

Staying Mentally Healthy During the Corona Virus and Possible Self-Isolation/Social-Distancing

Over the last few years at Wimbledon College we have built up a lot of work about looking after our mental health. Here we present some of these ideas in our current context, offering some ideas that might help in this time of heightened anxiety due to corona virus, and coping with novel challenges like self-isolation. Look at or follow https://twitter.com/Wimb_Coll_Well (@Wimb_Coll_Well) for more tips, stories and advice (you don't have to be signed up to twitter to view this content).



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Tips for Self-Isolation

- If you are in isolation, try to bring variety into your days, maybe have one day when you do some spring cleaning, another when you do something creative, another when you do some reading, etc. so everyday isn't the same.
- If checking the news makes you anxious, limit yourself to how much you follow. Only follow news from reputable sources.
- Know it is OK to be anxious. Some people are more anxious, some people are more laid back, try and be understanding of others around you if their response is different to how you are feeling.
- Keep active, see our tips for this in the protective factors section below.
- If you are isolating with others, anticipate that this close proximity living can be challenging for everyone. Talk to each other, air frustrations early but in a gentle way. Try to understand that other people might have different needs and emotional responses than you to the new situation. Make an extra effort to be patient with each other, and to look out for ways to do kind things for each other.
- Self-care – do things to look after yourself, take a long bath, cook your favourite food, use some essential oils, listen to your favourite album, watch some comedy.
- Watching TV series, using social media, playing computer games can be a great distraction, but bingeing on these can leave you feeling low and sapped of energy, and if you are doing this late in the evening this can also adversely affect your sleeping which can have a significant impact on your mental health. Try and set yourself reasonable limits on how much time you will spend in front of a screen, and mix up screen time with other non-tech-based activities (do some cooking, read a book, listen to music, do some gardening).

Tips if you are working from home:

- Set aside a space for work.
- Try to avoid using your bedroom to work in, if possible.
- Keep/create a routine that works for you, block your time so you have dedicated times for work. Keep boundaries between work and home life.
- Some people like to get up and get dressed ready for work to help delineate when they are in work mode and when they are in home mode.
- Try exploring more tips from others who have experience working from home, this podcast is a good place to start
<https://play.acast.com/s/is-this-working/5e6a8c58d22bfc26784b115c>

Tips to support your Mental Wellbeing

(Protective factors)

Exercise

(active)



Keeping active can be a great way of keeping mentally healthy. If your normal mode of exercise is inaccessible try going for a bike ride or a run (there are great “coach to 5km” programmes for beginners. If you are in isolation try out an online home workout video, like “The Body Coach” an activity like skipping. A whole variety of different styles of online workouts from HIIT sessions, to dance or yoga can be found here: www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/fitness/strength-training/a704114/best-youtube-workouts/

Sleep well

(discerning)



Anxiety and changes of routine can affect our sleep. Doing what we can to help ourselves sleep well can help our mental health and resiliency.

- Try to keep to a normal sleep pattern
- Don't be tempted to nap in the day
- Switch off electronic devices a couple of hours before bed.
- Have a distinct winding down routine in the hours before bed. Go for a walk, have a warm shower/bath, read a book.
- Don't drink caffeine or energy drink for a number of hours before bed.
- To avoid ideas and anxieties whirring in your head disrupting your sleep, keep a notebook by your bed that you can write down thoughts, or anxieties in, this can help externalize them, and stop them churning in your head.
- See www.good-thinking.uk, www.mentalhealth.org.uk, & Sleepio App for more help.

Be creative

(curious & active)



Having creative outlets can be great for our mental wellbeing. Get out a sketch pad, or paints, pick up a camera, turn your hand to some poetry or song writing, pick up a musical instrument, design a webpage, teach yourself how to code.

Eat well

(discerning)



- Health body, health mind. Eat a good balanced variety of foods.
- If you are in isolation or working from home try and keep to certain times of the day to eat, and don't be tempted to snack constantly.
- Keep your fluids up, but be careful not to increase your caffeine consumption.

Be grateful

(gratitude)



- Be thankful for the small things.
- If you are isolated with other people, make an effort to express your gratitude for the everyday acts of kindness.
- Take the opportunity to write that thank you note/email that you have been meaning to send.
- Keep a gratitude diary -challenge yourself to write down 3 things you are grateful for each day.

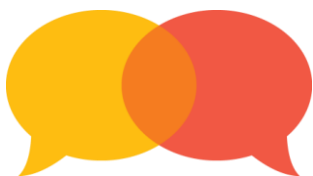
Be outward looking

Do things for others
(generous)



- Think what you can do for others?
- Is there a charity that you can support remotely?
- Is there a fundraising challenge you could complete in your spare time?
- Can you use your time to research an issue or cause that you are passionate about and plan how you can engage more with this in the future?
- Think – who do I know who might be lonely, pick up the phone, video call someone, message people, write someone a letter.
- Keeping yourself motivated – I am doing my bit to help others. I am making some sacrifices to help protect the most vulnerable.
- Keep things balanced, make sure you are also looking after yourself well.

