

**Whichever way
this throws us,
We will stand.**

Resources to help with mental wellbeing



in this together

isolating but not alone

this too shall pass

On the last Sunday in March, as Covid-19 forced social distancing and change across our island, I put a post on Facebook:

I'm a mental health nurse working in the community but I want to be able to help more. I've been putting together information on coping with the pandemic...anxiety management, self-care, compassion, reframing thoughts, tolerating uncertainty, coping skills and reliable websites etc. Would there be any interest if I collated it all and put a resource 'pack' together for self use and to share with colleagues, friends and family?

I would be doing this in my own time it would not be part of my work role.

*If anyone would be interested please let me know and I'll go from there.
Thanks.*

Within the day I had received over 600 responses including expressions of thanks, offers of help, and words of encouragement. But the overwhelming message was "yes please".

And here we are now. A resource pack which would not have been possible without the input and help of many; the professionals whose work is available for access in the public domain, the local businesses who have gone above and beyond to print these hard copies without charge, the individuals and colleagues who have offered to share their resources, and the volunteers who have helped distribute them so they can reach you. My message to you is thank you. Thank you for helping me, but mostly, thank you for helping us all by proving one of the points that will be looked at in this pack...Social isolation does not mean we are alone. We may be socially distant, but we are more together now than ever.

Be kind to yourself,

Helen

Given that mental illness does not discriminate and therefore no one is immune to it, I have often made reference to “us” and “we” throughout this resource. And that is the very first point to be aware of; **you are not alone in your feelings**. Look how many responses there were to my Facebook post! I am a registered mental health nurse, and whilst my training, skills, and experience enable me to offer you this resource pack, there is no ‘me and you’. There is an ‘us’.

Secondly,

“Everything can be taken from us but one thing; the freedom to choose our attitude in any given set of circumstances”. Viktor Frankl.

I like this quote because it acknowledges that there are things we cannot control, but reminds us that the most important thing (attitude) is entirely within our control and something that we can keep hold of whilst also instilling hope. That’s not to say that we won’t all struggle to keep a positive attitude during this time. But that’s ok too because this current situation is unknown to us and things are changing day to day. So of course we are going to be feeling a huge range of emotions that will likely fluctuate over hours, days and weeks. We may wake up with a positive attitude of “I’ve got this today, I can do this” but by lunchtime we’re asking “how can I cope?”, followed by maybe feeling anxious, fearful, frustrated and panicked by bedtime. This is ok. **It is ok to feel like this**. It may be an uncomfortable feeling, but please remember that there is no place for “should” or “shouldn’t”. e.g. “I should be able to cope better” or “I shouldn’t be feeling so anxious”. Instead, focus on “this might not be a nice feeling, but it’s ok to feel it”. There is a big difference between feelings being unwanted versus the belief that a feeling is not acceptable.

So, a good first step is to **take the time to explore what we’re feeling and label it**. Often when an uncomfortable feeling hits, our instinct can be to push it away. That can be necessary and appropriate at times, but if we keep pushing away every uncomfortable feeling we get, we may end up with a knotted ball of uneasiness in our tummy, or feel weighed down because we are so overwhelmed that we don’t know where or how to even start to try and feel better. This can then lead to panic.

Recognise what we are feeling. Remember that this may change throughout the day, and that different people will have different feelings and reactions to the same information.

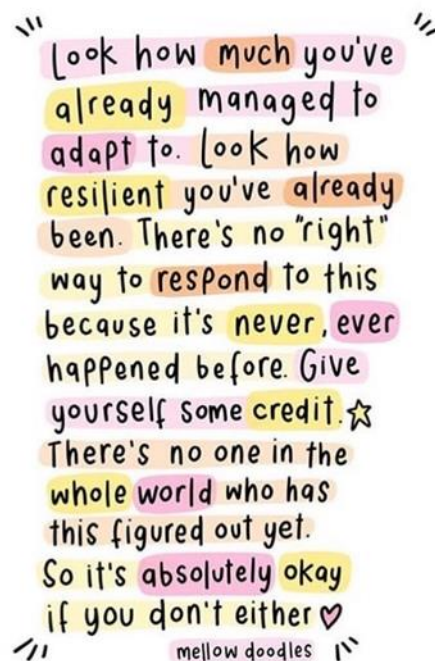
Label what we are feeling. Don’t be afraid of naming uncomfortable feelings. It’s ok to say “this is anxiety I’m feeling right now”. Once we identify our feelings, it becomes easier to manage them. We will look at ways to manage some feelings later on.

