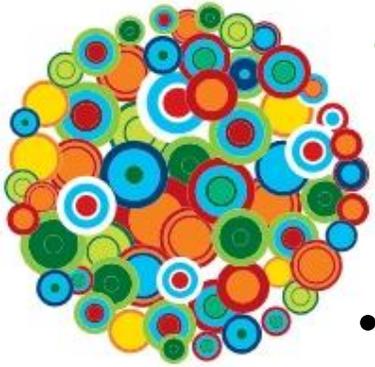




Welcome to:

Autism and Coronavirus quarantine -
how to explain it and reduce anxieties

Tanya Tennant
Autism Training and Consultancy
"Passionate about Autism"



Today's session will support you in ...

- Answering the question "Should I be honest" about what Coronavirus is
- Understanding the effects this may have on your child and why
- Exploring ways in which to explain what Coronavirus is using visuals and social stories
- Developing ways to support your child during quarantine to reduce anxiety and distress



Working together

- Using Zoom is new to all of us and so lets take some time to go over the basics
- We will hopefully have time for some questions at the end of the session
- I might not be able to answer all questions due to limited time but please feel free to ask additional questions via email after the session
- You will receive an evaluation at the end of the session, please take the time to fill this in. It helps in funding future sessions
- I will send out the slides and a resource list following the session



Introductions

It will be helpful to know who we all are

Either speaking on camera or typing into the text box please share the following

- Your name
- Your child's name
- Your child's age
- What are you hoping to get from the session?



Should we be talking to our children about COVID-19?

- Children and young people will be picking up information from various sources - we need to help them understand and process this
- Children and young people with Autism will be experiencing changes to their daily routines which they may struggle to understand and process
- It's important for all children and young people with Autism to build relationships built on trust, so important we are open and honest at this time
- Its important we support them to understand their responsibilities in fighting the virus.
- Its important to address any fears or worries connected to COVID-19

Its important the information we provide is **age and stage appropriate!**



How should I tell my child about COVID - 19

Setting the scene

- Plan out what you should tell them beforehand
- Consider who is the best person in the family to help bring up the subject
- Choose a moment when you are both in a calm mood and in a familiar place where you both feel comfortable
- Make sure there are no interruptions - may need time to think about what you're saying or to ask questions
- Your child may have spoken to someone else about COVID-19 Find out what they already know (including misinformation and rumours)
- Centre your conversation on the facts (not ifs and maybes)

Its important not to rush this process



How might my child react?

- Some children will be pleased that they now have a better understanding of COVID - 19
- Some children will become concerned that there is something seriously wrong that will affect their health or the health of their loved ones, leading to higher levels of anxiety
- Be there if your child wants to talk or ask questions. Some children may not want to talk face to face, so finding other ways to communicate is essential

How could you support your child if they didn't want to talk about it face to face?



How do I explain COVID-19?

Information for children at pre school age

2-6yrs

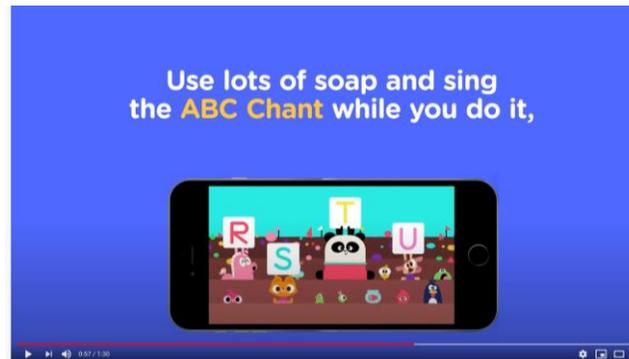
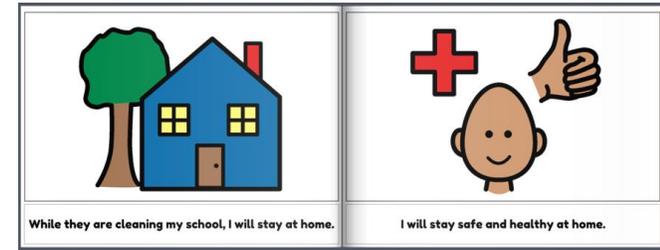
- Explanations must be **clear, simple and concrete**. Do not underestimate how much young children pick up on from observing others
- Children at this age may **make assumptions from their observations** but do not necessarily talk about them or ask questions
- Ensure children know that you are there for them to **talk through worries**
- It is important that information is provided as early as possible to **avoid any misconceptions**



Are there any books or resources which can help my child to understand?

