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Lockdown Resource Pack



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Lockdown
**Resource
Pack**

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What is Mental Health?

Broadly speaking, your mental health is the spectrum of your emotional and psychological wellbeing...



Unfortunately, our mental health isn't something enough of us think about until we're not feeling our usual self.

This is one of the factors contributing to the stigma that mental health and mental illness exist hand in hand.

The reality is that all of us have mental health.

Like our physical health, your mental health can be **good, bad, or indifferent**, and in that same capacity, lead us to being more OR less at risk of developing the symptoms of a diagnosable illness.

Again, like our physical health, small actions and consistent habits are the way to keep our mental health in

check, leaving us feeling prepared to deal with the setbacks and difficult emotions that life will inevitably give us.

Hopefully the following information in this pack will allow you to explore this further, and feel more prepared for the future, whether it's in school or in the workplace!

1 in 4
people have
mental illness

but

4 in 4
people have
mental health

Coping with Negative Emotions

There are lots of emotions that can affect our mental health negatively – things like stress, worry or sadness. If we keep ignoring them, they can become much harder to deal with. It's normal to experience different emotions from day-to-day.

In order to maintain good mental wellbeing, it's important that we know how to manage negative emotions. Try some of the tips below:

Relaxation:

Deep Breathing

- Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds, trying to fill your stomach not just your chest; Hold for 4 seconds; exhale through your mouth for 6 seconds. Repeat as often as you need too; try 5 minutes at a time.

3/3/3 Rule

- Name 3 things you can see, 3 things you can hear and move 3 parts of your body. You can use lots of different rules like this – find something that works for you.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Starting from your feet and moving upwards, tense different muscles, hold them for 10 seconds, then relax. Notice how different it feels.

Thoughts:

Acceptance

- Sometimes things happen that we don't like or agree with. It's important to recognise the event and accept the emotions that come with it – reflect on what you've learnt and what you could do differently next time.

Challenge your negative thoughts.

- Ask yourself, what is the evidence for my thought? Is there evidence against it? Do I need more information? What would a friend think? Will this matter in 5 hours, weeks or months from now? Can I do something about it now? Use a thought log to help.

Set goals and boundaries.

- It's okay to say no if you need to take some time for yourself. Do you need to take a step back and focus on something else? Know what makes you feel good and set a goal to engage in more of it.

Focus on the positives

- Try writing down positive things that happened to you or things that you accomplished that day before bed.



Physical needs

Think about your basic needs

- Have you eaten something or had enough to drink? Are you getting enough sleep? Have you done some exercise? Have you spoken to someone today? Try engaging your senses – eat something nice, have a shower or brush your teeth, light a nice smelling candle or spray something scented, watch a movie, listen to some music.

Use social support

- Think about who you can talk to, and how you'd get in touch with them.

Plan your week

- Make sure you make time for your hobbies, friends, and any other things you need to get done.

If you are experiencing negative emotions, try taking one thing from each category and doing that. Experiment a bit and find out what works for you. Some negative emotions are normal, but if you're experiencing them all the time and can't seem to shake them, talk to someone you trust and tell them what's going on. A problem shared is a problem halved; they might also be able to point you in the direction of someone who can help.

Goalsetting and motivation

Lockdown and periods of isolation are difficult. A very effective yet underutilised tool to help you cope with this is goalsetting.

There are many misconceptions with goalsetting, one of which is that the process of setting goals by itself will make you motivated. This isn't necessarily true.

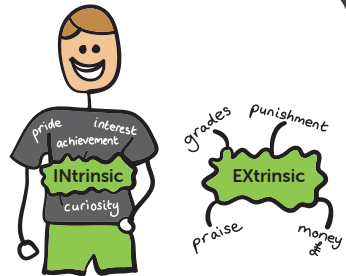
The following TED Talk, by author and motivational speaker Simon Sinek, explains this in more detail, outlining how powerful 'knowing your why' can

be to motivate and inspire individuals and groups of people:

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

Are you intrinsically or extrinsically motivated?

