



ST THOMAS'S SCHOOL
KOHIMARAMA. AUCKLAND

Newsletter

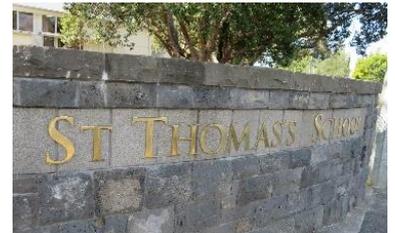
17 April 2020

Good afternoon all,

Thank you to staff, students and parents for such a great start to Term Two considering the uncertainty in our world at the moment. We have received some lovely feedback from parents who appreciate what teaching staff are doing in this new environment.

There is some discussion in the wider community regarding what will happen when we go to Level 3 and what teaching and learning will look like for our schools. Various organisations are meeting with the Ministry of Education today including New Zealand Educational Institute, New Zealand Principals Federation and Auckland Primary Principals Association to discuss health and safety concerns for students and teaching staff when they return to school.

Keeping students, staff and visitors safe on our return to school is a top priority for our Senior Leadership Team and Board. Once we hear what our Prime Minister has to say on Monday the Senior Leadership Team will update our pandemic plan and procedures for returning to school and I will share this with our community before we return.



Here's what the government has set out for schools at Level 3:

- Early learning centres and schools will be open up for children up to and including year 10
- Physical attendance of children at schools and centres is voluntary. All children who are able to, should remain home and continue to learn remotely
- Within schools and centres children should be kept in their own bubbles where possible to limit exposure between children
- Children, young people and staff who are at greater risk are encouraged to stay at home
- Any child, young person or staff member who is sick should remain at home

I know you'll have a lot of questions about what this will look like on the ground. There will be concerns around issues like safe distancing, staff with health conditions, managing the balance of teachers and children, the role of relievers and support staff, safely managing separate bubbles and whether a return to schools and centres will also be voluntary for staff. Once we have more clarity next week we will work through these issues and keep you informed. Below is a letter (abridged) to Auckland Principals from the Auckland Primary Principals Association president Stephen Lethbridge where he summed up Principals views on where we are currently at.

We are not in normal times, we are in a global pandemic. Schools have a part to play in the recovery of our country. We do not have control over the definitions of Level 3. We do have control about how we progress the next steps to ensure our staff and students are safe. The safest place for our students is still in their

bubbles with their families. It is vitally important that our communities continue to support our schools so that we can serve those families who have no choice and cannot work from home.

Principals will all be adding items to our 'how do we tackle this' lists - staffing ratios, cleaning, classroom organisation, contact tracing, use of equipment, break times, managing physical distancing, there will be a very long list. There is no doubt our schools will look very different. We need to ensure that our communities see that the approach to learning is consistent whether children are at home, or at school.

We need our communities to support us as we face another form of schooling, but not as we have known it. The best approach is for parents and caregivers to keep children learning at home, if they are able to do so. Our schools have shown that they can pivot their approach to learning. We have a busy few days ahead. We are fortunate to have highly capable teachers, support staff and leaders to help us prepare for the next stage in our response to the Alert Level Three Guidelines.

Enjoy your weekend and stay safe.

Kind Regards,

Michael

All About Wellbeing

At this unprecedented time, Wellbeing is more important than ever. The impacts of Covid-19 are creating widespread uncertainty and disruption and increased anxiety for many, as our way of life has been completely upended. It is our role as adults, parents and caregivers to guide children and young people through times of stress and unusual circumstances and find ways to enhance ours and their wellbeing. We can also look at the Covid-19 Lockdown as a time to build resilience in our children and young people and as a time to learn some skills to promote positivity and wellbeing.

We have put together some of the tips and guidance we have received along with some links to some very useful websites that are worth looking at.

Emma Johnson
St Thomas's SENCO and Wellbeing Lead



Wellbeing Tips for Families

The following pages contain tips that have been prepared by Gemma Trask our School Guidance Counsellor. We are very grateful for Gemma's expertise and input to our community at this time.



Family wellbeing – Creating calm and destressing.

Keeping well and doing small things to increase your wellbeing and that of your family, are really vital in times like these. It is important to actively take control and try to redirect your attention to focussing on wellbeing. Over the next few pages, we will look at a few different topics to help build your families collective wellbeing.

