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EMPOWERING WORKPLACE
MENTAL HEALTH

Surviving the Summer Holidays : Practical, Positive Tips for your Mental Health

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Our Partners



ALLEN & OVERY



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We are
Beyond

Our Friends



Bloomberg



General
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Surviving the Summer: Family, work and mental health 2020



Dr Judith
Mohring

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Family life before lockdown

- Busy school days
- After school clubs and activities
- Childcare available
- Grandparents on tap?
- Playdates
- Sleep overs
- Holidays
- Cinema, swimming pools, birthday parties, cubs, brownies, playgrounds etc, etc



Family life after lockdown

- Scary news stories 24/7
- Anxious parents
- 24 hours at home with the same people
- No teachers, friends, lessons, playdates, sleepovers, parties, grandparents, playgrounds, swimming, clubs, cinema etc...
- No childcare *for five months straight....*
- Working from home with the kids in tow- **what's your best war story....?**



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Covid 19: a perfect storm for families

- Covid 19 is a classic stress trigger
- Emotional upheaval
- Social isolation
- Massive expansion of job role
- All enacted within the family home with no pressure release valve...
- This is the kind of resilience test we submit astronauts to



Covid 19 is a classic stress situation

NUTS

- Novel
- Unpredictable
- Threat to the ego (fear of looking foolish)
- Sense of control is lost

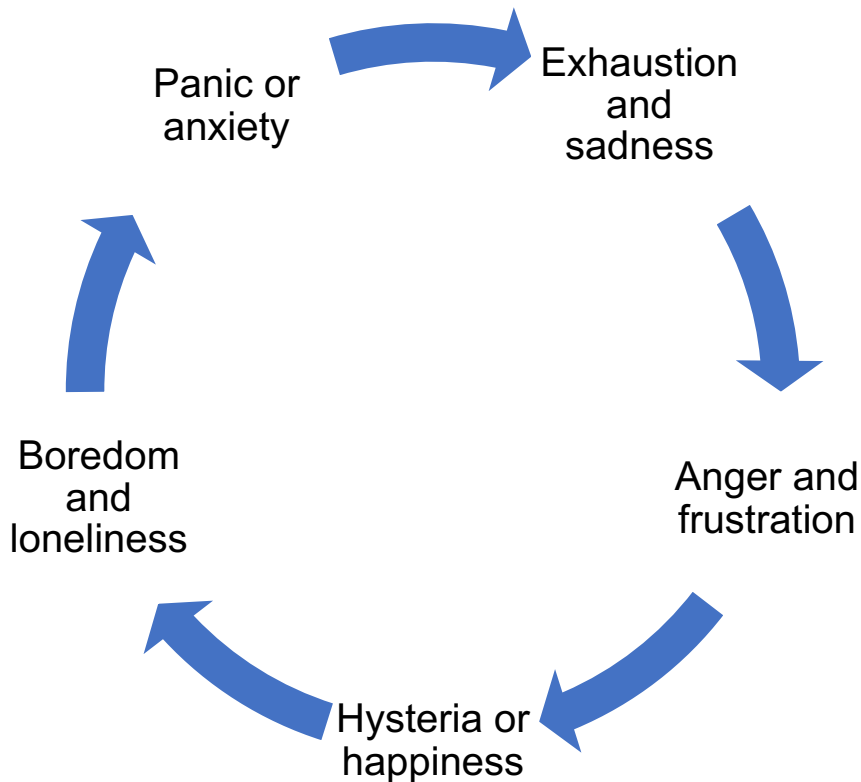
Dr Sonia Lupien- centre for stress studies California

Unfortunately, it continues to threaten our sense of control and deliver uncertainty.....



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Emotional Spin cycle of spring 2020



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Social isolation and loss of support

- Social contacts help us regulate emotion
- Our mirror neurones share and communicate emotional states
- This is true for adults and children
- In lockdown in person face to face contact was stopped altogether, a major blow to resilience
- *For children the loss of school contacts has been a huge change, massively underestimated*



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The expanded job role for parents

Add to your current job or jobs:

- Home school teacher
- Counsellor to kids, friends and family
- Storekeeper, cook and cleaner
- IT and audio visual technician
- Financial planner and strategist
- Home reorganiser and DIY whizz
- Carer for elderly relatives and neighbours

Is it any wonder we're all frazzled!