Round up:

- **It is ok to not be ok**
- **You are not alone in what you are feeling**
- **Accept and name what you are feeling**

Compassion

Accepting that it is "ok to not be ok" can sometimes be a challenge. Many of us are harsh and critical of ourselves, and whilst we will often show compassion to others during difficult times, we struggle to apply this same compassion and understanding to ourselves. Having compassion for ourselves is necessary for mental wellbeing, and is not a selfish act. Self-compassion means acting the same way towards ourselves when we are having a difficult time, when we feel we may be failing at something, or when we notice something we don't like about ourselves.



Taking a Compassion Break (An exercise by Kristen Neff from copingwithcoronavirus.com)

Often committing to a practice to improve our mental health can feel like a really big commitment, especially when we are under extra stress and feel like we can barely stay on top of the news, and all the changes around us. However, when we are at our busiest or most stressed, that is when we need to put our mental health first, and give ourselves a break.

The 3-step Compassion Break is a fast exercise that we can do to restore some compassionate balance when:

- We notice that we're being hard on ourselves
- We're feeling overwhelmed by hurt or fear or loneliness
- We notice that we're thinking negatively about ourselves
- We're just a bit frazzled and need a break

Step 1: This is a moment of suffering. Acknowledge what you're feeling, and that it's difficult. Accept it for what it is, and allow it to be there.

Step 2: Suffering is a part of being human. Remember that whatever difficult thing you're thinking or feeling right now is a natural, inevitable part of being human. It's a side effect of the immense complexity of our minds- the same complexity that allows us to love and care and hope. We all experience difficult feelings. They are a part of what it means to be human.

Step 3: May I be kind to myself. If we're always trying push out pain and difficult feelings, then when we do experience them we might see it as a sign of weakness or inability to cope and be harder on ourselves as a result. Once we can accept suffering (step 1), and acknowledge that it is a key part of humanity (step 2), we are in a much better place to be kind to ourselves, and in doing so to protect our mental health.

Set an intention to be kind to yourself, and then put it in to action:

- What is something you can do immediately as a compassionate response to how you're feeling?
- What are you going to do later today to demonstrate compassion to yourself?

Semblance of control

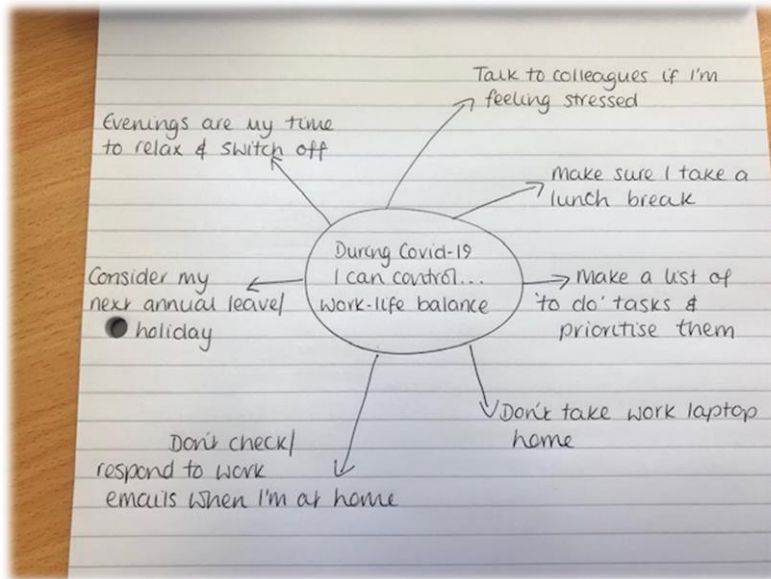
When something occurs which can be threatening and uncertain we can often feel distressed and disorientated. This is because we seek to find some semblance of control in our lives as a way to manage the situation. Something like Covid-19 can highlight for us many of the things that we can't control and we can feel like we 'don't know what we are going to do'. It is useful to look at what you do have control over and the things you don't. Given the government restrictions placed on us to manage the current situation, it can often feel that "everything is out of control". So you might be surprised to see just how many things we do still have control over. And it is this that we need to focus on.

