

# **Some thoughts and ideas about our and others mental health in these times of 'Social Distancing'**

**Created by Anita Hayne Adult Mental Health First Aider and Lay Pastoral Assistants**

We all have mental health just as we all have physical health and at this time of Covid-19 both may well be challenged. So, I have put together a few thoughts and tips to help us through this time.

Mental health is often shown as a continuum and it is good to recognise it may be different on different days. In addition, we are all different and knowing that some people are more able to deal with difficulties easier than others is also important.

So here are a few things to consider in these times and some resources that you may find helpful:

## **Feeling anxious and focusing on what we can control**

We are all only human and despite knowing as Christians that we are surrounded by God's love and can leave our worries with him, it is natural to feel worried; about our loved ones, our own health or what's going to happen. So, if we resist focusing on all those things we don't know and focus on the things that we can do now, however small, it will help. Try not to think too far out focus on today or part of the day.

**Matthew 6:34 is "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."**

## **Managing our anxiety**

We may feel a need to keep listening to the news and to know what is going on, make sure that isn't feeding your anxiety. Try switching off alerts on your phone or setting specific times in a day when you will listen to the news and aim to stick to those.

Identify what it is you are most worried about and then consider what you can do about that, if it is in your control, then take small steps to do something it can help to chunk things down into smaller do-able steps, or to talk things through with someone.

## **Managing days in isolation**

Our physical health does have an impact on our mental health so do set some time aside for some physical activity there are lots of resources available and I have indicated some below. But most of all if you can get outside a sit in the garden does wonders for our mental health, being close to nature has been identified as having one of the most positive effects on us. This could even be opening the window and listening to the birds.

Many Christians have lived in isolation over the years; Jesus spent time in the wilderness, hermits, nuns or monks still do. One of the most important things they speak of is having a structure in your day. Now that maybe one of the things that we feel has been taken away from us this could be for example our Monday club or Thursday meet up with friends. So do consider what structure you can put back into your day and week, even when you can't go out. A regular time to get up or go to bed is a great start.

### **Eating well and avoiding things that are not good for us.**

Having a healthy diet has an absolute impact on how we feel, our brains need healthy nutrients just like the rest of our body and so avoiding reaching for the biscuits, chocolate or alcohol as a way to pick us up is also important. After all, alcohol has an impact on sleep, which we need to remain healthy too.

Enjoying ourselves is important too, so allow time for a hobby, start a new hobby, or challenge yourself it is a great way to feel good and when we do that we get a natural hormone kick in our body which is good for us.

There are some ideas in the reference section at the bottom of the page and if you know more then please do share it would be great to create an ongoing resource.

**"A heart at peace gives life to the body." Proverbs 14:30**

### **Social Connection**

This is extremely important and one of the reasons I personally don't like the phrase 'Social Distancing' in fact we are only 'physically distancing' and there is no need to stop being social. As humans one of the biggest impacts on our mental health is that lack of social interaction and loneliness. Keep in touch with family and friends, look for some different ways to socialise, online communities, apps, regular telephone calls or writing a letter. Do ask if you need help. But most importantly talk to others and it is OK to say you aren't feeling OK. On the other hand, do listen and sincerely ask how someone else is.

Do something when others are for a sense the feeling of community across The Polden Wheel many of us are lighting a candle in our front window each night at 7pm and if not every night specifically on Sunday evening, why not join us

**Matthew 18:20 " For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."**

Most of all stay well, stay connected and reach out if you need help

### **Resources and tips**

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

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

You may find this article useful 'Finding the Inner Cathedral of Peace'

[https://www.mindandsoulfoundation.org/Articles/570036/Mind\\_and\\_Soul/Articles/Finding\\_the\\_inner.aspx](https://www.mindandsoulfoundation.org/Articles/570036/Mind_and_Soul/Articles/Finding_the_inner.aspx)

Exercise

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-older-adults/>

Joe Wicks exercises for the elderly <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0873kvz>

The library may be closed but you can access online resources including digital magazines at <https://www.librarieswest.org.uk/>

Audible books have free access to some of the classics

<https://stories.audible.com/discovery>

Church house publishing are delivering for free during this period

<https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/> and have made their pray app free too

<https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/apps/time-to-pray>

Sunday Services are being broadcast on the BBC and local radio and you will also find many online including Wells Cathedral <https://www.wellscathedral.org.uk/>

Learn something for free there are lots of resources out there and more and more places are making their resources available for free here is an example

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/learn-about-weather>

Ever wanted to go to the palace of Versailles , here is the virtual tour

<https://www.youvisit.com/tour/versailles?pl=wa>

Or a virtual tour of a museum or gallery

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2020/mar/23/10-of-the-worlds-best-virtual-museum-and-art-gallery-tours>

Ever tried a podcast – there are loads here <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds>