

**A LEAFLET ON
COPING DURING
COVID 19 FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE
AND FAMILIES**

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COPING DURING COVID-19

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CHECKING IN WITH HOW YOU ARE FEELING

At the moment there is lots of talk about our physical health and staying physically healthy, but it is really important that we also focus on our mental health and how we are feeling emotionally. We are all living through a difficult situation, lots of which can feel out of our control. Here are some ideas of how you can identify and reflect on your emotions. There are lots of different emotions that you might be feeling and your emotions may feel very up and down at the moment.

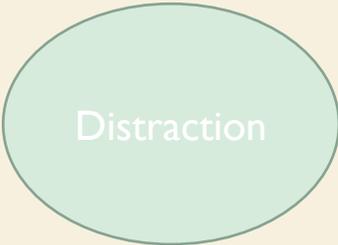
Checking in with how you are feeling will help you to take care of yourself and your needs.

Q'S TO CHECK-IN WITH YOURSELF



MANAGING YOUR EMOTIONS – WHAT MIGHT HELP?

There are lots of different ways that people might choose to cope with different emotions – Please remember, what works for one person might not work for another. Identifying some strategies that you can use anytime and anywhere during this challenging time will help you to find different ways of coping, depending on what you need in that particular moment.



Distraction

Absorb your mind in something else

Examples: Conversation, listen to talk radio, read, do puzzles, TV, jigsaws, solve a problem, make a list, learn something new, cleaning & tidying, gardening, arts & crafts, crochet.



Grounding

Getting out of your head and into your body

Examples: Use body & senses: smell fragrances, notice the colours around you. Go for a jog, take a walk. Splash your face with cold water, do yoga, meditate.



Emotional
Release

Let your emotions out

Examples: Squeeze something (like your pillow) really tight in your arms and then let go. Try a cold shower. Put on a funny DVD and let yourself laugh! Put on some music and shake it out!



Self Love

Do something kind for yourself

Examples: Massage hands with nice cream, manicure your nails, clean your room (or just make your bed), bubble bath or long shower, brush hair, write yourself a nice note on your blackboard which you can see each morning.



Thought
Challenging

Challenging your negative thoughts

Examples: Write down negative thoughts then list all the reasons they may not be true. Imagine someone you love had these thoughts – what advice would you give them? Practise mindfulness and ‘letting go’ of your thoughts.

YOUR COPING STRATEGIES

Note down some ideas of coping strategies that might work for you in each of these different categories. You could also think about whether you would like to share these ideas.

Distraction



Grounding



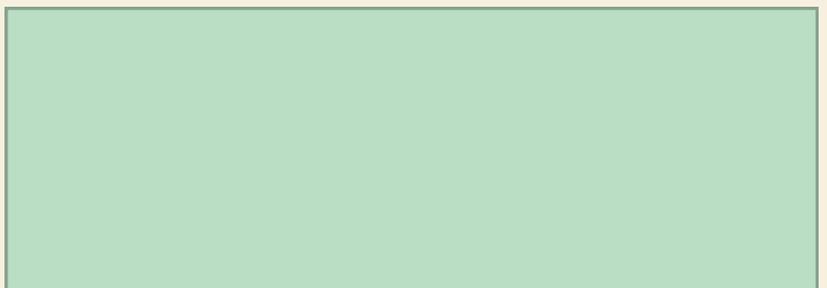
Emotional
Release



Self Love



Thought
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HELPFUL PLANNING

- **Creating new routines**
- Routines help us feel safe. Usually we don't even notice them, and we often take them for granted. But we really miss them when they are gone. Making new routines will be very important over the coming days and weeks as they will help us feel safe. They become the new normal surprisingly quickly – just think of a time when you have been on holiday or to stay with a relative. What are the new routines you are starting to notice?
- Some celebrities are helping with exercise, stories or cookery lessons on-line at different times during the day – can you use these to help create a routine as well as seeing a familiar face and trying something new?
- Some teachers are sending work so that school lessons can happen at home – how is this going for everyone?
- Some friends and relatives are using Face time and other ways to be in touch so that you can still see and hear them – can you arrange a time to 'meet up' on a regular basis?
- Mealtimes and bedtime are a really important part of everyone's routine, especially at a time like this. It is tempting to say they matter less as we don't have to be anywhere on time; but actually they are more important than ever. They make sure that we eat healthily and get enough sleep – the key to us feeling happy and well.
- It helps us if we do set things at set times in the day because it gives us something to look forward to. It makes sure we do different types of things during the day instead of just doing the same thing. It helps us do the things we are less keen on but need to do, and it keeps us busy so we have less time to focus on our worries.
- What does your new routine look like?