The following is one example, but there are many others available on the internet.



It would be useful to make something similar to the above, but which is personal and applicable to you. We can then start to consider not only what we can control, but how we can control it.

Shown below is a personal example of mine:



And, even with certain things that we can't control, it is important to remember that we can still look at ways to cope and to problem solve. The below are useful steps to help solve problems.

What I can't control:

For example; at the moment I can't go and visit my friends.

Identify what it is about this that causes a problem:

I miss my friends.

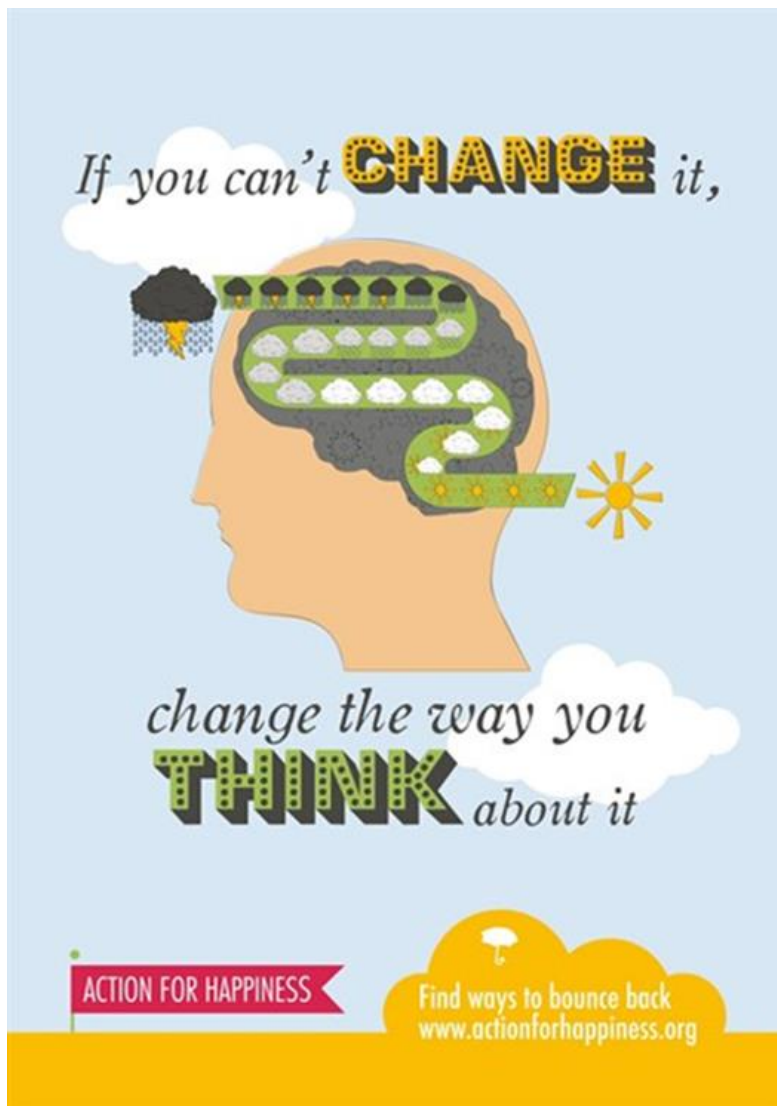
Generate ideas to solve the problem. Not all of them will work, but this step is not about you trying to pick out ones that will and won't work, it is about listing options:

Send them a card, FaceTime them, email them, call them, play an online game together, text them, set up a message group with a few friends, arrange a regular catch up time when you perhaps would have previously met up with them, do an exercise workout at the same time and then ring to discuss it, start a project with them and send each other updates and photos of how you getting on.

