

Mental Health Wellbeing



mental health

psychology, life, thinking, optimism, positive, philosophy, attitude, research, best, logic, mind, style, physical, human, goals, explanatory, think, mental, health, research, attitude, philosophy, logic, mind, style, physical, human, goals, explanatory, think, mental, health

mental health

stresses, anxiety disorders, depression, mental disorder, psychological, personality, dopamine, drugs, social, coping, well-being, mental, brain, generative, disorder, surgery, movements, pathologica, wellness, treatment, evidence, clinical, symptoms, recovery, support, systems, diagnosis, management, neuroimaging, managing, emotional, problems, atypical, health, central nervous system, cases, therapeutic systems, behavioural problems, symptoms, occurring, factors, insufficient, psychological, diagnosis, problem solving, depression, genetic origin, psychological, personality, mental disorder, primary, quality, treatment, different, pathological, clinical, doctor, pills, advanced, stages, slowness, biology, treatment, different, pathological, clinical, detailed, handwriting, accuracy, monitoring, cause, related, level, dopamine, drugs, inclusions, clinical, philosophies, ineffective, confirmation, well-being, mental, social, psychology, expression, related, tests, cope, brain, generative, disorder, surgery, movements, pathologica, wellness, treatment, evidence, clinical, symptoms, recovery, support, systems, diagnosis, management, neuroimaging, managing, emotional, problems, atypical, health, central nervous system, cases, therapeutic systems, behavioural problems, symptoms, occurring, factors, insufficient, psychological, diagnosis, problem solving, depression, genetic origin, psychological, personality, mental disorder, primary, quality, treatment, different, pathological, clinical, doctor, pills, advanced, stages, slowness, biology, treatment, different, pathological, clinical, detailed, handwriting, accuracy, monitoring, cause, related, level

# Returning to School

- Returning to school has been described by psychological professionals as a transition. A transition is a process, not a single event - it will take time to get used to our new normal.
- It will take time to re-establish and re-learn routines and expectations.
- Some of you will welcome returning to school others of you may feel anxious. There is no right or wrong response.
- It is always important to look after your mental health and wellbeing, however, during this unprecedented time it is more important than ever.

# Mental Health Is.....

How we think,  
feel and  
behave....

A person's condition  
with regard to their  
psychological and  
emotional well-being

Includes our emotional,  
psychological and social  
wellbeing, affecting and  
impacting on how we think,  
feel and act. It also helps  
determine how we handle  
stress, relate to others and  
make choices.....

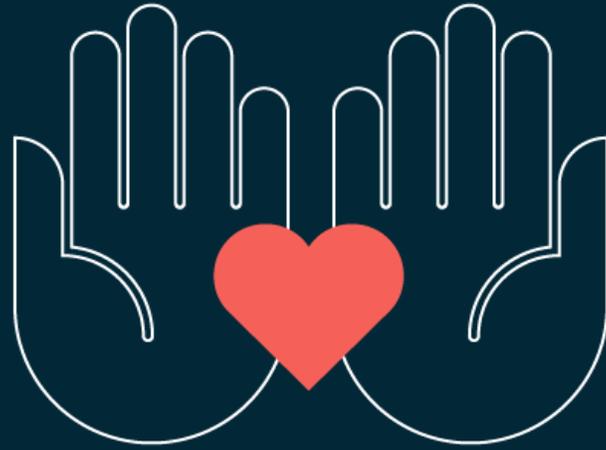


# 7 Steps to Good Mental Health

Research shows there are **7 Key Areas** when maintaining good mental health and in our current situation some of them have been severely impacted and we need to work towards restoring them:-

1. Connection.
2. Coping.
3. Calmness.
4. Happiness.
5. Health.
6. Sleep.
7. Fulfilment

# CONNECTION



# Connection

- Luckily we live in the age of technology and we have access to social media to stay connected. This has been fantastic during the lockdown period however, it doesn't replace the need for face to face connection. Some of you will have grieved the loss of face to face connection and returning to school will be beneficial however, it may feel strange when you have to go home.
- Speak to people about how you are feeling.
- Check in with your friends and family; ask them how they are.
- Speak to teachers, pastoral staff, teaching assistants; they are there to help and support you.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RijQpsWEdrE>



# Coping

- **Life is stressful, no matter what age you are; it is important that we find a way of coping with the different things life throws at us.**
- Ensure you don't overwork and burnout. We are all working at different levels. Some of us are enjoying working virtually, others are/have really struggled. Don't worry if you have struggled; you are not alone.
- Maintain boundaries (stick to a routine that suits you, have regular breaks).
- Have down time – self care is crucial.

# Coping Strategies

There are two main ways of coping with stress – short term strategies, and long term strategies.



## Short term

We know that stress has a **physical** and an **emotional** response that comes from our brain.

Our brain thinks we are in danger and makes our body ready to engage with a fight or flight response. If this cycle continues, it can lead to a panic attack.

Our first task is to break this cycle. This can be done by **controlling our breathing**.

*Because we get a physical response and our breathing speeds up, this tells our brain that it's right to be scared / nervous/ worried, so it gets even more scared/ worried etc*



*Because we get an emotional response, this tells our body to get ready to fight or flight which means our breathing speeds up and our heart starts pumping faster.*



# Controlled Breathing (short term)

## Balloon Breathing

Balloon breathing is good for bringing your heart rate and breathing back to normal, so bringing you back into your thinking brain.

