

‘Building Bonds and Good Mental Health for you & your Baby during Covid-19’

**A Parent Infant Mental Health Resource Pack to
help Parents and their Babies to Breakthrough
(Instead of Breaking Down!) Covid-19**

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You are not alone during Covid-19 & in the Antenatal & Postnatal Period!

Having a baby is a wonderful experience. However, we need to talk and be honest about the 'bitter sweet' mix of happiness, sadness, feeling of vulnerability and insecurity that becoming a parent brings. The maternity file and the little red book do not tell us about the overwhelming feeling of vulnerability we can feel when we have a baby and how our own past parenting experience and past insecurities (which have often been locked away under bolt and key for many years) can be unlocked when we become parents.

In summary, despite the joy and delights that a new baby brings, we as parents will never struggle more, and be more vulnerable with our mental health and emotional wellbeing than during pregnancy and in the first 2 years after having a baby. It is so important that you feel supported during this tricky time to understand that your emotions and struggles (especially with Covid-19 now thrown in the mix) 'are totally normal'. It is vital you hold in mind that the negative and difficult feelings you might have are not about the baby, or your relationship, but come from your own hormones, feelings and struggles with past/present and adjustment in becoming a parent. It feels very scary I know!...but I want to reassure you that you will get through this time.

Covid-19 adds a whole other additional layer of stress, vulnerability, struggles and emotions to what is already an impossible/difficult time. During Covid-19 you may be feeling more worried about your pregnancy/baby, your own coping, mental health, relationships, or your own parenting.

We in the Cheshire and Merseyside Women and Children's Partnership and NWBH NHS Trust are dedicated to supporting the Parent and Infants mental health/wellbeing and relationships, and helping our warrior parents like you to breakthrough this difficult time. We have put together this pack with good advice, support, links and resources from trusted organisations and websites to get you and your baby through this pandemic

Staying Safe & breaking through Covid-19 with your baby

Staying at home with your baby during Covid-19 will be a huge challenge. Self-isolating away from others can be very lonely, frustrating and overwhelming.

It is normal and 'ok' if you are feeling sad, overwhelmed, lost, grieving for your old life/ people you may have lost in the past or present. You may feel sad that Covid-19 has taken away some of the joys of being pregnant or having your baby.

We wanted to create this parent-infant resource to support you through this tough and uncertain time, and help you separate out Covid-19 as much as possible from what is most important right now – 'you and your baby'.

We also hope this information will help you with your mental health and wellbeing so you can enjoy this time with your baby, and build the bond and relationship you want to have with your baby.

What will help you & your baby to breakthrough....

Working on the following areas during Covid-19 can help and support you and your baby to break through Covid-19, instead of breaking down –

- ◇ **Building a Bond & Good Relationship with your Baby through Covid-19**
- ◇ **Using this time during Covid-19 to 'get to know your baby'**
- ◇ **Building Bonds and Staying Connected with Loved Ones during Covid-19**
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- ◇ **What To Do If you are struggling with your mental health or your baby**
- ◇ **Knowing Good Support & Contacts are out there if needed**

Building a Bond & Good Relationship with your Baby through Covid-19

The bond and relationship we build with our babies is the most important, key relationship both for us and our baby. It is normal for some parents to struggle to bond with their baby, as this doesn't come easy and natural to all parents. Parents may struggle (often in silence, without people knowing) to build a bond with their baby for many different reasons: Post-natal depression, struggles with their mental health, traumatic birth/separation from baby post birth, lack of support and negative/insecure relationships that bring them down, isolation/loneliness.

It is understandable that during Covid-19 and the fears, anxiety, isolation, segregation, loneliness and impact the epidemic is having on many parents mental health/well-being – can put up emotional barriers and make it difficult for parents to connect and bond with their babies.

If you are reading this and you are a parent currently struggling to bond with your baby due to your struggle through Covid-19 or for other reasons – I want to reassure you that this is 'totally normal and ok'. It DOES NOT mean that you are a bad parent, or that you don't love your baby, or that your bond will not grow or develop. It means that your own issues, feelings, experiences are getting in the way of your bond and relationship with your baby.

One of the few positives Covid-19 it gives us the time as parents to really connect and bond with our baby...without being too caught up on 'the hamster wheel of life' and the daily demands that are made of us as parents. If we are able, it gives us the chance to zone in & 'be in the moment with our babies'

Using Covid-19 to really 'get to know your baby'

It can be tough as babies don't come with an instruction booklet. It is down to us to understand, learn about them and get to know our babies.

All babies are SO clever and have very different personalities, temperaments and are unique in how they have their own minds, likes and dislikes. This is why as parents we should never compare our baby to others every baby is different and needs/wants/likes different things.

Babies communicate from day one. As they develop, they constantly watch what you and others are doing around them. The noises they make, their facial expressions and how they move their body is their little way of communicating with you. They will communicate with adults by watching their faces and might try to copy what they do. Being able to copy is important for young babies as this is how they learn.