Pick an idea that will work for you now, and use it!

Positivity


When looking at what we can't control, it is often our instinct to see the negative. Without us even being aware of it, some of the phrases we think and say to ourselves can be negative. It is important to try and adapt the way we think to a more positive one.



This can sometimes be difficult to get used to, but having a 'script' can help this to become a more automatic thought. The following is an example of ways we can look to change our thinking to be more positive.

positive mind-set

I'm stuck at home	➔	I get to be SAFE at home
I'll get really sick	➔	I will follow advice; wash my hands, stay home, and social distance which will all DECREASE my chance of getting sick
Everything is closing, I'm panicking	➔	The most IMPORTANT places are still open (health care, food shops, chemists)
There is too much uncertainty right now	➔	I can't control the situation around me, but I CAN control my ACTIONS



I read a lovely message from a lady who had been struggling to cope. She was self-isolating and was not able to see any of her immediate family. She spoke to her friend about her struggles, and her friend told her “think of it like this instead; we isolate ourselves so that when we get back together no-one is missing”.

Togetherness

Amidst this season of uncertainty and unpredictability there comes a true sense of togetherness and community spirit: Families pulling together to meet the needs of each other, neighbours offering to help each other with shopping, strangers volunteering to help out the vulnerable, shops and restaurants providing additional services such as delivery, families gathering on the streets to applaud our key workers, children putting rainbows up in the windows of their homes, local businesses responding to a Facebook post to print resource packs! The list goes on. **Social isolation does not mean that you are alone.**



Feelings

As much as we'd like to feel positive all the time we know that this isn't realistic because, with or without covid-19, life can be hard at times. We've already looked at the importance of knowing it is ok to not be ok. But what can we do when we don't feel ok? How do we cope with days where we may feel fed up and unmotivated, to the days where we are really struggling? Before we look at ways to help us cope, we need to remind ourselves that although it is not nice feeling sad, tearful, anxious or scared, these feelings will pass because **feelings are temporary.**



Using coping skills

There are many practical things we can do to help ourselves feel better. The "five ways of wellbeing" is a good basis for looking at what we need to keep ourselves well. Evidence suggests

that there are 5 steps we can all take to improve our mental health to help us feel happier, more positive and to get the most from life. They are:



oasishumanrelations.org.uk

When we look at ways of helping ourselves, remember that different things will work for different people, so try some of the suggestions and see what works best for you. For those of us who have children or teenagers at home, these suggestions can also be adapted and applied to use with them.

Routine

Whether you are working from home, self-isolating, in your usual work place, retired, or of school age, our usual daily routine and structure has changed dramatically. This doesn't mean we can't still have a routine to our day, just that we may need to rethink what this looks like. **Structure is important to give us clarity on what is essential, to help us prioritise, and to help us focus on our goals.** Have a think about what your day can look like on a regular basis; setting the alarm for the same time each morning, eating healthy food at regular intervals, exercise time, getting dressed each day, having a bed time routine, checking in with family/friends, an activity you enjoy, and of course, time for self-care.

Self-care

Given that this unprecedented time means we face challenges and changes on a daily basis, it is more important now than ever that we practice self-care and are kind to ourselves and others. There is a lot of information about self-care on the internet if you wish to explore this further. I

have included some plans of self-care below, but making your own one and keeping it somewhere visible is the best way to make sure that we each **make time and prioritise our own needs on a regular basis.**



IGNACIO 's Self Care Plan!

