

Looking After Our Wellbeing:

A grab pack for young people supporting their own wellbeing during Covid-19 response

Psychology and Wellbeing Service

May 2020

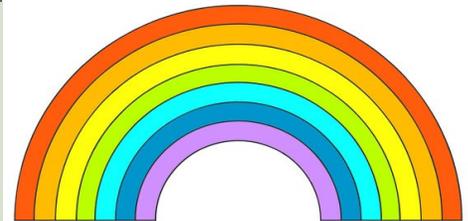
Balancing emotions during physical distancing and lockdown

Most of us are aware that we need to meet a number of physical needs to maintain healthy wellbeing. We need to sleep, eat and drink, exercise and keep sheltered from the elements.

However, equally important are our emotional needs which should be met in a balanced way. This can help protect ourselves from feeling depressed or overly anxious.

The purpose of this handout is to support you to identify your emotional needs; consider the challenges that lockdown places on these needs; and explore how you can keep balance alongside safe distancing restrictions.

Try reading through the following areas and consider whether these impact on you and your life at the moment, and what you can do about it to stay balanced..



During this unique time we are all considering the changes we need to make to keep ourselves and our families safe. Check out our range of wellbeing grab packs online, offering helpful tips on a range of subjects including the importance of sleep, parenting children with ADHD, wellbeing for children and many more.

In this grab pack

- Advice for young people
- Supporting your own wellbeing during lockdown
- Potential challenges
- How to achieve balance
- Mood tracking



Healthy Body

+



Healthy Mind

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Happy Human

Security



This is about feeling like you have a safe space around you so that you can lead your life without fear, and enjoy privacy when you want it.

Things that might challenge us include:

We may worry about ourselves, our friends or family becoming infected, particularly older relatives or those with underlying health conditions.

We may be concerned about the longer term impact of the pandemic, such as job security of family members, education and community groups.

We may be struggling without the predictability of our normal routine.

Privacy may be in short supply if we are confined to living with family working from home.

Some people may not feel safe with people they live with and feel isolated from their natural supports.

How can we achieve balance?:

It is important to recognise that worrying about coronavirus is normal and appropriate. However, it is equally important not to become overloaded. Try to stick to reputable sources of information, such as www.gov.je and take media breaks. Speak to family or friends if you are worried. Keep in contact with your school or college and ask questions if unsure. Support is still being offered by school based counsellors and YES (Youth Service).

Try to maintain as normal a routine as possible. It might be helpful to construct a weekly timetable / schedule either in paper or electronic form to help you with this and remember your timings e.g. getting up at the same time, take breaks at the same time etc.

If feeling unsafe, ask for help. There are many organisations ready to support any young person who feels vulnerable. (Please refer to the list at the end of this handout.)

If space is restricted within your home (and perhaps you have siblings), you may benefit from negotiating a rota for quiet time in an area of your home.



Volition

This means feeling like you have some control over your life and have the power to make changes when you need to.

Challenges: We all have to follow physical distancing guidelines and this will have an impact on social gatherings and pursuits, including meeting with friends, parties, team sports, education, shopping and entertainment.

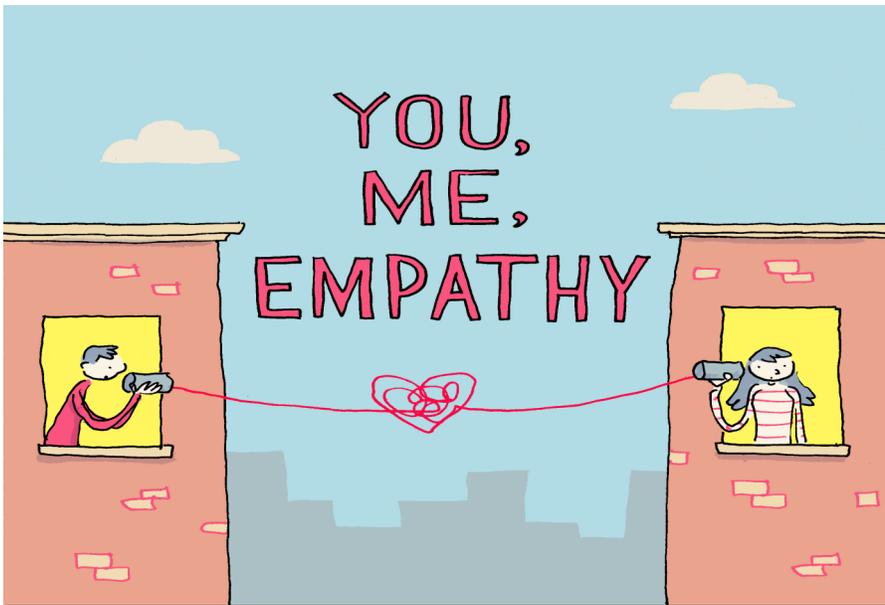
In order to help protect others, such as older people, you may not be able to visit relatives and others important to you.

