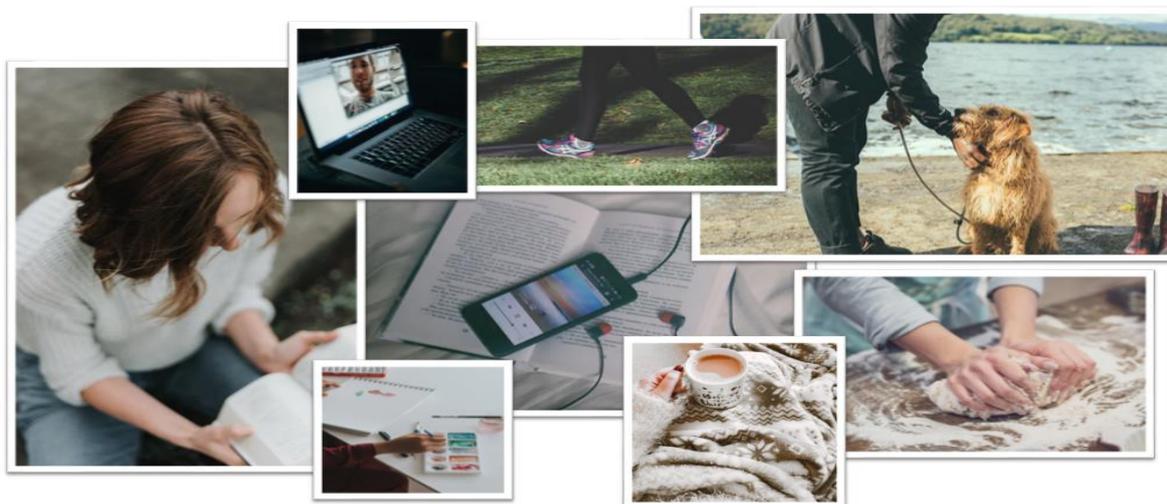


Let's Get Regulated!

Information for Teenagers



Developed by the NCSE Occupational Therapy Team

The corona-virus pandemic has been stressful for many young people. If you're feeling a little overwhelmed and struggling to adjust to the huge changes in your daily routine, here are some ideas and resources that may help you.

This resource pack aims to share some information and activities to support you to self-regulate during this challenging time by giving ideas on how:

- To focus on the tasks you need to do and want to do.
- To look after your mind and your body.
- To manage your emotions.
- To regulate your energy levels.
- To relax.

This resource pack will explore ways we can support ourselves to stay regulated under three different categories.

1. Self-Care: Taking Care of You
2. Taking Time to Chill
3. Doing Something You Enjoy

Self-Care: Taking Care of You

NUTRITION: A diet that's good for your physical health is also good for keeping your mind healthy. Just like the rest of your body, your brain needs a mix of nutrients to stay healthy and function well. Try to limit foods high in sugar and additives and stay hydrated. For healthy eating tips and information check out:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/health/healthy-eating-guidelines/>



MOVE YOUR BODY: Regular exercise helps you to concentrate, to sleep, and to feel better. Try to incorporate 60 minutes of physical activity into your day. Any activity that raises your heart rate, makes you breathe faster, and makes you feel warmer counts towards your physical activity. There are lots of physical activities you can do in your home or garden without any equipment. There are videos on YouTube which can show you how to get started with these exercises. Click on this link for some great exercise routines and ideas.

- The Body Coach
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYIRfn6rYQ>
- Free Home workouts:
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/gym-free-workouts/>
- Down Dog App - (free YOGA & HIIT workouts)
- Healthy Ireland - Be Well: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/O6de8b-be-well/?referrer=/healthy-ireland/physical-activity/what-is-physical-activity/>

SLEEP is 'food' for the brain. It is recommended that adolescents get a minimum of 8-9 hours' sleep. Implementing a good sleep routine is important to help achieve this. There are lots of simple and easy things you can do to improve the length and quality of your sleep (see links below for more info).

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/sleep-tips-for-teenagers/>
- <https://sleepcouncil.org.uk/advice-support/sleep-advice/>

Taking Time to Chill

Engaging in relaxation activities is an important part of our self-care. There are no right or wrong ways to relax. Find something that helps you to relax and make an effort to do it each day (even for ten minutes) to help you stay calm and to deal with daily challenges. The more relaxing moments you can schedule into your day the calmer you will feel. Over time, we all develop our own strategies for winding down and making ourselves less stressed. Sometimes it might be:

- Relaxation breathing techniques
- Mindful movements, Yoga, Stretching
- Doodling or colouring
- Reading a book or comic
- Listening to relaxing music
- Getting outdoors - while keeping the correct distance from others
- Taking a break from social media
- Being mindful, engaging in meditation



Breathing techniques: Focusing on your breathing can help to bring you to the present moment.