Place your hands on your stomach, over your belly button. When you breathe in, you should feel your hands move out (imagine a balloon filling with air) and then back in when you breathe out – like the balloon is emptying.

Try counting as you do it – “In, two, three, four. Out, two, three, four.”

(Dorter,2016)



Breathe in

Breathe out

## Square Breathing

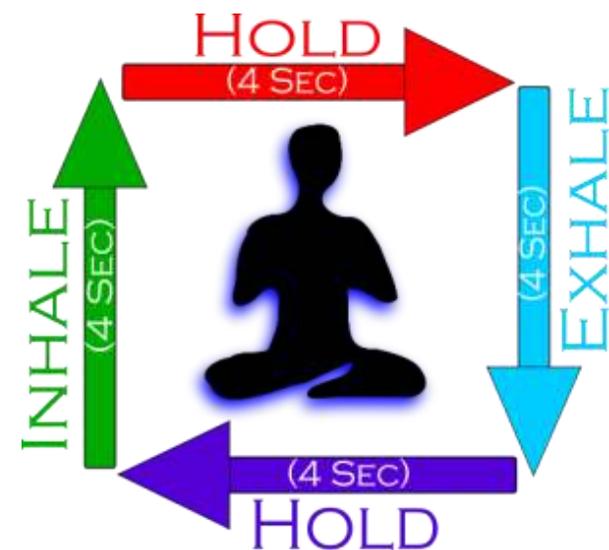
When we breathe too fast, we take in too much oxygen, but don't give ourselves a chance to release carbon dioxide which can make us feel sick and dizzy. Square breathing is a way of getting the right levels of oxygen back and bringing our breathing back under control.

Focus on something square – a piece of paper, a paving slab, a window, a table – anything. Move your eyes to trace the edge of square.

- Breathe in
- Hold
- Breathe out
- Hold

This is especially useful when you have been

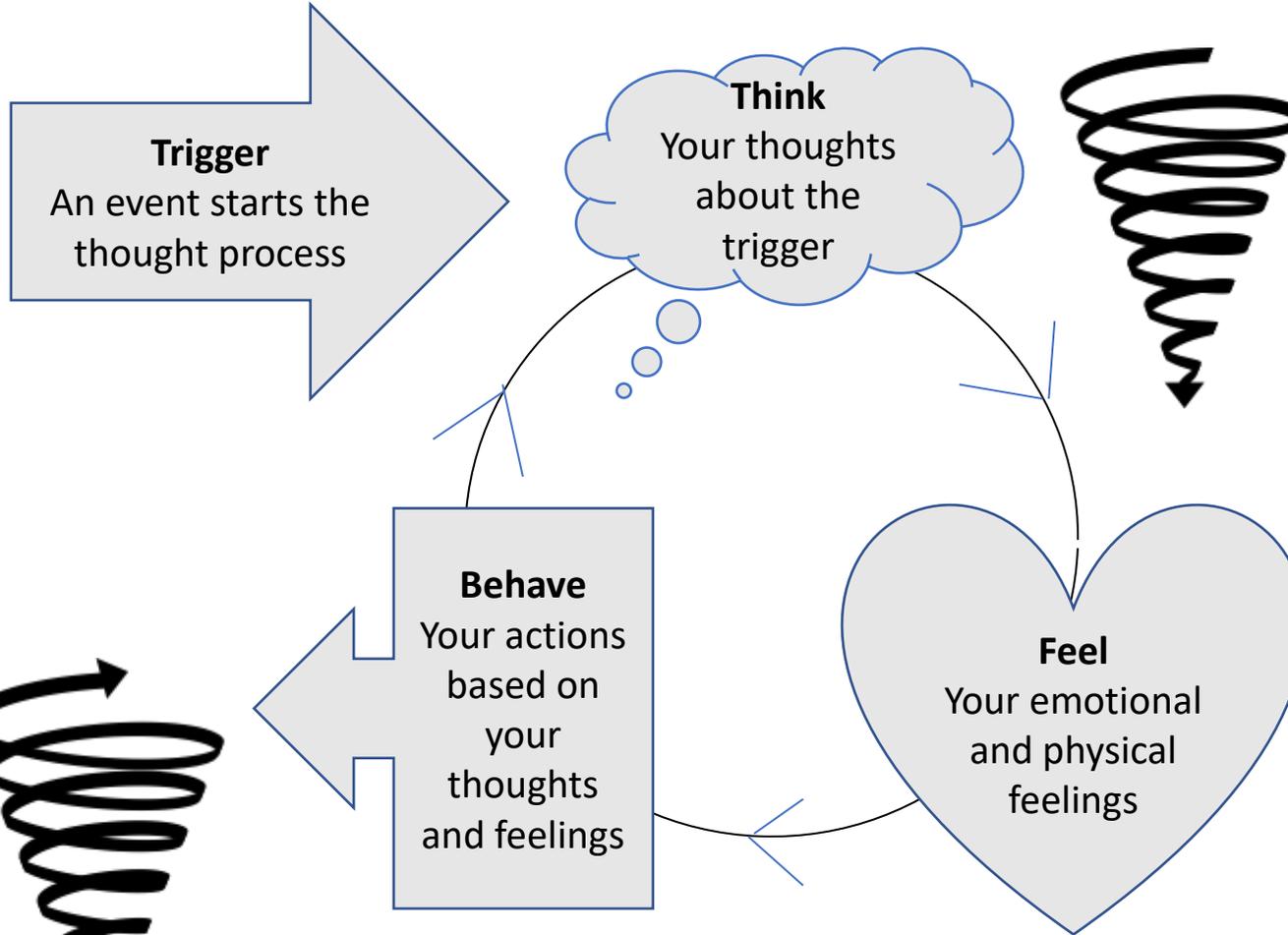
breathing too quickly, as it helps to get your oxygen levels and heart beat back to normal. (Life Charger, 2016)