The first focus is on keeping calm and dealing with uncertainty. As parents, caregivers and whānau your actions and reactions are watched and absorbed by your children. You may be more anxious, worried and less patient with your children. This is normal, due to the current climate but I encourage you to focus on the things within your control. Now is the time to create a 'new' normal. This not only role models to your children how to adapt, but it also demonstrates resilience. Spend some time individually and as a family and whānau, identifying strategies you can all use to increase calmness and decrease stress.

Strategies could include :

- Deep belly breathing and counting to 10.
- Going for a walk, bike or scooter (in your bubble).
- Running a bath or taking a nice warm shower.
- Getting some fresh air and sunshine.
- Doing some stretching or yoga as a family.
- Having a family 'code' word that signals to your family you need space.
- Moving into another room.
- Listening to calming music.
- Having a laugh by watching a funny movie, video, or telling jokes to each other.

An idea: Keep a jar on the bench and when someone talks about wanting to do something that is no possible right now eg Visit Grandma or go play with a friend, encourage them to write it down on a small piece of paper and put it into the jar. In time, when the lockdown is lifted, use these notes as a reminders and motivation to do all the things we were unable to do 😊

Stay safe, keep calm and remain connected.

Gemma (St Thomas's Guidance Counsellor).



Family wellbeing – Connection and maintaining relationships.

The next focus is on connection, which is a basic need that is an important component of wellbeing. Keeping connected will help to fill your wellbeing cup. Connecting with people and nature is still possible during this time.

Although physical distancing is important at the moment, there are so many great ways to stay connected with family, caregiver, friends and whānau.

- Finding time to connect with your children throughout the day will help you to see how they are coping during this time. It's okay not to have all the answers to their questions, they just need you to be there, reassuring them that 'we will all get through this together.' Validating their emotions, allowing their big feelings, sitting with them and asking what they need. This will all help to strengthen your connection, as well as give them feelings of safety.
- Platforms like Skype, Facetime, Viber, Zoom, as well as the landline telephone are great for keeping in touch with people who are not in our bubble, or who you can't physically see.
- Checking in and talking with the neighbours over the fence (while keeping your 2m distance).
- Connecting with nature is also amazing for wellbeing. Getting outside, walking barefoot on the grass, letting some sunshine on our skin, taking a walk, really breathing in the fresh air, noticing your surroundings and listening to the sounds of nature.

A reminder: Behind every behaviour there is a feeling. And beneath every feeling there is a need. And when we meet that need rather than focusing on the behaviour, we begin to deal with the cause, not the symptom 😊

Stay safe, keep calm and remain connected.

Gemma (St Thomas's Guidance Counsellor).



Family Wellbeing - The body and mind.

Another important focus is on looking after your body and your mind. The body, holds stress just like the mind does. Finding ways to reduce stress, letting things go and just 'getting through' is important for individual wellbeing, as well as the collective wellbeing of the family and whānau. Some ideas to help include:

- Doing something with your hands: Knitting, baking, tidying, drawing, cleaning, gardening, writing, reading, doing a puzzle, colouring, board games, card games.
- Looking after your body: We hold stress in our bodies as much as our minds. Doing small things that make you feel good. Taking a bath or shower, giving each other foot massages, stretching and moving together, putting some music on and dancing together as a family, eating healthy but delicious things, doing each others hair.
- Doing something nice or kind for someone: Whether they are in your 'living bubble' or further away, showing kindness, or doing something nice makes us feel good. This could include reminding someone you love them, writing a note with a compliment, helping them with something they are finding hard, making them a snack.
- Skills: Asking different family members to teach a skill they have or learning a new skill – learning to braid hair, a new language, dusting off an instrument from home and finding a lesson on youtube, learning origami, using a new recipe, researching something you have always wanted to learn more about, a new card trick, learning to sew a button on, doing the laundry and the list goes on. Encourage family, friends and whānau outside our bubble too teach us using Skype, Facetime, Viber or Zoom.

Tip: Smiling is infectious, it helps to reduce stress and makes you feel good 😊

Stay safe, keep calm and remain connected.

Gemma (St Thomas's Guidance Counsellor).



Family Wellbeing - Going back to basics.

The final focus is on going back to basics and having some form of routine. With information overload happening right now it is important to stay informed but not be consumed by it all. Allow a small window of time to check in and listen to what is happening, but then turn the news off and focus on the day ahead.

Keeping the important routines

- Wake up and going to sleep times
- Breakfast, lunch, and dinner times
- Showering in the morning or evening
- Getting dressed and getting out of your pajamas – even if it is into comfy clothes
- Get outside time and fresh air
- Do at least one thing that you enjoy, makes you laugh, or feel good everyday

A reminder: When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change 😊

Stay safe, keep calm and remain connected.

