

## Help with mental health during Covid-19

Many people have been struggling with mental health throughout lockdown across the world including students, teachers and maybe even family members.

Here are some resources to help you work through any anxiety, stress or depression you may be feeling at the moment. Remember you can always speak to your teachers should you be experiencing difficulties with your mental health.



### **NHS - Every Mind Matters**

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak means life has changed for us all. It may cause you to feel anxious, stressed, worried, sad, bored, lonely or frustrated.

It's important to remember it is OK to feel this way and that everyone reacts differently - for most of us, these difficult feelings will pass.

- 1) Stay connected with people
  - Maintaining healthy relationships with people we trust is important for our mental wellbeing.
  - You could try phone calls, video calls or social media - whether it's with people you normally saw often or reconnecting with old friends.
- 2) Talk about your worries
  - It's normal to feel a bit worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember: it's OK to share your concerns with others you trust.
  - If you cannot speak to someone you know or if doing so has not helped, there are plenty of helplines you can try instead like Young Minds (0808 802 5544)
- 3) Support and Help others
  - Helping someone else can benefit you as well as them, so try to be understanding of other people's feelings.
  - Try to think of things you can do to help people around you. Is there a friend or family member nearby you could message?
- 4) Feel prepared
  - Keep following the Government Guidelines so you feel more prepared and less concerned.
  - Think through your week and about how lock down affects it and what will you need to do to solve these problems.
- 5) Look after your body
  - Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and exercise regularly.
  - Going for a walk, run or bike ride can really help lift your mood and clear your mind.
- 6) Stay on top of difficult feelings
  - Try to focus on the things you can control, such as your behaviour, who you speak to, and where and how often you get information.

- Here is a link with some ideas on how to manage anxiety:  
<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/anxiety/>
- Here you can also find some videos on how to manage mental health at home:  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/moodzone-mental-wellbeing-audio-guides/>

7) Do things you enjoy

- If you can't do the activities you'd usually do, think about how you can adapt them to home or try something new!
- There are lots of music concert, exhibitions and tutorials on line which you could try out.

8) Focus on NOW

- Think about how things are now rather than worrying about the future.
- Here is a link to a mindful breathing video to help with stress:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRkLIoT\\_NA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRkLIoT_NA)

On the next page you will find some activities to do at home to help work through any mental health difficulties you might be having.

**Some exercises to try at home**

**A Worry Jar**

This is a worry jar, if you are feeling stressed and worried about something then put it in the jar by writing it down. The top of the jar is sealed so that the worry cannot get out of it.

Once it is locked in the jar it is time to think about the positives and negative of the worry and there can be positives that come from a worry, just think really hard, write these down and use two different colours to write them down, choose your favourite colour for the positives and another colour for the negatives.

If you want, you can even share your worry with someone else so that they can help you, but you have to be comfortable to do this.



## Our body's reaction

Our bodies react in different ways to stress and sometimes we need to work out what is happening to us and how we can deal with it, different parts of our body can be affected by stress.

The next two sheets will help you think about what is going on in your body and how to come up with ways to control how you are feeling.

On this sheet fill in any gaps and circle the statements that apply to you, green is okay and red means that you are not feeling as good as you could.