This is another part of your 'why' that you need to understand. It is widely acknowledged that intrinsic motivation is more sustainable, but those that thrive on extrinsic rewards can still be extremely successful in the pursuit of their targets.



SMART goals

The acronym SMART is used widely in education and business to help individuals and organisations set the right kind of goals. Have a think of the goals you'd like to set yourself, and see if it fits with the principles below...

- SPECIFIC** To your own ambitions, hobby, or your own personal circumstance.
- MEASURABLE** How are you able to see your progress?
- ACHIEVABLE** Is it possible? Being ambitious is great, but if your goals aren't achievable, it will only lead to you feeling down on yourself.
- RELEVANT** This is like specific, but more orientated to different size goals. Is your short term, two-week goal relevant to working towards the bigger, 1-year goal?
- TIMED** When are you going to achieve it by? This may be dictated by external factors, i.e. exam dates and results, but do your best to make yourself accountable!

Change

Changes and transitions frequently occur in life – we don't always like change, and it can bring up some negative emotions. We can wish things were back to the way they were before; but this often doesn't make us feel better, and just makes us unhappy with the way they are now. We don't ever really get used to change, but we can learn to manage it a little better.

Acknowledge the change

- Recognising that things are changing and you're stressed about it, helps you to put things in perspective.

Realise that change can be good – and even good change can cause stress.

Keep up with some kind of routine

- This doesn't have to mean a concrete plan, but making sure you have some time in your day when you know what you're doing – like always exercising in the morning, or having a shower at night – can help give you a sense of control. Try writing it down and checking it off.

Take care of yourself

- Make sure you're eating and drinking well, engaging in some kind of exercise, and sleeping enough.

Seek support

- It's okay to ask for help if you're struggling with something. Ask a trusted person for their advice.

While venting is helpful, it can sometimes be useful to hear some other views and get a plan in place.

Think about the positives

- Maybe this change has actually resulted in something good – what have you learnt? How can you take this forward?

Be proactive

- Think about what steps you need to take to make the change a little easier. Break it down into small, achievable goals.

Stop comparing yourself

- Everyone handles change differently – take a step back from social media if you need too. Sometimes you might use this for motivation, which is good; but if you're comparing your struggles to everyone else's high points, take a break. Think about what you've achieved and are doing well instead.

Changes can be big or small, or good or bad. Using each change as a learning experience will help you grow and learn what you can do to make things better the next time. Focus on the things you can control or influence, rather than those you can't.

Boundaries

Personal boundaries are limits or rules we set ourselves in relationships. These can be relationships with friends, family or if you're dating someone. Your boundaries can be tight, loose or healthy. You can have different types of boundaries depending on the setting or people – you might have healthy boundaries with family, but loose boundaries with friends. Healthy boundaries are being able to say 'no' when you want too but being open in close relationships.

There are also different kinds of boundaries you can set. Healthy relationships are based on someone respecting each of these different types.

- **Physical boundaries relate to personal space and physical touch.**
- **Intellectual boundaries relate to thoughts and ideas.**
- **Emotional boundaries relate to feelings.**
- **Material boundaries relate to money and possessions.**
- **Time boundaries relate to how someone uses their time.**

Some people struggle with setting boundaries for themselves, either with specific people, in specific settings or with particular types of boundaries. What can I do to promote healthy boundaries?

Know your limits and values.

- Know what is acceptable to you and what isn't in different situations. Be as specific as you can. If something is really important to you, make sure your limits protect this.

Listen to your emotions.

- If you're always feeling uncomfortable or drained after spending time with someone, try not to bury those feelings. Understand what those feelings mean and try to adjust your boundaries accordingly.

Give yourself the same respect you give others.

- You are just as important as others, so make sure your own needs are being met. This doesn't need to happen at the expense of other's needs – communicating openly can help you find the best solution.

Consider long-term relationships.

- Some days you'll give or take a bit more, but over the long-term there should be an equal balance. If not, reconsider your own boundaries.

Focus on positive communication.

- Think about what both you and the other person needs and talk it out. Figure out what is important to you and think about how you can use boundaries and positive communication to protect that, whilst considering the wellbeing of others.

