



# Newsletter

No 7

14/5/2020

We have now completed 7 weeks in lockdown. We hope you are all staying well and managing to cope in this extraordinary situation. The theme of this week's newsletter is "Take Notice" which is one of the Five Ways to well-being. The theme can be interpreted in several ways, and hopefully this newsletter will cover several aspects of it. One way to take notice is Mindfulness, and there are several articles about this. Another way is to take notice of things we have never looked at before, perhaps an art gallery or a nature website. There are links to several websites.

It is quite understandable that in these unusual times we may take more notice of the news. Some people find this helpful in trying to understand what is happening. Others find this distressing and unhelpful as there is so much that is currently unknown. If it helps to distance yourself from the news that is OK. At the time of writing this we are waiting for the prime minister to clarify what we are and are not allowed to do. To find out more go to a reliable website e.g. Public Health England.

Another thing that is understandable is to notice more about ourselves in helpful and unhelpful ways. You may notice becoming anxious when you go shopping or you may see this as exciting as it breaks the routine of being at home all the time. I notice myself getting excited when I can secure a click and collect slot at the supermarket. A friend got excited when she unblocked her drain. You may notice that you are getting enjoyment from different things eg hearing a cuckoo. Or you may notice that things which usually lift your spirits don't anymore. These are unusual times and our reactions may be different.

After 7 weeks of walking the same few routes each day it may be that you are finding them dull and dreary. Take notice of what is around you. I have just arrived home from walking to the local shops in the middle of a suburban housing estate. On my walk I noticed that lots of roses are coming into bloom with their glorious smell. The weeds are doing well here and there. Then I noticed an amazing smell and then saw a lilac bush. I nearly trod on a ladybird and watched a magpie swoop down to the road to grab a morsel of food. Enjoy noticing while you are walking.

Once again, we would love to hear from you.

Stay safe and well,

The Recovery in Mind Team

Don't miss Angela on Kennet Radio on a Friday morning just after the news around 8:03am!

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## Sometimes it Rains

Sometimes it rains  
When we were hoping for sunshine.

Try and escape the rain  
And you will get wet, and tired.  
Try and fight the rain  
And you will be wet, and angry.  
Be still, breathe and accept the rain  
And you will be wet, and calm.

In the calmness you might just remember that  
The rain will pass.

Oh, and that you're carrying an umbrella.

Poem by Peter Morgan



## My journey of developing my own sense of 'Taking Notice' - by Angela

It would be fair to say that before my first 'breakdown' I spent much of my time planning or focussing on 'tomorrow' or worrying myself about 'yesterday'. I wasn't aware of how I was living my life, as many of us don't, until it all came crashing down. I thought that being so busy and productive was a good trait as I got lots done and was always seen as someone who was capable and helpful. Ultimately, my time in 2014 in the Mother and Baby psychiatric unit in Winchester made me finally stop and think about what had really been going on for me, and how I ended up living away from home (with my then 8 month old baby) with a severe mental illness, relying upon others to support me. It slowly dawned on me that one of my biggest challenges was simply not being able to say 'no'. Therefore, I was run ragged as I felt I had to do everything that others wanted or expected me to do. This wasn't anyone else's fault - it was purely my own 'problem' of feeling that I couldn't let people down or show my vulnerability that I wasn't able to do everything or be perfect. I had to learn to be who I really am. Not what others might want or expect me to be, or not what I thought I should or wanted to be. This realisation helped me to be more 'me' and therefore I was able to not worry about yesterday and what I should or shouldn't have done.

I began to feel liberated about being 'me'. So, with this new sense of who I really was, I also realised I needed to work on 'living in the moment' and 'taking notice' of what was going on around me and for me that very moment, hour and day. Not planning constantly or feeling anxious about letting others down or being unhelpful. One of the things that has helped me is to limit myself to attend or do a maximum of 3 things a day. If I'm going to work all day, then going to the shops on the way home and cooking supper is enough. I don't have to tidy the house that evening or do more work. Practising Self-Compassion too has given me the ability to think like this ..... that I'm just the same as the rest of humanity (imperfect, and that I'm not alone thinking like this), that I have the power and ability to show myself the same compassion that I show to others, and finally, noticing (Take Notice) of how I feel without judgement or over reaction.

One of the things I now 'allow' myself to do is to stop if I see something that I think is beautiful, or that I am curious to look at more closely. I take pictures with my phone like this one of a field of poppies that I saw last summer. It took my breath away and so I stopped for 10 minutes and just enjoyed the sight of the poppies, the sun on my skin and the gentle summer breeze fluffing up my hair!



