



Teen guide to surviving lockdown and beyond

Activities, tools and practices to help manage social distancing and stay positive during the coronavirus lockdown and beyond



stay at home,
protect the NHS,
save lives



IT'S OK TO REACT DIFFERENTLY

As a teenager your brain will go through a lot of changes and so you may find you react differently to your family members and even friends. That's completely normal. It's also important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to deal with this current situation. We have never lived through anything like this before in our life time.






Did you know ...

There is a significant stage of growth and development for the brain from the age of about 11 to well into the 20s!

The teen brain is in a constant state of development.

Teenagers need more sleep than adults (about 9 ¼ hours compared to about 8 hours for adults). You may find it difficult to switch off at night as your sleep hormone “melatonin” doesn't kick in until late at night.

Unfortunately it doesn't switch off early in the morning either - so you might find you're grateful for this extra time in the mornings at the moment!



Your Inner Chimp

Learning to accept and manage your chimp

Imagine you have two brains; one brain is your thinking logically brain and the other is your emotional, reactive and irrational brain. Whatever situation we are faced with, we find both our 'brains' have a specific response. When responding with our logical brain (the human part) we often resolve situations with a calm and rational response. When responding with our emotional brain (the chimp part), we often respond with emotion creating an unwanted reaction in ourselves which often leads to further unwanted reactions. It's natural for us to respond with our 'chimp' brain; it's part of us that we will have forever. But when we know how our chimp brain will respond to certain situations, we can learn to manage it.

Think about your chimp and your human brain in response to the recent lockdown due to COVID-19. What are they thinking? Increase your awareness of when your chimp is talking, thinking or responding and awaken your 'human brain' to help manage your chimp in a more positive way. Feel free to make notes below





HOW ARE YOU FEELING?



During these very strange times, you may be feeling all kinds of unusual or weird feelings and emotions that you may not be used to... or you may be coping really well with lockdown.



However you are feeling, REMEMBER, it is OK to feel those emotions!!



You may find it helpful to keep a log of any feelings that you may be having on a day to day basis, so that you can ask for help or find something to help you if you are struggling.



You can “check in” on your mood using emoji faces, jotting down “feeling” words or simply scoring your mood from 1 (bad) to 10 (good) - whatever works best for you!



And if you are feeling strong emotion, just know that it is OK to feel them! And remember to ask for help from friends and loved ones or trusted adult if you need to.

TUNE INTO YOUR EMOTIONS

Why do I have all these emotions?

Our emotions or feelings are a normal part of our body. Positive emotions like happiness and confidence, or negative ones like anger or worry, work to keep our bodies safe and are totally normal. Sometimes when we feel strong and powerful emotions like fear or anger, it can trigger a warning system in our bodies. Our brain thinks we are in danger, and causes our bodies to react by pumping adrenaline round our bodies so we feel ready to attack or run away - known as the “fight or flight” response. You may get a faster heart beat, quicker breathing, your body may shake, you may get a red face or headache.

What can I do to cope with my emotions?

Remember all emotions are OK so allow yourself to feel them!



When you start to feel a strong emotion, simply take a deep breath and observe what you are feeling. Give it a name.

What are you feeling? Is it fear? Or are you excited? Worried or frustrated? Do you feel anxious? Or embarrassed? Maybe it's joy?



Accept what you are feeling.

Many people worry that feeling their emotions will intensify them. So they avoid them, in hopes that they'll just go away. But the opposite is true: avoidance only fuels your emotions.



Express your feelings.

Expressing a feeling is the only way to release it. Express your emotions in a useful way or positive way. You can express your feelings by writing about them, talking to someone you trust, crying, relaxing or exercising. Just be sure that whatever activity you choose, it doesn't hurt you or anyone else.



Find a healthy way to take care of yourself.

Ask yourself “What do I need right now to take care of myself?” For instance, you might need a hug, a nap, a walk, a shower or support from a loved one.

Feeling stressed?

WHAT'S IN YOUR STRESS BUCKET?

When life feels uncertain and out of control, we can sometimes start to feel stressed out. So it may be a good idea to think about the things that are making you feel stressed and how you can manage them.

This can help you to work out the things you can change and the things that are beyond your control as well as help you see what things can make a difference.

The “Stress Bucket” is one way of thinking about it.

If you are feeling resilient your bucket may have room for plenty of pressure before you start to struggle and feel overwhelmed and stressed, but if you are feeling vulnerable your bucket may be small and fill up quickly.