2-6yrs

- [Hello! My name is Coronavirus](#)
- [Coronavirus social story](#)
- [What is Coronavirus](#)
- [OMG my child asked me about Coronavirus](#)
- [Washing hand song-Sesame Street](#)





How do I explain COVID-19?

Information for children at school age

6 - 11 yrs

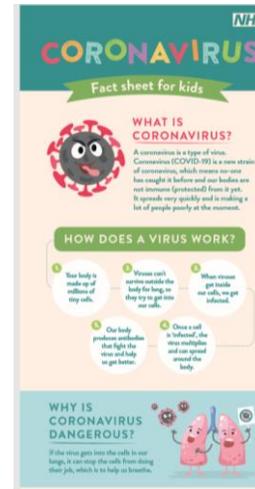
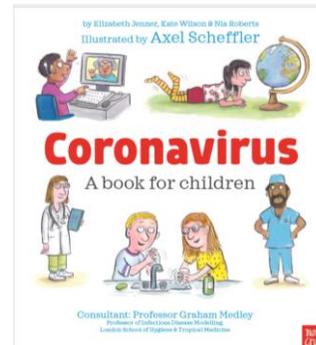
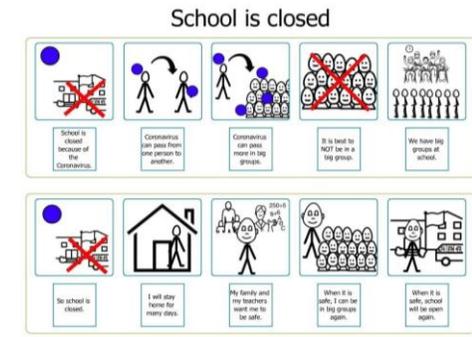
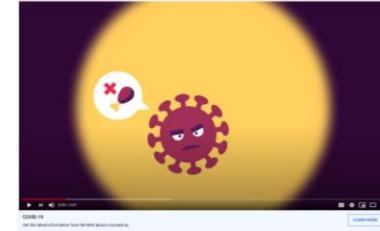
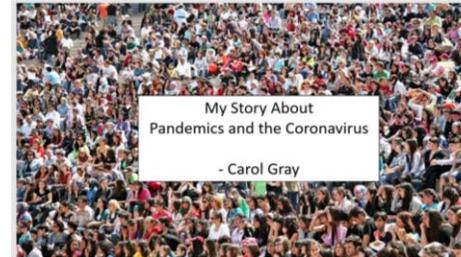
- By this stage, many children will understand more about how a situation is affecting them and their families and want to understand why
- They are more likely to ask direct questions about the situation rather than just making observations
- It will start to have a deeper meaning to them, and they may spend time worrying and ruminating about the situation
- Also at this age they may expect definitive concrete answers to their questions and become less easy to redirect away from the situation with simple answers

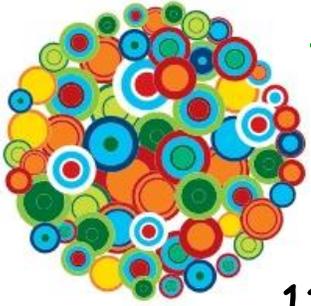


Are there any books or resources which can help my child to understand?

6 - 11yrs

- [Social Story by Carol Gray](#)
- [Corona virus a book for children illustrated by the creators of the Gruffalo](#)
- [Social story about school being closed](#)
- [Coronavirus fact sheet for kids](#)
- [COVID-19 What is it?](#)
- [School is closed](#)
- [Washing hands the right way](#)





How do I explain COVID-19?

Information for teenagers

11+ yrs

- Whilst some teenagers are intellectually as capable of understanding as most adults, it is still common for children of this age to have misunderstandings. It is therefore important they know where they can access factual, accurate information
- During the teenage years continue to build and provide resources to build on your teens knowledge and understanding of situations. Be as open as possible and answer any questions they may have. Make specific time for these conversations
- Teenagers may often have specific questions that they want answers to, particularly about how a situation may affect them. Its important to provide safe places where they can access this information
- Some teenagers, however, may just not want to discuss it. They may be coping with their own adolescence and may not seem interested in other things. You may need to adapt other methods of communication



Are there any books or resources which can help my child to understand?

