

# Supporting your child during the COVID lockdown and upon their return to school

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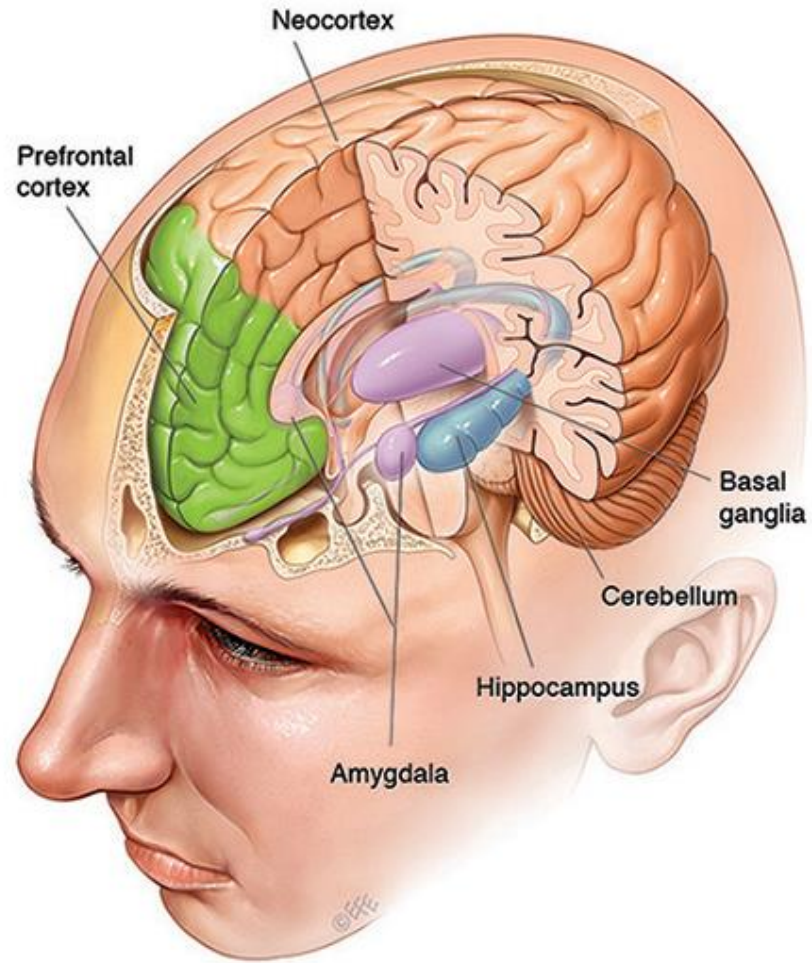
# Aims for this session

We will discuss...

- ▶ Behavior that we might expect to see during this time.
- ▶ Ways we can support young people to be mentally healthy.
- ▶ How to support our young people during this time of uncertainty and managing when they return to school.
- ▶ Supportive services and resources including apps and website that can be used to further support young people.

# Behavior that we might expect to see during this time

Over the last year, we have all experienced lots of changes due to the Covid-19 pandemic and now in our 3<sup>rd</sup> national lockdown it is understandable that we might be feeling anxious or low in mood. These are a normal reaction to such big changes, and to the uncertainty around what will happen in the next few months.



We all get  
anxious this  
is normal  
however...

Anxiety can get in the way of  
what we think are normal day  
to day actions.

