

Information brochure for children, young people and parents

# Dealing with the coronavirus



**Koningin Mathilde**  
Moeder- en kindcentrum



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Dear children, young people and parents,

In this brochure you will find a lot of information and psychological tools to help you on your way in this coronavirus crisis.

Are you now in hospital yourself? Would you like to know more or are you worried about the coronavirus? Are you a parent, and do you want to know what your child may need now in particular?

Feel free to read this leaflet together or individually, use parts of it, read about Olly the Elephant or visit the recommended websites for more information.

# 1 Olly the Elephant thinks, feels and does

Hello there! I'm Oliver, Olly for friends.

What do you see when you look in the mirror? Do you also see big ears and a long trunk? That is our outside. But did you know that we also have an inside? No, no, I don't mean our lungs, our heart, ...

What then? That we can think about things and feel them. And of course, we can do a lot of things with our body as well.

What we feel, think and do all has an effect on each other. Those are the arrows you see all around me.



Wait, I'll just explain it to you:

- If I **think** that Grandma may become ill, then I may **feel** frightened and have to cry.
- If I phone Grandma, then I **think** all is well with Grandma and then I **feel** happy.
- When I **feel** angry and I **think** about my friends who I now have to miss, I may **do** something annoying to my sister if I don't like something.

But how does all that thinking, feeling and doing work? Will you read along with me a moment? Then I will tell you.

## 1.1 Thinking

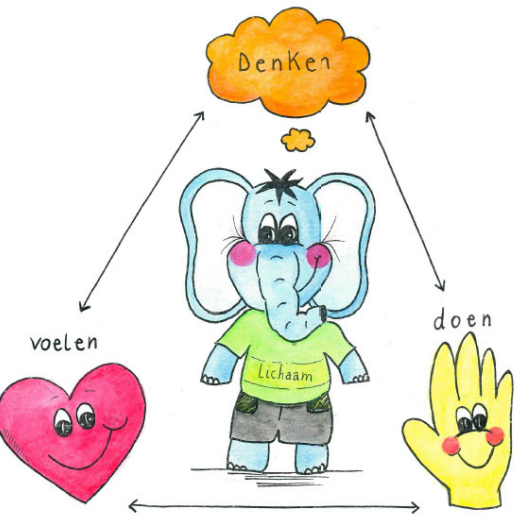
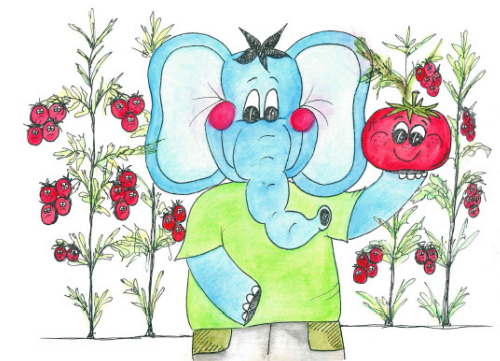
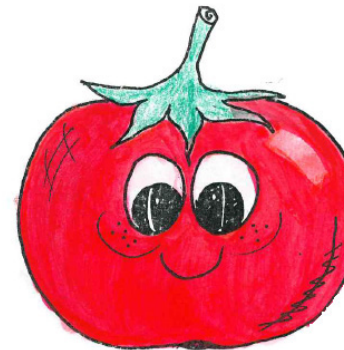
Have you ever noticed that you can think about all kinds of things? Sometimes I have nice thoughts. For example, when I think of playing with my elephant friends. Sometimes my thoughts are not so nice. For example, when I think I might become ill. If I keep on thinking about this, I get more and more not-nice thoughts. Sometimes we call that '**worries**'. Maybe you have that too sometimes? Because that's not really so surprising in these times. Even mum and dad sometimes have less pleasant thoughts.

Did you know that worries are a lot like a tomato plant?

A tomato plant is only a very small seed at first. If you look after it properly and water it, it will very soon grow into a plant with a first tomato. And if you keep caring for this plant, you will soon get a whole bunch of tomato plants. It grows very fast.

So it is with worries too. You cannot eat them like tomatoes, but they do grow, just by giving them attention. Many children give their worries a lot of attention. It starts with one thought, and then it quickly becomes a big mountain of worries that are difficult to get rid of.

