

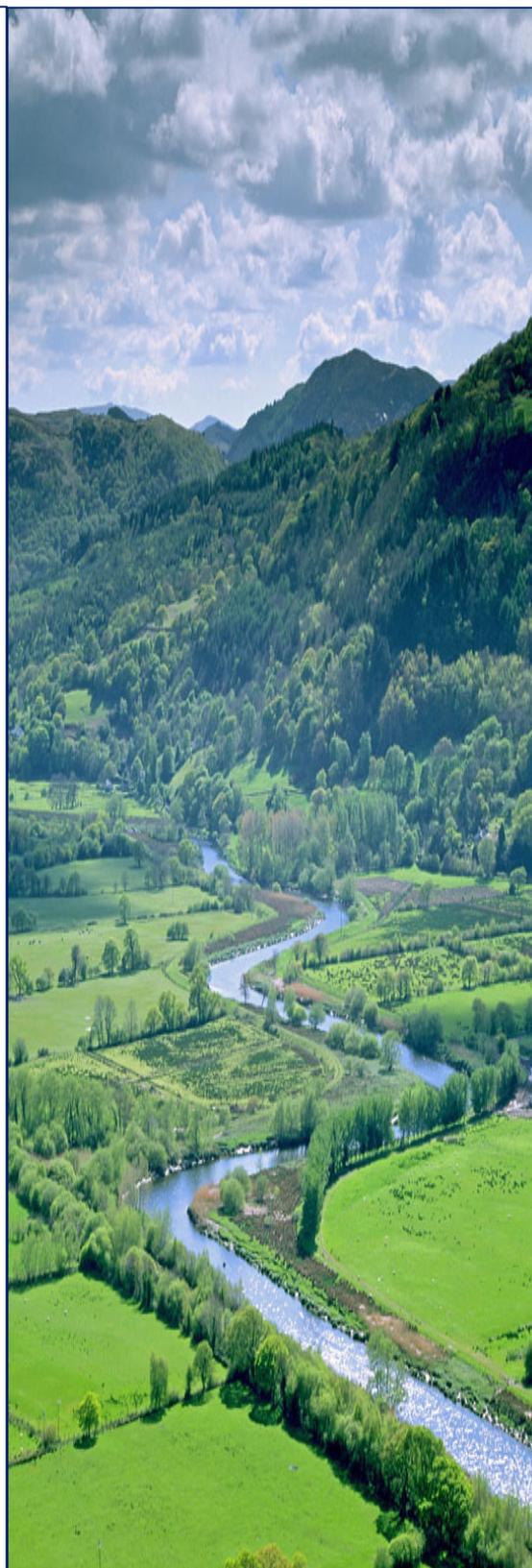
Tips to Support your Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing during Self-Isolation

We appreciate that this is a difficult time for everyone; uncertainty, separation from loved ones, loss or changes to routine, and worry about becoming ill are understandably causing people to feel worried or anxious. We have put this pack together as we hope it will support you to look after your mental health and emotional wellbeing during this period of self-isolation.

The river is a dark and sullen snake
That shifts through fields with unexpected ease
Forgetful of the waterweed and flowers
It moves the rocks and cracks the sturdy trees,
It came, who can forget, a while ago-
A torrent through the flabbergasted town
Wide and swift and, silently, it flowed
Tearing walls and feeble fences down.
Under bridges, over paths and streets
The town was filled with gravel, sand and mud
And no one could escape the river beast
Or shelter from its brown unfriendly flood.

Amazingly the sun came out again,
The waters fell, the people laughed
The river ran once more within its banks
To travel on its own relentless path.
And now there is an unexpected peace,
A place to watch the water dragons fly,
A path where people come to take their ease
To hear the sound of water running by;
The rustling of the rushes and the reeds,
The sunshine through the willows in Spring
The whispering of the willows in the breeze,
The meadow where the river warbler sings,
And magic plants that seem to wave and talk-
All found in this enchanting river walk.

“A poem composed by the pupils of Ysgol Bro Gwydir and poet Mike Kivi from their recollection of the river during a flood in Llanrwst and the contrasting peace it offers when calm”



Worry & Anxiety

What is worry?

As humans we are unique in our ability to think about events that have not yet happened. Our ability to 'think ahead' can be useful in helping us to plan, problem-solve, and look forward to future events.

However, our ability to 'think ahead' often leads us to spend time thinking about situations that may never happen, are outside of our control, or imagine worst-case scenarios. This sort of thinking ahead usually causes anxiety or fear, and is commonly known as 'worrying'.