# Anxiety

**A physical reaction**

**Survival mechanism**

**Fight or flight  
emergency state**

**Less able to think clearly,  
learn or remember**



# Signs of Anxiety

## Emotions

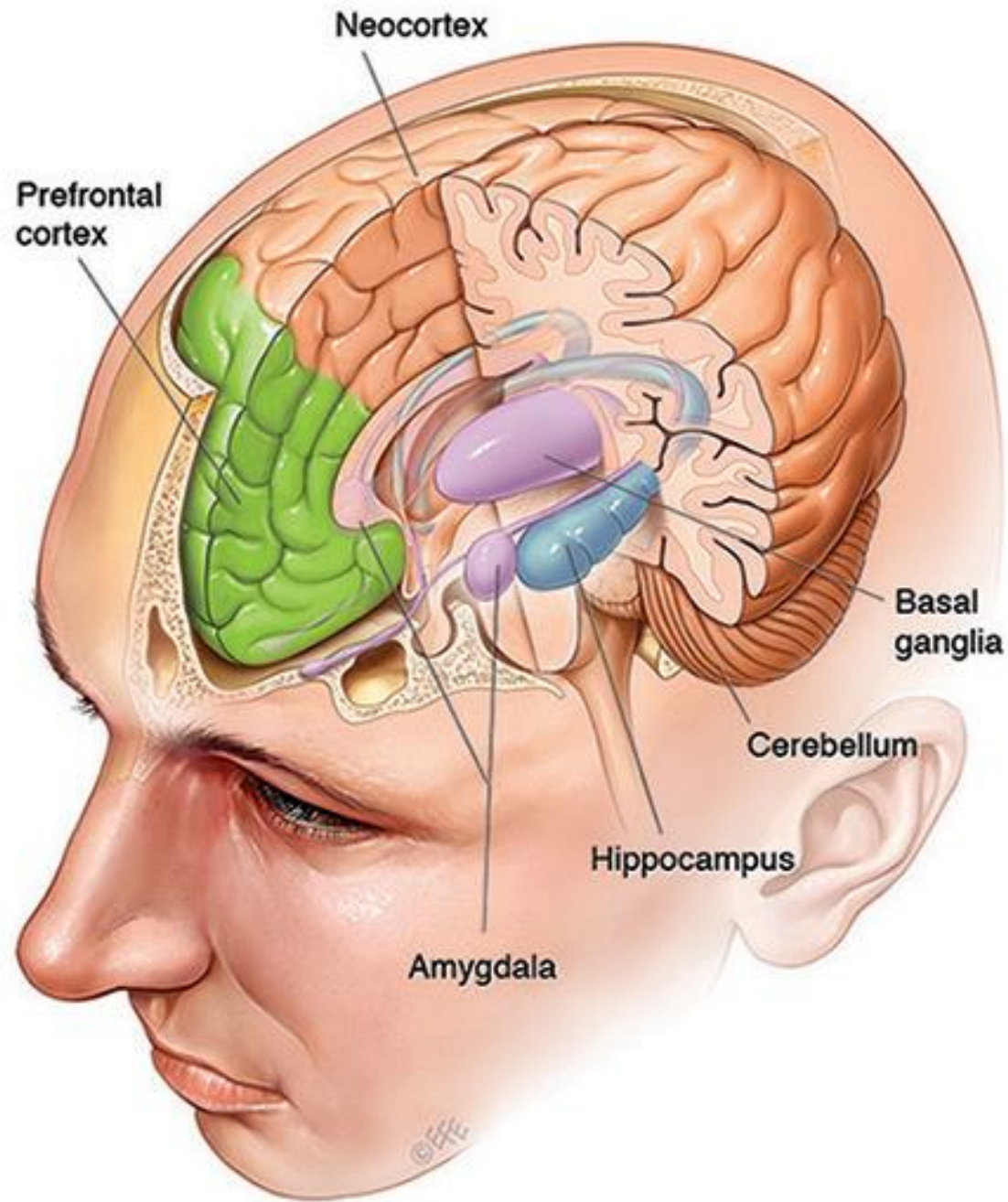
Being irritable, angry or sad.  
Feeling on edge or wanting to escape  
Feeling out of control  
Pessimism/thinking the worst  
Self-critical/over-exaggerating negatives  
Difficulties coping with change  
Avoidance  
Sleep difficulties  
Clinginess or crying

## Physical signs

Headaches  
Fatigue  
Stomach aches  
Loss of appetite  
Difficulty breathing  
Needing the toilet often  
Sweating  
Dry mouth

## Behaviour and thoughts

Struggling to get to sleep or stay asleep.  
Being oppositional or withdrawn  
Being forgetful, struggling to concentrate or confused.  
Thinking people are looking at you.



