



# Minds matter



Coronavirus has had a huge impact on all our lives. Lots of us are feeling worried and uncertain at the moment – and have been for many months. These feelings are completely normal.

It can be difficult to manage these emotions, though, which is why our expert practitioners have created this toolkit. It's full of advice and activities to help you look after your own, your family's and your children's wellbeing.

## Looking after your own – and your family's – wellbeing

### Try mindfulness

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present, aware of where you are and what you're doing. Here are some suggestions to help you focus on the here and now.



Breathe in. Breathe out.  
Feel the flow of breath.



Be aware of every activity you do  
(working, speaking to someone).



Pay attention to your senses – notice  
the taste and textures of food, or the  
sights and sounds of nature.



Go outdoors – take a walk  
and look around you.



As soon as the mind wanders, bring  
your thoughts back to breathing.



Forgive yourself for every  
negative thought.



Empty the mind – take a few  
moments to be still.



Be grateful – say 'thank you'  
to people, nature and things.



Practice non-judgemental  
thinking.



Go easy on yourself – with  
time you'll see progress.

## Eat well and stay hydrated



Your appetite might change if your routine changes, or if you're less active than you usually are. Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can help your mood and energy levels.

Drink plenty of water. Drinking enough water is important for your family's mental and physical health. Changing your routine might affect when or what you drink. It could help to set an alarm or use an app to remind you.

## Connect with people

It's important to keep in touch with people – the best way to do that at the moment is online.



Make plans to video chat with friends or groups you'd normally see in person. You could also arrange phone calls or send instant messages or texts.

If you're worried you might run out of stuff to talk about, plan to watch a TV programme or read a book separately so that you can chat about it later.

## Get as much sunlight and fresh air as you can



Spending time in green spaces or bringing nature into your everyday life has lots of benefits. It can improve your mood, reduce feelings of stress or anger, and make you more relaxed.

If possible, try to go for 30-minute walk six days a week. If not, you can still get the positive effects from nature at home. You could:

- Open the windows to let in some fresh air.
- Sit by a window and look out at the trees or sky, or watch birds and other animals.
- Listen to natural sounds, like birdsong, ocean waves or rainfall, via an app or online.
- Get as much natural light as you can by spending time in your garden (if you have one) or open your front or back door and sit on the step.

## Try to keep active



Build physical activity into your daily routine. Most of us don't have equipment like treadmills at home, but there's still lots we can do. Exercising at home can be simple: doing a bit of cleaning, dancing to

music, going up and down stairs or online exercise classes.

Give yourself targets – start small and build up. You could also set yourself a challenge with a family member, friend or as part of a team.

## Self-care



As a parent, you give your children endless time, energy and love all year round. But it's also really important to look after your own wellbeing.

Self-care is more than facemasks and candles. It's taking time to do things that give you energy and resilience. Here are a few ideas.

- Do something you love. Keep it simple – put your feet up and read your favourite book, watch a film, or take a long bubble bath. Make space for activities you can enjoy on your own. This can remind you that you're not 'just' a parent.
- Cook a proper meal. Dust off the cookbook and test that recipe you've been meaning to try. Making a tasty meal from scratch can give you a real sense of achievement and you get to sample something new. Use it as time to help you unwind. You could listen to your favourite podcast or album as you go.
- Spend quality time with loved ones. Catch up with a friend or family member. You could have a virtual coffee, meet up to go on a walk together or keep it simple with a phone call.
- Celebrate your achievements. Being a parent can be so rewarding but it also comes with plenty of challenges. Write down a few of the hurdles you've managed to tackle since becoming a parent. It's important to celebrate even the smallest of wins and take pride in what you've done.

## Looking after your child's wellbeing

Every child has ups and downs – it's natural for feelings to fluctuate in this way. As a parent or carer, it's a good idea to let your child know they can talk to you when they need to. If your child is finding things difficult right now, it might help to try some mood-boosting tactics.

### Collect words of kindness



Encourage your child to collect nice things that people have said or written about them. This could be cards, emails, or feedback from teachers.

Or it could be something a friend has said. Suggest your child writes them down.