Gemma (St Thomas's Guidance Counsellor).

Learning from Home

Learning from home is something few of us have experienced or expected to be doing in 2020. As a result, we are all learning as we go, which can create extra stress for everybody.

The New Zealand Institute of Wellbeing and Resilience has some fantastic videos that talk about how to manage this and to manage our expectations on our kids and ourselves.

<https://nziwr.co.nz/category/covid-19/>



They also provided this resource to help put things in perspective when it comes to children's home learning.

WELLBEING FOR ONLINE LEARNING WWW.WHATIFPLD.COM

- High tolerance, low expectations**
We're all the "new kid" at this, take a deep breath. People are all feeling their way- there'll be some false starts.
- Establish some basics**
Routine and consistency is reassuring, where possible. Greetings, being seen & a sense of belonging are the most important right now.
- Don't reinvent the wheel**
Use the pick 'n mix approach - work smart, not hard. Just pick a couple of things to try at first - avoid the overwhelm.
- Fail forward**
Be the lead learner. Model working through problems. Practise your growth mindset talk, use the word "yet".
- Practise self-compassion**
You're only human. Let's agree to be Real. NOT perfect! Authenticity will only make you more relatable.
- Have some fun**
Focus on relationships & building connections. When people are relaxed, they learn better.

Image taken from <https://nziwr.co.nz/>

Five Ways to Wellbeing

FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

- Give**
Your time, your words, your presence
- BE ACTIVE**
DO WHAT YOU CAN, ENJOY WHAT YOU DO, MOVE YOUR MOOD
- KEEP LEARNING**
EMBRACE NEW EXPERIENCES, SEE OPPORTUNITIES, SURPRISE YOURSELF
- CONNECT**
TALK & LISTEN, BE THERE, FEEL CONNECTED
- TAKE NOTICE**
REMEMBER THE SIMPLE THINGS THAT GIVE YOU JOY

INTRODUCE THESE SIMPLE STRATEGIES INTO YOUR LIFE AND YOU WILL FEEL THE BENEFITS. Mental Health Foundation OF NEW ZEALAND

Image taken from <https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/home/ways-to-wellbeing-2/>

These five actions came out of the New Economics Foundation's (NEF) Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing research report.

They found that building these 5 actions into our days helps the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

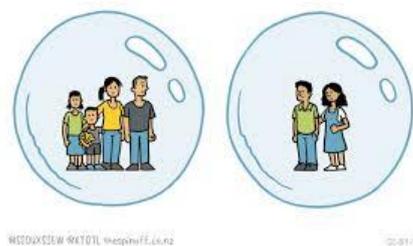
See how many you can do at home during the lockdown.

St Thomas's Community Wellbeing – Share Your Bubble Stories

We would love to hear from you about what you are doing in your bubbles to keep positive and develop wellbeing.

It might be related to one of the 5 ways to wellbeing strategies noted above. Send us a short blurb with some photos to ejohnson@stthomas.school.nz . . so that we can share your stories in the next newsletter.

Image taken from www.thespinoff.co.nz



Techniques to Destress and Calm Down

There are lots of ways that children can use to manage their anxiety and stress. We've noted the 5-4-3-2-1 method below but you can check out the following websites which give other useful tips.

<https://www.heysigmund.com/>

<https://gozen.com/video1intro/>

<https://www.headspace.com/>

The 5-4-3-2-1 Method

A great technique for helping children to self-calm:

- Support them to think of 5 things around them that they can see,
- 4 things that they could touch,
- 3 things around them that they could hear right now,
- 2 things that they could smell, and one thing that they might be able to taste around them.
- The idea behind it is to distract your brain from the thing that is upsetting

Have a look at the you tube clip with Professor Hans Van Puppet to who explains to younger students how to use the 5-4-3-2-1 method. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5LCP5wUI-0c>



Sparklers

Sparklers is a website that came about after the Christchurch Earthquakes to support and promote the wellbeing of all the young Cantabrians. Have a look at <https://sparklers.org.nz/> for some more great information and activities you can do at home to build wellbeing.



There is also Help for Parents

In order to look after and promote our children's wellbeing we have to look after ourselves. So to all our wonderful parents. Times are tough. If you need support then the following number provided by the Ministry of Health can be used.