11yrs +

- [Purple Ella - How to deal with Coronavirus](#)
- [Groups and activities outside the home - social story](#)
- [COVID-19 Information by and for people with disabilities](#)
- [Information about Coronavirus](#)



COVID-19 Information By and For People with Disabilities

What is COVID-19?

- It is a new illness spreading around the world.
- It's nickname is coronavirus.

How do you get it?

- Someone with COVID-19 gives you their germs.
- When they cough or sneeze, their germs get in the air, on you, and on things.
- Germs get into your body through your mouth, nose, and your eyes.

What happens if you have it?

A fever of 100.4* or higher Coughing Hard time breathing

Green Mountain Self-Advocates www.gmsad.org

Scottish autism
WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE ARE VALUED

Groups and Activities Outside of the Home

Sometimes, I go to groups and activities outside of home.

Usually, people enjoy going to groups and activities outside of home.

Because of Coronavirus I might not be able to go to groups and activities outside of home.

This is due to social distancing

Some people are not going to groups and activities outside of home to stay healthy.

I will try to not go to groups and activities outside of home to stay healthy.

I can do activities inside my home instead.

Information about Coronavirus

There has been a lot of information in the news about a virus called Coronavirus.

A virus is a type of illness.

Coronavirus is a new virus and people first had it in China.

Because people travel for work, to see friends and to go on holiday it is now in lots of other countries.

There are now a number of people in the UK who have got this virus.

There is a lot of information on the news about this, and people are talking about the virus and what it means.

What is Coronavirus?

Coronavirus is like flu and people who are ill with the virus may have

- A cough
- A high temperature
- and find it harder to breathe normally



"Social distancing", "Social Isolation", "Lockdown"

What do these phrases mean?

For Autistic children and young people it is best to explain the situation by describing what we are literally doing

- [WHO Talking Mats – What can we do and not do during lockdown](#)
- [Scottish autism-What is social distancing](#)
- [National Autistic Society-Guide on social distancing](#)
- [National Autistic Society-Guide to staying at home](#)
- [Sensory stuck at home – Facebook page](#) where families share ideas about activities to do while stuck at home

8 April 2020
Page 1 of 7

Self-isolation

If you or others in your home have symptoms of Coronavirus, self-isolation helps stop coronavirus spreading.

If anyone has symptoms no one should leave the house.

Staying at home is called self-isolation.

If you are self-isolating you must:

Not leave the house.

You can leave to exercise, but must stay 2 metres away from people.

The government has told us that because of Coronavirus we are not able to do activities where there will be lots of people. This is called physical distancing. We can't do things like:

Going to church/place of worship	Going to a concert or match
Going to a pub or café	Going out shopping
Going to the cinema	Going to a party or a wedding

They have also said:

- We should not use public transport unless we need to
- go to work
- get food
- get medication

- We should not have visitors to our house unless they are there to help us

And there are some things that are safe for us to do on your own or with people you live with:

Spend time in your garden	Cook/eat at home
Reading	Listen to music
Play games	Watch TV or a Movie
Arts and crafts	Exercise inside

If you know how to do a Talking Mat it might help to use these pictures to talk about how you/other people are feeling.

9 April 2020
Page 1 of 4

Coronavirus COVID-19: Guidance on Social Distancing

COVID-19 is a new illness.

Lots of people catch coronavirus.

It can sometimes affect your lungs and your throat.

It is important that people keep apart to stop it spreading.

Staying away from other people is called social distancing.

In March 2020, the government asked everyone to socially distance.

You should socially distance from people you don't live with.

The government will announce when we can stop social distancing.

Scottish autism
WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE ARE VALUED

What is Social Distancing?

Coronavirus is a virus which is a type of illness.

Coronavirus is spread from person to person.

It is therefore important at this time to see less people and avoid busy places. This is called social distancing.

By doing this it can keep me healthy.

It means that you might not be able to see all your family and friends.

It might mean you cannot do the things you would enjoy, like going to a restaurant or the cinema.



Reframing social distancing to a positive

Reframing social distancing and self isolation from things we are not doing to the things we are doing can make a difference

"We cannot visit Gran today because of the coronavirus. This is ok, Gran is safe. You can still see gran by video call. This will be fun. Gran will be happy to see me. Well done!"

