



Practical Tips to Promote Positive Mental Health Throughout Lockdown 3.0

1. Make a routine and stick to it!

Routine is everything. Especially with the dark mornings and nights, we need to give our minds and bodies some normality. During the first lockdowns I found that going for a walk, making set times to switch off, having lunch and dedicating time away from technology massively helped me deal with the rest of the world feeling so out of control.

2. Manage your expectations:

Life as we know it is very different at the moment. Therefore, we need to choose peace over perfection and not be too hard on ourselves if we can't be all things to all people. As much as we all still have our responsibilities as students, teachers etc., we need to recognise the need to work at the pace that works for us. Calm over chaos is the key, and 'go with the flow' mode is exactly what's needed at times to help us look after our mental health.

3. Make the time to go outside:

This links in with the previous point about calm over chaos. We have all been inundated with since the pandemic began. Be it a Google meet, a zoom meeting or whatsapp group chats, we are all glued to our screens for a lot of our day now. Online meeting overload is now recognised as a real issue and so it is important to get back to nature when we can (within our 5km obviously). Natural daylight has been shown to improve our mood, and so even a 30 minute walk/cycle or exercise of choice can help combat 'screen fatigue' and feelings of being overwhelmed. Prioritise your time outdoors and make it a part of your daily routine and you will quickly see the benefits! Ps. Try to avoid engaging with texts/emails etc. whilst out as this is your time for you.

4. Try not to over-use your phone:

We are all guilty of treating our phones as extensions of ourselves sometimes, but it is vital that we don't give ourselves 'tech neck' by spending too much time online. Scrolling endlessly through Instagram or whatever your social media platform of choice is, has been shown to have a negative impact on mental health. This can be especially true in the current circumstances as it can lead to comparing our lives/experiences to those of others with a seemingly "perfect" online persona. As the saying goes 'comparison is the thief of joy' so try to ensure that you are minding yourself by limiting your time online.

5. Get some extra sleep:

At a time where social plans are non-existent, and you have completed Netflix for the 1000th time, squeezing in just a few more minutes of sleep each night can really help in reducing stress and anxiety levels. As in tip number one, try and formulate a routine (at least midweek) so that you can wake up refreshed and ready to take on the day ahead. If you are a poor sleeper, using sleep casts and/or fall back to sleep guided meditations can really help with your quality of sleep. Lavender oil (just a few drops on your pillow) can also aid in improving sleep quality. Your mind needs to wind down at the end of a busy day so allow it to do that. Try to stay away from screens for about an hour before sleeping and you should notice a difference in your sleep patterns.

6. Try to avoid reading too much news:

'Doom-scrolling' (consuming too much negative news content online) can have a detrimental effect on your attitude and wellbeing. If we are constantly taking in negative information, it is to be expected that maintaining a positive outlook will be much more difficult. Unfollow any pages on any platform that you recognise to have a negative impact on how you feel. It is very easy to get all consumed by what is going on in the world at the moment, but constantly talking about, reading or dwelling on bad news can only serve to bring us down.

7. Make an effort to keep in touch with friends and family

This is the strangest time that any of us have ever experienced in terms of interacting with our loved ones. Save for our immediate families, connecting with others is just not how it used to be pre-Covid. It is difficult to find a substitute for physically hugging a friend or extended family member, and we are all feeling it. But now is the time to look for alternatives, and to ensure that you make a concerted effort to link in with the people that make you happy. Be that a long voice note to your best pal, or a good old fashioned phone call to your favourite relative, it is important to be candid and open with those close to you about how you are feeling. No person is an island and we all need support, even if it is just to vent sometimes! Living and being with the same person/people 24/7 can be trying at times, so reach out virtually to those who help you feel better.

8. Keep the world out first thing in the morning:

As difficult as it may sound, you should try and ensure that the first 30 minutes of your day is a screen free zone. Easier said than done I know, but if it means rising a little earlier to achieve this then I would highly recommend it. Have a shower, eat your breakfast, work out, whatever your routine is try to make sure that your phone is not involved. Completing these activities can help you feel more prepared for the day ahead. It also gives you the control to decide when you will invite the outside world in. Reading texts/emails/news stories first thing in the morning may dictate your mood/feelings for the rest of the morning or even the day.

9. Make time in the day for self-reflection:

Now is a time where we can really work on things like our self-esteem and confidence. It is so important to make time for the practice of self-reflection, as it can help us to recognise our goals and our values, and ultimately what is important to us in our lives. Try to source some interesting podcasts on personal issues that are important to you. Reach out to talk to the people who know and understand you. Try to take the positive from each day by journaling each evening about the good things that happened throughout the course of the day. Even if these

things are small, they can help us get to know ourselves better and appreciate the good we have. Similarly, if you are feeling down or stressed, take note of it but be aware that every day offers a fresh start and an opportunity to work on ourselves. Check in with yourself each day to see how you are. Be mindful of the fact that this period of time in the world is temporary, and while we can't control it, we can control our responses to it.

10. Set yourself goals and targets each day:

There is a great sense of pride in accomplishing that which we set out to do. It might be helpful at the start of each day to draw up a 'to do' list of all the things you hope to achieve. Having a focus is really good for our mental health, and when we are goal oriented we are much less likely to spend time dwelling on the negative. Our goals or targets need not be mountains we have to climb, but rather small achievable tasks that we can accomplish with relative ease. It may be related to exercise, a household duty, an academic or work task, or whatever you choose. The important thing is to give structure to your day through setting realistic goals. It's not the end of the world if you don't achieve them all in one day, simply add them to the following day's list. Remember, slow and steady wins the race and this is about making life easier for yourself!

On a final note in the midst of all of this chaos, please remember that the comeback is always stronger than the setback!! We have done this before and we can do it again because together we are strong!!

CBC Guidance Department