A Note from the Ministry of Health

Kia ora. Thanks for staying home New Zealand. By staying home, we can break the chain of transmission and save lives.

This situation is temporary, and while we don't know how long it will last, we do know that things will get better over time. And it's good to pay attention to your wellbeing.

- Do things that ground you – practical tasks like organising the garage or cupboards, completing home projects, just organising things can be a good way to feel more grounded.
- Maintain - or maybe start - daily routines . . . things like when you have meals or showers.
- Give each other space – make sure that everyone in your 'bubble' has some time and space to themselves.

The [Mental Health Foundation](#) have some great resources.

Get in touch with us if we can help you, if you want to talk it through. [The latest on COVID-19 is here.](#)

We're here. Free call or text 1737 any time, 24 hours a day. You'll get to talk to (or text with) a trained counsellor. Our service is completely free.

- Are you feeling anxious or just need someone to talk to? Call or text 1737
- Are you feeling down or a bit overwhelmed? Call or text 1737
- Do you know someone who is feeling out-of-sorts or depressed? Let them know they can call or text 1737

Whatever it is, we're here. Free call or text 1737 any time. [Read our FAQs and learn more about us.](#)

NEED TO TALK?

1737

**free call or text
any time**

Support for Parents & Caregivers

Please remember

You are parents first and foremost, trying to juggle parenting, teaching and working all at the same time is an impossible expectation. Although your children may not be at school, their learning doesn't stop. They are learning many new skills through cooking with you, playing with you, reading books, engaging in imaginative play and going for family walks. Focus on what is manageable, fun and prioritise what is important for you and your family during this time.



STAYING GROUNDED AND FEELING GOOD

10 ways to look after yourself and your whānau during your COVID-19 stay-cation. These activities incorporate the principles of positive psychology, and are easy to do at home.

SHARE SOME FEEL GOOD MEMORIES:



Talking about your positive memories can bring back the feelings we associated with them at the time – pretty cool huh! Kids often love our memories... tales of when they were babies, stories of their grandparents. Linger in the feelings to make them last.



BUILD A PLAY SPACE:



Make a hut, inside or out, and have a picnic there or nestle in to sleep – a li'l bit of fun and a little bit more cozy.

SORT OUT YOUR TREASURES:



Get around to doing the family album or an album for certificates, letters, special things. This is another way to recall positive memories, talk about our past and celebrate our achievements.

LIE ON THE LAWN AND WATCH THE CLOUDS:



A wee bit of mindfulness and a whole lot of being present and taking notice!

SPEND SOME TIME BEING GRATEFUL:



Make time to talk about the things you're grateful for. Mealtimes are a great place for this, or early mornings. The science behind gratitude is cool and compelling – when we can be thankful for others in our lives it gives us a real boost.

GO 'OLD SCHOOL' WITH HOPSCOTCH OR FOUR SQUARE:

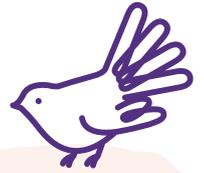


Being active and present like this is good for all of us. Be 'silly', lose the game, who cares? Just do it!

ESCAPE IN A TALKING BOOK:



We're trying to veer away from the screens (for a bit anyways!) but Audible.com is offering free books, so we couldn't resist! Choose a cool kid's classic and treat the story reading like a movie night without the pictures! Feeling cozy like this makes us relax.



PLAY CARDS:



If you can steer clear of too much competition, playing cards brings us into the present (stops us thinking too much!), boosts our concentration and again, it's more together time. All good for us!



FEED THE BIRDS!



Making a bird feeder or putting oats or honey water out for birds to enjoy is a great way to 'take notice' – one of the biggest ways to boost our wellbeing.

BAKE SOMETHING YUMMY:



Again, a little bit of cozy, maybe a little bit of memory making, and a little bit of fun, together-time. Super good for us all.



TRY SOMETHING YOU DON'T FEEL THAT CONFIDENT DOING:



Often we think we're not good at something simply because we've developed a fixed mindset around it. During home learning, challenge a fixed mindset you have around an activity, whether it's baking, singing, learning maths or something else! This is a good way to let go of whatever's holding us back, give up 'caring' about it, oh... and role model all of this to our kids!



For more fun, family ideas visit Sparklers At Home: www.sparklers.org.nz/parenting

ALL RIGHT? 
Helping tamariki live brighter

1 COVID-19 PARENTING One-on-One Time

Can't go to work? Schools closed? Worried about money? It is normal to feel stressed and overwhelmed.

