

# Maintaining your own resilience as a councillor

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# Coronavirus: How to look after your mental health

- There is a huge amount of helpful information online on how to cope in this pandemic and rather than repeat much of it here I have provided links at the bottom of this piece and some tips that I have not seen widely included that you may find helpful.
- Firstly if you are feeling overwhelmed do get professional help. If you can afford it get one to one help from a counsellor or psychotherapist. Most therapists I know are listed on <https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk>. Some will offer low cost sessions.
- Don't forget your GP they are there to help with mental health and may be able to refer you to help on the NHS and there are charities that offer free or low cost one to one therapy.

# 1) Acknowledge, understand and accept

- We are all experiencing loss and grief at the moment. It is a collective process but the experience will be very individual. For some, it will be the loss of a loved one, for others lack of contact with friends and family, loss of freedom to pursue interests, a job, financial security, change of routines, holidays or plans that cannot be fulfilled. It is very real and we do wonder and worry about if or when it will end and what will be the longer-term consequences.
- Although it is often referred to as a grief cycle, it is generally a process that we move through with stages that are not linear; we move back and forth between the stages until we eventually gain acceptance. Before this, we can experience:

Denial – shock, panic and confusion.

Anger – blame, hostility, questions about ‘Why’.

Bargaining – If only I, If only they etc.

Depression – a sense of despair, hopelessness and futility etc.

# 1) Acknowledge, understand and accept continued...

- The emotions we feel can go back and forth in the same week, day or hour. Trying to stop a painful or uncomfortable feeling usually has a paradoxical effect and can even increase the intensity whereas acceptance often results in the painful emotion subsiding.
- It is only when we achieve acceptance (it doesn't mean that it is right, good, fair or desirable) and stop fighting the situation that we can move on and make the necessary adjustments and gain the confidence to change our routines and activities, our priorities, values and new lifestyles.

## 2) Don't compare yourself to other people

- Theodore Roosevelt said, “Comparison is the thief of joy”. Be especially mindful with social media. Although it can be a wonderful to connect with others and some posts can be uplifting and inspiring it can also lead to feeling not good enough by comparison. It's ok not to be learning a new language or creating works of art or reading great novels, be happy for those that are and know that you are not any less ok if you are not. Also remember to regularly assess your social media activity. Tune in with yourself and ask if they need to be adjusted. Are there particular accounts or people that are increasing your worry or anxiety? Consider muting or unfollowing accounts or hashtags that cause you to feel anxious.

## 3) Be really kind to yourself

- If you are struggling with anxiety or other mental health issues, avoid beating yourself up and if you are struggling to think or feel kindly about yourself and instead being overly self-critical, try imagining how you would treat a close friend who felt that way. Empathise, reassure and challenge yourself as you would if you were helping someone else who finds themselves in a difficult spot

## 4) Re frame your thoughts

- For example, change seeing lockdown not as imprisonment but see it as finding refuge. You may not be able to change your situation but you can change your view of the situation. If you are catastrophising ask yourself 'will it matter in 6 months or 1 or 10 years time?'
- Avoid 'What If this awful thing happens ' thoughts and conversations-If you are imagining suffering you are all ready are suffering!

## 5) Write down your anxieties, and let them go

- It can help to express this anxiety in a way that you can control. That could be writing down what you feel. Acknowledge that you feel this way. Don't ignore these feelings, allow yourself to worry, put it down in writing, keep going until you can think of nothing more and then throw the piece of paper away.

## 6) Re-engaging with the wider world

- It is perfectly acceptable to be apprehensive about lockdown ending. This should not be viewed as a symptom of emotional fragility or a lack of courage or resolve, but a perfectly natural reaction to that which we have all gone through. There is no escaping the fact: it is going to take time to get used to being around people outside our household again just as it did when lockdown kicked in and remember, there is no rush to get back 'out there'. This is not a competition about who can reach the 'new normal' first. Do it in your own time and your own pace.

## 7) Working from home

- Many of us had to adapt to new ways of working. We are left being largely confined in one space, where we work, eat, and spend time with our families, exercise, and play. Boundaries are blurred. We are now, switching from being a mother/father/partner/flatmate/friend to the professional on those Zoom calls. A big chunk has been taken out of our lives, and we may well need time to adjust. Below are some helpful links to managing the difficulties that can be experienced:
  - <https://www.sciencefocus.com/the-human-body/wfh-sos-how-to-work-from-home-successfully-during-lockdown/>
  - <https://www.leapers.co/resources/little-guides/coronavirus-working-from-home>
  - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/>
  - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus>

## 7) Working from home continued...

- <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-%20%20%20%20%20covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>
- <https://www.cruse.org.uk>
- <https://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/covid-19-advice-and-information>

# Happiness Chemicals and how to hack them...

## Happiness Chemicals and how to hack them



### **DOPAMINE** THE REWARD CHEMICAL

- Completing a task
- Doing self-care activities
- Eating food
- Celebrating little wins



### **OXYTOCIN** THE LOVE HORMONE

- Playing with a dog
- Playing with a baby
- Holding hand
- Hugging your family
- Give compliment



### **SEROTONIN** THE MOOD STABILIZER

- Meditating
- Running
- Sun exposure
- Walk in nature
- Swimming
- Cycling



### **ENDORPHIN** THE PAIN KILLER

- Laughter exercise
- Essential oils
- Watch a comedy
- Dark chocolate
- Exercising



[https://www.reddit.com/r/coolguides/comments/hyi7dw/happiness\\_chemicals\\_and\\_how\\_to\\_hack\\_them/](https://www.reddit.com/r/coolguides/comments/hyi7dw/happiness_chemicals_and_how_to_hack_them/)