

Staying at home: supporting you with your routines, activity and wellbeing

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**Cheshire and Mersey Specialist Perinatal
Service**

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Be kind to yourself

Don't expect to function the same in very different circumstances

We are in unprecedented and difficult times. You may be feeling fearful and anxious – these are normal, natural responses to such a challenging event.

Staying at home is also another challenge. There is a saying that “it takes a village to raise a child” and it's likely you currently have limited access to your external village, whether this includes your extended family, friends, local children's centre, other mums in groups you attend, work colleagues or anyone else who supports you and your family.

Self-isolating can be lonely, frustrating and sometimes overwhelming. Your routines and the roles you identify with have likely changed, albeit temporarily. You may have older children who are now off school or getting used to working from home.

We wanted to create this resource to support you through these times, in particular to think with you about how your routines, activities and relationships can support your mental health and wellbeing.



Daily Routine

Top tips for the morning:

- Make your bed, open your curtains and get dressed for the day (loungewear counts!)
- Get your little ones ready for the day too as you usually would, helping to keep a daily routine
- Write a simple schedule for the day ahead – include mealtimes and medication, and set one small goal that you would like to achieve for the day ahead (more on this later!)



*It's OK to
have the odd
"lazy day" too*

Top tips for the evening:

- If you don't already have a set bedtime routine, now may be an opportunity to spend time working on activities that work for you and your little one, eg bath time, time for a song or short story, or quiet time. These activities help cue baby to 'bedtime'
- If you do have a bed time routine try to keep this as usual as possible
- Sleep for you: Stick to a regular bedtime and try to wake up at the same time everyday, even if it's hard to begin with. You can also further support your sleep by:
 - Trying to reduce caffeine in the day and avoid it after 6pm
 - Trying to do some sort of physical exercise in the late afternoon can help to make your body tired and help you to sleep (as well as helping your mood). Try to do some exercise every day. More ideas coming later!
 - When in bed think of positive things, eg think of five 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 your chest, deliberately slow your breathing, breathe deeply in your stomach instead of high in your chest)

Filling in time in-between:

- Predictable activities such as meal times or feeding can help to anchor other activities around them
- Mixing it up: having a balance of different activities in our routines supports our health and wellbeing. Try and engage in a mix of self-care activities, productive activities (those that give us a sense of purpose and end reward) and leisure based activities. It can be hard finding time to do this, particularly with a young family, however try even just for 10 minutes during nap times. See the next page for some ideas.

Enjoy music

Listen to music you like or find some new music to listen to, sing to your baby or children, play an instrument or listen to a podcast.

Get artistic

Draw a picture, take a photograph, make a photo album, start a scrapbook perhaps of your pregnancy journey or your baby's development, do some sewing / knitting or colouring in.

Animals

Go into the garden with your baby and listen to birds singing, bird watch from a window, watch Chester Zoo's Facebook page* for online streaming of their animals.

Play with children

Role play, imaginative play, messy play, garden play, dance with them, or sing with them.

Screen time

Watch your favourite TV show, a film or National Theatre plays with your family on Thursday nights at 7pm on their YouTube channel (link at the end of the pack)

Try to get a balance of activities in your routine

Complete tasks around the house

Do some DIY, ironing, washing up, cleaning, organise your or your children's wardrobes. Talk to your baby as you go along, tell them what you are doing. Head to The Organised Mum Method website (link at the end of pack) for ideas to help you organise these activities.

Watch something or journal

Write a poem, story, diary entry or letter.

Try something new, try something old!

Use an online tutorial to learn a new skill such as a language, how to plait, how to play an instrument, familiarise yourself with a new recipe or other creative activity. Or why not try something you liked and enjoyed doing in your childhood?

Activities that give you a sense of purpose and achievement

Activities that provide you with enjoyment and pleasure, or time for you

Activities that help to meet your self-care needs

Prioritise self care

Take a bath or shower, practice relaxation or mindfulness, pray or practice yoga. Other creative ideas include journaling or gratitude diaries.

Get active

Do a home workout or an online exercise class. Head to Mamma Tribe or Emma's Diary Facebook groups (links at the end of the pack) for classes including some for you and baby. Dance to music, go up and down the stairs, or just walk with baby around the garden.

Connect with others

Keep yourself and your baby in touch with friends and family with WhatsApp, Skype, Zoom, or FaceTime. Write a letter to a friend or family member or why not get in touch with an old friend?

Prioritise self care

Are you sticking to meal times or snacking? When preparing food or bottles for your little one make sure you prep food for you too! There's a link at end of the pack for family friendly meal ideas

Activity levels

Doing too much?

Doing too little?

Feeling overwhelmed?

Doing too much or too little can actually be as unhelpful as each other. Setting yourself realistic expectations and goals, whilst also being mindful of additional roles you may have recently adopted, eg becoming a new parent, or supporting older children now at home, can help to avoid this.

If you feel like you're doing too much...

Trying not to overwhelm ourselves with too many things to do is easier said than done! If you are feeling overwhelmed, identify priority activities by thinking about which ones will likely have the biggest impact for you or your family if completed in a day.

Break the task down, be specific, set limits...