Activities that can help you to bond & 'get to know your baby'

Get close, let them see your face, get right down to their level, even lying down to make eye contact, talk in a sing song voice – babies respond really well to this. Also, talk to your baby in your normal, positive adult tone as they like being spoke to like they are a like a real important person too

Talking to your baby (especially during this isolated, lonely time of Covid-19) is really important for both you and your baby, your relationship, both your mental health/wellbeing and your baby's development. Talking to your baby like they are a real little person is so important as their brain needs feeding with information, communication and interaction. Research has shown that the more parents talk to their babies and interact with them, the brighter, more sociable and cleverer babies become.

Sing the songs and rhymes with your baby that you remember from when you were little. If you cannot remember any – you will find hundreds on google, you tube or from books in shops

Learn how to be 'a mind-reader and talk for your baby'. This is really important as babies can't verbally talk so you talking 'for them' by understanding them and their communication, wants/needs (e.g. you speaking for them and saying things like 'mum, I'm tired/hungry'. 'I love being out in the garden in the fresh air mum and listening to the birds'. 'I need a cuddle mum that's why I am crying and want picking up'). Learning how to 'talk for your baby might not come easy at first and takes practice, but this can really help you to tune into your baby, their wants and needs and understand how they are thinking and feeling.

'Watch, wait and wonder' what your baby is doing, wanting, thinking and feeling

Have a 2 way conversation with your baby (e.g. Leave little spaces after you talk so that your baby can copy, make sounds, join in the 'conversation'. Ask them questions, tell them what you see - you may get a gurgle or a wave of their hand/arm which is their way of communicating back with you.

Mirroring – When possible mirror (copy) the baby's emotions and facial expressions. This will help your baby know that their feelings are being understood and supported by you.

Play 'peek-a-boo' or baby games. Parents often spend money on toys for their babies when the best toy for your baby is you. Talking, Interacting and playing with you in the best toy in the world for them

Read books – As bizarre as this may sound with your baby being so young, it is never too early for you to start reading books with your baby.

Understanding your Baby's BABY STATES -

Understanding the different baby states in your baby is important as knowing their cues and communication will help your baby feel happy, soothed and understood which will help them cope and manage their emotions a lot better in the short and long-term.

Sleep States:	
Quiet Sleep/ Deep Sleep	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of body activity/ movement • Smooth regular breathing • Eyes are closed tight • Lack of facial or eye movements • Occasional startles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very difficult to awake • If awakened, quickly returns to sleep • Intrusive procedures not recommended • Feeding is usually unsuccessful • Generally unresponsive
Active Sleep/ Light Sleep	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More body activity • Irregular breathing • Facial Movements • Movement of eyes under the lids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to wake • Feeding can be difficult • Baby can even smile • More responsive
Transitional States:	
Drowsy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variable activity • Irregular breathing • Eyes may be opened then closed • Eyes glazed • Delayed Responsiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to awaken • Difficult to tell if baby is awake/ asleep • If left alone, may go back to sleep • Feeding difficult until fully awoken • Can awaken to go back to sleep
Awake States:	
Quiet Alert	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal body activity • Regular breathing • Face is bright and shiny • Most attentive to stimuli • Observant, taking in surroundings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good time to feed, hold and interact • Responds and learns best in this state • Post birth newborns have periods of this state and deep sleep
Active Alert	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much body activity • Irregular breathing • Facial movement • Sensitive to stimuli 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May signal for a change: feed, re-position • Fussiness • Difficult to interact • If left alone, can console oneself
Crying	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irregular breathing • Facial grimace • Cries • Colour changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits have been reached • Needs a change • Needs consoling • Variable sensitivity

The Institute of Health Visitors (IHV) have lots of great resources and activities which can help you to 'get to know your baby' – See their website for more information -

Building Bonds and Staying Connected with Loved Ones during Covid-19

Let's face it, self-isolating during Covid-19 feels very lonely (equally, it can feel lonely being home alone in the postnatal period with a new baby). It is important during this time that we don't give up on our relationships and withdraw contact with the people we love. When we feel sad, insecure, unloved, abandoned by others, this is often what we do. It is normal that Covid-19 will evoke some of these difficult feelings so try and keep in mind that "it is Covid-19 and the world being in self isolation/lockdown that is separating you from others, you are not being rejected or abandoned". We need to feel somewhat connected in our relationships to feel happy so don't cut yourself off from the loved ones

Being isolated and separated from loved ones is really hard. However, there has never been a better time in all of history to be separated from people you love as technology enables us to talk/connect with loved ones wherever we are. Talking on the phone or via facetime isn't the same as being with our family/loved ones, but if we keep telling ourselves "this distancing is temporary" and ensure we still connect and build on the relationships we have via phone and the technology we have available, this time will make us value and appreciate the relationships we have in our life.

