

Dealing with the Coronavirus Outbreak:

Top Tips & Activity Ideas to Stay Well for Secondary School Students

The country is going through a difficult time with the recent COVID-19 Coronavirus outbreak and this is impacting on all of us. During this time it is understandable that people may feel worried about their health or the health of others around them. Others may feel unsure of how to look after their emotional well-being or keep themselves entertained. The following document includes activity ideas and a top tips guide to stay well for young people.

Top Tips to Stay Well

During this period of social distancing and self-isolation, it is really important to look after our mental wellbeing. Below we propose a few ideas about how to do this:

Talk to someone!: It's important during this time that you notice how you are feeling and try to accept that the feelings you are having are likely to be normal. We know that things might continue to feel overwhelming or scary. It's good for you to talk about this where possible, so think about who you can turn to. It could be someone in your family, a friend, or a helpline that can talk to you about how you might be feeling. Work out how you are going to stay in touch with your friends whilst you're not in school. We have included some helplines/websites on the final page.

Limit how often you check for news updates: Despite being the source of information about the situation, the news is often anxiety-provoking and not helpful to keep a peaceful mind. Instead minimise the amount of times you check the news to once or twice a day.

Monitor your social media usage: Similar to the last point, certain pages may be contributing to worries we may have and therefore maintain the anxiety. It is healthy to de-clutter your social media accounts by removing or un-following accounts that will make you feel worse.

Keeping a routine: It will be tempting to stay up late and/or sleep in longer but we know that this can have a negative impact on our mood. Maintain a routine as much as possible by getting up in the morning and going to bed at the same time, think about who can support you to do this – can you plan to speak to your friend in the morning or have an alarm and a plan of what you want to do in the day?

Gaming (but not too much!): Lots of people enjoy gaming and it's fine to include it in your day but it's easy to find yourself playing too much, especially when you don't have so much to do. This can lead to feeling disconnected from friends and family and mood dropping. We would encourage

you and your parent/carer to plan limits on this together. You can use the below suggestions of other activities to engage in if you are feeling bored.

Activity Ideas

The idea of staying home can often be fun and relaxing because there is no school to attend. On the other hand, staying home for a long time often leads to boredom and laziness – and this is common with everyone! Your school will be providing you with learning and work to complete, but you are likely to have more free time than usual.

It is important that we keep ourselves busy with activities, especially creative ones. This is a time we can really indulge in hobbies that we may have stopped previously, or an opportunity to explore a new interest. The reason for this is because activities take your full attention, where you ‘lose yourself’ in the activity and do not notice time passing. We call these ‘Flow Activities’. Below is a list of ideas for you to explore whilst you are at home:

Create a ‘Coronavirus Bucket-List’: You can use this as an opportunity to achieve something new! Spend some time thinking about any goals you would like to achieve during this period of time. This might be new skills which you would like to develop or tasks which you would like to complete. Work out what and who can help you to achieve this and then make a start on this list. Imagine how good it would feel to achieve your goals!

Goals	Steps
Learn how to cook a few different meals	Check what ingredients there are at home Research recipes online Ask Mum to help and agree on a time to do this
Start learning Spanish	Download audio guide Find out if anyone else in the family wants to do this with me Put 1 hour aside each day to do this
Rearrange your bedroom	Put 1 hour aside each day to do this

Create a self-soothe box: If you are feeling anxious or panicky, a self-soothe box can enable you to make you feel more grounded and relaxed. You can include photos of happy memories, sentimental objects, favourite smells, positive affirmation cards. You can find inspiring ideas from YouTube!

Read a book: Fiction or non-fiction? Whatever you prefer!

Exercise: Staying active is important for our physical and mental health and something the government is really encouraging at this time. The current guidelines say you can go for a walk or run with two metres of social distancing. You could also do some light exercise at home, or in your garden if you have one. There are a number of great YouTube videos - high-intensity interval training (HIIT), aerobic exercises, and yoga – that you can follow from the comfort of your home with no equipment needed. Some of you might be lucky enough to have access to equipment which can help you to stay fit, such as the Wii Fit, skipping ropes, or a trampoline!

Arts & Crafts: Whether it is drawing, painting or sculpting, or anything that activates your creative side can help soothe the mind. Some of the known benefits are developing your motor skills, your innovative skills, encourages self-expression, and boosts your self-esteem. Get creative!

