

Building Your Resilience (during Covid19) Webinar

Presenters: Kate Walters and Julie Singleton

It's well recognised that parent carers of children and young people with SEND face additional challenges and pressures in helping their child develop and get the most from life.

The recent pandemic has added to this pressure with hard won services now harder to access leaving parents to cope and facing constantly changing guidance and plans.

This includes personal resilience tools based on coaching and positive thinking approaches and tips from other parents to help reduce stress and increase your own resilience to improve your wellbeing. It goes alongside the online Resilience webinar for parent carers.

These tools are taken from Contact's DARE Resilience Workshop for Parent Carers who are actively involved in their forums. This was developed in coproduction with parents carers from forums.

This is about;

Downing Tools (take time out to review and think clearly and calmly) **Adventurous Thinking**
Reality planning -prioritizing what is important and urgent and

Empowering yourself to move forwards – making sure you have the resources, skills and qualities to take the next steps.

If you need support do reach out to local services, the Contact online community via our Facebook page, the Contact Helpline team and the range of support organisations offering a range of support.

Here are some Frequently Asked Questions that came up during the webinar and some useful resources

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If you notice a Steering Group member is stressed and exhausted how can you support them while maintaining balance yourself?

In the webinar we talk about the importance of having boundaries and knowing when to say no. We also talk about how to empower people by asking open questions that enable someone to think about their priorities, solutions and support needs.

Parent Carer Forums can develop non line management support for steering group members – this can be via a forum member, an independent person from another organisation such as IASS or voluntary or statutory organisation. You can also use the CIC Forum Assistance programme (see Appendix for details) or buy in time from a Contact Associate. Contact your Regional Adviser and/or email parent.participation@contact.org.uk.

It is important that forums recognise the importance of their members looking after their wellbeing. Some forums make sure they build in time to check in with each other (at

meetings for example) or provide opportunities to have fun and connect with each other alongside forum work.

Some forums find it useful at to have posters or to post on Facebook thing that remind members to look after their wellbeing (see below) and to let others know if they are feeling overloaded or stressed so this can be addressed in the team. Here are a couple of examples <https://chart-magic.com/project/50-ways-to-take-a-break/> and NHS England's 5 ways to mental wellbeing www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/

Your forum can also look at other training such as Resilience or mindfulness training, Expert Parent or IPSEA training to build confidence.

How can I stop myself supporting others and taking on too much when this is who I am!

In the webinar we talked about the importance of maintaining good boundaries between your forum work and personal and family life and to look after yourself. Recognising your own stress signs to prevent overload and significant health problems so you can continue your role in the forum, look after others and maintain balance and your own health.

You can still support others and maintain a healthy distance and boundary for yourself so that you don't take on problems that aren't yours and feel that you have to solve things for everyone. Think of it as empowering other people so that they don't become reliant on you to solve their problems.

Many forums have Facebook groups (for example) that act as a supportive group and signposting from other parents so that parents can develop more peer support. You can also use your website to signpost parents to relevant support organisations where there are paid workers who can provide more in-depth support when needed.

Building a supportive community can help forums grow and flourish and there are a number of webinars about how forums do this on the [Resources page](#) in the Participation section of Contact's website

How can I implement and model boundaries around looking after myself / and avoiding being overloaded?

It is not easy running a forum and often people involved in forums are just the sort of people come to for support. But some things you may want to consider are to;

- Make sure you signpost parents to appropriate support rather than feeling you have to provide support directly,
- Look after yourself first – remember you can't pour from an empty cup!

- Recognise when you are stressed / feeling overwhelmed and take time out to think calmly and clearly,
- Consider solutions, priorities what is important and urgent,
- Focus on what you do want rather than what you don't want,
- Try to think positively about what you can do about the issue- make a list of different ways you can resolve the issue;
- And empower yourself to move forward (see the Top Tips for Avoiding Stress in the webinar).

Forums can share some of the **tools from the webinar** and or watch it together. Look at some of the tools and tips in the webinar in more detail and to plan for how they will build resilience and promote wellbeing in their forum.

Goal setting and positive thinking are key skills to resilience but they take practice. Consider doing some training as a forum so you can support each other to build a resilient forum and use some of the techniques discussed in the webinar into the day-to-day running of the forum.