# The Owl: our pre-frontal cortex

**Analyse**

**Make  
decisions**

**Process  
information**

**Find  
solutions**



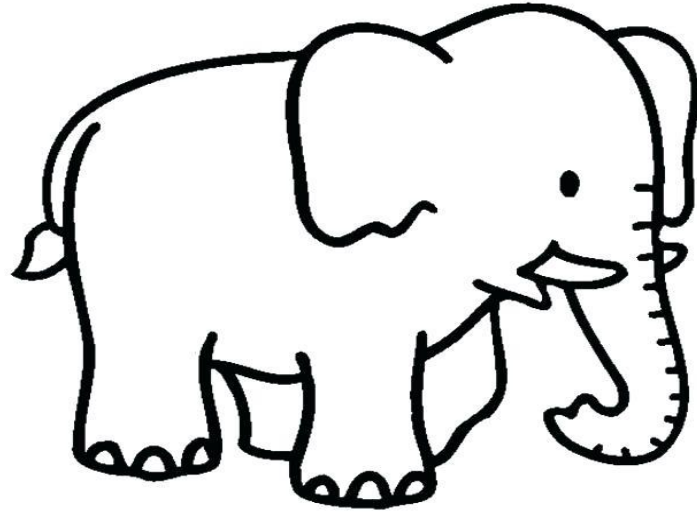
**Plan  
ahead**

**Weigh up pros &  
cons**

**Problem Solve**

*Helps us to respond rather  
than react*

# The Elephant: our hippocampus



**Creates, stores &  
processes our  
memories  
& important facts**

**Remembers how  
things & people  
made us feel**

*The emotional memory brain, as an elephant  
never forgets!*

# The Meerkat: our Amygdala

**Internal alarm system**

**On the look out  
for danger**



**blocks information  
from the Owl**

**Reacts automatically**

**On high alert**

***If it thinks or feels under threat - triggers Fight Flight Freeze***

# Ways we can support anxiety

## Avoid

Avoid asking 'why'?

Instead look to acknowledge and validate their feelings where you can.

## Ask

Ask 'what can we do to distract you?' You can also give them choices to help them feel in control more.

## Example

I understand why you might be feeling worried. I would feel worried too if I thought that was going to happen. When I feel like that I try to...

# Practical anxiety support

- ▶ Finger breathing - Stretch one hand out and trace all around it with the index finger of your other hand. As you breathe in trace up to the top of each finger, breathing out as you trace back down.
- ▶ Box breathing Breathe in through your nose to a count of four, then hold the air in your lungs for four, breathe out for four, then hold your lungs empty for four.
- ▶ Distraction Try to notice things around us, for example 5 blue things, 4 red things, 3 different smells, 2 sounds. Counting backwards can also be good. Repeat for five minutes.
- ▶ Create a short playlist of songs which helps them feel good. Shortcut it to a home screen on a phone or tablet so it is easy for them to access when needed. Singing also helps to regulate breathing.
- ▶ Walking outside or inside, bouncing a ball, running an errand.

# Growing a Grown-up Brain

Scientists have long thought that the human brain was formed in early childhood. But by scanning children's brains with an MRI year after year, they discovered that the brain undergoes radical changes in adolescence. Excess gray matter is pruned out, making brain connections more specialized and efficient. The parts of the brain that control physical movement, vision, and the senses mature first, while the regions in the front that control higher thinking don't finish the pruning process until the early 20s.

Gray matter density

Gray matter becomes less dense as the brain matures.



