

Coronavirus: Looking after your Mental Health

A Guide for young people

MHST – Mental Health Support Team
Schools, Croydon

South London and Maudsley



NHS Foundation Trust

There is a lot of uncertainty around the current Coronavirus outbreak, particularly as the situation is constantly developing and the information about the virus remains incomplete.

Understandably, this is causing a lot of worry and anxiety for people, particularly around how to stay well and healthy as well as not pass the virus onto vulnerable loved ones.

Given the recent recommendations around social distancing, staying indoors, working from home and schools closing (as a way to reduce our, and vulnerable others, risk of exposure to the virus), it's likely that loneliness and anxiety may develop for some.

Good mental health and positive wellbeing can help you better cope with the Coronavirus disruption and the uncertainty it's creating.

It is important to remember that whilst doctors and the government have to plan for worst case scenarios, it doesn't mean the worst case is the most likely outcome.



Strategies to keep a sense of control to ease Coronavirus anxiety:

1. Seek accurate information
2. Set limits around news and social media
3. Look after yourself
4. Reach out to others and support people around you
5. Try and focus on things that are positive in your life
6. Acknowledge your feelings
7. Manage your anxiety
8. Contact a professional



Our anxiety does not come from thinking about the future, but from wanting to control it.



Try to separate out what is in your control and what is not.

Pay attention to and action the things you have control over.

I CANNOT CONTROL

(So, I can LET GO of these things.)

IF OTHERS FOLLOW THE RULES OF SOCIAL DISTANCING

THE AMOUNT OF TOILET PAPER AT THE STORE

I CAN CONTROL

(So, I will focus on these things.)

- MY POSITIVE ATTITUDE
- TURNING OFF THE NEWS
- FINDING FUN THINGS TO DO AT HOME
- HOW I FOLLOW CDC RECOMMENDATIONS
- HOW LONG THIS WILL LAST
- MY OWN SOCIAL DISTANCING
- LIMITING MY SOCIAL MEDIA
- MY KINDNESS & GRACE

THE ACTIONS OF OTHERS

PREDICTING WHAT WILL HAPPEN

OTHER PEOPLE'S MOTIVES

HOW LONG THIS WILL LAST

HOW OTHERS REACT



1. Seek accurate information

- Only read information from official sources e.g. NHS, World Health Organisation, Gov.UK, BBC or Centre for Health Protection.
- These credible sources help avoid the fear and panic that misinformation may cause.



2. Sets limits around news and social media

Avoid excessive exposure to media. Constant monitoring of news updates and social media about Coronavirus can intensify feeling of worry and distress.

Consider:

- Turning off automatic notifications
- Setting boundaries of how much news you consume e.g. once a day at a specific time

