



Updated: 31/03/2020

COVID-19 Cheat Sheet:

Tips and ideas for looking after your Mental Health and Wellbeing

Keeping calm

Think about activities that help when you feel overwhelmed e.g. write down how you feel, play music or talk to a friend. Or you can make a self-soothe box and learn breathing techniques:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/how-to-make-a-self-soothe-box/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/ways-relieve-stress/>



Taking breaks from the news

Limit the amount of time you spend reading the news, perhaps sticking to regular intervals. Take your mind off the news with enjoyable activities.

Talk to someone about how you're feeling

Acknowledge your feelings and speak to someone you trust; friends, family, a teacher or a helpline. Make time and plan in calls.



Stick to the facts

Try not to let false reports fuel your worry, read reliable sources from the NHS or gov.uk

Wellness Plan (Advice from MHA national)

Maintain routines that make you feel good

Trying to keep positive routines such as exercise can help with a sense of normality. Look for online gym classes (youtube). Mon-Fri you might treat 9-3 as a school day, working but still taking the same break times.

Create a routine

It's not just about maintaining your routine but also adapting it to what suits you at this time. Try to plan in fun and calming activities also. What makes you feel better?

Socialising

Schedule virtual hangouts with friends, family or choose a support buddy so you can lean on each other.

Panic/anxiety Attacks

Be aware severe anxiety can lead to anxiety/panic attacks, try to determine what brought on symptoms and you can learn or practise grounding exercises.

<https://www.healthline.com/health/grounding-techniques#physical-techniques>

Make sure you have enough medication

Ensure you refill prescriptions on the first possible day to reduce stress about running out. Contact your pharmacy to see if they can deliver (if you're in quarantine) and what other support they have for ensuring you get your medication.

Anxiety UK suggests practising the "Apple" technique to deal with anxiety and worries.



Acknowledge: Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind.

Pause: Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Pause and breathe.

Pull back: Tell yourself this is just the worry talking, and this need for certainty isn't helpful or necessary. It's only a thought or feeling. Thoughts aren't fact.

Let go: Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond to them. You might imagine them floating away in a bubble or cloud.

Explore: Explore the present moment, right now, in this moment, all is well. Notice your breathing and the sensations of your breathing. Notice the ground beneath you. Look around and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch, what you can smell. Right now. Then shift your focus of attention to something else - on what you need to do, on what you were doing before you noticed the worry, or do something else - mindfully with your full attention.

Eat well and stay hydrated (Mind UK)

Try to make sure you are still drinking water regularly, perhaps set timers. A balanced diet can help your mental health, if quarantined you can text a neighbour or friend to leave essentials by the door.



Keeping Active

Schedule some physical activity into your daily routine e.g. a jog, dance to music, clean your home, gardening, go up and down stairs or online exercises.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpQ34afVgk8cRQBjSJ1xuJQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/blogilates>

Getting sunlight and fresh air

Use your 1hr exercise for a walk outside. Open windows in the house and make a comfy space to sit by one. If you have a garden you can sit outside whilst working or during breaks. If not you could listen to nature sounds, close your eyes imagine a calm open space outside, or sit on the front doorstep.



If you're feeling Claustrophobic or Trapped

Sit in rooms with windows, and try to regularly change the room you're sitting in.

Please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> for updated COVID-19 advice. If you are a parent and you have concerns about your child's mental health, please contact 0203 319 7666 Monday to Friday 9am-5pm. Please contact the SLP crisis line on 020 3228 5980 Monday to Friday 5pm-9pm and Saturday to Sunday 1pm-9pm. For all other times please contact the Oxleas Urgent Advice line on 0800 330 8590. Please also note that support is available via Kooth at www.kooth.com

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Ideas for activities and keeping busy

Stimulate your mind- Learn a new language (duolingo app), listen to a podcast, download a puzzle app e.g. for sudoku. Or read, online libraries or this platform - [National Emergency Library : Free Texts : Free Download, Borrow and Streaming](#)

Relax and be Creative-

- **Arts and crafts**, such as drawing, DIY, colouring, painting, collage, sewing, knitting, craft kits or upcycling
- Playing **musical instruments** (free lessons on youtube), writing music/lyrics, singing or listening to music
- **Writing**, such as a short story, poetry, start a blog or a diary
- **Self-care**; have a bath, light candles, face/hair mask, paint your nails, have a nap, watch a film/new TV series
- **Games**; dig out an old board game, play a computer game, make up your own games, or try a new app?

Find other ways to spend your time- Have a spring clean; you can spend time cleaning out your room and going through possessions. Or a digital clearout, deleting old files and apps plus updating software.

Yoga and Meditation

Just close your eyes and relax. Take a few deep breaths from your diaphragm and release the tension in your body.

Focus on a five-count breath:

1. Slowly inhale from the belly
2. Then into ribs
3. Then into chest
4. Up into crown of the head
5. Then gently hold the breath for the fifth count

Repeat this backwards whilst exhaling for another count of five, from the crown, chest, ribs, belly, pausing on the last bit of breath out of the body, and then begin again. Visualize the tension leaving your body from your head to your feet, either as imagining that the stress is draining from you through your toes, escaping your body with each breath, or melting away.

Full version: <https://www.verywellmind.com/practice-5-minute-meditation-3144714>

Meditation: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/changepower/201703/12-quick-mini-meditations-calm-your-mind-and-body>

Free Yoga & Meditation: <https://relief.ekhartyoga.com/> and <https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene>

Mindfulness During COVID-19 (Try this exercise from mindful.org)

Stop. Literally. Just stop what you're doing, whether you're working or on your phone. Give yourself a moment to calm your mind, pause, and collect yourself.

Take a breath. Now that you've paused, take a deeper breath, or two, allowing yourself to feel the expansion of the belly as you breathe deeply. Notice the sensations of being here, now. This may help to bring your attention to feeling your feet meeting the floor. Feel the support of the ground and of your own relaxing breath.

Observe what's arising in you, including thoughts, emotions, or bodily sensations (e.g. tension, butterflies, tightness in the jawline). Broaden your awareness, take in the situation. Notice how you can be in this situation without being ruled by it. For added support, offer self-compassion as you release tension and stressful thoughts. As you calm down, open to the choices you have in terms of how best to move forward from here.

Proceed with something that will support you in the moment, maybe a cup of tea or talk to a friend?

More COVID-19 Mindfulness resources: <https://www.mindful.org/free-mindfulness-resources-for-calm-during-covid-outbreak/>

Mindfulness worksheets: <https://mindfulnessexercises.com/free-mindfulness-worksheets/>

Alternative Support:

Free NHS Mental Health Apps - <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/>

Oxleas CAMHS Mental Health App (Free) - <http://oxleas.nhs.uk/advice-and-guidance/children-and-young-peoples-services/headspace/>

YoungMinds Crisis Messenger: *If you are a young person experiencing a mental health crisis you can text YM to 85258 for free 24/7 support.*

Childline - 0800 1111 <https://www.childline.org.uk/>