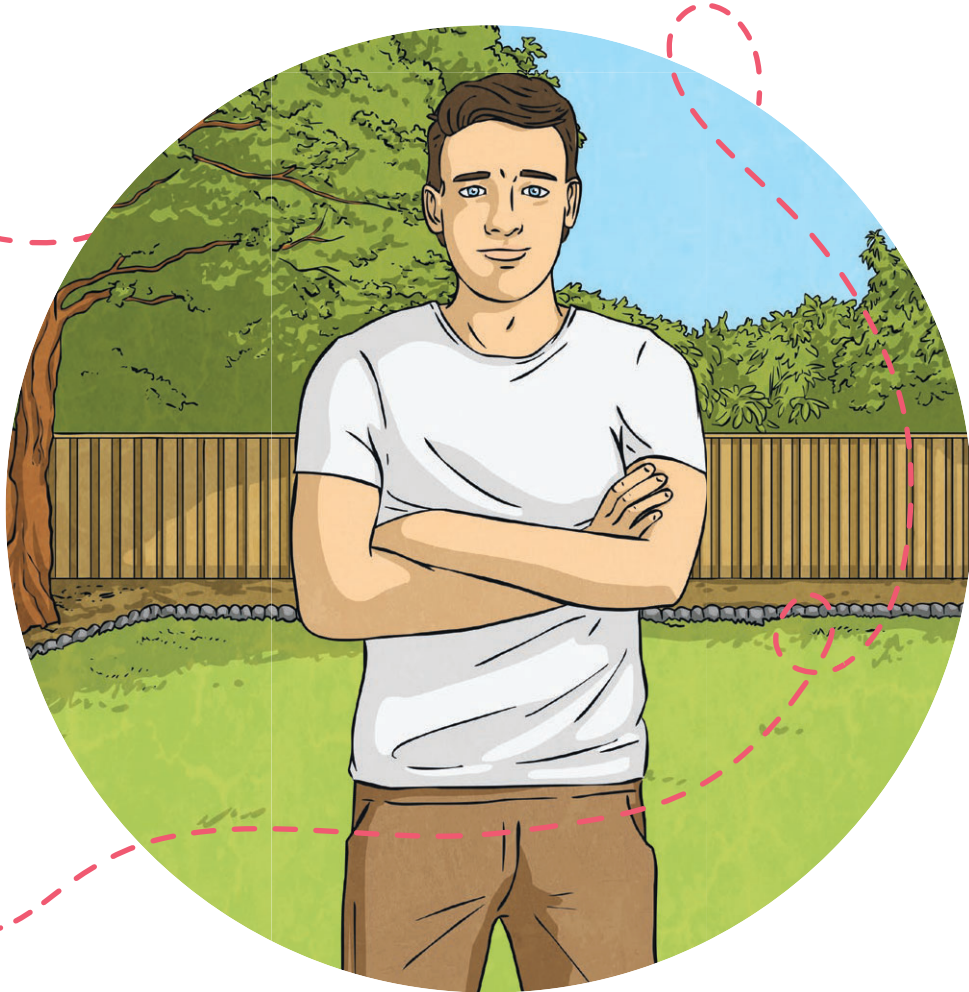


Supporting Mental Wellbeing Through School Closures



Looking for more information? Go to [mind.org.uk/coronavirus](https://www.mind.org.uk/coronavirus)

Preparing for and going through a school closure is likely to be a very stressful experience. The uncertainty that surrounds practical issues can have a massive impact on mental health and wellbeing and there may be a large amount of anxiety caused by the reason for school closures as well. With this in mind, it is important to make every effort possible to protect our own mental wellbeing. This leaflet aims to offer some practical help and advice to anyone going through the stress and uncertainty of school closures and, hopefully, to promote a sense of control within our new daily routines.