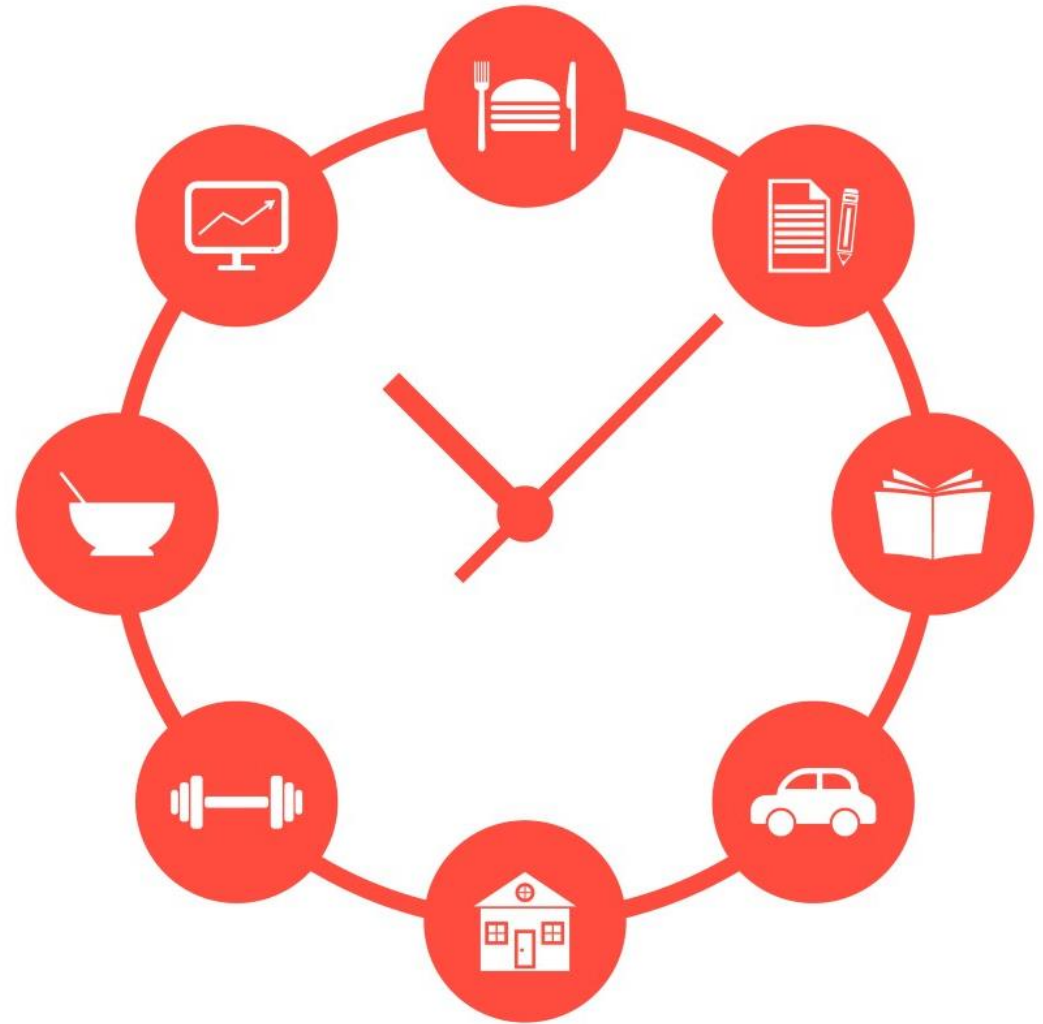


3. Look after yourself

Self-care includes focussing on things you can control (like good hygiene) instead of those you can't (stopping the virus).

Where possible:

- Maintain your daily routine and normal activities
- Eat healthy meals
- Get enough sleep
- Do things you enjoy and are in line with your core values



3. Look after yourself

Consider:

- Creating a daily routine that prioritises your wellbeing and positive mental health
- Including activities such as taking a walk, meditating, yoga, exercising which can help you relax and have a positive effect on your thoughts and feelings
- Including activities that give you a sense of accomplishment or purpose e.g. completing work, helping others, cleaning the house, gardening, arts and crafts, phoning someone etc.

Example daily routine

Before 9am	Wake up	Eat breakfast, make your bed, get dressed
9-10am	Morning exercise	Family dog walk, yoga, dance video exercise app. etc
10-12am	Academic/work time	No electronics Complete study or work tasks or revision
12:00	Lunch	
12:30pm	Chore time	e.g. wipe kitchen table, wash up, clean bathroom etc
1:00-3:00pm	Academic/work time	Electronics okay Complete study or work tasks
3:00-4:00pm	Creative time	Drawing, lego, craft, music, cook, bake, imaginative play, writing, reading
4:00-5:00pm	Fresh air	Walk, play outside, bike, run
5:00-6:00pm	Dinner	Connect with family
6:00-8:00pm	Free time	Connect with friends via phone, messages, chat
8:00pm onwards	Bedtime	relaxation and wind down for bedtime (relaxation/mindfulness apps)

4. Asking for help

Keep in touch with friends and family by:

- Text
- Video call
- Phone call
- Face to face (if possible)

Use your friends and family to talk through feelings and deal with challenges. Receiving support and care from others can bring a sense of comfort and stability.



4. Reach out to others and support people around you

Assisting other people in their time of need and reaching out to someone who may be feeling alone or concerned can benefit both the person receiving support as well as the helper. Ask a trusted adult for help if you have a friend who seems depressed or very low.

Avoid only talking about the Coronavirus.



Keep Active

Build physical activity into your daily routine.

Cleaning your home/ room.

Dancing to music.

Going up and down stairs

Online exercise workouts

Getting as much sunlight, fresh air and nature as you can. This can be in your garden, local park (if possible), or woodland.



Fit activity for kids what's your name!

