



Think for the Future

# WOW Pack

## Mental-health

This pack has been put together in response to the current situation to support students and staff during school closures. We will be producing packs multiple times per week on a variety of topics. These will also be released on our social media, see our accounts below!



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# Mental Health Top Tips



The way we feel on the inside is just as important as how we feel on the outside. Our lives can have so much going on that while our bodies might be healthy, we can often forget to look after our thoughts and emotions, and we are at risk of becoming mentally unhealthy.

The things that happen around us, in our own lives and the rest of the world can really affect our mental health. At the moment we are experiencing an uncertain time, and people are understandably worried. But often people can make themselves feel worse than they need to, so here are some tips for keeping yourself mentally healthy during the next few weeks.



## How do I know how I feel?

It's so important that we can identify our feelings. This helps us to not only know what it is we're experiencing, but also to explain it to someone else when we might need their support. Sometimes we may feel new feelings that we're not used to. You might be feeling more worried than usual, and not know how to describe it. Some people might experience **anxiety** during difficult times, which is a more severe form of worry and can often stop us from feeling good about anything.

## How should I be feeling?

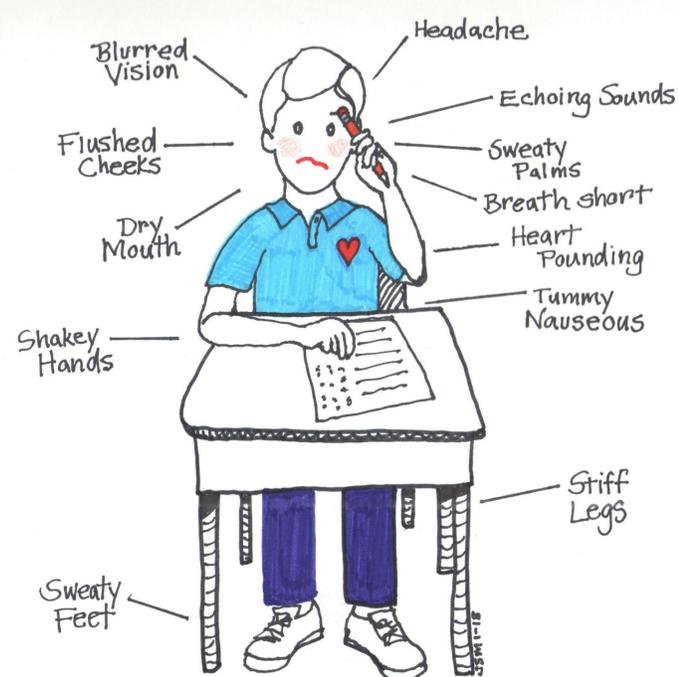
One of the best things about us is that we are all different! Everybody experiences the world differently, but at the moment some people may be more scared or worried than usual. There's nothing wrong with feeling this way. The important thing is that you **talk** about how you're feeling, and don't keep it inside. There's a lot of changes to our normal routines at the moment, so try not to get frustrated if things don't go the way you were expecting them to. We can't change some things, but we can control how we react to them.

## What shouldn't I do?

We're going to be at home more than usual and it can be very easy for us to forget that as humans, we need a healthy routine.

- **Don't stay up late!** It's crucial for our health that we get regular sleep patterns, staying up late will make it harder to get up the next day.
- **Don't stay in bed!** It might feel like you don't need to wake up early, but studies show that getting up at the same time every day keeps us happy and healthy. Plan your routine for each day and aim to start your weekdays the same time you normally would.
- **Don't laze around!** Spend your days doing things that are productive. Sitting around watching TV or Netflix might pass the time, but that's not what you'd be doing at school. If you have schoolwork to do, get it done! If you don't have work to do, ask to help around the house! That work/play balance keeps us feeling happy, believe it or not.
- **Don't play games all day!** It's important that we have a balanced life, and if you're just playing games on your Xbox or Playstation all day, what are you really achieving that will benefit your life?
- **Don't forget to eat properly!** Eating too much or too little can have a negative effect on how we feel, as can eating things that are bad for us. Remember to have your set meals - breakfast, lunch and dinner - and eat a balanced diet, with lots of fruit and veg.

## Signs of anxiety



## Talk about it

If at any time you don't feel great, or you're worried about what's going on, or you just need to talk to someone, it's important you don't keep it inside. Remember that while there may be a lot of negative stuff at the moment, there's also a lot of positive too. The more you practice ways to change how you think and feel in a healthy manner, the more naturally it will come to you. You can also teach others how to feel better during difficult times - what an amazing gift!