If I have a whole mountain of worries, can I never get rid of them again? No, you can! There are many things you can do to give your worries less attention. Just think about the tomato plants. If we give them less attention, they will become smaller and shrivel up. It's that way for your thoughts as well. I'll tell you more about that in a moment.



## Thinking about the coronavirus

What are your thoughts like in these crazy coronavirus times? What do you sometimes think about? Do you recognise some of these worries yourself?

- I cannot see my friends anymore
- My grandparents will get ill
- I'm so bored
- I'm going to become ill

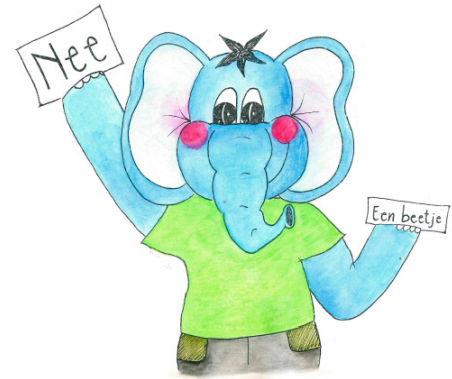
Do you have any other thoughts?

- .....
- .....
- .....

You can also draw your thoughts or worries together with Olly:



## First aid for worries

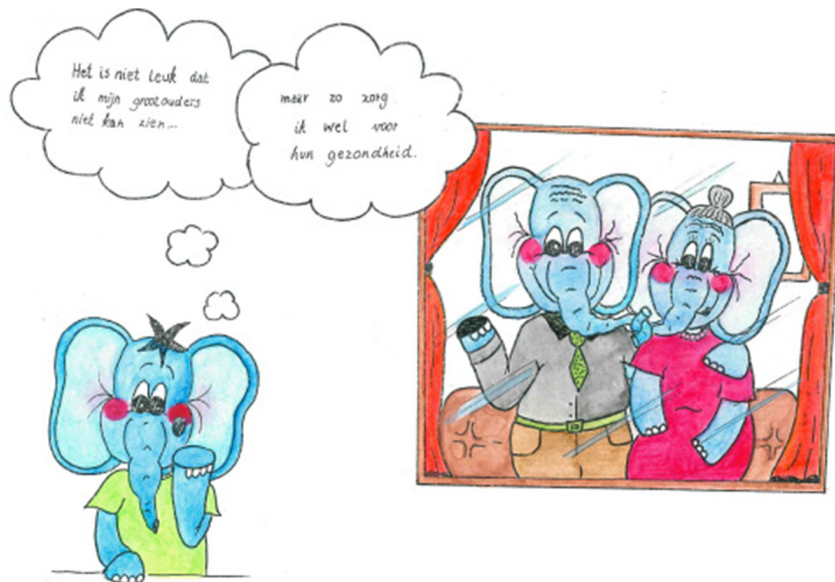
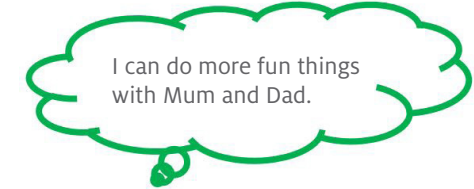
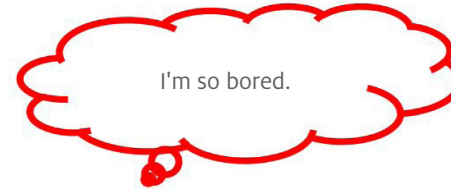
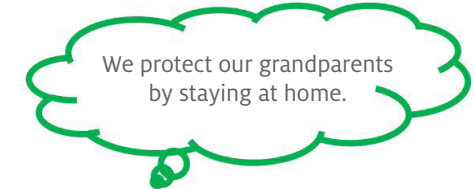
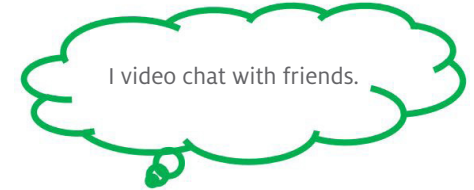