Cooking: With more time spent at home, there is more time to help in the kitchen. Cooking is an essential life skill and something you can start doing more of. Ask your parent or carer to help cook lunch or dinner. There are hundreds of recipes online and many ‘how to cook’ videos on YouTube. Likewise, this is a perfect excuse to bake sweet treats – cakes, cupcakes, brownies, cookies and much more!

Creating something to engage with others: Do you have a talent? Is it singing? Dancing? Rapping? Playing an instrument? Then this could be one for you. You could create a video of you performing a favourite piece and send this to your friends, grandparents and relatives. This will keep them entertained and engaged with you.

Write something: Do you have an interest in writing? Whether it’s writing a blog, a diary, or the next novel, you could use the time to explore your inner J.K. Rowling to create a story. Perhaps your experience of being at home. What are your thoughts, your feelings about what is going on in the world? This could be a time for you to let the people of the future about what you are going through!

Socialise: You might think it is unusual for us to suggest socialising during social distancing, however, you can be creative with this. We know that social contact is extremely important for our mental health. We would encourage you to prioritise doing activities with family members who are at home with you – for example cooking/baking together, playing a board game, learning a new skill together (perhaps your parent/carer or older sibling can teach you something new), or watching a film together. We know that young people tend to be really great at using technology and you can use this to your advantage by setting up virtual meet ups with friends and family members over Facetime, Skype, Whatsapp or Zoom. It’s likely that people who are self-isolating (such as grandparents) would really appreciate this.

We have included a weekly planner and an activity log in this document and would encourage you to use this, as this is a helpful way to ensure that you are engaging in activities that are making you feel good.

Activity Scheduling

Having a routine can be a good way to keep busy and improve your emotional wellbeing. It is also important for helping you to sleep better at night and feel better during the day. It can help to get a mix of different activities into your week and planning in advance can help motivate you to do them.

Try to get a mix of activities in your day including: social activity, physical activity, activities that will give you a sense of achievement and activities you enjoy. Some activities might fit into more than one category and that's ok! **Remember that it's also really important to have some downtime in between activities so do factor in time for relaxing and chilling out.**

Social: An activity where you are engaging with others and help's you to feel closer to another person. Remember, it's possible to feel close to someone that you're not physically with you may have to think creatively how to do this over the next few weeks!

Enjoyable: An activity that you enjoy and find fun. If this is something you normally do outside of the house then try to think about how any ways you can do this at home!

Achievement: An activity where you feel like you accomplish something, or get something out of doing it. Remember this is personal to you, so something that might not be an achievement to another person might be a big achievement for you.

Physical: Any activity involving movement or exercise, whether this is stretching, walking or a planned workout.

Step 1 – Brainstorm which activities you could do while you're at home which fit into the groups. You may want to use suggestions in this handout or look online for other ideas.

Enjoyable Activity

- e.g. Interactive virtual tour of Disney World, Museums and Zoos*
- Watch a movie with your family*

Social Activity

- e.g. Using Party Chat with friends on PlayStation/X-box*
- Play games with friends & family on House party App*

Achievement Activity

- e.g.*
- Learn how to make your favourite meal*
- Do a bit of school work*

Physical Activity

- e.g.*
- Join a live dance class with 'Strictly come Dancing' Dancer, Oti Mabuse*
- Join Joe Wicks morning PE sessions on you tube*

Step 2 – Schedule your activities:

Print or copy the diary below, and then fill in what you plan to do for the next week.

It's important to do a balance of activities from each group over your week. Scheduling things into your week can be a helpful way of motivating yourself to actually do the activities you have planned.



You could also use this to help plan your routine in general. For example, when you will get up each day, eat lunch and any things you need to do.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
13:00							
14:00							
15:00							
16:00							
17:00							
18:00							
19:00							
20:00							
21:00							

Websites and Telephone Support

If your mood is low, it is really important to talk to someone, either someone you know, or you can use the following services who offer support to young people:

Kooth

- Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people.
- Chat 1-2-1 with a counsellor online.
- Access to tips on staying well.

Childline

- Comforts, advises and protects children 24 hours a day and offers free confidential counselling.
- Phone 0800 1111 (24 hours).
- Chat 1-2-1 with a counsellor online