# 5 Ways to Wellbeing

## 1

### Connect

Connecting with other people increases our feelings of happiness and self-worth. Use these tools to connect with others!

- **Message a friend.** A text message, a whatsapp message, a phone call. It doesn't matter what it says, even just a "Hey how are you?" is enough to start a conversation.
- **FaceTime** with a friend or family member who needs support or company
- **Write a letter** to someone. It's easy to forget that we used to communicate with pens and paper before we had mobile phones.
- **Take the time to get to know your family better.** Ask them about their past, you'll be amazed at some of the stories you'll hear. And maybe your brother or sister isn't that bad after all!
- **Reach out to us.** Get in touch with Think for the Future on social media or email us if you need support

Keeping your body active and exercising releases feel-good chemicals in the brain that make us feel great. There are lots of ways to stay active without even leaving your house!

- **Press-ups, situps, planks-** there are lots of different kinds of body weight exercises that keep you fit and importantly make you feel better mentally.
- **Dance!** Put on your favourite tunes and dance away - it doesn't matter how you look, especially if there's nobody else around. Dancing is a great way to be active!
- **Yoga.** There are various different types but a quick google search can bring up guides including videos on how to practice some of the basic positions in yoga. It really puts you in touch with your body and makes you feel great.
- **Football in the garden.** If you have nobody to play with, practice your skills and kick ups - whos knows, you might end up being the next Messi!

## 2

### Be Active

## 3

### Learning

We grow when we challenge ourselves to learn something new. There's so much out there that can expand your mind and keep you entertained. You might surprise yourself with the things you pick up!

- **Go online** to research topics that interest you. A good place to start is to think "What would I like to spend my time doing if I didn't have to worry about anything else?"
- **Languages.** Maybe you know a bit of French and want to improve it, or maybe you want to learn how to say a certain phrase in Polish to impress one of your friends. Get online or into books to pick up a new way of communicating!
- **Learn a instrument.** Get dad to get that old guitar out the attic, it's time to learn some chords! If you start now, think how good you'll be in a few years?
- **Challenge yourself to learn one random fact a day.** Here's your first one: The national animal for Scotland is actually - the unicorn! They exist after all!

Giving to others has been proven to help us feel better about ourselves. It's also important that during tough times we help each other out as much as possible, because we all need a hand sometimes, right?

- **Do a household task to help out.** Maybe it's the washing up, or changing the dog's water. Do something to take the pressure off - you will benefit from this too.
- **Give someone a compliment.** Send a friend a message to tell them something you like about them. Maybe they really cheered you up the other day, or you're just glad they are your friend. Tell them!
- **Be a listening ear.** People will be feeling a lot more upset at the moment, so listen to others if they need to let it all out. That connection helps everybody.
- **If you've been told to stay at home, then stay at home!** Listen to the guidance given to you by parents, teachers and the government. The best way you can help others at the moment is to follow the advice we're given.

## 4

### Help Out

## 5

### Take Notice

Happiness is often right in front of your eyes - we just sometimes focus on the bad stuff and forget how many good things we've got in our lives. It's time to take notice of the positive things around us.

- **Write a gratitude list.** Write down a list of as many things as you can that you're happy you have in your life. For example, your house, your bed, your clothes, your family. Our lives are full of things to be grateful for!
- **Look out of your window.** What do you see? What do you hear? Really take in what's outside. How would you describe your view using three words?
- **Talk to your family.** We can take people for granted, but if they weren't there we would definitely miss them. Take notice of how other people might be feeling
- **Draw a picture of your room.** It doesn't matter how well you can draw, nobody has to see it. It's not about skill, it's about getting as much detail as you can onto the paper to help you take notice of all the things around you. Could you draw it from memory?

# Mental Health vs Mental Illness



## Mental Health

*A person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being.*

## Mental Illness

*A clinically diagnosable illness affecting how a person thinks and feels, behaves and interacts with other people*

We can all experience poor mental health, but that doesn't necessarily mean we've got a mental illness. There are things we can all do to take care of our mental health and keep us functioning in the best way possible. This is especially important during difficult times when we are facing new challenges. Sometimes we may feel new feelings that we're not used to. You might be feeling more worried than usual, and not know how to describe it.

Some people might experience **anxiety** during difficult times, which is a more severe form of worry and can often stop us from feeling good about anything. Anxiety is a symptom of poor mental health, and can be caused by stress, worry and uncertainty.