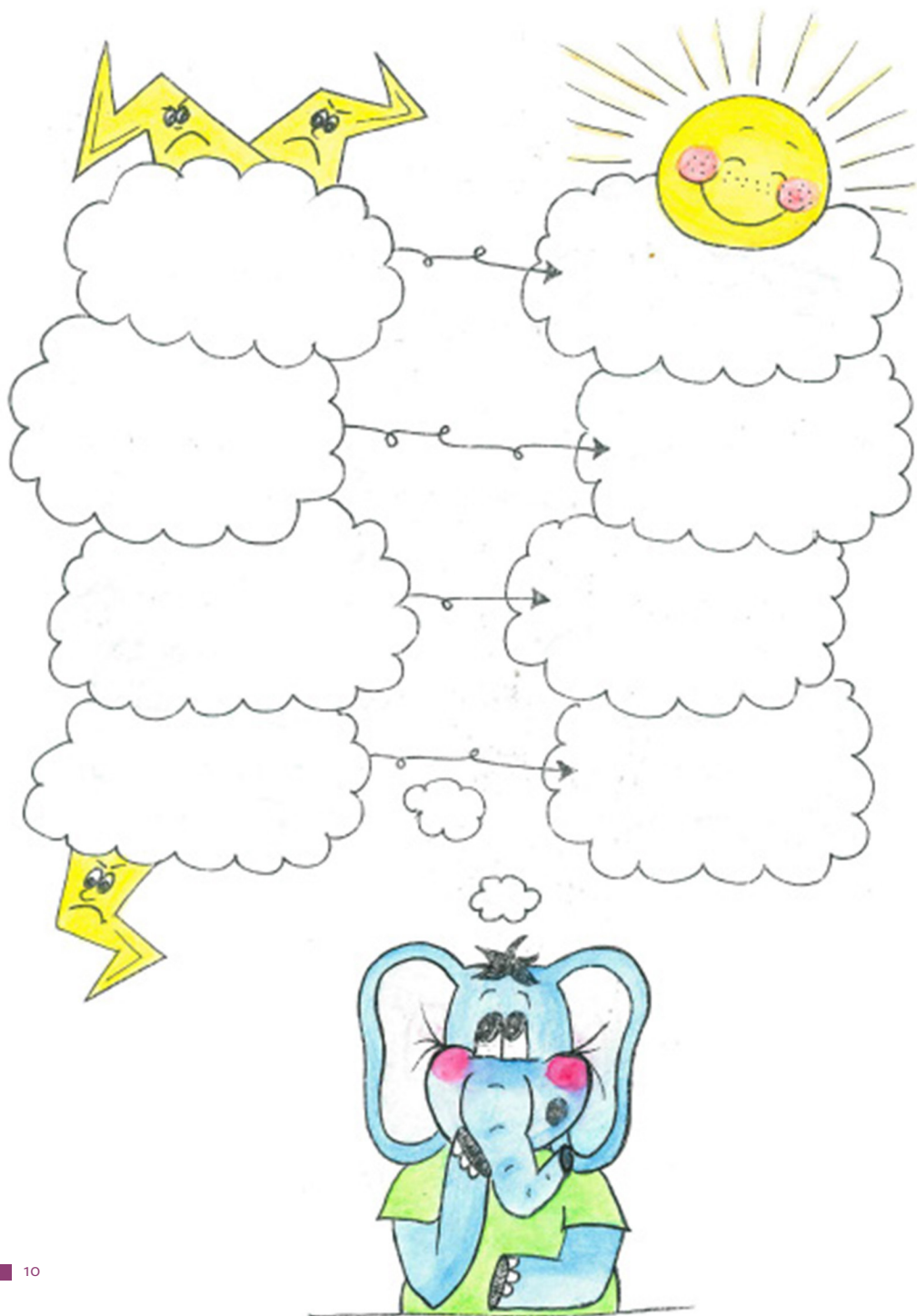
You may wonder what you can do if you have those nasty thoughts that just keep coming and going. Do you know what I sometimes do when I suffer from worries? I go on an exploration trip to see if my thoughts are true. This is called challenging thoughts. You can do this by asking the question 'Is what I think true?'. The answer will usually be 'no' or 'not quite'. In that case, you can try to replace your unhelpful thought by a helpful thought.

For example, when you think 'I cannot see my friends anymore'. Is this true? Can I never see them anymore at all? Not like when we were still allowed to go to school in any case. It might help to think that you can still see them in another way.

Some thoughts can help us and others are less helpful. Unhelpful thoughts may make you feel frightened, angry or sad. Helpful thoughts can help you feel less sad, frightened or angry.