MEDITATE
TAKE LOTS OF BREAKS
MUSIC **Mind**
FUN! LIFE-LONG LEARNING

TEA NOURISHING FOOD
EXERCISE
Body SLEEP EIGHT HOURS
EVERYTHING IN MODERATION

Supportive People In My Life:

GRETCHEN
MOM
MI VIEJO
ALBERTO
LYNNE
CAROLINE
REED
DEBORAH

MEDITATE
HUMAN CONNECTIONS
Spirit
SELF-REFLECTION
FULFILMENT
THOUGH USING MY AWESOME SKILLS

I want to accomplish:

PEACE
SERENITY
CONTROL
HAPPINESS
GOOD WORK
BE A GOOD PERSON



ACTIVE COPING CALENDAR: APRIL 2020

"Everything can be taken from us but one thing: the freedom to choose our attitude in any given set of circumstances" ~ Viktor Frankl

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 Make a plan to help you keep calm and stay in contact	2 Enjoy washing your hands. Remember all they do for you!	3 Write down ten things you feel grateful for in life and why	4 Stay hydrated, eat healthy food and boost your immune system
5 Get active. Even if you're stuck indoors, move & stretch	6 Contact a neighbour or friend and offer to help them	7 Share what you are feeling and be willing to ask for help	8 Take five minutes to sit still and breathe. Repeat regularly	9 Call a loved one to catch up and really listen to them	10 Get good sleep. No screens before bed or when waking up	11 Notice five things that are beautiful in the world around you
12 Immerse yourself in a new book, TV show or podcast	13 Respond positively to everyone you interact with	14 Play a game that you enjoyed when you were younger	15 Make some progress on a project that matters to you	16 Rediscover your favourite music that really lifts your spirits	17 Learn something new or do something creative	18 Find a fun way to do an extra 15 minutes of physical activity
19 Do three acts of kindness to help others, however small	20 Make time for self-care. Do something kind for yourself	21 Send a letter or message to someone you can't be with	22 Find positive stories in the news and share these with others	23 Have a tech-free day. Stop scrolling and turn off the news	24 Put your worries into perspective and try to let them go	25 Look for the good in others and notice their strengths
26 Take a small step towards an important goal	27 Thank three people you're grateful to and tell them why	28 Make a plan to meet up with others again later in the year	29 Connect with nature. Breathe and notice life continuing	30 Remember that all feelings and situations pass in time		

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

www.actionforhappiness.org

30 actions to look after ourselves and each other as we face this global crisis together

Keep Calm · Stay Wise · Be Kind

As much as we need to prioritise self-care, we all have different situations and roles at home/work, and so we may struggle to find the time and energy to use some of the examples above.

But, there are step ways that we can still **practice self-care in just seconds**:

Breathe: Momentarily stop what you are doing and take a deep breath in through your nose, and out through your mouth. Do not underestimate the power of a deep breath because it can make the difference between feeling overwhelmed and staying focused.

Mindful eating: As you stop to eat a snack or lunch, take a second to really focus on the different flavours and textures and appreciate the taste.

Technology: Take 30 to 60 seconds to step away from all technology. Use this moment to focus your eyes on something around you; maybe a painting, the cloudy sky, children playing, flowers in the garden. Focus on the details and see how much you can observe (shades, texture, shape).

Stretch: Raise your arms straight up above your head and then bring them out to your sides. Gently roll your head from the left to the right. Shrug your shoulders, and then roll them to the front and back a few times.

Close your eyes: You may not be able to actually take a break from your surroundings, but you can mentally escape by closing your eyes for a few seconds and imagine a calming scene or a location which makes you smile.

Be thankful: Change your focus to one of feeling positive by being grateful for something in this moment.

If you do have the time, try and practice some of these for a longer and at regular intervals.