This highlights how much they're valued by others, and builds self-esteem. Keep the things they've written in a safe place so your child can find them at any time.

### Give your child's health a boost



Your child's physical health is closely linked to mental and emotional wellbeing. Try playing some sport, going for a walk together, or doing activity at home. This will help them experience the feel-good hormones released by exercise.

Eating well as a family will help, too. Look for inspiration online (try searching 'healthy' on the [BBC Good Food website](#)).

### Create a happiness jar



When something good happens, get your child to write it down on a piece of paper, fold it up and put it in a jar. It can be absolutely anything that makes them feel happy.

- Encourage them to think about happy moments from the past week.
- Get them to jot down positive things when they happen.

Noticing the good bits of life can help them to feel good about what they have.

### Take a moment to breathe

Get your child to put aside between 10 minutes and half an hour every day to relax. Suggest they use the time to do as little as possible.



They should just 'be' and reflect on their day, instead of trying to achieve anything.

Help them to create a peaceful space where they find it easy to take time out.

## Activities

### Activity 1: Celebrate the good

Take 10 minutes to recognise the good stuff in your life.

Things, people and places you like:



Write down one thing that's going well for you right now:

One thing you've worked hard to achieve:

Two people you can count on for kind words or a warm hug:

Three things you are looking forward to:

## Activity 2: Perfecting your life commentary

Positive 'self-talk' can make you feel good about yourself. It's like having an optimistic voice in your head that boosts your mood and helps to build resilience.



It takes a bit of practice – becoming aware of your 'self-talk' isn't easy. But the more you notice the running commentary in your head the quicker you can change negative talk into positive commentary.

Start by speaking your thoughts out loud for a few minutes every day. Choose a time when you're alone if you feel more comfortable. For example, you may notice thoughts like:

***'I'm always running late. Why can't I be more organised? I'm useless.'***

With practice, you may be able to change this thought to:

***'I have a lot to do in the mornings but I manage to get my children ready, dressed, give them breakfast and get them to school. That's quite an achievement.'***

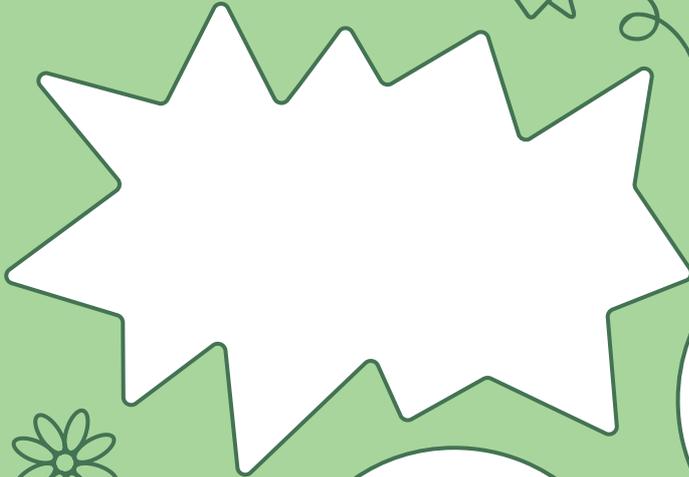
You might find it useful to set aside a bit of time each day to make a note of your negative thoughts and a more positive way of thinking. Training ourselves to have a more positive life commentary can lift our mood and build resilience.

### Activity 3: Looking to the future

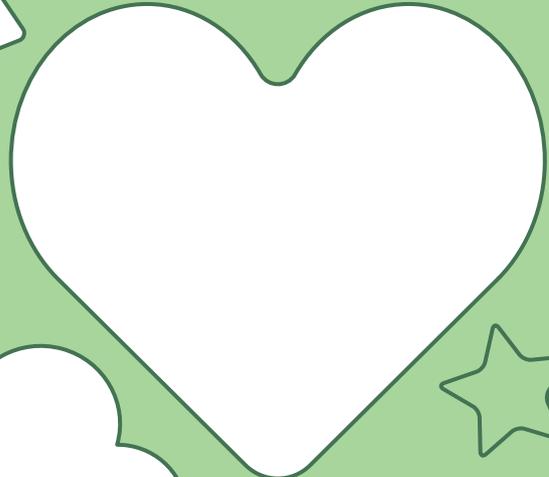
It's important to look forward. Although this is difficult at the moment, it can help to set some goals (big or small) for the week, month or year ahead. Think about new things you'd like to try, skills to develop or a bucket list for the future.

