



A helping hand from a safe social distance – supporting parents, carers and young people

If you and the young people that you care for are finding this new Coronavirus way of life challenging, you're not alone. At The Foundation For Positive Mental Health, we run a well-being programme in schools called '[Feeling Good For Schools](#)' that aims to reduce stress and anxiety and promote a positive emotional outlook (which is especially important as we're faced with this crisis)¹, and we'd like to share our top tips for looking after the mental health of you and your family, as well as inviting you to use our well-being apps for adults and young people for **FREE** during this challenging period.

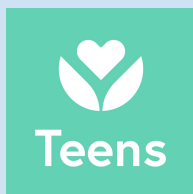
Our apps² (available from the Google Play store and the Apple app store)



Download our [Feeling Good: Positive Mindset](#) app (for adults) for **FREE** and gain **FREE** temporary access of the positive mental training tracks using the login details below.

Username: coboost

Password: positive



Download the [Feeling Good Teens](#) app (suitable for age 11+) for **FREE** and gain **FREE** temporary access to all of our tracks using the referral details below.

Username: coboost

Password: coboost

Top tips for Staying Positive and Mentally Resilient

1. Stay connected when forced to stay apart

- **Schedule some daily or weekly video calls.** Despite social isolation, it's important for both adults and young people to maintain contact with friends and family. Studies³

¹ It was shown in 2006 that people with a positive emotional outlook were less likely to pick up viral infections from others. Exactly how positive emotions help immunity, we don't know but it appears that positive emotions can reduce, by about a half, the number of infections in those exposed to a flu and cold virus. For more on this, see [this blog](#) by The FPMH's Dr Alastair Dobbin and Dr Sheila Ross.

² The Feeling Good: Positive Mindset app was developed from an [Olympic sports coaching](#) programme. It is [accredited by NHS digital](#), and used in the NHS to aid recovery from stress, anxiety and depression. Yet anyone can benefit from using the app without having to reach a crisis point, as it aims to strengthen key neural networks in the brain (just as you would train your muscles physically). It is a mental resilience technique, to help develop positive feelings, self-confidence and performance (mental and physical). It contains a safe and effective audio, mind-body programme (Positive Mental Training) that takes you through a set of relaxation and visualisation exercises. This allows you to switch to a helpful state of mind and let go of the negative emotional triggers, which underpin distress, whilst simultaneously increasing your positivity and focus. The techniques build a resilient mindset of positive motivations, enabling goal focused outcomes.

³ A study by Robin Dunbar in Oxford.

have shown that virtual face-to-face interactions with someone (for example via Skype, Facetime or Zoom) are just as good for you as being in the same room as that person. Play around with the plethora of free platforms out there (or ask your child(ren) to show you what to do if you're not very tech-savvy!) and make group calls.

- **Make a list of things you can do from the comfort of your own home.** Note down any websites, books or T.V. programmes that you and your child(ren) have enjoyed and share your lists with friends and family (like [this one](#)). You can even [sync Netflix](#) to watch T.V. and films together and chat!
- **Make contact with people in your local community.** Connecting with others in similar situations can be helpful and there are plenty of people in communities across the country who are willing to help out or chat. Search for groups local to you via online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter or download the NextDoor app and (virtually) meet your neighbours! (Ensure you've spoken to your child(ren) about the dangers of social media before giving them any independent screen time and never share personal details such as bank details with anyone).
- **Use helplines if you need professional support.** If you are feeling emotionally distressed, contact a [helpline](#) for support. There are also a number of helplines that can support your child(ren), such as [Childline](#) who have also set up a [dedicated Coronavirus page](#) or you could ring the [parents' helpline](#) that's been set up by Young Minds.

2. Plan and stick to a new routine

Juggling full time childcare, home-schooling and running the house (not to mention working from home) is a new normal that many parents and carers are trying to adjust to and it might feel overwhelming at first! You may find it helpful if you and your child(ren) make a list of ways to reduce stress or increase well-being (choose what's best for you) and incorporate some of them into a daily routine (which you could write up and display in the kitchen, if that's what works for your family).

For example:

- Practising 3 minutes of mindfulness
- Going for a walk, run or bicycle ride⁴
- Eating at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day
- Being creative for 30 minutes

3. Get your information about coronavirus from reliable sources

With a lot of misinformation on the internet, it is important to use trustworthy sources to keep informed and up-to-date with pragmatic health guidelines to help you to feel in control and to help to explain things to (and reassure) your child(ren). We recommend the websites below as your first port of call.

- [Gov.uk](#)
- [Health Protection Scotland](#)
- [Public Health Wales](#)
- [Public Health Agency](#)

⁴ As per government guidance that permits us to leave the house for one form of exercise a day (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others>)

4. Limit social media

Whilst we advocate using reliable sources to find the most up-to-date information about coronavirus, the spread of misinformation and speculation is also contagious and dangerous as it can trigger anxiety. It's easy to get swept up and spend hours on social media but it might leave you feeling hopeless and overwhelmed and if that's how you feel, imagine how your child(ren) might feel. If what you or your child(ren) are reading on social media is not making you feel better you can:

- Mute groups, Facebook pages or keywords on twitter or unfollow accounts that you find triggering
- Try some [apps](#) that can limit the time you all spend on social media to give yourselves a break.

5. Avoid burnout

It will take some time for the UK to recover from the pandemic and for life to go back to normal. In the meantime, we're all having to make adjustments to our work and home lives (perhaps not quite to the extent of [this man](#) in France, who ran the marathon from the (dis)comfort of his own balcony!) and nobody should expect you to manage in the same ways that you always have. If you or your child(ren) are feeling under pressure, talk to family, friends, your boss, your child(ren)'s teachers (all of whom are also trying to navigate these unprecedented times without a handbook as well) or give one of the helplines that we've recommended above a call.

If you need any help accessing the apps, please email us at rebecca@fpmh.org.uk. For a more comprehensive list of resources that might help you and your child(ren) during this time, please see our list [here](#).