**How you think about something, effects how you feel and how you behave.**

# The Thought Spiral



## What about you?

Think about the situation you've just described.

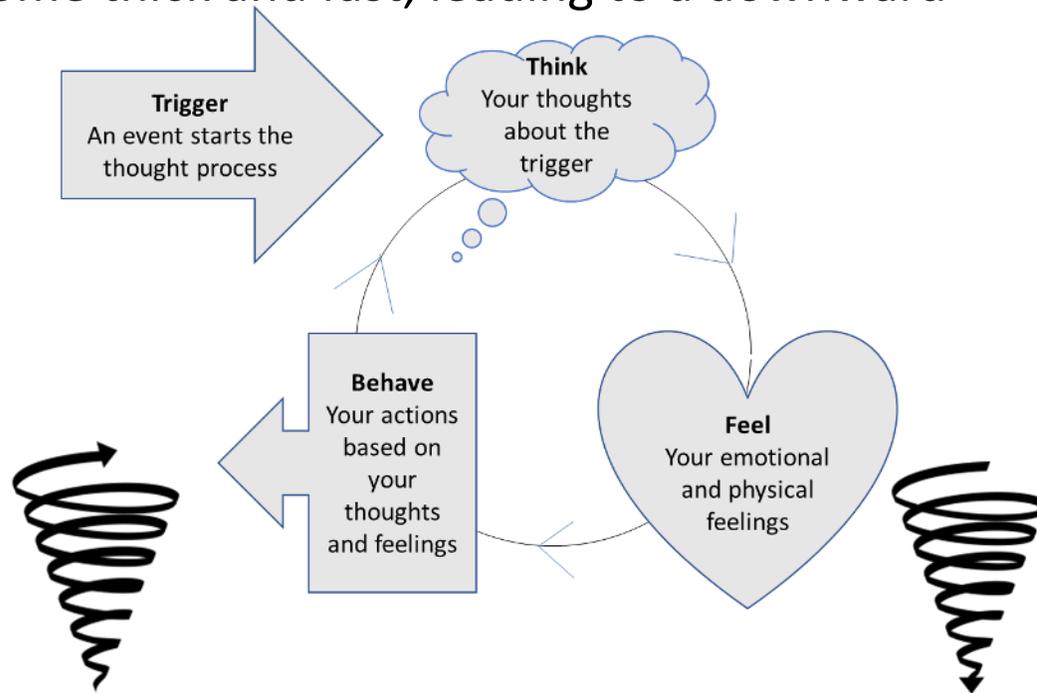
- Are you a negative or a positive thinker?
- How could you have thought about the situation differently? Would it have changed your feelings and behaviour?

**Whether you think positively or negatively, will depend on whether you have an upward or downward spiral**

# Controlled Thinking (short term)

Once we are in our caveman brain, because the pathway to that part of the brain is made up of negative thoughts and low self-esteem, it can be very difficult to stop all those negative thoughts, especially when you're lying in bed with very little to distract you.

The thought spiral? Once you start with one negative thought, the others can come thick and fast, leading to a downward spiral.



If this sounds like you, then you need some short term distraction techniques to get you out of your caveman brain, back to your logical thinking brain. The following slide has some techniques you could try.



## **Controlled Thinking (short term)**

1. Chew some gum, counting how many chews before it loses its flavour.
1. Travel a journey you know well, in your mind. Don't speed through it, go at the speed you would go if you were in the car. Think about all the things you can see out of the window, post box, graffiti, colour of cars etc.
1. Try counting backwards from 100 in 3s or 7s or ... Or, try and work out random maths puzzles in your head 14x9 for example

4. Play "I went to the shop and bought an apple; an apple and banana; an apple, banana and cake ... going all through the alphabet, seeing if you can remember everyone.
4. Try looking the clouds and making pictures out of them ...

**These are just a few ideas to distract you from all the negative thoughts that keep you in your caveman brain, and keep you having all those negative responses. Think of some more you can use.**

# Coping Strategies

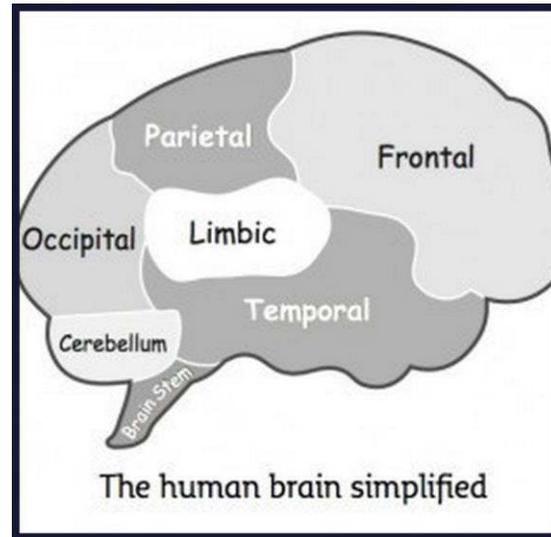
## Long term

Whilst it is important that we have short term strategies for coping with stressful situations for when we need to get into our thinking brain, we also need to make sure we have things we can do that mean we don't end up having that fight or flight response.

