

# Anxiety in an uncertain time: Williams syndrome and covid-19

## Introduction

We know that many people (children, adolescents, and adults) with Williams syndrome can experience heightened anxiety. We also know that for many of these individuals, uncertainty, or changes of routine can be especially anxiety provoking (on top of baseline levels of anxiety). Therefore, it is possible that some people with Williams syndrome (and their wider families) will experience an increase in anxiety during the current unprecedented and unpredictable covid-19 situation. We therefore want to remind families of some of the techniques that can be used to help with positive wellbeing during this time.

## Hand washing

Talk about hand washing and watch YouTube / online examples. Sing favourite songs for at least 20 seconds while washing. This concrete activity can be something to focus on as well as decreasing risk. Does your son/daughter have a favourite song they use to soothe anxiety that they can also use when washing?



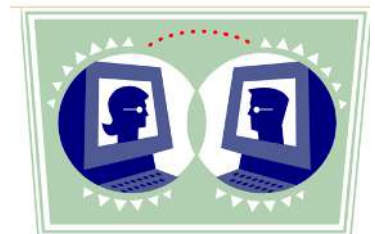
## Routine

Even if you are stuck in the house it might be possible to get a form of routine into your days. Try and think how you might do this under the circumstances – for example the timing of snacks or lunch, when you try to include some exercise, times allowed online / watching television... would it be useful to use a visual timetable for the day / week?



## Social Contact / Communication

Many people with Williams syndrome thrive on social interactions and engagement. Can you use other means of contact such as face time, phone calls, skype chats with friends and loved ones to stay connected?



## Music

Many people with Williams syndrome use music when they are anxious and this can be particularly soothing. If you see an increase in anxiety or you know an anxiety trigger is present, can music be used to help? If they have a playlist of calming music, have this to hand.



## Talking about feelings

For some younger people with Williams syndrome it might be difficult for them to understand their emotions. However, using emotional literacy, talking about feelings and emotions, using emotion images (found online) can be useful to discuss anxieties. Equally, understanding that it is ok to feel some anxiety can be useful.



## Relaxation

Relaxation techniques help many people when they are feeling anxious, not just those with Williams syndrome. Deep breathing, yoga, meditation, mindfulness apps can all be used. Breathing exercises can be useful for children who aren't yet able to discuss emotions and feelings.



## Summary

This is a brief suggestion of some strategies and techniques that might be helpful with regards to anxiety at this unpredictable time. I would also like to remind parents to look after their own well-being at this time and some of these strategies might be helpful for all members of the family, not only those with Williams Syndrome. Not every technique will suit everyone so give some a try and see what works for you.