



**Down's Syndrome
Association**

A Registered Charity No. 1061474

Emotional Well-being



A reminder to look after ourselves

For parents, carers and supporters

A Down's Syndrome Association publication

Our resources and Information Team are here to help

Please see our website for up-to-date information: downs-syndrome.org.uk

If you have any questions, please get in touch with our helpline by calling 0333 1212 300 or by emailing us on info@downs-syndrome.org.uk.

Helpline Monday - Friday 10am-4pm | Telephone: 0333 1212 300

Emotional wellbeing

Emotional wellbeing is about how we think and feel and how we cope with life events. It is also about how we deal with our own emotions as well as those of others. How we relate to ourselves can have an effect on our emotional wellbeing. It is easy to feel good about ourselves when things are going well but life isn't always like that.

We are going through big changes in the way we live and we are being asked to rapidly adapt whilst experiencing increased levels of worry and uncertainty. We recognise that working from home, self-isolation and social distancing mean there are things we previously enjoyed doing that, for the time being, we might not be able to do. Our changed circumstances will bring challenges, unexpected positives, stresses and joys.

If your son/daughter or relative is spending more time at home, perhaps you are finding yourself with less time for you than is usual. It may be that you are having to cut out the activities and things that you do in your life that give you pleasure, energy and keep you going. It has never been more important to think about our emotional wellbeing and to look after ourselves where we can.

Key message: Be kind to yourself – If you don't look after yourself, it can make it harder to support someone else's emotional well-being

Putting aside some time

Having your son/daughter or adult relative at home for longer than usual and keeping them occupied will probably result in you feeling a little more tired, drained and depleted of energy. For some families this may present challenges and result in higher levels of stress.

It is really important that you find some time each day to do something that keeps you going (sustains you) whether that is talking to a friend on the phone or online, exercise, reading a book, meditating etc.

This is to prevent something called burnout which is what happens if we cut out all the nourishing things in our life and only do the essentials.

It can help to put aside some time to think about those things that sustain you and those that drain you. You could make a list like the one below. Each day make sure you do at least one thing from your sustainers list and remember you are doing it for you and those that you care for.

Sustainers Things that give you pleasure and energise you	Drainers Things you don't enjoy and drain you of energy

Mindfulness for parents or mindful parenting

Although we refer in this piece to '*mindful parenting*', the ideas and suggestions here are equally relevant to anyone in a caring or supporting role.

Mindfulness is a way of calming the mind and body by bringing a non-judgmental awareness to our present experience (what we are thinking/feeling/doing/going through). So this is about kindly acknowledging and recognising where we are at without judging ourselves or our experiences.

Mindful parenting means bringing that same awareness to the experience of parenting. Mindful parenting is allowing ourselves to feel how we feel without telling ourselves we shouldn't feel like that as well as bringing this same acceptance to our sons/daughters. It is about being really present with them, paying attention to their needs as well as our own.

We try to focus on one thing at a time rather than 100 things all at once and this means we can be more responsive rather than reacting and then feeling overwhelmed.

It is really important to acknowledge any difficult feelings and emotions you have as this can help to avoid meltdowns (from both parents and sons/daughters!) and a useful way to do this is by checking in with how we are.

The three step breathing space can be a really useful tool to use throughout the day

Step 1 – Check in by asking yourself *'how am I feeling right now?'* acknowledging body sensations, thoughts and emotions without any judgment. You may want to close your eyes if that helps.

Step 2 – Bringing the attention to the breath and following the breath all the way in and out for about a minute

Step 3 – Broadening the attention back to the whole body and then to sounds around us

In addition to this each day pick one activity that you and your son or daughter can do together just for fun and see if you can be fully present with them.

Making mistakes and treating ourselves with kindness

Everybody makes mistakes particularly in difficult times like the present.

It is important to remember we are allowed to make mistakes; we're not superhuman.

Many of us beat ourselves up when we make mistakes. We tell ourselves that we *'should have known or done better'* and we become our own worst critic.

Mistakes can help us to learn and make progress, and criticising ourselves when we make a mistake doesn't achieve anything except to make us feel even more rubbish than we already do.

If we want to look after ourselves then we need to be kind to ourselves and tolerant of our mistakes and imperfections.

We need to talk to ourselves with a kind voice, in the same way we would probably talk to a good friend if they were feeling bad.

Treating ourselves with kindness can help us to see where we went wrong, and to grow and improve from the mistakes we make.

We do not provide a counselling service but you can pick up the phone and call our Helpline if you want to let off steam, have questions and/or need a sounding board.

Call 0333 1212 300, Monday to Friday, 10am-4pm.

The Down's Syndrome Association provides information and support on all aspects of living with Down's syndrome.

We also work to champion the rights of people with Down's syndrome, by campaigning for change and challenging discrimination.

A wide range of Down's Syndrome Association publications can be downloaded free of charge from our website.

Contact us

Down's Syndrome Association

Langdon Down Centre,
2a Langdon Park, Teddington,
Middlesex, TW11 9PS

t. 0333 1212 300

f. 020 8614 5127

e. info@downs-syndrome.org.uk

e. training@downs-syndrome.org.uk

w. www.downs-syndrome.org.uk

Wales

e. wales@downs-syndrome.org.uk

Northern Ireland

e. enquiriesni@downs-syndrome.org.uk



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