

This document aims to support you to help individuals to discuss and take action to improve their mental health and wellbeing. It provides examples of questions to help you better understand the person's circumstances, feelings and experiences, as well as examples of ways that can support mental wellbeing. Additional mental health and wellbeing information can be found at NHS A&A Better Health web pages above.

An individual may present specifically for support to manage stress, anxiety and wellbeing. However, many people are still uncomfortable with asking for help around their mental wellbeing. Therefore, it is important to ask questions to better understand how the person is feeling. They may also present to get support with another area of their life which can open up the opportunity to understand how that situation is affecting their mental health. For example, someone asking for help with money is likely to be under considerable stress. In addition to a referral or signposting, asking the person some more questions around mental health and wellbeing could support them to deal with the stress. (The situation you have described sounds really difficult, how is that making you feel? How well have you been sleeping? Would you like to talk about this more and discuss some things that may help you cope with these difficult feelings?)

Have you been feeling worried, stressed, anxious or low recently?

- What does this feel like for you? Is there anything in particular causing you to feel this way? Have you experienced these feelings before?
- Do you know how to cope with these feelings in a positive way?
- Do you have support around you to deal with these feelings?
- Do you get the opportunity to take time out for yourself? To do things you enjoy? To do things to improve your wellbeing?
- Have you thought about things you could do to improve your wellbeing? Is there anything that you have used in the past that helped you feel better?
(eg recreational/social/ creative activities, reflective activity, relaxation or physical activity).
- What do you do at the moment to improve your wellbeing?
- Would you like any information on local community activities to allow you to socialise and meet with others?

If someone is feeling worried, stressed, anxious or low:

- ❖ Explain that everyone's mental health and wellbeing goes up and down
- ❖ Acknowledge that it is ok to be feel like this, and reassure them that things will get better
- ❖ COVID related worries- reassure that feeling this way is a completely normal response to a challenging situation. Although this is a situation that is out with our control, we are still able to take some action that can help us to feel better and take control of our feelings. Again, reassure them this will not last forever.
- ❖ Be positive; explain that there are simple steps they can take to improve their mental wellbeing and ask if it would be ok to go through some of them
- ❖ Talk them through setting small achievable goals each day or each week using the tools below
- ❖ Start by asking what kind of things they have enjoyed in the past or done to make themselves feel better
- ❖ Ask about people they could keep in touch with more – link to daily wellbeing tools

Everyday steps to make day to day life more manageable during COVID-19

- Rethink "I am stuck inside" to "I have more time to focus of myself and my home"
- Try to work out and plan a daily routine and keep some structure to your days
- Limit the time you watch the news or read about the coronavirus, only choosing credible sources
- Set up zones for daily activities, for example try not to eat in bed or work on the sofa
- If your worry or anxiety becomes unmanageable use telephone sources of support

What would you like to change or be different this area of your life? How motivated are you to make the change (scale of 1-10) How confident are you that you can make this change?

Then highlight and discuss some of the suggested ways to improve mhw below:

10 ways to improve our mental health & wellbeing

With social distancing we may have to rethink how we maintain good wellbeing and adapt some of the ways below:

- Eat well and drink sensibly
- Keep physically active
- Ensure you get enough sleep
- Take time to do things you enjoy
- Keep in touch with others
- Take a break
- Talk about your feelings
- Accept and value who you are
- Care for others
- Don't be afraid to ask for help

Self help tools

Below are some practical self help tools you can try out during the weeks of social distancing:

Daily Wellbeing Tools: In the same way we look after our physical health every day, we can look after our mental health & wellbeing every day. Think of some activities that you enjoy. This can be anything at all whether it is a hobby, an activity or a task. During social distancing we may not be able to do some of the things that we usually enjoy doing. You could use this time to try some new 'Daily Wellbeing Tools' from our suggestions below:

- Online exercise class
- Play a board game
- Baking or Cooking
- Walking
- Create a daily 'to do' list
- Learn a new skill online
- Gardening
- Colouring or Craft
- Yoga (online videos)
- Have a 'clear out'
- Look through old photos
- Start a journal
- Spend time outdoors
- Read a book or magazine
- Mindfulness
- Phone or video call friends or family
- Make a 'feel good' playlist

Relaxation doesn't have to take up lots of time. Simply taking a few minutes for yourself to do something you enjoy can give you enough space to feel calmer. Try to make a plan for your day or your week...and remember to build in some form of relaxation! Try Belly breathing- put one hand on your stomach and one on your chest. Slowly breathe in and out, feeling your stomach inflate and deflate like a balloon as you breathe.

Mindfulness...and focussing on our breath... for a few minutes every day can help build healthy coping skills. Take time to breathe & be thoughtful about the small details of where you are and how you are feeling

- Box breathing or four-square breathing involves exhaling to a count of four, holding your lungs empty for a count of four, inhaling for four, holding for four, exhaling and beginning the pattern again
- Mindful cup of tea or coffee...**simply sit and just be in the moment**. Take five minutes before the day begins...this is even more important just now because we are out of our usual routines.

Gratitude & positivity: thinking about three things that went well or made us smile can improve our mood, help us feel more positive and able to cope. Particularly useful when things are tough. **Small things are best!** It can be anything from a smell, sound or touch. It can be something you have done or something someone has done for you. Write down your '**3 Good Things**' regularly.

Supporting children & young people who are worried about COVID-19.

It is normal for CYP to be worried. There are simple things the people around them can do to help them cope:

- Acknowledge that it is ok to be concerned
- Don't dismiss questions or concerns, instead listen and try to reassure
- Help distract from worries with activities they enjoy or spending time outdoors
- Check in with them regularly

Links to resources and additional support

<http://www.clearyourhead.scot>

<http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/5828-Steps%20to%20deal%20with%20stress-September2019-English.pdf>

<https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/stress.asp>

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/stress/breathing-and-relaxation-exercises-for-stress>

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/mental-health/mental-health-self-help-guides/anxiety-self-help-guide>

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/mental-health/mental-health-self-help-guides/depression-self-help-guide>

<https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/sleepproblems.asp>

<https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/anger.asp>

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/DepressionSelfHelp.pdf>

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/AnxietySelfHelp.pdf>

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/anger.pdf>

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/PositiveAffirmations.pdf>