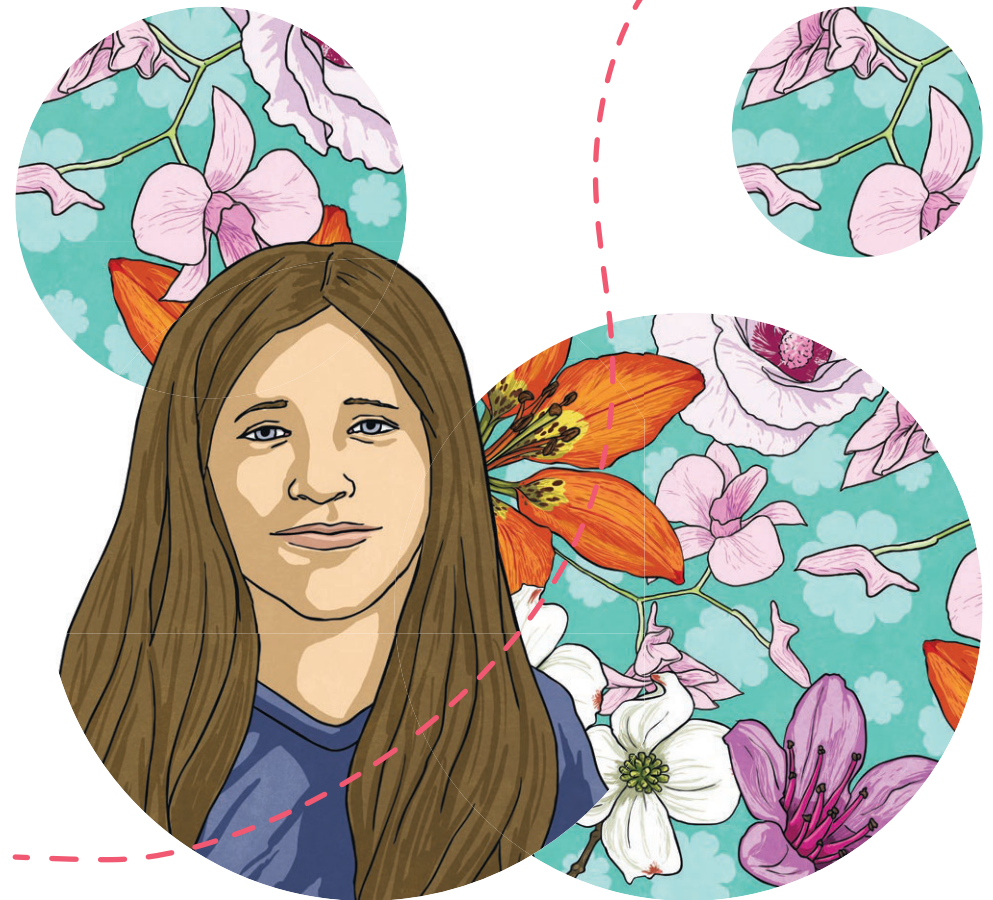


This guidance is intended to support a healthy and balanced reflection on life today. There is still beauty in the world to be enjoyed; there are people supporting each other in ways not seen before; there is bravery and kindness being shown beyond imagination.

For further wellbeing support, please visit the [Twinkl Wellbeing Hub](#).

Control What We Can

When focusing on mental health and wellbeing, areas of control are really important. Consider what areas you can control and focus on these. Thinking about areas beyond these can all too easily lead to worry, anxiety and stress, all detrimental to mental health and wellbeing. Instead, focusing on areas that we can control can lead to feelings of calm, rationality and purpose. It feels empowering and can benefit wellbeing greatly. Decisions about school closures are not taken lightly: these decisions have been taken to protect everyone at a very unsettling and worrying time. These closures will lead to a working day which looks very different to the one we have chosen as teachers – whether that now involves going to school to teach reduced numbers of children, teaching remotely or not teaching at all. But regaining some control in what we do on a day-to-day basis and how we view that new routine can be empowering and can therefore enhance our mental health and wellbeing.