Building on your Relationship with you Partner

There have been many jokes and articles written suggesting that Covid-19 (self-isolating and being in lockdown with your partner) with 'make or break' many marriages and relationships. If we think about it, relationships are not built on the idea/expectation that we will be spending 'all day, every day' with our partners (and children). Despite how much we may love our partners, this period is enough to test and break any relationship! It is important that we hold this in mind 'this is temporary' and it is 'totally normal' that you are stressed, anxious, irritating one another, and will no doubt be taking out your own struggles/frustrations out on each other (which is what we do during difficult times, with the people closest to us).

A Few Tips for 'Maintaining your Relationship with your Partner' during Covid-19

- Hold in mind that you might deal with this epidemic/crisis in different ways (you are different people). Try to respect and understand each other's emotions/behaviour
- Try and have some space/time for yourselves (we all need our own time). Also try & building some quality/nice time together (movie/date night, talking over a meal).
- 'Pick your battles/gripes with one another (as there will be SO many!). Big/difficult conversations – put on hold until after Covid-19 when things are less difficult
- Try and have some fun together – having a laugh often breaks ice/tension
- If you were having relationship problems previously, understand that Covid-19 and being together a lot more will bring these to the surface.

See 'Relate' contact details in the CONTENTS page for further support and advice.

Keeping Your Mind & Body Busy During Covid-19

PLANNING

Don't be tempted to see this time as dead space. This is not life stopping: life is continuing and this time of isolation can bring opportunities for you to do different things, stuff you normally wouldn't have the time/head space to do. We all have lists of things we want to do at home 'one day'. That 'one day' is now. This isn't about trying to master anything, or do anything impressive or extraordinary. It's just about trying *something* new/different at home and seeing what happens.

Questions to ask yourself - What small steps would I like to take/are possible right now for me to do at home over the next few weeks? (e.g. sort out the house/a room, garden, baby stuff, cook new food/recipes, start exercising more (there are great 15, 20, 30 minute workouts you could start with), build on my relationship with the baby and other people, watch some good movies, read a good book)

If you have the internet on your phone/at home - can this help? (YouTube has tutorials/sessions on everything. There are short online exercise classes, courses, app's for almost anything you can think of. Google is the master for searching everything) But go slow too. You have nothing to prove here: this is simply about adding things that will give your days a feeling of joy and greater purpose.

‘PUTTING PLANNING INTO ACTION’

When life is difficult, you get more distracted. Anxiety, fatigue, intrusive thoughts, overwhelming emotion: it gets much harder to focus on anything for any length of time. Hours drift. You get lethargic and slow and, oh, look, you’ve done very little after all. All this is OK. However, creating some daily routine and having some daily plans can really help you feel better and enjoy your days more. ‘Writing a small ‘To Do List’ the night before can be good to help you plan your day, and good for you to read each morning.

E.g. Today I would like to... It is good to aim for one important goal as a main focus for the day, three smaller goals, and a few additional/optional extras. Whatever you can’t do/achieve can always be done on another day. When we are struggling with our mental health/well-being, it is good to make plans/‘to do lists’ for ‘A Good Day’ and ‘A Bad Day’. That way, if you wake up feeling bad, rubbish or tired, it doesn’t matter: you still have a positive plan,

The key is thinking ‘what would an enjoyable, nice day look like for me?’ Plan it out. This isn’t about squeezing as much productivity or perfection out of the hours as you can, but about providing a positive, achievable daily plan you can follow *‘when you can’t think straight’* because you will get a lot of days like that with a baby and during Covid-19..

It is helpful to develop the habit of checking of checking in with yourself, to notice what you are doing or planning to do. E.g. Say what you are doing out loud.

- **“I am going to make a cup of tea and sort the washing.”**
- **“I’m avoiding doing the cleaning again.”**
- **“I am going to put some music on and start cooking.”**

When you are carrying out a good, helpful activity, try your best to stay with it until it’s done as this will make you feel better. Your mind will still probably wander off as this is what our mind does when we sometimes have to push ourselves to do things. If it does, just keep bringing it back by saying aloud again what you want to do. When you notice that you are doing something unhelpful or avoiding doing what you have set out to do, this doesn’t make you feel good so you need to recognize that what your doing isn’t good/planned and stop. If its hard to to pull yourself away, counting down sometimes helps: *‘5 4 3 2 1 STOP’*.

It takes courage to look at your activities and ask yourself, “Is this helping me or making me feel good?” When we are having ‘a bad day’ we slip into doing things that make us more low and anxious low and rubbish. You deserve to feel happy and calm so try and avoid ‘self-destruct mode’ and carry out activities that will help you feel good and give you a feeling of achievement, and try and put a stop to the ones that don’t.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and a light-colored apron, is seen from the back, hanging a circular wreath on a wall. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting with warm lighting. The title 'MAKING YOUR HOME A BETTER SPACE AND PLACE' is overlaid in large, bold, purple capital letters.