It is normal to be worrying more than usual during these uncertain times, but the reality is that worrying isn't helpful, it doesn't change things, and often leaves us feeling anxious, helpless and overwhelmed.

Instead of worrying about things outside of our control, it is more helpful to focus on the things we can. We hope that the information, strategies and exercises in this pack will help you to do just that, and will be helpful in supporting your mental health and emotional wellbeing during this difficult time.



Effects of Self-Isolation on Wellbeing

Our minds and bodies are intricately connected; changes in our physical wellbeing such as how much we sleep we, how much food we eat, exercise and health effects our emotional wellbeing, and vice versa.

Routine

If you are noticing changes in your sleep pattern, eating habits, activity levels, or behaviour, this is normal. For most of us, our routines have changed dramatically, and it will take time for us to adjust to this new way of living.

Our ability to be adaptable to our changing circumstances is a good thing, however maintaining elements of your previous routine, or developing a new one can also help your wellbeing. Routines and predictability offer stability and a small sense of normality.

Adapting or Creating a Routine

There are some great planners online that can be printed but you can just as easily write out a schedule for your day each morning or the evening before

- Write down what you would have done in a typical day
 - Break it into small parts e.g. “Getting ready” can be broken into several smaller steps “Wake up at 08.00, make a cup of tea, take a shower, get dressed, brush teeth etc”.
 - When we are feeling overwhelmed or lacking motivation it can be helpful to have this level of detail to prompt you
- Highlight the parts of the routine that you can still do, even if you’re not going out
- Write these into a list in the order that you’re going to do them
 - Leave a space beside each one so you can tick it when you’ve done it
- Schedule in the things you have to do e.g. preparing meals, DIY, cleaning and the things you enjoy doing e.g. favourite TV show, reading a book, colouring so you have parts of the day to look forward to
- Schedule in time to rest, or do nothing. Let go of the pressure to keep busy, and be productive, see this time as rare opportunity for stillness

Schedule in watching, listening, or looking at the news. During times of uncertainty it’s normal to seek as much information as possible, as this makes us feel more prepared. However, at times such as these, the news can evoke feelings of anxiety or helplessness, and leave us feeling overwhelmed or frightened. Checking in with the news just once a day, at a pre-arranged time will reduce these difficult feelings and focus our attention on the present moment and the things within our control.

Loneliness

During self-isolation, particularly if you live alone, loneliness can be a very real and difficult experience.

As humans we are designed to connect with others, and being physically separated from our friends, family, neighbours and acquaintances can lead to a feeling of disconnect.

Finding Connections

- Use technology if you can
 - Telephone, emails, Facetime and WhatsApp can help you to feel connected to people even in the absence of physical proximity
- Write letters or send pictures or photos
 - Sending and receiving letters also creates connection, you may also find you rediscover a passion for this form of communication, or enjoy a sense of nostalgia
- Tune into the radio for chat shows or programmes you're interested in

Phone Befriending/ Check-In Services

Several charities and organisations are offering befriending or check-in services over the phone for older people in self-isolation.

Age Cymru are offering a free 'check-in-and-chat' telephone service for over 70s. You can register for a regular phone call by calling **08000 223 444** or emailing enquiries@agecymru.org.uk

Silverline offer telephone and letter befriending schemes. Call **0800 470 8090** to find out more or register

Age UK offer a telephone befriending service. Sign up online at www.ageuk.org and search 'befriending services'

Carers Trust are offering regular 'keep in touch' telephone calls, to sign up call **01492 542212**

Carers Outreach are offering regular 'keep in touch' telephone calls, to sign up call **01248 370797** or email: help@carersoutreach.org.uk

Pressure and Expectations

You may find yourself putting pressure on yourself to 'make the most of this time' or setting standards for how you 'should' be coping or what you 'should' be doing.

Setting goals can be helpful, and give us a sense of purpose. However if you are feeling pressured to be doing more, or feeling guilty when you haven't achieved something you set out to do, then you are probably putting too much pressure on yourself.