ENGAGING WITH TEENAGERS



- To summarise how to interact and engage with teenagers, **O*A*K** is an acronym which is really fitting as it requires us as grown-ups to stand steady throughout the storms, and be a calm presence when the sun does eventually come out.
- **O** – offer opportunities often
- **A** – anticipate rejection
- **K** – keep the door open
- The current circumstances are challenging for everyone, of course, but out of every generation it could be argued that teenagers are uniquely disadvantaged during enforced house arrest. Developmentally, their main tasks are to separate from their families, connect with their peer group and form intimate relationships. This is all now rendered impossible. They have no escape, they have to be at home, and they cannot see their friends.
- Some parents will be secretly delighted that this natural drive to escape has been curtailed and they are back in the nest; particularly at a time like this when everyone is feeling anxious. But the nest is the last place that most teenagers are likely to want to be.
- This tension of going out/staying in has always been around in families – but it has become enforceable by law and there has really been no choice. The one advantage of that, of course, is that it is no longer a battle between you and them. Deep down they do know that, but their anger and frustration is likely to be directed at you anyway – because where else can it go?
- There are some exceptions of course, and lots of parents of children who are very anxious or have additional learning needs are sharing that life is actually easier for them in some ways. They are enjoying a bizarre honeymoon of not having to get their kids to places they find difficult to be in; take part in activities they find really hard to do; or engage with people they struggle to be with.

STAYING CONNECTED TO YOURSELF AND OTHERS

Staying connected with family & friends

As humans we are social beings – we like to connect and touch and be close to people. Since the start of COVID-19, we have had to change our behaviour and practise physical distancing from other people, which can make us feel isolated or more disconnected from others. Calling, facetimeing or texting your friends and family during this time is one way to stay connected.

And if social media is becoming too much, it's OK to take a break

If you've been on social media a lot, you might start to feel anxious because of all of the coronavirus posts. Remember to regularly assess your social media activity and notice when you might need to take a break. Sometimes it is useful to treat social media like an unorganised wardrobe at times like these... the best approach might be to go in, have a quick peek around to get what you need and then pull yourself back out again.

Find new ways of connecting

- Playing board games – lose purposefully to your children/spouse
- Making up quizzes for each other
- Leaving each other notes of encouragement or kindness
- Connecting with nature – noticing the start of Spring and the flowers growing outside
- What brings you joy? How can you connect more with these hobbies or experiences during Covid19?
- Random acts of kindness (to other people and yourself) – send someone a cute animal picture, watch a video that makes you smile, play your favourite uplifting song, shop for neighbours if you can.

Kindness during the coronavirus outbreak



RELAXING YOUR BODY

When we are feeling anxious, we often hold lots of tension in our bodies. When we experience anxiety on a daily basis, our bodies can get really tense, until it is hard for us to know what it is like to be relaxed. Muscle relaxation exercises can help us to release some of this tension in our bodies.

Start by getting yourself into a comfortable position. Sit in a comfortable chair, or lie on your bed. Make sure the whole of your body is comfortably supported - including your arms, head and feet. Rest your arms on the arms of the chair, with your feet flat on the floor.

Instructions

For each group of muscles you should:

- 1) Focus your attention on that muscle group
- 2) Tense those muscles as instructed
- 3) Maintain the tension for about 5 to 7 seconds and then relax
- 4) Stay focused on that muscle group for about 20 to 30 seconds before moving on, noticing feelings of relaxation

Right hand and lower arm - clench your fist and tense the lower arm

Left hand and lower arm - clench your fist and tense the lower arm

Right upper arm - bring your hand to your shoulder and tense your biceps

Left upper arm - bring your hand to your shoulder and tense your biceps

Right lower leg and foot - point your toe and gently tense the calf muscle

Left lower leg and foot - point your toe and gently tense the calf muscle

Both thighs - press your knees and thighs tightly together

Abdomen - pull your abdominal muscles in tightly

Chest - take a deep breath and hold it in

Shoulders and back - hunch your shoulders or pull them towards your ears

Neck and throat – tilt your head backwards and then forward so that your chin touches your chest

Face – scrunch up all of the muscles in your face and then release

RELAXING YOUR MIND



Mindfulness is about being aware of what is happening in the present, moment-by-moment, without making judgements about what we notice. Our minds can be focused on things in the past, present or future. We often find ourselves ruminating about events that have already happened, or worrying about things that could happen. Mindfulness helps to encourage us to attend to the present moment, without judgement of our thoughts or of what is going on in our minds.

Engaging your senses in mindfulness activity

Sit in a comfortable upright position with your feet planted flat on the ground. Rest your hands on your thighs or on your desk.

Breathe: Just breathe. Don't worry about technique, just allow relaxing breaths to enter deeply and exhale fully.

