

# Looking after your mental well being

Top tips and advice for children and adults on how to look after your mental well being during the covid-19 pandemic

## TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Anyone can be affected by mental health issues, no matter how old they are. Mental health is a bit like physical health. Because nobody chooses to have mental health issues. But with the right support you can get better.

## WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health is all about:

- how you feel about yourself
- how happy you are
- how much you believe you can overcome challenges in your life
- whether you feel able to interact with other people.

Sometimes you might feel stressed or anxious. Other times you might feel positive and full of confidence. Feeling up and down like this is normal.

But it might start to be a problem if negative or stressful thoughts happen all the time. Or if these thoughts start to affect your daily life. If you feel like this, a doctor might diagnose it as a mental illness.

## Things to do right now

- **Do some exercise**  
Find something you like, whether it's running, dancing or going for a walk
- **Talk**  
Finding time to talk to friends or family is a great way of making things feel better
- **Help someone else**  
You could give a present or compliment to a friend – it often puts you in a better mood
- **Eat good food**  
There's a link between food and mental health, and eating well can help you feel well
- **Try something new**  
You might feel like you can't do it – but then you find you can do it. And that can make you feel pretty good about yourself.

# LEARNING TO COPE

Taking care of yourself means doing things just for you to help you to feel better.



Learning to slow down your thoughts and change how you see things can help you to:

- feel better and happier
- concentrate, study or work
- find new ways to cope with situations.

Self-care can take time and practice. But the more you do it, the easier it can get.

## 5 things to try

1. Take 5 deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth
2. Express your feelings using our [art box](#) or [mood journal](#)
3. Read our top tips for [building confidence and self-esteem](#)
4. Do some light [sport or exercise](#)
5. Ask an [adult you trust](#), a friend or a [Childline counsellor](#) for help

Looking after yourself and your mental health can also be through developing a positive mental well being.

The next slides will give examples of different ways you can improve you positive mental wellbeing

# What is positive wellbeing?

It is a state of overall good health in both body and mind and can include:

- ✓ **Intellectual** (cognitive stimulation such as problem solving puzzles),
- ✓ **Spiritual** (understanding sense of purpose and beyond your own existence, can be through prayer or exploration of a higher power, etc)
- ✓ **Social** (building relationships and community support through friends and family and neighbours etc.)
- ✓ **Physical** (Movement, whether in sports or walking, movement that brings joy.)

# 11 TOP TIPS FOR POSITIVE WELLBEING WHEN YOU ARE OFF SCHOOL

Taking breaks from technology. It can create strain on the eyes, disrupt sleep, overstimulate your brain and normally technology is linked to a lack of movement.



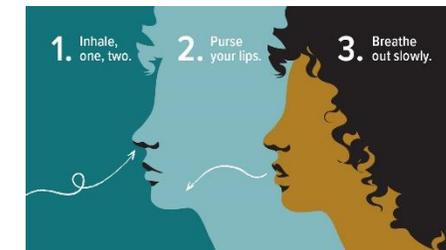
Spend time outside in nature. Nature is healing, going to your local park or green space and taking a walk is a great way to destress. .

Spend time with people who support you. Social interaction and a strong network of support is important for mental health, sharing problems and building social skills



Eat fresh fruit and vegetables daily. Food helps to build and nourish your body, it provides energy and helps you when you're not feeling well. Aim for at least 5 portions daily.

Breathing exercise. Practice breathing slowly into your stomach, through your nose and out slowly to calm down nervousness. Left and right nostril breathing is all good for enhancing these effects.

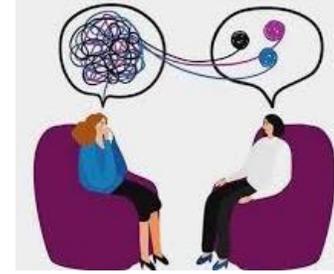


Find a creative activity. Finding a way to expressive yourself through your chosen form of art from acting, playing an instrument, art, writing short stories or poems is great for relaxing and spending time away from technology.



