

Looking after Ourselves: Guidance for Young People



Powys

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There is a lot of uncertainty for everybody surrounding Coronavirus (Covid-19). The situation is constantly changing and developing, and we are having to adapt the way we live our lives very quickly. Understandably, this is causing a lot of worry and anxiety for everyone. Routines and normality have gone out of the window and young people, like everyone else, have had to change the way they live their daily lives.

Following government guidelines, we are having to spend a lot more time indoors. Virtual online learning has replaced face-to-face teaching and get togethers with family and friends have been put on hold. Spending a lot more time at home and adjusting to a 'new normal' can be tricky. So now, more than ever, it is important that we are looking after ourselves physically and mentally.

This guide hopes to provide you with some practical ideas on how you can promote your own self-care, giving you helpful pointers and links to some great online resources. We will look at how you can **stay healthy, keep connected, and boost skills** at this difficult time. We hope you find this information useful. You can contact any member of the Educational Psychology team (details on page 10) for extra guidance or support. We are always happy to help!

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Staying Healthy:

Looking after our physical and mental wellbeing is an important way to stay healthy

Stay Active

"When it comes to health and wellbeing, regular exercise is about as close to a magic potion as you can get" - Tich Nhat Hanh

Regular exercise has positive effects on both our physical and emotional wellbeing (check out this fascinating [TED talk](#) looking at the brain changing effects of exercise!). As we are all spending more time at home, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy habits. It is important that we try to get at least **30 minutes exercise per day** to keep our bodies and minds healthy.

As long as it is safe to do so, a short daily walk around your local area is a great way to lift your mood and create a positive routine. The internet is full of free resources, apps, and YouTube channels to help you maintain good exercise routines at home. Check out some of the ideas [here](#) or have a look at the [NHS exercise website](#) and the [Stay In, Work Out](#) Movement.

Practice Self-Care

Making time, each day, to practice self-care and kindness is one of **the most important things** we can be doing right now. Try and create some structure to your days. Follow a new routine (e.g. sleeping, eating, washing, drinking plenty of water, getting dressed, exercising etc.) and make time to be kind to yourself and do a bit of what you love. Have a read [here](#) of why self-care is so important

to our mental wellbeing. [Kindness Matters](#) offer some great advice on practicing self-care, along with a free 30-day kindness challenge. Follow [Action for Happiness](#) on Facebook or Twitter. They regularly share resources on practicing self-care and kindness.



Research shows that our emotional wellbeing improves when we achieve what is known as a **state of flow**. Think of a time you have been totally immersed in an activity. You are fully focused and concentrated on it, and almost lose yourself in this joyful experience. You were likely to be experiencing a state of flow. It will be different for everyone, but it may involve drawing, mindful colouring, exercising, or reading for example. Right now, experiencing flow and taking some time out from Coronavirus related worries is important. Whatever it is that brings you happiness, **try and make some time for it!**

Whilst committing to having some simple structure to your days can bring a sense of calm amongst the chaos, try not to be too rigid with your plans. This can place unnecessary pressure on yourself. First and foremost, you want to be as **relaxed, happy, and well** as you can be. If we don't look after ourselves, we can't look after anyone else either!

[Acknowledge Difficult Emotions](#)

It is **completely normal** to feel worried or anxious about yourself, your family or friends right now. However, sometimes our anxieties can become so intense that they impact negatively on our daily lives. It's important that we give ourselves time to understand and think about how we are feeling. **Naming** your

emotions and worries gives you an opportunity to **tame** them. Check out this [YouTube video](#) and [Unicef advice](#) exploring how we can manage our worries and concerns during the Coronavirus pandemic.

There are lots of online resources and apps for promoting positive mental health.

The [ThinkNinja](#) app teaches about positive mental health and skills to build resilience.

The [Healthy Young Minds](#) and [NHS](#) websites offer a wide selection of apps to support mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Mindfulness can also be a good way to manage difficult emotions. You can access free mindfulness exercises at [Mindful](#), [Mind](#), and [Headspace](#).

[Every Mind Matters](#) and [Young Minds](#) are full of tips, advice, self-soothing tools, and resources to help you stay healthy and manage stress and anxiety.

[Kooth](#) provides free, anonymous online support for young people. You can interact in a supportive way with other young people or, if you prefer, receive support from a qualified counsellor.

Keeping Connected:

Maintaining friendships and connections with the outside world can help us feel safe and supported

Keep Socialising

Right now everyday life looks very different to what we are used to. We are not sure when things will go back to 'normal' and this can feel quite unsettling. You might be worried about missing out on important experiences with your friends, end of year celebrations for example. You might feel concerned about how your education, exams, applications, or future plans may be affected. Remember, **we are in this together**. Don't be afraid to reach out to those around you. It is likely that they are feeling the same and would welcome the opportunity to discuss their worries and concerns with you.

Just because we are all spending more time at home, it doesn't mean we have to stop socialising. We are fortunate to live in a time where technology is so advanced. We can keep in touch via [Zoom](#), FaceTime or SnapChat, for example. There are also some fun apps that allow you to play games during videocalls with your friends. Check out the [HouseParty](#) app!

Think about **who** you want to stay connected with. Human beings thrive on having deep, meaningful relationships which give us a sense of **belonging**. Who makes you feel good? Who can you be totally yourself around? Who can you share your worries and concerns with? It might be a friend, an aunty, or even someone from a club. Make time to **regularly connect** with them. There is no right or wrong amount of time we should be socialising. It will look different for everyone. Find a balance that makes you happy.

Stay Connected

Whilst it is important that we stay connected to the outside world, we need to be aware of the negative sides of social media and the news. Sometimes, too much information can be overwhelming. It might be a good idea to **limit the amount of time** you spend online and/or listening to the news. Set aside an hour every morning and every evening where you spend quality time with your family and turn off your phones and TVs. Mute conversations containing anxiety-inducing messages. Twitter has a feature to mute certain words from appearing in your feed. And be aware of **fake news**. Follow official accounts like [NHS](#) or [Government](#) for updates and information.

Check out [Bored Panda](#) and [The Happy News](#) which are dedicated to sharing positive news, or have a read of how other young people are keeping positive during this difficult time ([here](#))!

Remember, if things are difficult at home there are always people you can contact. If you or someone else is seriously injured, Call 999. If you can't speak, follow [this guide](#). You can also contact [Childline](#) about any problem - big or small. [Unicef](#) have put together some helpful guidelines on what to do if you are experiencing cyberbullying.

Boosting Skills:

Keeping our minds working and taking this time to build on or learn new skills can be a great way to feel productive

Focus on your learning

School has probably kept you busy with your learning, but you may find yourself with more free time on your hands than usual. It's important to use this time firstly to practice **self-care and kindness**, but you might also want to spend some time focusing on your learning. Why not learn about an area you've always been interested in, or catch up on some of those trickier subjects? The internet is full of great learning resources - find one that works for you!

[BBC Bitesize](#) can be helpful to support school-based learning and revision.

[UK Government](#) has put together a list of online resources to carry on learning at home.

[Off School](#) offer hundreds of fun activities you can complete at home.

[Scholastic](#) have put together day-by-day projects to keep you learning, including how to spot **fake news** and decoding what your dog is thinking!

[TED-Ed](#) is a website with short talks and animations covering all kinds of subjects.

[Khan Academy](#) offers hundreds of resources to help you understand different subjects.

[ChatterPacks blog](#) has lots of extra resources which can help with learning.

[Recovery College Online](#) are offering online courses surrounding how we may feel about Coronavirus for 7-18 year olds.

Work on your interests

You might also want to spend some time working on your interests or learning a new skill. You could take up baking or learn some DIY!

[YouTube](#), [Instructables](#), and [Make](#) are full of instructional videos and guides to help you get started.

[Fender](#) are offering 3 months free guitar lessons right now.

You could learn [British Sign Language](#) for only £3.

Why not lose yourself in a story?

[Audible](#) are offering hundreds of free audio books. The [National Emergency Library](#) holds over a million e-books you can access free.

[Overdrive](#) helps you access books through your local library or school.

Focus on your future

You might feel that you're missing out on a lot of things right now - celebratory events, holidays, even just a catch-up with friends. Whilst it's important that we don't dwell on all of the things that we are unable to do, it's a good idea to make a list of all the things you want to do when restrictions are lifted. What have you been missing most? What brings you joy that you could do more of? Plan to spend more time doing these things as an act of **self-care**.

Plans can be big or small but should be there to remind us that **this won't last forever** and there are things to **look forward to**.

You might also want to plan for your future by completing some **online courses**. This can be a great way to show your interest and commitment to your chosen career and can support course and job applications.

[BBC Bitesize](#) has a career section full of resources about careers that might suit you.

[Mooc-list](#) is a search engine to find free online courses from different providers.

[The Open University](#) and [Future Learn](#) offer around 1000 courses for free and provide certificates upon completion (aged 13+).

Whatever you decide to do to keep yourself busy, the number one thing to remember is to practice **self-care** and **kindness**. Do more of what makes you feel good and reach out if you need support. And remember, **we are in this together** and **it won't last forever**.

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