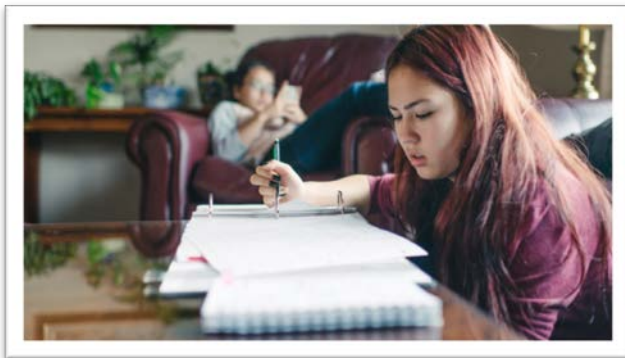




Your Guide to Physical and Mental Wellbeing During Isolation

Introduction

Firstly, it is important to note that being asked to stay at home and away from your school environment is an unusual situation. You may be experiencing shock at your GCSEs and A Levels not taking place, and sadness at having to leave school and friends so abruptly. Therefore, any feelings of stress or difficulties managing your emotions are completely understandable.



For years you have been focusing on your studies, and the adults around you have been encouraging you to work towards your exams. Your education and exams are extremely important and the government, teachers and the adults in your life are

taking the current situation very seriously. However, due to needing to protect vulnerable members of our society, social distancing and isolation as a public health concern has been prioritised. Currently we do not know how long this will last and this uncertainty can be very challenging for young people and adults alike.

Your teachers have prioritised how you will complete work at home and the government and schools will support young people to achieve their potential once this crisis has come under control.

This booklet is aimed at supporting your emotional wellbeing when at home. If you are known to external counselling services or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) please continue your work with them and feel free to share this material with your workers so that they can discuss it with you.

Back to Basics



Eat well....

Food and mood go hand-in-hand but often the first thing that we do when we feel stressed is to let good eating habits slip. To help to stay well it is important to maintain a healthy diet and prioritise going back to basic eating habits.

Key things to remember are to:

- Eat regularly** - breakfast, lunch and dinner
- Try to **balance your diet** in line with the healthy eating plate image below
- Choose **slow-release energy foods** (such as oats, pasta, rice and nuts) over quick-release energy foods (such as sweets, biscuits and energy drinks) to keep your blood sugar levels stable throughout the day. Fluctuations in our blood sugar can cause irritability and low mood.
- Limit the number of caffeinated beverages** per day as caffeine can negatively impact your sleep and high quantities can increase your body's anxiety response.

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



Back to Basics



Sleep well ...

Young people tend to need about **8-10 hours of sleep per night**.

With the change of routine there are likely to be shifts in your sleep routine and not getting enough sleep can impact mood and concentration.

To ensure that you get enough sleep there are certain things that you need to consider:

- Maintain a **regular sleep routine**. Try to go to bed and wake up at around the same time each day.
- Keep a **regular bedtime routine**, doing more relaxing activities before sleep, for example read, have a shower and brush your teeth. This allows your brain to get ready for sleep.
- Your bedroom should be comfortable, at the right temperature, dark and quiet with **phones and other mobile devices out of the room**.
- Try to **avoid working, reading, listening to music and watching TV** in bed. (I know this one is hard, but it's an important one!)
- Always **incorporate exercise into your daily routine** This will mean you will get better quality sleep.
- Never go to bed on an empty stomach**, but also do not eat a heavy meal before sleep.
- If you have problems getting off to sleep **try listening to calming music** or an audio book.
- If you wake up during the night and have difficulties getting back to sleep get up and **engage in low stimulus activities for 20-30 minutes** before returning to bed.

- ☑ **If you are worrying about things before going to bed** you can talk to your family, write down your worries and leave it in another room during the night or do a breathing/relaxation exercise.