Limit phone time. Social Media can be a very negative environment and hyperfiltered which can distort how we see and feel about ourselves. Breaks are a good reminder that social media is a filtered highlight reel, not real life.

Talk about your problems. They can seem much worse in your head, especially if you don't talk about them and let them build up. Find someone you can trust.



Meditation. Close your eyes for a few minutes each day and just focus on breathing. You don't need to anything else but witness your thoughts and feelings.

Drink plenty of water. We are over 70% water and dehydration can cause low energy amongst other undesirable symptoms



Write your feelings on paper. Keeping a journal, can help ease a troubled mind when you're not ready to talk about what is bothering you.

Throughout this Pandemic it can be hard to try and remain positive, especially as everything has been shut. It is important to remember that not everything has been cancelled.

## NOT EVERYTHING IS CANCELLED

sunshine is not cancelled  
spring is not cancelled  
love is not cancelled  
relationships are not cancelled  
reading is not cancelled  
naps are not cancelled  
devotion is not cancelled  
music is not cancelled  
dancing is not cancelled  
imagination is not cancelled  
kindness is not cancelled  
conversations are not cancelled  
**hope** is not cancelled



#keeplookingup  
SimpleStencils.com

The next few slides will give you ideas on things to help your mental well being



## **Connect** – Make sure you get a parents permission if using online video apps

- Use technology to connect with your friends, have a set topic for discussion- a positive story from the news or perhaps a philosophical question!
- Record an message for each family member watch them together.
- Organise a lunch date via a video app with a group of your friends
- Organise a movie evening with your friends, perhaps you could make it a weekly event, taking turns to decide what to watch
- Organise an online skills competition with your friends - mini Olympics.
- Create a playlist on YouTube or Spotify you can share with your class, family or friends
- Compile your own round of quiz questions and arrange a virtual quiz evening with your friends or family members who you don't live with



## Be Active

- Try to do Body Coach PE workout at 9am
- Learn a new dance routine
- This week why not take to wheels – take a ride around your local park
- Create your own obstacle course around your house, can you share with a friend for them to try?
- Couch to 5K – Is this the challenge for you?



## Take Notice

- Identify 3 things of beauty you can see from your house and document it by photo.
- Step out on to your balcony or garden (or when your out on your walk) – Standstill, pay close attention to something that you have not looked at closely before. Go inside and draw it. – What did you choose?
- What is it you have missed the most this week? Think about the small things such a regular chat with your friends or just being in a group
- Consider what has changed in our environment. What can you see, hear, smell that is different. Many people have commented on the increased amount of bird song that we can now hear
- Take five minutes to practice Mindful Breathing. There are many podcasts available. [Here is a quick link](#)
- On your daily walk, take notice of how many rainbows you see.
- As lockdown rules have begun to change, how has your local area changed?



## Keep Learning

- ❑ You Tube has a whole world of things to learn – choose something to challenge yourself: Drawing, language, instrument, craft! The following link is for the e-lending library <https://llc.overdrive.com/> all you need to do is put in your library card and pin.
- ❑ You can learn basic British Sign Language very quickly from YouTube. This is a fabulous skill to have in school, college and your future workplace.
- ❑ It can be learning how to make a cup of tea or a basic pasta dish. Think about your sense of accomplishment when you succeed. (get an adult to help you)
- ❑ Learning origami is an easy way to relax, while doing something productive. Origami.me is a helpful resource that has over 100 models that you fold using just paper.
- ❑ A huge number of art galleries and museums around the world have digitized their collections and are now offering free virtual tours.
- ❑ Offer to skill share with a friend via video call- you could teach a dance, a song on the guitar or how to bake something



## Give your time: to yourself or someone else

- The best gift is time- make time to read with someone, complete a task together or play a board game. Make it a weekly thing
- Set aside a time to talk as a family or with your friend. Discuss three positives you have experienced this week.
- Identify one household chore that you could do instead of your parent. Think about how this will make both you and them feel.
- Give time to learn a dance, poem, sonnet or scene from a play to perform to your family or friends
- Send someone you know a joke to cheer them up – perhaps you might choose someone in your class you haven't connected with in a while.
- Prepare a special meal for your family – how about an afternoon tea? Breakfast in bed?
- Reach out to call a friend, family member or neighbour who is experiencing loneliness or isolation.
- Set aside 20 minutes a day do something that brings you joy. e.g. Reading, dancing, listening to music.

