

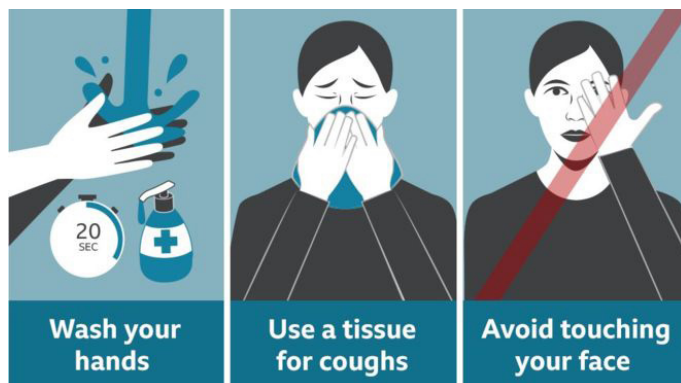
COVID-19

Mind your Mental Health during the Corona Virus

Information for Teenagers and Young People

Helpful things we know about the Virus:

- We know what it is – this means that we can test for it and have a plan to treat it
- Most cases are mild and most people recover – especially younger people
- The virus can be wiped clean – so hand washing and wiping down areas will protect you and others
- Lots of scientists and doctors are working hard on finding a vaccine and improving treatment for those more seriously affected
- There are things we can do to help not catch or pass on the virus:



Common Symptoms

- High temperature
- New continuous cough.

How to treat: If you and anyone in your family has these symptoms

- Everyone should stay at home for 14 days
- Use paracetamol to help you feel better
- Be kind to yourself and the rest of your family
- Rest
- Talk to someone you trust if you feel sick or worried about yourself.

One of the other ways of stopping the spread, is to avoid large crowds of people, so you may notice schools, clubs and societies stopping for a while. You may need to stay at home and be less able to go out to meet your friends.

Remember Routine and Daily Wellbeing (especially if you aren't at school!)

When something big and dramatic like this happens (which is not too often thankfully) it interferes with our daily routine. It might sound a bit silly, but routines are actually really important.

Routines reassure us, they help the world feel predictable and they help our bodies know when it is time to eat and sleep. That's

where Coronavirus can have such a negative psychological impact, because the things that we are doing to keep the virus away, will knock our routines off. Unpredictability and uncertainty feeds and fuels anxiety, so having as good a routine as possible will really help.

Here are 4 key ways to keep a healthy routine.

Here are 4 key ways to keep a healthy routine: Think about a table (*this sounds a bit weird ... but hear me out!*) A table has four legs to keep it stable and strong. All four are equally important and need to be equal in length for the table to be balanced and strong. If any of the four are neglected or if we do too much of any one of them then it will knock us off balance.



1. Sleep

When we're out of routine we often neglect one of the most important aspect of our self-care, sleep. We might stay up too late watching a box set knowing we don't have to be up early in the morning. For a prolonged period at home, it is inevitable that there will be some times where we will go to sleep later and get up later. What we need to try and do is make sure that it doesn't become a pattern.

When Coronavirus comes under control again, we will need to adapt back to our pre-coronavirus lives again! This will be much easier to do if our normal sleep routines aren't too out of sync.

2. Social Media

It is really important for our mental health that we are connected to those around us. As bad a rap as it gets sometimes, this is where technology comes in! Whether it's a WhatsApp video chat or FaceTime, it will be important to maintain regular social contact. It will never replace real human contact, but as a temporary measure it can meet our needs for social connection.



There are a few things to remember about social media and mental health:

- Not everything you read and see online is true. Check things out with someone you trust
- Limit corona conversations. Talking about corona all the time will only make you anxious and worry more. Think about having corona free chat zones or limiting discussions to 5 minutes at the start of a group chat – have a timekeeper
- Whilst social media can be helpful, it is also important to take a break. If not at school schedule chats at your normal times eg. Break/Lunch. This will help keep your routine and also help with your studies at home. Have a scheduled morning chat to make sure you are all up and at your school work and help keep each other motivated in studies – especially if you have significant exams.