MAKING YOUR HOME A BETTER SPACE AND PLACE

The environment and space we live in can have a big impact on how we feel and live our lives. Whether you like the home you live in or not, it is the living space you currently have and must make good use of during Covid-19. It is important that you feel comfortable, safe and settled in your home environment.

Thus, use this time you have during lockdown/isolation to try and achieve 'a better home/ living space for you and your baby. If you live with other people, make sure you create a space/area that feels good for you (even if that's a corner of a room you like to be in). If you or your partner are pregnant, you may be in 'nesting mode' and want to make home a better place for your family. If you are in the postnatal period, it is really important that you feel comfortable at home. Small actions and changes could achieve this:

- We often feel better and have more 'head space' when we live in a clear, organised environment/home space. Thus although it involves effort - decluttering, tidying, cleaning, organizing your home space can really help! It is true that 'a clear and tidy home space creates a clear and tidy mind'.
- Decorating or simply moving furniture around can give your room a different feel.
- Buying small, new 'home comforts' - fluffy throw/blanket for the couch or your bed; or a few new picture frames to put up photos of loved ones/the baby, or some nice candles, air fresheners to give your room/home a nice smell.
- Bring more light into your living space during the day. Research has shown that light feeds our 'happy hormones' and can make us feel better. Thus, open the blinds/ windows a little more to let more light in, change the color of your room if your room is too dark. Babies also love light too and can see better in the light, so this will make them feel better and happier at home.
- Bring music and other forms of life into your home. Play music more around the house or buy a nice new plant or bunch of flowers. As crazy as it sounds, but these too can make us feel good.

Small positive changes to the environment we live in can make a big difference to how we Feel and function, and can give us more motivation to want to make more changes and improvements.

Looking After You, Your Wellbeing and Mental Health during Covid-19

‘Be kind to yourself - Don’t expect to function the same in very different circumstances’

First - you need to make sure that you have the 5 important basics in place which are fundamental to your mental health, well-being, coping and survival through Covid-19

- **Rest & Sleep**
- **Food & Nurturance**
- **Self-Care**
- **Exercise**
- **Having good relationships**

Please think about how much time and energy you invest into these 5 important basics??? They are fundamental to both yours and your baby’s mental health and wellbeing during Covid-19 and in the antenatal/postnatal period. When we are stressed or have a new baby it is impossible to get the right amount of rest and sleep that our body and mind needs. However, to survive the demands of a new baby and cope during Covid-19 **we must try and get as much rest and sleep as we can**, as sleep deprivation has a great impact on our well-being, ability to function and cope. **Eating and drinking** enough daily is also vital to fuel both the physical and emotional energy you need during this period. Caring for you baby obviously comes first but **caring for yourself** (e.g, having a soak in the bath, watching a good movie) is what will give you the superpowers and emotional strength you need to get through Covid-19 and be the parent that you want to be to your baby. Although it takes a lot of motivation and energy, **exercise and movement** can really help our mental health and wellbeing. Even just a 10 minute walk or a 15 minute You Tube exercise video can make you feel better. Last but not least, **having good relationships** (staying connected with our baby at home and our loved ones via available technology, talking and communicating daily) is ‘so important’ during this difficult period of Covid-19.

In relation to ‘good relationships’, it is normal that many relationships breakdown in the antenatal and postnatal period. Some parents find themselves in negative, abusive or controlling relationships that are not positive or healthy for them or the baby. If you can relate to this to this experience, please be reassured that there is help and support. Please see CONTACTS Page (Page 23)

HOW TO GET A BETTER NIGHTS SLEEP

If you are struggling to sleep – here is some advice on things that can help

- Do not drink caffeine: no tea, coffee, or Coca-Cola after 6pm
- Do not eat a big or spicy meal late in the evening
- Do not go to bed hungry
- Avoid alcohol as it interferes with sleep
- Physical exercise, in the late afternoon can help to make your body tired and help you to sleep. Try to do some exercise every day.
- Sleep only at night-time and do not have day-time naps, no matter how tired you feel. Naps keep the problem going by making it harder for you to get to sleep the next night.
- Having a regular bedtime routine teaches your body when it's time to go to sleep.
- Have a soothing drink like chamomile tea or a milky drink
- Have a bath, or a routine of washing your face and brushing your teeth
- Go to bed the same time each night
- When in bed think of nice things (e.g. think of 5 nice things that happened that day – they might be big or small, such as a nice conversation, seeing the sunshine, or hearing nice music on the radio)
- Do a relaxed breathing exercise (one hand on stomach the other on chest, deliberately slow your breathing, breathe deeply in your stomach instead of high in your chest)
- Try and wake up at the same time every day, even if this is tiring to begin with