# 7 Well-being Activities for 7 Days

Here are seven activities you can do while school is closed. The first three are activities to do once, the four on the next page are activities you can do every day. All of these activities are based on research to help you look after your mental health and well-being.

THANK  
YOU

GRATITUDE

Make a poster to thank your postman/postwoman and any delivery drivers that bring food and other items to your house, then display it outside your front door, where they'll see it.



YOUR STRENGTHS

Talk (or write) about a time when you had to do something difficult and you got through it. Explore how you felt beforehand and how you overcame the challenge. Think about which character strengths you used to help you.



FAMILY OR GROUP  
STRENGTHS

Draw a strengths 'family tree' - either for your family, or for your group of friends, your class or your school. Think about how these character strengths you all have can help you overcome challenges together.



### HAPPY PLAYLIST

Make a playlist of your favourite feel-good music. Keep adding to the playlist every day as you think of more music that makes you feel happy. Every day, spend some time dancing to music from your playlist.

If you are able to, get together with other people (e.g. at home, or friends via social media) and dance together to each other's playlists.



### KEEP IN TOUCH

Every day, keep in touch with someone you can't see face to face. You can do this by phone, text, Skype, WhatsApp etc - use whatever technology you have available to connect with people you care about. This could be your friends, your grandparents, or other relatives, for example.



### SPOT CHARACTER STRENGTHS

Watch a film, then talk with your family or friends (or teachers if you are at school) about the strengths you spotted in the various characters in the film. Give examples of how they used those strengths.



### KINDNESS

Make a list of seven kind things you can do for someone else. This could be for people you live with (e.g. do the dishes one evening, tidy your room, read with your brother or sister) or people you don't get to see every day (send someone a compliment by text, draw a picture and send a photo of it to your grandparents, etc). Each day, do one of the seven kind things from your list.

## Wellbeing tips for families:

- Talk with your family, if you have questions, ask them. If you are unsure of the answers, do research with an adult to better educate yourself and answer your questions and correct possible misconceptions. This can be reassuring rather than worrying.
- Avoid being too immersed in media coverage. Be mindful of the amount of things you are reading and watching, including social media – as this may add to worry and anxiety. Consider a few updates every day from trusted sources (BBC shows the live updates at 5pm from Downing Street)
- Remember that people react differently to significant events. Some people – adults and children – may feel worried, some excited, some nothing much at all. Be reassured that different reactions are normal and ok
- If you're worried, it may be good to distract yourselves with something to take your mind off your worries. You might also want to set aside 10-15 minutes each day for them to talk about any worries and to find reassurance.
- Remember to keep things positive and give hold onto hope. For example, remind yourself that now many people are working to make this better and that even though it is serious, everyone is doing their best to help people.
- Try to keep familiar routines. Well-known routines in everyday life provide security and stability.
- Do nice things together, and keep active. Make a plan and suggest some regular family times where you can play games, do some exercise together, or do other things that you know most of you like. Try to find a good balance between time together, and screen time.
- Keep in good contact with family and friends (via Facetime, Skype WhatsApp etc.; following nhs guidance on 'social contact'). This will help you connect with others and know that others are thinking about them. It will also reassure you that others are well.
- As a parent you may be concerned yourself. Take care of yourself and make sure you have breaks, time to relax, and ask for help from others if you need.

For adults: please share these links with your adults at home, they will find them useful in supporting your mental well being as well as their own

<https://mollyrosefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Building-A-Routine-top-tip-number-1.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnANLAcPRZ4&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/>

<https://mollyrosefoundation.org/covid-19-coping-strategies/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/looking-after-your-mental-health-while-self-isolating/>