

# Minding Me and my Mental Health



Created by the Psychology Department in the Brothers of Charity Ireland, West Region,  
Galway Services

Authors:

Dr Aoife Whelan, Senior Clinical Psychologist

Grannie Griffin, Senior Clinical Psychologist

Dr Maria Mannion, Senior Clinical Psychologist

David Hanley, Assistant Psychologist





It is a stressful time at the moment because of Corona Virus.

Corona Virus has changed the way we live and what we can

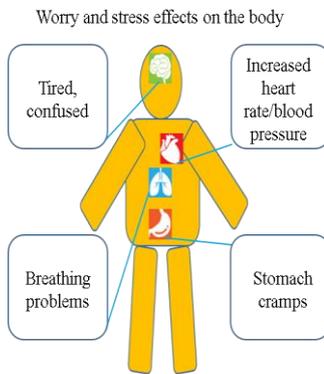
do. Many people are worried about the virus and getting sick.

You might be worried about the virus and getting sick. Worry

and stress can have a strong effect on us. Worry and stress can

affect how we think and how we feel in our bodies.

**This is a difficult time for everybody. You are not alone.**



**Many of the things we are being asked to do are hard for us:**

**Health and Safety Advice**

- No touching your face  
(Wash Your Hands)
- No hugging  
(Wash Your Hands)
- No shaking hands  
(Wash Your Hands)
- No standing too close  
(Wash Your Hands)

....did you wash your hands?

Having to stay inside – we miss going out!

Having to keep a distance from others – we miss hugging our friends and family!

Washing your hands a lot takes time – our hands may be getting dry.

**And that's a lot of things for us to remember every day!**

## How will I know that I am stressed or worried?



- I might find it hard to relax
- I might have trouble sleeping



- I might feel very worried
- I might feel scared

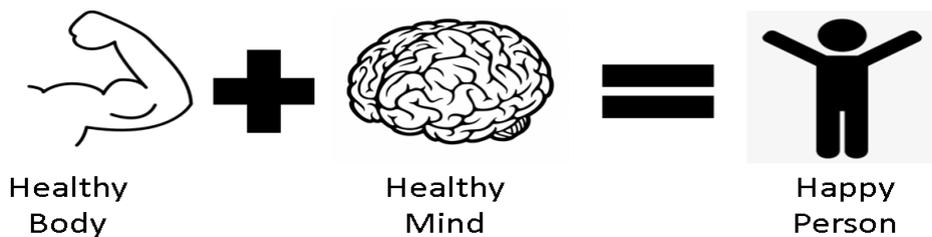


- I might feel down and depressed
- I might do some things that aren't good for me like drinking alcohol, smoking or eating too much

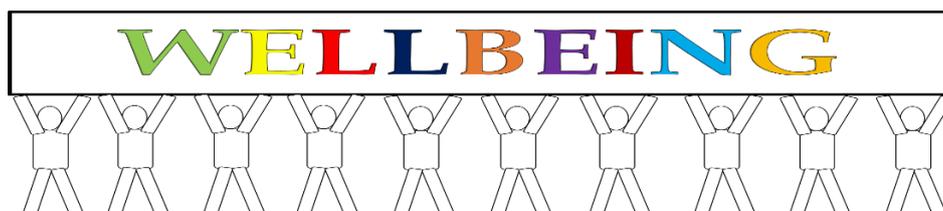


- I might not feel in good form
- I might feel like hurting myself or someone else

During stressful times it is so important to look after our bodies and our minds.



We can learn to feel less worried and to cope with our worries.



There are lots of things you can try to help you feel better.

Here are some ideas

**Things I can do to help my body and my brain during times of stress:**

### My Health



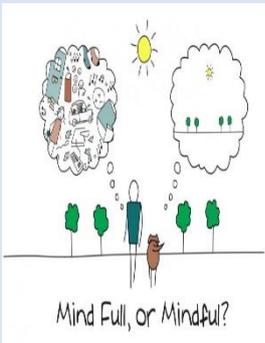
- I can keep active. Doing exercise keeps my mind and my body healthy. Being active can improve my mood. It can make me feel happier and is a good way of stopping me from feeling worried or stressed. I can do at least 20 minutes of exercise every day. Some ideas include cleaning my house/dancing to music/walking up and down stairs/walking outside close to home.
- I can eat healthy food. Eating lots of fruit and vegetables and avoiding too much sugar can help.
- I can drink less alcohol. Drinking too much alcohol can make me feel sad.
- I can try to get a good night's sleep.

