

7 Principles to regulate whilst in lockdown

Purpose

Just as we are encouraged as adults to put our oxygen masks on before assisting children, we should ensure that we, as adults, are regulated to ensure that we can support students (and our own families) to the best of our ability.

Put simply, in times of fear, we usually respond in one of three ways- flight, fight or freeze. In our current situation, these responses are over active right now. The first of these (flight) is impossible at this time. Although many of us would agree that we feel like getting in the car and driving as far away as possible, this, unfortunately, is not an option currently which is very frustrating for some people. Because of this, we have increasing amounts of the stress hormone (cortisone) in our bodies; we are left with the other two responses- fight or freeze.

Not being able to 'get away' is now meaning that it is much easier to fight. Houses are hot spots for irritability, arguments and short tempers. Obviously this is not what we want either, but we also do not want to slip into immobilisation (freezing) either as this can be just as risky. So what can we do?

Below are 7 principles to support us in becoming regulated in our new situation. Once these principles are in place and you are regulated, you are in a much better position to support children to do the same. Below this, are how these 7 principles can be translated to support our students and the younger members of our own families.

Principle	Adults	Students
Predictability	It is important to have some kind of routine whilst in lockdown. This doesn't mean a strict timetable of work but rather certain times of the day when you do the same activities e.g. have exercise, mindfulness activities, have lunch etc. It is essential that there is a notable difference between weekdays and weekends/holidays. Ensure that things to look forward to are planned; this is challenging during lockdown but still possible e.g. plan a nice route for your daily walk or a video call with family etc. Don't let days merge into one.	Have a routine. Again, this doesn't have to be a 'strict timetable of academic activities but try to do the same activities on the same days e.g. always bake on a Friday or always watch a certain programme at a certain time. 'Check in' with the students on the same days and times where possible, have a regular slot when it is your time to be with them.
Mobilise ourselves so we have an element of control	This is about managing the fear and not slipping into that 'freeze' state. Intentionally do something that actively re-directs your body and mind e.g. exercise (something gets heart rate going); planning, preparing and cooking meals; DIY projects (something that involves lifting and carrying; working in some way; sorting, classifying and cleaning; looking after others and pets; gardening etc. It is important to re-direct your energy to keep mobilised despite being in a state of alarm.	This is about encouraging children to move around and get their heart rate going e.g. Joe Wicks, exercising, trampolining, power posing (TED talk).
Connection	As humans, we are programmed to connect and socialise with others and during this lockdown, it is so unnatural not to connect with others. I know a lot of people are currently doing this, but it is vital to stay connected in some way e.g. phone calls, virtual 'get togethers' etc.	Continue with 'check ins' so students can connect with their team (trusted adults and parents). Plan virtual calls as it is important that children can see faces and not just hear voices to make the connection. Other connections can include; sharing notes, letters, pictures and emails. Ensure children are keeping contact with family members and where possible facilitate to connect with peers. Keeping strong relationships with family at home is vital and too much pressure should not be put on completing school work. Families should start thinking about transitional objects on entry back to school, something from home that they can take to school to keep the connection e.g. perfume sprayed on their sleeve, a keyring, a scarf etc.



Principle	Adults	Students
Regulate our bodies and minds	This is about being <i>grounded</i> in body and minds rather than spacing out or feeling numb. Some people at this time will be more drawn to things like food or alcohol to deal with the over-whelming feeling that we are experiencing. It is helpful to experiment with different sensory comforts to self-regulate and to take control of our bodies and minds-we need to work from the inside, out. Examples of this might be exercising, listening to or playing music, completing mindfulness activities, yoga etc	Help to sooth their bodies and minds through things such as mindfulness activities, exercise, eating sensory snacks, accessing apps such as do relax kids, go noodle and headspace, play or listen to music, play instruments, create calm boxes, sing together, create a journal. Encourage experimentation – explore what it is that helps to sooth them. Help them to be curious.
Knowing where we are in time and space	At times like these, it is difficult to see the finish line and it can feel like it is going to last for ever. In uncertain times like these, it is useful to bring structure both externally and internally. Externally: this involves having something physical to see or to do to mark the day e.g. have a calendar that you can mark off the days; have a schedule for the day etc. Internally: it is important to have an internal sense of time, to press the ‘pause’ button occasionally during the day and concentrate on what is changing inside you- what are your thoughts? How do you feel? What is your breathing doing? etc. It is beneficial to have this ‘me time’ or ‘quiet time’ on a daily basis to support you in having a sense of time internally.	Create structure for children so they know where they are in time and space. Discuss what has stayed the same at home/ at school rather than all the things that have changed. Create a school timeline and mark significant days e.g. on special days e.g. National days like St Georges day or home or school specific e.g. wear pink day/ trips etc. that have been cancelled, get children to dress up/ take part;/ post pictures on Twitter? If possible, all children should return to the classes they left in March for at least a week. This staggered approach to transition will be so useful and this stage cannot be missed out.
Facilitating internal safety	This is currently a real threat and many people are feeling an over-whelming feeling of being ‘unsafe’. We need to focus on increasing our sense of safety. We can do this with the people at home e.g. we can ask for more hugs than usual; sensory comforts e.g. wrapping ourselves in blankets, cuddling pets, listening to music. We can ensuring have privacy e.g. quiet time, yoga etc	Consider how to increase a sense of safety for our children. Pay attention to your body cues when communicating with them-they will pick up on your body language if it is not matching what you are saying. Encourage them to make dens to have some ‘down time’. Staggering transition to learning will support this also; it is useful to think of them <i>all</i> as new starters once we return.
Having a sense of purpose	This is about re-creating your role while you are at home. You could engage in some CPD; you could support vulnerable people in your area; you could take up a new skill or hobby e.g. drawing, playing an instrument etc.	Give pupils a sense of purpose; encourage them to take up a new skill or hobby. This could be documented to make memories and shared with friends and family. This could also be planned in to share with peers once back at school.