School shutdown is also a chance to make better relationships with our children and teenagers. One-on-One time is free and fun. It makes children feel loved and secure, and shows them that they are important.

Set aside time to spend with each child



It can be for just 20 minutes, or longer – it's up to us. It can be at the same time each day so children or teenagers can look forward to it.



Ask your child what they would like to do



Choosing builds their self confidence. If they want to do something that isn't OK with physical distancing, then this is a chance to talk with them about this. (see next leaflet)



Ideas with your baby/toddler

- Copy their facial expression and sounds
- Sing songs, make music with pots and spoons
- Stack cups or blocks
- Tell a story, read a book, or share pictures



Switch off the TV and phone. This is virus-free time

Ideas with your teenager

- Talk about something they like: sports, music, celebrities, friends
- Go for a walk – outdoors or around the home
- Exercise together to their favorite music

Ideas with your young child

- Read a book or look at pictures
- Go for a walk – outdoors or around the home
- Dance to music or sing songs!
- Do a chore together – make cleaning and cooking a game!
- Help with school work

**Listen to them, look at them.
Give them your full attention.
Have fun!**

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2 COVID-19 PARENTING

Keeping It Positive

It's hard to feel positive when our kids or teenagers are driving us crazy. We often end up saying "Stop doing that!" But children are much more likely to do what we ask if we give them positive instructions and lots of praise for what they do right.

Say the behaviour you want to see

Use positive words when telling your child what to do; like 'Please put your clothes away' (instead of 'Don't make a mess')

It's all in the delivery

Shouting at your child will just make you and them more stressed and angrier. Get your child's attention by using their name. Speak in a calm voice.

Praise your child when they are behaving well

Try praising your child or teenager for something they have done well. They may not show it, but you'll see them doing that good thing again. It will also reassure them that you notice and care.



Get real

Can your child actually do what you are asking them? It is very hard for a child to keep quiet inside for a whole day but maybe they can keep quiet for 15 minutes while you are on a call.

Help your teen stay connected

Teens especially need to be able to communicate with their friends. Help your teen connect through social media and other safe distancing ways. This is something you can do together, too!



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3 COVID-19 PARENTING Structure Up

COVID-19 has taken away our daily work, home and school routines. This is hard for children, teenagers and for you. Making new routines can help.

Create a flexible but consistent daily routine

- Make a schedule for you and your children that has time for structured activities as well as free time. This can help children feel more secure and better behaved.
- Children or teenagers can help plan the routine for the day – like making a school timetable. Children will follow this better if they help to make it.
- Include exercise in each day - this helps with stress and kids with lots of energy at home.



You are a model for your child's behavior

- If you practice keeping safe distances and hygiene yourself, and treat others with compassion, especially those who are sick or vulnerable – your children and teenagers will learn from you.

Teach your child about keeping safe distances

- If it is OK in your country, get children outside.
- You can also write letters and draw pictures to share with people. Put them up outside your home for others to see!
- You can reassure your child by talking about how you are keeping safe. Listen to their suggestions and take them seriously.

Make handwashing and hygiene fun

- ▼ Make a 20-second song for washing hands. Add actions! Give children points and praise for regular handwashing.
- ▼ Make a game to see how few times we can touch our faces with a reward for the least number of touches (you can count for each other).

At the end of each day, take a minute to think about the day. Tell your child about one positive or fun thing they did.

Praise yourself for what you did well today. You are a star!



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4 COVID-19 PARENTING Bad Behavior

All children misbehave. It is normal when children are tired, hungry, afraid, or learning independence. And they can drive us crazy when stuck at home.

Redirect

- Catch bad behavior early and redirect your kids' attention from a bad to a good behavior.
- Stop it before it starts! When they start to get restless, you can distract with something interesting or fun: "Come, let's go outside for a walk!"

Take a Pause

- Feel like screaming? Give yourself a 10-second pause. Breathe in and out slowly five times. Then try to respond in a calmer way.
- Millions of parents say this helps - A LOT.

Use consequences

Consequences help teach our children responsibility for what they do. They also allow discipline that is controlled. This is more effective than hitting or shouting.

- Give your child a choice to follow your instruction before giving them the consequence.
- Try to stay calm when giving the consequence.
- Make sure you can follow through with the consequence. For example, taking away a teenager's phone for a week is hard to enforce. Taking it away for one hour is more realistic.
- Once the consequence is over, give your child a chance to do something good, and praise them for it.

