

# I'M A PARENT, GET ME OUT OF HERE!

THE WEEKLY SCHOOL CLOSURE NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS/CARERS OF CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

## The Corona Virus, Me and My Family's **Mental Health**

Rob Emery – Autism Advisory Teacher Service

The effects of the Corona Virus will reach us all in one way or another. Whether it is low mood due to negative headlines, loneliness and boredom due to isolation or anxiety over the future of our health or finances, no one will escape untouched. But there are things we can do to maintain a grip on our mental health and give our families a helping hand. Here we look at some of the expert top tips and interpret it for those living with someone with Autism.

### Keep a Daily Routine if Possible

The number one top tip for parents, according to [youngminds.co.uk](http://youngminds.co.uk), is to try to maintain some element of routine to the day. It is also one of the first pieces of advice on the [mentalhealth.org](http://mentalhealth.org) website. The benefits of routines for some people with Autism are well documented but we should remember that these are extreme times and you shouldn't worry if your routine is flexible and informal. The Young Minds guidance suggests starting with a meal planner which will help break up the time and allow your family to gather regularly. Something as simple as set mealtimes can provide the predictability and structure needed to improve mental health.

### Stay Connected

Regularly keeping in touch with friends and family using technology is another piece of advice that features highly in the sources of expert advice on mental health during the isolation period. However, social interactions can be a source of anxiety for some people with Autism and contact with others using videocalls may raise such anxieties. Some young people might prefer to write a letter or an email. Staying connected for some is about opening lines of communication and avoiding long periods of being isolated in a separate room. Regular mealtimes where the family come together will also provide this.



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### Get Fresh Air and Exercise

The physical and mental health benefits of exercise and being outdoors are something that we have all come to know. You can currently leave the house for exercise locally, with members of the household once a day, provided that no one in the house has symptoms of Corona Virus or an underlying condition that means they should be isolating more strictly. Going for a walk as a household, even for a short time each day, could help provide routine, communication and exercise which can all improve mental health.

### Limit or Modify Your News Intake

According to [themix.org.uk](http://themix.org.uk), which provides support for young people under the age of 25, constant exposure to the news media's reporting of the Corona Virus can raise anxiety levels. They suggest limiting the intake of the news. Maybe tune in for the government's daily briefing but then change the channel to something less corona-y! You might try to balance news stories with more positive stories. [The Happy Broadcast](https://www.instagram.com/thehappybroadcast/) is an instagram channel that reports only positive news stories.

### Get Help and Support

Help and support is available. There are websites linked within this article as well as the following hotlines:

[Young Minds Parent Hotline](http://www.youngminds.org.uk): 0808 802 5544  
[Anxiety UK Hotline](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk): 0344 477 5774

**Coming Soon:** Dealing with Meltdowns, The Blue Ribbon, More Boredom Bashers, More Parent Top Tips.

# Make time 2 Play



Available on the app store,  
play store or online at  
[www.maketime2play.co.uk](http://www.maketime2play.co.uk)

## Resource Review

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It has been almost a month since schools and nurseries closed to most pupils. You have done some nice activities with the kids, they have enjoyed them - they even learned a thing or two, but now you feel like you are running out of ideas. 'Make Time 2 Play' could be your answer.



Make Time 2 Play is a completely free app available on apple or android devices and can also be used through their website. It allows you to filter activity ideas by age, number of children, where you can play and how long you would like the activity to last. The app will then present a

range of play ideas that fit your criteria. Many of the activities require very few resources or resources that you may have at home.

Another useful feature is to be able to filter activities by their benefits. Activities are categorised as physical, emotional, creative, social, behavioural and inquisitive. The app provides information on each of these benefits. You can also save favourite activities to come back to. A great free source of inspiration.

★★★★★ 5/5



## Parent Top Tips

In this section we want to share your tips and advice. Have you got a great activity? Found a brilliant resource? We'd like to hear about it! Please share your top tips at: [SENandInclusion@Peterborough.gov.uk](mailto:SENandInclusion@Peterborough.gov.uk)



"I must admit the past few weeks have been a massive struggle, for both my son and the entire family. While his little sister can't get enough of worksheets and online learning videos, attempts to home school Noah usually result in angry or tearful outbursts. I'm learning, through experience, that when a child is feeling stressed, learning just isn't possible. I do worry about him falling behind in school, but the last few weeks have been a reminder that my child's mental health is more important than their academic skills."

Jenny, mother of Noah, age 9

Check out our other weekly newsletters:

**Cosy Crew** – A newsletter for Primary Aged Children with Autism.

**Lockdown Lift Up** – A newsletter for teenagers and young people with Autism.

Available from our [Local Offer Page](#) each week.

## Boredom Bashers

Resource:



**MakeTime2Play App:**  
Read our more in depth review above. This resource is well worth a go and it's completely free!

Activity:

Rescue the toys from the ice! Freeze some toys in a block of ice and then try to rescue them!



Something for me:

The acclaimed BBC series 'Killing Eve' is back with season 3 on iplayer. If you missed the previous seasons you can catch them too.