Balance? We make hundreds of choices each day and might not recognise some of these. From choosing what to wear and what to eat to how to spend our time. Bringing awareness to the choices we do have can be helpful.

Sometimes we can focus on things that are outside of our control. This is normal but not a good use of our time and energy. Consider what are the things that you can influence and see if you can spend more of your energy here.

Structuring your day with a timetable/planner, and thinking about how you can vary each day e.g. the type of exercise you are going to engage in, when you're going to call a friend this week, may also help you remind yourself about what you're in control of and feel reassuring.

Having a list of options available to you can help as a reminder of the choices we have. There is a great list of activities on the following website: <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/>



Emotional connection to others

As humans we are sociable beings. We need to connect to each other in order to feel a sense of belonging. Some people may struggle with social communication but nevertheless need to be connected.

Things that might challenge us:

Not being able to share the same physical space with friends can be difficult. It is usually much easier to connect with people when face to face and so the absence of this can lead to a variety of difficult emotions including feeling a little sad or lonely.

Whilst many will think you've got it covered because you still have access to Face time and social networking, there really is no substitute for being with others, in person. Emotional connections enable us to feel seen, heard, understood, and loved. These are universal needs that may feel absent or reduced right now.

Those with a partner may find the lack of physical closeness challenging and upsetting.

Young carers who are supporting parents and / or siblings may not have the same respite opportunities. Caring for others can be really rewarding but can also be exhausting, especially in the absence of good self-care. Not having a break from such responsibilities can impact on your own wellbeing and sense of self.

How can we achieve balance?:

Many people have changed the term 'social distancing' to 'physical distancing'. This is so important because we can still connect socially via social media or other video / audio links. Whilst this may not feel quite the same as seeing someone in person, it is still a useful way to keep connected. To compensate for the reduced ability to read facial expressions and gestures online, it may be worth considering being more descriptive through words. Words (as well as kind gestures) may play a larger role in communicating feelings of care and love in the absence of physical contact

Consider other ways to express feelings with others and / or privately. For example, through music, art, film, journal writing / blogging, etc.

If you spend much of your time supporting others, either family members or friendships via virtual means, make sure you look after your own wellbeing to avoid feeling overwhelmed or 'burnt out'. My Time 4 Carers or Youth Enquiry Service may be a useful source of support.



Connection to the wider community

This is about being part of something larger than ourselves. This can include a whole range of things such as clubs and groups; being in nature; volunteering; religion; and causes we feel strongly about. Schools and colleges also provide a sense of common values.

Things that might challenge us:

Most charities and volunteering groups, clubs and religious gatherings are having to pause and change their way of delivering services. This can include you if you usually meet friends at the beach to go surfing, are part of a football team, meet up at the local youth club etc. This can impact on your sense of being part of a community.

Fear around contamination can result in caution in community areas. These are necessary procedures but can at the same time lead to a sense of separateness from our community.



How can we achieve balance?:

Ironically it is our separation that connects not only our community in Jersey but the whole world. This is truly a shared human experience. Sometimes recognising that we are all in this together can really lighten the load and feel connected, rather than isolated, with our feelings.

Make contact with any organisations you are involved with to find out whether they have adapted their ways of working and how you can still be involved.