Back to Basics



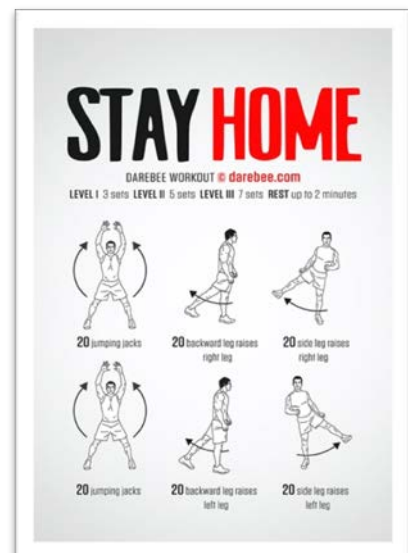
Try to keep active ...

Being physically active means sitting down less and **moving our bodies more**. Many people find that physical activity helps them maintain positive mental health.

This doesn't mean running marathons or training every day at the gym! There are lots of different things you can do to be a bit more active. **Build physical activity into your daily routine**. Most of us don't have exercise equipment where we live, but there are still activities you can do.

Exercising at home can be simple and there are options for most ages and abilities, such as:

- ☑ Cleaning your room
- ☑ Dancing to music
- ☑ Going up and down stairs
- ☑ Seated exercises
- ☑ Online exercise workouts that you can follow
- ☑ Sit less – if you notice you've been sitting down for a while, get up and move position



Click on Image

Look out for all the workout sessions on YouTube and Instagram ...

Maintain a Routine



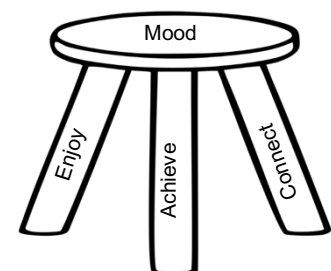
In the absence of your usual routine of attending school every day, it will be important to **follow your home-schooling routine** and include further structure in your day if you need it.

It is particularly important to organise **something in your day to look forward to** so that you are motivated to get up in the mornings. Try to structure your day so that:

You take care of your personal hygiene. It's nice to have a pyjama day occasionally but having too many in a row will negatively impact your mood and motivation. **Leave the pyjama days for the weekend** and on school days make sure you get dressed every day. Other ways to include structure into your day are:

- Having 3 meals a day at regular times.
- Starting your school day as normal ... keep to your timetable.
- Including exercise in your routine.
- Spending time talking with friends and/or family via Skype or Zoom or other social media platforms.

Research has shown that we need three things in equal measure to ensure that our mood remains stable. These are activities that bring us **enjoyment, achievement and connection**. Our mood is like this three-legged stool with each leg representing one of these forms of activities: enjoyment, achievement and connection.



If any leg is shorter or longer than the others, then the stool becomes unstable. Therefore, if the leg of achievement is significantly shorter or longer than the leg of connection and enjoyment then our stool, i.e. our mood will become unstable.

So, it is important to incorporate activities that bring you a **balance of enjoyment, achievement and connection** into your daily routine.

Ways to Help



Strategies to cope with feeling anxious or low ...

As well as the basics of establishing good eating, sleeping and exercise habits, there are ways you can help yourself when you are feeling particularly worried or low. **We all**

manage stress and feeling down in various different ways.

Below is a list of strategies that you can try that might help.

- ☑ **Distraction** - can be really helpful in the heat of stress or when there is nothing that can be done immediately about the problem.
- ☑ **Breathing strategies** - directly impact your body's stress reaction which is Fight, Flight and Freeze.
- ☑ **Mindfulness exercises** - are all about staying in the present moment and there is some cross over between mindfulness and relaxation. However, mindfulness is often about noticing the feelings that you have and not getting hooked into them rather than relaxing your body. Often mindfulness can do both though.
- ☑ **Self-soothing activities** - use all your five senses to relax. Self-soothing is about using your five senses to gain a sense of wellbeing and calmness.

There are some examples for you to try out on the following pages for each technique.