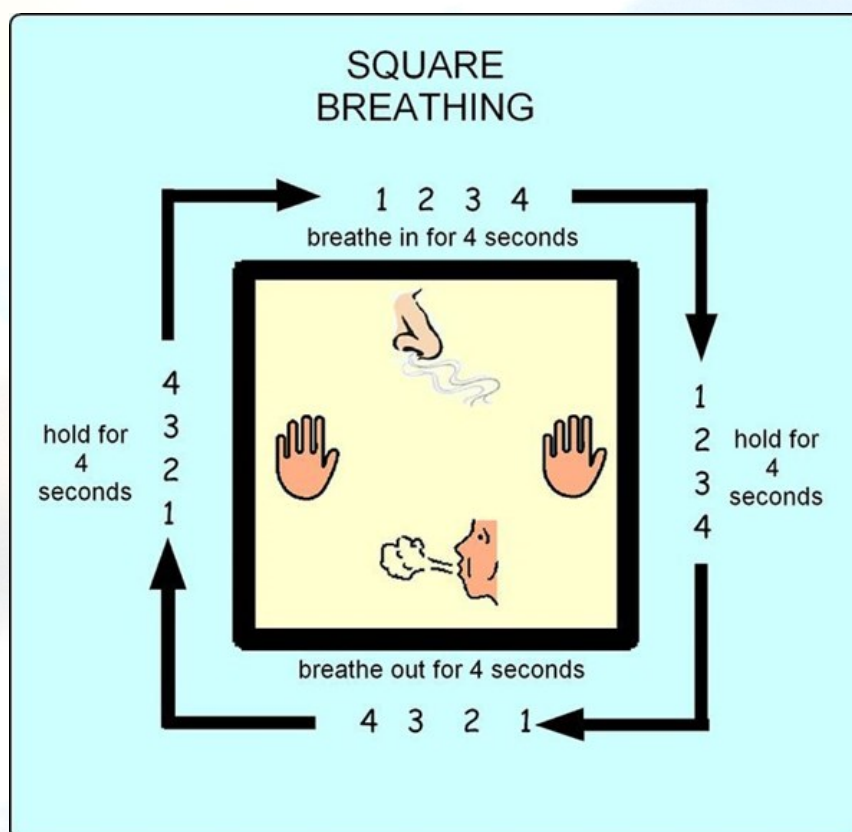
It is really important that you make sure you look after your own mental health and wellbeing during Covid-19, especially if you are isolating yourself from your friends and family. Having good support around you is vital. Also being in regular contact with people that you can talk to is vital when you are not feeling great/coping well

Focus on your BREATHING

When we are anxious or stressed our breathing becomes faster/more rapid, which can make us feel more anxious. We can feel better by slowing and relaxing our breathing. Anxious breathing is up in the chest, whereas relaxed breathing happens deeper in the stomach.

Relaxed breathing instructions

- Breathe in slowly and steadily through your nose for a count of 4 - don't rush this!
- Pause for a count of 1
- Exhale slowly and steadily for a count of 4 - breathe out gradually - try not to breathe out with a sigh
- Repeat for a few minutes until you notice a change in how your body feels
- If you get distracted, or if your mind wanders, just bring your attention back to how it feels to breathe in and out



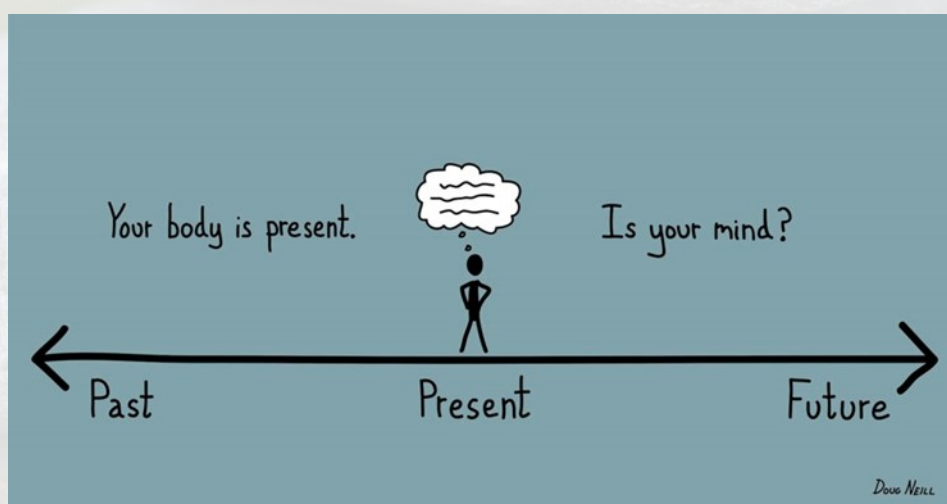
Colour Breathing

For a fast and effective calming technique in a stressful situation, visualise the colour blue. Visualise breathing in that blue calm and breathing out red tension

Learning how to 'Live in the Present Moment' with your Baby

It is important that we try to live and be more in the present moment (instead of focusing on the past, the future and the 'what if's') to prevent feeling overwhelmed by all the things we have no control over (Like Covid-19)

When we feel anxious, down or stressed, mindfulness can really help bring calmness, a new focus/perspective by freeing up our minds to simply focus on the present moment (instead of ruminating on all the other negative things that are making us unhappy).