When we feel stress, our brain fills up with **cortisol** and **adrenaline**, which speeds up our breathing and reactions. This is to give us the energy and power to fight or run.

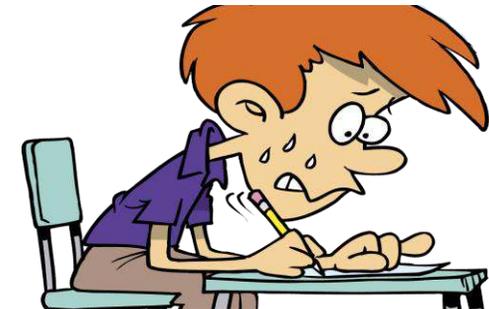


In caveman times, this was fine. The cortisol and adrenaline would be used up as they got away from the danger.



*Dr Steve Peters, The Chimp Paradox, 2011*

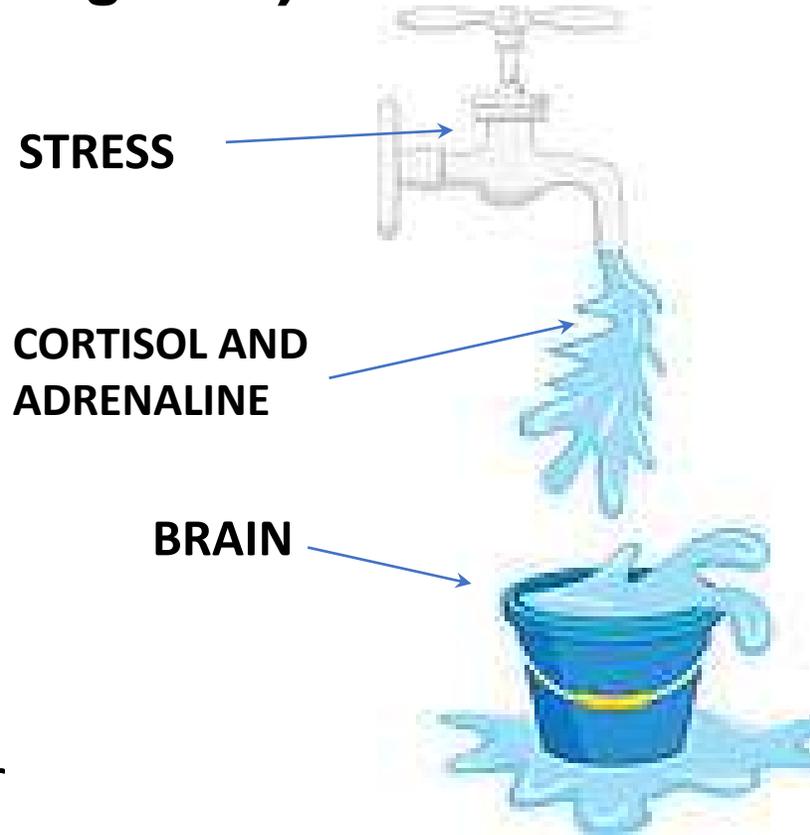
In the modern world, we don't use this cortisol and adrenaline up by getting away from the threat, which means it just stays in our brains. Then, when another stressful event comes along, it fills with more adrenaline and cortisol.



# Coping Strategies (long term)

Adrenaline and cortisol are important in giving us the ability to escape danger. However, we can't fight or run away from today's main stresses, so unless we find a way of releasing that stress, those chemicals stay in the brain, then more of them are added when we have another stressful situation.

If this happens then we become **mentally unwell**. Too much stress is known to cause depression, anxiety, memory problems, headaches, weight gain and other physical health problems. (Mayo Clinic, 2016)



We need a way of releasing the chemicals; a bit like giving our brain a tap, so it can drain off the stress. This means the chemicals don't build up to dangerous levels so we are able to stay **mentally healthy**.



We need **long term coping strategies** to release the stress we build up as a normal part of life.

## Coping Strategies (long term)

- A long term coping strategy is something you can do as part of your daily routine at times when you are **not** stressed.
- It is something that helps you **drain away the toxic chemicals**, adrenaline and cortisol, so that your bucket isn't already full when another stressful incident comes along.
- It also helps build your **defence system** so it's harder for the stressful event to affect you. *If you know there is a hurricane coming, you don't wait till it hits before you board up the windows and prepare the house, you make sure that's been done already.*

# Unhealthy Coping Strategies

## 1. Thinking about the past and go over it again and again in your head



This is unhealthy because the past is the past and dwelling on the past is not going to change it. You should look back to see if there is anything you could have done differently, but don't stare.

