



An NJJ\$ guide to looking
after your mental wellbeing

What is mindfulness?

A strategy to support our mental well-being.

A way of connecting with your emotions, how you are feeling, and actually understanding your emotions and feelings.

Practising it is a way of learning to cope with emotions, particularly negative feelings like stress, anxiety, anger, panic, worry, failure etc.

Mindfulness helps us to understand our emotions and feelings, and greatly reduces the risk of mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

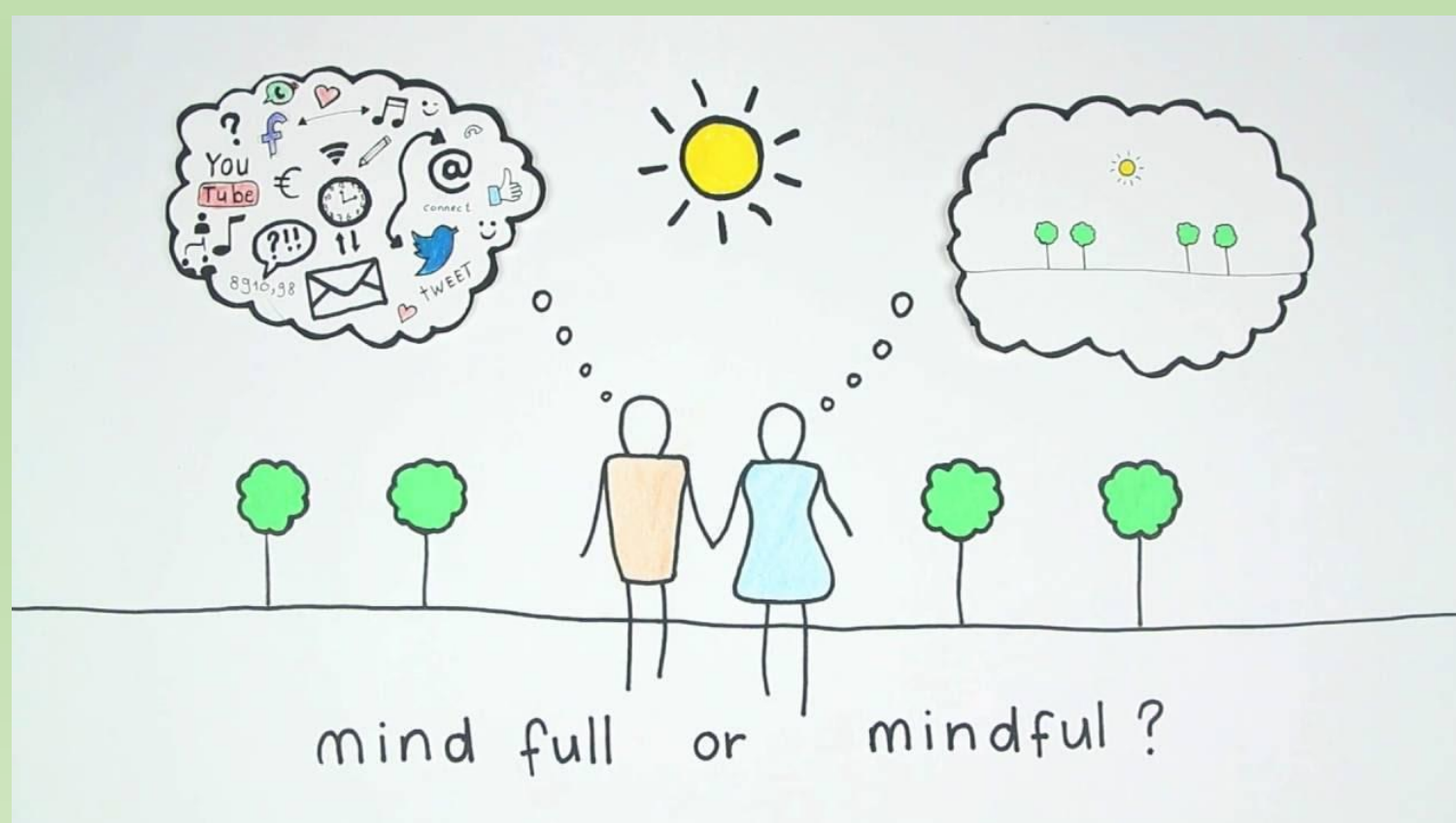


Why is mindfulness important?

Modern life is busier than ever before, for both adults and children. We all often feel that we don't stop from the moment of waking up to going to bed. Rushing around all the time, with the added distractions of social media and mobile phones, means we can easily become stressed or anxious.

The coronavirus outbreak means life has changed for us all. In some ways, we may be far less busy and stressed. But, even if **physically** we are living a slower life, **mentally** we might not have slowed down as much as we think. Covid-19 may cause us to feel anxious, stressed, worried, sad, bored, lonely or frustrated.