"Today we will be learning at home. This is because school is closed due to coronavirus. This is ok. We can still learn lots of things at home. Mum/Dad will help me with this. This will be fun. School will open again when Coronavirus is finished."





Staying away from people : What does 2M look like?

- Physically showing what two meters looks like can help a child or young person understand how far away they need to be from other people
- Ask children and young people to guess what 2m looks like. This is a good way to test their proprioception
- Using a visual such as a broom, or even identify the amount of steps the individual has to take to be two meters away can help visualise this
- Remember to prompt it is not just 2 metres in front, it has to be from every angle. Asking what people can see of other people at 2 metres is a good indicator (can see someone's glasses but not freckles on the face etc)
- Finding a key prompt word for public allows for quicker communication
- Identifying that some people aren't very good at social distancing, but we can help with that (i.e. moving further away with someone with mobility issues)



Staying away from people : What does 2M look like?

[We need space between us visual](#)

[The wiggles Social distancing video](#)

COVID - 19
New rule. We need have space between us

Inside and outside
Be 2 steps away from other people

- behind you
- in front of you
- beside you.

Made by Access Easy English. Version 2. Updated 24 March 2020





Autism and anxiety

Why might we see higher levels of anxiety?

- Be more prone to anxiety in general (higher baseline)
- Have less ability to process complicated information about the pandemic
- Struggle to identify their own feelings of anxiety
- Struggle to understand why they're anxious
- Not have the communication to tell us their worries
- Have black and white thinking which makes it hard to work through the 'grey areas' of COVID-19
- Be more impacted by changes to routine
- Be more socially isolated without school





Some Symptoms of Anxiety

- Repetitive questioning/constant looking for reassurance/fear of being alone
- Lack of concentration
- Increased irritability/angry outbursts
- Random noises/vocal tics
- Repetitive behaviours
- Catastrophising



Some Symptoms of Anxiety

- Bed wetting
- Poor sleep patterns/nightmares
- Controlling behaviour
- Selective mutism
- Restricted eating or overeating
- Lots of bad thoughts, Self Harm



Key things to remember

- Expect stress
- Stay connected to friends and family
- Normalise the experience
- Reduce access to rolling news
- Supervise children with screens
- Restrict the time that you talk about it, introduce set times
- Don't make promises you can't keep (ie. "things will be back to normal by your birthday")
- Focus on things that reduce anxiety: routine, open communication, exercise, connecting to others
- Sleep, sleep sleep!
- Talk about who's job it is to worry and 'fix' the issue

"There are a lot of scientists, doctors, health professionals etc. who are working very hard to make sure that we get through this, which we will do"(Dr John Goldin)

(British Psychological Society, 2020)



Using visuals to understand emotions

Rate my worry chart

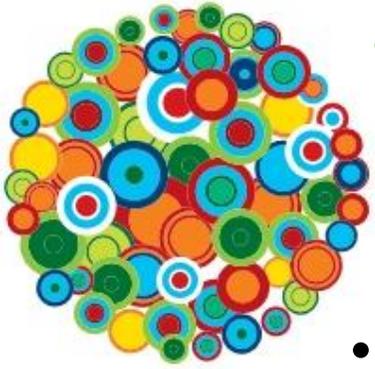
Some children may have difficulty highlighting their anxiety or why they are worried. It can be helpful to introduce "Rate my worry chart"

This can support them and you to link periods of worry and anxiety to particular activities or times of the day

Rate My "Worry" Chart

	Reading	Typing	Cutting	Cleaning Up Desk	Drawing/ Art	Talking to Teacher	Talking to Friends	Use Computer	Local News	Homework
8										
7										
6										
5										
4										
3										
2										
1										
No Worry										

© The Pocket Occupational Therapist



Using visuals to understand emotions

- Visuals can be used to help our children tell us how they are feeling
- Also to teach appropriate coping strategies

5	<p>mad</p> 
4	<p>angry</p> 
3	<p>upset</p> 
2	<p>bothered</p> 
1	<p>happy</p> 

<p>I feel Angry. I need to be left alone. I can go to my bedroom.</p>
<p>I feel Sad and feel like crying. I might start shouting. You can try to help me but I may need time alone in my room.</p>
<p>I feel Worried/Scared. You can help me by suggesting things from my "Emotions check list".</p>
<p>I feel Ok. You can still speak to me and play with me.</p>
<p>I feel Happy. I feel relaxed. It is ok to speak to me. I can play with you.</p>

<p>Here are some things I can do</p> <p>Go to my Bedroom Put my Do Not Disturb sign on the door Cuddle a cushion Listen to relaxing music Play with my toys on my own Play on my Ipad Read A book</p> <p>Important: I have to tell everyone once I feel calm and they can speak to me again Turn the sign around to say you can come into my room Go downstairs and let Mum, Dad and Molly know I am ok</p>
<p>Here are some things I can do</p> <p>Shake it off Count to 10-20-100 Deep Breathing Write my worries down Draw a picture of how I feel Play with Playdough/Theraputy Listen to music Speak to Mum or Dad Ask Mum or Dad for a bear hug Put on my weighted jacket Play on my Ipad Think or speak to Mum and Dad about something I'm really good at Read a book</p>



Examples of worry charts

Worry chart

My worry	Why I feel worried	What I can do to worry less
I am worried about Nana	<p>Nana is old and old people get Coronavirus and die</p> <p>I don't see Nana so I'm worried she's dead</p> <p>My nana and I do things together like baking a cake, I miss Nana</p>	<p>Remember that not all older people get COVID-19, and not all people with COVID19 die</p> <p>See nana on facetime or have a phone call with nana</p> <p>Send nana cards to show her I care about her</p> <p>Bake a cake with mum and phone nana for help with how to stir the cake</p> <p>Take a helpful role "I remind nana to take her tablets before bed"</p>
My hands are always dirty	<p>Germs are invisible</p> <p>Germs give you Coronavirus</p> <p>The TV man said wash your hands to save lives</p>	<p>I wash my hands before and after each meal, after I use the toilet and after I go outside</p> <p>I put a sticker on my washing chart</p> <p>I don't watch the TV man anymore</p>

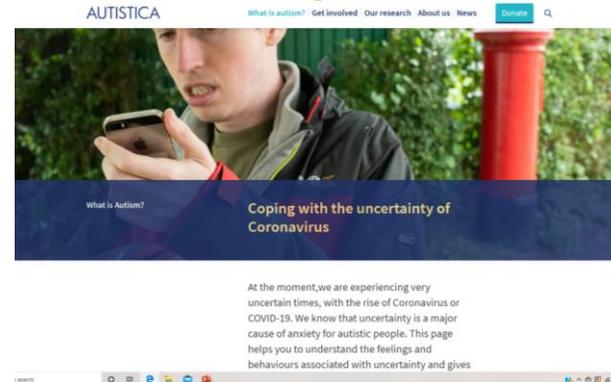
Feelings Chart

	How I feel	What I can do
5	 I need some help!	<input type="checkbox"/> Ask to go visit Mrs. Holland <input type="checkbox"/> Ask to take a break/use therapy <input type="checkbox"/> Hold on to Luke Skywalker [if he is here] <input type="checkbox"/> Take 4 or 5 deep breaths
4	 I'm really upset.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ask to go visit Mrs. Holland <input type="checkbox"/> Ask to take a break/use therapy <input type="checkbox"/> Hold on to Luke Skywalker [if he is here] <input type="checkbox"/> Take 4 or 5 deep breaths
3	 I've got a problem.	<input type="checkbox"/> Let a teacher know that you have a problem and need some help <input type="checkbox"/> Play with your squishy thing <input type="checkbox"/> Hold on to Luke Skywalker [if he is here] <input type="checkbox"/> Take 4 or 5 deep breaths
2	 Things are pretty good.	<input type="checkbox"/> Play with my squishy thing <input type="checkbox"/> Think of my favorite things <input type="checkbox"/> Say "I'm going to be O.K." to yourself <input type="checkbox"/> Take 3 or 4 deep breaths
1	 Feeling Great!	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy the feeling! <input type="checkbox"/> Have fun

