

ARE YOU FEELING FOCUSED AND MOTIVATED DURING LOCKDOWN?

IF THE ANSWER IS NO – YOU ARE NOT ALONE!

THESE ARE AMONGST THE MOST FREQUENTLY REPORTED LOCKDOWN CHALLENGES, ALONG WITH FEELING ISOLATED AND OVERWHELMED. OUR TEAM OF WELLBEING PRACTITIONERS HAVE COMPILED SOME TIPS THAT COULD HELP.



BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Allow for the fact that you are in a difficult situation.

You will be affected by what is going on around you and might not be as productive as you were or as you imagine you should be.

Use the tips in this guide to look after yourself and protect your wellbeing.



DEVELOP A ROUTINE - AND STICK TO IT

The 'new normal' may have meant that your usual routine is disrupted. Whilst this can bring advantages, such as more flexibility, it can also have a negative impact on our levels of motivation.

Having a routine can enhance wellbeing by helping us to feel more in control, it is known to reduce stress levels and gives the opportunity to plan activities that are good for us. It also helps us to achieve an effective balance between work and rest. In the current climate - when lots of things seem out of our control - some predictability can be no bad thing!

Where possible, plan to attend teaching sessions at the scheduled times, even where it's an option to catch up later, this may help you to feel more connected to your course as well as adding structure to your day.



DO SOMETHING ACTIVE



The message here is a really simple one – move more – feel better!

Physically and mentally. It's not new information that being active is good for your wellbeing, but it can be one thing knowing that, and another to take action. Now really is the time to look after our wellbeing and the benefits of being active are backed up by science – physical activity changes the chemical mix in the brain by increasing the hormones that are responsible for making us feel good and contented. Lots of the things that we rely on to feel good might be restricted but being active is something that we **can** do to protect our mental health and wellbeing.

Make time for physical activity each day in your schedule, it doesn't have to be running or high intensity work outs if that's not for you, they are great if you can do them and enjoy them, but more gentle options like walking and yoga, have the same rewards for our mind. Visit our [active wellbeing pages](#) for more information and to see what's available.



PLAN IN RELAXATION AND ENJOYMENT

We might feel pretty restricted about what we can do to enjoy ourselves at the minute, and that's all the more reason to give it some real attention. Think about the things that you enjoy that you can do, or maybe things that you haven't tried before, that you might like to. This could include making time to read a book or magazine or watch a film, cook or bake your favourite foods, or planning in time to catch up with friends or family.

CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Feeling isolated is a major factor that has arisen from the pandemic. Opportunities to meet up with people that we know and care about or to meet and engage with new people are restricted and we are all feeling it.

Scrolling through social media can be useful to keep up with others but equally can leave us feeling even more isolated if we're not really engaged with it.

Make time to connect with people in a way that feels positive. It's still possible to meet another person in a public space or go for a walk. Catch up over the phone, text or WhatsApp, video calls if you can face any more of them. Check in on your friends and family – they will appreciate the effort and you're likely to feel better for doing it. If you'd like to connect with new people, our [Students' Union](#) have a range of events each week that you can sign up to.



PLAN IN WORK – IN CHUNKS



- Plan your work sessions, using either your phone or writing it down on a planner (planning in your head doesn't work!)
- Choose a time during the week to plan in any regular commitments such as online sessions, paid work etc. then plan in the evening for the following day (or 2 days if you prefer). This allows for flexible planning so that if something unexpected comes up, you can move other commitments to accommodate.
- Don't attempt to work for more than 20-30 minutes before having a mini break, or more than 2 hours before having a longer (30 minute) break
- If your concentration is not good, stick with 20-30 minute work sessions until you are established with that. You can build up from there
- First tackle more straightforward pieces of work or those that you have already partially done
- Break work down into manageable chunks and then plan exactly what task you will do during each 20-30 minute work session
- Ensure that you begin working as per the time on your planner, even if you don't complete the whole of the session
- Finish work at a point where you still have some energy and interest, so that you feel more able to go back to it during your next work session
- Ensure that you have a good balance of achievement activities (study and chores) and activities that give you pleasure.



TIP



Whilst spending time planning is very useful, here's a word of warning! This is for those who make very detailed plans which go wrong within an hour and are then ripped up in disgust...

Plans need to be flexible! Don't plan all the hours in the day; leave plenty of unplanned times and spaces - to allow for things taking longer than expected, and for you to have extra time for relaxation when they don't!

BOOST YOUR MOTIVATION



AFFIRMATION

Affirmations are positive statements that can help you to challenge and overcome self-sabotaging and negative thoughts. When you repeat them often, and believe in them, you can start to make positive changes. Option: Write a notice for your wall with a big picture affirmation, E.g.

- I'll work to complete my degree,
- The world needs scientists/ artists/teachers etc.
- Even though I can't see the whole way forward I will do something each day...

VALUES

Take account of the sort of person you are, of your values and your expectations. Assess whether these 'fit' with the way in which you are trying to tackle the task - do you need a new approach with which you will be more comfortable? Patterns of working vary from one person to another, and so do the desired outcomes.



SELF TALK

The words that we use to ourselves in thinking or talking about the task matter! They have feelings attached to them which colour our anticipation and experience of the work.

Try changing the words "have to" and "can't" to "choose to" and "choose not to" - this won't always be true, but it will probably be more honest most of the time. After all, you don't have to do this work - you probably chose to come and do this course, research or job, and you could choose to leave it. Remember why you started!

SHOW UP - FOR YOURSELF



Sit at your desk with your laptop or work materials at the times you have planned and then you have achieved this goal, the goal of showing up. This develops a sense of trust in yourself.

When you are getting stuck, rather than just stopping work, try a different strategy - take a pencil and an old, half-used piece of paper, and scribble unplanned and unstructured notes and ideas to yourself for the task in hand. Or start on a different section of the piece (you don't have to work from the beginning to the end), picking the least demanding in thought or creativity.

UNDERSTAND PROCRASTINATION

Recognise self-defeating behaviour and its associated thinking. Try to work out why you procrastinate: what do you gain from it? Find out how to overcome such behaviour. You might choose to sort it out yourself, to refer to a self-help book or leaflet, or to consult the appropriate person, such as your tutor, supervisor, director of studies, manager, colleague or a counsellor.

Quite often procrastination is connected to anxieties about the quality of the work you hope (or fear) you will produce! At times like this, it is worth remembering that it's better to produce something rather than nothing!



REFLECT ON SUCCESS

Dwell on your strengths, on tasks you have accomplished and feel good about, in order to remind yourself that you can be successful. Give yourself rewards when you accomplish something.

The way that you are feeling at the minute is likely to be a natural reaction to the current challenges that you are facing. It could be very similar to how lots of other people are feeling. You're not alone! Take the opportunity to catch up with other people about how you are doing.

If you don't feel that you are managing well and you need support - it is available. See our [Student Support](#), [Student Wellbeing](#) and [Students' Union](#) webpages for more information about support available.