Distraction

Accept that there will be times when we have tried coping mechanisms, but we still can't stop thinking about something and will struggle to focus on anything else. This is where distraction is a good skill to use to help us 'switch off' from our thoughts. Distraction is where you engage in another activity to redirect your mind off your current emotions. Each of us will have our own hobbies and interests; making a list of them is useful, not only because you can include them in your daily routine, but you can also see options available to you if you feel you need an impromptu distraction. For this reason, it is good to include a variety of activities which vary in length of time and the amount of planning needed. For example, watercolour painting is a hobby of mine, but this takes some planning in terms of gathering the materials and setting up. This would be a great planned activity, but not something that is readily 'at hand' for a quick distraction. Possible distraction skills could include:

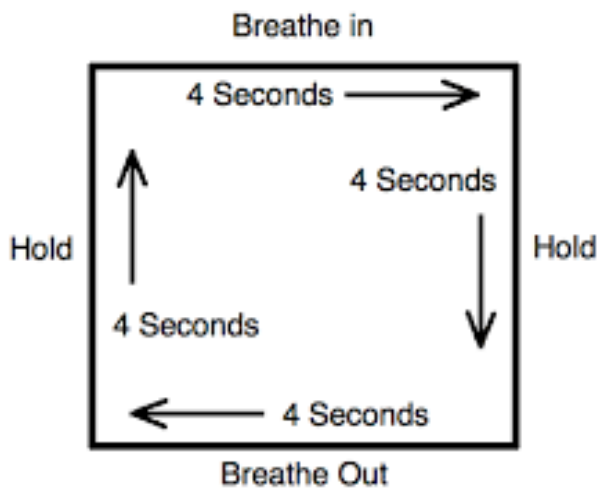
- Puzzles (books, games, phone apps, jigsaws, newspaper crosswords, online games)
- Reading
- Watching a TV programme
- Colouring
- Craft activities
- Movement (be it a 30 minute walk or 10 star jumps in the kitchen)
- Activities with your child
- Listening to music

- Playing a musical instrument
- Listening to an audio book
- Baking/Cooking
- Playing with pets

Quick ways to calm down

Sometimes we may need a quick way to help calm ourselves down from feeling intense emotions of maybe frustration, irritability or anger. This is great to use with children too. Try these tips to quickly feel calmer.

- 'Box' breathing exercise. Imagine or look at a square object (window, tv, picture) to focus the four stages of the breath: the inhale, breath hold, the exhale, and breath hold:



- Imagine your favourite place (describe it if it helps)
- Think of one of your favourite things (describe them if it helps)
- Name some animals alphabetically (alligator, bear, cow, dog...)
- Squeeze something (play dough, stress ball, your fists, a cushion)
- Get a cold drink of water
- Recite the words to a song you like
- 54321 grounding technique (explained below)

The '54321 grounding technique' uses all 5 of our senses to focus us in the here and now. The aim is for us to notice 5 things we can see, 4 things we can touch, 3 things we can hear, 2 things we can smell, and one thing we can taste. This is a good skill to use in any setting and can be applied to every situation we are in; be it in public or at home. Even if we can't always complete all 5 of the senses, focusing on even a few of them can help us to feel calmer and more relaxed by being present in the current moment.

Helpful websites

Action for happiness <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/> Helps people take action for a happier and kinder world.

Free pintables and apps, including the monthly calendars used in this pack.

Helpout.im <https://helpout.im/> Helpout.im will be leading the Isle of Man's Community Response to COVID-19. The goal of Helpout.im is to help members of the community who may be isolated or require assistance due to Coronavirus or the necessary measures in place to reduce its impact.

This recently launched local website is full of up to date information on wellbeing, business support, local support and also includes options to request specific help or to register to become a volunteer in our local community

Kooth <https://www.kooth.com/> Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people, Monday–Friday 12pm -10pm and Saturday–Sunday 6pm–10pm.

Mind UK <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/> A mental health charity who can help you make choices about treatment, understand your rights or reach out to sources of support.

Quell <https://www.qwell.io/> Online counselling and well-being for adults. Monday–Friday 12pm - 10pm and Saturday–Sunday 6pm–10pm.

Rethink <https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/covid-19-support/> Improving the lives of people severely affected by mental illness through a network of local groups and services, expert information and successful campaigning. Their goal is to make sure everyone affected by severe mental illness has a good quality of life.