Will you also try to find a helpful thought to replace an unhelpful thought? I'll give you an example. You can try it with your own thoughts in the drawing below.

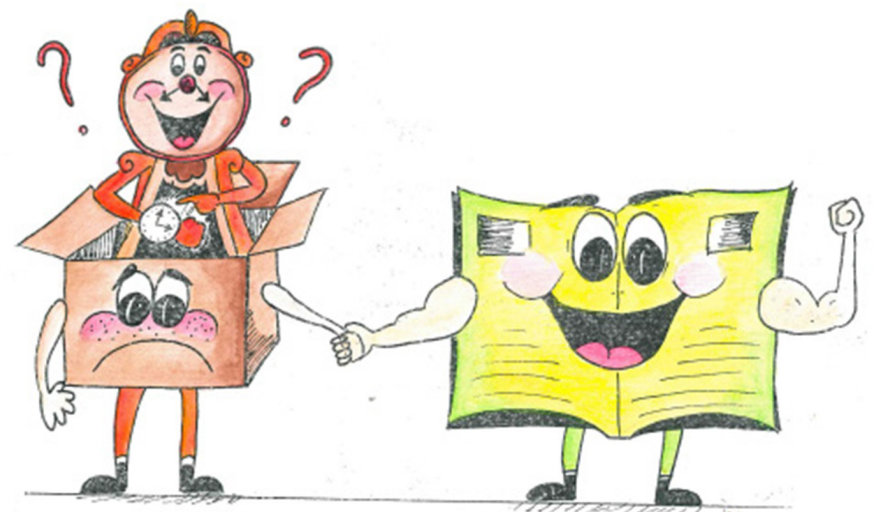




Sometimes I try to **write down** my worries. I always do this at a fixed time and always in the same place. I don't do it for too long, so that I don't fret too long (fretting means that you keep thinking about worries). I stop after 10 or 15 minutes. This is my **stop fretting** time. Do you want to try this yourself too? Choose a fixed time and place where you feel good. You shouldn't do this in your bed or just before you go to sleep. Set an alarm to go off after 15 minutes. During this time, all your worries may be there. Write them down in a worries booklet or put them into a fretting box.

You can do it together with Mum or Dad, or alone. If you notice that you have a lot of worries at other times, then try telling yourself: 'Worries, I listen to you during my stop fretting time, but not now'. Then try to carry on with what you were doing, for example, playing or helping someone. After a while, your worries will learn that they have a place during the stop fretting time, but at other times they had better stay away.

You can also keep a **positive diary**. In this, you can write down two or three fun and positive things that have happened every day. You can also write things in it that you're thankful for. You can do this alone or together with Mum or Dad. If you find writing hard or don't like it so much, you can always make a drawing!



## 1.2 Feeling

Okay, I've already told you about thinking. But what about feeling?

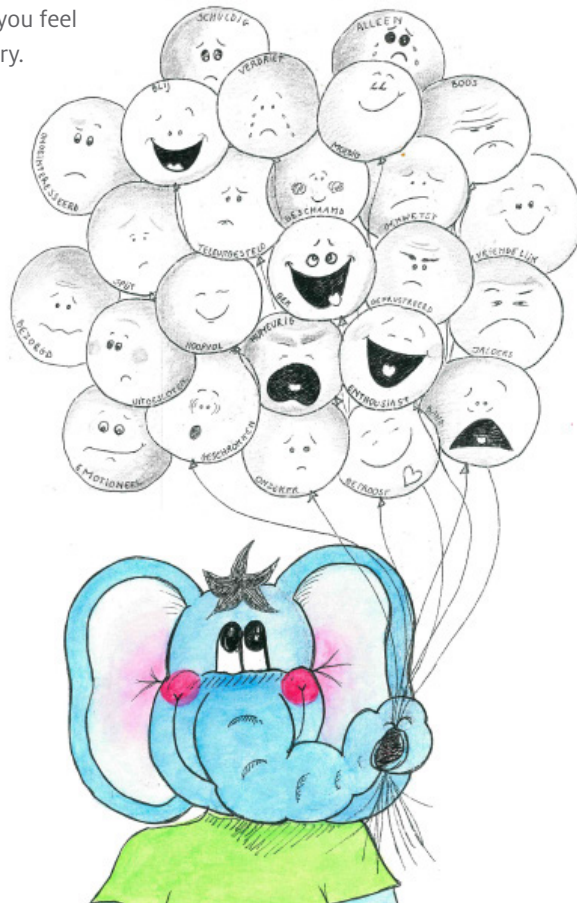
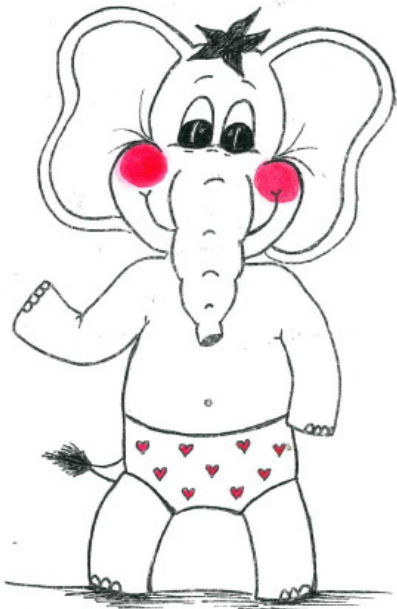
There are so many feelings! Which ones do you know? .....

.....

.....

What are your feelings like in these crazy coronavirus times? I am sometimes sad because I miss my friends and family. I have already heard from others that they sometimes feel grateful to the nurses and doctors who help sick people get better again and who care for them.

If you like, you can draw on these drawings where you feel it in your body when you feel afraid, for example. Or happy. Or angry. Or sad. Use a colour that you think matches your feeling! Write down or show on the drawing what you feel.



## What should you do now with all those feelings?

Nothing, it's alright for them to be there! What you feel is totally okay. Sometimes I do get a bit confused by all those feelings. Sometimes they can even get quite big. I like it when I can talk about them with my Mum, Dad or someone else. They help me to find what exactly I'm feeling when I just don't understand myself.

Would you like to talk about something to someone but you don't quite know how? You can make your own feelings thermometer. Then you can show how you feel with a clothes peg. Don't feel like being creative? You can use mine. You can find it on the next page.

Sometimes, making a drawing of how I feel can also help. Sometimes I show it to someone else afterwards. And sometimes I don't.

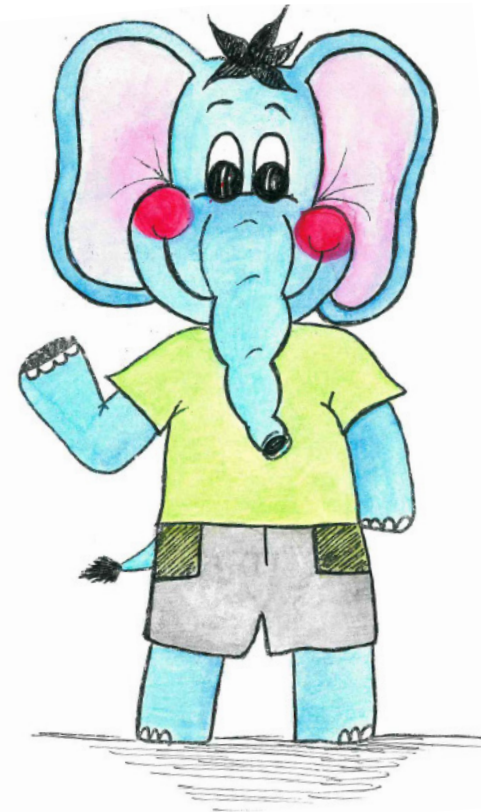


## Body

Have you ever heard of body cues? Our body tells us how we feel. And if you listen carefully, you can find out what your body is telling you.

When I am angry, I feel my elephant hands turning into fists and I can feel my muscles tensing up. When I am afraid, I sometimes feel a strange feeling in my tummy, which sometimes even hurts. And sometimes I start breathing very fast and crazily. When I'm in love, I feel like there are butterflies in my stomach. These are body cues. And there are lots more. And maybe you feel completely different ones. You can see some of these cues on me...

Do you also have some body cues? I'm very curious about that... Do you want to draw or colour them on the drawing?





## First aid for relaxing

Do you know what I sometimes do when I don't feel well and I am all stressed out? Then I do a **relaxation exercise**. Relaxation-what? That's a difficult word, isn't it. Then I listen to a story that helps me to just relax completely. That way, my muscles can relax and I don't give too much attention to the worries. Mum or Dad reading a story can also be nice and relaxing. But this is not the same. A relaxation exercise is a story that gives you instructions to help you relax. In some exercises, we watch our breathing. That can help to calm down, for example when you cannot sleep well.