Engage: It's time to engage each of your senses, one at a time. The point here is to focus on the present moment and how each sense is being activated in that moment.

Hearing: Begin to relax by just noticing all of the sounds around you. Give yourself permission to suspend your judgment of the sounds. They are not good or bad, they just are.

Smell: Now focus on the smells of your environment. Try closing your eyes so you can focus on any really subtle smells.

Sight: If you closed your eyes a moment ago, open them to notice the colours, shapes and textures of your surroundings. If you really look, just about everything has colour variation and texture that may have gone unnoticed.

Touch: Last one. Where did you place your hands when you first started this exercise? Notice the sensation of where your hands meet something solid like the fabric of your clothes or the surface of your desk. Notice the pressure between your feet and the floor. To fully ground yourself in the room and bring the exercise to a close, feel several objects on your desk and perhaps even stand up from your chair to bring energy and sensation to all parts of your body.



TIPS FOR HEALTHY SLEEP



- **Try and stick to a regular sleep routine.** This can be more challenging when working shifts, but might be helped by some of the tips below
- **Get regular exposure to natural light.** Aim for at least 30 minutes of daylight – this doesn't have to be all in one go and could just be short bursts of fresh air during the day.
- **Avoid stimulants** such as caffeine and nicotine close to bedtime (the effects of caffeinated drinks/foods can take as long as 8 hours to wear off).
- **Limit quantity of alcohol** - whilst alcohol can make it easier to fall asleep (as it may help you relax), larger amounts of alcohol can impact on deep sleep later in the night.
- **Exercise regularly** – this might be tricky at the moment, but 10 minutes of aerobic exercise such as walking or jogging (or whatever your preferred form of exercise) can improve sleep quality.
- **Avoid heavy or rich meals late at night** as these can cause indigestion
- **Try to schedule time for relaxation before bed**, even if this is just 5 or 10 minutes to wind down at the end of the day. Perhaps try listening to some soothing music or try a brief mindfulness relaxation.
- **Try keeping a worry journal if you notice worrying thoughts going through your mind before bed.** For example, if you are listing tasks or concerns about the following day in your mind, try jotting these down to come back to the following day if you need to.
- **Establish a bedtime routine** – this might involve having a bath, reading a few pages of a book or stretching ('cue' your body in to knowing it is time to relax and sleep).
- **Where possible, avoid emotionally upsetting or activities before bed** (e.g. checking news updates).
- **Create a comfortable sleep environment** – keep your bedroom cool, turn off or adjust any lamps or screens, consider black out curtains or ear plugs if needed.
- **Don't lie in bed awake for long period of time** – If you have been lying awake for a while, get up and do a relaxing, quiet activity until you feel sleepy again.
- **Try and get up at a regular time each day where you can** – this will teach your body and brain to fall asleep at a regular time too. Where this is hard due to shift changes, try and have a routine for each shift pattern and move to it as soon as you can
- **Only use your bed for sleep** – don't watch TV, read or use a computer/ phone in bed – you need to teach your brain that bed = sleep
- **Try not to clock-watch** - if you notice that you get into a habit of clock-watching when you are struggling with sleep, try turning the clock face so it is out of view.

EMERGENCY SUPPORT

- If you feel like you are really struggling to cope, or are worried about the safety of someone else:
- **Emergency G.P.Appointment:** If there is no immediate danger to your safety or the safety of others but you need urgent support for your mental health
- **Ring 999 or visit your local A&E Department:** If there is an immediate risk of harm, you should ring 999 or visit your local accident and emergency (A&E) department.
- **Other sources of support:**
- **Samaritans (24/7):** Call [116 123](tel:116123) (freephone) if you need to talk to someone urgently about how you are feeling. **You can also email jo@samaritans.org or visit their website.**
- **HOPEline UK:** Papyrus runs a listening service if you're under 35 and may be having thoughts of suicide. Call: [0800 068 4141](tel:08000684141) Text: 07786 209 697 Email: pat@papyrus-uk.org. Opening hours: 9am – 10pm weekdays, 2pm – 10pm weekends, 2pm – 10pm bank holidays
- **SANEline** Call [0300 304 7000](tel:03003047000) for emotional support and information if you're affected by mental illness. This includes if you're a family member, friend or carer (4.30pm to 10.30pm). <http://www.sane.org.uk/>
- **Remember, Mill lodge team are also here if you have any worries about your child. We are preparing to offer family work/family therapy via Zoom or other as well.**
- **We would hope to restart leave at some point depending on several parameters – ethical as well as legal including the new Corona Virus pandemic act. We are grateful for your understanding as we continue to ask you to do the impossible, staying away from your child.**

Take care & Good luck!