Mindfulness' – A Fancy Word for Learning how to 'Live In the Moment'

We can all pay attention to the present moment, at least for a short while. However it can be difficult as our attention can wander off and at times is not easily controlled.

Practicing 'Mindfulness' (which is a fancy word for 'practicing paying attention to the present moment') can strengthen our ability to pay attention to what is going on in the 'here and now' instead of being in 'automatic pilot mode' and focusing on problems and worries about the past or future. Mindfulness helps us to build a good understanding and awareness of how our mind works (sometimes in unhelpful ways!). People who practice mindfulness regularly feel happier, more relaxed as they are more able to live in and enjoy the present moment without their mind taking them off to other unwanted places.

TRY IT!!

Why don't you try short a short 5-10 'mindfulness exercise' each day (you can do this alone or with your baby) to see for yourself the benefits 'being more in the moment' can offer. There are lots of short exercise you can access on You Tube, Mindfulness Apps', books. Here is 1 you could try below:

Five Senses Exercise

This exercise is called "five senses," and provides guidelines on practicing mindfulness quickly in nearly any situation. All that is needed is to notice something you are experiencing with each of the five senses. Practice the Five Senses Exercise:

- *Notice five things that you can see-* Look around you and bring your attention to five things that you can see. Pick something that you don't normally notice, like a shadow or a small crack in the concrete.
- *Notice four things that you can feel-* Bring awareness to four things that you are currently feeling, like the texture of your trousers, the feeling of the breeze on your skin, or the smooth surface of a table you are resting your hands on.
- *Notice three things you can hear-* Take a moment to listen, and note three things that you hear in the background. This can be the chirp of a bird, the sound of your baby breathing
- *Notice two things you can smell-* Bring your awareness to smells that you usually don't pay attention to (whether pleasant or unpleasant) The fab smell of your baby after he/she has had a bath, the smell of your lunch cooking
- *Notice one thing you can taste-* Focus on one thing that you can taste. Take a sip of a drink, chew a piece of gum, eat something, notice the current taste in your mouth, or even open your mouth to search the air for a taste.

"Thoughts are just Thoughts' not who we are"

The negative thoughts that spin around our brain (especially during stressful, lonely, difficult times like Covid-19 and in the antenatal/postnatal period) are often what cause us to struggle with our mental health and wellbeing, as we interpret them as being real and who/what we are.

We need to be able to distance, disconnect from our thoughts and feelings at times and see them for what they actually are (just streams of words, travelling thoughts, passing sensations/feelings which can change from day to day) and NOT what they tell us they are (bad, in control of us).

Spot when your negative/unhelpful thoughts and feelings are taking over your mind and body. Try and tell yourself "they are just thoughts, not who I am" and "these are just my feelings today. My feelings can change day to day", which they do.

Understanding our Feelings of Grief and Loss during Covid-19

Covid-19 has brought massive changes to our lives. In our minds we know that this epidemic is temporary, however when we are living it day in and day out it doesn't feel that way. We are all experiencing feelings of grief and loss in Covid-19: The loss of our normal lives, routines, work, finances; loss of freedom in going out places; the loss of relationships and connections with family and friends. Sadly, some of us will experience the grief and loss of losing people who we love to Covid-19.

This pandemic is hitting us all hard in many ways and we might not understand that the feelings we are struggling with are grief and loss.

Covid-19 will bring many of us different kinds of feelings of grief and loss. For many of us Covid-19 may have stirred up past experiences/feelings of loss and insecurities. It is normal to experience some normal feelings of loss when becoming a parent in the antenatal and postnatal period: The loss of our normal body shape, loss of our old childless/independent life, loss of relationships, loss of the 'ideal/fantasy' of being a parent and having baby (as often the reality is different to our fantasies).

Stages of Grief and Loss (David Kessler, 6 Stages of Grief Model) – Understanding the stages of grief we might experience during Covid-19

- **Stage 1 – Shock and Denial**
- **Stage 2 – Anger**
- **Stage 3 – Bargaining**
- **Stage 4 – Depression**
- **Stage 5 – Acceptance and moving forwards**
- **Stage 6 – Finding Meaning**

From your experience of Covid-19 you should be able to recognise some of the stages above. For instance, 'Shock and denial' that we are in Covid-19 (shock horror watching the news or maybe denial about the severity and risks, still going out, not seeing the need to stay home/self-isolate); Feeling 'angry' and 'depressed' that your life/plans has been put on hold and the shine has been taken from you and your baby due to the epidemic. In recent weeks you may have started to 'accept'. adapt, and move forward with this new way of living.



What To Do -

If you are struggling with your mental health or your baby

In the first instance, it is important that you contact your loved ones, friends, people who you trust/can talk to most about how you are feeling.

If you are worried about your mental health, you can get in touch with a health professional such as your usual GP, midwife, health visitor or mental health worker.