Taking the pressure off

- Don't compare yourself to others
 - There is no script or 'right way' to handle this situation. Everyone is doing the best they can, and as everyone's circumstances are different, this will look different for each person.
- Show yourself compassion, try to notice when you start having unkind thoughts about yourself, for example that you're not good enough, and remind yourself that you're doing the best you can.
 - It can help to imagine what you would say to a friend who was in the same position, and then extend that kindness to yourself.
- Identify a value that you can use to inform your actions and decision making during this time.
 - Some people may feel a goal is helpful, but also find this puts too much pressure on them, a value may a good alternative
 - To identify a value that is meaningful for you, you might ask:
 - What do I want to stand for in the face of this crisis?
 - What sort of person do I want to be as I go through this?
 - How do I want to treat myself and others?
 - Your values might include love, respect, humour, patience, courage, honesty, caring, openness, kindness or numerous others.
 - Once you've identified your value, look for ways to 'sprinkle' them into your day and guide how you respond to yourself, and others.
- These see as an opportunity to be still, and if you can enjoy not being busy. It is rare we get the chance to press pause and just spend time reflecting.
 - This may feel very difficult to do in the current times, and you might find some grounding and mindfulness exercises help in doing this

W. H. DAVIES

Leisure

WHAT is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare?—

No time to stand beneath the boughs,
And stare as long as sheep and cows:

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass:

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night:

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance:

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began?

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

Practical Support

It can be difficult to ask for help, but during these times it is important that we rely on each other, and there are people and services available who want to help.

Community Transport provided by Royal Voluntary Service

The RVS are offering to collect shopping and prescriptions for individuals, and take people to hospital appointments.

They also offer 'Safe and Well' phone checks once or twice a week for people who may be lonely or isolated.

They also provide technical support for people struggling with IT issues

Phone: 01248 661915 Email:

ynysmongwyneddhub@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

Local Support

There are a lot of people looking for ways to help, and it worth contacting local businesses to see if any are offering delivery services, many have advertised via social media, but would probably be more than happy to receive a phone call.

Keeping Safe

Whilst most people have good intentions, it is important that you keep yourself safe.

Don't hand cash over to people you don't know, and remember that during this period of social-distancing, nobody should be asking to come into your home.

Most businesses, charities, and delivery drivers know to drop parcels or goods on the step and then ring/knock on the door and walk away.

If you do feel unsafe or suspicious contact the non-emergency police number on 101

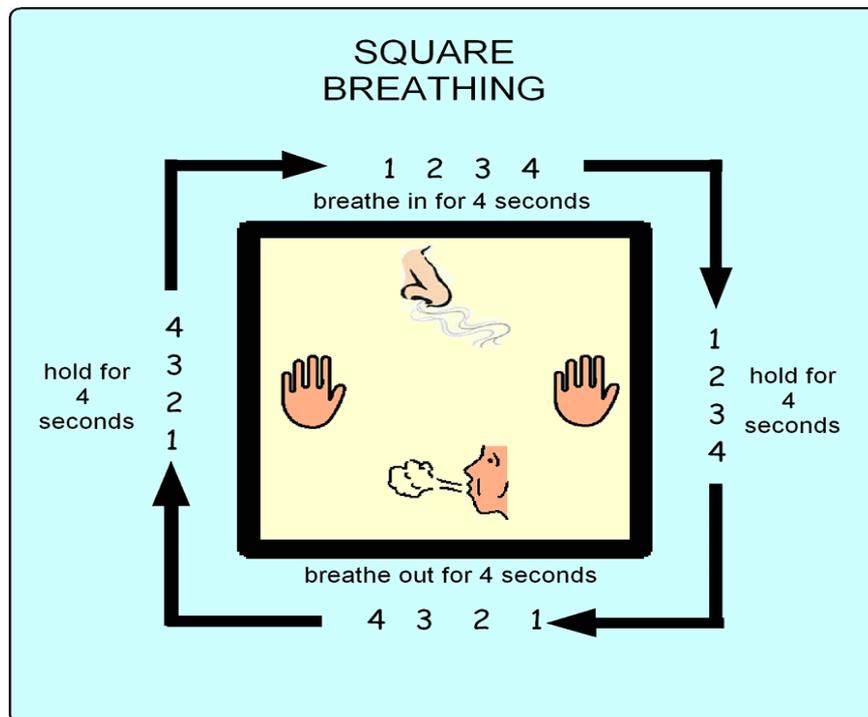
Coping Strategies to support your emotional wellbeing and mental health

Breathing Exercises

Below are a couple of quick, and easy breathing exercises to use when you might begin to feel overwhelmed, frustrated, or anxious.

They work to slow your heart rate and control your breathing to manage the physical effects of stress and anxiety.

Just be cautious if you have any lung or respiratory conditions, and be sure to listen to your body if it is telling you to stop.



