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Beat the Coronavirus Blues

A guide to being as happy and mentally healthy as possible during the coronavirus pandemic

The first year of a new decade got off to quite a traumatic start, with the COVID-19 pandemic infecting millions of people around the world.

It's led to a number of changes in the way we live our lives. Whether it's working from home, being in lockdown, or having to continue working through the pandemic within imposed restrictions, we are all having to do things a bit differently.

It is therefore not really a surprise that so many people are beginning to notice a rise in stress and anxiety, a deterioration in mental health, and more difficulty sleeping than usual.

My role as a therapist is to help people overcome their issues, improve their mental wellbeing and achieve their goals. Each day I see clients who have been struggling with stress and anxiety, who have experienced a deterioration in mental health, and struggled with sleeping at night.

That is why I decided to create this Beat the Coronavirus Blues e-guide. I want as many people as possible to feel as happy and mentally healthy as they can during the coronavirus outbreak as we adjust to a new way of living and doing things.

A number of people have contacted me since the pandemic started to day that they are struggling. First of all, I want you to know that it is ok to struggle. It is ok to feel stressed, anxious, sad, worried, upset, scared, unsure or insecure. We are all human and all emotions that you experience are valid. However, if that's not how you want to feel, I am here to help you.

This e-guide is full of useful tips and advice to help you boost your mental wellbeing. From self-care tips to practical advice to help you through this challenging time, there is something for you here.

There is no particular way to use this e-guide. Take whichever bits you want to from it. Have a read through and come back to it bit by bit if that is what works best for you. There is no right or wrong way.

I hope you find this e-guide useful. Together we can get through this.

Daniel

Self-Care

Self-care is about looking after yourself in a healthy way. Even a simple task such as brushing your teeth can be considered self-care, but of course there is more to the concept than just brushing your teeth twice a day (you do brush your teeth twice each day, right?).

Taking some time out to look after your physical and mental wellbeing is key for a healthy, balanced, happy life. It's important to do the things that you want to do; not just the things that you need to do.

This is even more important during the coronavirus pandemic. The chances are that you are spending more time at home. You may be self-isolating or simply obeying the government's lockdown instructions if they are in place. Being at home more, particularly if you are home alone, may be quite challenging for you. Boredom may be settling in. You may be worrying about what you are going to do with your extra free time. Perhaps you are stressed about not being able to see people or go about your usual daily routine.

Making sure you spend time on your self-care during this time (and beyond because self-care is for life, not just for coronavirus pandemics) is key.

When writing this e-guide I considered the reasons why, as a society, we do not indulge in self-care enough. I think one of the biggest obstacles is not knowing how to indulge in self-care, almost as if there is a 'right' way to do it. The truth is that there is no right or wrong way, of course. It is about simply taking action. The rest is down to your own individual personal preference.

For some people, sitting down and relaxing is self-care. For others it is going for a run. Even catching up with family or friends is a form of self-care as it's conducive to your mental wellbeing.

Self-care is essentially doing anything that's good for your wellbeing! It shouldn't be a forced part of your routine, but something that naturally occurs. Saying that, do make sure you include self-care as part of your new daily routine.

So how can you introduce a bit more self-care into your life?

If you have a busy, full on lifestyle, even at home, just stop for a minute

Right now, stop what you are doing for sixty seconds. Close your eyes, breathe, and notice how good it feels to take some time out, however brief it may be. Do this several times each day, just so you can take a bit of time out, and it will soon become a natural part of your day.

Think about what you would like to do, and then do it

If you want to catch up with a friend, pick up the phone chat with them. If you fancy having a nice, hot bubble bath, allow yourself the time to do that.

Eat healthily

This will improve your physical health, which in turn can positively impact on your mental wellbeing.

Get active

Even just ten minutes of walking each day can be beneficial.

Reward yourself

Promise yourself rewards for completing some of the tasks that you *have* to do. Your rewards must be things that you *want* to do.

And of course...

Brush your teeth twice each day.

Your mind and body are temples and I believe they should be treated as such. We all have things that are essential to do, but don't forget to add taking care of yourself to the equation.