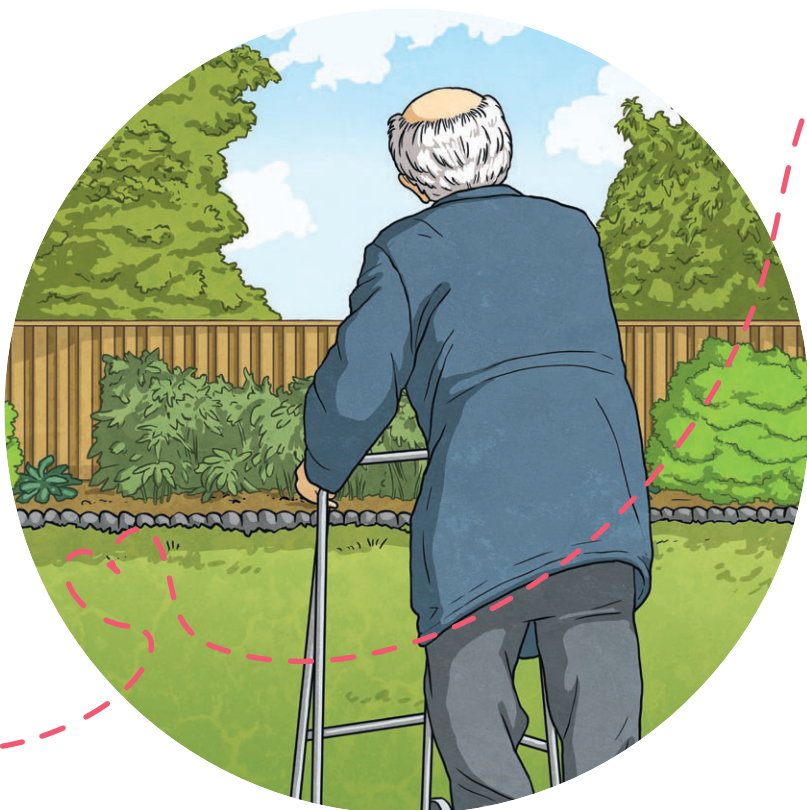


Be Kind

Being kind is vital to maintaining wellbeing and we must start by being kind to ourselves. We are coping with a lot right now. It is important to recognise this and to adjust our expectations accordingly. Showing understanding and compassion to ourselves and others around us is a great place to start. People will be dealing with these strange times in different ways and may not be able to acknowledge how difficult they are finding the situation. The prospect of school closures will affect different people in different ways. It is important to be sensitive in our interactions with each other and remember that we are all juggling different demands right now. Colleagues may well be faced with situations and concerns that we may not appreciate or understand. Kindness and compassion are the way forward.

Look out for Others

With kindness in mind, it is worth noting how looking out for others can also benefit our own mental health. Considering the wellbeing of others and how best we can help them allows us to feel a sense of purpose which may otherwise be missing during this time. This can enhance our own wellbeing. People express their difficulties in different ways but knowing there is a support network out there for them will benefit their wellbeing greatly. Considering how we can help anyone around us who is alone or struggling, including members of the local community as well as colleagues or children and families we work with, can provide us with a real sense of purpose. Keep track of any added pressure that you feel as a result of caring for others, and seek support if you find that caring for someone else is having a negative impact on your own wellbeing. Take a look at these [ways to look after yourself](#) if you are a carer.