Stress flows into the bucket

What stresses fill your bucket?



What can you do to release the flow from the tap?

What helpful techniques do you already use?

What unhelpful techniques might cause a blockage and prevent the flow from the tap?

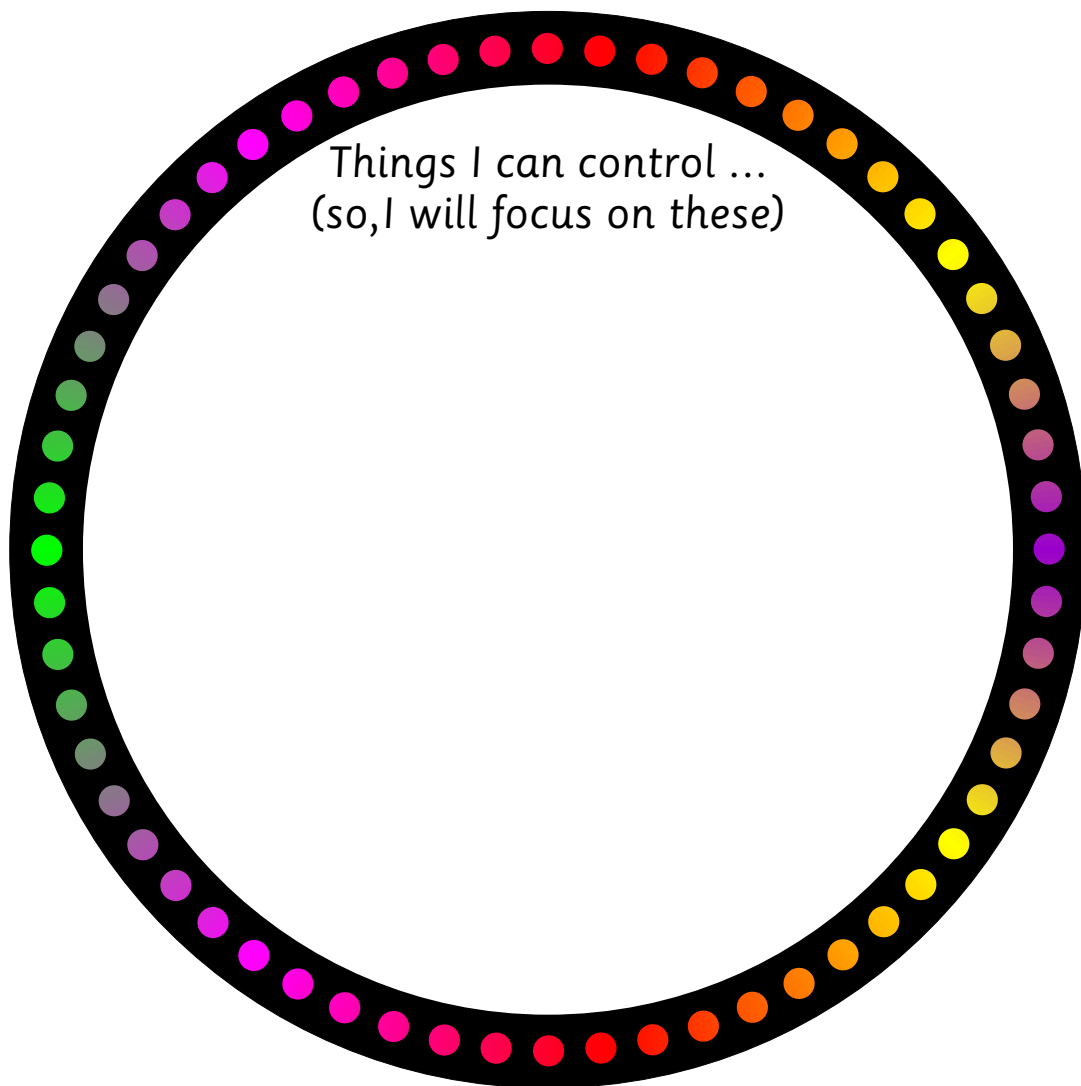
If the bucket overflows, problems develop - “meltdown”

What will make your bucket overflow?

Read on to learn new techniques practices and activities to help release the flow

Circle of control

There is no point in getting stressed about things which are out of your control. The Corona Virus is out of your control. Everybody is experiencing the same restrictive measures. There is nothing you can do about this. So why waste time getting frustrated / angry / stressed and anxious? Using the circles below, make a list of the things you are in control of during this time and ignore the things you cannot control.



