

Coping With Lockdown May 2020

A few months ago, we didn't use words like 'Lockdown' and 'Social Distancing.'

Schools were open to pupils, and we could go to restaurants and shops whenever we wanted.

Suddenly, the world we were familiar with, changed dramatically.

We were all asked to stay at home to save lives.

A virus we had never heard of started spreading throughout the world.

Now it is affecting all our lives.

Humans are adaptable and we are starting to find strategies to help us cope with life during Lockdown, but we all get anxious and upset sometimes.

Here are some suggestions to support your wellbeing.

At the end is a list of useful websites that might be of help.

This guide is aimed at adults and young people.

Please get in touch if you would like further support.

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1. Communicate With Others:

It is perfectly normal to feel worried about what is happening. Talking about how you are feeling is a good way to release any tension that you are feeling.

When you share your worries with another person, you often discover that you are not on your own. They may have similar worries. They may be able to suggest some useful coping strategies.

During Lockdown, we are making use of technology such as video calls to help us to keep in contact with others. You can talk to friends and family in this way. People working can also talk to colleagues and pupils can talk to school staff. There are helplines available online too.

There is a list of possible helplines at the end of this guide.

2. Routine:

Being at home for much of the time can mean that routines start to slip. Many people don't need to get up early to go to work or school and so they may lie-in.

They may start getting up later and later and find it hard to motivate themselves to get anything done.

Some people feel guilty that they aren't able to go in to work or school. They may feel that they must follow a strict timetable at home.

Some pupils and their parents are feeling stressed because they aren't able to stick to the school timetable.

The key here is to find a balance between doing some work and having some time to relax and do other things.

Try and get up at a reasonable time each day. Make sure you don't go to bed too late.

At the start of the day, make a rough plan of what you would like to achieve that day.

At the end of the day, you can look back and see how you did.

Try and set realistic and achievable goals.

If things don't go well one day, try not to stress about this. Get up at a reasonable time the next day and try again.

If you can follow a routine like this, it is likely to help you to cope.

3. News:

While it is important to know what is happening in the world, be aware that too much News can feel overwhelming. There are lots of ways to learn about what is happening. Some people watch the daily government briefings. Some people prefer to read the headlines online.

Try and look out for good news stories. They help to balance out some of the sad and worrying information we hear.

Some News sources are more reliable and accurate than others. If you hear something and you are not sure if it is true, look for other reliable News sources to see if they are also giving the same information.

The NHS website is a good source of medical information, for example.

4. Learn a skill:

If you find you have a lot of spare time on your hands and are getting bored, why not learn a new skill? Online there are sites that can help you learn a new language, for example. Some people are joining 'virtual choirs' and other people are watching YouTube to learn how to play an instrument.

Learning something new can be a great way to occupy your time.

5. Experience Flow:

When you are fully absorbed in an activity, time seems to fly by, and you can forget your worries for a while. Some people experience this by drawing or painting. Some people find that colouring or knitting has this affect on them.

Other people experience this while jogging or dancing. Others experience it while playing a musical instrument or even by listening to music.

See what works for you.

6. Exercise:

Going out for daily exercise is great for your wellbeing if you are able to. Some people like to walk, while others choose to cycle or jog.

Even if you cannot leave your home at the moment, try and get some exercise indoors. There are lots of benefits. Exercise can lift your mood. It helps you to stay fit and healthy.

Gentle stretching exercises can stop you experiencing joint and muscle aches from staying in one position for too long.

Some people like dancing or even jogging on the spot.

See what works best for you.

7. Be kind to yourself:

Make sure you are looking after yourself. Try and get enough sleep and eat a healthy diet. This will help you to feel better and improves your chances of staying fit and well. People are often kinder to their friends than they are to themselves. Try treating yourself as you would a good friend. If you make a mistake, forgive yourself. Find some time to do things you enjoy.

Your friends and loved ones are important, but so are you.

8. Be realistic:

We can sometimes come up with a long list of things we feel we ought to be doing. We then get upset or disappointed with ourselves when we don't complete everything we aimed to achieve.

Try and set realistic and achievable goals for yourself.

We are bound to have good days where we achieve what we set out to achieve, but there will also be days when things go wrong, and we make mistakes.

9. Acknowledge your feelings:

Some days are easier than others. You may feel you are coping well one day and really struggling on another.

Some days you are likely to feel sad for no obvious reason and on other days you may find yourself having fun.

Sometimes we are having a good day and then we discover one of our friends is having a bad time and this can make us feel guilty.

It is OK to feel happy and it is OK to feel sad.

We are all trying to cope with the challenges of Lockdown and our feelings and experiences will vary.