Focus on some of the community building activities and initiatives such as the applause for critical workers or the connecting videos on social media (e.g. toilet roll challenges!). Recognise some of the 'silver lining' stories, such as some of the environmental improvements that have resulted.

Connect with groups or causes of interest through forums, interactive gaming, YouTube channels, etc.

COMPETENCE



Achievement, meaning and purpose

We often gain satisfaction and pleasure from doing things well. It feels good to succeed in a test; score a goal; finish a drawing or complete a task, for example. We sometimes develop a sense of who we are from the activities we pursue. Research shows that we tend to experience greater wellbeing when we have a purpose in life.

Things that might challenge us:

Not only can it feel stressful having too much to do or being stretched far beyond our ability, it can also feel stressful to have too little to do or not being challenged enough, mentally and physically.

It may be that many of the activities we do well and that we enjoy are things we aren't able to do right now.

Without our usual routine of school or college we can feel less productive and less motivated to initiate and / or complete activities.

If we do not practise regularly or train then we are in danger of losing our sharpness. This applies to our cognitive abilities, such as concentration and problem solving, as well as our physical abilities, such as fitness, strength and agility.



How can we achieve balance?

Access remote learning opportunities provided by your school or college.

Develop an activity schedule each day that is stimulating and varied. Include educational tasks as well as leisure and connecting.

Consider setting specific goals to achieve and commit to a date for completion.

Utilise online media for learning new skills or maintaining skill development.

Write a list of the things that are most important to you (your values). You can find value questionnaires online. These can help direct your goals.

Identify your personal qualities and strengths. Each day choose a particular strength and plan how you will use it during the day. For example if a strength is kindness, you might choose to make someone in your family a cup of tea, or check in on a friend who was feeling down.

Keeping track of your mood

Having a way to express your thoughts and feelings is so important, especially if you are self-isolating with little or no company. Having anxious thoughts and feelings of worry at this time can be consuming as wherever you look you see news about the pandemic (often the scary or sad stories). It can be hard to find a calming rational voice.

Mood journal

Getting your 'internal voice' onto paper can help you feel more in control of your situation. Some young people feel that seeing their thoughts in a written form, feels far less scary and becomes easier not only to address but to learn from and help the feelings pass by or feel less intense (see youngminds.org.uk for more info).

Gratitude journal

A gratitude journal is quite simply a tool to keep track of the good things in life, no matter how small. No matter how difficult life can be there is always something to feel grateful for. Regularly journaling about the good things in your life can help you prepare and strengthen you to deal with the rough patches when they pop up. Gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness as it helps people experience more positive emotions, relish good experiences and deal with adversity.

Why not include a space for gratitude in your journal?

Keep talking

Sharing your feelings with a trusted adult can really help you not feel overwhelmed. Sometimes something as simple as a mood check in with your parent/carer can be enough. This can be done by sending a simple emoji text to their phone, so they know how you are doing. This can then determine their next actions that you could agree together. It may mean you need some space or you want some company to do something together.

Resources

Further reading on emotional needs:

Griffin, J. & Tyrrell, I. (2013) [Human Givens: the new approach to emotional health and clear thinking](#)

Emotional support

Childline - <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/>

Mind Jersey - <http://www.mindjersey.org/get-support/mind-services/children-and-young-people>

Samaritans - <https://www.samaritans.org/branches/jersey/>

Youth Enquiry service - <https://www.yes.je/about/>

Other useful information

<https://www.annafreud.org/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>



Mood tracker

Mood tracking journaling is a helpful tool to support wellbeing. Tracking your mood on a daily basis gives you more insight into your feelings and mental health. It will also help link your mood to the situation you were in, helping you to understand your triggers to particular feelings.

So if you were doing an activity that made you feel good, you can focus on these activities on a day you may feel lower in mood. Mood tracking can help us to feel more in control of managing our feelings.



Mood tracker apps can be a helpful tools and some can be linked with a trusted adult or carer for further support.

There are many mood tracking apps available. By choosing NHS supported apps you can be reassured the apps are safe to use and have been assessed to be clinically effective.

<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/> has a range of apps to choose from.

<https://www.moodscope.com/>

Thrive app (via NHS library).