# Take Notice

Wasing Wellbeing is a Yoga, Meditation and Wellbeing Hub on beautiful Wasing Estate, Berkshire. We are currently running a weekly schedule of online classes to help us stay grounded and connected to ourselves during this time. For online timetable and booking visit:

[www.bookwhen.com/wasingwellbeing](http://www.bookwhen.com/wasingwellbeing)

The one thing that underpins yoga and mindfulness practices, is the idea that the way we pay attention and what we pay attention to literally shapes our brain. In fact, the way we pay attention also shapes the wiring throughout the whole human nervous system, suggesting the heart to pound or the breath to quicken if we feel there is a threat, or if we keep repeating thoughts that something is wrong with the situation we find ourselves in. There is nothing wrong with this response of course, it is entirely human and common to all of us - it's just not optimal for our mental and emotional wellbeing. We know now that through some very simple practices we can start to notice with a wider lens and broader perspective, working with the body and mind together to restore a sense of ok-ness with the present moment, whatever challenges it may hold. I call this sense of ok-ness "*Befriending yourself*" - or in other words, learning to become more and more comfortable over time with that which might previously have made us uncomfortable.

Here are my Top 3 Tips below for "*Befriending Yourself During Tough Times*"

- **Compassion** - Have compassion for yourself - if only it were that easy! When we get stuck in a negative spiral of thoughts, often the last thing that is accessible to our brain, body and nervous system is a sense of kindness and compassion. What is amazing is how quickly we can develop the compassion muscle once we get started. We need to imagine ourselves back into a space of soothing our inner child, talking to ourselves in a way as if we only had love for the wounded places in us - it might help to imagine a person or pet with whom you find that level of kindness automatic. And then act on it - hold your heart with your hands, say out loud "it's ok, this moment will pass, I am here for you now". I personally like to add a hot water bottle and warm blanket to the mix - any ingredients that take you effectively from self-critic to self-caregiver. If you are finding it really tricky, apply the 1% rule - how can you be 1% more compassionate towards yourself in this moment?
- 
- **Breath** - There are an abundance of soothing breath techniques to work with when your nervous system feels a little stressed or frazzled. It is worth setting a specific time aside every day to settle into a few minutes of practice. Morning can be a great time to focus on your breath, as it sets the tone for the rest of the day, but the main thing is to choose a time that fits around your other daily commitments. I would recommend 5 minutes to start with, building up to 10 or longer, and perhaps setting a breath-break reminder 2-3 times per day until it becomes a habit (if you are really serious about seeing the benefits). We intuitively know that deepening the breath - lengthening the in breath and out breath - helps to calm the nervous system, and that is a great simple place to start. One tool I particularly love is to

start to pay attention to the pause at the end of the in-breath, and the pause and the end of the out-breath - sometimes known as square breathing because it happens in 4 equal parts. To start, make yourself comfortable seated or lying down, then inhale for a count of 4, pause for a count of 4, exhale for a count of 4, and hold for a count of 4. As it becomes a habit you can increase the duration to a count of 6 or 8. We start to notice with this practice that the breath has so much more potential than just in and out, and the places of pause give us a moment to gather our attention towards the empty space, which we can choose to fill with positive prayers or intentions towards our wellbeing.

- **Being in Your Body** - This one might sound a bit weird to start with - what do we mean by being in the body? A better way of saying it might be being *with* the body - in other words, starting to trust the inner feelings and sensations that pulse through your physical body day to day, and with awareness, start to notice and listen to the deeper wisdom held there. Non-human creatures are much better at this than we are: they know innately if they need to move, stretch, rest, hydrate, and they tend not to delay in giving the body what it needs. They also don't have quite so many sophisticated ways of distracting themselves from being in their bodies (over-using technology, thinking, consuming, numbing with TV or food)! Being with your body is the essence of feeling grounded or centred. To increase the feelings of being in your body, you could start with a top to toe body scan, taking a relaxed lying down posture and saying out loud or silently to yourself, "I am noticing my forehead, my jaw, my left shoulder, my right pinkie finger, etc". This could take 10 minutes, or longer if you have the time and can go for the deluxe version. It starts to create a connection in the moment of being safe and at home in your body. My other favourite things to get grounded and centred in your body are taking a quick barefoot walk on the grass, or flipping the last minute of your shower to the cold setting to awaken the senses in a completely different way. Both of these techniques bring tone to the vagus nerve, which is responsible for bringing us back to a place of "rest and digest" instead of "fight or flight".



Wherever you are at in looking after yourself during these strange times, know that the 1% changes really do count, and you may even come out of this having made friends with yourself for good.