Have some trusted people you can talk to about your feelings (truthful)



Find someone who you can talk to honestly about how you are feeling. If isolation is driving you crazy, don't pretend it's a breeze.

If you are anxious, but perhaps trying not to show it to help keep children or family calm, find someone who you can talk to honestly and openly about how you are feeling.

Connect with friends and family (loving)



- If you end up isolated, keeping connected with friends and family by whatever means you can will be important for you.
- Use the opportunity to ring a friend who you haven't spoken to in a while. Use video calling technology to remotely connect with friends and family.
- Think of others who might not have as many people to connect with and speak to or message them.

Focus on the positive (intentional & hopeful)



This is not about being naïve and looking at the world through rose tinted spectacles, but at the same time we can be drawn to focussing on the negative things, so try and focus on the positive.

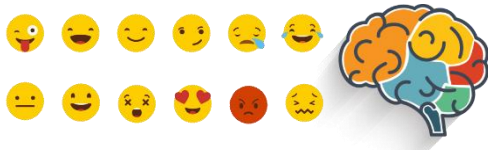
If you are in isolation you might be tempted to make mental lists of all the things that you now cannot do, all the freedoms you no longer have. That is fine, and having someone you can talk to about your frustrations is good, but also try and look for, and focus on, the positives. What can you positively use some of this extra time to do?

Try and focus on positive self-talk:

"I can focus on doing my bit and doing my bit well"

Be mindful of your own feelings

do mindfulness exercises
like the examen
(attentive & discerning)



Pray the daily Examen,

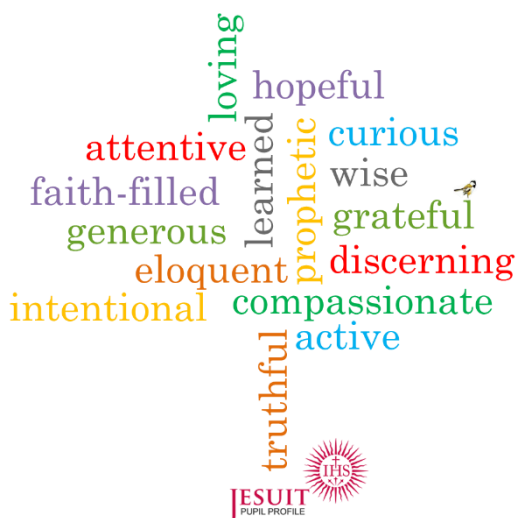
- Podcasts here: <https://examen.libsyn.com/>
- Or download the “Reimagining the Examen” app

or use mindfulness exercises.

- <https://bemindful.co.uk/>
- <http://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/>

Read a Good Book (curious, compassionate)

Reading a good book can take you into another world, take you out of your own situation and worries and immerse yourself in the lives of the characters in the book. Not only is this a good form of entertainment and distraction to fill the time, it can help you focus outside of yourself, help you empathise with others and give you perspective.



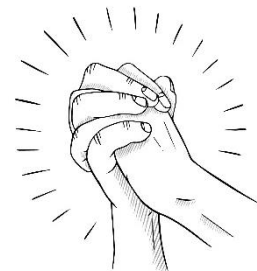
Challenge negative thoughts (intentional)



Negative self-talk can become a bad habit, and it is never a true balanced reflection.

Try and catch yourself if you are dwelling on negative thoughts, and challenge yourself to reframe them in a more balanced way.

Pray (faith-filled & hopeful)

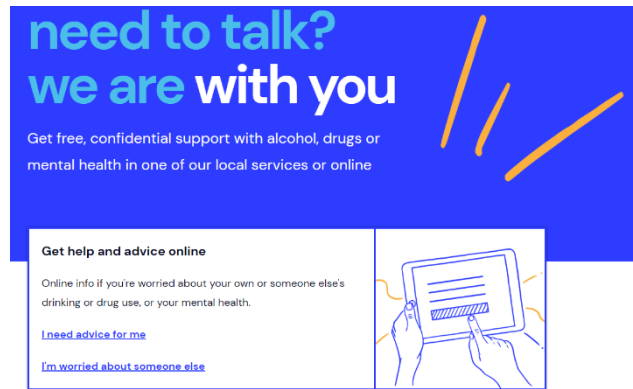


- Lent is a great time to get into some new good prayer habits.
- Take part in the Pray as you go online Lenten prayer podcasts. <https://pray-as-you-go.org/retreat/lent-2020>
- Use centering prayer to help connect with God and relieve anxiety www.contemplativeoutreach.org/category/category/centering-prayer
- Read a Gospel
- Read some of the New Testament books you are less familiar with.
- Try out the new prayer app -Soultime