If you are struggling with your feelings, talk to someone you trust. There are sources of help available online. There is a list of possible contacts at the end of this guide.

10. Music:

Creating or listening to music can be uplifting. Singing can help to lower stress levels and has even been found to help with sleep.

There is music available to reflect every type of emotion. Listening to music can help you to release tension and improve your mood.

11. Diet:

Try and eat a balanced diet. Too much junk food can leave you feeling sluggish. Eating too much sugar can give you a 'sugar-rush' but afterwards you can feel low.

Balance is key here.

There are healthy snack recipes available online and one site is mentioned at the end of this guide.

12. Mindfulness:

Mindfulness is the quality of being fully engaged in what you are doing.

It can be hard to stop worrying about things that have gone wrong in the past or might go wrong in the future. There are techniques that you can use to help you focus on the present and stop worrying so much.

Using your senses can help you to stay present. What can you hear, see, touch, smell and taste?

Focusing on your surroundings can distract you from your thoughts.

Focusing on your breathing can also help. Make sure that you exhale as much as you inhale. People tend to hold their breath when they are feeling tense.

Tensing and then relaxing each muscle in your body can also help you to remain present and feel calmer.

13. Relaxation:

Find ways to relax that work for you. Some people find listening to music is relaxing. Other people find yoga or dance can help. Some people close their eyes and meditate while calming music is playing in the background.

You might find a warm bath relaxing or spending time with a pet.

14. Environment:

When you spend a lot of time in one place it is important that you feel as relaxed and comfortable as possible there.

Spending a bit of time de-cluttering or tidying your environment is a good idea. If you find your environment clean and welcoming, you are likely to feel more relaxed.

If your place is rather untidy and you feel overwhelmed at the thought of tidying it, consider spending just a few minutes a day tidying up.

Even a few minutes tidying each day can make a lot of difference over time.

15. Ask for help:

This is a challenging time for all of us. We all cope in different ways.

If you are struggling to cope with any aspect of life during Lockdown, ask for help.

You may have a friend or family member you can talk to. Is there someone you can contact at work or school who might be able to help? Look at the list of online support at the end of this guide and see if there is someone who could help.

There is no need to feel bad if you do need help. We all need help sometimes. The important thing is to recognise when you are able to cope and when you need support.

16. Help others

Do you know anyone who is struggling? Is there something that you can do to help them?

If you cannot help them, is there someone who might be able to help that you can tell them about?

If we all look out for one another we will be able to cope with this situation more easily.

Even small offers of help can make all the difference to people when they are struggling.

17. Laughter:

One really good way to release tension is to have a good laugh. Is there a TV programme that you can watch that always makes you laugh? Maybe you know of a great comedy show or a funny film?

Laughter can help you to cope more easily with stressful situations and it boosts your mood.

18. Tiredness:

Some people are finding themselves unusually tired during Lockdown. When we experience stress over a long period, we can become mentally exhausted.

Ways you can help to combat this is to make sure you are getting enough sleep. Eat as healthily as possible and try and get some exercise. Break up tasks into short, manageable chunks and have a rest or do something you enjoy after you complete each task.

Try to take a break from technology and watching too much News.

Be kind to yourself and acknowledge to yourself that you are doing the best that you can in a difficult situation.

19. Active Listening:

When we are caught up in our own thoughts or worries, it can be hard to focus on other people. If you are scrolling on your phone, you are unlikely to be fully listening to people who may be trying to communicate with you.

Try Active Listening.

When someone talks to you, stop doing other things and fully listen to what they are saying. You can look at their facial expression and body language to help you work out how they are feeling.

If you make the effort to listen carefully to others, they are more likely to listen to you when you try to communicate with them.

Active Listening can really help to reduce conflict with others and help life with them to run more smoothly.

20. Space:

Many of us need time on our own. This isn't always easy to achieve if you are living in a small space with other people. If you share a room with someone, is there part of the room you can call your own?

Having a place that you can go to be by yourself for a while, can be really helpful when you are dealing with difficult feelings, or you need time to think.

It may be that you can talk to members of your household to see if there is a room in your home that you can use to be alone at certain times of day?

The key is to remember if you are feeling stressed and want to have time on your own, the chances are that other members of your household might be feeling the same way. See if there are some compromises that can be made so that you are all given a bit of time to yourself sometimes.

21. Increased arguments:

Lots of people are arguing more with their loved ones. There are lots of possible reasons for this. We are all worried about the future and spending more time around members of our household than usual. When people are feeling worried and they are spending lots more time together, it is not surprising that they can start to feel irritated by one another.