## 2. Drinking alcohol



This is never a good idea. Whilst a lot of people do this, or use drugs, to help them switch off and forget about the problems they have, in the long term it does not work. Alcohol is a depressant, so even if you are in a good mood, it will make you feel bad when you sober up. Also, there's the embarrassment about what you did/ said whilst you were drunk, not to mention the hang over ...

## 3. Stay away from the thing that causes you stress

This can be a good technique if the things causing you stress is something like hanging around with a group of people who put pressure on you to do things you don't want to. In that case, fine - stay away. But you can't always avoid stressful situations - you have to do exams or go to the dentist or whatever. You have to find other ways to deal with this.

## 4. Blame yourself when things go wrong and tell yourself you will do better next time.

We can all play the blame game but it's pointless. Blame just makes you feel guilty. If something has gone wrong, and it was your fault, use SMART goals to change things, but just telling yourself you need to do better will achieve nothing!!



## 5. Post things on Facebook/ twitter

Really? Do you want the whole world knowing your business? The golden rule is - if you wouldn't want your mum or your boss (or headteacher) reading it, don't post it!!

# Unhealthy Coping Strategies

## 6. Make yourself feel better by eating things you like

It might make you feel better temporarily, after all, who doesn't like cake?? However, in the long term, if you are eating for the wrong reasons, you will end up feeling guilty about it.



It can work the other way round too - some people eat less, thinking it will make them feel better, and it might work, for a while - who doesn't want to lose weight and fit into the next size down? But, because your body and therefore brain, isn't getting the nutrients it needs, it is harder to get into your thinking brain (thinking takes energy) so you end up in your caveman brain more and in a negative thought spiral more. It's really NOT the answer but we will look at this more in another unit.

## 7. Punch a wall

It sounds obvious, but there are many reasons why people do things (or want to do things) that are going to cause harm/ physical pain to themselves. The thing is, ultimately, it doesn't work.

1. You end up in physical pain.
2. You could risk causing more damage to yourself than you wanted (expected)
3. You normally feel worse mentally as you feel shame or embarrassment about what you have done and it hasn't solved the original problem.



### If you, or someone you know, self harms:

1. Make sure you reduce the risks – keep the area clean and make sure that any implements that are used are clean.
2. Try and have at least one person you can turn to in a time of crisis
3. Keep an open mind about talking to a professional – there is help, there is support and people will understand without judging .

(Brooks, 2017)

(Skills you need, 2017)

# Healthy Coping Strategies

## 1. Go out for a walk

This gets you away from the source of the stress and gives you a chance to get some more perspective on the problem. The fresh air and vitamin D from the sun can also lift your mood.



## 2. Reward yourself

Plan rewards for yourself for when you have something you have to do that is stressful, and stick to it. Remember to recognise the positives.



## 3. Be realistic

There is no point in setting ridiculous targets, then beating yourself up when you don't achieve them.



4. Think about things you don't like about your life and make SMART goals to change. Remember they need to be realistic and achievable.

## 5. Write down your thoughts and feelings in a diary/ blog

This is a good way of exploring your thoughts and feelings, it can also help you track your mood so that you can work out what is making you stressed.

## 6. Ask for help

There is no shame in asking for help, in fact it shows great courage and maturity. If you feel you can't talk to family or friends, then try talking to a teacher or support worker, or even message one of the many online support offers.



Ask for help, not because you are weak, but because you want to remain strong.

# Healthy Coping Strategies

## 7. Exercise

This works as it releases hormones similar to those released during fight or flight. As a bonus, it gets you away from the source of stress, helps improve your physical health, and releases endorphins that make you feel good about yourself.



## 8. Help other people

This works by distracting you from your own problems, it puts your problems into perspective and helping other people makes you feel good about yourself.



<http://uniquenet.co.uk/caring-about-people/>

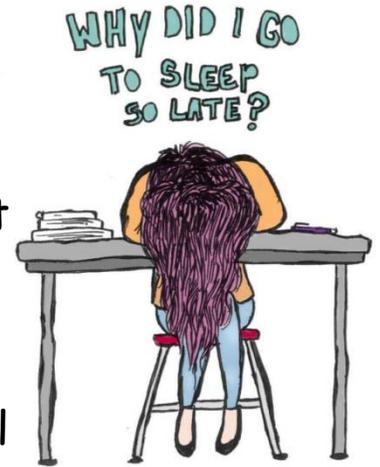
## 9. Learn to say no

If you are too busy, or if you don't feel confident enough to do something, that's okay; you don't need to feel guilty about saying no - the world will go on turning!!



## 10. Sleep

Sleep is vital, the National Institute of Sleep recommend teenagers get between 8 to 10 hours a night. Sleep helps to reset your stress levels ready for the next day. When you're awake, your stress hormone is active and keeps producing cortisol, so the longer you're awake, the more cortisol is produced. (Lightman, 2016)



If you have trouble getting to sleep, try doing some of these:

- Avoid caffeine in the evening
- Stop doing homework about an hour or two before bed to give your brain a chance to switch off.
- Turn off your laptop, tablet or phone at least an hour before bed. The light from these signals to your brain it's not night time.
- Leave your phone downstairs charging so you're not tempted to check on it.
- Try a warm bath or reading an 'easy' book, to relax you.