So there we have the basics of self-care, but if you want to gain a deeper understanding of how you can effortlessly make self-care an everyday part of your life, be sure to read on for 30 more amazing self-care tips.

30 Amazing Self-Care Tips You Can Try In Your Life

This section of the e-guide contains thirty amazing self-care tips that you can implement in your life at any time to help yourself feel good in mind, body and soul.

You don't have to try them all at once, or even try them all. Do give as many of them as you can a go though. They have all been tried and tested, so therefore do work for people. They can absolutely work for you too.

Go for a walk

Many of us are guilty of not doing enough exercise, but walking doesn't have to be a chore. Even just twenty minutes of walking can be beneficial, so you don't have to walk for miles either.

Eat healthily

What you eat can affect the way your body feels, but if can also impact on the way your mind feels. Keeping a balanced, healthy diet is key to overall wellbeing. That's not to say that you must only eat healthy foods. That would be unrealistic, so make sure you treat yourself occasionally too. If you want a chocolate bar, have one. BUT only do this in moderation, especially if you are spending more time at home at the moment and not being as active as you would usually be. The 80/20 rule is a good one to live by. Eat healthy foods for 80% of the time and then a bit of what you fancy for the remaining 20% of the time. It's about striking a healthy balance.

Run yourself a hot bath and relax

We all like hot bubble baths, right? Treat yourself to one. Sit back, relax and enjoy that 'me time'.

Get arty

Expressing yourself creatively can be good for the soul. It can help you to make sense of your feelings and can be fun too. This could be a really useful thing to do during this time.

Develop your social life

But how, we're in lockdown? Yeah, I hear you. Having friends is a valuable part of any lifestyle and it is fun getting to know other people. The coronavirus pandemic doesn't mean that has to stop. There are great tools such as Skype, Zoom, Google Hangouts, Facetime, etc for video calls. Plus there is Whatsapp, Facebook and other social media outlets for messaging. Keep in touch with people and keep developing your social life.

Put on some music and dance

Oh, I like this one. Bursts of activity can do wonders, plus this can be a lot of fun. Dance like nobody is watching.

Put your phone down and turn the computer off

Technology can be distracting. Texts, calls, emails, Facebook and Twitter notifications all come through to our phones these days and it can become a constant cycle of checking your phone, seeing what's going on, replying, and so on… It doesn't have to be like that. So give switching off all technology a go and indulge in some 'me time'. Besides, there is so much bad and frankly concerning news coming through to our phones and through the internet at the moment. Switching off for a bit will do you some good.

Catch up with a friend you haven't seen or spoken to for ages

As we focus on our lives it is sometimes the case that we lose touch with people we were once great friends with. However, with a bit more time on our hands and with other people in the same or similar situations, it's the perfect opportunity to pick up the phone or send a message to some friends. It's good to reconnect with those we miss.

Be prepared for tomorrow

If you have got a busy day tomorrow, make sure that you prepare for it the day before. It could be making sure your bag is packed the night before or making sure your outfit is ready so that you haven't got to spend time the next morning looking for something to wear. That's if you still have to go out to work. If you only have to go downstairs, it's good to still be prepared. Knowing you have got everything ready may help to put you at ease and it also means that the following day gets off to an easy, stress free start.

Put on some music, put your feet up, and take half an hour for yourself

An alternative to putting on music and dancing energetically, which can be just as beneficial.

Discover the benefits of breathing exercises

Inhale deeply for a count of seven, then exhale for a count of eleven. Repeat this exercise for about two minutes, twice each day, and you may well find it helps you to feel calmer and more relaxed.

Start keeping a diary

It is a good way of documenting your life and important events, but it can also help you to make sense of your feelings. Then in years time you can look back through it and remember how you got through this.

Remind yourself that tomorrow is a new day

If today hasn't been so good or not gone to plan, there is always tomorrow. Stay positive.

Begin saying positive affirmations

Telling yourself something positive each morning can really help. You may say something like "I choose to be happy and healthy" or "each day I am becoming slimmer". If you tell yourself something enough then it might just come true.

Treat yourself to something

You deserve it.