SPELL OUT YOUR FULL NAME AND COMPLETE THE ACTIVITY LISTED FOR EACH LETTER. FOR A GREATER CHALLENGE INCLUDE YOUR MIDDLE NAME & DO EACH ONE TWICE! FOR VARIETY YOU CAN USE A FAVORITE CHARACTER'S NAME OR A FAMILY MEMBER'S NAME.

- | | |
|---|--|
| A jump up & down 10 times | N pick up a ball without using your hands |
| B spin around in a circle 5 times | O walk backwards 50 steps and skip back |
| C hop on one foot 5 times | P walk sideways 20 steps and hop back |
| D run to the nearest door and run back | Q crawl like a crab for a count of 10 |
| E walk like a bear for a count of 5 | R walk like a bear for a count of 5 |
| F do 3 cartwheels | S bend down and touch your toes 20 times |
| G do 10 jumping jacks | T pretend to pedal a bike with your hands for a count of 17 |
| H hop like a frog 8 times | U roll a ball using only your head |
| I balance on your left foot for a count of 10 | V flap your arms like a bird 25 times |
| J balance on your right foot for a count of 10 | W pretend to ride a horse for a count of 15 |
| K march like a toy soldier for a count of 12 | X try and touch the clouds for a count of 15 |
| L pretend to jump rope for a count of 20 | Y walk on your knees for a count of 10 |
| M do 3 somersaults | Z do 10 push-ups |

5. Try and focus on things that are positive in your life

Find opportunities to amplify the positive stories of local people who have experienced the virus and have recovered or who have supported a loved one through recovery and are willing to share their experience.

Link to video of people singing in Italy lockdown:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0laEJqETiY>



6. Acknowledge your feelings



It is normal to feel overwhelmed, stressed, anxious or upset, among a wide range of other emotional reactions, in the current situation.

Allow yourself time to notice and express what you're feeling. This could be by writing them down in a journal, talking to others, doing something creative, or practising meditation.

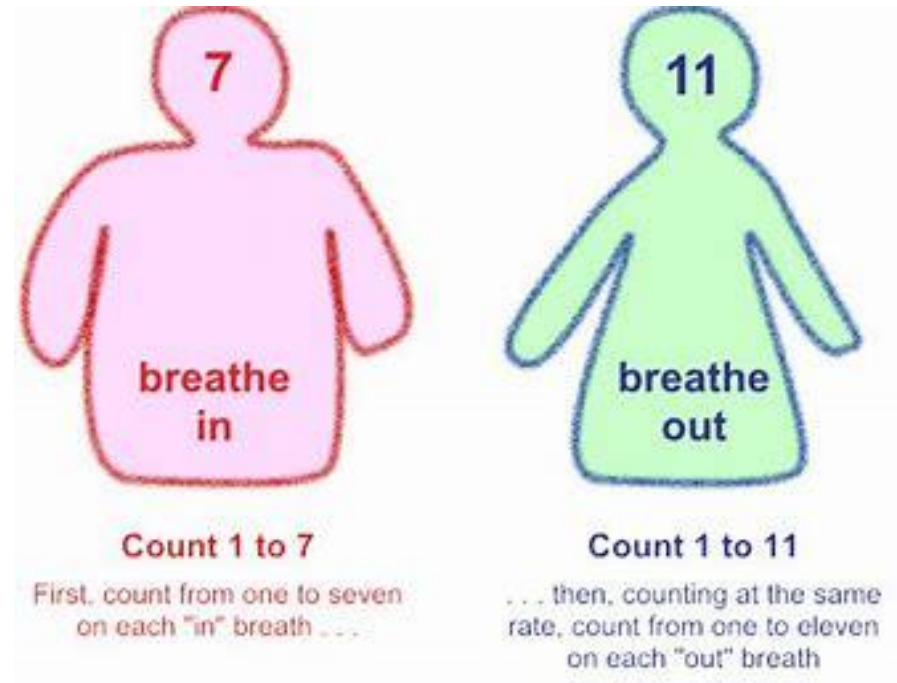
7. Manage your anxiety

a) Try some breathing, mindfulness And grounding exercises to help you relax, such as:

7-11 breathing

- Breathe in for 7 seconds, out for 11 seconds

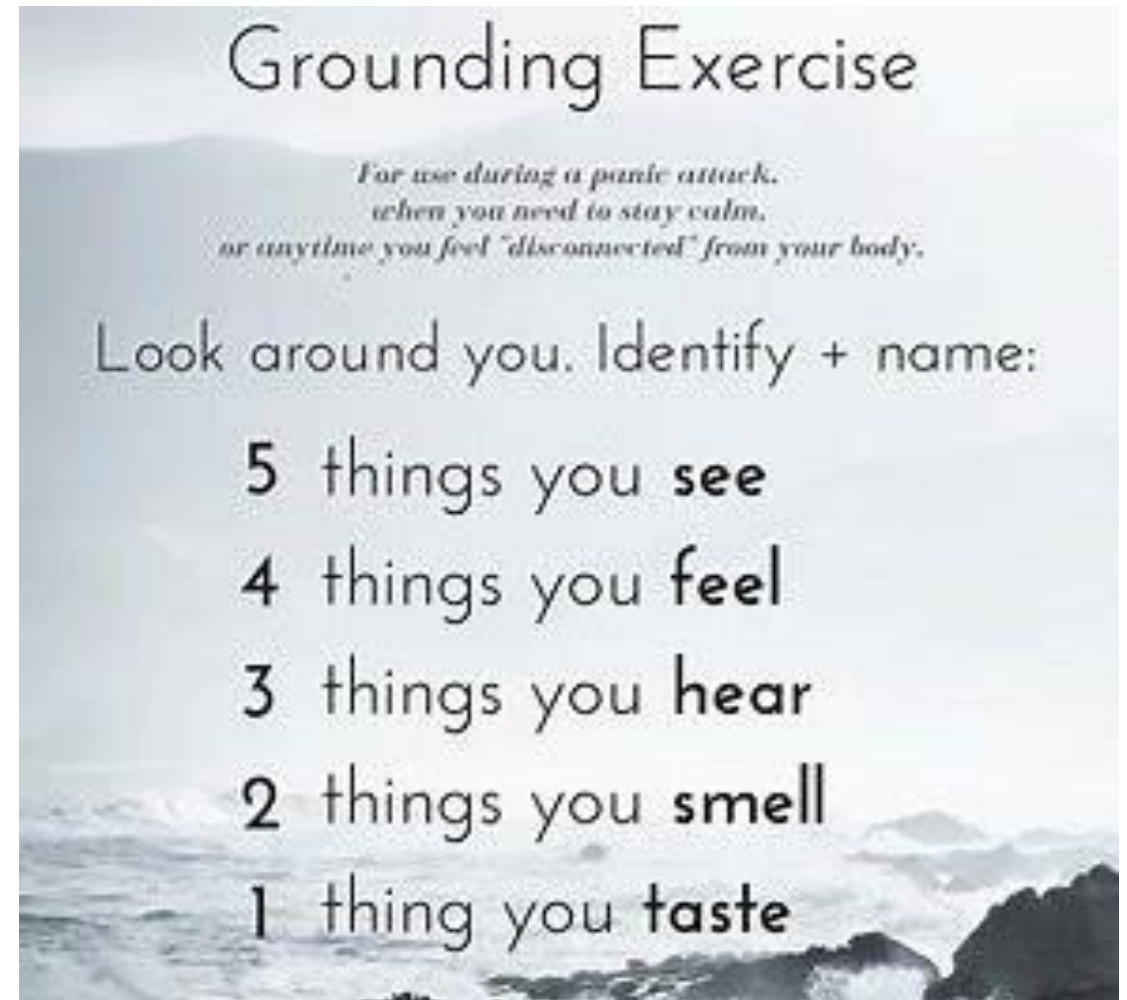
(Also, access the many apps available which will Guide and lead you such as Headspace, medication For kids (or adults)



a) Try some breathing, mindfulness And grounding exercises to help you relax, such as:

Grounding

Helps you focus on what is going on around you and where you are rather than focusing on the body sensations or what you are thinking.



a) Try some breathing, mindfulness And grounding exercises to help you relax, such as:

Progressive muscle relaxation:

- Tense muscles slowly whilst taking a deep breath through your nose
- Hold both muscles and breath for 5 sec, and then breath slowly out through mouth while releasing muscle tension in your feet
- Repeat with a different body part
- Focus on key tension spots e.g. neck, jaw, legs



a) Try some breathing, mindfulness And grounding exercises to help you relax, such as:

Mindfulness exercise:

Imagine you are looking out at a calm lake... Imagine you are throwing a pebble to the center of the lake... You are the pebble, feel the sensation as you float gently towards to bottom of the lake... Take notice of what is around you in the lake... Feel the smooth sand beneath you and the light touch of the water around you... Sit with this peaceful image... If your mind wanders to other things, gently bring it back...