Things I can't control ...
(so, I can let go of these things)

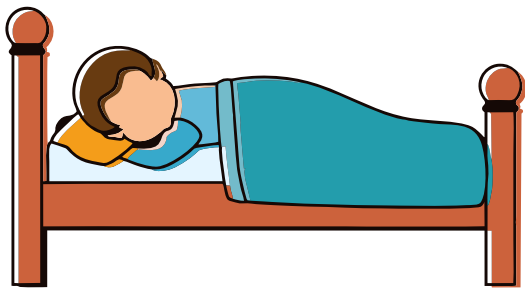
Feeling Bored?

Ok, so many of you will love the fact that you haven't got to race out of bed in the morning and get ready for school. But there will be a lot of you who are missing the routine the school life brings and may be feeling bored as you face another day spent completely or mostly in your home.

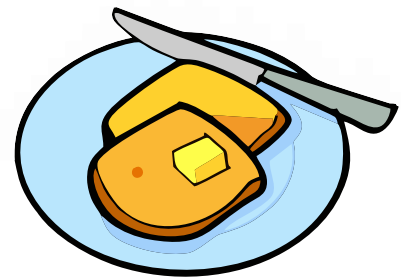
So for those of you who are experiencing this, aim to give yourself some sort of routine each day.

You will feel better for it!

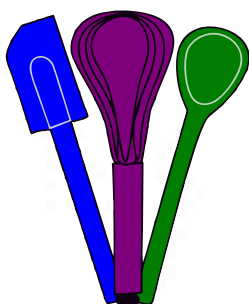
Try to keep bedtime and wake-up times the same as a regular school day (you can have a lie in at weekends!)



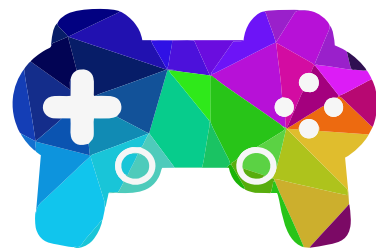
Start with breakfast and some kind of activity / exercise to wake up your brain and body



Give yourself a purpose for each day - such as completing home school work, baking a new recipe, learning a new skill, helping a family member, tidying / revamping your bedroom or something else! Research shows that we all feel much more content if we have something to achieve each day!



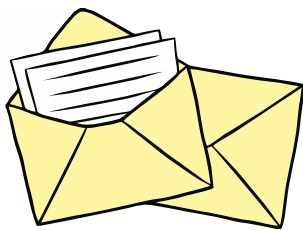
Give yourself something to look forward to every day - catching up with friends online, watching a favourite TV programme or spending time gaming



Missing your friends and family??



Arrange regular catch-ups by phone / video call or use one of the virtual “party” apps, as long as it’s safe to do so!



It’s also really nice to receive letters by post - so if you live near a post box and can safely walk there, why not drop a letter in the post for a friend....

you might even get one back

You may have never sent a letter before, why not try something new.

How about setting up a virtual movie review or book club?

Or maybe a forum for sharing tips on gaming?



Energy givers or energy takers ?



Now might be a good time to have a think about all those people you follow on social media.

Do they make you feel good about yourself (energy givers) or do they make you feel rubbish (energy takers)?

You know the ones we're talking about - always posting pictures of their perfect lives that can end up making you feel inferior.

Circle of trust

You could go even further and consider who might be in your circle of trust. This is a great way of figuring out who your real and true friends are, people who you know will look out for you and be there when you need them.

How many of your friends circles of trust would you be in?

Ask yourself.....

....What positives do following these people on social media add to your life right now?



Mindfulness is a superpower

WHY SHOULD I PRACTICE MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness brings heaps of benefits to help you cope with life's challenges:

- Gives you skills to relax so that you can keep calm, deal with tricky emotions and control any powerful impulses you may be feeling.
- Improves your focus and concentration, so you are less anxious, angry or stressed.
- Helps and become more accepting of yourself and others.
- Gives you time to feel more joy and to be kinder to yourself and others!
- Helps to keep you focussed, calm and improves your mood.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I DO IT

Keep it simple - just try a minute or two, a couple of times a week to begin with. When you feel more comfortable with it, you can try different techniques or spend more time practising being mindful.

Do what feels right for you and makes you feel good!

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is about being present in the moment; it is simply paying attention to what is happening to you now, inside and outside your body. When you pay attention to something, it means your mind is focused, calm and you aren't thinking about your worries.