If you are able to see things from the other person's point of view this will help you to communicate better with them.

If you get something wrong, be willing to apologise.

If someone apologises to you for getting things wrong, it can help things to move on if you are willing to accept their apology and see if you can move on from the argument.

There are people who can help if arguments are becoming a real problem. There may be people at work or school, that can advise you and there are helplines that you can contact for help and support.

Some of these are listed at the end of this guide.

22. Future Plans:

People have had to cancel holiday plans and are not sure when they will be able to resume their usual activities. It can be frustrating and upsetting not being able to visit loved ones or go to the places you usually go.

It can be helpful to have some ideas of what you might like to do when Lockdown eases but it is important not to make exact plans with fixed dates as we do not know when restrictions on movement will be lifted.

You can make plans for activities you would like to do that are flexible so that you can carry them out when things are less restricted.

23. Journal:

Some people make sense of what is happening by writing down their thoughts, feelings and experiences in a diary. Other people choose to make drawings or paintings to mark the occasion. This can help you to release your feelings now and can remind you of any good ideas you might have.

After Lockdown has been lifted, you can look back over what happened.

24. Nature:

Nature can be very uplifting. If you cannot go into Nature now, you can watch Nature programmes or explore some of the Wildlife Webcams that are available online.

Even looking out of your window and noticing the weather can take your mind off things.

Looking up at the sky at night can be rewarding on a clear night. You can see the stages of the moon and all the stars.

25. Control:

It can be very stressful not being able to do the things you would like to do. People worry about a whole range of things when they are experiencing Lockdown.

Try and work out what is worrying you and focus on the things that you can do something about. Lots of things are not in our control at the moment, and dwelling on them is likely to make you feel worse.

If you are worried about something that you can do something about, you can help yourself to cope with this by being clear on what you are worried about. Once you know what the problem is you can look at possible solutions. Solutions are rarely perfect. Look at your list of possible solutions and think of the advantages and disadvantages of each one.

Choose the solution that looks best to you and try it out. If it doesn't resolve the problem, you can look back at the list and try another solution. You may be able to ask someone your trust for their opinion. They may be able to suggest a possible solution that you hadn't thought of.

Life becomes a lot easier to cope with when we are clear on what we can change and what we can't.

26. Technology:

Technology has been very helpful during Lockdown. We have been able to stay in contact with friends and family through video calling. Schools are using Zoom and other online platforms to help them to teach their pupils.

You can find out about many things and teach yourself new skills using Technology but too much time spent online is not good for you. Make sure you take enough breaks from using technology. Ensure you give your eyes a rest from staring at screens. You also need to move about every now and then to stop your muscles aching.

It is hard to get to sleep at night if you spend too much time watching screens before bed.

Try other things such as listening to music or drawing. Maybe you could read or listen to a talking book?

27. Inspiration

There are many inspiring people doing brave and helpful things or saying things that really help us to cope with the situation we are in.

Look out for inspiring quotes and acts of kindness. These can really cheer us up and remind us that we can work together to get through this.

28. Time capsule:

I read somewhere that some children are carrying out a very interesting exercise. They are being asked to think of things that they would put into a time capsule that would help future generations learn and understand what it was like living during Lockdown.

You could choose to carry out this activity. You could make a list of things you would put in a time capsule or you could make drawings.

29. The good bits:

While Lockdown can be a very stressful experience, it does have some good points. An example of this is that as we are travelling less, there is less pollution, and this is good for the planet. See if you can think of 10 things that you have appreciated about this time.

If you find thinking of 10 things too challenging, aim for 3. You may find this exercise easier than you think and the list could get longer and longer.

30. Surprise others:

Thinking about other people can cheer you up. Is there someone that you are missing? Do you have loved ones that you care about? Why not send them a message and see if you can cheer them up?

Knowing that other people care, can really help people through these unpredictable times.

31. Mood Swings:

It is perfectly understandable if you feel calm and content one minute and then stressed and anxious the next.

Some people are quite enjoying aspects of being in Lockdown as they are appreciating more time to themselves. Some people are really struggling with it and find it hard to cope. Others feel good one minute and stressed the next.

When you feel stressed, take some time to relax and do something that you enjoy. It may help you to take your mind off things and help your mood to lift.

If you find it really hard to relax, talk to someone you trust and see if they can help you to feel calmer.

Breathing techniques and Mindfulness can also help.

Useful Websites:

NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/>

Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

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

Samaritans: <https://www.samaritans.org/>

Healthy Recipes: <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/quick-and-healthy>

Wildlife Webcams: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/webcams>

Breathing Exercises: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/ways-relieve-stress/>

Mindfulness: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/>