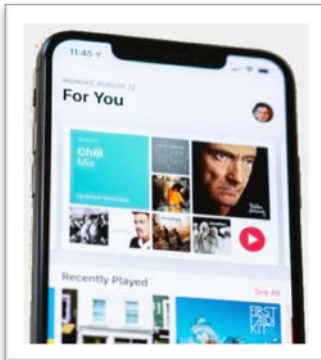


Distraction Activities



Here is a list of common **distraction techniques** you could try.

- Listening to music, playing music or writing music.
- Baking or cooking something new.
- Watching a movie or programme on TV.
- Going for a walk (if this is still in the government guidelines) or spend some time in the garden.



- Doing exercise in the house.
- Painting/drawing/doodling/colouring.
- Crosswords, puzzles, Sudoku.
- Writing lyrics to a song, writing a creative story or writing a journal.



- Speaking with your friends on the phone.
- Reorganising your room and your belongings.
- Reading a book or magazine.
- Picking a new hobby or return to a hobby that you have moved away from.

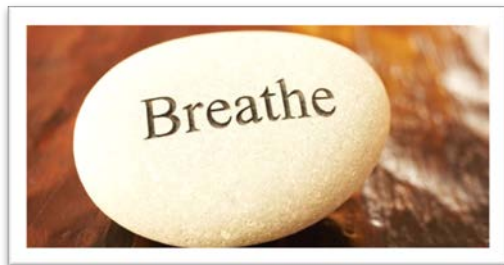


- Spending time with your family doing activities in the house, for example playing cards or a board game.
- Looking through and sorting out family photos together with your family.

- Spending time with your pet, playing or training them to do a new trick!
- Completing a craft project, for example making celebration cards, creating something to decorate your room, create your own board game, make a collage of somewhere you enjoy or something you like doing.



Breathing Techniques



Breathing strategies can be extremely helpful when you are feeling stressed as they directly trigger the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS). This system counteracts the sympathetic nervous system which is responsible for the fight,

flight, freeze response. The parasympathetic nervous system helps our bodies to feel calm and returns us to our relaxed body state.

Breathing strategies that make breathing out longer than breathing in can trigger this PNS system. One example of a breathing exercise is the **paced breathing strategy**.

Lie or sit in a comfortable position with both feet securely on the floor.



Close your eyes if you feel comfortable to or hold your gaze on one point of the floor.

Place one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest.

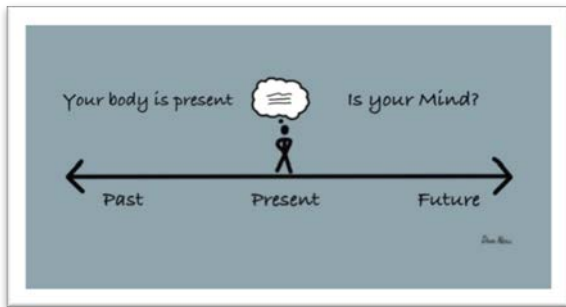


Imagine a balloon on your stomach inflating when you inhale and deflating when you exhale. Try to focus your breathing from your stomach with your chest remaining still.

Now spend 3-4 minutes breathing in to the count of 4, hold and out to the count of 6.



Mindfulness Practice



Mindfulness simply means being present in the moment. It involves observing what is happening around us or inside our bodies and describing those observations to ourselves.

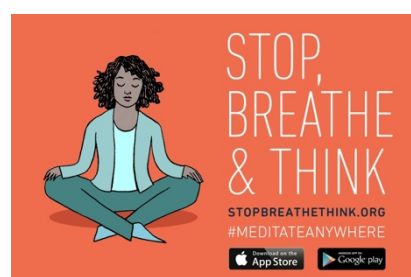
Mindfulness practice encourages us to do exercises to **practise being non-judgemental about ourselves, others and the situation.**

You can also incorporate mindfulness activities into your everyday routines. For example, when brushing your teeth in the morning or showering. This would involve **noticing what all of your senses are observing**, and describing these in your mind.



In the toothbrush example you may notice the smell of the toothpaste, the feel of the brush on your gums, the taste of the mint and the noise of the bristles of the toothbrush on your teeth. At points you may notice that your mind wanders to breakfast or something else, this is normal and when this happens gently bring your attention back to brushing your teeth.