Take notice of what you see, hear, smell, taste and touch. Being aware of what your mind is doing or thinking about, how your body feels and what emotions you may be experiencing - discomfort if you are feeling worried or upset or warm and fuzzy if you are happy.

It's not about quieting the mind, as that is pretty tricky to do! Sometimes your mind is quiet and sometimes, it's pretty busy and noisy - and that's ok!! It's how we respond to what's happening in our mind that matters the most.

There are lots of things you can do to practise mindfulness. It's not just doing meditation, although that is something you can do to be mindful.

Mindfulness activities

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

When life is tough, be kind to yourself and see how it changes things. When something goes wrong or you feel like you've failed, using your inner voice, send kind thoughts to yourself.

Say "I am enough" or "May I be happy"
See if it changes how you feel.

LISTEN TO MUSIC

Choose some music you love and spend some time every day listening to it for at least 10 minutes.

While listening, focus on your thoughts and how the music makes you feel
What do you notice?

DEEP BREATHING

Place your hand on your belly and take 10 deep breaths.

Count 1 for inhale and 2 for exhale, until you reach 10.

Feel the breath leaving your body as you count.

TALK ABOUT IT

Talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling and why!

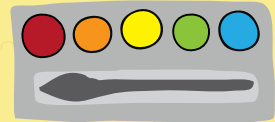
Remember you can use the phone or video call if you can't talk to someone at home.

MINDFUL EATING

When eating spend time focussing on your food - look at the colours of the food. Take a bite and focus on how the food tastes and feels in your mouth. Concentrate on each bite, smell, colour, flavour and be fully aware of your food.

MINDFUL ART

Do some mindful art using a colouring book. Focus on the patterns and colours. Or just doodle!



MINDFULNESS 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

5 things you can see

4 things you can touch

3 things you can hear

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste

HUG

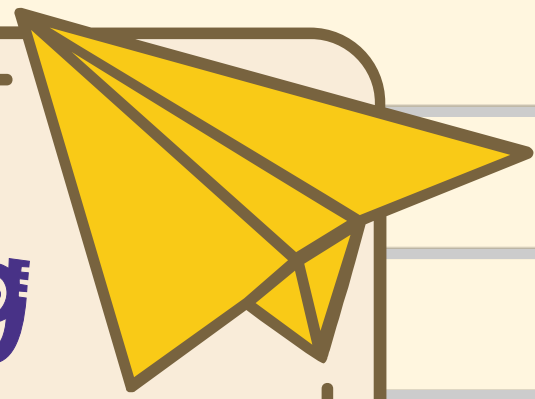
Give yourself or someone you live with a hug for at least 20 seconds!



OTHER IDEAS

Write down something that helps you.

Journaling



Journaling is a mindfulness practise that helps you slow down and reflect on what's been running through your mind. There is no right or wrong way to journal — just write whatever you like - good stuff and bad. You don't even have to worry about spelling or grammar as only you will read it!

Your journal can help you:

- Understand yourself — figure out what makes you you!
- Understand your life experiences: explore your thoughts, feelings and reactions to recent events
- Analyse situations
- Process your thoughts, feelings and emotions
- Process and perhaps even solve problems
- Set personal goals and make plans

Hints & tips.

Start with writing about you; your hobbies and interests. When you are ready, you can write about more personal stuff. You can draw in it too, if you want!



Set a reminder to journal in your diary or phone, but if you don't feel like writing, that's ok!



Choose a nice note book or decorate it so that it feels special to you. You could have a special pen too!

Keep it safe - you don't want others to read your personal journal so look after it and hide it away if you need to



Look for more ideas on journaling online if you get stuck!

Most importantly, relax and have some fun with it!

COVID 19

Journal Prompts

Who are the people you miss the most?

Do you think the pandemic has had any positive effects on your mental health? If so, what?

What about negative effects on your mental health?

Write down 5 things you never realised you were grateful for before.

How are you going to change your behaviour after the pandemic?

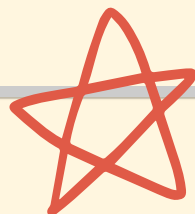
Write about how you spent your time today.

What have you learnt about yourself?

What are your greatest fears and worries at the moment?

What things can you do to help manage these worries?

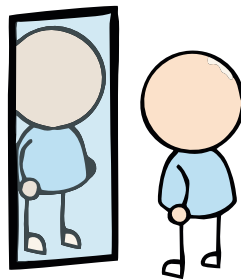
What do you think some of the positive impacts the pandemic has had on the world?



