The importance of playing during a crisis

Playing helps children stay physically and mental well. It is an everyday part of a healthy and happy childhood. Play is just as important during a crisis like the current coronavirus pandemic. It helps your child manage their emotions and maintain a sense that everything is and can be ok.

During a crisis, playing is your child's way to:

- stay emotionally healthy
- stay physically active, getting some exercise
- relax and forget about worries
- make sense of any new experiences and changes in their world
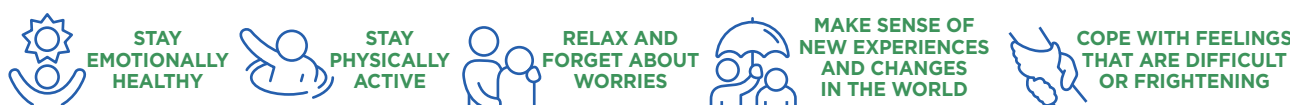- cope with feelings that are difficult or frightening.

Playing at home

A great way for you to support the health, happiness and development of your child during the current crisis is to find ways they can play at home. Making time to play and have fun together is good for your relationship with your child and for your own mental wellbeing.

Playing can also protect your child from some of the negative impacts this crisis could have.
For example:

- Playing is strongly linked to creativity – it involves imagination and problem solving.
- Playing helps young children develop by doing and talking. It is also how they learn to think.
- Playing may involve your child acting and repeating events – this is one way for them to understand what is happening.
- Acting their feelings helps your child come to terms with them and feel more in control.
- Playing allows your child to express anger and frustration safely without harming other people, or without getting harmed themselves.
- Playing allows your child to develop their own strengths and ability to cope.

Being at home for long periods of time and being physically separated from friends, families, routines and cherished places is a new situation for most of us. Playing is a natural and active process that can help us.

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The *IPA play in crisis* series is designed to offer straightforward advice and suggestions to help you and your child keep playing through the coronavirus pandemic.

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