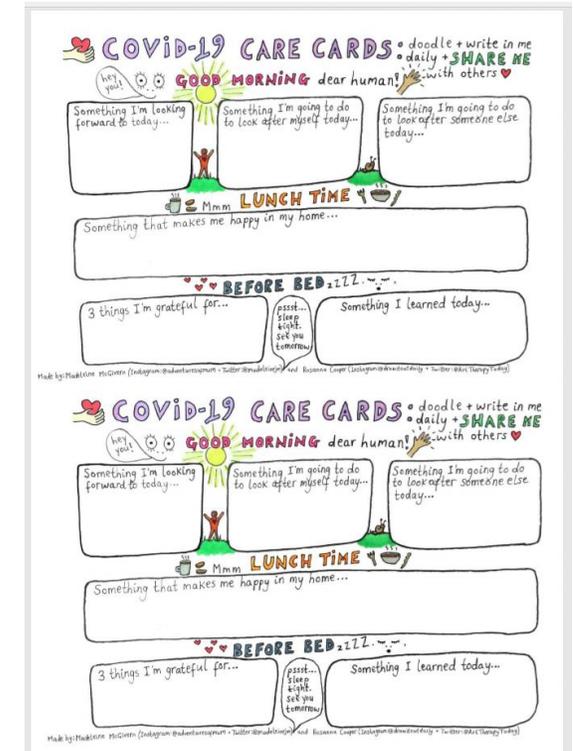
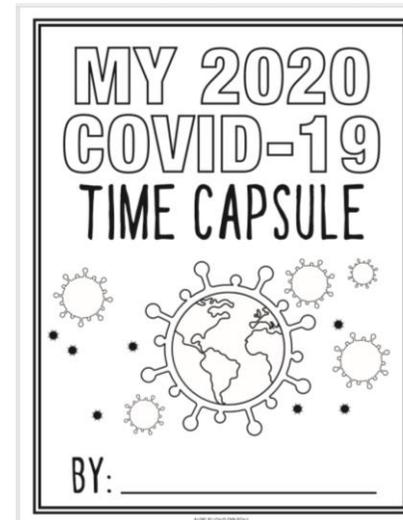


Resources for understanding and reducing anxiety

- [Sesame street - Self Hug](#)
- [What is Autism - coping with uncertainty of Coronavirus](#)
- [Workbook - My 2020 time capsule](#)
- [Young minds - what to do if you're worried about coronavirus](#)



Self Hug - Sesame Street





Additional resources

- [Self Isolating, ideas for home education](#)
- [Supporting children with learning disabilities/ASD coping with coronavirus isolation](#)



▼ RESOURCES FOR EDUCATING AT HOME ▼

As we prepare for all/most children being at home, we are pooling our resources together with other education, health and care organisations to bring you helpful ideas and advice for home educating, including mental and emotional well-being for all the family.

We hope, health permitting, to also bring you webinars and online videos.

Remember our consultancy and advocacy services are all still available remotely - we can do so much to help you via technology! Contact us here: www.sunshine-support.org.uk

- **Twinkl**
<https://www.twinkl.co.uk>
a month of free access to parents in the event of school closures (use promo 'UKTWINKLHELPS')
- **Virtual Museum Tours**
<https://hellogiggles.com/news/museums-with-virtual-tours/>
- **BBC Bitesize**
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>
- **The Imagination Tree**
<https://theimaginationtree.com>
Creative art and craft activities for the very youngest.



Supporting Children with Learning Disability/ASD Coping with COVID-19 Isolation

The next few weeks (and possibly months) will be a particularly difficult time for children and families, whilst schools are closed and we are advised to self-isolate or socially distance ourselves from our friends and family. Our normal structure and routine will be out of the window. This information pack aims to support parents of children with an ASD or LD during this tricky time and will hopefully make things a little more manageable.

This Booklet was put together by colleagues in Community Family Psychology, Neurodevelopmental Team and Children's Occupational Therapy (20th March 2020)

Contents:

- A. Structure and Routine
- B. Providing Easy-read Information on COVID-19
- C. Looking After Yourself
- D. Advice from Occupational Therapy on Regulation
- E. Sleep Routines
- F. Indoor Activities
- G. Exercise in the Home
- H. Managing Behaviour





In Conclusion

- Having a heightened state of anxiety during this time is completely normal
- Explaining COVID-19 in an age and stage appropriate way is vital
- Continuing to use visual communication is vital due to high levels of anxiety
- Finding creative ways to promote handwashing and being positive with our language is key
- Looking after yourself and your mental health is key to being able to support your children
- Focusing on facts not fear gives children/young people more control
- Allow for worry time and focus on coping mechanisms to reduce this

This time will pass, we will get through it and be stronger as a result 😊



Questions?

Please can you fill in your
Evaluation



Thank You for Coming

I hope you enjoyed the day

For more information or to book a workshop please contact me at:

Tel: 07506681192

Web: www.tanyatennant.co.uk

Email: contactme@tanyatennant.co.uk