If you need support in integrating any of these practices into your week, you can reach out to Jill on [wellbeing@wasing.co.uk](mailto:wellbeing@wasing.co.uk) or tel. 07734210330.

*Jill Watson*

*Yoga & Wellbeing Manager*

## Busy as a Bee

Flo, my six year old, did a little project about Bees. I took this photo with her of this tiny little bumble bee with pollen rubbed on his back from the dandelion flowers. We watched him for several minutes. It was fascinating to watch him rubbing the pollen from his legs onto his back before 'buzzing' onto the next flower. Talk about 'Busy as a Bee'!! Angela



## A Couple of Activities...

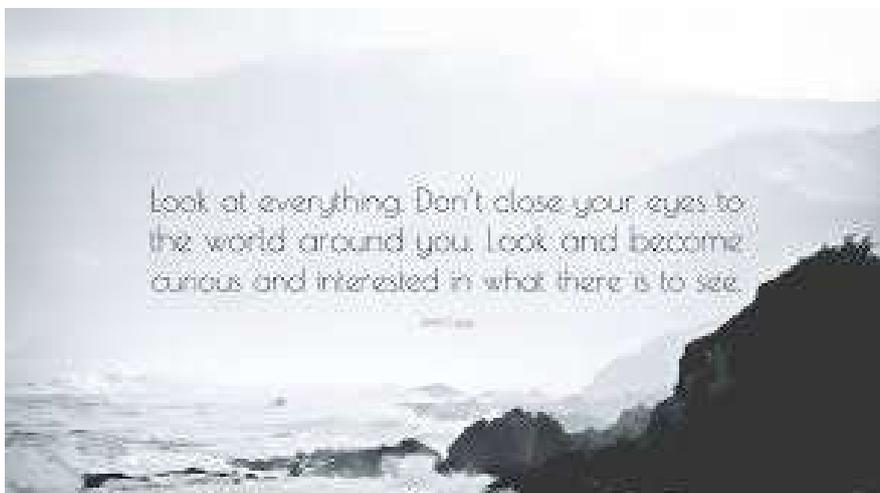
### The Sitting Spot

Create a place for you to retreat to when you need some alone time. It could be a favourite chair. Decorate your space with some of your favourite objects (eg books, cushions, photos, drawings...whatever you have access to). This space will be for reading, contemplation, daydreaming, meditating, creating, writing, or whatever you wish.

### The Powers of Observation

Sit in one spot for at least 30 minutes, preferably in nature, or with a view of nature (eg from the window, if you can't get outdoors). Document everything you can see in that time. Include movement, sounds, quality of light, smells, changes. Become a detective. Can you see something you hadn't noticed when you started?

(Taken from the [www.explorationoftheday.com](http://www.explorationoftheday.com) website.)



# Mindfulness

## What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness can be defined as: 'the quality or state of being conscious or aware of something'.

Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment.

Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them - without believing, for instance, that there's a 'right' or a 'wrong' way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practise mindfulness, our thoughts tune in to what we are sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.

**"It's about living your life as If it really mattered, moment by moment by moment by moment."** Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindfulness can be described as paying attention to what we are experiencing in this moment, and doing so with a particular attitude: one of curiosity, openness, acceptance and warmth. Simply observing what we are experiencing, right now, and bringing a warm curiosity to whatever arises.

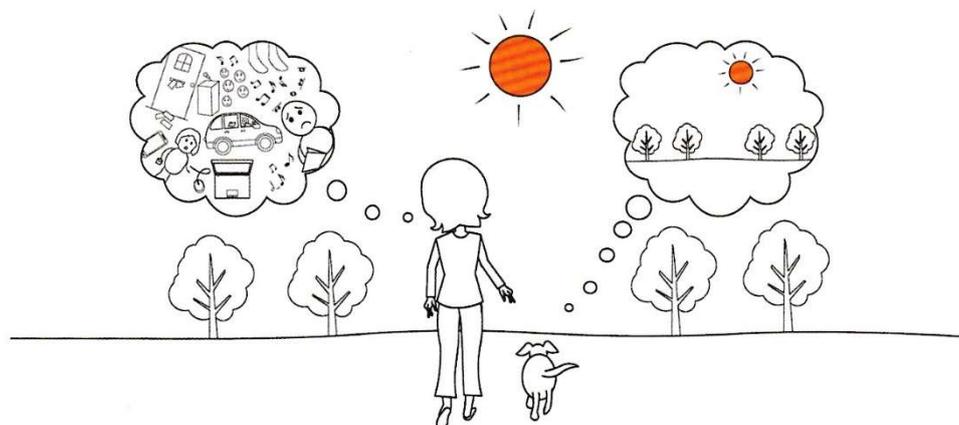
Mindfulness is something that we can bring to any aspect of our day to day life, cultivating the same qualities of curiosity, acceptance and warmth.