Examples: Complete one load of washing and hang out. Read a short story to baby. These small tips can make activities more achievable and in turn support our motivation.

If you feel like you're not doing enough...

Revisit the diagram on the previous page and have a think about what activities you are currently completing. You may feel that you are doing loads of activities from two areas but not so much in the other one. Or, try to take a different perspective...

Make a list of the things you have done today rather than those you haven't

You'll probably find that you are doing more than you have given yourself credit for and it may help you think about what you would like to be doing more of.

Scheduling

What is it and why do it?

Scheduling is planning your activities in advance. It can:

- Help you achieve your goals and priorities in the time you have available
- Make planning and organising your day easier
- Increase your motivation and productivity

You may have tried scheduling before and it may or may not have worked for you, however given the recent unique changes to your routine and daily structure, revisiting and retesting it may be helpful.

Try different styles of schedules to see what might be helpful for you and your family:

- ☑ Weekly planner – can be used to set yourself simple tasks each day / meal plan for your family or baby weaning / record feeds, nappy changes, etc
- ☑ Daily schedule – focus on one day at a time, reduce overwhelm
- ☑ To-do list – remember keep this small and specific!
- ☑ Activity list - find some time to make a list of activities you are able to do with your little ones, when feeling overwhelmed this may be a helpful reminder of ideas
- ☑ Things I have done today– great way to give time and attention to your achievements, however big or small
- ☑ There are also apps available to help you to log feeds, naps, sleep, etc

Have a look at the templates on the following two pages, which you can use to try scheduling - one may work better for you than the others, so think about what might work best for you and your family right now!

Weekly planner

Morning	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Afternoon							
Evening							

Daily schedule

Day / Date:

9am	
10am	
11am	
12pm	
1pm	
2pm	
3pm	
4pm	
5pm	
6pm	

Notes

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Things to do today /
Things I have done today

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Other thoughts...

Think about your space:

Your environment can have an impact on your day to day functioning and wellbeing. Think a little about your own space - here are a few ideas:

- Being in isolation means spending more time in your space. This may mean more mess and more stress! Think about how you are using your time and how impactful the task is
- Spending less time outside may be impacting your mood and wellbeing. Think about different ways you can connect with the outdoors, eg sitting by open window with baby, going for a walk with baby, sitting in garden with baby, exercising outdoors with baby
- Background noise – do you leave the news / television on without purposefully watching it? Is this helpful or is this just noise? Perhaps playing music you enjoy is more helpful to your mood
- Using the spaces in your home for their purpose – enjoying tea in front of the TV can be a treat and an easy habit to get into, but if you have space to eat at a table try and stick to these routines and changes of scenes. Try not to spend too much of the day time in your bedroom - use your day areas in the day and maintain a day/night routine

Think about your village

Self-isolating can be lonely, frustrating and sometimes overwhelming therefore it is really important to try to access “your village” and stay in touch with your support networks, whilst you cannot do that face to face there is a range of apps and services to help you stay connected:

Instagram, Twitter, Facebook messenger, FaceTime, WhatsApp video calls, Zoom, Skype and others...

But – even though it’s important to link in with your village, it’s just as helpful to consider when to limit your exposure to social media, news and similar outlets to protect your wellbeing and reduce overwhelm!

What’s on offer?

Check out what’s going on in your local communities as many groups, support services and activities are finding new ways of connecting with their members – perhaps their websites and social media pages can help!

If you and your little one were enjoying activities, eg baby sensory groups, perhaps you can search for alternatives online, ie YouTube sessions.

Useful links

Self-care:

Self-care activity ideas: www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care

Advice from Mind: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse2895a

Mindfulness: www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/Mindfulness.pdf

Free streaming videos for you and/or your children:

Chester Zoo Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/chesterzoo1/?ref=page_internal

National Theatre Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/nationaltheatre

Activity ideas for little ones:

Baby sensory: <http://youtu.be/F8vCXk96uZA>

Bounce and Rhyme for babies: <http://youtu.be/H7sspSCQJyU>

Activity ideas for 0-5 year olds: www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/activities/zjh8hbk?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=generic-toddler

Easy toddler activities: <https://busytoddler.com/2016/11/40-super-easy-toddler-activities>

Activities you can do in your own home from the Woodland Trust:

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2020/03/kids-nature-activities-self-isolation

Indoor activity Ideas from the scouts: www.scouts.org.uk/the-great-indoors

Virtual exercise classes:

Mama Tribe UK Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/mamatribeuK

Emma's Diary Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/TheEmmasDiary

Support organising domestic activities:

The Organised Mum Method: www.theorganisedmum.blog

Podcasts:

Motherkind: Zoe Blaskey - brings you some of the best wellbeing teachers in the world to help you find your calm, happy place in the madness of modern mum life. Latest - Episode with Julia Samuel - psychotherapist author of 'This too Shall Pass'

Happy Mum, Happy Baby: Giovanni Fletcher - Discusses all aspects of parenthood - the highs, the lows, the challenges and rewards

Food for the family:

Baby and weaning: www.nhs.uk/start4life/weaning and www.nhs.uk/start4life/baby

Healthy, family friendly meals: www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes and www.nhs.uk/change4life/dinners