# 2021

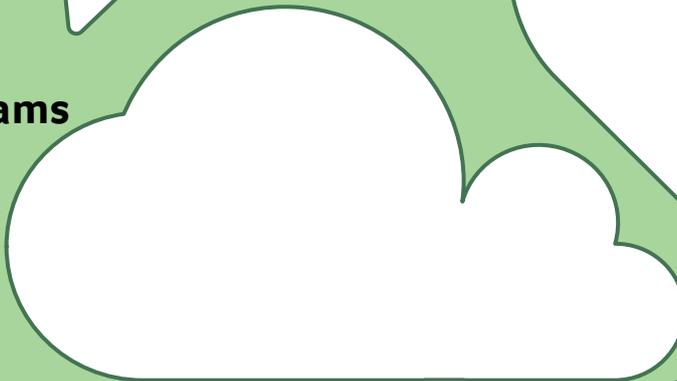
**New things to try**



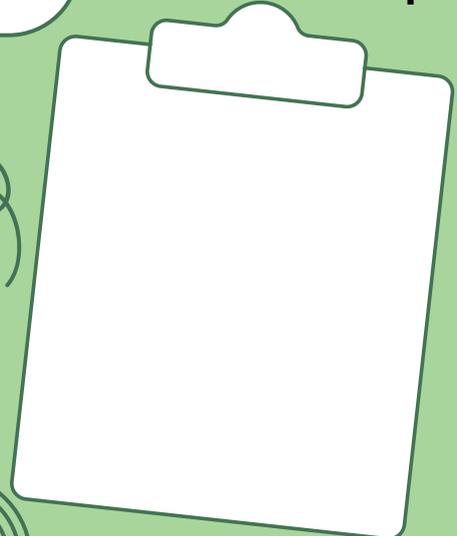
**Goals for the year**



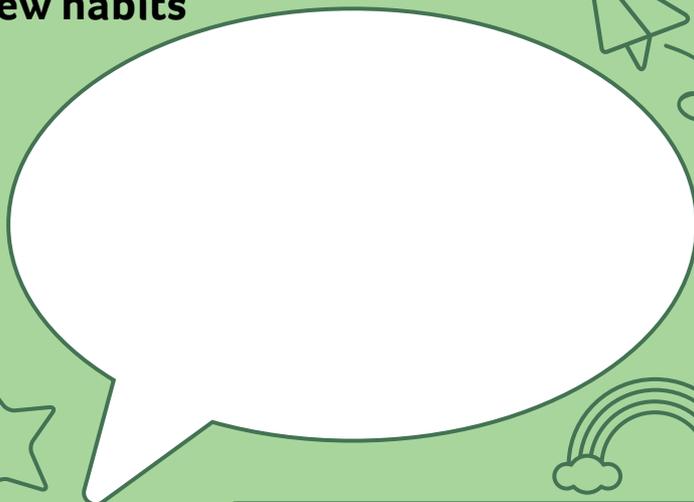
**Dreams**



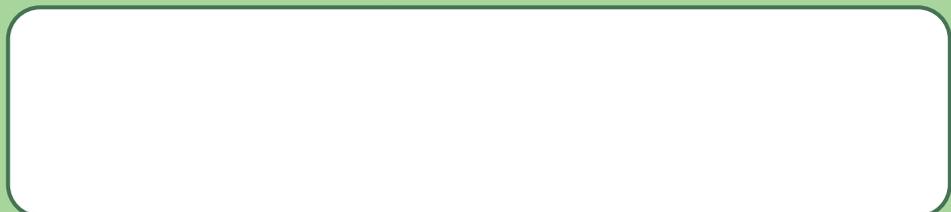
**Skills to develop**



**New habits**



**Bucket list**



## Useful resources

Our **Parent Talk** online service is home to lots of useful information and down-to-earth advice, as well as live one-to-one chat support. For more information on supporting adults, as well as children and young people struggling with their mental health, head to: [parents.actionforchildren.org.uk](https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk)

### Apps (external providers)

#### Mindful Gnats

Helps young people to develop mindfulness and relaxation skills.