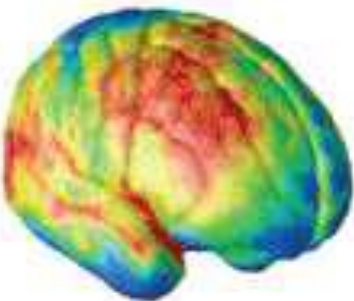
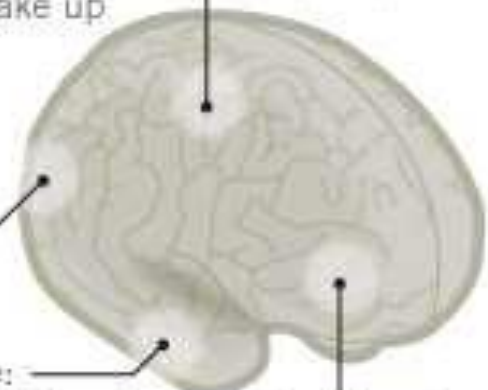
**Gray matter:** Nerve cell bodies and fibers that make up the bulk of the brain's computing power.

**Parietal lobe:** Spatial perception

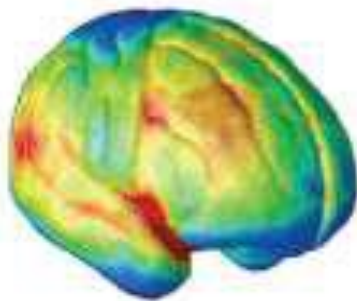
**Occipital lobe:** Vision

**Temporal lobe:** Memory, hearing, language

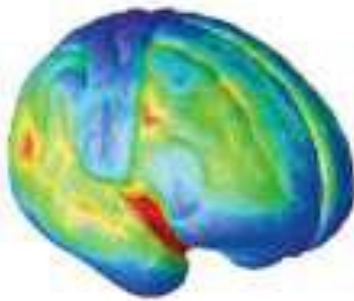
**Frontal lobe:** Planning, emotional control, problem solving