Do you already know these exercises? Go to [www.uza.be/relaxatiekinderen](http://www.uza.be/relaxatiekinderen).

## 1.3 Doing

I said at the beginning of this booklet that all that thinking, feeling and doing belong together. Do you recognize the following things?

Have you ever heard someone shout loudly when they feel angry or frightened? Or have you heard them laugh loudly when they feel cheerful or happy? Maybe you cry very loudly sometimes and you don't know how to stop. When I am very angry, I sometimes stamp on the ground very hard with my heavy legs. And when I'm happy, I sometimes start to sing and jump. So hard that it shakes the ground. Sometimes I get so worried that I ask Mum and Dad lots of questions. And then sometimes I really cannot sleep, until I have asked all those questions. Sometimes I'm so afraid that I make myself do certain things, such as singing the same song in my head ten times or washing my hands twenty times. Then it seems as if I'm less scared, but actually it makes me even more scared.

So we do things that match what we feel and think. That does not mean that those things always help us.

But do you know what? If we don't feel well and we want to feel better again, then we can also do things ourselves that help us feel better. If I am very angry, it helps to kick the ball in the garden. Crazy, isn't it? I think it's because all those thoughts go away for a moment.

Have you already discovered some **do-things** that help you feel better?

- Maybe you just want to be alone for a while and do something quietly? Like reading a book, drawing, doing a puzzle, etc.
- Maybe you feel it bubbling in your tummy and it just has to erupt like a volcano. Maybe you like kicking a ball, rope jumping, swinging, screaming very loudly into a pillow, etc.
- Maybe it helps to play some fun games
- Maybe you want to phone a friend or a family member? Seeing each other via video chat can also be fun.
- Maybe you are so sad that you just don't want to see anyone for a while. That can help, but maybe talking about it with someone afterwards can help after all. Mum and Dad would like to do that with you.

What helps you when you are angry, sad or frightened?

Think about it and maybe you can also write these things down below:

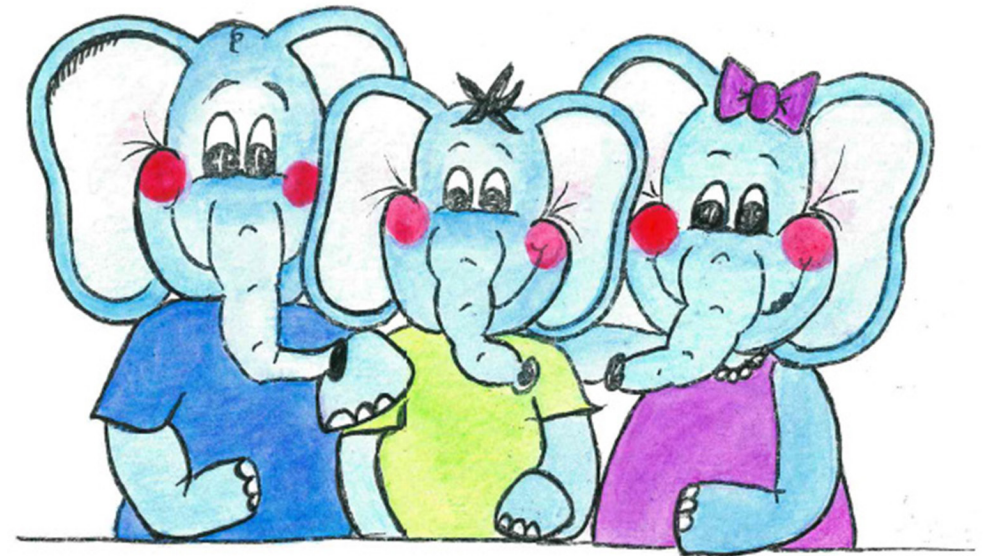
<b>ANGRY</b>	
<b>FRIGHTENED</b>	
<b>SAD</b>	

And maybe my **elephant-do-tips** also help. Shall I list them for you?