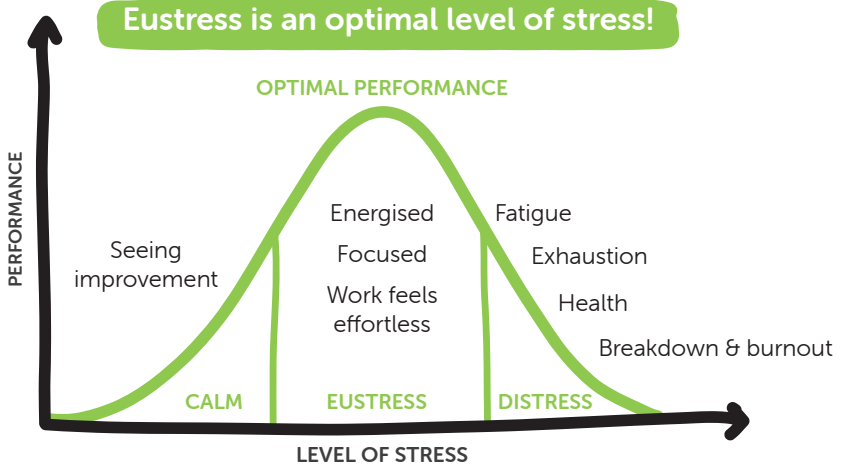
Challenge yourself to be 'Eustressed'

It's normal to have variations in our levels of stress. However, there could be more variation than usual. Many of our plans and holidays have been affected or cancelled, and there's still lots of uncertainty right now about the future.

CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

How are you currently feeling?

Where would you currently see yourself on the below chart?



If you feel like you sit on the left hand side of the curve, feeling underwhelmed and in need of some motivation, make a plan for the day. It makes you feel purposeful, gives you a structure, and a sense of accomplishment as you move through the small tasks you set yourself.

Equally, if you are sitting on the right-hand side and everything is feeling a bit much, planning can still help. Writing

down the tasks you need to complete on paper can help you see problems from a more neutral perspective, give you some mental clarity, and allow you to prioritise your tasks and allocate time to improving your headspace.

If you currently feel on top form, make a note of why you think this might be. This could be useful for a time that you aren't feeling your best, to reflect and understand what it is that makes us tick.

What does being 'Mindful', really mean?

Mindfulness is the state of being conscious or aware of something, whether it's our surroundings, a movement, or our own thoughts.

A common misconception with mindfulness, is that it needs to revolve around a meditation, yoga, scented candles and relaxing music.

Many are already experiencing the benefits of a mindfulness practice, but just don't realise it. It's important to acknowledge this to break down any barriers to the many benefits that mindfulness can give to us all!

Can you think of an activity that facilitates you to be aware of your own movements, thoughts and emotions?

For many, this comes from hobbies such as drawing, painting, physical exercise, or playing a musical instrument. If you make the time for these activities every day, and they leave you feeling calm and clear minded, you may not see the benefits of a direct mindfulness practice.

It's important to understand that there are many ways to get the same outcome and benefits that are promoted through mindfulness practices. A great comparison is dieting, there are many techniques and methods to become a healthier version of yourself.

If you know there is a certain activity that leaves you feeling calm and clear minded, but you can't access it daily, do you have the opportunity recreate this environment in a different way to

find the same benefits? This can take some trial and error, but it's worth investing the time for your wellbeing!

The reason mindfulness practice through apps and other guided breathing practices has become so popular is that the barriers to participation are so small. You can do this type of practice pretty much anywhere, at any time. We recommend trying one of the free guided meditation apps, such as 'Calm' or 'Headspace'.

It is important to acknowledge that this type of practice doesn't need to be about 'treating an issue'. It's to allow you to be the best version of yourself and feel on top form as much as possible!

Positive Communication

A key part of any relationship is positive communication. At times when we are feeling stressed, we can often let our emotions get the better of us and respond to questions or requests in a negative way.

