**Managing your Thoughts and Feelings**

These is a challenging time for us all and we are all responding to the situation in different ways and using our own unique coping mechanisms.

During this time it is especially important that you pay attention to and take steps to mind your wellbeing. Some suggestions to help you with this can be found [here](https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/covid-19.html).

**If feeling stressed or anxious you may have some of these thoughts…**

This is not the Summer I planned It is what it is It’s not fair

This is so boring I have nothing to look forward to

I have a lot of things to be happy about Some normality will return soon

**You may be having some of the following emotions or feelings…**

Bored Unmotivated Angry Nervous Stressed

Worried Sad Excited Nothing Frustrated

**You may experience some of the following sensations in your body …**

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* Tension
* Butterflies in your tummy
* Tiredness
* Headaches
* Change in appetite
* Tearful
* Poor sleep
* Agitation

It is natural to have a range of thoughts, feelings and sensations like these. Or you may not have experience any of these and that’s ok, too. We all have our own way of reacting to situations like this.

**So what can you do if this is distressing for you?**

* Talk to your family, friends, or teachers.
* Accept your thoughts and feelings. Don’t try to push them away. Your reactions are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. You will not always feel this way.
* Think about what upsets you the most? Is it negative thoughts, distressing feelings or is it sensations in your body? Just pick the one that bothers you the most and work on that first, using the strategies listed below.

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| **Unhelpful Thoughts** |
| Unhelpful thoughts are negative thoughts which can take over our thinking and make us feel bad. By learning to manage these unhelpful thoughts, we can improve our wellbeing and make this journey through COVID-19 more positive.  Some examples of unhelpful thoughts are:   * Such a long year * That’s my summer gone * This is so unfair * Things will never get back to normal |
| **What To Do** |
| * Acknowledge your thoughts * Talk to an adult or friend * Remember that your thoughts are normal * Remind yourself that thoughts are only thoughts, they are not facts * Try to challenge unhelpful thoughts. You can do this by asking: * ‘Is that really true?’ * ‘What evidence do I have for thinking that?’ * ‘How else could I look at this?’ * ‘What would I tell my best friend if they thought this?’ * Try to replace unhelpful thoughts with realistic positive self-talk such as: * ‘I can get through this’ * ‘I can ask for help’ * ‘I have people who can support me’ * ‘I know this is a difficult time but I can try my best’ * ‘I know I would like things to be different, but things will work out’ * ‘If I am unsure of anything, I will ask someone for help.’   **Tip: Positive self-talk statements work even if you don’t believe them at the time. Fake it to make it!** |
| **Unpleasant Feelings or Emotions** |
| Unpleasant feelings or emotions can follow on from unhelpful thoughts. It is normal to feel these in challenging times These might include:   * Anger * Frustration * Disappointment * Feeling fed up |
| **What To Do** |
| * Acknowledge your feelings and remind yourself that your feelings are normal given the circumstances. * Talk to an adult or friend. * Name the feeling and find where it is in the body. Breathe into that area and imagine the area softening. * What thought goes with the feeling? Challenge the thought. Ask, is this really true? Or use a positive self-talk statement (see above). * Pick a dedicated time to explore, discuss or think about this feeling. For example, ‘I will worry about this at 5pm.’ Tell the feeling if it returns that you will pay attention to it at the dedicated time. * Develop a coping strategy such as * Thinking of and doing something that makes you feel better * Challenging the thought - Using a positive self-statement * Asking for help - Talking to family or friends * Developing a routine, see our suggested [Daily Plan or Blank Plan Template](https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/NEPS-Guides/plan-for-the-day/). |
| **Unpleasant Body Sensations** |
| These may happen because you are experiencing unhelpful thoughts and unpleasant emotions or feelings. They might include:   * Tense neck and shoulders - Headaches * Tiredness - Tummy ache * Change in appetite - Butterflies in tummy * Difficulty settling |
| **What To Do** |
| * Acknowledge the sensations and remember it is normal to have these at times of stress * Talk to an adult or friend about this * Name the body sensation and find where it is in your body. Breathe into the area and imagine the area softening * Practice calming strategies regularly such as breathing, visualisations, and mindfulness. See NEPS relaxation documents [here](https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/new-relaxation-techniques.pdf) and podcast [here](https://soundcloud.com/user-719669409/relaxation-techniques-30-03-2020). * Include exercise in your daily routine. * Have a bath or shower, these can calm the body and help you relax * Have a massage (sibling, parent can give a neck rub) or use a gym ball or roller to massage tense parts of your body * Practice positive self-talk statements * Sleep is really important so have a good bedtime routine. Things that help include avoiding technology for an hour before bedtime. Don’t exercise too near bedtime, this is better done during the daytime. Avoid eating too much before you go to bed. * Keep in touch with your friends. * If you continue to be worried you can always talk to your G.P. |