Additional resources

The last few pages of this pack are templates that can be printed or copied to help you complete some of the exercises and suggestions in this pack. Also included is the general month coping calendar from Action for Happiness.

Note of thanks

I have been truly overwhelmed by the number of lovely messages and offers of help I have received, right from my initial Facebook post to typing this now. I unfortunately can't name all of you or this would be more of a register than a resource pack! I do hope that I have not missed anyone out in thanking you in person or via message or email. Just in case...thank you.

I would specifically like to thank the following local businesses who offered their help by printing these packs out. They have been proactive in volunteering their services, so generous with their time and resources, and have asked for nothing in return:

Bridson & Horrox

Cole Edit Production

NK Construction

Quine and Cubbon

Words and Spaces

Thank you!

Hope and Trust

One of my favourite things about being a nurse is helping someone believe that there is hope. For this same reason, I offered to make this pack knowing that a feeling of **hope** is essential during this current season. And, I hope that this resource pack has been of some help to you.

My final message is to encourage **trust**; trust ourselves, trust our bodies, trust the people close to us, trust that the key workers are doing everything they can to help our community, and trust that this pandemic will come to an end. Because it will. **This too shall pass.**

And the people stayed home.
And read books, and listened, and rested, and exercised,
and made art, and played games, and learned new ways
of being, and were still. And listened more deeply. Some
meditated, some prayed, some danced. Some met their
shadows. And the people began to think differently.
And the people healed.

And, in the absence of people living in ignorant,
dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth
began to heal.

And when the danger passed, and the people joined
together again, they grieved their losses, and made new
choices, and dreamed new images, and created new
ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been
healed.

Kitty O'Meara

54321 Grounding Exercise



Date: _____

Self-Care

DAILY JOURNAL

MONDAY





Self-Care Goals for today

- ★
.....
- ★
.....
- ★
.....

Meal for Today

- BREAKFAST
.....
- LUNCH
.....
- DINNER
.....

Morning Self-Care Routine

- 
- 
- 
- 

Night Time Self-Care Routine

- ★
- ★
- ★
- ★

Exercise

ACTIVITY	TIME	SET	REPS	DIST
.....				
.....				
.....				

Notes and Scribbles

Daily Water Intake



Rate your day



COPIING CALENDAR: KEEP CALM. STAY WISE. BE KIND

30 actions to look after ourselves and each other as we face this global crisis together. Please use & share

- 1. Make a plan to help you keep calm and stay in contact
- 2. Enjoy washing your hands. Remember all they do for you!
- 3. Write down ten things you feel grateful for in life and why
- 4. Stay hydrated, eat healthy food and boost your immune system
- 5. Get active. Even if you're stuck indoors, move & stretch
- 6. Contact a neighbour or friend and offer to help them
- 7. Share what you are feeling and be willing to ask for help
- 8. Take five minutes to sit still and breathe. Repeat regularly
- 9. Call a loved one to catch up and really listen to them
- 10. Get good sleep. No screens before bed or when waking up
- 11. Notice five things that are beautiful in the world around you
- 12. Immerse yourself in a new book, TV show or podcast
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- 15. Make some progress on a project that matters to you
- 16. Rediscover your favourite music that really lifts your spirits
- 17. Learn something new or do something creative
- 18. Find a fun way to do an extra 15 minutes of physical activity
- 19. Do three acts of kindness to help others, however small
- 20. Make time for self-care. Do something kind for yourself
- 21. Send a letter or message to someone you can't be with
- 22. Find positive stories in the news and share these with others
- 23. Have a tech-free day. Stop scrolling and turn off the news
- 24. Put your worries into perspective and try to let them go
- 25. Look for the good in others and notice their strengths
- 26. Take a small step towards an important goal
- 27. Thank three people you're grateful to and tell them why
- 28. Make a plan to meet up with others again later in the year
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Find out more about the Ten Keys to Happier Living, including books, guides, posters and more here: www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys

