



## Tips for home quarantine and restricted permission to go out



The following recommendations are intended to serve as support and suggestions, which can always be individually adjusted and modified.

The Corona crisis is posing big challenges for us at the moment. This particularly holds true for families and frameworks in which children and adolescents live. General restrictions on going out, the closure of schools, care and leisure facilities, suspended social contact etc. can become a burden.



In these times, it's very important for children **to be able to understand** what is happening and why certain things must be as they are at the moment. So for example, explain why so much isn't possible at the moment and that, in the event of quarantine, it's necessary or why everyone has to help. You can find suggestions for this in the pamphlet called "Hygiene explained for children" or the info sheet "Corona explained for children". Perhaps very young children only partly understand your explanations but it's good nonetheless if you find words for the situation. That alone gives them a feeling of security.

At the same time you should accept that even with the best explanation you won't be able to prevent a little resentment or unhappiness because certain things are not possible at the moment. For this reason, show that you **understand** and take to heart that the protective measures currently required are important but at the same time can also be a burden and frustrating. Make it clear that it's not that easy for anyone not to be able to keep up with regular routines and familiar procedures as usual.

Convey to your family that more **conflict potential** is totally normal when people suddenly spend much more time with one another than usual. This also applies if everyone loves each other, for those where things usually run smoothly and above all for those who usually also grapple with one another anyway or are not at all used to all being together all the time. In short: A new situation in which everyone is more tense than usual and at the same time has less possibility to avoid each other can lead to more arguments.

If cold symptoms occur in children or adolescents or they otherwise feel unwell it could be that they start to fear they have contracted Corona. **Take their fear seriously** and tell them clearly that you know what to do. Emphasise that young, healthy people have "strong body police" and can manage illnesses very well, as a rule even the Corona infection (compare info sheet called "Corona explained to children"). Guide yourself by your child's symptoms. There are tables for this which compare the most common symptoms of flu, colds and Corona infections.

Regardless of what your child has, in any case indicate that there are ways of supporting the body police in their work. This will have an impact on their fear. Introduce all the necessary care steps depending on illness symptoms with as much calm and assurance as possible.

It helps many younger children if you imagine time and again how tea, medicine, gathering strength by resting, or something which distracts you or gives pleasure, helps the body police go about their work with vigour and joy. For example, draw a picture which shows what the body police look like and how the special tea for colds helps them get even stronger.

The AETAS Kinderstiftung has compiled handouts on the various topics all around the Corona crisis. These expand on certain aspects which might apply to your individual situation. In the present publication we have compiled tips for older and younger children as well as for the whole family. Children and adolescents develop in various ways, they don't all need the same thing. This holds true even more under strain.

### Tips for the whole family

Discuss with your family that these are **exceptional times** and that a new situation requires new rules. Become a "beacon" and set up a framework in which all family members find a way to participate. Include the following aspects in your reflections:



- Set up a **daily structure** for getting up, eating, playing, reading or learning. Also include hygiene measures such as hand washing as well as contact with others who cannot be visited at the moment, for example, by telephone.
- Don't put too high **demands** on yourself and your family: A daily structure shouldn't create additional pressure, but rather enable guidance.
- **Illustrate** your new daily structure by means of a written or drawn schedule, define what your child can **contribute** to the new daily structure and let it tick off the completed tasks. Clear procedures give the feeling of being informed and being able to observe what has already been achieved.
- Draft **rules** for being together in these particular times. In doing so apply the following guideline: As few rules as possible but clear ones which apply equally to everyone!
- It is important to ensure that the **stress level** of neither each individual nor the family as a whole is constantly too high. For this reason, check whether a discussion, activity or information is providing better guidance and connection and therefore **more security and calm** or causing the opposite. Adults and also adolescents can have an eye on this and help the little ones. The following measures help create suitable conditions for this:
  - Set up **private time** for each family member and define **places for retreat** (room or even a space in the flat); headphones can also be helpful.
  - **Agree on** how you should deal with tension (refer also to content in the "Conflicts" chapter), and introduce **stop signals** for moments in which individuals find the dynamics or topic too much. At what time people find it too much can be completely different. Therefore, please take all stop signals equally seriously, incorporate a short break for all participants and think about your next joint step.
  - Think about **which topics** and troublesome content are suitable for whom and to what extent. This means a decision must be made time and again on who talks to whom, how long for and what about and also who is not to be present during which discussions.
  - Explain to **siblings** that it's alright to tease each other or also pull each other's leg, but serious and alarming topics are not allowed to be used for this. Have older children and adolescents promise not to frighten the younger ones.

