



St Anselm's School Closure

Supporting Parent and Pupil Wellbeing



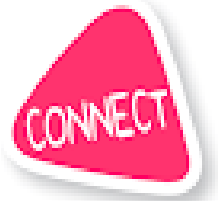
In response to the news that schools will be closed to the majority of children from today, we felt it may be helpful to put together some suggested support for parents who may be daunted by the situation, including the prospect of being at home with their children for an unknown period of time.

You would have already received information on the home learning we have set, however we would like to emphasise that although children should be continuing their education at home, and this should be approached systematically and consistently throughout the school closure, this time away from school could also be used an opportunity to turn a period of time that is worrying and stressful into an opportunity for growth and reconnection.

The wellbeing of our children and their families during the school closure is at the forefront of our concerns, so we have put together some ideas on how to take care of yourselves and your children during this time, to support positive wellbeing and mental health. Below you can access our tips on how to maintain the 5 Ways to Wellbeing during school closures, both for yourselves and for your children. On the reverse, we have included some other ideas on how to cope with this unprecedented time at home.

Connect With Others

There is strong evidence which indicates that feeling close to, and valued by other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world. At a time of social distancing, we need to think of alternative ways to ensure daily connection with others. This could be as simple as making plans to video chat with people or groups we would normally see in person or arranging phone calls or sending messages or texts.



Give to Others

Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. In a time where the focus may be on keeping ourselves and our families safe, small acts of kindness towards others, particularly those who may be isolated or struggling in the current situation, could turn a time of crisis into a time of increased solidarity. Wherever there is human need, there is an opportunity for kindness and to make a difference.



Keep Learning

Keeping our brain occupied and challenged is important in maintaining positive wellbeing and mental health. Of course academic learning is desirable, but learning something new or creative, can bring a wealth of positive benefits. Maybe you we could research something that we have always been interested in and never had the time. We could even go to the next level and start to learn a new language or an instrument!



Be Aware

Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances our wellbeing and savouring 'the moment' can help to reaffirm our life priorities. In a time where our thoughts could easily inflate our anxieties, it is important to stop, breathe and reflect on all of the things that we have and are grateful for. Meditation, yoga, breathing techniques and mindfulness are all effective ways of stopping and refocussing potentially harmful thought processes.



Be Active People who exercise regularly tend to do so because it gives them an enormous sense of wellbeing. They feel more energetic throughout the day, sleep better at night, have sharper memories, and feel more relaxed and positive about themselves and their lives. All of these benefits are particularly desirable during a time of uncertainty, so ways to remain active should be planned in daily. Exercising at home could be as simple as dancing to music, going up and downstairs, completing seated exercises or completing online exercise workouts. From Monday morning at 9am, Joe Wicks The Body Coach is going to be streaming daily live 30-minute workouts for children to try to keep them moving during the school closures. **YouTube - PE With Joe**





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Managing the News

Staying informed during these times is important, however the constant news reports could also become overwhelming for both adults and children. Ensure to get information from reputable websites and try taking breaks from social media if you feel like the updates are getting too much. BBC Newsround hub and #covibook are age appropriate reliable sources for children.



Easing Anxieties

It is likely that some children may be extremely anxious about the situation and in such a case they should be reassured that it is natural to have these feelings in times that do not feel safe or stable. It is important to talk openly and calmly with your children about the situation, but this again should be age appropriate. It is also important that any anxieties you may have are not imposed unconsciously or unnecessarily onto your child. Encourage your child to ask questions and even though you may not have the answers, simply talking to them and reassuring them can make them feel calmer. You could spend time doing a positive activity with your child (e.g. reading, playing, painting, cooking) to help reassure them and reduce their anxiety. This is also a great way of providing a space for them to talk through their concerns, without having a 'big chat'. Encourage your child to think about the things they can do to make them feel safer and less worried.



Keeping to a Routine

Most children thrive on routine, so being away from school could present difficulties for some children or encourage prolonged periods of the day dedicated to unhealthy habits such as having too much screen time. Try to follow an agreed routine as much as possible. This could include getting up at roughly the same time as normal, following usual morning routines, and going to bed at the usual time. Use the opportunity to add new things into your daily routine that you would not normally get time to do, such as spending more time cooking or having designated family time and exercise time. It may be helpful to include all of the household into devising the routine, so everyone is in agreement. It is also important to think about scheduling in some alone and quiet time.



Getting Fresh Air

Spending time in the outdoors or with nature can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. It is possible to still get these positive effects from nature while staying indoors at home. You could try:

- Spending time with the windows open to let in fresh air.
- Having flowers or potted plants at home.
- Arranging a comfortable space to sit where you can look out over a view of trees or the sky or watch birds and other animals.



Look for the Silver Lining

Just a final thought to hopefully inspire positivity in such difficult times. We can't control this current situation, but we can very much control how we respond to it. If managed thoughtfully, some time, hopefully in the not so distant future when all of this is over, we could look back with a different perspective on the situation that we have now. All of the children could remember the time our health was our first priority and people were forced to think outside of the box and dream up new things. For once, even amongst the chaos there could be community and a global rise in togetherness. Even though the streets may be quiet, our homes should be bustling with love and laughter. We know it is unsettling times, but focusing on a silver lining will help; we are in this together and there is so much beauty to see.