### Activities



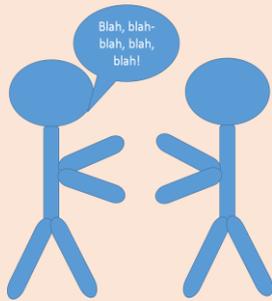
- I can keep the same routine each day. That means getting up at the same time every morning and going to bed at the same time every night.
- I can do nice things for myself. I deserve it. Examples of nice things could be having a footspa, watching a favourite movie, playing a video game, listening to the radio, listening to my favourite music, painting my nails, playing a board game, going for a walk.
- I can make a coping toolbox: I can put things into this box that help me relax, like photos of my family/friends, a stress ball to squeeze, some relaxing music CDs, my favourite DVD, a colouring book and pencils, or anything else that helps me to relax.
- I can do things that I am good at. This can make me feel happy.
- Having a plan of the activities I am going to do each day is a good idea.

## Relaxing:



- I can listen to relaxing music
- I can take a bubble bath
- I can squeeze a stress ball
- I can do some deep breathing, like in this video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYQsRBNYdPk>  
“How to do Deep Breathing” by ‘Therapist Aid’
- I can relax my body, by trying this exercise:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nZEdqcGVzo>  
“How to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation” by ‘Therapist Aid’
- I can imagine that I am somewhere safe and happy, like on a nice beach:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBSGH837pvc> “10 MINUTE Guided Meditation "The Paradise Beach" by ‘The Honest Guys - Meditations – Relaxation’
- I can do a Mindfulness exercise. There is a mindfulness exercise I can practice on page 8 of this book.
- I can try a “Grounding” exercise to help me to take my mind off my worry. There is an example to try on page 7 of this book.
- There are some more ideas for relaxing on pages 7 and 8 of this book for me to try.

### Keeping in Contact:



- I can keep in touch with friends and family. I can make at least one phone call every day to someone I care about. If I have a mobile phone, I can text or send voice messages to friends and family on apps like Whatsapp and Messenger.
- I can also send cards or notes by post.
- I can talk to someone about how I feel. Sharing feelings can help me to feel better. People who I can talk to are: a friend, someone in my family, a staff member, a psychologist, a psychiatrist.
- I can do something nice for someone else (e.g. send them a text/letter, draw them a picture/make them a card).

### Information:

It is important to know about Covid-19 and what I should do to stay well. There are some good leaflets and videos about this. However, I should try not to watch too much news on TV or on my phone as it might make me feel more worried or sad.

**If I still feel worried or stressed, I need to get help from someone. I can get help from:**

- My GP/Doctor
- A psychologist in the Brothers of Charity
- A psychiatrist in the Brothers of Charity

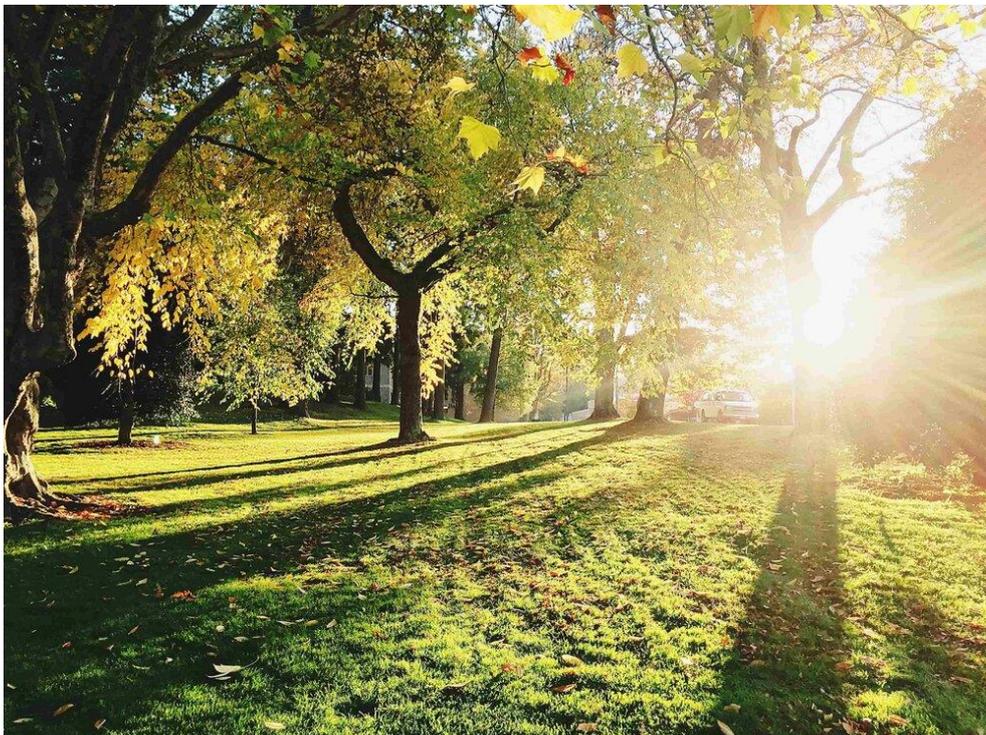
Remember, this is not an easy time, but it will get better for all of us.

It is important to remind ourselves that nothing lasts forever.

The virus will not last forever.

We will all get through this.

Better days are ahead.



## Some Grounding Exercises

Grounding exercises can help us to stop thinking about our worries by helping us to focus on the here and now. Try some of the exercises below:

- **The 5-4-3-2-1 Exercise**

Try to take in the details of what is around you using your eyes, your ears, your hands and your mouth. Try to notice small details that you might not normally notice, like sounds, or how something feels.



**What are 5 things you can see?** Look for small details such as a pattern on the ceiling, the way light reflects off a surface, or an object you never noticed before.



**What are 4 things you can feel?** Notice the sensation of clothing on your body, the sun on your skin, or the feeling of the chair you are sitting in. Pick up an object and examine its weight, texture, and other physical qualities.



**What are 3 things you can hear?** Pay special attention to the sounds your mind has tuned out, such as a ticking clock, distant traffic, or trees blowing in the wind.



**What are 2 things you can smell?** Try to notice smells in the air around you, like an air freshener or freshly mowed grass. You may also look around for something that has a scent, such as a flower or an unlit candle.



**What is 1 thing you can taste?** Carry chewing gum, sweets, or small snacks for this step. Pop one in your mouth and focus your attention closely on the flavours.

- **Categories exercise**

Choose at least three of the categories below and name as many items as you can in each one. Spend a few minutes on each category to come up with as many items as possible.

Movies	Countries	Books	Cereals
Sports Teams	Colours	Cars	Fruits & Vegetables
Animals	Cities	TV Shows	Famous People

- **Body Awareness exercise**

The body awareness exercise will bring you into the present by asking you to pay attention to feelings in your body. Pay special attention to the physical feelings as you do the exercise.

1. Take 5 long, deep breaths through your nose, and exhale through puckered lips.
2. Place both feet flat on the floor. Wiggle your toes. Curl and uncurl your toes several times. Spend a moment noticing the feelings in your feet.
3. Stomp your feet on the ground several times. Pay attention to the feelings in your feet and legs as you make contact with the ground.
4. Clench your hands into fists, then release the tension. Repeat this 10 times.
5. Press your palms together. Press them harder and hold this for 15 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of tension in your hands and arms.
6. Rub your palms together fast. Notice the sound and the feeling of warmth.
7. Reach your hands over your head like you're trying to reach the sky. Stretch like this for 5 seconds. Bring your arms down and let them relax at your sides.
8. Take 5 more deep breaths and notice the feeling of calm in your body.

### **How to Practice Mindfulness**

1. **Take a seat.** Find a place to sit that feels comfortable, calm and quiet to you.
2. **Set a time limit.** As you start practicing mindfulness its a good idea to choose a short time, like 5 or 10 minutes. You can always go for longer if you want.
3. **Notice your body.** You can sit or kneel, whatever is comfortable for you. Just make sure that you are in a position you can stay in for a while.
4. **Feel your breath.** Follow the feeling of your breath as it goes in and out.
5. **Notice when your mind wanders.** When you notice you start thinking about something else, simply focus your attention back on your breath.
6. **Be kind to your wandering mind.** Don't be mad at yourself or focus too much on what thoughts you have, just bring your focus back to your breath.
7. **Praise yourself.** If you feel relaxed afterwards, remember that feeling, even if you don't, praise yourself for taking the time to focus your mind.