

## TAKING CARE OF YOUR WELLBEING AND REMAINING CALM



We recognise that with the constantly changing COVID-19 situation around the world, this is an unprecedented time for everyone. A time that, for many, is filled with uncertainty. We know though, that people are amazing, heroic, ingenious, compassionate and kind. We are

certain that after a period of adjustment, we will see, as we are already, the best of humanity as the weeks unfold.

**It is very natural that you may feel anxious and worried at this time.** There is a great deal of uncertainty in all areas of our lives and it will certainly test our resilience. It is important that we try not to panic and get anxious. When we panic, or our anxiety levels get high, we use the emotional part of the brain, or the limbic system, which is responsible for our fight and flight responses. [This is great for keeping us safe if we need to run away or fight to keep ourselves safe, but it's not the right part of our brains we need to use when we need to make clear decisions and choices.](#) We need the cortex, the thinking part of the brain to keep working.

Children and young people may have a lot to be worried about at this time and the younger they are, the more difficult they may find it to talk about what they are feeling. [It is important that adults keep talking to children and young people about their worries,](#) and to remind them too that all emotions are natural, and it is OK to feel unsure, worried or confused.

If you, or the children and young people in your life feel worried or feel anxious take 2 minutes to breathe. [Stop what you are doing, close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing.](#) Paying attention to your breathing really works and there is strong scientific evidence base for it. [Mindfulness](#) and [visualisations](#) are based on this science.

**Try this Breathing Exercise.** Take a deep breath in through your nose, all the way into your diaphragm, and breath out through your mouth for longer than you breath in. Ideally your breath should be 2:1 which means if you breath in for 2 seconds, you double the number to breath out, in this case, 4 seconds. You can try 3 seconds in, and 6 seconds out. Choose what feels most comfortable but breathe deeply and fill your lungs all the way into your diaphragm.

Do this for at least two minutes to help slow your heart rate. Your heart rate will then tell your brain that everything is OK, no need for fight or flight and you will relax. If you need more than 2 minutes, take as long as you need. If you can take deeper breaths, take deeper breaths but remember to exhale for double the number of seconds than you inhale. If you have a Fitbit or something that shows your heart rate, look at what a difference just two minutes of breathing can make to your heart rate.



## FEELING GOOD ABOUT OURSELVES

You should spend some time each day to remind yourself that it is OK that life will change as we adjust to a 'new normal' and that for a while we may not feel in control of every element of it. This can feel very unsettling. That is why it helps us to focus on the things we do have control over such as our immediate relationships and environment.

### TOP TIP: Limit Watching the News and Limit Your Time on Social Media.

Watching what is happening in the world, seeing other people upset, and listening to other people's worries may make you feel more worried and anxious. We empathise and care, but there is risk that what we are seeing and hearing can make us feel even more anxious.

Try and watch the news at certain times in the day, such as once in the morning and once at night. Then turn it off. This will give you some headspace and some time away from worry. Do the same with social media and upsetting media in general.



## PRACTICE SELF COMPASSION

You may also find that you are not being kind to yourself when you worry and feel anxious. In fact, we can be very negative about ourselves when we don't feel 100% and we can hear an inner critic that tells us negative things about ourselves. It is really important

that we are kind to ourselves and remind ourselves of how brilliant we are. We may have to do that with deliberate thoughts and actions.

### TOP TIP: Practice Positive Affirmations

You may like to put post it notes on your bedroom mirror that are positive affirmations and phrases and spend a few minutes every day saying each one out loud. For example,

"The days that I am living are not what I am used to, but it won't last forever."

"I believe in myself and trust that I will make the choices that are best for me and those I love." "I am resilient." "I am hopeful and kind."

Ask your friends and family to message each other with five positive attributes that you can post around the house and say out loud as you pass them. For example, "My partner believes that I am the most wonderful person in the universe." "Dave said I have the best sense of humour and always make people laugh." "My dog said (in tail wags and lap invasions) that I'm hopelessly devoted to you and I have never smelled anything on this earth that smells as good you do."



### TOP TIP: Allow Yourself to Make Mistakes

Learning is a part of life and right now we are all learning to live differently. Be kind to yourself, allow yourself to make mistakes, get things wrong, and to not be perfect. You can only do your best and that is all you can do. Don't set unrealistic goals or have unrealistic expectations of yourself because if you fail, you may only feel worse. Remind yourself of all that you do well instead.



