

YOUR GUIDE TO WINTER WELLNESS AND LOCKDOWN 2.0



ALL
THINGS
MENTAL
HEALTH
AND WELL
BEING

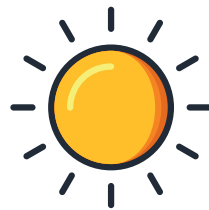
GuthrieTherapy.

Counselling, Psychotherapy & Hypnotherapy

Top tips to staying mental and physically well this winter



BE OUTSIDE FOR AT
LEAST 30 MINUTES A
DAY



TAKE AN EXTRA
VITAMIN D
SUPPLEMENT

REDUCE
STIMULUS:CAFFEINE,
ALCHOL, SUGAR, HIGH
ENERGY TV AND MUSIC



STAY CLEAR OF THE
NEWS AND UNHEALTHY
SOCIAL MEDIA

STAY CONNECTED TO
OTHERS, BY WHAT EVER
MEANS YOU HAVE TO.



LEARN A NEW SKILL

DON'T IGNORE OR DISMISS YOU EMOTIONS.CONNECT TO
THEM, FEEL THEM AND THEN, LET THEM GO

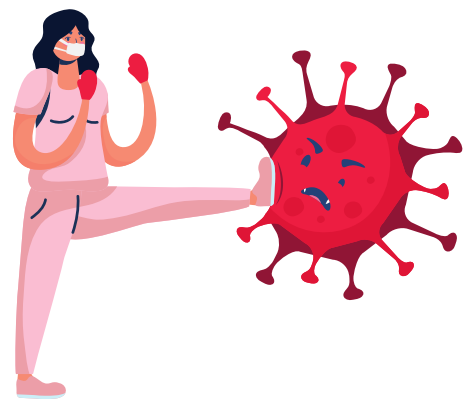
Mental health and Corona survival guide

I guess the first thing I want to address is the changes that we are all going through, the fear that most of us will be feeling at the moment and I want to say that it's okay to be feeling all of the above and more, so firstly accept these feelings as real and valid. I'm sure you are all very much aware of how being in lockdown impacts your/our mental health.

Not having routine and structure to my day leaves me feeling a bit "lost".

I feel I should be "doing" something, but my options are limited.

Shops are closing one by one, coffee and cake only on a takeaway service and of course all places of entertainment are closed.



I imagine your work or daily routine is severely disrupted and although many of us think working from home is a great idea, we soon realise that it's OK for a while. What we need is connection, support, purpose, friendship and a sense of achievement. Even trying to get out of bed at my normal time to try and have routine and structure to my day is already an issue.

I worry for those around me and how they are coping.

I feel helpless that I can't fix things.

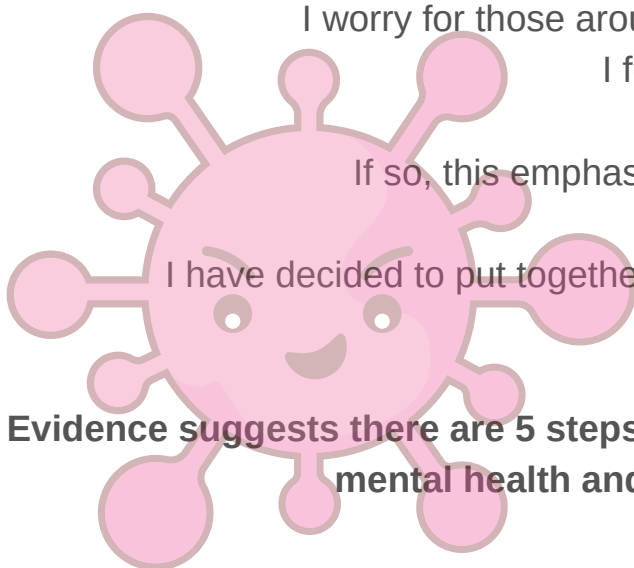
Does any of this sound familiar?

If so, this emphasises the importance of managing our/your mental health.

I have decided to put together my top five Corona survival tips.

So here we go.

Evidence suggests there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing.



Read through these in your own time and let them sink in.