- Make yourself as comfortable as you can.
- If you're lying down, place your arms a little bit away from your sides, with the palms up. Let your legs be straight, or bend your knees so your feet are flat on the floor. If you're sitting, place your arms on the chair arms and both feet flat on the ground.
- Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it.
- Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count from 1 to 5 (you may not be able to reach 5 at first.)
- Then, without pausing or holding your breath, let it flow out gently, counting from 1 to 5 again, if you find this helpful. Keep doing this for 3 to 5 minutes.

<https://spunout.ie/health/article/using-breathing-exercises-to-help-anxiety>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/ways-relieve-stress/>

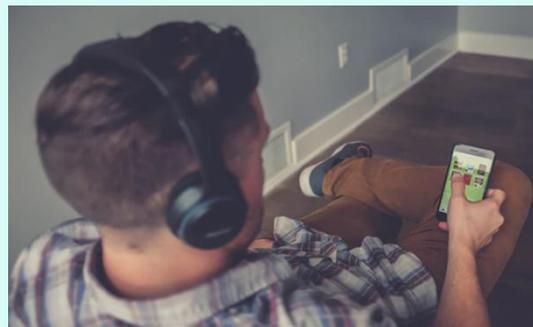
Mindfulness is about becoming more aware of what's going on in the present moment and being fully engaged in what we are doing right here, right now. It aims to help you manage your thoughts and feelings. Mindfulness like any other skills, is something we can work on and get better at. See links and suggested apps below to learn more about mindfulness and ways to incorporate strategies into your day.

Take a break from social media. We are constantly bombarded by imagery and stories of other people's lives on our phones -usually only the best bits! In the current situation it can be quite overwhelming to log in online due to the constant stream of COVID-19 content. Try to take time off from your social media throughout the day. There are apps which monitor your social media usage and can help you to track the amount of time you spend each day online. For example: **Mute**, **Zen Screen**, **Moment**, and **Space**. When trying to focus on your school work and studies, there are also apps you can use which prevent you from opening unimportant websites and block distractions, for example **Freedom** and **Stay Focused** (a free Chrome extension).

Create a Quiet Corner: this is a safe, calming space for you to access throughout the day when you are feeling overwhelmed, distressed or when you just need some time to chill and relax! There is no set instructions of how to make a quiet corner. You can be creative and make it fit whatever space you have available! Your quiet space may include a comfy place to sit (beanbag, cosy armchair, cushions on the floor). Keep items you enjoy and that help you to unwind in this space- soft blanket, headphones, mindful colouring book, sketch pad, stress ball, scented items, yoga mat etc.

Links/Apps for Relaxation, Breathing, Meditation & Mindfulness Exercises

- www.headspace.com
- <https://spunout.ie/health>
- Stop Breath Think (App)
- Headspace (App)
- Mindful Gnat (App)
- Insight Timer (App)
- Calm (App)
- Yoga with Adrienne (YouTube)



Doing Something You Enjoy

Taking time for the things you enjoy is an important way to look after yourself. Think about activities that have meaning for you or give you great satisfaction to do. It can be anything from kicking a football around, baking, walking your dog, singing, to styling your hair. This may be a time to reconnect with a hobby or activity you loved in the past and have not done for a long time! Build the activities you enjoy into your week to help keep your mind and body active. It is important for us all to balance work with fun (Doble & Santha, 2008).



As you may have more free time now, it's may be a good opportunity to **try out something new**. Think about what you are good at, or things that you have always wanted to try. There are endless tutorials and videos online to help you kick-start your new interest.

Connect with Others: In the current climate, we must maintain social distance to help protect ourselves and others from COVID-19. This means we are not be able to connect with our friends and extended family members face to face in the way we usually would. It is important that we stay socially engaged and connected with the people who are important to us. Hence we need to be creative about how we can connect. Using FaceTime or apps such as Skype or Google Hangouts can enable you to video call with multiple friends at the same time. It may be helpful to use video calls to do a study or revision session with a friend.

Routine

The COVID-19 outbreak has caused a great deal of uncertainty in our usual daily lives. Your daily routine of going to school is now different and this might feel worrying. Having structure and routine in your day brings predictability and can help you feel calm, safe and secure. It can be beneficial to set out a schedule for your day, incorporating healthy habits. This helps you to take control of your day and plan what you need to do and how much time you have to do it. It helps you to engage in a balance of self-care, 'work' and leisure activities and gives you a sense of satisfaction at the end of the day when you see what you have achieved. (Doble & Santha, 2008; Law et al., 1996). See sample schedule.

Monday

8.00 -9.00: Get up, washed/dressed and eat breakfast
9.00 - 10.30: School Work
10.30 -11.00: Physical Activity & Snack
11.00-13.00: School Work
13.00-14.00: Lunch & take dog for walk
14.00-15.30: School work
15.30- 16.30: Down Time
16.30: Help Mum with Dinner
19.00: Skype with friend
22.00: Bedtime



It's important to be aware of our own methods of staying regulated.

Have a go at writing down the things that you will build into your day to look after your body and mind and to help you to relax.

References

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- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-health-benefits/>