- **Hand out praise and be pleased** whenever an arrangement succeeds, a stop signal works or a solution has been found without an argument.
- Involve the **body**:
  - If possible, get out into the fresh air regularly, into the garden for example, or, depending on the rules in place, go for a walk.
  - Do some sport or play active games which are also possible indoors, or get some fresh air at the open window. This could even become a nice game together: With your child, run on the spot at different speeds and together imagine where you are going at that moment. Describe to each other the area through which you are walking or all those you are meeting on the way. Run through a jungle, jog along the beach or creep through the forest. Meet dragons, mermaids and giant guinea pigs, become a master thief or run an errand for the queen...

## Conflicts

As explained already at the start, it's totally normal for the atmosphere to be more strained while going out is restricted and during social isolation and it therefore leads more quickly or more frequently to arguments. It is therefore worthwhile to now reconsider how to handle conflict situations and adjust methods:



First and foremost we recommend **not to battle it all out immediately**. It's more advisable to interrupt discussions which develop into an argument and take them up again when all "heads have cooled down" again, including your own. Even if you feel you are in the right it makes more sense to first de-escalate and let little "squabblers" **off the hook quickly** in order to reduce the basic tension. Arguments with no possibility of avoiding one another lead to a highly explosive combination. Don't literally push your old or young counterpart into the corner, but instead try to face the situation in a **forgiving manner** maybe even more forgiving than usual. If you succeed then you have already removed 50% of the dynamics from the escalation.

As a precaution, consider beforehand how you as a family wish to handle aggravation and arguments. This includes introducing **stop signals** which indicate that a discussion is getting too fast or too intense. If a stop signal is used - regardless of by whom - first of all the **"pause button"** must be pressed and everyone should distance themselves since **distance, distraction and time** contribute to calming down. However, little children should not get the feeling that they are being punished by ties with carers being disrupted. For example, go into different rooms for a few minutes or at least into different corners of a room. Headphones can also convey the feeling of being able to exit a situation. Please note that in such a calming down phase it is absolutely allowed to distract oneself, to play, listen to music - just doing anything that helps gain a distance. The quicker tempers have cooled down, the quicker one can continue **talking calmly**. Note that the time it takes to calm down can take longer than usual in the dilemma we are experiencing at the moment.

Tips on how to manage conflicts most effectively:

1. Ask yourself: **"Is the issue which is about to start a conflict right now really that important and worth an argument?"** (Also read the tips for contact people in this handout.) Try to answer the question for yourself matter-of-fact and without the current irritation in mind.
2. If the answer to this question is **"No, it's annoying but not really that important"** then

let the issue rest and don't actively pursue the conflict. If the answer is **"Yes"**, then ask yourself next whether the issue is not only of basic importance but rather actually of significance in this particular moment. Does it really need to be fought out right now or is it a "long runner" which you already know?

3. If the answer is **"Important but a long runner"** then let the issue lie and let all other participants in the conflict know. Tell them, for example: "This is an important issue which we already know and for which we don't yet have a solution. Right now we are all in a really tense situation so it's not likely that we will find a solution. It would be best if we talked this issue over when we all have stronger nerves." Maybe write down the issue so that nobody has the feeling it was only pushed aside.
4. If the answer is **"Important, must be resolved immediately"**, very deliberately set yourself the goal of only finding an **interim solution**. This should take the issue seriously enough but also meet the needs of the current exceptional situation. Now is not the right time to discuss big issues in full detail. What's important, is that you focus clearly on a solution and that the goal of being right or "not losing" the argument doesn't "sneak in" there. In doing so you would only accelerate the conflict yourself or prolong it.

Instead, show strength through a considered approach, adjusted to the crisis, and the ability to park issues or let them go.

### The situation for younger children and a helpful approach

Younger children find it immediately reassuring to see what has already been achieved and experiencing a little ritual that goes with it. So, for example, make a daily list which details the various points of your daily schedule which can be ticked off once completed. Let your child take on this task. Also, methods which make it clear how many days have already been accomplished help children orient themselves. Please think ahead when doing this. If you don't exactly know how long the time is which has to be overcome, agree with your child that you will look at one week at a time. A popular method for children in nursery but also of primary school age is:



- For the period of one week draw seven different empty beds on a large sheet of paper. A four-poster bed, a nest, a basket, a hammock... Each evening before going to bed you can now fill in one of these beds together with your child. Many families, for example, have animal stickers at home so that each evening a "sticker animal" can be put to bed. Or, with your child, draw the animal or similar thing that needs to be put to bed. Use your imagination.
- **Games and craft ideas** help fight boredom and allow one's head to rest for a while. Websites such as \*[www.quarantaene-kids.de](http://www.quarantaene-kids.de) publish new ideas daily. To supplement your own collection, there are also regularly new things to listen to and watch here \* [www.br.de/kinder](http://www.br.de/kinder). **Exercise** can help children to ease tension, feel their capacity is being used and relax more easily. This is particularly important if the freedom to go out is restricted and at the same time tension is high. Play movement games which can also be played indoors and use the time for playing together and having fun. You can find suggestions here \* [www.familie.de/kleinkind/kinderspiele](http://www.familie.de/kleinkind/kinderspiele).
- **Play** is essential for children and particularly valuable to relieve stress. When playing they

can express what they have experienced and at the same time process difficult situations. Sometimes however, tension, the lack of a familiar playing environment and instruction or an unusual situation can cause children to have problems entertaining themselves or getting back into play. The best thing you can do to help is join in! If your children have made or drawn something themselves or played alone then let them show you those things or those games and join in every now and again.

Another reason children currently require more company, participation or attention from adults could be insecurity. Many small children then have an even more attentive eye on the adults near them in order to find reassurance. This can be exhausting. Please be aware that your child is already insecure enough as it is so don't scold or punish "clingy behaviour". Instead, allow your child to take part in your tasks, give it small (partial) tasks or give yourself the freedom to "park" children near you with an audio book or children's film, even if you normally try to avoid this. As long as you lay down the framework for this and define the start and end time then by all means use these methods.

- At the moment, children are not allowed to do many things that are important to them and are fun. These include going out and meeting other children, going to sport or music lessons, visiting grandparents or romping around the nursery. It can be very difficult or almost impossible for younger children to understand and so factual explanations often only partially or temporarily calm the youngest ones down. They find it hard to grasp why something that feels awful is necessary and sensible. Nevertheless, explain in a clear and unambiguous manner what is possible at the moment and what is not and why this is so. Have understanding for your child's frustration and remain loving and maintain your position all the same. Try to redirect energy out of a situation into something else which is possible. For example, if grandparents can't be visited and this causes a lot of distress then suggest drawing a picture for both of them.
- Enduring frustration is already a large part of developing even in normal times. It's particularly difficult when it comes down to **being separated from people important to us**. It's a situation which many children are experiencing at the moment with their grandparents, ill relatives, but also within their circle of friends and acquaintances. Having to bear this is truly a painful task and in children can lead to annoyance and even anger. But maybe your child is reacting with sorrow or deep unhappiness or alternating between showing anger and sad behaviour. Realise that your child's feelings are totally normal and healthy and accompany and support it during what its going through. Remain loving and direct, show your understanding and endure the pain together with your child. Please don't meet up with other children, relatives or friends **"at a distance"**. Standing in front of a window or on the other side of the street in order to see those people for whom one's heart yearns, but not being allowed to go to them, is often more difficult to bear than not seeing them at all, and it is impossible to understand.

### The situation of older children and adolescents and a helpful approach

- In comparison to younger children, older children and adolescents have more ways of understanding the situation, its background and all the consequences. This enables them to have **more insight but also more anxiety**. Therefore, please also be conscious about sharing information with this age group in doses. Pay heed to the quality and balance of negative and positive news and have a discussion. You can find more information on this in the info sheet called "Giving children guidance".
- The cramped living situation brings particular challenges for older children and



adolescents because, according to their level of development, it is precisely the separation from parents, autonomy and exploring one's own way which is on the cards at the moment. Being cramped and confined in these times and having to deal intensively with the family and come to arrangements with them, **is frequently particularly difficult for this age group**, even if they don't directly express it. Consequently, it could be that some adolescents are more irritable and pugnacious, things "blow up" more quickly and they are maybe less able to cooperate, perform and concentrate than usual. Keep this exceptional situation in mind if you get annoyed or are on the receiving end of anger and frustration.

- For adolescents, **contact with peers** is particularly relevant not only for the experiences but also completely objectively in the sense of healthy separation and development. During this time they feel they belong, have backing and the kind of understanding and support they need in order not to feel alone. Since personal contact is not possible at the moment, meetings among peers will shift to social media even more than usual.
  - Adjust **your agreements on the use of media** to the current situation and absolutely bear in mind that this kind of contact gives true stability and is of great significance. It's also totally okay if at the moment the times in which media are allowed to be used are being extended with a sense of proportion. Explain your reasons and define the current situation explicitly as an exception with altered rules. Make it clear that it's important to you to act with the interests of the child or adolescent in mind without throwing all rules and structures completely overboard.
  - Due to its great significance, don't use the **withdrawal of "online time" as a punishment during these times**.
- Be sure to grant **time-outs** in which it is okay for your child or adolescent to retreat, be undisturbed and completely switch off without contact, exchange or participation in family life. Come up with a structure in which these times alternate with those in which certain tasks are undertaken or the whole family comes together again.

### Tips for contact people

And finally, a piece of good news: The scientific world agrees. As "the big ones", we have in our hands one of the **strongest levers** for development within the family. This includes our own attitude, own aspirations and self-care with a healthy minimum level of self-reference.



### Attitude

- In the current situation, in particular, there's a need to get through a difficult time together with as little damage and friction loss as possible. It's not primarily about upbringing or about not losing out in conflicts. A sense of community and clarity helps much more than severity and stubbornness. **You can choose** which conflicts to resolve and which ones to recognise as a sign of tension and not let them become significant. Practice recognising "trivia" or "slip-ups" for what they are and in this way not losing energy unnecessarily. Become a role model yourself and show what you want and what's important at the moment: How do you deal with your own nerves being on edge or if you hit a wrong chord yourself on occasion? What are your strategies to calm yourself? How do you apologise and make peace again?

## Aspiration

- At the moment, many parents have to take on all sorts of roles simultaneously: Being the contact person for children and other adults, managing the household, standing in as school teacher, thinking about crisis management, working from home... . That alone is destined to become intolerable for anyone. A bigger risk, however, is if there is an additional inner aspiration to master all these roles perfectly and without mistakes, regardless of how familiar or new the task and regardless of how great one's own strain or worry is at the moment. **Allow yourself** a larger error tolerance and a greater degree of letting something pass - not only for others, but above all for yourself. Above all, however, realise that not all the roles can be fulfilled simultaneously. Instead, ask yourself: "**Who am I at the moment?**". Am I teacher, dad, comforter, househusband and communicate this openly to the family. Tell them what your task is at that moment and when you will be available again for a school question, for example. Maybe you can link these reflections to your daily schedule. Of course there must be exceptions if a child is in distress and needs help or comfort. Very consciously plan times in which you have no role apart from being yourself and doing what you need in order to remain upright. And don't forget: Be generous with praise for yourself and do it often. You are mastering an exceptionally difficult situation at the moment.
- There is no school as usual at the moment and it can't be replicated exactly at home. The aim of study packages should be to maintain the **feel of a familiar structure** and occupy the mind. Performance is not the first priority in these particular times. Don't try to replace school and, as much as possible, free yourself from worries about comparisons with other families. Keep to the structure without great performance expectations or pressure. The way the minds of all involved, big and small, are working differs from usual at the moment. The circumstances themselves are already strenuous enough and only few contact people are truly teachers and even then not usually of their own children.

## Self-care

- **Keep an eye on your tension level.** In your daily schedule, plan short times every now and again in which you can relax into a calm state. This is important for you but also for children who guide themselves by you and can read in your stress level how threatening the situation is at the moment.

So make sure to set up **time-outs** which are only for you: An undisturbed cup of tea, a walk around the block, the length of a shower or an audio book. Even little interruptions have an effect and make a big difference all things considered. Come to a mandatory agreement: Who has which half-hour or hour free? Everyone must get this opportunity. If you are looking after your children alone then take your half-hour in the evening when everyone is sleeping and very deliberately don't do anything "useful" any more. Instead, listen to, read, watch or feel something that recharges your battery. Which music or which relaxation method, which magazine, which film, which shower gel, which bar of dark chocolate or which phone call will lead to your having more energy than before after these 30 minutes?

- **Think consciously about** what gives you stability: Adults also have worries and need times in which they don't need to be strong for a change. Find **other adults to lean on** - directly, over the telephone or virtually.

If you have had issues with fear and anxiety in the past then make sure you keep an eye on these now. Which strategies have helped in the past? **From the support from** therapeutic links to online help to telephone helplines - which one works for you?

Consider your own **use of media** and set yourself rules: For example, tell yourself you will only read up on information three times a day instead of reading the latest news every hour. When doing this, choose sources which give guidance and contribute to feeling secure, not to panic and upheaval.

Take note of when you need a short break and try the following method in order to get back on track again quickly and reliably: **Emergency mini-break**: Go to the bathroom and sit on the toilet lid or edge of the bath and just feel that you are seated. For a moment, don't hold your body but let the sitting surface take on this job. First relax your eyes then let your shoulders drop, open your hands and relax your stomach. Inhale once deeply so that your chest and stomach move and then exhale with force.

**Your attitude, how you manage your own aspirations and your ability for self-care will become what your children learn from you. Be good to yourself!**



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*Sources: AETAS Kinderstiftung (2020): Tips for home quarantine and restricted permission to go out. AETAS Kinderstiftung. Munich. Available online at [www.aetas-kinderstiftung.de](http://www.aetas-kinderstiftung.de), Version: 13/05/2020.*

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