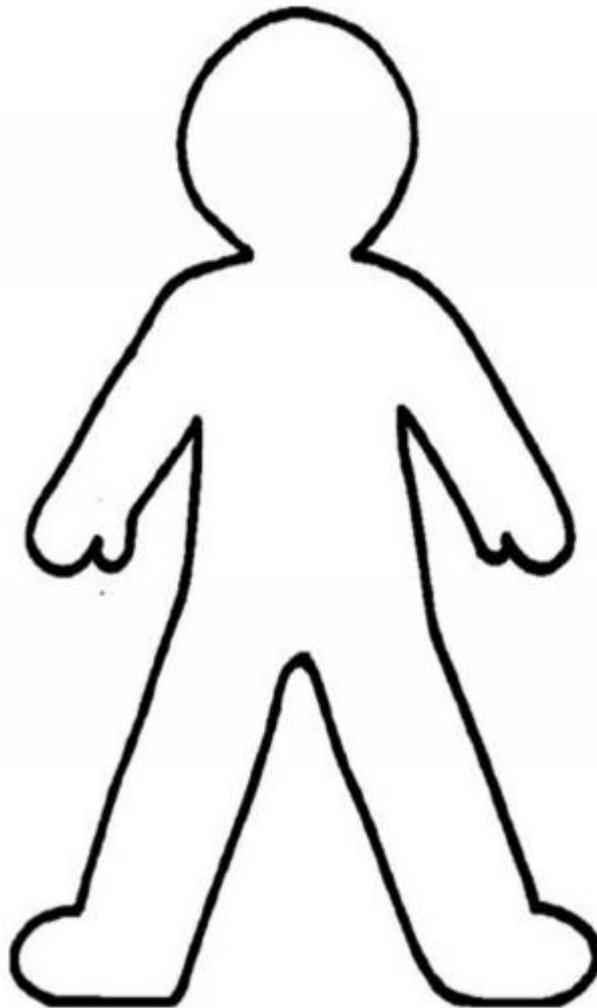
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Brain</u></p> <p><b>Our brain is where we think about our worries and anxieties. If we are calm we can think clearly, if we feel anxious our brain overthinks everything</b></p>	<p>I am feeling really calm and in a good place. My thoughts are clear and I can think about good things that make me happy.</p>	<p>I am not feeling calm and I have lots of different thoughts in my head right now and I am worrying about things. I want to escape and get away from my thoughts</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Heart</u></p> <p><b>Our heart can tell us a lot about how we are feeling. Normal heart rate is 60/80 beats per minute. When we feel anxious our heart beats faster.</b></p>	<p>My heart is beating at a normal rate and rhythm. Measure your heart rate by finding and counting your pulse</p> <p>Heart rate _____bpm</p>	<p>My heart is beating faster than normal and it feels really in my chest. Measure your heart rate by finding and counting your pulse</p> <p>Heart rate _____bpm</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Tension</u></p> <p><b>We often feel stress and anxiety in our muscles and they might feel tight or like there is a ball in part of our body</b></p>	<p>My muscles do not feel any different and I feel okay</p>	<p>I feel like I have a tension in my muscles and a ball of worry in my body and it is _____</p> <p>(where in your body?)</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Hands and feet</u></p> <p><b>When we are stressed or anxious we tend to move our hands and feet more. We can pick or bite our nails or tap our feet against the floor or something we are by.</b></p>	<p>I am in control of my body and I feel calm, my hands and feet are not moving and I do not feel the need to fidget.</p>	<p>My body feels restless and I feel like I need to fidget with something, or bite or pick my nails or tap my feet against something. My legs and hands might even feel painful.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Voice</u></p> <p><b>The way that we talk can change when we are stressed or anxious. We can either talk really quietly and not very much or very fast and a lot.</b></p>	<p>My voice is fine and I am talking normally.</p>	<p>I really don't want to talk to anyone and feel like I can't or I am talking really fast and talking about so much at once and some of it makes no sense.</p>

Other things that your body may also feel if you are anxious or stressed are:

<p><b><u>Sweat</u></b> You will sweat more when you are stressed or anxious</p>	<p><b><u>Shaking</u></b> Your body will shake more when you are stress or anxious</p>	<p><b><u>Feeling hot or cold</u></b> Your body may feel hotter or colder if you are stressed of anxious</p>	<p><b><u>Emotions</u></b> You may feel more emotional and cry if you are stressed or anxious</p>
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### **My body and my thoughts**

On the outline of the body below, write down how your body feels and the changes that you have noticed. On the outside of the body write down all of the thoughts that you are having. This get you to think about how these thoughts are impacting upon your physical and mental health.



### Mental Health Thermometer

This is a tool that can help you think about how stressed, anxious or frustrated you feel. The aim is that you know how you are currently feeling, can describe this and then think of things that will help you calm down and feel better. We ideally want to be in the green zone as this is our happy place. Write down your strategies to take you down to the next level on the scale

Scale	How I am feeling	Strategies to support me
5	I feel really stressed and anxious I feel really angry and unhappy I feel like I am going to explode I feel like I may hurt someone or break something	
4	I feel slightly stressed and anxious I feel like something is bothering me I feel agitated and want to fidget I feel like the smallest thing might make me angry and even more stressed.	
3	I feel okay, some things are annoying me, but I can deal with them. I feel like I can cope and get on with my day. I feel like I could be in a good place if things carry on this way.	
2	I do not feel stressed or anxious and things are going really well today. I feel happy and I am in my good place People are not annoying me today and I am enjoying their company.	
1	I feel tired today and I cannot be bothered with anything or anyone. I feel down and depressed. I feel agitated by things.	



## Understanding our Brain

When we feel stressed our bodies react in two ways, this is often called fight of flight. These are the body's natural defence mechanism and is something that our ancestors learnt a long time ago.

When we are feeling good our brain is working in perfect harmony, this means that all the part of our brain are working together. The pictures and descriptions below should help you to understand your brain a little bit more.



Our upper brain is working to process all of the information that is coming in as it is able to communicate with the mid brain as they are connected. This part of the brain is used for reasoning, making judgements and being able to socialise.

Our mid/lower brain is being hugged by the upper brain and so it is being protected and it is feeling safe. This part of the brain is often referred to as the 'cave man' part of our brain.

This part of our brain is responsible for our big emotions and when we lose control. Because it is being kept safe and communicating with the top part of our brain we feel calm.



Our upper brain has become overwhelmed with information and is no longer protecting our mid/lower brain and they are no longer connected. This means that it no longer has any influence over our emotions.

Our mid/lower brain is now free and our big emotions are now being displayed, this means that we may shout at people, hit out and say things that we do not mean.

Until the upper and lower brain are connected again, there will be no rational thought and it takes time for you to feel safe again and for the upper brain to hug the lower/mid brain again.

Sometimes we cannot control our emotions and we all have outbursts of emotion, this is okay, but we all need to learn our own triggers, our tolerance levels and also how to calm ourselves down. We all have strategies to do this and we all have things that we need and enjoy. Try to remember that things will settle down and you will feel calm again.