

# **CORONAVIRUS SKIN HUNGER AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TOUCH**

## Dear parent/carer

Known to reduce heart rate, blood pressure and production of the stress hormone (cortisol), physical touch is vital for emotional, mental and physical health.

In recent months, we have endured an unprecedented social isolation period which has resulted in many of us experiencing a lack of connection and interaction but, most of all, missing human touch. Lack of social isolation is associated with social, relational and health deficits such as sleep disturbances, loneliness, depression, anxiety and lowering of the immune system. When our nerve endings are deprived of interaction, this triggers a cascade of neural pathways similar to unrequited love.

Scientists have discovered a nerve ending (tactile Afferents), which recognises any form of gentle touch as a signal to release oxytocin, known as the 'love hormone.' In the same way as our rumbling tummy reminds us that we need to eat, 'skin hunger' is recognition that we're not receiving enough touch and connection in our lives.

So, what can we do if we can't hug our loved ones and relieve that skin hunger feeling? Havening is a psychosensory therapy, based on self-touch, to help raise our sense of well-being. There are some simple but effective video explanations available to watch on YouTube. The suggestions below can help us reduce stress and anxiety, and act as alternative calming substitutes to hugs and cuddles.

Remember, we are almost through this journey of social isolation. It won't be long until we can hug and cuddle our loved ones.

Take care.

The Unravel Team

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Experts in children & young people's  
emotional well-being

Supporting you on behalf of your child's school

## TOP TIPS TO HELP WITH SKIN HUNGER

- ✓ Give yourself a butterfly hug by wrapping your arms around yourself, so that each hand touches the opposite upper arm or shoulder. Then move your hands like the wings of a butterfly tapping your shoulders in an alternating rhythm.
- ✓ Pet a cat or dog
- ✓ Try dry body-brushing and massaging your skin with your favourite moisturiser or oil, as cortisol can dry out your skin
- ✓ Hug a pillow or blanket
- ✓ Have a long, hot bath to induce the release of oxytocin, the 'love hormone'
- ✓ Put magnesium in your bath to help reduce stress levels
- ✓ Try walking barefoot on grass, soil or sand to give you a mentally stimulating and grounding effect due to the many nerve endings on the bottom of your feet



ARM SELF-HAVENING



FACE SELF-HAVENING



PALM SELF-HAVENING

CORONAVIRUS

**TOGETHER WE CAN  
BEAT IT**

**Please keep yourselves  
and your children safe**

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