



CONNECT model developed by Dr Kirsten Krawczyk and Dr Sarah Modi –
Informed by the work from [Emotion Coaching UK website](#)

Managing feelings of uncertainty for Young children: Coronavirus

CONNECT

Check-in (with the moment and with your feelings)

It is important to be aware of the different emotions you may be feeling before responding to the child. Think about how are you feeling about the current situation, notice any increased feelings of anxiety you may have and any behaviours that may result e.g. hyper-vigilance regarding cleanliness, frequent watching of news etc. You might also notice that your body is reacting to this too. Young children are very good at picking up on emotional cues, even if they do not understand them. It is important to convey a sense of calm whenever you can by paying attention to your tone of voice, the words you use - young children need these to be short, easy to understand and kind, as well as notice and acknowledge their feelings.

Opportunity for teaching

Observe how your young child may be expressing their feelings through their behaviour. Babies and toddlers may cry more than usual and want to be held/cuddled. Slightly older children may regress a little e.g. have more toileting accidents, tantrums, difficulties with sleeping and separation. Some may talk about their fears e.g. a member of the family becoming unwell. This will provide an important opportunity to model managing and naming feelings, to answer questions honestly to fit their level of understanding and to reassure. Notice your young child's emotional reactions and behaviours as communication and as an opportunity to connect and support them to learn ways of coping based on your observations.

Notice

It is important to be aware of the different emotions your young child may feel which will be demonstrated by their behaviour. Consider your child's perspective to help interpret how they might be feeling, name and acknowledge the feeling, notice how your child responds and pace your response accordingly. Babies benefit from mind-minded commentary - i.e. you speaking out how they might be feeling and why: *"I can see you are tired and maybe a bit grumpy, it must have been difficult to sleep with everyone being busy around you?"* etc. Consider too what they might need to calm; e.g. a cuddle, soothing tones, their comforter, a favourite rhyme, sharing a picture book, 'grounding' by using their senses to see, hear, smell what is going on around them, taking 3 deep slow breaths. This is how we support young children to self-regulate.

Name and normalise

Name and normalise the feeling - "That's OK, we all feel a bit worried when things change." By doing this we are helping young children to recognise their feelings and acquire a feelings vocabulary.

Empathise

The above is about empathising/'tuning in' to your child and by doing so helping them to gradually develop these skills for themselves. The adult contains the child's emotional reactions and supports them to cope with their confusing feelings, to make

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sense and to reassure. *“I can see you are feeling a bit scared but we can do things like wash our hands to keep safe.”*

Consider setting limits

Routines and boundary setting are especially important at a time of change when things are uncertain. Young children and babies need the reassurance provided by simple, clear everyday routines that respond to their needs. Too many words and explanations can be overwhelming as well as hold little meaning. Routines that respond to their needs provide a sense of safety. Maintain consistency and a sense of rhythm. Reaffirm boundaries when needed. Young children’s understanding is concrete and rooted in the ‘here and now’. *“I wonder if you are upset because you can’t play with your friends? Keeping safe is important for everybody, so let’s pick up the Lego you have thrown on the floor and then we can go out into the garden.”*

Team-work-problem solve together

Here the adult and the child explore solutions to problems together. Families/parents/key carers are the most important people in the lives of babies and young children which will be further reinforced at this time. Use time together to develop social skills, communication and engagement, follow the child’s lead, ask to join in, play simple games, and take turns. Encourage self-efficacy by offering simple choices, *“Do you want to play with the big ball or the smaller ball?”*; *“I can see you are upset because you can’t go to the shops. What do you want to do instead?”*

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References

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