To help children cope well with their current and future lives, we can teach them tools and skills to do so. Mindfulness teaches children the importance of understanding their emotions, not hiding from them. It teaches techniques to manage negative emotions, like stress or anxiety, and quick ways to overcome these feelings. Most importantly, practising mindfulness regularly reduces the amount that these emotions affect us in the first place.



Tips for parents/carers

The following information is taken directly from NHS Every Mind Matters current advice.



1. Listen to what your child says and how they're feeling

Children and young people may respond to stress in different ways. They may be more emotional (upset, anxious or angry) or behave differently (clingy, withdrawn or wet the bed). They may also have physical symptoms, like stomach ache, and problems sleeping.

Children and young people can feel less anxious if they are able to express themselves in a safe and supportive environment.

Stay calm – kids often take their emotional cues from the adults in their lives, so how you respond is important.

Listen to and acknowledge their concerns, speak kindly to them and answer any questions they have honestly. Give them extra love and attention if they need it.

2. Be clear about what's happening

Children and young people want to feel that those who care for them can keep them safe.

Explain what will help to keep them and those they love safe, such as washing their hands regularly. Do this by talking openly and giving honest answers to questions they have.

Use reliable sources of information, like the [coronavirus advice on GOV.UK](#) and [NHS coronavirus advice](#) – and explain things in words they understand.

If you cannot answer all their questions or stop them from worrying, focus on listening to their feelings. This will help them feel supported.



3. Limit news and conversation about coronavirus

Children and young people, like adults, can become more worried by too much news on the coronavirus outbreak in the media and online.

But blocking all news rarely helps, as children are likely to find things out from their friends or online. Turning off the TV or closing websites when children come into the room may increase their interest, and their imagination, too much.

Cut down on the amount of coronavirus news and talk you and your family have. Try to stick to getting an update twice a day – it's enough to keep you informed but not overwhelmed.

You should talk to them about what's going on and ask them what they have heard.



4. Keep close and regular contact

Try to keep your children close to you or those who care for them, as they will need that closer contact now. If you are not living with your children or must go away, for work or to hospital, keep regular contact by phone or video calls.

If the children are part of a family that is separated, it's important for them to be supported in their contact with parents and other family members – even when the adults do not always get on.

Help them understand any arrangements that have been or are being made for them. Use simple terms they understand so it's clear why these things are happening.



5. Create new routines



With everything happening at the moment, it's likely your normal routine has been disrupted. For most children and young people, certain routines like going to school have stopped, or changed significantly. Routines make children and young people feel safer, so think about how to develop a routine that is interesting and fun.

Make a plan for the day or week that includes time for learning, playing and relaxing.

If your child or young person continues to be learning from home, ask teachers what you can do to support them. Explore online educational resources and activities like [BBC Bitesize](#). You could arrange a virtual play date with friends or visit an online museum or gallery.

6. Get active

Children and young people should be active for 60 minutes a day, which may be more difficult when we are all indoors more. It's important to try to build activity into kids' daily routine.

Plan time outside, making sure to follow the [government advice on social distancing](#). There are also lots of [indoor games and activities for kids](#) to play on the Change4Life website.



7. Eat healthily and avoid too many treats

We know it can be tempting to give sweets or chocolate to cheer your children up. But too many treats are not good for their health, especially if they're not as active as they normally are.

Change4Life has loads of healthier snack ideas – and making them together is also a great way to keep the kids busy.



8. Children and young people need good sleep

Sleep is so important for mental and physical health for everyone.