There are a range of excellent Apps which talk you through various mindfulness exercises. These include:



Self-soothing Activities

All human beings require certain levels of sensory input: smell, sight, hearing, touch and taste in order to feel stimulated.

When we feel stressed we can feel overwhelmed by particular sensory input and we can also manage our sensory input to help us to feel calm.

Some of the activities below can help with this:

- Take a shower / bath
- Cuddle your pet
- Get snug under a cosy blanket or by wearing a fluffy jumper
- Squeeze a stress ball



- Light a scented candle
- Put on your favourite scent
- Use essential oils
- Put on a nice smelling hand moisturiser



- Make a cup of your favourite flavoured tea
- Have a piece of your favourite fruit / cake



- Listen to music
- Go into the garden and listen to the noises of the birds and trees



- Look at photos that you have fond memories of
- Watch a programme or film that you find calming, for example a nature programme.



Support and Contacts



This wellbeing leaflet was an introduction to you understanding emotional wellbeing and strategies to support you to cope when isolating at home. There are many online resources if you would like to find out more. Here are a few good websites and contacts:

Youth Access (Directory of local services)

www.youthaccess.org.uk

Childline : 0800 1111

www.childline.org.uk

Young Minds

www.youngminds.org.uk

Anna Freud Centre

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

Mental Health Foundation

www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Anxiety UK

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/blog/health-and-other-forms-of-anxiety-and-coronavirus>

A final note ... please always remember that **YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**

This pandemic will pass, and although you may not be in school at the moment, there are plenty of people you can talk to if you are feeling worried or low.

Always reach out to someone and talk about your feelings.

Some young people may need further support and guidance from professionals. If you are concerned about some of your thoughts or you feel that you are unable to keep yourself or others safe, it is important to contact your GP or your care co-ordinator if you are known to CAMHS. If there is a fear of imminent danger please call 999 or attend your local Accident and Emergency department.

School is here to help ...

You can always talk to someone at school.

- Contact your Pastoral Manager.
- Contact one of your Safeguarding team.
- Contact one of your Mental Health team.

ALPERTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL

OUR DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING OFFICERS

Safeguarding young people is the responsibility of every member of our staff. If you have a safeguarding concern, then please contact any of the following members of staff:

Deputy Safeguarding Lead
Ms Larkin, Deputy Headteacher
Tel extension: 111

Designated Safeguarding Lead
Mr Hoop, Deputy Headteacher
Tel extension: 999

If you cannot contact any of the safeguarding officers, please contact the Headteacher on extension 100.

Ms Alexander, Ms Bailey, Ms Banejee, Ms Barnett, Ms Doss, Ms Green, Mr Howes, Mr Jenkins, Ms Lucas, Ms Minott-Statham, Ms Ramesinghe, Ms Rufe, Mr Vavvas, Ms Watwick, Ms Zoforokou

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Click on each poster to visit the page on our website.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

Who do you **TALK** to if you are worried about something or someone?

- An adult you trust
- School Therapists from Brent Centre for Young People (BCYP) (E306 and SA Medical Room)
- Ms Minott-Statham – Mental Health Lead / Adult Mental Health First Aider (E131)
- Ms Hazley – Wellbeing Lead (E005)
- Ms Hussain – Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) / SENCO (E129)
- Ms Barnett - Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) E300
- Your Pastoral Manager

Ms Minott-Statham, Ms Dhanoo, Ms Turner, Ms Morris, Ms Hazley, Ms Hussain, Ms Barnett

Ms Minott-Statham: Mental Health Lead, First Aider (E131)
Ms Dhanoo: Lead School Therapist (E306 and SA Medical Room)
Ms Turner: School Therapist (E306 and SA Medical Room)
Ms Morris: School Therapist (E306 and SA Medical Room)
Ms Hazley: Wellbeing Lead (E005)
Ms Hussain: Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) (E129)
Ms Barnett: Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) (E300)

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