Take 10 Breaths

1. Take 10 slow, deep breaths
2. Focus on breathing out as slowly as possible
3. Notice how it feels as your lungs empty and then refill
4. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your shoulders
5. See if you can let your thoughts come and go as if they're just cars passing by your house
6. See if you can notice both your breathing, and then your body, and then the space around you
7. Notice what you can see, hear, touch, and smell in the room

Grounding Exercises

During times of uncertainty and worry it is normal to find ourselves looking to the future or caught up in any number of hypothetical situations, often imagining worst case scenarios. While this is normal, it isn't particularly helpful and can lead us to feel more anxious and worried.

Try to notice when you might be doing this, and then practise the exercises below to see if you can connect to the present moment instead



Dropping Anchor

1. You can do this sitting or standing
2. Plant your feet firmly on the floor
3. Push them down, feel the floor beneath you, supporting you
4. Notice the tension in your legs as you push your feet down
5. Notice your entire body, and the feeling of gravity flowing down through your head, spine, legs, and into your feet
6. Now look around and notice what you can see, hear, or smell around you
7. Notice where you are, and how you are feeling

Mindfulness Exercises

When we are feeling worried, anxious, uncertain or fearful, we tend to find that a lot of our thinking is occupied with future events as we attempt to solve problems that haven't even, or may never occur.

In relation to the current situation it is easy to start asking 'what if' questions. These questions make us feel like we have some control over the situation, that if we can think of and plan for every possible situation we will be better able to manage if it does happen.

However, the reality is we can't predict what will happen in the future, we can only control what we do in the present. Have faith in your own resources and resilience that you will be able to manage whatever is going to happen, indeed, you've got this far.

Mindfulness aims to help us to connect with the present, to focus our attention on what is happening in the moment; what we are doing, how we are feeling, and the environment around us. In doing so we break the cycles of worry and 'what if' questions.

Below are a couple of quick, and easy mindfulness exercises. As you will see, mindfulness can be done anywhere and at any time, as it is fundamentally about bringing your attention into the moment.



Mind Full, or Mindful?

Mindfulness Exercises continued

Mindfulness of Household Activities

- Pick an activity that you need to do around the home
 - For example, ironing, hoovering, washing dishes, anything mundane that you have to do
- Do this activity mindfully
 - Engage it in fully, don't be tempted to multi-task, just do the task you've chosen to do
 - Use all of your senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch)
 - For example, notice the colour and shape of the clothes you're ironing, the warmth when you're folding them, the smell of the fabric softener, the sound of the hiss of the steam, the feeling in your arm and shoulder as you move the iron
 - If your mind starts to wander, that's ok, just bring it back to what you're doing
 - If you begin to feel bored or frustrated, that's ok, just recognise these feelings and then bring your attention back to the task

Mindfulness of Pleasant Activities

- Pick an activity you enjoy which can be done inside, or in the garden if you have one
 - For example, painting, eating a meal, listening to music, enjoying a bath, reading, gardening, colouring, the list goes on...
- Do this activity mindfully
 - Engage it in fully, don't be tempted to multi-task, just do the task you've chosen to do
 - Use all of your senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch)
 - Notice and savour each moment
 - If your mind starts to wander, that's ok, just bring it back to what you're doing
 - It's normal for our attention to wander, don't be tempted to give up, or tell yourself off, just notice when it happens and then bring your attention back to your task

Mindfulness Exercises continued

Five Senses Mindfulness Exercise

1. Sit in a comfortable upright position with your feet planted flat on the ground. Rest your hands on your thighs or on your desk.
2. Notice your breath. No need to breathe in any particular way. Just bring attention to each part of the breath- the inhale, exhale, and space in between.
3. Bring awareness to each of your 5 senses. One at a time, start at 10-20 seconds, and try to build up to a minute. The point here is to focus on the present moment and how each sense is being activated in that moment. The order in which you pay attention to each sense does not matter.

Hear: Begin to notice all of the sounds around you. Try not to judge the sounds- just notice them. They are not good or bad, they just are. Sounds might be internal, like breathing or digestion. Sounds might be close by or more distant like the sound of traffic. Are you now hearing more than you were before you started? You may begin to notice subtle sounds you did not hear before. Can you hear them now?

Smell: Now shift your attention to notice the smells of your environment. Maybe you smell food. You might become aware of the smell of trees or plants if you are outside. You might notice the smell of books or paper. Sometimes closing your eyes can help sharpen your attention.

See: Observe your surrounding and notice the colors, shapes and textures. If you really look, you may notice things that have gone unnoticed.