Online Support Services for Adults

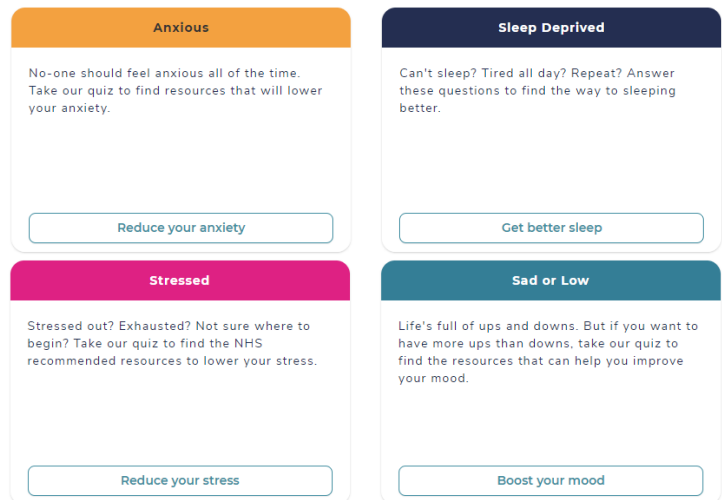
we are with you

<https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/>



<https://www.good-thinking.uk/>

Find the right tools and resources to help you feel better



Online Support Services for Young People



Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people
You can chat online with a counsellor:
from 12pm to 10pm Monday to Friday
from 6pm to 10pm Saturday and Sunday
www.kooth.com



ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME
childline.org.uk | 0800 1111

ChildLine is the UK's free helpline for children and young people in trouble or danger. It provides a confidential telephone counselling service for any child with any problem, 24 hours a day, every day. It comforts, advises and protects. Online 1-2-1 chat with a counsellor also available.
0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk



Clear Fear

Clear Fear is an app to help young people struggling with anxiety and fear, developed for teenage mental health charity stem4



www.themix.co.uk

WHO general guidance

- COVID-19 has and is likely to affect people from many countries, in many geographical locations. Don't attach it to any ethnicity or nationality. Be empathetic to those who got affected, in and from any country, those with the disease have not done anything wrong.
- Don't - refer to people with the disease as "COVID-19 cases", "victims" "COVID-19 families" or the "diseased". They are "people who have COVID-19", "people who are being treated for COVID-19", "people who are recovering from COVID-19" and after recovering from COVID19 their life will go on with their jobs, families and loved ones.
- Avoid watching, reading or listening to news that cause you to feel anxious or distressed; seek information mainly to take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself and loved ones. Seek information updates at specific times during the day once or twice. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel worried. Get the facts. Gather information at regular intervals, from WHO website and local health authorities platforms, in order to help you distinguish facts from rumours.
- Protect yourself and be supportive to others. Assisting others in their time of need can benefit the person receiving support as well as the helper.
- Find opportunities to amplify the voices, positive stories and positive images of local people who have experienced the new coronavirus (COVID-19) and have recovered or who have supported a loved one through recovery and are willing to share their experience.
- Honour caretakers and healthcare workers supporting people affected with COVID-19 in your community. Acknowledge the role they play to save lives and keep your loved ones safe.

WHO guidance for people in Isolation

- Stay connected and maintain your social networks. Even in situations of isolations, try as much as possible to keep your personal daily routines. If health authorities have recommended limiting your physical social contact to contain the outbreak, you can stay connected via e-mail, social media, video conference and telephone.
- During times of stress, pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly, keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy food. Keep things in perspective. Public health agencies and experts in all countries are working on the outbreak to ensure the availability of the best care to those affected.
- A near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel anxious or distressed. Seek information updates and practical guidance at specific times during the day from health professionals and WHO website and avoid listening to or following rumours that make you feel uncomfortable.

WHO guidance for carers of young Children

- Help children find positive ways to express disturbing feelings such as fear and sadness. Every child has his/her own way to express emotions. Sometimes engaging in a creative activity, such as playing, and drawing can facilitate this process. Children feel relieved if they can express and communicate their disturbing feelings in a safe and supportive environment.
- Keep children close to their parents and family, if considered safe for the child, and avoid separating children and their caregivers as much as possible. If a child needs to be separated from his/her primary caregiver, ensure that appropriate alternative care is and that a social worker, or equivalent, will regularly follow up on the child. Further, ensure that during periods of separation, regular contact with parents and caregivers is maintained, such as twice-daily scheduled phone or video calls or other age-appropriate communication (e.g., social media depending on the age of the child).

- Maintain familiar routines in daily life as much as possible, especially if children are confined to home. Provide engaging age appropriate activities for children. As much as possible, encourage children to continue to play and socialize with others, even if only within the family when advised to restrict social contact.
- During times of stress and crisis, it is common for children to seek more attachment and be more demanding on parents. Discuss the COVID-19 with your Children in honest and age appropriate information. If your children have concerns, addressing those together may ease their anxiety. Children will observe adults' behaviours and emotions for cues on how to manage their own emotions during difficult times.