- This helps teach you to bring your mind back to place of calm
- You can get better at this through practice
- This image can be used when you are beginning to see yourself moving into a state of anxiety



7. Manage your anxiety

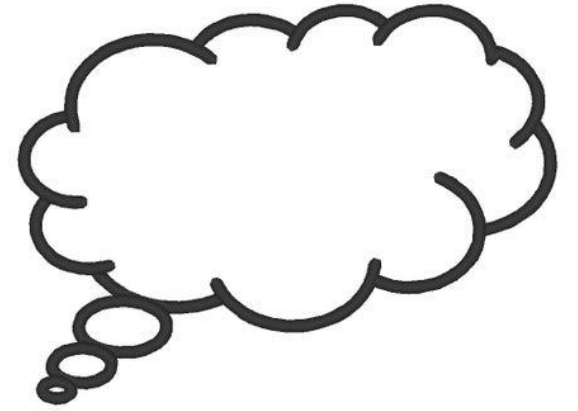
b) Keep active/moving

Try to move your body each day, even if you are indoors, as exercise helps to elevate your mood and lower stress. If you are physically fit and healthy, your body will be stronger and better able to fight a virus.



7. Manage your anxiety

c) Challenge your thoughts



Our thoughts (how we think about things) are interlinked with how we feel emotionally and physically. If our minds are filled with lots of catastrophic and anxious thoughts (e.g. “I won’t be able to keep my family safe during this outbreak”) then this is likely going to make us feel emotionally distressed and anxious, and may impact us physically e.g. sleep difficulties, poor appetite, difficulty concentrating, tiredness and low energy.

As best you can, try to think positive thoughts and not focus on things you have no control over.

7. Manage your anxiety

d) Self-kindness

Self-kindness is essential if you want to cope well in this crisis – especially if you are in a caregiver role.

So ask yourself, “if someone I loved was going through this experience, feeling what I am feeling – if I wanted to be kind and caring towards them, how would I treat them? What might I say or do?”

Then try treating yourself the same way.

KINDNESS
begins with
ME

8. Contact a professional

If you are experiencing strong levels of distress or trauma which are interfering with your life, remember that you do not have to face it alone. Help is available. Please contact one of the following services:

- Duty clinician CAMHS 9-5 (0203 228 0000.)
- CAMHS Crisis Line: 0203 228 5980.
- Outside hours: SLAM mental Health crisis Line 0800 731 2864. 5pm – 9.30pm and weekends 1pm – 9pm.
- NHS: 111
- Emergency services: 999
- The Samaritans 24-hour hotline: 08457 90 90 90
- Childline : - 0800 1111
- Off the Record: <https://www.talkofftherecord.org/croydon/online-support>, Tel: 020 8251 0251 or Email: croydon@talkofftherecord.org

Sources

<https://www.mhe-sme.org/covid-19/>

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_2

www.mind.org.uk

Russ Harris, 2020 www.TheHappinessTrap.com

www.ImLearningACT.com

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Resources

- <https://youngminds.org.uk> > coronavirus. Tips and advice on how to survive self isolation.
- Headspace – Meditation for kids
<https://www.headspace.com/mediation> for kids
- https://emergingminds.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID19_advice-for-parents-and-carers_20.3_.pdf Advice for parents on how to support children / adolescents through this difficult time.
- Be Mindful. Online course to help reduce stress and anxiety using mindfulness
- Beat Panic. Overcome panic attacks and anxiety
- Bluelce. App helps young people manage their emotions and reduce urges to self-harm
- Calm Harm. Reduce urges to self harm and manage emotions in a more positive way.
- Catch it. Learn to manage negative thoughts and look at problems differently
- Chill Panda. Use breathing techniques to help you relax more , worry less and feel better
- Sleepio. Online sleep improvement programme.

<http://www.robbiddulph.com/draw-with-rob> - Drawing activities

Free audible books for children:-<https://stories.audible.com>

<http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk>- 10 Nature activities for kids if self isolating

NHS Website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>.