(Skills you need, 2017)

# CALMNESS



# Calmness

- For some/most of you at some point over the last 3 months there will have been a lack of calmness. Uncertainty is rife, the feeling of lack of control will have been felt. This is normal response to a fast changing situation.
- Be open and honest about what you are worried about.
- Focus on what you can control.
- Ask your teachers questions about anything you are unsure about when coming back to school.
- Regulate your use of social media, get information from accurate sources of information.
- Use your coping techniques daily and when you are feeling overwhelmed.

HAPPINESS



# Happiness



- There is a lot we can do to increase our own happiness but sometimes it can feel like we are stuck with negative emotions, unhelpful patterns of thought or locked on to a particular issue that feels irresolvable. This "stuckness" can sometimes become overwhelming and can start to significantly affect the quality of our lives and our relationships.
- Talk about how you have managed to remain positive/motivated? Ask others about their experiences. This is unique in the fact that we are all living through this together. Learn from each other.
- Monitor/reflect on your mood through journaling, mood trackers daily. This can help notice triggers but can also highlight what coping techniques work for you.
- Having a bad day is normal –avoid negative blaming behaviour. Acknowledge that your mood will/may fluctuate. Reflect on this and look at how you can utilise coping techniques .
- <https://10daysofhappiness.org/>

# HEALTH



# Health

- Mental, physical and social wellbeing are intrinsically linked.
- You have to look after all aspects of your wellbeing; physical health is one of those aspects. You need to look after your body and your mind to have good mental health.
- It is important to get some form of exercise each day and maintain a healthy diet.
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/healthy-eating-for-teens/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/get-active-your-way/>

SLEEP



# Sleep

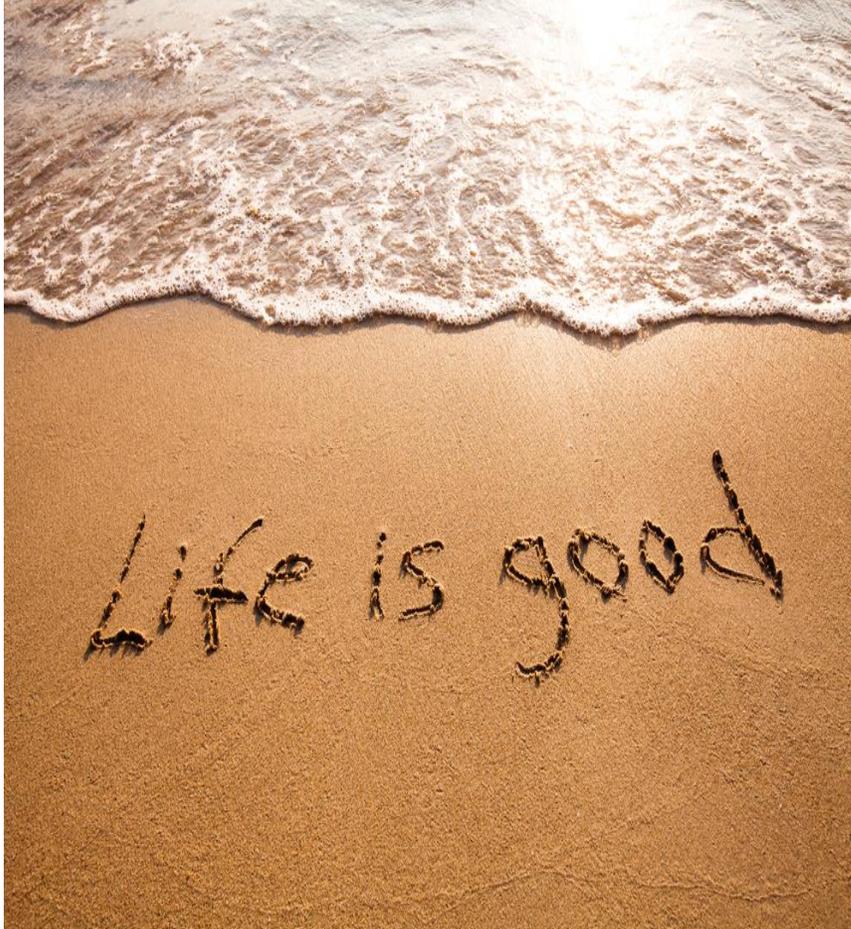
- Sleep is vitally important.
- Look at your sleep pattern – has it become unregulated during lockdown? What do you need to do to get back into a better routine?
- Are you not sleeping because you are laying awake for hours worried about everything and anything. Look at different techniques that can help calm your mind

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/sleep/getting-better-sleep.htm>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiYm20F9WXU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CyKhfUdOEgs>

# FULFILMENT



# Fulfilment

- Lack of fulfilment can lead to lack of motivation.
- A lot of us have certain aspects of our life that leave us feeling fulfilled; this may have been lost or reduced due to lockdown. Sport and other extra curricular activities for some of us, are a major source of fulfilment and you may be missing this part of your life. School may be another source of fulfilment and again it has been lost.
- Share what you have been up to with others. However, it is key to avoid comparing yourselves with others. Some people have embraced this time to learn new skills or take up an old hobby. Others will have got out of bed, got dressed and watched TV. Do not compare what you have done with others. Be kind to yourselves, it is an unprecedented time there is no right or wrong way to have dealt with the changes we are experiencing.
- One way to help you achieve a sense of fulfilment is by setting yourself small, manageable, achievable goals. Setting and achieving goals can improve motivation and give you a sense of achievement.

