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NHS

South West London and
St George's Mental Health
NHS Trust



Dealing with Coronavirus Restrictions over the Winter Break:

Top Tips & Activity Ideas for Secondary School Students

The Christmas holiday is going to be different this year for everyone. The country is still going through a difficult time with the ongoing COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak, locally going into tier 3 and more strict restrictions, and this is impacting on all of us. Understandably, many people will be having lots of strong feelings; frustrated not to be able to see their friends or family, bored with less options of things you are allowed to do, worried about themselves or people they know becoming ill with the virus, conflicted about following guidance and the desire to see friends or family etc. We've heard that many young people don't feel they have the skills to look after their emotional well-being or know how keep themselves entertained. We have included here some activity ideas and a top tips guide to stay well for young people.



Top Tips to Stay Well

This time of year, for many people, is usually a time for getting together with family and friends, celebrations, parties etc but this year things are going to be very different. During this period of social distancing, reducing social contacts and, for some people, self-isolation, it is important to look after our mental wellbeing. Here are a few ideas about how to do this:

Talk to someone! It's important that you notice how you are feeling and try to accept that the feelings you are having are likely to be normal. We know that things might continue to feel overwhelming or scary, or you could find yourself feeling low. It's good for you to talk about your feelings where you can, so think about who you can turn to. It could be someone in your family, a friend, or a helpline that can talk to you about how you might be feeling. We have included some helplines/websites on the final page if you find you're struggling.

Limit how often you check for news updates: Despite being the source of information about the situation, the news is often anxiety-provoking and not helpful to keep a peaceful mind. Instead minimise the amount of times you check the news to once or twice a day and only look on respected websites such as the BBC.

Monitor your social media usage: Social media can keep your anxiety high for many reasons. Try to have a limit on how much you check on social media. It's a good idea to de-clutter your social media accounts - remove or un-follow accounts that you notice make you feel worse. Talk to someone you trust about how you can do this.



Keeping a routine: It will be tempting to stay up late and/or sleep in longer but we know that this can have a negative impact on our mood. Having enough sleep can really help our mood, did you know most teenagers need 9-10 hours a night? Maintain a routine as much as you can by getting up in the

morning and going to bed at the same time, think about who can support you to do this – can you make a plan with someone each morning, or ask someone at home to wake you?

Gaming (but not too much!): Lots of people enjoy gaming and it's fine to include it in your day but it's easy to find yourself playing too much, especially when you don't have so much to do. This can lead to feeling disconnected from friends and family and your mood dropping. We would encourage you and your parent/carer to plan limits on this together. You can use the below suggestions of other activities to engage in if you are feeling bored.

Activity Ideas



The idea of staying home can often be fun and relaxing because there is no school to attend. On the other hand, staying home for a long time often leads to boredom – and this is common with everyone! It's good to relax but your mood will feel better if you spend time doing things that you enjoy with family or friends (where possible).

It is important that we keep ourselves busy with activities, especially creative ones. This is a time we can try hobbies that we may have stopped previously, or an opportunity to explore a new interest. The reason it's important to do these things is because activities take your full attention, where you 'lose yourself' in the activity and do not notice time passing. We call these 'Flow Activities'. Below is a list of ideas for you to explore whilst you are at home:

Create a 'Coronavirus Christmas Holiday List': You can use this as an opportunity to achieve something new! Is there anything you'd like to achieve over this time off school? This might be a new skill which you would like to develop or tasks which you would like to complete. Work out what and who can help you to achieve this and then make a start on this list. Imagine how good it would feel to achieve your goals!

Goals	Steps
Learn how to cook something new	Check what ingredients there are at home Research recipes online Ask someone at home to help you and agree on a time to do this
Rearrange my bedroom	Put aside some time to do this, Ask someone at home to help you move furniture



Create a self-soothe box: If you are feeling anxious or panicky, a self-soothe box can enable you to make you feel more grounded and relaxed. You can include photos of happy memories, sentimental objects, favourite smells, positive affirmation cards. You can find inspiring ideas from YouTube!

Read a book: Fiction or non-fiction? Whatever you prefer!



