**Ideas For Young People At A Time Of Challenge**

The Coronavirus pandemic is new for all of us. We are all struggling to make sense of it and learning how to keep ourselves safe and healthy. No one has all the answers. However, we are all likely to do better if:

* **we keep looking out for ‘what works for us’**
* **share good ideas**
* **and let others know if we need help.**

Creating your own structure or rhythm to your day can be helpful. Be kind to yourself. Some days will go better than others but pay attention to the things you need to help you get by. Can you tick off each of the following every day?

 1. Exercise

Exercise – is the number one way to help the endorphins in our body get going and stop us from overthinking. What works for you?

* A walk, run or cycle outside
* An exercise class/app like Joe Wicks (many apps are free at the moment like High Intensity Interval Training by Down Dog) Browse YouTube and try a different one each day til you find one that best suits you.
* Dancing – stick your favourite tunes on in your room and go for it (silent disco style if you have to because of other house members). Get practising your favourite dance steps for your own TikTok video
* Can you practice your solo football/tennis/basketball skills?
* Skipping, hula hooping, hopscotch? – any old toys around that can be used by you and/or others in your household?

2. Connect with someone

As a teenager it is normal to get frustrated with the adults in your life. Especially if you are stuck with them for long periods of time without a break! However – remember that the adults around will want to help you. What’s the best way for you to check in with each other at least once a day?

* walk round block with the imaginary/real dog
* breakfast/lunch or tea together(including cooking and/or washing up)?
* tea and biscuits at a set time?
* a card game after tea (jenga, monopoly, cluedo) for twenty minutes?
* sharing funny memes/videos on social media?
* exercising together/learning dance moves together?
* learning a new skill together?
* teaching them your favourite computer game?
* Get them to help you make a sensory soothing box (section 8)

Text, phone, videocall, message other friends/family as well – share a virtual activity together if possible – e.g. exercising ‘virtually’ together or agree to watch a tv show/film at the same time and then ring each other to chat. Link up over homework to make it less daunting.

Contact – a word about contact – the cruellest thing about the coronavirus is that our natural impulse is to draw close to the people most important to us. Unfortunately this is the one thing that spreads infection. To keep our loved ones safe we have to stay away from them (if they live in a different home). However, physically distant does not have to mean emotionally distant. Talk to your social worker about adaptations to the usual contact rules.

Check in with your teachers – they are still there to help you and will be missing you! The same goes for other professionals in your life- social workers, leaving care workers, psychologists, therapists, LAC nurses etc – they are all only a phone call away and many are starting to get their heads around video calls. Let them know if you want regular check ins. Don’t feel like you have to wait til it’s urgent.

 3. Eat as well as you can

There’s never been a better time for all of us to think more about how to eat well on a budget, with what’s available to us. Check out Jack Monroe [www.cookingonabootstrap.com](http://www.cookingonabootstrap.com) for ideas about nourishing food that tastes great and doesn’t break the bank.

Who provides the food in your house – can you help them with meal planning and preparation? Can you learn how to make your favourite meals and snacks? Can you surprise them by making them their favourite? Are you up for trying new meals to expand your repertoire?

 4. Do something that you enjoy

Watching movies, favourite TV shows, computer games, getting creative (see below), have a relaxing bath or refreshing shower, listening to music, get dressed up as if you are going to go out or have a full on PJ day.

Browse social media but use it wisely – set yourself a time limit and notice if the things you are looking at make you feel better or worse. You may want to check the latest news but after this swap to something that lifts your mood and doesn’t suck you into a pit of hopelessness.

Get creative *-* What’s your thing?– making music, singing, baking/cooking, making videos, drawing, painting, writing/blogging, sewing, knitting, hair/make up, making things? Allow yourself to try stuff and be spectacularly bad at it (there are ‘how to’ videos for everything on the internet). Could someone in your household help you and/or learn with you? Make yourself a sensory self soothing box (see section 8)

 5. Achieve something everyday

You don’t have to rigidly stick to a school timetable but avoiding all school/college work for ever is likely to lead to guilty feelings. Are you managing to do anything? Praise yourself for that – being self motivated in a pandemic is tough!! You are learning great life skills for the way ahead.

What are you not managing to do? Deep breathe – it’s ok to be struggling – allow yourself to be helped – can you let your carer/teachers know what you are struggling with/getting behind on? Remember something is better than nothing – so spending five minutes on maths homework that you have been ignoring for 3 weeks is a massive step in the right direction. You are likely to have plenty of time to catch up so little and often should work well.

Aside from school work – what else would help you feel that you had done something useful today? – tidied your room, made someone a drink or a meal, helped with housework or DIY around the house, sorted through your toys, books, clothes?

 6. Do something to help someone else

One great way to make ourselves feel good is to do something to help someone else, no matter how small. Can you help out at home with housework, DIY, cooking, shopping or gardening? Or entertain younger children in the house, helping them with their homework, timestables or reading etc.

Within the rules of social distancing, can you contact someone you know who might be lonely, shop for neighbours, or help the NHS/carers by making scrubs <https://scrubhub.org.uk/manchester/> or crochet mask adaptors <https://bellacococrochet.com/ppe-mask-adaptor-pattern/>

 7. Being outside

If you’ve not been outside for exercising or shopping and it complies with social distancing rules – get outside! Make sure you feel the sun on your face (or wind and rain on your cheek!) even if it’s by sticking your head out of the window, standing on the front step, in the garden or walking round the block. Observe the weather, trees, plants, clouds and animals - this will help you with no 8.

 8. Staying in the Now!

Many of our most difficult feelings relate to anger and upset about things that have happened in the past or worries and fears about the future.

This is why finding ways to stay focused on the present (mindfulness) can really calm us down – like exercising regularly to get fit, regularly practicing mindfulness in a variety of ways can make a real difference to our ability to manage stress. Just like exercise, however, you have to find what method suits you best.

The simplest way to do this is just to stop, breathe deeply and notice 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch/feel, 3 things you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste (the 5,4,3,2, 1 technique).

There are also a huge array of apps and YouTube videos teaching breathing techniques, meditation, mindful activites, yoga and pilates etc. For example:

* Hand or star breathing: <https://youtube/NAldSdx-jps>
* Muscle relaxation: <https://youtu.be/FbhUxg9eHDE>
* Rhythm Breathing: <https://youtu.be./e6z6TJ1wQDM>
* Young Minds have a good explanation of how to make yourself a sensory soothing box <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/how-to-make-a-self-soothe-box/>

Helpful websites include: [www.Headspace.com](http://www.Headspace.com)

 [www.stopbreathethink.com](http://www.stopbreathethink.com)

[www.calm.com](http://www.calm.com)

[www.calmharm.co.uk](http://www.calmharm.co.uk)

[www.smilingmind.com.au](http://www.smilingmind.com.au)

[www.downdogyogaapp.com](http://www.downdogyogaapp.com)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Did I? | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thur | Fri | Sat | Sun |
| 1. Exercise?
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Socialise?
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Eat well?
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Do something fun?
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Achieve something (even if small)
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Help someone else?
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Go outside (if allowed)
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Use ‘staying in the now’ techniques
 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Rate your day 0-10 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

What I am learning about what works for me

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*And finally, sleep is a really good sign of how you are doing. Everyone is finding the change of routine disruptive and that effects sleep. If you are having persistent difficulties getting to sleep let your carer know and we can share some ideas about what might help.*