Age: 5



Adolescence

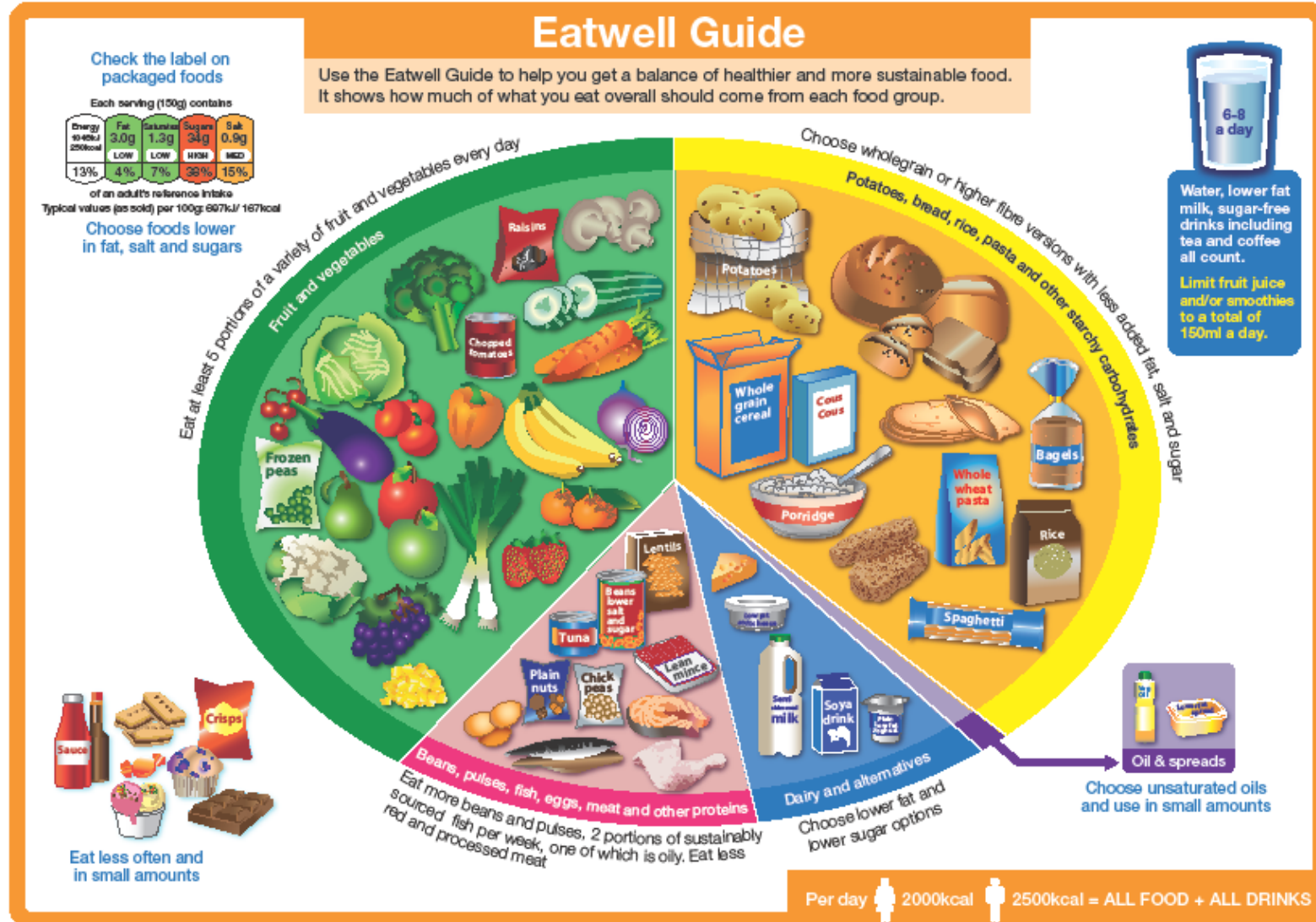


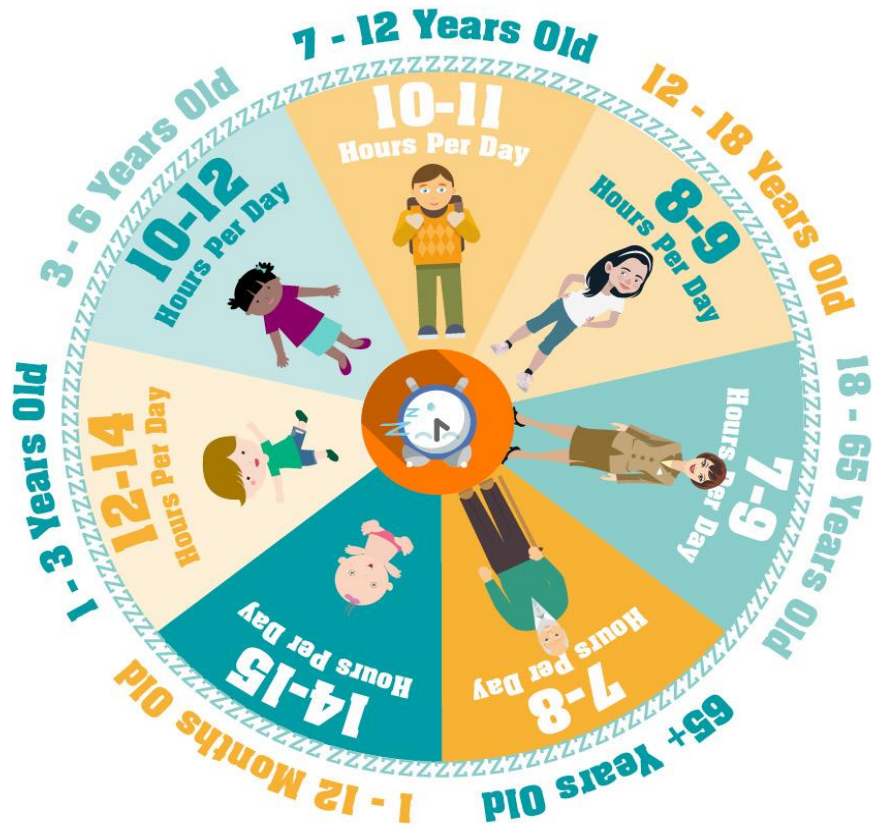
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Source: "Dynamic mapping of human cortical development during childhood through early adulthood," Nitin Gogtay et al., *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, May 25, 2004; California Institute of Technology

Ways we can support young  
people to be mentally  
healthy.