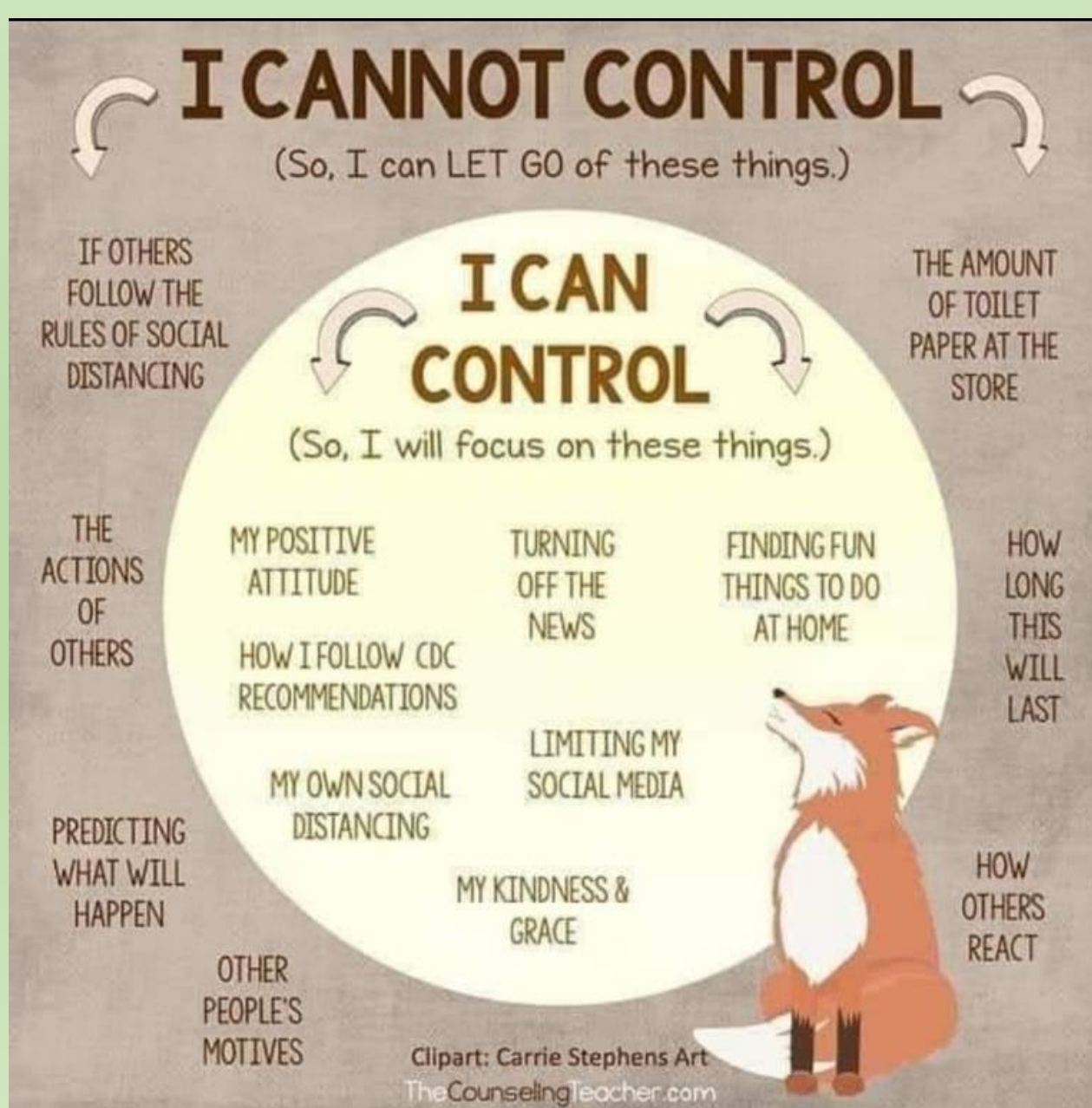
Children and young people need good-quality sleep, so it's important to keep to existing bedtime routines.



9. Look after your own mental health and get support

Remember to take care of your own mental health and wellbeing! You will give the best support to those you love if you can deal with things calmly and confidently.

You can be more supportive if you are better prepared to deal with any issues. There are things you can do, and support is available on looking after your mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak.



Things you can do at home

- Breathing exercises
 - in for 5, out for 7
 - dragon or snake breathing
 - hand breathing
- 5,4,3,2,1 – sit still and think of 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste.
- Look at some favourite photos or videos to remind yourself of happy times
- Sit outside in the sun, watch the clouds/trees, breathe in the fresh air
- Yoga – search Cosmic Yoga on Youtube
- Go for a walk, job or bike/scooter ride. Fresh air and exercise releases endorphins - hormones make us feel happy
- Phone or video call a friend to chat
- Mindful colouring
- Sing along to some favourite music
- Baking or cooking
- Listen to peaceful music – Youtube has endless options if you search ‘calm music’ or similar
- Do some weeding, digging or work in the garden
- Do a cross word, word search or Sudoku
- Read
- Meditate – search Peace Out on Youtube
- Explore nature – do a bug hunt, gather leaves and make a picture or make mud pies
- Write a diary entry
- Write a letter to a friend
- Make a gratitude list
- Do some painting or drawing – create a picture that represents your feelings
- Make a list of things that make you happy
- Dance – freestyle to the radio or search Just Dance on Youtube

Useful websites and resources

NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/>

Mind: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/>

NSPCC: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/>

These websites have specific current advice linked to Covid-19:

Every Mind Matters: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

Young Minds: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

These websites are useful to find mindfulness games and activities:

Youtube: Cosmic Kids, Peace Out, Just Dance. Search things like 'meditation for children' or 'relaxation for kids' or 'calm music.'

Pinterest: Download the app and make a free account. There are endless ideas for activities! Search things like 'mindfulness art for kids' or 'mindfulness activity for children' or 'mindfulness nature games for kids.'

<https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities/>

<https://www.waterford.org/resources/mindfulness-activities-for-kids/>

<https://www.firstdiscoverers.co.uk/mindfulness-activities-kids/>