Exercise: Staying active can help both our physical and mental health. You could go for a walk or run outside or do some exercise at home, or in your garden if you have one. There are lots of great YouTube videos - high-intensity interval training (HIIT), aerobic exercises, and yoga – that you can follow from the comfort of your home with no equipment needed. Some of you might be lucky

enough to have access to equipment which can help you to stay fit, such as the Wii Fit, skipping ropes, or a trampoline (if it's not too soggy at the moment)!

Arts & Crafts: Christmas is a great time for crafting – making decorations or Christmas cards for your family or friends, look online for some inspiration! Whether it is drawing, painting or origami, anything that activates your creative side can help soothe the mind. Some of the known benefits are developing your motor skills, your innovative skills, encourages self-expression, and boosts your self-esteem. Get creative!



Cooking: With more time spent at home, there is more time to help in the kitchen and make some tasty Christmas treats! Cooking is an essential life skill, it's also a good way to spend time with people at home - you could ask your parent or carer if you could help them cook lunch or dinner. There are hundreds of recipes online and many 'how to cook' videos on YouTube, enjoy creating something delicious!

Creating something to engage with others: Do you have a talent? Is it singing? Dancing? Rapping? Playing an instrument? Then this could be one for you. You could create a video of you performing a favourite piece and send this to your friends, grandparents and relatives as part of the Christmas celebrations! This will keep them entertained and another way to connect with others.



Write something: Do you have an interest in writing? Whether it's writing a blog, a diary, or the next novel, you could use the time to explore your inner J.K. Rowling to create a story. Perhaps your experience of being at home. What are your thoughts, your feelings about what is going on in the world? This could be a time for you to let the people of the future about what you are going through!

Socialise: You might think it is unusual for us to suggest socialising during social distancing, but it's Christmas and you can be creative with how to do this. Social contact is so important for our mental health. As we've already said make sure you spend some time doing activities with family members who are at home with you – for example cooking/baking together, playing a board game, learning a new skill together (perhaps your parent/carer or older sibling can teach you something new), or watching a film together. We know that young people tend to be really great at using technology and you can use this to your advantage by setting up virtual meet ups with friends and family members over Facetime, Skype, Whatsapp or Zoom. Can you work out a way to have an online party with friends? Come up with some games or a quiz, dress up in your Christmas jumpers!

We have included a weekly planner and an activity log in this document, which you could use to help plan what you're going to do each day. You can also notice which things helped your mood improve (do more of these things!) and when your mood might have got lower (do less of this!).



Activity Planner:



Print or copy the diary below, and then fill in what you plan to do for the Christmas holidays (or you can use it whenever it could be helpful!)

It's important to do a balance of social activities, things that give you a sense of achievement and things that help you feel close to others, as well as some 'down time'.

Scheduling things into your week can be a helpful way of motivating yourself to actually do the activities you have planned.

You could also use this to help plan your routine in general. For example, when you will get up each day, eat lunch and any things you need to do.



	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>	<i>Sunday</i>
<i>9:00</i>							
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Websites and Telephone Support

For more information please look at the Covid Emotional Wellbeing resource hub for children, young people and their parents on the Southwest London NHS website:
<https://swlondonccg.nhs.uk/your-health/mental-health/covid19-resource-hub/>



If your mood is low, it is really important to talk to someone, either someone you know, or you can use the following services who offer support to young people:

Kooth

- Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people.
- Chat 1-2-1 with a counsellor online.
- Access to tips on staying well.
- <https://www.kooth.com/>



Childline

- Comforts, advises and protects children 24 hours a day and offers free confidential counselling.
- Phone 0800 1111 (24 hours).
- Chat 1-2-1 with a counsellor online
- <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/>



Off The Record

- **Support for Young people ages 11-25 in Croydon Merton & Sutton**
- **Winter Holidays Support Line - 020 8175 6776** open everyday between 24th December - 3rd January, 3pm - 6pm
- Information about support available outside these times - <https://www.talkofftherecord.org/sutton/>

Sutton School nursing service

- For children and young people who require support the contact number is 020 87704409 8-4pm on working weekdays, or email address is schoolnursing@sutton.gov.uk