Keep using Tips 1-3

- One-on-One time, praise for being good, and consistent routines will reduce bad behaviour.
- Give your children and teens simple jobs with responsibilities. Just make sure it is something they are able to do. And praise them when they do it!

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5 COVID-19 PARENTING

Keep Calm and Manage Stress

This is a stressful time. Take care of yourself, so you can support your children.

You are not alone

Millions of people have the same fears as us. Find someone who you can talk to about how you are feeling. Listen to them. Avoid social media that makes you feel panicked.

Take a break

We all need a break sometimes. When your children are asleep, do something fun or relaxing for yourself. Make a list of healthy activities that YOU like to do. You deserve it!

Listen to your kids

Be open and listen to your children. Your children will look to you for support and reassurance. Listen to your children when they share how they are feeling. Accept how they feel and give them comfort.



Take a Pause

1-minute relaxation activity that you can do whenever you are feeling stressed or worried

Step 1: Set up

- Find a comfortable sitting position, your feet flat on the floor, your hands resting in your lap.
- Close your eyes if you feel comfortable.

Step 2: Think, feel, body

- Ask yourself, "What am I thinking now?"
- Notice your thoughts. Notice if they are negative or positive.
- Notice how you feel emotionally. Notice if your feelings are happy or not.
- Notice how your body feels. Notice anything that hurts or is tense.

Step 3: Focus on your breath

- Listen to your breath as it goes in and out.
- You can put a hand on your stomach and feel it rise and fall with each breath.
- You may want to say to yourself "It's okay. Whatever it is, I am okay."
- Then just listen to your breath for a while.

Step 4: Coming back

- Notice how your whole body feels.
- Listen to the sounds in the room.

Step 5: Reflecting

- Think 'do I feel different at all?'
- When you are ready, open your eyes.

Taking a Pause can also be helpful when you find your child is irritating you or has done something wrong. It gives you a chance to be calmer. Even a few deep breaths or connecting with the feeling of the floor beneath can make a difference. You can also Take a Pause with your children!

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6 COVID-19 PARENTING

Talking about COVID-19

Be willing to talk. They will already have heard something. Silence and secrets do not protect our children. Honesty and openness do. Think about how much they will understand. You know them best.

Be open and listen

Allow your child to talk freely. Ask them open questions and find out how much they already know.

Be honest

Always answer their questions truthfully. Think about how old your child is and how much they can understand.

Be supportive

Your child may be scared or confused. Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know you are there for them.

It is OK not to know the answers

It is fine to say "We don't know, but we are working on it; or we don't know, but we think." Use this as an opportunity to learn something new with your child!



Heroes not bullies

Explain that COVID-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks, where they are from, or what language they speak. Tell your child that we can be compassionate to people who are sick and those who are caring for them.

Look for stories of people who are working to stop the outbreak and are caring for sick people.

There are a lot of stories going around

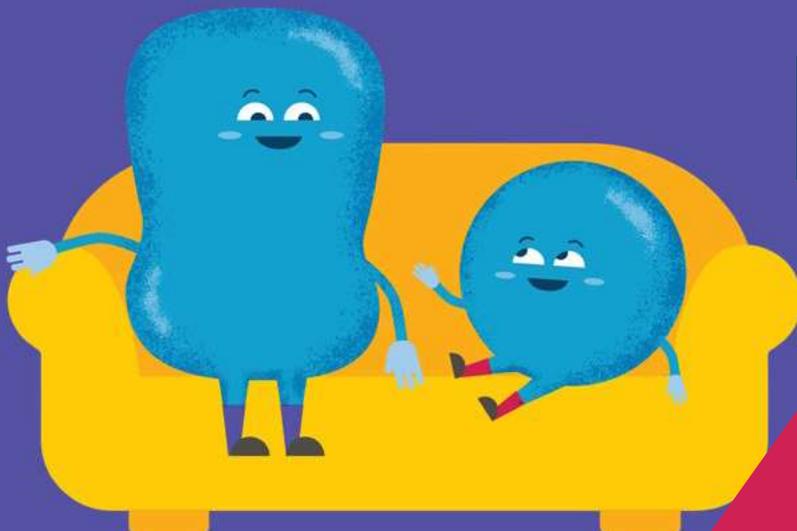
Some may not be true. Use trustworthy sites:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>
and

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19>
from WHO and UNICEF.

End on a good note

Check to see if your child is okay. Remind them that you care and that they can talk to you anytime. Then do something fun together!



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