# Eating a balanced diet





# Sleep

Both your brain and your body need adequate sleep to enable them to function properly.

Sleep is integral for your...

- ▶ Memory.
- ▶ Concentration.
- ▶ Ability to solve problems and work creatively
- ▶ Your muscles, bones and skin can grow properly.
- ▶ Body to repair injuries or strains to muscles.
- ▶ Body to fight off infections.

# Tips to help your child sleep



Have a clear routine, write it down if this will help.



Try and fall asleep and wake up at a similar time, this helps to set an internal alarm clock



Create an environment that is good for you, making sure you are the right temperature, and it is dark and quiet.

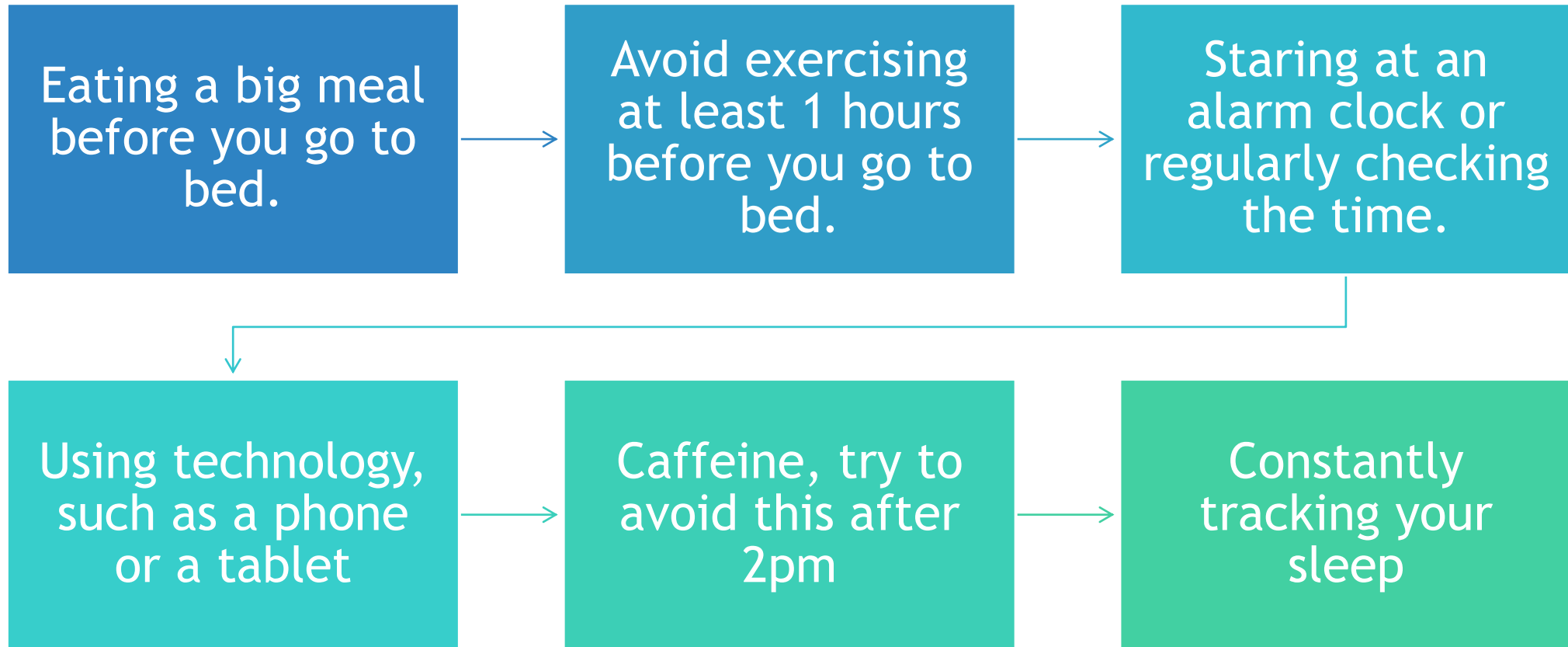


Write down worries or a to do list for the next day



Get at least 30 minutes of exercise a day

# Things to avoid



# The Sleep Council



- ▶ More information on sleep and advice can be found on The Sleep Council's website: <https://sleepcouncil.org.uk/>



## Five ways to wellbeing

Introduce these  
simple strategies  
into your life...