GET TO KNOW YOURSELF ...

So much of everyday life for teens is taken up with school, social media and all the pressures that they bring. Perhaps this time would be a great opportunity to get to know more about yourself. If you understand who you are you are more likely to be content in the decisions you make and the relationships you have with others.

Think about all the beautiful parts that make you the amazing person you are.



Imagine you are looking in a mirror...

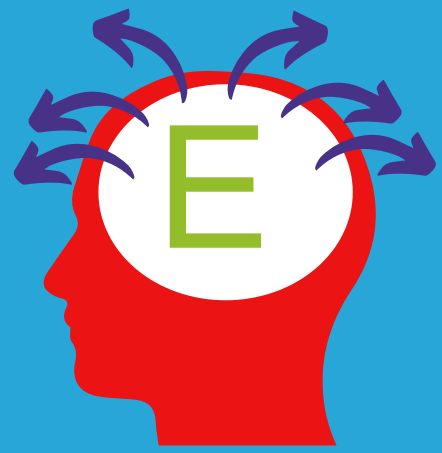
What do you see?

What do other people see?

What about the beautiful parts of you that you can't see?

What are you grateful for about you?

In the space below, jot down all the amazing things about you that you are grateful for...



INTROVERT OR EXTROVERT

WHICH ONE ARE YOU??

One thing is for certain – we are all different and will experience things differently. This largely depends on our life experiences up to now, our genetic makeup and the type of person we are. Some of us will want to talk about our feelings while others will prefer to process their thoughts quietly, away from others. There is no right or wrong approach.

Being an introvert or extrovert is about how our bodies and brains react to social situations. It can be useful to know as it helps us understand our feelings and reactions to certain situations.

Introvert

React more strongly in social situations - may feel stressed or find them tiring. Like to have your own space, enjoy your own company.

Extrovert

Find social situations stimulating and exciting. Thrive on being around other people and may get bored if left in your own company for too long.

You may already have a good idea of which one you are but the following statements may be a useful guide. The more strongly you agree with the statements below the more likely you are to be more towards the introverted end of the scale:

- I often think "I really need to be on my own for a bit".
- I get tired after talking to friends for a long time and i feel better after a break.
- I like chatting to just a couple of friends more than being with a larger group.
- I really prefer quiet places to noisy lively ones.
- I find my mind becomes overloaded when I'm with other people and the noise can be stressful.
- I often make excuses to leave.
- I much prefer working on my own to doing shared work

If you are more introvert than extrovert this means that you will need to give yourself space to 'recharge' your batteries.

REMEMBER: there are positive aspects to both being introvert or extrovert. There is no such thing as a 'perfect personality': we are all different. Both introverts and extroverts can be valuable friends - an introvert may be an excellent listener; an extrovert may bring fun and energy to the rest of the group.

It's also important to remember to step out of your comfort zone as either an introvert or extrovert to build your resilience. You will encounter many different experiences in life and being able to adapt to these, rather than run away from them, will help you achieve your goals.

Extroverts and introverts depend on each other to do great things

Every cloud has a silver lining...

Taking some time every day to think about things you are grateful for can have a HUGE impact on how you feel? We all know that every day won't be perfect, but when we focus on what we are grateful for, any negative feelings like anger, frustration or disappointment tend to melt away. Not only does an attitude of gratitude put you in a better mood, it can also help keep you healthy and reduce any stress!

Just by writing down 3 things you are grateful for every day...

So why not start now... write down 3 things you are grateful for here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

They don't have to be big things - it may simply mean being thankful for a friend who supported you, or your mum helping you tidy your bedroom or even managing to get through a tricky challenge..

We are living in such strange and uncertain times so its very easy and understandable to feel overwhelmed and negative. But there are so many positive things happening right now too.

On the news there are people doing amazing things to raise money for the NHS, clapping for our key workers every Thursday evening, random acts of kindness amongst neighbours and families settling long held disputes, to name but a few.

It's also worth remembering that, despite all the doom and gloom we read and hear about like people behaving selfishly – stockpiling and ignoring social distancing rules – these make the headlines because they are unusual acts of behaviour.

What are the positives of this experience for you? Perhaps you could jot them down in a notebook each day. You will be able to look back on these, in the future and see that there have been some positive experiences.



FEEL FREE....



Space for you to jot your thoughts and ideas
or just doodle!!

.....to scribble away.....

yes!





Created by Dawn McGinty Pupil Support Officer.