If you feel that your mental health is at risk/breaking point and you feel despairing or suicidal, there are local Mental Health Crisis Teams and emergency services you can call for immediate help and support (See 'List of Good Contacts and Support Out There for You & Your Baby').

Coping with your Baby Crying

Crying is normal behaviour for babies. However, trying to keep calm and relaxed with a screaming baby is easier said than done (especially during this period of Covid-19 and self-isolation). Tensions and emotions will be running high and coping with your baby's crying can be difficult and overwhelming to cope with at times.

When we are stressed or having a bad day it can feel like the baby is 'crying, shouting at you'. Rest assured they are not. Crying is just their way of trying to tell you what they want or need. There are lots of different reasons why your baby might be crying. The challenge as a parent is trying to stay calm, focused and find out what will soothe and settle your baby.

If you've done the usual checks (hunger, thirst, nappy) and the crying doesn't stop, try:

- **Cuddling** - remember, picking up and cuddling a crying baby isn't "spoiling" them! It is sometimes what they need to settle.
- **Gently rocking** your baby in their cot, swing chair or pram
- **Singing** to them (the calm sound of your voice can sometimes settle them)
- **Walking up and down** with your baby in your arms or in a sling or go for a drive out in the car (babies love movement!)
- **Playing music.**

If your baby's crying seems unusual or you think that they may be unwell, talk to your health visitor or GP.

If your baby's crying becomes too much for you to handle (NSPCC Advice):

- **Take a deep breath**, count to 5 and let it out slowly.
- **Put your baby down in a safe place** like the cot or pram and go into another room, but go back to check on your baby if they go quiet.
- **Calm yourself down**, sit for a few minutes in another room (or go out in the garden if you have one) perhaps with a cup of tea to help take your mind off the crying.
- **Go back to your baby** once you feel calm and able to cope.
- **Seek Support** - If there are any other loved ones in the house, ask them to take over for a while. If you are home alone with your baby, maybe call a friend or family member to talk, offload or ask for advice and support.
- **Try not to get angry with your baby**, as this will only make the crying worse.

CONTACTS

Contacts and Support for You & Your Baby

PROFESSIONALS WHO CAN SUPPORT YOU & YOUR BABY DURING THIS PERIOD

Most of the relevant professionals you can contact for support, advice and guidance during this tricky time are in your maternity notes or in your baby's red book.

Discuss any worries you have with your GP, midwife or health visitor.

You might find it helpful to try self-help resources such as apps, websites and books. See the resources provided below for more information.

You might want to join online supports group for expectant or new parents, or groups that are specifically set up for people struggling with their mental health/wellbeing. See some resources provided below for more information.

If you are under the care of a Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Midwife, Specialist Health Visitor or a mental health worker you can get in touch with them if you are struggling

WHO TO CONTACT IN THE EVENT OF A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

- **Call your local Mental Health Crisis Teams (Cheshire, Wirral and Merseyside)**
- **Cheshire West Partnership – 0300 303 3972**
- **Mersey Care (Liverpool, Sefton) – 0151 330 7332**
- **NWBH NHS Healthcare (Halton, Knowsley, St. Helens, Warrington) – 01925 275309**
- **NWBH NHS Healthcare (Wigan) – 01942 636395**

Emergency services (999) if you don't feel you can call the crisis team but need to keep yourself safe right now, seek immediate help from your local emergency service.

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO KEEP YOU OR YOUR BABY SAFE

Local Children's Social Services Team (Cheshire, Wirral, Merseyside).

Children's Social Services are there to support parents and infants during breakdown and when there are significant risks to children and families' safety, health and wellbeing. Many families struggle and find themselves at crisis and breaking point.

Children's Social Services Teams are there to support and protect babies, children and families. See <http://www.gov.uk> for listing of all Children Social Care Services. Again the professionals supporting you can give you the contact number for your local service.

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU NEED PSYCHOLOGICAL THERAPY

Search NHS Psychological Therapies (IAPT) Website to find your local IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) Service [https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Psychological%20therapies%20\(IAPT\)/LocationSearch](https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Psychological%20therapies%20(IAPT)/LocationSearch) or speak to your GP who can make the referral.

LIST OF LOCAL IAPT SERVICES ACROSS CHESHIRE & MERSEYSIDE

- **Liverpool** - Talk Liverpool (0151 228 2300)
- **Knowsley** - Think Wellbeing Knowsley – (0151 430 1707)
- **Sefton** - Access Sefton 01704 395785
- **Halton** – Think Wellbeing Halton (0151 292 6954)
- **Warrington** – Warrington Primary Care Psychology Service (01925 401 720)
- **Wigan** – Think Wellbeing Wigan (01942 264 051)
- **Wirral** – Wirral Psychological Therapies (0151 649 1859)
- **Cheshire** - 1829 Building (01244 650 300)
- **Western Cheshire** – Western Cheshire IAPT Service (01244 397 761)

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING TO BOND WITH YOUR BABY

If you are struggling to bond with your baby and feel this is impacting on yours and your baby's mental health/wellbeing – please be reassured these feelings are 'normal' for many parents but may need some help/support.