# Connect

Talk to someone face to face instead of sending an email or text

**Speak to someone new, even if it's just a smile or asking how their weekend was**

Put five minutes aside to catch up with a friend you haven't spoken with for a while

**With this in mind, try to do something different today and make a connection**

# Be active

Exercise helps to release any stress and engaging in physical activity can allow us to feel stronger emotionally

Head for the stairs instead of a lift

Walk to or from school, maybe with a friend?

Try joining a sports team or activity

Have a kick-about in a local park

Do some 'easy exercise', like stretching,

before you leave for school in the morning



# Take notice

Take some time to think about the good things in your day

Think about an achievement from today

Clear your room or have a sort out

Take notice of how your friends or family are feeling or acting

# Keep learning

Learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not learn something new today?

Sign up for a class or activity like Duke of Edinburgh

Read a magazine or book

Download some quiz apps or Sudoku

Research something you've always wondered about



# Give

Even the smallest act can count,  
whether it's a smile, a thank you  
or a kind word

Give it a go today!

Ask how someone's day is or offer a  
compliment to a friend or family

Make someone close to you dinner  
or even just offering

a cup of tea

Listen to some music to boost your  
mood



# Daily Activities - the Fabulous Four

<b>Something you enjoy</b>	<b>Activity with a sense of achievement</b>
<b>Physical exercise</b>	<b>Social activity</b>

- ▶ When you're stressed you might stop doing things that lift your spirits. This can be a vicious circle and make you feel even worse.
- ▶ Practice makes perfect: It might take practice to find the combination that works for you. Just remember to try to keep a good balance of activities from across the Fabulous Four, and keep it realistic - don't overstretch yourself.

How to support our young  
people during this time of  
uncertainty.

# Ways we can look after ourselves during this time

- ▶ We can help manage uncertainty with the 5 c's
- ▶ **Control:** Focus on what we can control such as adhering to the guidelines on social distancing and washing our hands, although hard try to let go of things that are not within our control, using a breathing technique or distracting ourselves with something we enjoy could help us do this.
- ▶ **Care:** Looking after ourselves is important to maintaining our emotional energy, we can do this through getting up and a similar time, making sure we are washing, brushing our teeth and getting dressed. These little things, although we may be reluctant to do, will make us feel better in the long run.

- ▶ **Continuity:** When things change around us very rapidly it can be difficult to manage, one way we can combat this is by focusing on things that help increase our feelings of normality, this can be done through watching the same show or content creators that you usually watch or listening to the same radio station you normally do on the way to school. Keeping a routine will make us feel more in control and grounded.
- ▶ **Creativity:** Being creative and enjoying hobbies can really help to lift our mood, so sing, dance, paint, draw or try something new as this will help to distract from worries that we might be feeling, and you may find a new hobby that you love.
- ▶ **Compassion:** Being kind to yourself and others is really important, and this includes seeking support and talking to someone if you feel you need it. Being there for someone else if they are struggling and showing kindness can make us feel more connected to those around us and support our mental wellbeing.

# Ten top tips for staying mentally well during COVID-19

- ▶ Many of us will be able to manage these uncertain times and protect our mental health by taking one day at a time and focusing on our wellbeing:
  1. Have a daily structure
  2. Get regular daily exercise, preferably outside
  3. Maintain your sleep routines
  4. Try to eat a healthy diet and get support if you are in financial crisis
  5. Keep in contact with friends, family and loved ones online or on the telephone, where possible

# Ten top tips for staying mentally well during COVID-19

6. Make time for enjoyable activities, relaxation, and self-care
7. Restrict media and social media that increases a sense of despair and helplessness
8. Cultivating an attitude of gratitude can help improve mental health and may be even more important during times of significant challenge as a result of Covid-19.
9. Have hope: it will not solve our problems or make them go away, but it can give us the motivation to keep going when times are difficult
10. Reach out if you need support.