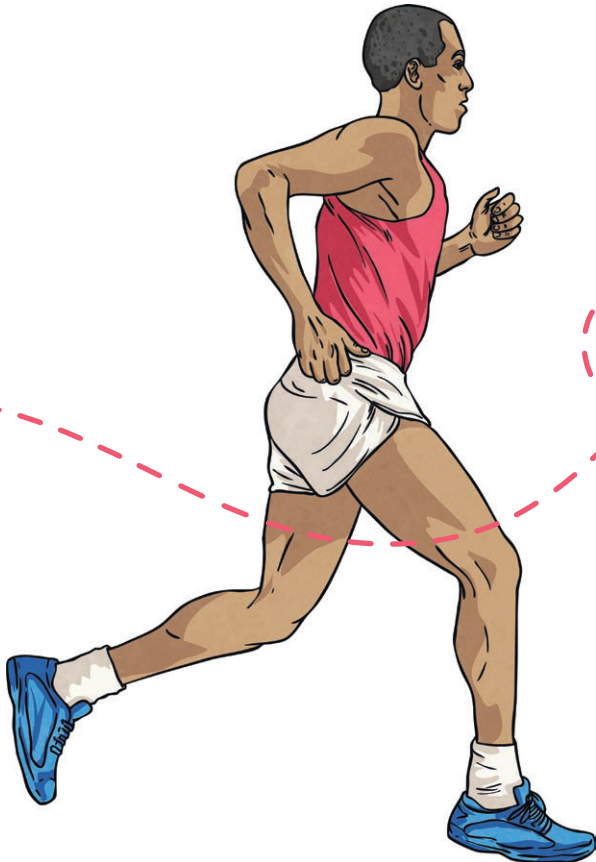


Consider How We View Change

The changes to our daily lives caused by school closures are clear to see. But what is open to interpretation is how we view these changes and this is something which is within our control. As difficult as the situation is now, seeing this time as an opportunity, rather than a threat or an inconvenience, will allow a greater feeling of control. For example, teaching remotely requires us to engage in a variety of technologies and these can present real opportunities for the way children interact. Use these; see them as a benefit and a way of enhancing the learning experience. These virtual opportunities don't have to stop with work. There is a huge array of virtual activities to join in with, from fitness and dance to music and craft. They could even be enjoyed as a wider group, linking remotely with friends or family in different parts of the country or world.

Limit Screen Time

Computers and phones can be more necessary than ever before at a time of unexpected closures and massively reduced personal contact. Depending on how working from home is set up, it may well be that phones, computers and other devices are vital for work communications, as well as for maintaining social contact with the outside world. This, coupled with the constant stream of information we receive on our devices from news stories, can seem very overwhelming. It may be helpful to have some structure or routine around when screens are used and when they are switched off, to allow us to connect and to be present with those around us. Fresh air and a connection with nature are so important for mental health and wellbeing as well. Using time away from screens to enjoy the nature that we can, be it in the garden or just through an open door, can provide a real boost.



Communication

Take time to consider the communication systems that need to be set up if this is at all possible. Messages to parents, carers and the children they support will most certainly provide reassurance, as they provide a link to a familiar routine. Having said that, families may well respond to home learning tasks in different ways. It is likely that some will be reassured by every task sent home, that they will welcome structure, distraction and learning activities to keep children busy. It is worth considering, however, that some families may see home learning tasks as a source of pressure and may feel there is already too much to manage. We should keep this in mind when communicating and let it inform the tone of our correspondence.

Talk About It!

The changes we go through as part of a school closure are something that, as a staff group, we are experiencing together even if, within this group, there are different feelings about the closure. Remember we are each other's 'normal'. Our colleagues are people we are used to seeing every day so it will feel like a big change to have that daily contact removed through the closure. Technology can really help people stay connected at this time. Use whatever channels are already set up and try to share positive, uplifting messages as well.



Create a Routine

No matter what role we now need to fulfil during a school closure, there will have been a huge shift in our daily routine. We will have gone from a routine that is largely fixed to one that has much more fluidity. If working from home is the new normal, it can be easy for lines to blur over what we do when. Being clear with ourselves about which tasks suit us better at which times of day can really help. It can provide a sense of balance and control over what needs to happen day-to-day and can also provide a division between tasks – something which was previously created by a change in physical location. A sense of routine can also provide us with a real sense of accomplishment. We are able to look back and realise what we have achieved each day which, in turn, will help our mental wellbeing.