

Encouraging positive mental wellbeing while we isolate.

Dear Parent/Carer

I hope this letter finds you and your family safe and well.

We are currently experiencing unprecedented times and the associated challenges can put extra pressure on our mental wellbeing. The tips and guidance below are aimed at giving you advice on how best to maintain good mental health for children during these times and also to give you a few ideas to combat the boredom which may creep in.

NUAST understands that during these times everyone's situation will be different and families will face a range of challenges. The tips and guidance below are just suggestions. Families will adopt none, some or many of these as appropriate. Also include is a table of useful external agency contacts providing a range of guidance or advice.

Your child will receive information from their head of year regarding mental health, stress and anxiety. I encourage you to discuss this with your child. Important NUAST staff contacts are outlined within their document.

I hope you find this information useful and of benefit. Please do not hesitate to contact your child's head of year or pastoral support officer if you would like to discuss any concerns further.

Year	Head of Year	Email
7	Mr Cox	scox@nuast.org
8	Mr Wood	dwood@nuast.org
10	Mr Hallam	jhallam@nuast.org
11	Ms King/Mr Brookes	alking@nuast.org/mbrookes@nuast.org
Y7&8 Pastoral Support Officer	Mrs Akhtar	pakhtar@nuast.org
Y10&11 Pastoral Support Officer	Mrs Brenham	pbrenham@nuast.org
Safeguarding Lead	Ms Fountain	sfountain@nuast.org

Kind regards

Mr Robert Tapp
Assistant Principal – Pastoral
NUAST
rtapp@nuast.org

Plan your day

Children will benefit from having structure while they are not attending school. Creating a timetable together for them to follow will guide them with regards to completing any school work but will also make it easier to ensure that you are able to balance this with downtime and relaxation. Try and maintain a normal routine in terms of going to bed at a reasonable hour and getting up in good time.

Social media

Although we discourage young people spending too much time on their social media, online gaming and phones, during this testing time it is important that children feel connected to their peers. Allowing them access to interact with others can benefit their mental wellbeing, however please be vigilant with regards to who they are contacting and what is being said.

Get some fresh air.

If you're lucky enough to have a garden, take advantage of this while we are confined to our houses. Vitamin D found in the sun's natural rays, is known to have positive benefits to our mental health.

Activities to help fill the day and free the mind:

Mindfulness Colouring.

Some young people may see colouring as something they did when they were much younger but there are some great resources out there providing free printable colouring sheets aimed at older young people and adults. : https://www.betweenessions.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/mindfulness-coloring-book-4_25-16.pdf

Exercise

It is important that we stay as active as possible in these times. When you **exercise**, your body **releases** chemicals called endorphins. These endorphins trigger a positive feeling in the body and can aid positive wellbeing. One example of how to get children to stay active while confined to their home is the Joe Wicks PE sessions that are free to access on YouTube at 9am every day.

Cooking

Take the opportunity to introduce some life skills to your children. Cooking can be a great way to do this and something that you can do together. BBC good food has a section dedicated to recipes suitable to attempt with children <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/kids-cooking>

Board Games

Search through your cupboards and bring out some of those board games that only normally come out at Christmas. If you don't have any, you can also find some free printable games on the internet; <http://www.supercoloring.com/paper-crafts/printable-board-games>

Scouts 'the great indoors'

The Scouts association have put together some inspired indoor activity ideas which will keep your kids learning new skills and having fun. <https://www.scouts.org.uk/the-great-indoors/>

Reading books

All young people should be encouraged to read independently and this does not have to be through the use of a physical book, there are many books available to download onto phones and tablets and other electronic devices. Audio books are also another option <https://www.audible.co.uk/>

Watching documentaries

If you want to encourage the positive use of screen time and at the same time want to encourage learning, BBC iPlayer has some great documentaries, the Blue planet is an example of a very popular one.

Useful resources/agencies/websites containing information on mental health:

If you do find at any point that either yourself or your children are experiencing elements of poor mental health, the list below provides with a range of resources and services that you may find useful.

Organisation name	Website	Support offered
Young Minds	www.youngminds.org.uk	General guidance and information regarding mental health Specific parent help line Young person's crisis messenger service
Harmless	www.harmless.org.uk	Offer online support for young people and families experiencing self-harm concerns.
Kooth	www.kooth.com	Online counselling and emotional well-being platform accessible through mobile, tablet and desktop.
Beat	www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk	Website offering support for young people and their families experiencing an eating disorder.
Childline	www.childline.org.uk	Charity run organisation supporting children's wellbeing
Time to Change	www.time-to-change.org.uk	Anti-stigma campaign lead by the charity 'Minds'
Anna Freud Centre	www.annafreud.org	Children's mental health charity
Samaritans	www.samaritans.org	24hour support online/phone