Taste: You can do this one even if you have food in your mouth. You may notice an aftertaste of a previous drink or meal. You can just notice your tongue in your mouth, your saliva, and your breath as you exhale. We have tastes in our mouth that often go unnoticed. You can run your tongue over your teeth and cheeks to help you become more aware.

Touch: Last one. Bring your attention to the sensations of skin contact with your chair, clothing, and feet on the floor. You can notice the pressure between your feet and the floor or your body and the chair. You can observe temperature like the warmth or coolness of your hands or feet. You might take time to feel the textures that you noticed by sight a moment ago. You can feel several objects on your desk to fully focus your attention on the present.

When finished, pause to notice how your body feels in this moment. Compare how you feel now with how you felt 5 minutes ago- what has changed?

Relaxation Exercise

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

When we are anxious or stressed, our bodies often feel tense. This is because we're designed to respond to threat by either fighting, or fleeing, and our bodies respond to feelings of stress and anxiety as if they are a very real threat.

PMR helps to show our bodies that we aren't in danger by deliberately tensing, and then letting go of that tension in each part of our body-signalling to our minds that we are safe.

PMR can be helpful to do before going to bed, if you are finding it difficult to 'switch off' or relax.

Find a quiet place free from distractions. Lie on the bed or recline in a chair, loosen any tight clothing, and remove glasses. Rest your hands in your lap or on the arms of the chair. Take a few slow even breaths.

Now, focus your attention on the following areas, being careful to leave the rest of your body relaxed.

Work through the following parts of the body one by one, squeeze the muscles, hold for 15 seconds, feel the muscles getting tighter and tenser, then slowly release the tension. Notice the difference in feeling and sensation between tension and relaxation.

(Avoid any areas where you have an injury or pre-existing pain)

Forehead-raise your eyebrows as high as they can go

Jaw-grit your teeth or jut out/clench your jaw

Neck and shoulders-raise your shoulders as high as you can

Arms and hands-Pull your hands into fists then straighten your arms in front of you

Buttocks-tense the muscles in your buttocks

Legs-raise your legs, or squeeze the muscles in your thighs or calf

Feet-curl your toes under your feet, or point them to the ceiling.

Take a deep breath in...hold...and then breath out, imagine your breathing out all the tension

Enjoy the feeling of relaxation sweeping through your body. Continue to breathe slowly and evenly.

Contacts for Support with Emotional Well-being and Mental Health

Helplines for carers

National careline: Freephone 0800 0699 784

Carers UK: Freephone 0800 808 7777 Open Monday & Tuesday 10-4

Carers Direct: 0300 123 1053 Open Monday-Friday 9-8, Saturday-Sunday 11-4

Other Helplines

Citizens Advice Bureau:

General advice Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30 pm call: **0300 330 11921**

If you are feeling anxious or stressed you can call their ICAN team for a chat

Monday and Thursday 9.30am-2pm on **07496571156** and **Tuesday and Wednesdays** 9.30am-2pm on **07496571241**

Chat to an online advisor at: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/contact-us

What to do if you feel overwhelmed or are finding things really difficult

Mental Health Helplines

Samaritans Free and confidential 24/7 telephone service offering the opportunity to talk about how you're feeling and explore support options.

Phone 116 123

CALL Mental health information and advice specifically for people in Wales. Community advice and listening line 24/7. **Phone 0800 132 737**

Mind Info Line Free confidential advice on range of topics including mental health and emotional wellbeing. Monday to Friday 9am-6pm. **Phone 0300 123 3393**

If you find yourself becoming overwhelmed, feeling like you cannot cope, or having thoughts of hurting yourself do what you need to do to keep yourself safe.

National Helplines

Samaritans Free and confidential 24/7 telephone service offering the opportunity to talk about how you're feeling and explore support options.

Phone 116 123

SHOUT is a free 24/7 text service for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis **Text 85258**

Local Services

Speak to your GP if during opening hours

Phone 111 for out of hours advice and support and they will signpost you to the appropriate sources of help

Glan Traeth Community Mental Health Team Duty Service Monday to Friday 9am-5pm 03000 856261

Websites

www.rethink.org search 'suicidal thoughts' for advice and information for how to manage these and keep yourself safe

www.papyrus-uk.org has helpful guides to creating a 'Hopebox' "The idea behind this box is that it is filled with things that can help you to feel better. When you're feeling upset, anxious, or experiencing thoughts of suicide then you can use the box as a way to feel better"

If you feel you cannot keep yourself safe attend your local Accident and Emergency Department and tell them that you are having thoughts of harming yourself or ending your life and they will help to keep you safe.