1. Give to others

Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by:

- Creating positive feelings and a sense of reward
- Giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth
- Helping you connect with other people

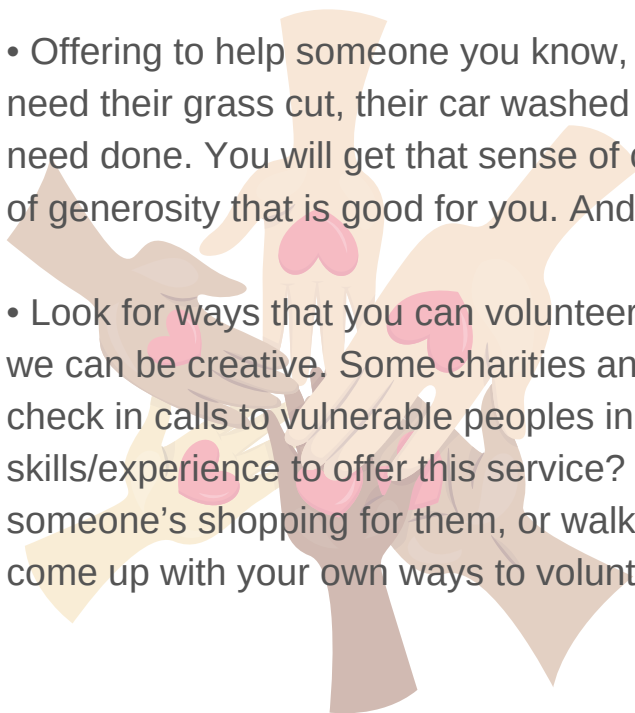


It could be small acts of kindness towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community. Of course, at present being able to give as much as we would like to is extremely limited however there are things we can do. One of the most important things we can give is time:

- Time to knock a neighbour's door (keeping your distance of course) and asking are they OK, do they need anything or just asking "how are you". Exchange phone numbers, if you haven't already done so and ask how they feel about a "check in" call from time to time.

- Offering to help someone you know, maybe the neighbour, if they need their grass cut, their car washed or another wee job that might need done. You will get that sense of community, of achievement and of generosity that is good for you. And they get their grass cut!

- Look for ways that you can volunteer. Again, this might be limited but we can be creative. Some charities and community organisations offer check in calls to vulnerable peoples in the community. Do you have the skills/experience to offer this service? Could you volunteer to get someone's shopping for them, or walk their dog? I think you could come up with your own ways to volunteer.



2. Be active

Now moving on, today's theme is "Be Active". We know that being active is not only great for your physical health and fitness, but evidence also shows it can improve your mental wellbeing by:

- Raising your self-esteem.
- Helping you to set goals or challenges and achieve them
- Causing chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood

And I imagine you are now saying "how do we get active/stay active if everything around me is closed and everyone is self-isolating?" And even though you may be right, there are other ways to get active.

Remember yesterday we talked about cutting the grass? Well, what's stopping you? I imagine it's your thought pattern that's stopping you with things like:

- Sure there's no point, its going to rain later
- No one is going to see it?
- I've got plenty of time, I'll do it next week



It's not about the grass, or the weather or the fact that nobody will see it. It's about the task. The activity of getting up off the seat (that you probably feel stuck to) and getting out in the open air. Afterwards you will feel like you have achieved something; that you have done something worthwhile today. And even if nobody notices your neat and tidy garden, well at least you know it looks good.

What about other forms of activity? Yes, the gym is closed but you don't need a gym to exercise. Get the dog out. He will appreciate you making an effort. Get next doors dog out if you have to! Have you ever tried the couch to 5k? Give it a go. It won't cost you a penny.

What about the fence that you have been promising to paint? The car that needs washed and vacuumed? Or the gutters that need cleaned? And remember the time you told the kids you would go for a cycle with them? What's stopping you. But remember, keep your distance from the one in front and only one at a time!

Even if the weather is raining cats and dogs (not literally!) I'm sure there are plenty of indoor jobs that could be looked at. How many times have you said to yourself that you need to clear out the cloakroom and get a load of stuff to the charity shop?

What about clearing out the kitchen cupboards because you can't get the doors closed anymore? Decluttering is good for the mind. Try it. It's very therapeutic. A client once said to me when I asked her about her anxiety "Anxiety? What anxiety? I was too busy to get anxious." There's something in that.

Go on, set yourself a challenge, a realistic one, and when you achieve your challenge take some time to consider how you feel afterwards. I bet it's a good feeling.



3.Connect.

With a lot of us working or confined to home at present we probably want to DISCONNECT for a while and get a bit of "me time". I get that.