**Anxiety disorder** is a mental illness that causes anxiety and fear a lot of the time. We can all feel anxious in uncertain times, but it doesn't mean we have an anxiety disorder.

It's normal to feel worried about the future, especially if there are sudden changes to our routine.

If at any time you don't feel great, or you're worried about what's going on, or you just need to talk to someone, it's important you don't keep it inside. Talk to your family if you have any concerns about how you or someone else is feeling.

There are also lots of places you can get support online:

- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) or 0800 1111
- [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

*Sometimes all it takes is for somebody else to listen.*

# When things are out of our control



We can often feel frustrated because there are circumstances affecting us that are out of our control. But is there anything you can do? Often you can't change the situation, but you can change how you feel about it. Here are some tools to keep yourself from getting too worried or frustrated:

1

If you can't control the situation, then the first thing is to accept that it's out of your control. Say to yourself "I can do nothing to change this, but I can change how I feel". Saying it out loud to yourself makes it real.

Don't let your thoughts race ahead to 'What if?'. We often send ourselves into a panic by playing the 'What if?' game with ourselves, but it doesn't help us - it can just make us worry about things that probably won't happen. **Keep your thoughts in today.** For example, 'Today I will tidy my room, start my homework, and help mum with the laundry' or 'Today I will read that next chapter of my book, and help look after my younger brother'.

2

3

**Mindfulness.** Mindfulness is basically bringing your attention into the present moment. Stop what you're doing sit in a comfortable chair. Listen to your breathing. Focus on your five senses - what can you see? What can you hear? Feel? Smell? Taste? Maybe you can smell dinner being cooked downstairs, and it smells good. Maybe you never noticed that pattern on the carpet. **Bring yourself back into the present moment** away from all the worries of things that don't necessarily exist.

**Breathing exercises.** Bringing awareness to our breathing is a great way to get rid of those noisy thoughts. Try this - find a comfortable, quiet place. Start breathing in for 4 seconds through your nose, then breathe out for 4 seconds through your mouth. In through your nose... 2.. 3.. 4.. Out through your mouth... 2.. 3.. 4. Do this for as long as you can, focusing on your breathing, and nothing else. After a few minutes, notice how you feel - you'll feel much more relaxed! You can do this anytime you feel worried, stressed or unhappy.

4

The more you learn to put yourself into a relaxed state of mind and deal with stress, the easier you will find it to get through uncertain times. Also, **think positively** - most of the time things **will** work out okay in the end, even if you can't see it right now.

# Things to do and Watch



## Write down something you are grateful for

Gratitude has been clearly linked with improved well-being and mental health as well as happiness. The best-researched method to increase feelings of gratitude is to keep a gratitude journal or write a daily gratitude list. Generally contemplating gratitude is also effective, but you need to get regular practice to see a long-term benefit. Find something to be grateful for, let it fill your heart, and bask in that feeling.

## Click here to watch -

Ex professional footballer Andy Cole speaks openly about his battle with depression and how his mental health is improving every day.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkPJvDZQbQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KkPJvDZQbQ)



## Non-dominant Hand Day

If you're like most people, you rely almost entirely on your dominant hand. This is the hand you use to write, eat, brush your hair, and draw with. One great way to keep your brain active is to encourage it to create new connections by using your non-dominant hand. For example, if you're right-handed, you'd spend a period a lesson or even your morning routine by using your left hand. While this task will feel impossible at the beginning of the day, you'll probably notice that things seem much easier by the end of the day, at which point you'll know that your brain has successfully made some new connections!

## Give your brain a workout

To give your brain a real workout, practice counting backward. Starting at 200, count backward to zero in 5's Easy enough? Now, start at 200 and count back in increments of seven. Once you've done that, go from 500, counting backward in increments of 3's. Don't get discouraged if you find this activity tough! Just take a deep breath and start again. You'll probably find that the game gets easier as you repeat it.



## Click here to watch

We all all mental health - read Sasha's story about some of the struggles with mental health issues and what we can do to help ourselves and others.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxIDKZHW3-E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxIDKZHW3-E)

## Start today

You have the power to take positive steps to improve your resilience and emotional health. Don't wait until you are in crisis to make your mental health a priority. It is easier to form new habits when you are feeling strong, and then you will have them in place when you need them most. Pick something from this pack that resonates with you and try it. Then try something else. Slowly putting in place routines, habits, and regular patterns will help you feel better through gradual change.



# Where else to look...



Click on the icons below!



Elliot's Story



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwoghwj6j3s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uwoghwj6j3s)

**YOUNG MINDS**



let's end mental health discrimination

**keoth**