#### MindShift

Designed to help teens and young adults cope with anxiety.

#### Calm

Calm encourages meditation through guided programmes and sleep stories.

#### Happify

Offers science-based activities and games to reduce stress, overcome negative thoughts and build resilience.

#### MoodGYM

An interactive programme – based on cognitive behaviour and interpersonal therapy – to help young people with low mood.

#### Headspace

Help to let go of stress, relax and get a better night's sleep using meditation and mindfulness techniques.

#### SuperBetter

A game that builds resilience: the ability to stay strong, motivated, and optimistic even in the face of difficult challenges. For young people over 13 years old.

#### Daylio

A private journal (no typing needed) that tracks mood and activities, helping to understand habits and be more productive.

#### Smiling Mind

A free modern meditation app that helps young people aged over seven to bring balance into their lives, de-stress and stay calm.

### Other organisations that can help

#### Anxiety UK

Charity that supports people who have been diagnosed with an anxiety-based condition.

Phone: **03444 775 774**  
(Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5.30pm)  
[anxietyuk.org.uk](https://anxietyuk.org.uk)

#### Bipolar UK

Charity that empowers people affected by bipolar to live well and fulfil their potential.

[bipolaruk.org.uk](https://bipolaruk.org.uk)

#### CALM

Campaign Against Living Miserably has a mental health helpline and webchat.

Phone: **0800 58 58 58**  
(daily, 5pm to midnight)  
[thecalmzone.net](https://thecalmzone.net)

#### Men's Health Forum

24/7 support for men by text, chat and email.

[menshealthforum.org.uk](https://menshealthforum.org.uk)

#### Mental Health Foundation

Information and support for anyone who has a mental health problem.

[mentalhealth.org.uk](https://mentalhealth.org.uk)

#### Mind

Charity that represents the needs of people with mental health problems.

Phone: **0300 123 3393**  
[mind.org.uk](https://mind.org.uk)

#### No Panic

Charity that offers advice, support and recovery programmes for people living with phobias, OCD and other anxiety-based condition.

Phone: **0300 7729844**  
(daily, 10am to 10pm)  
[nopanic.org.uk](https://nopanic.org.uk)

#### OCD Action

Support for people with OCD, including information on treatment and online resources.

Phone: **0845 390 6232**  
(Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 8pm)  
[ocdaction.org.uk](https://ocdaction.org.uk)

#### OCD UK

A charity run by people with OCD, for people with OCD. Includes facts, news and treatments.

Phone: **0333 212 7890**  
[ocduk.org](https://ocduk.org)

#### PAPYRUS

The young suicide prevention society, offering confidential support and information.

Phone: HOPElineUK **0800 068 4141**  
(9am to midnight, every day of the year)  
[papyrus-uk.org](https://papyrus-uk.org)

#### Rethink Mental Illness

Support and advice for people living with mental illness.

[rethink.org](https://rethink.org)

#### Samaritans

Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: **116 123** (free 24-hour helpline)  
[samaritans.org.uk](https://samaritans.org.uk)

#### SANE

Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers.

Textcare: comfort and care via text message, sent when the person needs it most: [sane.org.uk/textcare](https://sane.org.uk/textcare)

Peer support forum:  
[sane.org.uk/supportforum](https://sane.org.uk/supportforum)  
[sane.org.uk/support](https://sane.org.uk/support)

#### YoungMinds

Information about child and adolescent mental health. Services for parents and professionals.

Phone: **0808 802 5544** (parent helpline, Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm)  
[youngminds.org.uk](https://youngminds.org.uk)

For more ideas, support or materials,  
please contact:  
[RoyalMail@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:RoyalMail@actionforchildren.org.uk)

[www.actionforchildren.org.uk](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

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