Some Top Tips for Avoiding Stress

- Just say no!
Know your limits and stick to them. It's okay to say "I have a lot on this week already, and I need to make sure I have time and energy to spend with my family, so I won't fit that in too" In fact it's also okay to just say "No, I won't do that"
- Plan your time
Think about the balance – make sure there are things that you enjoy! Pick your battles and cross things off the to do list if they don't matter. Give yourself a break! You don't need to read every single article, home learning link, government update yourself – there is so much swirling around it is easy to feel bombarded
- Notice your stress signs and see what you can do to avoid the things that trigger them
If you notice that 20 minutes on twitter leaves you angry, or the home learning group on Facebook makes you feel like you're failing, switch it off, leave the group (or at least mute it for 30 days til you're feeling more robust)
If you know a particular person winds you up, can limit the contact you have with them
Take control of your environment - If trips to the shop are really difficult can you shop on line instead?
- You do you
Think of circles of control exercise; use your energy where it's most effective. You don't know others' full circumstances, and they won't know yours
- Fact check
There is a lot of information out there.... Make sure you're checking and using

valid sources gov.uk, NHS, WHO, Contact, Council for Disabled Children, Wellchild, NAS etc

- Stay connected
Call, text, zoom, WhatsApp, meet for a walk – keep in touch
- Reach out
Resilience isn't being invincible, it's using the support available. It's okay not to be okay, and it's okay to ask for help – use the advice you would give to other parents! Use resources, information, helplines. You can set an example.
- Be positive
Build in gratitude as a daily habit.
Look for the solutions If something has gone wrong try to find a more positive way to look at it. Try to focus on the 5 things that went well rather than the one that didn't.

- Take care of your body
Physical resilience matters too –“you're not you when you're hungry” – exhausted etc. We all know we need to eat well, drink lots of water, keep active and rest – but it's easy to push it down the to do list
- Give permission
Give yourself permission to prioritise yourself. You *can* say no, you *can* allow yourself to have fun, to go to bed, to ask for help.
Take the advice you would give to other people.
As an added bonus, you are also setting an example to others around you that it's okay to step back and take a break – you are giving them permission too.

Forums may also wish to do **an audit** from time to time to check if people are spending time on the things they enjoy, that they are good at/ or that they find rewarding. You can do this by making a wheel of how you spend your time and score areas as to how satisfying they are then look at the lower scores and discuss with others what to change. You may be surprised at the results! And what you might be able to change! Mindtools is a useful tool to help you do this. www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_93.htm

Contact has developed a **DARE – Developing a Resilience Ethos Workshop for Forums** (which can be run in regions or with individual forums) as part of our Enhanced Offer. Contact parent.participation@contact.org.uk for more information or talk to your **Regional Participation Adviser**.

In addition you **Regional Participation Adviser** will be pleased to discuss with you and signpost you to support and /or training the forum can access to make the forum stronger and more resilient.

Who can I contact to discuss issues arising in my family/ to do with my disabled child?

The CiC Forum Assistance Programme (part of Contact's free support offer to forums)

Forum members (in particular chairs) told us they felt they often had no one to turn to and spent a lot of time supporting others. So as part of our core support offer to forums we have included a **Forum Assistance Programme**. Up to 8 active members can access a range of services via a company called CiC.

This support will shortly be delivered via an interactive, user-friendly website and will have a new Live Chat functionality, allowing forum members to speak directly with a qualified counsellor. Other support includes financial helpline and signposting; debt counselling and information and Family Care helpline . Additional places and support can also be purchased at an additional cost (see Appendix for more information).

There are lots of wellbeing resources as part of this package so you can sign up and receive the resources and use the other services if you need to.

Support From Contact – for Families with Disabled Children

Contact provides [online](#), printed and **helpline advice** on everything from education, benefits and finances, childcare, social care, medical information, Relationships, Sleep, Behaviour, Supporting Siblings and Stress.

Contact has also introduced a **closed (private) Facebook Group** for parent carers which lets parents chat with others going through the same thing. Only other members of the closed group will be able to see what you put.

Apart from ringing or emailing our helpline (and other resources above) you can now contact our [Listening Ear](#) **1-1 confidential phone service** where parent carers can book an appointment to talk to one of our experienced family support advisers.

Contact also offer **wellbeing workshops and other workshops** on everything from sleep, behavior that challenges, money matters etc. Sign up to the newsletter [What's New](#) here.

FREEPHONE HELPLINE 0808 808 3555

helpline@contact.org.uk

Open 9.30 to 5pm Monday to Friday Access to interpreters

www.contact.org.uk

During the COVID pandemic there are pages dedicated to updating parents with information and advice – and or contact our helpline

<https://contact.org.uk/covid-19>

Support Materials - Resources Pack for Forums

Forums can get a FREE pack of Contact's resources for families:

- 20 x helpline cards
- 20 How Contact a Family can help leaflet
- 20 bookmarks
- p1 reference copy of the helpful guide
- 2 print copies of the publications list from our website

To order your free Forum pack contact Karin.beeler@contact.org.uk

Contact publishes a wide range of guides for parents. All guides are free for parents who call our freephone helpline on 0808 808 3555. The helpline will print you out and send you a copy. They can be also downloaded free from our website at www.contact.org.uk

https://contact.org.uk/media/1579337/publications_list_march_2020.pdf

Other organisations who have helplines/ advice lines include;

IPSEA www.ipsea.org.uk/advice-line-

IPSEA provide legally based information and next step advice on any educational issue that is the result of a child's special educational needs or disability

Family Lives www.familylives.org.uk

Family Lives (previously known as Parentline) offers a confidential helpline service which is free from landlines and most mobiles. Please call us on **0808 800 2222** for information, advice, guidance and support on any aspect of parenting and family life, including bullying. Or email askus@familylives.org.uk.

What about other family issues like – my partner is not taking on their share of childcare?

Contact knows that it can be really challenging for a family with a disabled child/ children and this can be particular tricky if you are an active member of a forum too or if parents are working and juggling lots of different responsibilities. **Contact** has some useful resources about relationships and family life. www.contact.org.uk/advice-and-support/

And about how to access support as a carer www.contact.org.uk/advice-and-support/social-care/how-to-access-services/carers-assessments/

The charity **Family Lives** runs a helpline to discuss parenting and family matters which is open to all families www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/confidential-helpline/.

Members of a forum committee can also access the **CiC Forum Assistance programme** to talk to a trained counsellor about things other than forum matters. (See appendix).

In the webinar we talked about reality checking, and looking at what we can control and not and steps we might take to change something we are unhappy with. **Assertive Communication** can be a helpful tool here too.

Trying to frame things in solution-focused way using I rather than you can be helpful too e.g. I feel

When ... such and such happens

What I would like is.....

So that we can...

You can read more about this technique here and this can apply to lots of different situations where you wish state what you want to change.

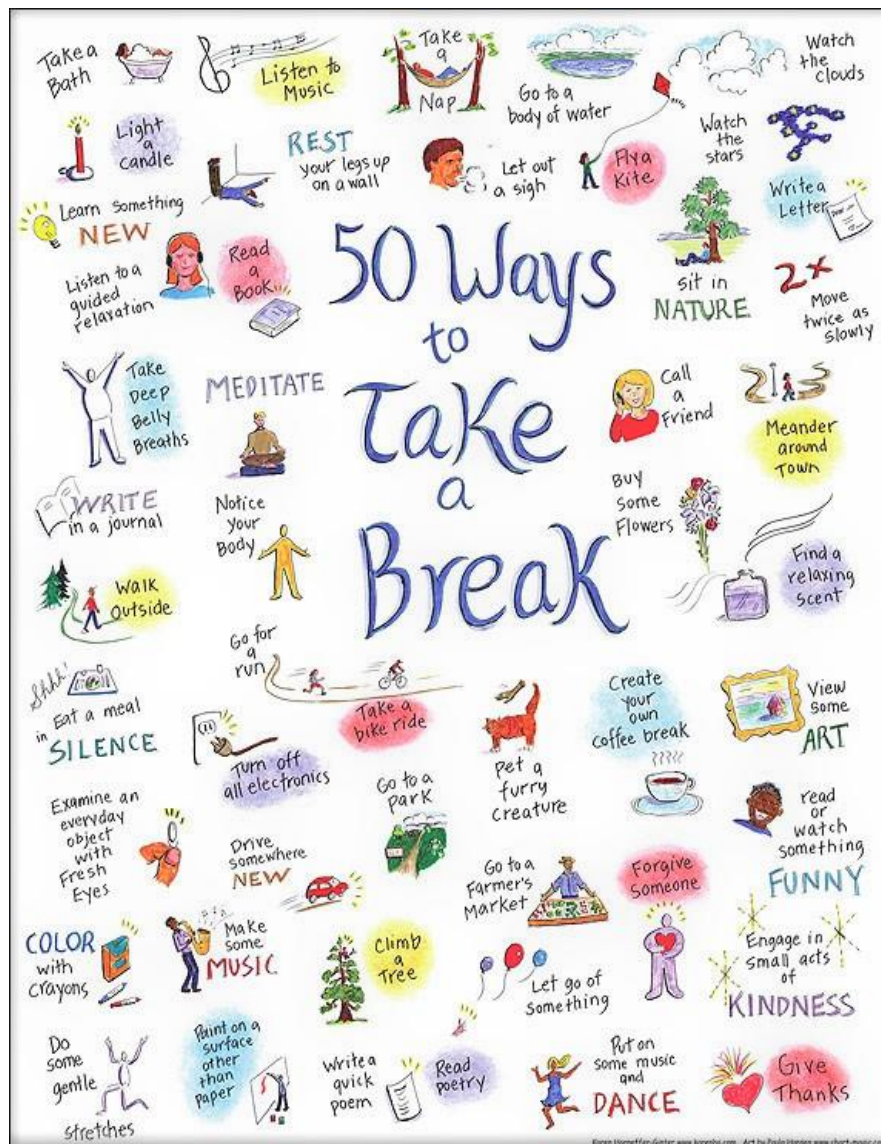
<https://www.verywellmind.com/managing-conflict-in-relationships-communication-tips-3144967>