- Challenge unhelpful thoughts and think up helpful thoughts
- Fretting box and fretting stop
- Relaxation
- Fun-things-diary
- Feelings thermometer
- Feelings drawing
- Talk about it with someone else

Wow, now I have told you so very much. I hope you liked doing the exercises. I have one very important tip that you certainly should remember:

If you are thinking about all kinds of things, you are worried or have certain feelings that you don't really know what to do with, you can always go to Mum and Dad. They are there for you to talk about this.



## 2 Dealing with the coronavirus: for children and young people

This time brings turmoil and uncertainty with it for everyone. That is why we want to give you some encouragement. Here are all sorts of fun websites where you can find information.

### 2.1 What is the coronavirus?

Do you have questions about the coronavirus and do you want to know more? Then you can definitely look at the following websites:

- On the website [www.zitdazo.be](http://www.zitdazo.be) under 'Blog' you will also find a video that explains the coronavirus. ('Kids video explains the coronavirus')
- On the website [www.dewegwijzer.org](http://www.dewegwijzer.org), you will find a brochure that explains the coronavirus. ('I am Corona', [www.dewegwijzer.org/hallo-ik-ben-corona/](http://www.dewegwijzer.org/hallo-ik-ben-corona/))

Be sure to ask any questions to your Mum, Dad or a counsellor.

Where can you surf to?

- The website [www.noknok.be](http://www.noknok.be) is for young people from 12 to 16 years old. Be sure to check out this website, because you will find interesting information and exercises. You can also create your own NokNok account. It lets you keep a diary, do some exercises and much more.
- On the website [www.watwat.be](http://www.watwat.be), young people between 11 and 24 years can find various articles about the coronavirus and how to handle certain difficulties, such as boredom, stress and anxiety.
- On the [www.awel.be](http://www.awel.be) website, you can find articles to read, but can you also talk directly with a counsellor.
- Tele-onthaal is a helpline where you can call or chat with a counsellor. This is free and anonymous. You can find more information on [www.tele-onthaal.be](http://www.tele-onthaal.be).
- Young people can also go to the website [www.caw.be/jac/](http://www.caw.be/jac/) to chat, call or email with counsellors.

## 3 Dealing with the coronavirus: for parents

This time brings turmoil and uncertainty with it for everyone. That is why we want to give you some encouragement. We at the children's psychology department have come up with some tools to get you started.

### How do you notice that your child is worrying about something?

There are many signs that indicate that your child is worrying about something. Below you can find an overview of common signals. Any striking change in his/her behaviour can be a potential signal, for example:

- Not wanting to go to sleep, waking, nightmares, bed-wetting relapse
- Reduced appetite
- Afraid to be alone
- Physical symptoms due to stress (tummy ache, headache, tired...)
- Demanding attention
- Reluctant behaviour

### How do you talk with your child?

Does your child ask questions about the coronavirus and do you not know where to start? Ask what your child thinks about it themselves. This will help you find out what misconceptions there might be and where the imagination runs wild. This gives you room to correct where needed and to connect with the needs of your child at this time. This also gives you as a parent the room to give a focused response. At times when there is just a little too much chaos for yourself, retaining an overview is not always easy. Do not be afraid to say 'I don't know' or 'Let's just look it up together'.

The following links may be good to look at together. Also allow yourself to say that you will come back on it later, and agree on an exact time when you will do this.

It is important to talk with your child in an honest and age-appropriate manner. Children and young people are entitled to and need this information.

- On the website [www.zitdazo.be](http://www.zitdazo.be), under 'Blog', you will find various articles with tips about talking with your child about the coronavirus. You will also find a video explaining the coronavirus to children.
- On the website [www.dewegwijzer.org](http://www.dewegwijzer.org), you will find:
  - A brochure explaining the coronavirus to children. ('I am Corona', [www.dewegwijzer.org/hallo-ik-ben-corona/](http://www.dewegwijzer.org/hallo-ik-ben-corona/))
  - A guide for parents and teachers with further tips. ([www.dewegwijzer.org/moet-ik-bang-zijn-van-het-corona-virus-gids-voor-ouders-en-leerkrachten/](http://www.dewegwijzer.org/moet-ik-bang-zijn-van-het-corona-virus-gids-voor-ouders-en-leerkrachten/))
- Or visit [www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019](http://www.nctsn.org/resources/parent-caregiver-guide-to-helping-families-cope-with-the-coronavirus-disease-2019)

Be sure to ask how your child is feeling or what is going on in his/her head. It is important to offer enough room for the various emotions that this evokes in children:

- Children may need specific questions (for example: Do you think it is annoying that you cannot see grandma?)
- Making drawings can help in talking about these emotions. Also look at the book 'I am Corona'.

