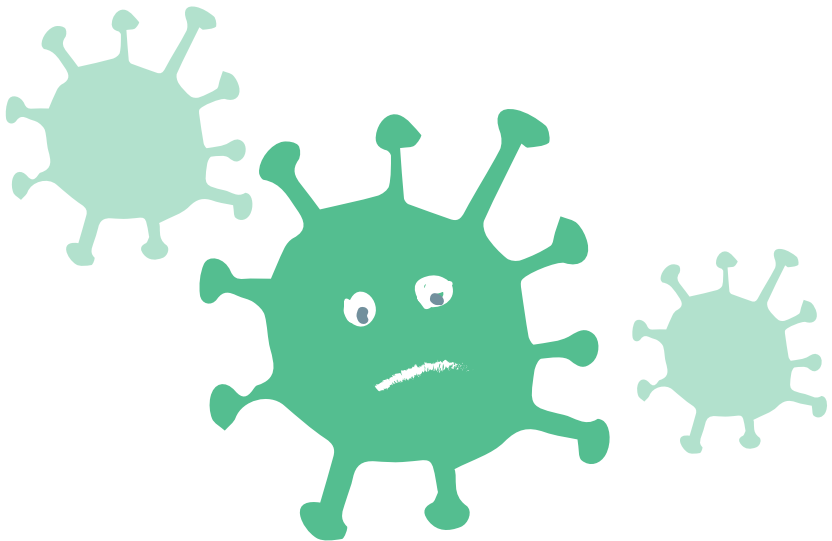




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Coping with Coronavirus

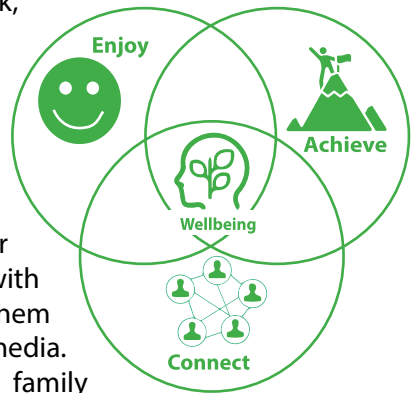
COPING WITH CORONAVIRUS

After speaking with numerous students these last few weeks, I think it is amazing how many of you are coping with what's going on in the world. It just shows how strong you are. However, this is a challenging time for everyone and the uncertainty of not knowing what is happening can be difficult. You are probably feeling more anxious and worried than usual, which will be a common reaction for many. I decided to write this piece in the hope of trying to share some strategies you may find useful during these difficult times.

PLANNING A NEW ROUTINE

With the current health situation your daily routine will have changed, which can be unsettling. So, it is important for you to organise a new routine, a structure which will benefit you. When planning this new routine try to get up in the morning as if you were attending school. Keep your days varied and include a balance between activities that:

- Give you a sense of achievement: (schoolwork, sports, learning something new, doing something you've been putting off for a while - such as sorting your room out!).
- Help you feel close and connected to other people: This will be more difficult because you cannot go out and see your friends. However, you can still connect with them in other ways by speaking to them over the phone or through social media. If possible, spend time doing things with family members too as feeling close and connected to people is very important.
- Activities that you do for enjoyment or pleasure (creative activities, sport, playing or listening to music, watching Netflix, gaming etc.). By getting a balance of these activities in your life, it will help with how you are feeling and keep you feeling well.



Doing too much in just one area can have a negative impact on how you feel, therefore it is important to get a balance between all the activities. Check in with yourself each day and reflect on 'what did I do today that gave me a sense of achievement, closeness to others or enjoyment?'

KEEPING ACTIVE

We know that exercise is very important for our emotional as well as physical health, however given that most gyms, sports clubs and leisure facilities are now closed, you will be limited by what you are able to do. Think about other ways you can do some exercise. Could you download one of the free fitness apps or do the Joe Wick's work-out each morning at 9am on YouTube? Could you come up with your own routine to stick to each day or play outside in the garden with family members? Although you cannot go far from home, try to ensure wherever possible that you go outside and get some fresh air each day. Being outside and around nature has been proven to be helpful for our emotional health.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Based on the ACE which we have talked about above, it is important for you to keep in contact with friends and family. Young people are often fantastic sources of help to each other and you should turn to your friends during these times. Looking after each other and being kind to those around us can certainly help us to feel better in an unknown situation. Although you cannot have face-to-face contact with friends, use FaceTime or other safe apps whereby you can chat with friends and feel more connected to them because you can see them. Often when young people feel down or anxious about things, they isolate themselves and withdraw from friends and family. This can make them feel worse if they find themselves spending too much time thinking about things, so it's very important to maintain contact with the people you care about.

'HEALTHY' USE OF TECHNOLOGY

With being stuck indoors so much you're likely to be making more use of technology and social media. However, try to make sure you use it healthily and don't spend too much time online. Also, be careful about the information you read online and make sure it comes from trusted sources. If you do want to check the news, then do it at set times rather than focusing on the continuous flow of negative information which can contribute towards making you feel down.

MANAGING WORRIES

Uncertainty is hard to tolerate and many young people (and adults) struggle when they do not know what is going to happen. Try not to imagine the worst as this could result in you worrying even more about things!

To manage any worries, try to recognise the difference between those worries you can do something about and those which are outside of your control. Spot the specific worries that come to mind and ask yourself is it a current worry you can do something about, or a more abstract 'what if' worry? For current worries you can problem solve what you are going to do and set time aside to do it now or later.

However, those 'what if' worries are the ones we can do very little about as we don't know if they are going to happen. These are the worries we need to try to let go of, whether by distracting ourselves for a short while or by accepting that we can do very little about them.

Writing your worries down can sometimes help, especially when you find it tough to fall asleep at night. Also, try setting designated 'worry periods' of 10-15 minutes a day. These are times when you can think about anything that is bothering you and all your worries. Any other time during the day when a worry pops into your head, tell yourself that you do not have time to think about that now and will think about it instead during your 'worry period'. It is better to focus your energy and attention on worries you can do something about and that are within your control.

PRACTISING SELF-CARE

As the name suggests, self-care is what we do to take care of ourselves. With all the changes in your usual routine it is important for you to try to look after yourself physically as well as emotionally. Make sure you eat healthily as this can have a significant impact on your mood. Exercise each day and ensure you get enough sleep by sticking to a good sleep routine each night (going to bed and getting up at similar times each day). Continue to do the things that keep you feeling well as much as possible.

It is also important to look after your emotional health by recognising your warning signs when you are struggling. Then do something about it, trying to help yourself using the information in this sheet. During times like this, it is vital to look after yourself wherever you can and there is a long list of suggested self-care strategies provided on the link below:

<https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/>

If you are struggling with how you are feeling, look to the people you trust for support; reach out to them to make sense of things but remember just like you they probably won't have all the answers. There are some great sources of support out there and school have provided you with a list of useful websites and apps which can help support your mental health and wellbeing. Remember there is no right or wrong way to be feeling right now and these are difficult times for everyone, so don't beat yourself up for what's in your mind. Make sure you regularly check in with yourself and ask yourself how you are feeling.