Again Contact has a range of guides including guides around familylife, work and childcare.

<https://www.contact.org.uk/advice-and-support/>

We also have a free Helpful Guide for families you can order

<https://www.contact.org.uk/professionals/our-helpful-guide-for-your-families/>



More Resources

Contact's webinar **Building Your Resilience** (during Covid19) listed a number of resources and tools for you to try. Here are some more you may find useful.

Sumoguy resources and training on resilience www.thesumoguy.com

Ways of wellbeing - MIND <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-atwork/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

Young Minds <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

The Wellbeing Project <https://thewellbeingproject.co.uk>

Free Self Help APs

CALM – an ap that can help you mediate, sleep relax and much more

CBT Thought Record Diary – help you evaluate, understand and change thoughts and feelings

DigiPill – creative and playful AP that prescribes you digipills depending on your circumstances

Happy Healthy

Mindshift – for teenagers and young adults

Mood Tools – to help combat depression

Nature Sounds Relax and Sleep

Optimism- for depression and anxiety disorders

Pzizz – for insomnia

Relax Melodies – to aid sleep

SAM – Anxiety management

T2 Mood Tracker

Worry Box – help to control worry and get relief from anxiety.

The [Building Your Resilience During Covid-19](#) Webinar and presentation can be found on the [Resources page](#) in the Parent Participation section of Contact's website

These other webinars may also be of interest

[Reducing Isolation and Increasing Wellbeing in your Parent Carer Community 'Podcast excerpt from the webchat with Rotherham PCF, Contact and the DfE'](#)
[Adapting to Covid 19 - a webinar for Parent Carer Forums.](#)
[Building Your Active Membership](#)

DARE Developing a Resilience Ethos – Workshops for Forums

For more information on Contact's DARE – Developing a Resilience Ethos Workshop for Forums contact parent.participation@contact.org.uk or contact your Regional Participation Adviser.

The Webinar Building Your Resilience (during Covid 19)

The webinar and presentation can be found here

https://www.contact.org.uk/media/1608538/resilience_webinar_presentation.pdf

and here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dml_D3vA8mA&feature=youtu.be

This webinar and other useful webinars for forums can be found on our Resources page <https://contact.org.uk/pcp/resources>

Appendix

CiC Forum Assistance Programme- Counselling and Support

As a member of a forum committee you can access the **Forum Assistance programme** for free to talk to a trained counsellor about things other than forum matters. This service is provided as part of Contact's Core officer. Via the company CIC up to 8 members of a forum can access the following services for free (and more places can be purchased if required).

In a nutshell, the support includes:

For individuals

- 24/7 telephone counselling
- Financial helpline and signposting; debt counselling and information
- Legal helpline
- Family Care helpline
- Online counselling
- Face to face counselling (6 sessions,) please note that this is currently suspended in line with government guidelines
- Wellbeing web portal – online resources
- Specialist advice/general information – Everyday matters

For Forums

- Managerial Support service
- Guidance and advice on HR issues, policies and procedures
- Electronic communications toolkit
- Whistle-blowing support

For details of how to sign up contact parent.participation@contact.org.uk or contact your Regional Participation Adviser.

The Webinar Building Your Resilience (during Covid 19) and other useful webinars for forums can be found here <https://contact.org.uk/pcp/resources>

The webinar and presentation can be found here

https://www.contact.org.uk/media/1608538/resilience_webinar_presentation.pdf

and here

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dml_D3vA8mA&feature=youtu.be

