**Wellbeing Advice Issue 5 – Managing with life after Lockdown, Mrs Wardle at Cavendish**

As we start to adjust to our ‘new normal’, we are faced with the lifting of lockdown, for some of us this couldn’t come soon enough and we are ready to embrace the wider community however, for some this is not good news as anxiety and concerns around personal safety arise.

We are still in a period of uncertainty, even though some restrictions are being lifted, there is still no known time when this will all be over completely. Trying to navigate this is all encompassing and can lead to increased levels of anxiety. For some, the past few months have been a period of relaxing in tracksuits and trousers with elasticated waists and limited interaction with others. Some people have in fact enjoyed the safety of their home and the lack of social interaction has actually been reassuring for them. Thinking about changing this can be daunting, not only because the thought of leaving the house to go back to work / school, but also the idea of face to face interaction with people and colleagues.

Now is the time to start putting routines back into practice, treat each day as a normal work / school day. Get up at your normal work / school time, and follow your usual routine. It is important to start bringing routines back into play and actually getting dressed, brushing your hair, and starting each day fresh and ready. The clothes that we wear can affect our moods, confidence, attitudes and the way we behave and interact with others. Now more than ever think of this as your psychological armour for re-entering the world post lock-down. Organise your wardrobe and choose outfits that make you feel good and confident and wear those each day. Not only will this mentally empower you, but it will also alleviate a lot of pressure and stress when the day finally arrives - It will be one less thing to worry about and simplicity is key when it comes to reducing anxiety.

Try and organise your exercise to a similar time each day, put on shoes and go for a nice walk, make the most of where we live and experience all the beauty of it. Take advantage of this time to appreciate all you have around you. Starting the day with exercise is a good way to invigorate yourself and flood your body and mind with feel good chemicals like endorphins. After being at home for so many weeks, it is sometimes a bit difficult to feel comfortable and trusting in the company of strangers again so instead of darting into the nearest hedge when someone walks towards you, try smiling and making eye contact, this will help to build your confidence again and could quite possibly make someone else’s day! So don’t focus on your feelings of awkwardness, focus instead on brightening another person’s day.

Keep communicating with friends and family, now that you can meet up with another household, this is a good time to have face to face communication with people you know and start preparing yourself for the work / school dynamic. If you are struggling with the many Zoom / online calls and meetings, maybe try calling someone and have a telephone conversation if this makes you feel more confident.

Changing routines can be challenging and just as we found it difficult to get into the routine of lockdown, it is only reasonable that we will also find it difficult to come out of the routine of lockdown. So try to keep a routine for the week, such as chores, work and school work and enjoy the relaxation of a weekend to prepare yourself for the return to work / school.

We still want to reinforce the need for our pupil’s to remain focussed on a routine as similar to the school day as possible,

* Wake up at a similar time in the morning (similar to your normal waking time during the work / school week)
* Ensure your bed times are reasonable, it is very important to get a good night sleep and feel fresh at the start of the new day
* Get dressed, keep your personal hygiene good
* Take breaks just as you would at school
* Please remain proud of your academic accomplishments, take pride in the work you do and the effort it takes to complete it
* Keep in touch with friends and family safely and always talk about concerns or worries you may have as this is very important to keep yourself emotionally healthy
* Remember that staff are available to support you as well.  Email us on **wellbeing@cavendish.e-sussex.sch.uk**with any concerns or worries you may have.

It is important for people to feel confident about the lifting of lockdown and a return to our ‘normal’ routines and behaviours. This will understandably be very difficult for some who are uncertain and to a certain extent afraid of leaving the safety and comfort of home and returning to work / school, the fear is not so much about leaving the house but more about becoming unwell as a result. It is vital therefore that the guidelines are clear in people’s minds which can reduce uncertainty, thus reducing anxiety. It is also very understandable that a lot of anxiety can come from a loss of confidence having not done things for a very prolonged period of time, this can be going out to work or being at school. This compounded by the feelings of concern about face to contact again can be overwhelming. When people are reintegrating we can suddenly be hit with a lot of stimuli which can cause a sensory overload, remember to be kind and gentle with yourself, try and focus on some key steps to staying calm.

When contemplating that first commute, it is natural to feel a high level of anxiety. Be prepared not only physically but also mentally and emotionally. Have the standard essentials ready such as a face covering, gloves, anti bac, wipes but also make sure you have downloaded your favourite pod cast or a playlist to listen to which will hopefully relax you and transport you to a place of calm, take a book with you as well.

[Psychologies has a lovely Wellness article about boosting your body’s natural feel good chemicals](https://www.psychologies.co.uk/self/how-to-boost-your-natural-feelgood-chemicals.html#:~:text=It's%20a%20survival%20mechanism%3A%20in,chemical%20%E2%80%93%20cortisol%20%E2%80%93%20comes%20in.)

[Emotion Matters have put together 10 helpful steps for maintaining mental wellness during Covid-19.](https://emotionmatters.co.uk/2020/04/04/10-positive-ways-to-manage-your-mental-health-during-covid-19/)

[The national Autistic Society has some great information for preparing children for the return to school](https://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/coronavirus/updates/education-and-school/back-to-school-guide.aspx) This page is helpful for all children dealing with difficult changes at the moment,not only for children with SEN provision.

If anticipating the day when you have to reintegrate by going to work or school for the first time or simply worried about face to face contact with people, I have found a great video to help you stay calm in tricky situations, click [HERE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R8srJcF65Mc) to watch it.

I have found a short video on youtube about maintaining routines during Covid-19, click [HERE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9bMfSaNnaM) to watch it.