3. Exercise

- Exercise is a well-known mood enhancer! Just a little bit of regular exercise has been shown to help our mood. With having to stay at home a bit more, we will be at risk of not doing as much exercise. The gym might be closed, our football training might be cancelled and we might not be able to walk the dog as much.
- A quick google search or any free exercise app will give us so many options for exercises that we can do at home or (weather permitting) in gardens or around the house. Regular exercise will protect both our physical and mental health.



4. Food

When we're out of a routine, our healthy food habits can slip. We need to try and maintain routines around eating and also try and resist the temptation to over indulge in things like junk food. Processed foods that are high in sugar and fats, also negatively impact our mood and energy levels.

It will be helpful to try and eat at the same time that you normally would.

Sticking to the same breakfast, lunch and dinner times will help your body clock. As we will have a bit more time at home, why don't you try cooking a meal you have never cooked before! Ask if your family can experiment with some cooking, baking or new foods and use the opportunity to prep some really nice meals.



Managing Emotions

CoronaVirus, school closures, being more isolated can all be frightening and make us feel worried and anxious.

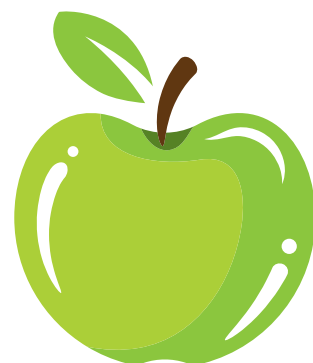
In this situation, anxiety is likely to be one of our biggest challenges. As a teenager, one of the things you may be worried about, is the impact of school closures on your education or exams. Try to remember that your school will have your best interests in mind. Everyone who knows you, will know how important this is to you. Your school will have its own advice and resources on its website.



It's also important when we're feeling anxious to check in with friends and family. There's a high likelihood that they will have been feeling anxious too. It helps to know we're not the only ones that feel a particular way. We can use all the things discussed in this booklet to help each other manage our anxieties and worries.

Anxiety UK suggests practising the 'APPLE' technique to deal with anxiety and worries.

- **Acknowledge:** Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind. You don't have to do anything with it – just notice it. Remember that thoughts aren't actually as powerful as we think they are. They are just thoughts, they can't hurt us
- **Pause:** Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Just pause and breathe. Taking deep, slow breaths for at least 5 minutes will calm our heart rates and help the thinking parts of our brains switch back on again
- **Pull back:** Remind yourself this is just worry talking. While worry is normal and okay, it isn't always helpful. It is only a thought or feeling. Don't believe everything you think. Thoughts are not statements or facts
- **Let go and lean on others:** Try if you can, to let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You might imagine thoughts floating away in a bubble or cloud. You could lean on someone else by talking about your thoughts and feelings with a parent, friend or an adult who you trust.
- **Explore then engage:** Explore the present moment. 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. 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. Then engage in a nice activity, something fun or pleasant. Or engage with a person who can help you feel better.



In Summary

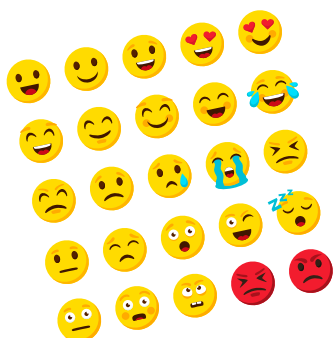


Social Media

- Avoid watching, listening to or reading news that could cause you to feel anxious or distressed
- Try to find factual information
- Take a social media break
- Stay in touch with friends through phone calls, texts and through platforms that are 'Coronavirus talk free zones'

Keep Your Routine Going

- Routines support good mental health. Think about the 4 legs of the routine table.
 1. Regular good sleep
 2. Social contact
 3. Exercise and brain stimulation
 4. Food and diet



Managing Emotions

This can understandably be a time of worry for a lot of people. It is important to talk to those you know and trust.

- A – Acknowledge and notice how you feel
- P – Pause and take a moment
- P – Pull back from the worry for a few minutes
- L – Let go of the worry and lean on those around you
- E – Explore the world, engage with others or with something relaxing