It is important to make room every day for the questions and concerns your child has without this being present the whole day. You can choose to plan a fixed **fretting time**. This way, it is defined in time, but your child knows that there is room for it:

- Each day, choose a fixed point in time (not before bedtime) and a fixed place.
- Also, try to define the fretting time properly with music or a bell.
- Make room for thoughts, emotions and questions.
- Have your child write down or draw these thoughts and emotions.
- Conclude by writing down positive thoughts or positive events (for example: I ate my favourite food. I will soon be able to Skype with Grandma.)

### How do you create calm in your family?

You as parents can help your child cope with the stress and anxiety by scheduling daily routines. Children need structure and rules, this brings clarity and calmness. Your child sees you as an example on how to deal with this situation.

- Create a daily schedule with enough variety in tasks and relaxation moments. You can do this together with your child.
- Tap into your creative side and make something beautiful of the daily schedule. Provide variety in activities and explore new ideas.
- Not so creatively disposed? On [www.sclera.be/nl/vzw/home](http://www.sclera.be/nl/vzw/home), you will find a number of pictograms that you could use to visualise a daily schedule.

It is important to stay connected with family and friends and to hold onto normal daily life as well as you can.

- You can plan a daily fixed video chat time with family or friends.
- Let your child make letters, cards or drawings for loved ones.

### Where can you as a parent go with your concerns about your child?

- On the website [www.opvoedingslijn.be](http://www.opvoedingslijn.be), you can find contact details to obtain anonymous tips from a counsellor.
- You can contact the **Centrum Algemeen Welzijn (General Well-being Centre)** ([www.caw.be](http://www.caw.be)).
- Tele-onthaal is a helpline where you can call or chat with a counsellor. This is free and anonymous. You will find more information on [www.tele-onthaal.be](http://www.tele-onthaal.be).
- If you notice that you keep getting stuck, you can always contact a psychologist or educationist for yourself or your child. Currently, guidance will only be given online, but support can be offered. You can ask your doctor for contact details, or look them up yourself on e.g. [www.vvkp.be/zoek-psycholoog](http://www.vvkp.be/zoek-psycholoog).

### Dealing with conflicts in the family during the coronavirus crisis

We refer to the poster below for tips in dealing with conflicts.

# OMGAAN MET CONFLICTEN IN HET GEZIN TIJDENS DE CORONACRISIS

## 5 TIPS



### ZORG VOOR STRUCTUUR, VOOR JEZELF EN ELKAAR

Deel samen je dag in. Beweeg voldoende (wandelen, fietsen, yoga...). Doe leuke dingen samen en neem tijd voor jezelf. Geef elkaar elke dag een complimentje.



### WORD JE BOOS? UIT JE GEVOELENS

Zeg wat je voelt of schrijf het op. Laat kinderen tekenen of hun gevoelens uitbeelden met speelgoed.



### BESPREEK SPANNINGEN EN CONFLICTEN

Wat maakt jou en andere gezinsleden (weer) rustig? Wat ontspant je? Praat over oplossingen. Na een ruzie: praat het uit.



### DRUK OP DE PAUZEKNOP

Verlies je controle? Tel tot 10. Adem diep in en uit. Ga naar buiten. Gaat iemand over jouw grens? Neem afstand. Zoek een veilige plek.



### ZOEK STEUN OF HULP

Blijf contact houden met vrienden en familie. Praat met iemand die je vertrouwt. Zoek professionele hulp (bv. telefonisch/online).

Professionele hulp bij geweld?

**NOODSITUATIE?** Politie: **101** / Medische noodhulp: **112**

**PROFESSIONELE HULP:** Bel of chat met **hulplijn 1712** bij vragen over geweld. Gratis en anoniem.



Vlaamse overheid



Meer info op

[www.1712.be](http://www.1712.be)

[www.slachtofferzorg.be](http://www.slachtofferzorg.be)

*This brochure contains general information and is intended as a supplement to the interview with your healthcare provider.*

*Illustrator: Aline Michiels*



The Antwerp University Hospital bears the JCI-label for safe and quality care.

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