Mental Health Awareness Week

18th – 24th May 2020

This year's theme is kindness – but why?

In these uncertain times we are witnessing a rise in kindness all over the world.

Despite fear and uncertainty there is evidence of a sense of community, shared support and hope.

Helping others can benefit your own and others mental and emotional health and wellbeing and can help to reduce stress.

Follow these tips and try some of the tasks to help take care of yourself and others during these challenging times, and keep safe!

Plan your day

As tempting as it might be to stay in pyjamas all day, regular routines are essential for our identity, self-confidence and purpose.

Try to start your day at roughly the same time as you usually would and aim to set aside time each day for movement, relaxation, connection and reflection.

Some Ideas:

Plan a timetable for your day

Take regular breaks

Remember to socialise, take time away from the computer and talk to someone

Move more every day

Being active reduces stress, increases energy levels, can make us more alert and help us sleep better.

Explore different ways of adding physical movement and activity to your day and find some that work best for you.

Even at home, there will be lots of ways to exercise and keep your body moving.

Some ideas:

Set yourself a daily target of steps to achieve

Join an online workout

Take a walk with a family member

Go for a spin on your bike

Learn a new skill – e.g. juggling, keepy-ups

Try a relaxation technique

Relaxing and focusing on the present can help improve your mental health and lighten negative feelings.

Try some different meditation or breathing exercises to see what helps. For example, sometimes we can be so tense that we do not even remember what being relaxed feels like.

A range of relaxation techniques are available from the NHS :

https://www.cntw.nhs.uk/resource-library/relaxation-techniques/

Connect with others

Staying at home, especially if you live on your own, can feel lonely. Find creative ways to keep in touch with friends, family, and others to help you (and them) feel more connected and supported.

Explore ways of connecting that work for you, whether that's by post, over the phone, social media, or video-chat. This could be anything, from sharing a cup of tea over video, playing an online game together, or simply sending a supportive text-message.

Some ideas:

Write a letter / send a picture to a family member

Plan a quiz and invite your friends (via video chat)

Perform a random act of kindness e.g. pay someone a compliment, make them a cup of tea or a snack, do an extra chore

Teach someone a new skill

Call someone you haven't spoken to in a while

Take time to reflect and look after yourself

Be kind to yourself, recognise your successes and don't put pressure on yourself - life is different at the moment and you will need time to adjust.

Make time every day to reflect on what went well. It's important to recognise your successes and the things you are grateful for, no matter how small.

Mindfulness techniques may also help you focus on the present rather than dwelling on unhelpful thoughts

There are a number of exercises on the Mental Health Foundation website :
https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/podcasts-and-videos/podcasts-for-your-wellbeing

Some ideas:

List three things that went well today and tell someone

Consider keeping a gratitude journal each day where you could write two or three things that you are grateful for every night before you go to bed.

Take a drink outside, sit still and listen to all of the sounds that are happening around you.

On a clear, starry night go outside and take a few minutes to appreciate the beauty of what you see.

Go and read or listen to a podcast in a quiet space

Have an early night

Switch off devices and take a break from your work and do something you enjoy

Improve your sleep

Feelings of uncertainty and changes to daily life may mean you have more difficulty sleeping.

There is a lot you can do to improve your sleep.

Top Tips :

Aim to go to bed and get up at the same time each day, even at the weekend if you can

Regular exercise will help you to sleep better

Try to get some natural sunlight (by opening your curtains and windows) where possible. This helps to regulate your body clock which can help you sleep better.

Wind down before bed by avoiding using your phone, tablet, computer or TV for an hour before bedtime.