Parent Infant Mental Health Services and other community **Support Services** can help you in building the bond/relationship you want with your baby. Speak to your named Midwife, Health Visitor or GP for advice on Parent Infant Mental Health support available.

SPECIALIST PARENT INFANT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (PIMHS) ACROSS CHESHIRE & MERSEYSIDE

- **Knowsley** – Building Attachment and Bonds Service (BABS) – 0151 430 1757
- **Liverpool** – Parent and Baby Relationship Service – 0151 702 5535
- **Halton and Warrington** – Halton & Warrington Baby Infant Bonding Service (BIBS) – 01928 568162
- **Wigan** – Wigan Parent Infant Mental Health Service (PIMHS) – 07891708799

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Organisations offering support to parents, infants and professionals across Cheshire and Merseyside. See organisations websites for useful resources, guidance, advice, support for parents and infants during this period of Covid-19.

- Cheshire & Merseyside Women's & Children's Services Partnership
- <https://www.improvingme.org.uk>.
- **Parent Infant Foundation UK** - <https://parentinfantfoundation.org.uk> (0300 365 8747)
- **Association of Infant Mental Health (AIMH)** <https://aimh.org.uk>. (07468 528994)
- **Institute of Health Visiting** <https://ihv.org.uk>. (0207 2657352)
- **NSPCC - The UK Childrens Charity** <https://www.nspcc.org.uk>. (Number for Adults: 0808 800 5000) and (Number for Children – Childline 0800 1111)

LOCAL COMMUNITY SERVICES SUPPORTING PARENTS AND INFANTS

Speak to your named Midwife, Health Visitor or GP for information about other valuable community services/contacts that can support you and your baby – such as:

- **CHILDREN CENTRES** Children Centres offer invaluable support for parents and infants
- **BREASTFEEDING ADVICE/SUPPORT** – All areas have Breastfeeding Support Services
- **HOUSING SUPPORT**
- **CITIZENS ADVICE, SUPPORT WITH DEBTS/FINANCES**
- **VOLUTARY FAMILY, PEER SUPPORT GROUPS/SERVICES**

WHO TO CONTACT IF YOU WANT IMMEDIATE TELEPHONE SUPPORT/ SERVICES

TELEPHONE SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

- **Mind** – mental health charity & support: 0300 123 3393
- **Samaritans** - If somethings troubling you, then get in touch: 24 hours a day, 365 days a year: www.samaritans.org Call 116 123 free from any phone.
- **Rethink Mental Illness**: Supporting people with mental illness www.rethink.org
- **CALM** - Campaign against living miserably - in response to the high suicide rate among men: www.thecalmzone.net 0800 58 58 58 - 7 days a week, 5pm to midnight (anonymous & free phone on 3, Virgin, Orange and Vodafone networks).
- **PANDAS** (Pre And PostNatal Depression Advice and Support) www.pandasfoundation.org.uk 0808 1961 776.
- **SANEline** is a national out-of-hours telephone helpline (0300 304 7000) offering emotional support and information for people affected by mental health problems.
- **Shout** - UK's first free 24/7 text service for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It is a place to go if you're struggling to cope and need help via text message.

TELEPHONE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

- **Cruse Bereavement Care** - Phone: 0808 808 1677 Website: www.cruse.org.uk
- **Relate**: Phone: 0300 100 1234 www.relate.org.uk

TELEPHONE SUPPORT/HELP WITH ABUSE & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- **Women's Aid**: helpline@womensaid.org.uk, you can also chat to a support worker using their free instant messenger service, Mon-Fri (10am-12pm)
- **Refuge** support women and children who are experiencing domestic violence. They provide a freephone 24 hour helpline: 0808 2000 247 and provide information relating to COVID-19.
- **Rape and Sexual Abuse Support** - Call 0330 3630063 www.rapecentre.org

GOOD RECOMMENDED ACCESSIBLE/ONLINE RESOURCES

- **The NHS Every Mind Matters Campaign** has information online specific to looking after your mental health during the Coronavirus outbreak.
- **Women and Children's Partnership mental health resource** for Cheshire and Merseyside. <https://kindtoyourmind.org/>
- **The Maternal Mental Health Alliance** has information and links on supporting perinatal mental health during the COVID-19 crisis available online.
- **APP Network** provide support to women and families affected by post partum psychosis and offer online peer support forums.
- **NSPCC – Handle With Care Campaign** <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/leaflets/handle-with-care>
- **MIND** have lots of free self-help activities available, as well as tools for coping with the mental health impacts of COVID-19 and self-isolation.
- **The NHS Apps Library** has a list of Mental Health apps.
- **NHS Audio Guide** on stress, anxiety and depression.
- **Relate** – Support on building on your relationship with your partner during Covid-19. <https://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/covid-19-advice-and-information/>



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