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# **Public Crisis Situations: Helping young people with their mental health**

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Samantha Garner  
Education Trainer & Consultant  
[www.samanthagarner.co.uk](http://www.samanthagarner.co.uk)

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- How disasters and tragedy can affect the mental health of students
  - Recognising signs and symptoms a student may be not be coping
  - How to speak to primary aged students
  - How to speak to secondary aged students
  - Providing advice for parents on supporting their child
  - Protecting your own mental well-being
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# WELCOME

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Who am I?

Questions?

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# What is happening?

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- collective stress
  - difficulty coping with physical, emotional and financial burdens
  - short and long term consequences
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# Anxiety

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- fear of the unknown
  - lack of control
  - additional stress
  - catastrophising
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# Factors affecting emotional impact on children....

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- characteristics, extent and duration of the disaster
  - direct exposure to disaster
  - earlier exposure to disaster and chronic adversity
  - perception of life-threat to self or significant other
  - separation from caregivers
  - physical injury
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# Factors affecting emotional impact on children....

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- effects on parents or caregivers
  - inner resources of the family, relation and communication patterns among the family members
  - exposure of children to mass media
  - degree of disorganization and loss of social control in the community
  - community response
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# Individual characteristics influencing vulnerability.....

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- age or development stage
  - degree of dependency on adults
  - gender – externalise/internalise
  - previous physical and mental health
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# Signs of anxiety

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- disturbed sleep/nightmares
  - appearing 'clingy'
  - very tearful
  - angry/irritable
  - withdrawal
  - psychosomatic symptoms
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# Supporting primary students

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- acknowledge
  - don't lie
  - emphasise on people recovering
  - online social interaction
  - allow them to express their emotions in a variety of ways (creative)
  - getting through this more important than academia
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# Supporting primary students

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- give information but not too much detail
  - not talking will lead to elaborate imaginations
  - too much may create additional alarm
  - model calmness
  - do not scaremonger (news or school work)
  - may seek continued reassurance
  - explain why measures are necessary
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# Explaining to primary students

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- the virus is a sort of germ that can make people feel sick
  - it's a bit like the flu, sometimes people feel really sick, sometimes they hardly notice it
  - people get a bit hot, cough and sometimes find it harder to breathe
  - you can catch it from germs in the air when people sneeze or cough
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# Explaining to primary students

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- you can catch it from germs getting on your hands
  - to help not catch it we need to sneeze into tissues or our elbows
  - wash hands with soap and water often (give details)
  - try to keep hands away from your face (positive)
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# Explaining to primary students

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- sometimes people wear masks – like doctors and nurses
  - most people get better and doctors are working really hard to help everybody
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# Supporting secondary students

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- acknowledge that their regular life has become disrupted
  - don't say that others are worse off
  - allow space and time alone where possible
  - ask them to model calmness to younger siblings
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# Supporting secondary students

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- keep social interaction where possible – using technology
  - teach them to fact check anything they read on social media
  - discuss don't threaten
  - allow to retain some independence/choice
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# Explaining to secondary students

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- corona viruses causes the common flu and colds
  - this corona virus is believed to started in animals and passed to children
  - we've had viruses spread from animals to adults before
  - previous viruses were contained
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# Explaining to secondary students

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- this virus has spread more quickly to more countries
  - because of the internet information is shared a lot more than previously
  - if reading about the virus on social media causes distress then take action to remove the sources
  - there is no evidence pets can get sick or pass the virus
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# Explaining to secondary students

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- most people do not die (95% - 99%+)
  - a lot of people will have the virus and not even get ill so that affects the figures
  - schools have closed to help stop the spread of the virus
  - the government is making arrangements so those due to take exams will not miss out
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# Explaining to secondary students

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- explain hygiene routine
  - explain the importance of trying to keep sleep/eat routine
  - remind them everyone is working hard to manage the virus
  - ask to talk about how they're feeling with someone
  - provide support websites
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- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
  - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround>
  - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/518610>
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# Advising Parents

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“The adaptive capacity of nearly all children is influenced by the physical and emotional availability of their caregivers, but this is especially true for younger children.”

[https://www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/disasters\\_dpac\\_PEDsModule9.pdf](https://www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/disasters_dpac_PEDsModule9.pdf)

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# Advising parents

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- acknowledge feelings – talk about it, don't try to cheer up
  - keep routines where possible
  - start new habits
  - take it one day at a time
  - don't have set ideas of how it should be
  - be flexible with plans – days will vary
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# Advising parents

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- model calmness – will look to you for cues
  - children may be more 'needy' beware of conversations in front of children
  - social media important part of communication
  - look after your wellbeing
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# Advising parents

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- you are not a home school
  - more work at home completed in shorter time than school day
  - students will not lose out on qualifications
  - not all children have access to internet
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# Looking after your own mental wellbeing

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- maintain social interaction
  - limit how often you news check
  - remove negative social media
  - talk about how you are feeling
  - good days/bad days
  - anticipate and prepare as much as possible
  - maintain routine where possible
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# Helpful Websites

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>
- [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51873799>

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**Questions?**

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# Mental Health in Education: Building Good Foundations – available on Amazon

- [sam@samanthagarner.co.uk](mailto:sam@samanthagarner.co.uk)

Twitter: @samgarneredu

Linkedin: Samantha Garner

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*That's all Folks!*