## STAY CONNECTED

A fundamental human need is to feel we belong and if we aren't socialising as we were, this can bring its own challenges. It is important that we make time to connect and stay in touch through virtual platforms like Facetime and Skype, so that you can **see** as well as hear each other. One of the ways that people calm and soothe each other is through facial expression so face to face contact, even if virtual is very important. Many companies are offering more data and/ or free data. Take advantage of it. Instead of calling or messaging use a virtual platform so that you can physically **see** each other. If you don't have this technology, download it as most are free to use. Once you've set it up let people know that you will be using this platform for the foreseeable future. As much as you can, replicate your usual every day on a virtual platform which will help maintain your connections to each other.

### TOP TIP: Make Time to Have Virtual Fun with Your Friends and Family.

You could organise virtual social events, set up a weekly group meeting and treat it like you would any other time where you would usually be in each other's company. Think about when you see friends and family and try and stick to seeing each other at those times. You could have breakfast, lunch or dinner together, meet up at break times. Share an interest such as cooking together, have coffee together, play a game together, have a virtual quiz or watch your favourite TV programme together. Anything you would normally do together, try and keep the same routine as much as possible and stay connected.

## SLEEP AND REST

### *Sleep Now and Rest*

*Russian folk song*

Sleep my ba - by, sleep now and rest. Safe as a fledg - ling in its wee nest.

Sleep now and rest safe in your nest. Sleep my ba - by, sleep now and rest.

bethnotes.com

Sleeping well is very important for your wellbeing. If we don't sleep well and feel rested, the lack of sleep or disrupted sleep can make it difficult to concentrate and it can affect our moods. Also, if we sleep too much, this can have the same effect as not getting enough sleep. It may be difficult to sleep at the moment if you are worrying, but when you sleep, the brain and body are busy repairing and healing you. You will know when you feel most sleepy. Some people are more alert first in the morning and go to sleep earlier than others, some people are more alert midmorning and go to sleep later than others. When you are sleepy, start your bedtime routine and get some rest.

### TOP TIPS: Relax your Mind and Your Body

Turn off all of your screens at least an hour before you go to bed. The blue light that comes from your screens keeps you awake as the brain and body think it is still daytime. As we get sleepy, the body produces melatonin which helps us relax. If there is blue light, this delays melatonin production and this makes it harder to go straight to sleep. Set yourself a digital curfew and stick to it.

Try and exercise every day for at least one hour. The more physically tired we are, the easier it is for us to go to sleep.

Try and listen to some white noise, like nature sounds of a river flowing, ocean waves, rain falling, or a human heartbeat. Whilst you're listening, do some deep breathing, or muscle relaxation and hopefully you should drift away into sleep.

## EXERCISE



Understandably, you may find that social distancing can be boring or frustrating. You may find your mood and feelings are affected and you may feel low, worried or have problems sleeping and you might miss being outside with other people.

At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse. There are simple things you can do that may help, to stay mentally and physically active during this time such as:

- look for ideas of exercises you can do at home on the [NHS website](#)
- spend time doing things you enjoy – this might include reading, cooking, other indoor hobbies or listening to the radio or watching TV programmes
- try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs
- keep your windows open to let in fresh air, get some natural sunlight if you can, or get outside into the garden
- You can also go for a walk or exercise outdoors if you stay more than 2 metres from others.

## ROUTINES



Try to keep to routines as much as possible.



## TOP TIP: Drink Water

- Drink plenty of water to keep hydrated.
- Drinking water will also help you to concentrate.
- Adult humans are 60 percent water, and our blood is 90 percent water.
- There is no universally agreed quantity of water that must be consumed daily.
- Water is essential for the kidneys and other bodily functions.
- When dehydrated, the skin can become more vulnerable to skin disorders and wrinkling.
- Flavour water with fruit juice or make ice-pops.



## TOP TIP: Eat Healthy Food

- Meal Plan and Eat Healthy Food Options as much as possible.
- Look for foods that are low in fat, calories, sugar, and sodium — and high in fibre, vitamins, calcium, and iron.
- Choose smaller grilled items over fried foods.
- Be creative with food and include the family in planning meals.