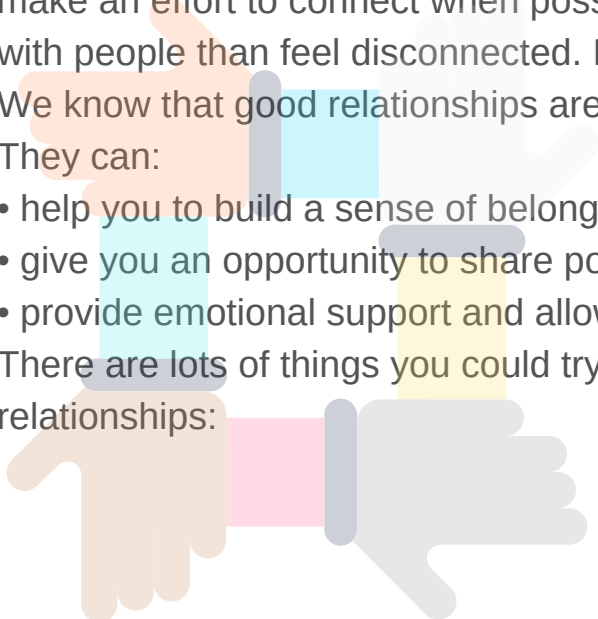
Unfortunately, we're not allowed anymore to lock the kids or the other half in the shed just so you can get your head showered but I know how you feel!

Well, we are in this together and for the long haul so we might as well make an effort to connect when possible. Ask me would I rather connect with people than feel disconnected. I know what I prefer.

We know that good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. They can:

- help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth
- give you an opportunity to share positive experiences
- provide emotional support and allow you to support others

There are lots of things you could try to help build stronger and closer relationships:



Even in this second period of lockdown try to find time in your day to take time each day to be with your family. Now what do I mean by “be with your family?” You might say I’m with them all day every day – and yes, we are but do we really take the time to sit together for perhaps a meal and ask:

How is your day going?

- What have you been up to?
- How do you feel about not being able to get out and about?
- Its good if we have an idea what others in the house are reading/watching on their devices and how they feel about what’s going on in the world.



I get a sense that loads of people may be spending crazy amounts of time on their own in bedrooms and home offices etc and even though there are others in the same house they might feel alone.

One of the suggestions to get connected would be to have a lunch with a colleague. But of course, this isn’t possible at the minute. Or is it? would you ever consider having a Facetime or Skype call to your workmate at lunch time every day as if you were in work and having that catch up? Worth thinking about.

Talking about Facetime, Skype and other apps that allow us to communicate with others regardless of where they are in the world. Have you ever used them? I have just started to use these apps more and more in recent days for my work and they are a great way of keeping in touch.

That said, it’s important not to rely on technology or social media alone to build relationships and friendships. It’s easy to get into the habit of only ever texting, messaging or emailing people but vitally important we have direct contact when possible.

How many times have you said to a friend “we need to get a catch up” or to somebody you used to work with and at their leaving party you said, “keep in touch”? And did you? Most of us don’t because life is busy, and we don’t always take the time to keep in touch. Now’s your chance.

Have a scroll through your list of contacts and start making those calls. And for all those techno phobe out there who haven’t got a clue how to use Skype or face time think of the sense of achievement when your 14 year old shows you how to use it and you’re able to speak directly to your mate in another country !

4. Keep learning, growing and changing

We are in a really unique position whereby things are changing every day around us.

We can use this time to ditch old habits and behaviours and form new ones.

Who said you can’t teach an old dog new tricks?

Of course, you can, if the dog is motivated enough and the rewards are plenty!

With many of you having to take on the role of parent, teacher, cook, cleaner, nurse, gardener, friend etc etc the task is getting tougher day by day. I imagine how you were taught back in the days of real blackboards and chalk dusters has changed drastically and the way kids now do their long division looks alien to you. Me too.

But, that said, teaching kids at home is not just about downloading the worksheets that the school sent you. It’s a lot more than that.



What do we get out of learning and teaching? Research shows that learning new skills and passing the learning on to others can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- Boosting self-confidence and raising self-esteem
- Helping you to build a sense of purpose
- Helping you to connect with others

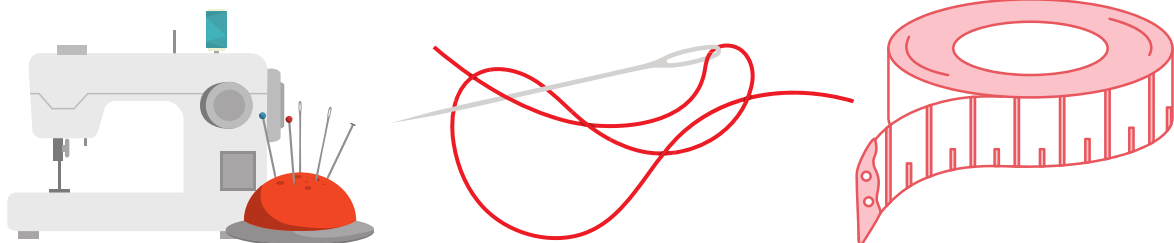
Even if you feel like you do not have enough time, or you may not need to learn new things, there are lots of different ways to bring learning into your life.

Some of the things you could try including:

- Learning to cook something new.



- Work on a DIY project, such as fixing a broken bike, garden gate or something bigger. I heard during the week someone is planning to paint their deck. I wonder how that's going? One thing that might be worth considering is when you are fixing the bike, mending the gate or whatever it is you decide to do that you take one of the little ones with you. Show them how the bike works; what makes the wheels go around; how to make sure that they are in good working order. I spoke to a client the other day and we were talking about learning and teaching, and she told me that she didn't know how to sew a button on a shirt because her Mum always does it.



Now's the time. Show them how to sew, how to dip the car for oil, how to fit a plug, how to work the washing machine, how to turn the water off at the mains! The list is endless. And if you don't know how to do any of the above – ask someone who does. Your teaching will benefit just as much as the worksheets will.

Remember the time you said to yourself I would love to be able to play the guitar, or any other musical instrument. And off you went and bought one? I bet it lying in the case in some corner gathering dust. Get it out, get on to the internet and research how to play the thing! You will be surprised how many videos and tutorials you will find on google, You Tube etc. I wouldn't imagine you will be a star on Britain's Got Talent but its not about how well you play (or not) its about taking part. Its occupying the mind and is part of managing your mental health.



te gustaría poder hablar un nuevo idioma – would you like to be able to speak a new language? Are you heading to Spain in the summer and you would like to say a wee bit more than “la cuenta, por favour” (the bill please)? Try one of the language apps like duolingo. They are free and easy. And fun, especially with a bottle of red to loosen up your vocal cords!

There are loads of free video tutorials online. Well worth a go. Make learning fun, make it collaborative and make it a memory. As the years go by and the kids become adults, they will often remind you of the day you taught them how to



5. Take notice have awareness!!

This tip is about taking notice and paying more attention to the present moment. For those who have worked with me direct, you will know I love the word AWARENESS!! Awareness is key.

We know by doing this it can improve our mental health. When I say “take notice” this includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and also the people around you. Some people call this “mindfulness”. In other words, being mindful of your surroundings, your thoughts, feelings as well as being mindful of the thoughts, feelings and behaviour of those close to us.

Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.



In times of stress (and lockdowns!) it's easy to stop noticing what's going on around us. It's also easy to lose touch with the way our bodies are feeling and to end up living 'in our heads' – caught up in our thoughts without stopping to notice how those thoughts are impacting us and others around us.

Take notice of how you are feeling and behaving.

Are you more irritable?

More tired? Eating/drinking more?

Less interested in what's going on around you.

Then it's time to take notice of that.

Be mindful...



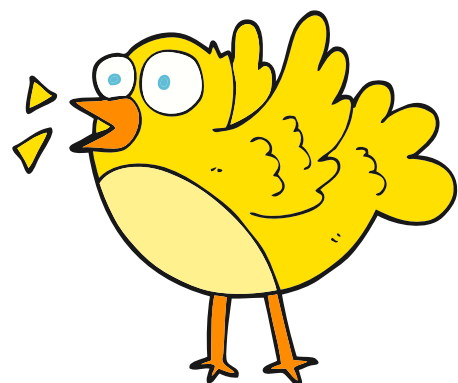
An important part of mindfulness is reconnecting with our bodies and the sensations they experience. This means waking up to the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the present moment. That might be something as simple as the sound of the birds outside, or the smell of fresh cut grass. It could be the sound of laughter of the kids playing downstairs. The smell of toast, coffee and bacon on the grill does it for me! Be aware of the senses and take in what you see, hear and smell. Being mindful can help you:

- Become more self-aware
- Feel calmer and less stressed
- Feel more able to choose how to respond to your thoughts and feelings
- Cope with difficult or unhelpful thoughts
- Be kinder towards yourself.
- And bring you back to the here and now.



Remember if we are thinking about the future, this normally brings with it a level of anxiety. So how do we use mindfulness with those around us? What about the stroppy teenager who is huffing and puffing about the house slamming all the doors? What about the partner who's lying on the sofa all day and not interested in anything around them? What about the lady next door whose grass is 3-foot-high and hasn't seen a lawnmower in ages?

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The questions I would be asking myself are – Is that normal behaviour for that person? Is that usually the way they behave? If not, it's worth being mindful that the person may have changed somewhat and then ask yourself "I wonder why, I wonder what's going on for them?" Maybe the lockdown is having a greater impact on them than you realised.



If you change your thinking and become more aware of what's going on around you then you can change your behaviour in how you deal with it by becoming more compassionate, supportive and understanding. Building relationships and connecting with people at a time of stress is good for all of us.

I really hope this helps.

Guthrietherapy face book and Instagram page has stacks of resources and podcasts recorded in our first lockdown, full of helpful tips. We are also doing a series of Facebook lives, 7pm on a Wednesday evening up till Christmas.

Take care, be kind to yourself and to those around you.

Kevin