Take up a new hobby

Is there something that you have always wanted to do? Now is the perfect time to do it. Providing it doesn't involve going outside too much, of course.

Tell yourself that every day, in every way, you are getting better and better

The power of positive affirmations is wonderful. If you tell yourself this enough times then surely it will come true?

Put the kettle on, make a cup of tea, sit down, and take ten minutes out for yourself

Even snatching just ten minutes for yourself can be of benefit, and we all have a spare ten minutes each day.

Buy a new item of clothing for yourself

Looking good can help you to feel good. Even in lockdown you can still dress up and make an effort with your appearance. It can help to maintain a positive mindset.

Listen to yourself

Pay attention to what your body is telling you.

Go slower

We can all get caught up in being busy, but sometimes it's good to slow the pace down and be a bit more leisurely. It may be that you have more of an opportunity to do that at the moment.

Do some housework

A tidy home aids a tidy mind, apparently, but doing some cleaning can actually be quite therapeutic. I love nothing more than going around my house with a feather duster. Housework is also a form of exercise, so you can burn some calories while you clean.

Prioritise

Work out what is most important on your to do list. Whether it be a to do list relating to work or jobs around the house, if there is something that can wait, let it wait. Sometimes it is ok to be a bit selfish and take some time for yourself. The to do list will still be there when you are ready to tackle it.

Laugh

It's a bit of a cliché, but laughter really can be a medicine. Try to find something to laugh about each day and notice how good it makes you feel.

Love

There are many ways of loving, and even just a hug can do the trick. So, hug whoever you are at home with or send s virtual hug to someone.

Indulge in a moment of reflection

What has made you happy recently? Have you achieved something or done something that you have enjoyed? Spend a few minutes quietly reflecting on it and enjoy the positive feelings that the reflection brings.

Don't compare yourself to others

Comparing yourself to others can lead to envy and lower your self-esteem. Therefore it is simply not worth comparing yourself to other people. Accept that you are unique and that everyone is different. Everyone has their own journey and all you need to focus on is yours. Especially at the moment, there may be people who you think have it together more than you. There are lots of people posting online about how fun lockdown is because they are getting lots of baking done and have done all sorts of fabulous things. That's great, but it may not reflect the reality. They may be struggling too. Even if they are not, it's ok if you are struggling. Everyone is different. We experience things in different ways and all have ups and downs. All you need to do is focus on yourself.

Know your strengths

Our weaknesses can be so overpowering sometimes, which means we don't focus on our strengths enough. Do not allow your weaknesses to be so needy. Focus on your strengths and shape your life around them.

Forgive

Whether it is forgiving yourself or somebody else, that forgiveness can be incredibly freeing. Of course there are some things that seem completely unforgivable, but if you feel able to forgive yourself or someone else then it is worth giving it a go. However, it should always be for your own benefit. Forgiving doesn't mean that you have to forget, and it doesn't mean that you have to welcome someone back into your life when they have done you wrong. It is true, though, that the words 'I forgive you' are three of the most powerful words in the English language.

Embrace your imperfections

Being perfect is pretty boring, right? Be proud of your imperfections. They make you who you are.

Dealing with Stress and Arguments

It goes without saying that this may be a stressful, testing time. Being at home more may mean spending more time that usual with other people, such as partners, children or other family members. It's ok to feel stressed and it's ok if that stress means that arguments break out. After all, life isn't always perfect. However, if stress is getting to you or you're finding arguments becoming too much, here are some tips to help you through it.

Keep perspective

Remember who and what is important.

Try to avoid arguments if possible

Fallouts can be all too common, especially if you're in close quarters. But if you feel one coming on, remind yourself that arguing probably won't achieve anything. Think about the bigger picture, and accept that it's ok to have a difference of opinion.

Breathe deeply

Counting to 7 on the inhale and 11 on the exhale is a useful relaxation technique to try.

Remind yourself to KEEP YOUR COOL

Ask yourself the following questions: What will becoming angry achieve? Will become stressed actually help you?

Remove yourself from the situation

Physically walking away is often the best option. This frees you emotionally too so you can think more clearly about the situation. Go to a different room or go out for a walk if you can.