Communicating effectively with family members, friends and teachers, is extremely important. It's normal for families and friendships to have conflicts and argue now and again, but they make the time to talk about things and share feelings to better understand each other's perspectives.

Here are a few of our top tips to promote positive communication and reducing conflict with friends and at home

- Remembering to actually remain quiet while someone else is trying to convey their point. Really listen to them, rather than planning what you are going to say next and waiting for your chance to respond.
- Listen to understand, not to respond. A great way of reinforcing this is to ask questions, and clarify you understand what the other person is saying.
- The language we use and the way in which we speak are two often neglected areas of communication, often we don't realise the unchecked emotion we're putting across just through our tone of voice!
- Be mindful. Sometimes emotions can get the better of us, so taking a moment to acknowledge your emotional state before you speak can allow you to phrase or communicate how you're feeling effectively, without imposing that emotion on others.
- Don't rush others into a discussion before they are ready. If tensions are high, it's a good idea for everyone to take a few minutes to calm down and collect themselves before trying to resolve the issue.
- It is OK not to agree with the opinions of others. Just remember to respect their opinion and listen to their point of view, this can help diffuse conflict and improve understanding of each-others perspective.

Sleep and Routine

One thing that became clear during the last lockdown is that your morning and evening routines and sleep habits were a significant contributor to maintaining positive wellbeing.

The following TED Talk with Mathew Walker, Author of 'Why We Sleep' might be very useful.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MUIMqhT8DM>

It's known that having good sleep habits boosts your mood, allows you to think clearly and improves your immune system. Having poor sleep habits can also make us crave and eat unhealthy foods, as well as doing less physical activity, which are two of the most important things to improve your sleep!

As we move into this difficult period of lockdown where you may have less routine again, we have some tips to keep you feeling on top form

- Shower or take a bath a few hours before you want to fall asleep. Body temperature is really important – the drop of temperature that is experienced after getting out of a hot shower or bath tells your body it's time to go to sleep. Make sure your room is a comfortable temperature, think about what you wear to sleep in and how many blankets are on your bed.
- Avoid high intensity exercise in the evening. Exercise is great, and is beneficial for your sleep, but putting your body under high levels of stress leads to the release of hormones that will reduce the quality of your sleep and potentially make it harder to drift off in the first place!
- Try to keep a consistent routine. Try to do similar things before bed each night and go to bed and wake up at similar times each day. Having this routine gives your brain subconscious cues that it's time to start winding down, making it easier to fall asleep.
- Make your sleeping space constructive for sleep – make sure it's dark enough, tidy up a bit so it's less cluttered, and get some fresh air in through the day so it feels clean!
- Only use your bedroom for sleep – avoid things like watching TV or playing on gaming consoles in your bedroom, especially directly before you go to sleep. Blue light produced by these decreases your melatonin, which makes it more difficult to sleep.

What type of communicator are you?

Good communication is a key aspect of any relationship, and in all areas of life. It is a skill that will always serve you well by allowing you to effectively explain your opinions, problems, disagreements and feelings, while also allowing others to feel comfortable and understood while speaking to you.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATORS

Take a minute to think about what type of communicator you might be.

Assertive is what we are aiming for.

Passive - Silence and assumption are the hallmarks of the passive communication style. Passive communicators often disregard their own opinions, feelings, needs, and desires. Passive communication places one's own needs and desires below those of others. Passivity takes away one's power and allows others to decide the outcomes of situations.

Aggressive - Quite often people mistake aggression for assertiveness. Aggression doesn't hold much respect for others. It disregards others feelings, needs, opinions and ideas and sometimes this can compromise the wellbeing of others too.

Assertive - Assertive communication allows us to express our beliefs, feelings, opinions and thoughts in an open respectful manner that doesn't violate the rights of others. Assertive communicators use actions and words to express their boundaries in a calm manner with an air of confidence.

In order to maintain good relationships with those around us, we must remember to communicate effectively. We all have conflicts and argue, but being able to take the time to talk about those differences and share feelings to better understand each other's perspectives is far more helpful than shouting, or avoiding the situation.

