

The Knock-on of Lockdown



Lockdown has had significant effects on babies and young children’s socialisation, recent research has found. We take a look at three key findings and how nursery can help little ones and parents.

The added pressure and worries brought on by COVID-19, alongside the continually changing rules and restrictions are bound to have affected our little ones. While there have been benefits to a slower pace of life and more time together at home, many parents and families are also experiencing more negative emotions including anxiety, confusion, grief and loss.

The recent [Babies in Lockdown](#) report, commissioned by The Parent-Infant Foundation, Best Beginnings and Home-Start UK, gathered information from parents about the impact the pandemic, and more specifically, lockdown had on them. Almost 9 in 10 (87%) were more anxious as a result of COVID-19 and the lockdown, while two thirds (68%) of parents said their ability to cope with their pregnancy or baby has been impacted by COVID-19.

Here are three factors that were found to have affected little ones more than many realised:

Working from Home

For many of us, working from home is new, and for our children, it’s also new. Understanding and adapting to this change can be difficult for all involved. One 38 year old mother from Scotland, said: “My son is hating me working from home because he doesn’t understand why mama is ignoring him when he can hear me and is now super clingy with me... he doesn’t understand why I am locked away 35 hours a week in the bedroom.”

Added Pressures and Worries

Whether it’s health or money worries, the lack of contact with others, uncertainty due to job insecurity, or a loss of routine and purpose, there are many factors that can cause worry, anxiety or depression. An expectant mother was recorded saying: “I have been crying for hours on end, having anxiety and panic attacks, which are all out of the ordinary for me. This has affected my nine month old son who has seen me experience this and has been more tearful and clingy with me.”

It’s well-known that children are sensitive to emotions. Even at just a few months old babies can recognise the difference between a happy expression and a sad one. They sense and react to their parents’ emotional cues, generally speaking, picking up on what you’re giving off. Our little ones may

not be able to tell us that we seem stressed, or be able to ask us what is wrong, but they do pick up on our stress and tension. And unfortunately babies don't just detect negative emotions, they are affected by them. Stress is contagious, making it even more important to look after our own wellbeing and try to be calm when interacting with our little ones.

Lack of Social Groups

With baby groups cancelled, play dates with mum friends and family gatherings not possible, the opportunity for you and your baby or toddler to socialise during lockdown is often impossible. One 32 year old mother from the West Midlands, said: "I think I'm struggling with postnatal depression due to COVID. I was fine before as I was going to places, doing things and going to classes."

Meeting with other mums who are in the same phase of parenting gives support and often reassurance. Without that, parenting can feel isolating and scary. Not only might our little ones sense this, but they may also have a similar void left by the lack of stimulating baby groups, activities and generally just being around other babies. Socialisation is an important part of growing up, but the pandemic brought that to an abrupt halt, leaving children deprived of an important developmental step – peer-to-peer interaction.

Light at the End of the Tunnel

Childcare centers and preschools will hopefully be opening soon, giving an opportunity for our little ones to socialise with other children of a similar age, as well as interacting with other adults.

Center based care could also help to alleviate some of the pressures, enabling us to look after our mental health and wellbeing.

For more details, take a look at our other blog on the benefits of childcare at a children's center. www.brighthorizons.com/india

Parental Perks

You might think childcare is just for babies and young children, but actually there are also many benefits for parents! Check out our 'Parent Perks' of childcare centers and preschools:

- Enables a better work-life balance
- Expert support and advice available
- An opportunity to build networks with other parents at the same lifestage
- More quality time when you are together as a family
- Less meal pressure and craft mess, meaning less chores!
- Allows for a little 'me' time