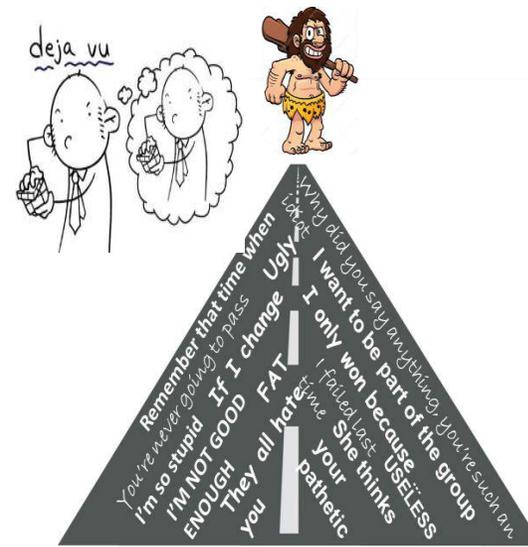
# Your future philosophy

How you see your future depends upon how you see yourself and that good old self esteem. Remember your thought spirals? Well, the same applies to the future.

*If your thought spiral is negative, then your future will be negative – how can your future be positive if you're thinking negatively every day?*

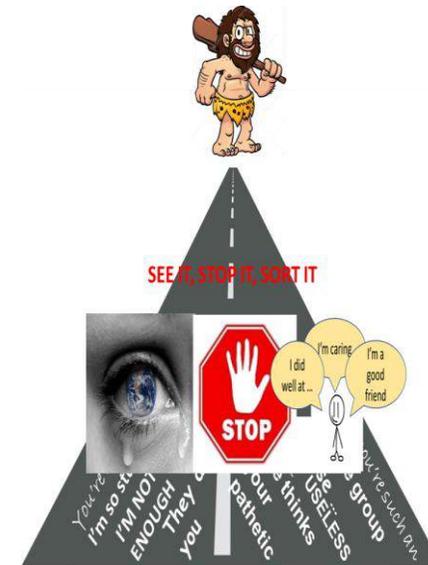


*If your thought spiral is positive and you are using positive self talk, you will have the confidence to try new things; if you are able to see those negative thoughts, stop them, and sort it with positive thoughts, you are not going to be stopped by obstacles.*



*If you are able to stay in your thinking brain, you are better able to overcome the obstacles.*

*If at every obstacle you panic and go into your caveman brain because you are negative about yourself, you will find it hard to get to the future you want.*



# Your Negative Future Philosophy

How you see yourself



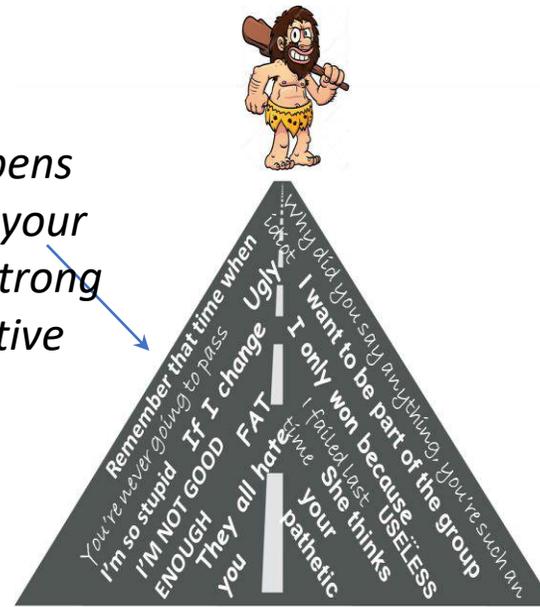
**“I’m useless, I get rubbish grades at school, the teachers get at me for nothing, my mum and dad moan at me all the time and I’m too much of a wimp to do the stuff some of the others get up to outside of school.”**

*This is what happens when the path to your caveman brain is strong because of negative thinking.*



How you see your future

**“Nothing ever goes my way ...”**



How you see the world

**“I’ve had enough of teachers, parents, the police, and everyone else telling me what to do. It’s my life, what do they know anyway? I wish everyone would just leave me alone.”**



(McLeod, 2008)



# Planning for a better future:

So, we know we need to think positively and focus on the positives instead of the negatives if we are going to build a strong path to our thinking brain.



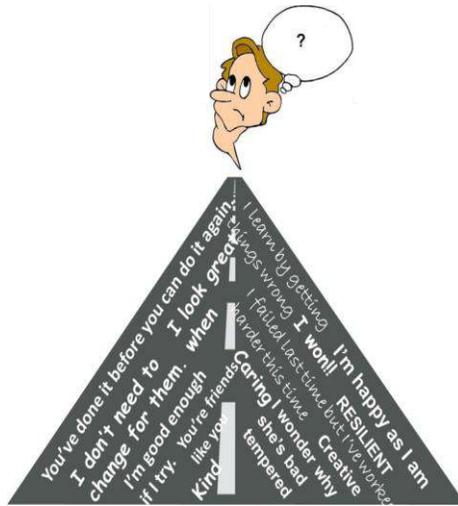
**BUT what if there are negatives?** What if there are things about us that aren't as good as they should be?