Diet and wellbeing

Although it is not always acknowledged, our physical and mental health are very closely linked. This is why much of our advice for improving mental health comes back to a few key principles that equally support our physical health. Diet and exercise are things that can support OR negate each other.

Sleep is also a significant contributor to how we eat and whether we want to exercise. Check out our sleep section on page 13.

The key to influencing both diet and exercise in positive ways, is to make small, but most importantly, sustainable changes to our lifestyle. Over time, these add up to make a difference. If you see an extreme exercise routine or a 'fashionable' diet that leads to quick results, in the short term you might make some progress, but often we end up back where we started as it wasn't sustainable.

Diet

- **Try to have a piece of fruit or portion of vegetables with every meal.** We need the vitamins and minerals to keep us healthy.
- **Drink a large glass of water with every meal.** Being dehydrated makes you feel tired and 'under the weather'.
- **Try to make a meal from basic, whole ingredients, once a day.** Processed food often contains high levels of salt and saturated fats. Everything in moderation is okay, however too much of these aren't good for us.

Exercise

- **If you have a smartphone or watch that tracks your movement, try to hit your target daily steps.**
- **Allocate 30 minutes in your daily calendar to do some form of exercise.** This could be a walk, run, or even an online yoga class. Having a routine and making the time always makes it easier to get moving.
- **Do something you find fun.** Exercise doesn't have to be labourious. It could be playing with a pet, trying to perfect a tiktok dance, or trying a new skill/taking part in sport.

Social Media - Make it work for you

Most people now indulge in at least some time scrolling through social media feeds each day, whether it's to catch up on current affairs, the latest trends, interacting with friends or a variety of other reasons.

Young people now average between 6 and 9 hours of screen time each day, with a large portion of this being social media. If we assume a roughly 16 hour day, this could well be up to (or even more than) half of your time spent awake!

So considering what a large portion of our lives that is, surely the content that we look at for that amount of time is going to have an effect on our perceptions of both ourselves and the world around us, and generally on the way in which we think.

This is why it's so important that occasionally, we step back and evaluate the individuals, accounts and organisations that we follow or interact with.

If an account consistently makes posts that make you feel or think negatively about yourself or your body, unfollow them! Replace them with an account that makes you feel good, teaches you something or just brings you joy!

Here are some great accounts and individuals that can make you feel good, entertain, educate and empower you:

@POC_IOM (Twitter/Instagram)

@The.Holistic.Psychologist (Instagram)

@TheHonestBloke (Instagram)

@HumansOfNY (Instagram)

@DitchTheLabel (Instagram)

@BodyPosiPanda (Instagram)

@DrJulieSmith (Twitter/TikTok)

@FlorenceGiven (Instagram)

@I_Weigh (Instagram)

@MorganHarperNichols (Instagram)

@BoPo.Boy (Instagram)

@_EvryMan_ (Instagram)

@SatisfyingVideo (Instagram)

Reading / Listening List

Picking up a book is something that we forget about all too often in our busy daily lives, but it can create an amazing pocket of time to relax, unwind and grow yourself as a person.

Whether it's a paperback, kindle or other medium, the amount and depth of information or intricacies of a story cannot be matched by any other medium. Even movies can't come close.

Some of the biggest changes in perception and deep realisations have started with the information contained within books:

Books:

A New Earth – Eckhart Tolle

The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse – Charlie Mackesy

Finding Audrey – Sophie Kinsella

Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire – Akala

This Book is Anti Racist – Tiffany Jewell and Aurelia Durand

The Woman Code – Sophia A Nelson

The Unexpected Joy of Being Single – Catherine Gray

Me and White Supremacy – Layla Saad

How to Get Over a Boy – Chidera Eggerue

The Chimp Paradox – Dr Steve Peters

Work Clean – Dan Charnas

The Pressure Principle – Dave Alred

Start with why – Simon Sinek

Podcasts:

Jay Shetty – 'On Purpose'

Dr Hazel – 'The Food Medic'

How stuff works – 'Stuff you should know'

Fearne Cotton – Happy Place

Don't tell me the score – BBC Radio 4

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