Supporting young  
people as the return to  
school.

# Supporting a return to school

- ▶ Plan together ahead of time and think about a typical morning routine for going to school and practice this, including getting dressed in the uniform and making the walk to school.
- ▶ Discuss how not everything will be different - the staff, building and some routines will still be familiar
- ▶ Discuss t's OK to feel worried about change, this is normal and every time we go into school it will get a little bit easier.

# Encouraging motivation

- ▶ Intrinsic motivation refers to doing an activity for its inherent enjoyment rather than for a separable outcome.
- ▶ Extrinsic motivation refers to doing an activity, not for its inherent enjoyment but instead for a separable outcome.
  
- ▶ Pro and Cons list of staying the same or changing behaviour
- ▶ Rewards
- ▶ Modelling the behaviour and talking about the benefits
- ▶ Let your child make their own choices—and face the consequences
- ▶ Give your child a sense of control
- ▶ Encourage a family culture where it's OK to make mistake

# Parents support- Looking after yourself too

- ▶ Having someone to talk to and share your feelings with - either in person or on the phone.
- ▶ Making time for yourself - pampering, watching a fave film or TV show.
- ▶ Getting some fresh air - a walk, cycle or just sitting in a garden or park can help clear our heads.
- ▶ It's really important to remember not to beat yourself up if you feel you get it wrong - it can feel like trial and error a lot of the time and sometimes all your strategies will go out of the window.

# Resources to support young people

# Relax

## 7 – 11 Breathing

Breathe in through your  
nose to the count of 7  
seconds

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Breathe out through your  
mouth to the count of 11  
seconds

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Repeat

## Guided Relaxation

Think of a place where you  
feel safe, secure and relaxed.  
Spend time thinking about  
what you can:

See  
Hear  
Feel  
Smell  
Taste

## Muscle Relaxation

Tense – Hold – Release  
Toes  
Calves  
Thighs  
Stomach  
Fingers  
Arms  
Shoulders  
Jaw  
Eyes

# Useful apps for young people to support their mental health



▶ Calm

▶ Headspace



▶ Mindshift

▶ For me-Childline (live chat for mental health support)

▶ Catch It (support with mood)



▶ Stop, Breathe, Think (meditations and mindfulness)

▶ Think Ninja



# Other helpful resources

- ▶ <https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/resources/>
- ▶ <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/coronavirus/managing-feelings-about-changes-to-lockdown/>
- ▶ <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/coronavirus-and-mental-health/>
- ▶ <https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/coronavirus>
- ▶ <https://charliewaller.org/information/coronavirus-mental-health/new-lockdown-looking-after-our-mental-health>

# What to keep an eye out for in our young people.

- ▶ Having significant change to their appetite or ability to sleep.
- ▶ Alter their personality or impacting their relationships.
- ▶ experiencing panic or getting very teary often
- ▶ Disengaging with school or activities they enjoy
- ▶ Having thoughts about not wanting to be alive or harming them self intentionally

# Referring into CAMHS

When you refer to CAMHS, they will want to know details of the young person's difficulties. How is impacting upon their life?

Before making the referral, it is useful to have a clear outcome in mind- what do you want CAMHS to do? You might be looking for advice, support or a diagnosis for instance.

It is helpful if you can explain to CAMHS what has been tried already.  
Has anything been useful?

Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) help children, young people and their families who are experiencing mental health difficulties. If you feel you need further support please call the Single Point of Access (SPA) on: **01865 902515**. *The SPA team work between the hours of 9am-5pm Monday- Friday (excl. bank holidays). Outside of these times please call your out of hours GP or 111, and in an emergency always call 999.*

If you would like to make a request for service then you can do this through your GP, through school or you can contact SPA on **01865 90 2515**.