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And now for 8 weeks of school holidays....

Over the last 3 months families have had to cope with:

- Increased stressors
- Increased job roles
- Decreased social support
- Decreased sense of control
- Decreased time.....

“The impact of shutting schools on children and families has been massively underestimated”

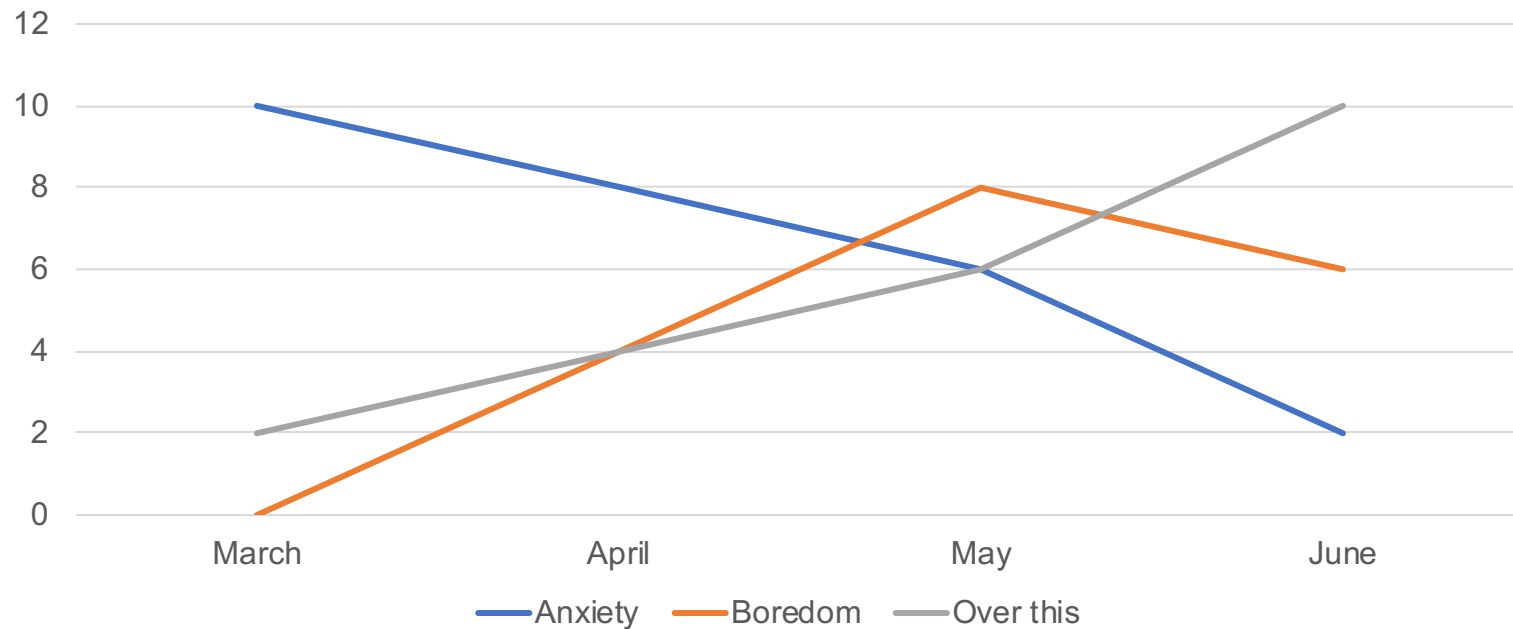


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2020 COVID Mood Chart





Looking after
ourselves as
parents

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Time for a reset: ACT

- The last 3 months have felt like groundhog day
- Kids and adults are bored, lonely, irritable and fed up
- We all need to press the reset button by:
 - **A**dding something new
 - **C**hanging some things
 - **T**aking something away



Add something new: Appreciate yourself

- We spend so much time telling our kids how well they've done
- When do we ever say the same to ourselves?
- Lockdown means losing the day to day "strokes" we normally get from colleagues
- So take time to notice what you've achieved and done- **make this a practice**
- *Start by noticing what's gone well in lockdown for you as a parent*



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Change something:

Review your self care

Every 6-8 weeks



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Take something away; turn down the self criticism

- This is the *most imperfect* of situations
- We don't need to be perfect, but we do need to be "good enough" for our kids and or jobs
- It can feel like an impossible balance
- Try to turn down the inner critic
- And try to turn down the inner perfectionist
- 80% is probably the most you can give just now
- **Learn to say no, or at least, not now**



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Love yourself the way you love your kids

We care for our children the way we care for ourselves

Our children watch and learn

Much of our communication is non verbal

If we can be kind and compassionate to ourselves we have greater reserves of kindness for our kids, and they learn kindness in return

Otherwise *“being a grown up means drinking beer and shouting”* Oscar age 5



Looking after children



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Concerns, worries and wobbles

- Regression- becoming more childlike
- Anger
- Behavioural problems
- Educational underperformance
- Lack of motivation
- Mood swings
- Tantrums
- **What are your concerns for your kids?**



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Make time to listen- emotions are not harmful

Our kids have been through the same spin cycle we have: my kids have been by turns

- Anxious
- Bored
- Lonely
- Sad
- Frustrated

Model talking about your own feelings to show its ok to open up- listen- don't problem solve

We love "The Unworry Book" by Usborne



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ACT: This is a good time to add....

- Covid 19 hasn't gone away but society is opening up
- Ask your kids what they'd like to **add** to their new post lockdown life
- Their expectations may have lowered
- Simple things now seem really special like:
 - Seeing friends
 - Being outdoors
 - Your time



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Have a change of...

Scene- work from home from a holiday property

Pace- reduce your hours if possible

Carer- do a drop and swap playdate- one household has 4 kids for the morning- the other 4 kids for the afternoon

Teacher- enrol grandparents for zoom lessons or bedtime storytelling

Childcare- our childminder is a local music student out of college for lockdown

Cook- have a different take out each night for a week



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What to take away- Stop

- Relentless focus on the academic not the emotional
- Lack of social contact- for everyone
- Lack of childcare- for you as much as them
- Lack of exercise
- Lack of routine- **create a schedule**
- Too much screen time and too many sweets
- Our kids have started a swear box for us....



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Prepare for the unexpected

In this most unusual of years be prepared

- For rain, cold and wind
- For picnics
- For swimming in the sea
- For outdoor socialising- get a gazebo
- For local lockdowns
- For someone in the family needing a test and everyone having to go into isolation!



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What is safe?

Its easier to prove what is definitely unsafe than what is safe

We know groups of adults indoors eating, drinking and socialising can easily spread Covid 19

But we don't have good evidence of children spreading Covid 19 in the same way

We also know that being outdoors is very safe in terms of transmission rates

Which makes me comfortable with outdoor playdates, playgrounds, sports and holiday clubs



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Holidays and grandparents

- Covid 19 hasn't gone anywhere
- 80-85% of transmission is within households
- Older adults are particularly at risk
- So you might want to holiday with grandparents by staying in separate self contained accommodation
- Separate bathrooms and kitchens are important
- Only go on holiday somewhere
- You're insured
- You'd be prepared to be ill



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Autonomy, responsibility, reward....

- All kids need autonomy
- Older kids even more so
- Responsibilities like delivering the paper to a neighbour or household chores improve children's self esteem
- Reward them for jobs done- give them real work and real rewards- especially teenagers
- Praise effort not outcome



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Don't be afraid of boredom

- Be realistic- lockdown is the ultimate time thief for parents- we can't be there to entertain all the time
- But- boredom fosters creativity (and mess)
- We can only find out what really interests us when we are free to fill our own time
- Boredom will do our kids no harm at all
- My kids have learned to cook, play, make soap, make dens, knit and swear like a sailor in lockdown!



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Is this an opportunity to be less alpha?

Over the last 20 years the academic expectations of our kids have grown enormously

At the same time there has been a huge mental health crisis in teens

Is it time to re-examine the way we focus so narrowly on the academic?

To reduce the overscheduling and over involvement?

To let them get bored and discover themselves?



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ACT

Add: some sunshine, outdoor time, camping, crafts, play dates, kids social time, wild swimming or whatever

Change: location, routine, self care schedule, activities

Take away: work (turn off your devices for the holiday...)

And have a rest before September

Good luck!





Thank you very much for joining us

For more information please go to:

www.thiscanhappenevents.com