

## **Some useful tips and links for mental well-being**

### **Staying positive during lockdown**

The last months during the pandemic have been awful for so many people, with millions dealing with grief, stress, financial difficulties, job losses and isolation. Now we have the latest lockdowns in all 4 nations, albeit it slightly differently and the added winter months which are typically a time that can be tough for many people even in normal times. But the country's leading mental health experts say there are things that many of us can do to give ourselves a lift. Here are some of their tips.

### **Get moving**

Getting outdoors for exercise can be difficult in winter, but pretty much all experts agree that it's a great way to boost your mood. "Our minds and bodies are completely inseparable", says Dr Brendon Stubbs, of King's College London. Exercise triggers the release of endorphins into the bloodstream, relieving pain and producing a feeling of well-being. Research by Dr Stubbs has also shown that exercise also increases electrical activity in the emotional processing areas of the brain, particularly the hippocampus and the pre-frontal cortex. "It's vital to keep active to improve your mental health and stimulate your brain including those areas", he says. "If you don't exercise, the activity drops." That's one of the reasons why a lack of exercise increases your risk of anxiety and depression.

### **Set a target**

Setting a new goal or target, can really help pull you through. That could be a large project like learning a language or something as small as trying out a new recipe or reading a new book. If big ideas are too much, start small. The point is that if it's outside your comfort zone, and it's pushing you forward, it gives you a focus and a sense of control. For many people that's hugely helpful for their mental state.

Learning to do new things is frequently how we acquire self-worth. Goal-motivated behaviour is one of the most fundamental ways that we operate. Structure your day and know what you intend to do tomorrow.

### **Try not to overthink**

People often dwell on problems, going over and over the same negative thoughts. Some simple suggestions to stop that happening are that if you have been worrying about a problem for 30 minutes or more without coming up with a plan of action, or you've been going over questions with no answers, it's time to stop. Try to change your focus from worries to practical problem-solving.

It's perfectly normal to worry, but many of our worries never materialise and sometimes they are better shared.

## **Talk it through**

We're not really designed to be on our own," says Prof Emerita Kuipers, of King's College London. We're socially-oriented. We feel better with social contact. Talking problems over when you can is a good idea, but the key thing is how it's done. Going over problems again and again, just rehearsing how terrible you feel, may not help at all. Talking things through with someone who can help you reframe your problems, and help you move through them can be much more helpful.

Isolated people are more likely to focus on themselves which can make things worse. So reach out when you can, and if Covid-19 means you can't do that in person, make that phone call to a friend, or arrange to talk online.

## **Try and stay positive**

Optimists live longer, have better relationships and better immune systems, says Olivia Remes of Cambridge University. And the good news is you can cultivate optimism, an inner sense that you can make a difference to your life. You don't have to be perfect and some things will fail. That's even more important in winter when gloomy weather might make you think twice about doing something. Our inner voice of criticism continually stops us from doing worthwhile things. Do things and accept that they might initially be done badly.

Olivia's other tips include writing down three things each day that you're grateful about, to force yourself to focus on what's gone well and why. It'll fire up the left hand side of your brain which is associated with positivity.

## **Other ideas to consider:**

Listen to music

Try not to overuse digital usage especially listening to the news all day long

Don't expect too much, it is okay to have good and bad days

Stay in touch with friends, family and colleagues

Go easy on alcohol

Think ahead to better times

Declutter it can feel great afterwards

Stay connected to positive material

Be kind to others, maybe even volunteer to help someone

There are a lot of ideas on the internet on ways to stay positive during this pandemic and what is nice is that the majority say to pass on the ideas to others which is exactly what the points above are doing. We are not trying to be medical experts with our suggestions on this page. If you are struggling with your mental health then contact a doctor because they will be able to help, some issues such as eating disorders, alcoholism and severe depression will need expert help.

Below are some useful links you might like to consider. There is also a new section each month on mental well-being in the ADINJC newsletter.

## **Mind**

Many of us are struggling to maintain our mental wellbeing during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. This page has tips to help yourself cope, including ways to support yourself during winter. Mind have produced a [self-help booklet](#) to help provide some structure for your days. They also have produced an item about the link between [Physical Activity & Mental Health](#)

[Relaxation tips](#) Is a video with 8 relaxation techniques produced by Mind

[Get moving & feel better](#) [Some more tips](#)

## [Rethink Mental illness](#)

Their mission is to deliver a better life for people severely affected by mental illness. Our network of groups, services and advice lines are on hand to get you the support you need. In the 'Help in your area' use your postcode to search groups, mental health services & peer support online in your area.

## **Samaritans**

The coronavirus pandemic is affecting the way many of us live our lives, and it's normal that this will affect people's mental health. The [Samaritans](#) have gathered some tips and resources that might be helpful.

## **I'm fine**

Is a video from the Mental Health Foundation to ask what's behind when someone tells you that they're [fine](#).

## **Excluded UK**

[Excluded UK](#) have produced a list of events for you to get involved in to fill your time. Excluded are an organisation to campaign for the self-employed that have been excluded from any government help. They have free events which include - Yoga and Stress Relief, Tea and Chat, Visioning your Successful future self, effective digital marketing. Drawing for beginners.