Count backwards from 20 to 1

Aim to have calmed down by the time you reach one.

Visualise a calm tranquil place

It could be the sea, mountains, fields or anywhere that you consider to be calming. Visualise that place for about two minutes.

Let go of any expectations you have

Sometimes it is better to not have any expectations.

Relax in a bath while listening to chilled music

We all like to do that, right?

Dance to lively music

The burst of energy will help you release your frustration.

Inhale relaxing aromatherapy oils, such as lavender

This can be incredibly beneficial for stress relief.

The Marvels of Mindfulness

Mindfulness has become a bit of a buzz word over the last few years and everyone seems to be giving it a go. Why is this? I am sure that part of it is because people like to jump on a bandwagon, but I am also in no doubt that it is because as we strive to become better and do better, we burnout and begin to feel, well, rubbish.

So what is mindfulness?

It is essentially a form of meditation. It has been used for centuries, but is still relevant in the present day. Practicing mindfulness is known to alleviate symptoms of:

- Stress

- Anxiety

- Depression

- OCD

- Anger

It can also help you to sleep better and simply feel wonderful.

The basis of mindfulness is about being in the present moment; taking notice of how our body and mind feel at this exact time, and becoming more in tune with what our body and mind is telling us.

Being mindful can make it easier for you to savour the pleasures in life as they occur. You can become more engaged in activities and your capacity to deal with difficult events will increase. You will find yourself less likely to be disturbed by worry, less preoccupied with concerns, and feel a greater sense of self-esteem and wellbeing.

Personally I try to practice mindfulness every single day. I will be honest and admit that I don't always manage it, as the reality is that it's not always possible. However I notice the difference when I haven't partaken in a daily dose of mindfulness and cannot wait to make up for it the day after. Even just ten minutes of mindfulness day can do wonders, so I guess there is no excuse not to make time to do it really.

You may be thinking that all sounds great, but how do you actually do this mindfulness. Here's how:

I find the best way to begin a mindfulness session is to make sure you are sitting or lying down comfortably. Make sure that all distractions, such as people and phones, are out of the way and not likely to disturb you. Then close your eyes and begin to take notice of your breathing. As you focus on your breathing you will begin to notice your concentration increases. You can start to still your mind and let it be free.

Continue to slowly and deeply breathe in and out, still taking notice of each and every breath. Then just allow yourself to go with the flow.

Observe the flow of your inner thoughts, emotions, and the sensations that your body feels. Acknowledge them all and do not judge them, even if they are bad. They are all a part of you and you must accept them in the present moment.

As you continue to take notice of your breathing and all of the thoughts and sensations you are feeling, you may begin to notice external sensations, such as sounds, sights and smells. It is important that you don't allow yourself to get caught up in those external sensations. Instead just allow them to come and go from your mind, noticing and accepting which of them produce a positive or negative feeling.

At times, your practice of mindfulness may not seem relaxing at all, but over time it will become easier and you will discover the key to a greater happiness and self-awareness that you will come to treasure. Remaining focused on your breathing is essential, and if you become distracted simply return the focus to your breathing and continue.

The benefits of mindfulness are boundless. I thoroughly encourage you to give it a go and incorporate it as part of your self-care routine. Given the times we are in at the moment, this could be really beneficial for you.

Alongside this e-guide is a complimentary guided mindfulness meditation relaxation MP3 that will have been sent to you by now. Try listening to it and see how much it helps.

Thanks for reading…

That brings you to the end of the e-guide. I hope you have found it a useful read and have plenty of tips to take away to help you keep the coronavirus blues at bay.

One final tip I have is to know when to get help. Even while you are stuck at home or focused on getting through work each day, help is available if you need to talk to someone.

My clinic is open, with appointments taking place in person or online via Skype, Zoom or Facetime. The option that is best for you is fine with me. I'm here to help you work through stress, anxiety and depression. I can help you to lose weight, quit smoking, build your confidence or self-esteem. Even if it's just some relaxation that you would like, I am here to help you. My contact details are below.

Wishing you the very best.

Stay safe. Stay healthy.

Daniel

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