Planning Your Time-

Finding a Routine That Works for You!

Introduction

Looking after our mental health during lockdown can be tough, with opportunities to see family and friends limited, negative news stories filling our feeds and losing access to our normal routines and hobbies, many of the ways we might usually cope with stress might not be available to us.

This short guide aims to give you some ideas to help you create your own personalised lockdown routine, which could help you manage your stress during this difficult time.

Why can a routine help?

Routines are an important part of our everyday lives not only do they help us get things done by bringing structure to our time, they also support our mental health by bringing variety to our lives.

Lockdown has disrupted these normal routines, which can mean our usual eating, sleeping, socialising and exercise patterns look very different- all of which can have a negative impact on our mental health. For example, if we stay up late scrolling through the news or social media we might wake up the next day feeling more tired and anxious than usual.

What can help?

Some activities can help us feel a little more 'normal' and help us during these uncertain times:

Set Yourself a Wake-up and Bedtime

Our bodies operate on a 24-hour clock, so setting a regular time to get up and go to bed can help our body recognise when it is time to sleep.

Having a bedtime routine such as dimming lights, having a bath, avoiding screens and reading a book can also help us relax and sleep soundly.

Get Showered And Dressed

This can help us feel a little more normal compared to wearing our pyjamas all day. Putting on clothes you love can make you feel good about yourself and make you feel ready to take on the day!

Eating Well

When we are stressed we sometimes crave snacks and sugary foods to give us an energy boost, but these sugar spikes can actually lead to crashes in energy.

Eating regular meals and planning snacks which release energy slowly, such as complex carbohydrates, can help us regulate our energy through the day.

Making Time for Self Care

Setting aside dedicated time in your day to specifically focus on promoting your wellbeing can help create good habits and support your mental health.

This could be doing a hobby you enjoy, taking a bath, or even switching off your phone for an hour. If you're not sure of what might help you, you could take some inspiration from the five ways to wellbeing explored below.

Five Ways to Wellbeing

Connect

It is no surprise that studies suggest that our relationships with others are a critical part of our mental health. Connecting can be difficult during lockdown, but ensuring we make time for video chats and calls with friends and family will help us to feel more positive.

Be Active

Strong evidence shows that just 30 minutes of exercise a day can reduce stress.
Stress is our bodies' 'fight or flight' response, so exercise that increases our heart rate can actually help reduce the stress hormones in our body, naturally.

Be Mindful

Mindfulness may be seen as 'airy-fairy', but there's a lot of evidence to suggest it is a useful tool to help us connect with the present rather than worrying about the past/future. It's not all meditation, you can practice mindfulness through yoga or even going for walk.

Learn

Research tells us that learning new skills or exploring new topics can help improve our wellbeing. As well as satisfying our brains' love of novelty, mastering new skills can give us a sense of purpose and boost our self-esteem.
You could try cooking something new, learning a new craft on YouTube or even changing your environment through a DIY project.

Give

Performing an act of kindness once a week over 6 weeks has been shown to help increase our wellbeing.
Things like volunteering and contributing to your community are fantastic ways to give back, but smaller acts of kindness can also support those around you, such as making time for a friend in need, helping around the house or saying thank you to those who've helped you.

Planning Your Week

Use this table to help you decide what's important to you this week- remember to include what you need to do and other activities that you enjoy!

Work What do I need to do? Any upcoming deadlines? E.g. College work/prep.	
Fun Which of my favourite activities can I enjoy this week?	
Connect Who can I connect with this week?	
Be Active How can I get my body moving this week?	
Relax What can I do to relax and unwind?	
Learn Can I learn or try anything new or different this week?	
Give How can I help those around me this week?	

Use this calendar template to help schedule these activities into your week!

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
AM							
PM							