Well, of course there are, **nobody is perfect**. Nobody.

The important thing is to recognise if there are things you'd like to change about your life, and act on them.

We are going to look at how to do that.

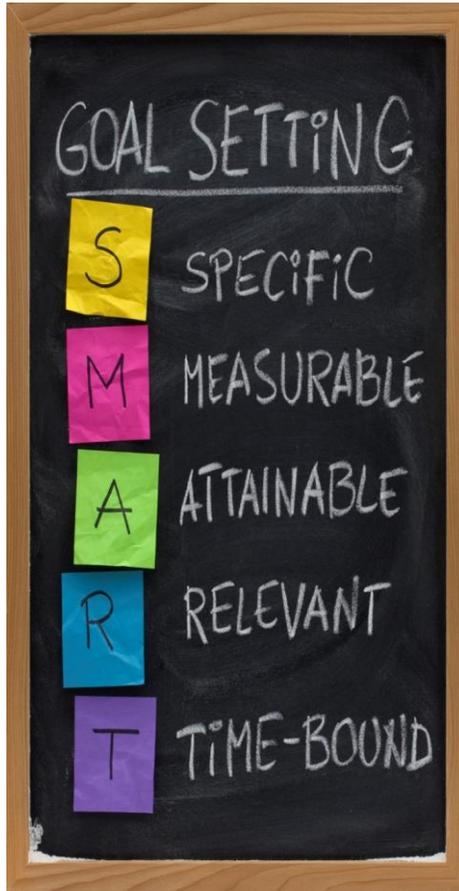
But remember, sometimes good enough is good enough. **Change takes time.**



# Planning for a better future: *Setting goals*



If you are to make changes, then it is important to set realistic targets that lead to your final goal. If you do this, you will be able to see and measure the changes that you make. For this to happen, your targets must be SMART.



(Cognology, 2017)

<b>S</b>	Set <b>SPECIFIC</b> targets – I want to lose weight is too vague, I want to lose about 1 -2 lb a week, about 6lb by the end of the month (that's nearly half a stone)
<b>M</b>	They must be <b>MEASURABLE</b> ; there must be a way to tell whether you have met your target.
<b>A</b>	They must be <b>ATTAINABLE</b> . There is no point in saying you're going to stop eating all cake and chocolate, because it's not realistic, you're setting yourself up to fail. Instead, you could say, you're not going to eat chocolate during the weekdays, or maybe every other day. If your targets are too high, you won't achieve them, so be realistic.
<b>R</b>	They have to be <b>RELEVANT</b> . There is no point in saying you're going to join a gym, when the nearest gym is miles away and really expensive. There is no point saying you're going to cook complicated food, when you haven't got the time.
<b>T</b>	Review after a set <b>TIME</b> , e.g., the end of the month. If you have not met your targets, you haven't failed, you have set the wrong targets. Look at what your targets were, think about why you haven't met them, then work out new, better targets.

# Planning for a better future key points



## Top Tip 2:

*Even though it is a diet, it is better to plan to have a small amount of chocolate than it is to give up and go back to eating lots.*

1. If you are unhappy with an aspect of your life, **identify it**.
2. Plan how you can change it using **SMART targets**. The important thing is to make them short term, realistic and **achievable** so that you are able to meet them.
3. If you don't reach your target, that's okay, go back to the plan, **think about it where wrong and set another plan**, including how you can get over these challenges (change your plan not your goal)  

e.g. If your diet went wrong because all your friends were eating chocolate at break time, fine, you could plan to take a better option in such as a rice-krispie bar, or a small Kit-Kat. Or, you could plan to go somewhere else at break-time, such as the library or the music room. The important thing is you recognise it and you plan to overcome it, you don't use it as an excuse to totally give in.
4. **When you reach your target, recognise it**, you've done well, you've been successful. Remember it and add it to your list of positive statements.

## Top Tip 1:

*You will go wrong, things won't always go to plan. You're human and this is life, it's normal!*

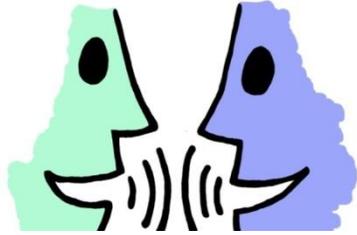


# Extra Sources of Help

## 1. Talk to someone you trust.

If you feel you are not coping with stress, then talk to someone, this may be a

- Friend
- Parent
- Teacher
- Youth leader
- Someone you trust.



It may be that your friend is not in a position to help, in which case you could talk to an adult together.

## 2. Talk to the GP

If you're feeling constantly down and finding it very difficult to stop thinking negatively, then you could talk to the GP.

Try talking to your parents first, or write down how you feel so that it's easier when you get to the doctors and you don't get tongue tied.



## 3. School Website

Our school website has lots of useful resources to help with lots of different needs.

<https://plymstockschool.org.uk/distance-learning/>

<https://plymstockschool.org.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing/>

**YOUNG Mi MINDS**  
fighting for young people's mental health



[Text Shout to 85258](https://www.shout24.org.uk/)  
**shout**  
for support in a crisis