If you have a few moments, why not stop and ask yourself:

**"How is my mind right now?"**

Take a few moments to look and see.

Is it busy? Calm? Are your thoughts racing? Is it a confusing picture or is it crystal clear? Acknowledge this moment where you have stopped, observed and noted how your mind is. Whatever you are thinking, whatever you are feeling, simply be aware of this without a need to change what you observe. With an awareness of our experiences we can choose to relate to them in a more compassionate way.



**Mind Full, or Mindful?**

## Mindfulness of Breath

It can be helpful to bring our focus intentionally onto the breath in order to ground ourselves in what is happening right now. We can practise observing without reacting, experiencing each breath as it happens without feeling a need to change it.

You might like to try the following exercise:

### Preparation:

Sit, lie or stand in a comfortable position. You may choose to close your eyes or keep them open.

### The Breath:

Begin by gently moving your attention on to the process of breathing. Notice the sensations of each breath as they happen, whether you focus on the rise and fall of your chest or abdomen, or on the feeling of the breath at the nostrils. Really feel what it is like to breathe, just observing it as it happens.

You may find that your mind wanders (this is what our minds are prone to do!), caught by other noises or bodily sensations. When you notice that this happens, know that this is OK, and simply notice the distraction but gently bring your attention back to the breath.

### Ending the Exercise:

Take a few moments to yourself, connecting with your experience in the present moment. Expand your awareness from the breath into the space around you, and as you feel comfortable to do so, bring the exercise to a close.

### Reflections:

Take a few moments to think about what your experience was in this exercise, and how you feel in the present moment.

#### References:

Greater Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life

The Free Mindfulness Project

DEEP LISTENING IS LISTENING IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY TO  
EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO HEAR NO MATTER WHAT YOU  
ARE DOING. SUCH INTENSE LISTENING INCLUDES THE  
SOUNDS OF DAILY LIFE, OF NATURE, OR ONE'S OWN  
THOUGHTS AS WELL AS MUSICAL SOUNDS. DEEP LISTENING  
REPRESENTS A HEIGHTENED STATE OF AWARENESS AND  
CONNECTS TO ALL THAT THERE IS. AS A COMPOSER I MAKE  
MY MUSIC THROUGH DEEP LISTENING

- PAULINE OLIVEROS -

LIFEQUOTES.COM

## Micro-dosing Mindfulness by Toria (Peer Trainer)

Mindfulness in these quarantined times seems a strange solution.

Why pay attention to the minutiae of life when there are such powerful macro events going on in the world demanding attention?

Why introduce periods of silent reflection into longer periods of silence?

Why quieten the cacophony of community?

Why check in with a brain and body that 'ok is enough'?

Because, my peers, mindset matters.

Our mindset is what gives us control over the narrative of unpredictable nature of our immediate future.

The control to choose our mindset is one of the gifts we give ourselves when deciding to engage with the recovery process. And, like with all facets of recovery, Control requires gentle maintenance and thoughtful re-adjustments.

Now, as I have personally chosen to use my hour of outdoor exercise to be active and I am beset on all sides by noisy (often needy) neighbours, I've needed to develop other ways of engaging with the task of taking notice.

And so, I created the idea of **micro-dosing mindfulness**.

Instead of wasting my energy being frustrated at external interruptions and taking on more unnecessary stress I decided to see if I could keep learning and capture that sense of peace in a smaller and smaller space.

Can I sit at the back door with my headphones playing birdsong and watch the leaves dance against the sky whilst wrapping myself in the memories of us all together up at Snelsmore or Thatcham Lakes? With practice, yes.

Can I do a body scan to connect with where I'm holding stress during the time it takes the kettle to boil? With practice, yes.

Can I give all my attention to the soles of my feet and deep soothing breaths whilst standing in these never-ending queues? With practice, yes.

Micro-dosing mindfulness is about identifying areas in my life that could be better utilised to support me during my recovery journey. Adaptability is a core element of building resilience.

My next area to practice is brushing my teeth - to really really slow down and take notice of how the brush feels against my gums, how the minty flavour of the toothpaste tastes and smells, to take notice of the very odd faces I pull to get to my molars. So, my peers, whether you have a full set or a full set of dentures, how about giving it a go?

Where in your life do you think you could practise micro-dosing mindfulness?

I would love to hear your suggestions and read about your experiences.

With Hope, Control, and Opportunity - Peer Trainer, Toria xx

## Haiku

Bring to each moment  
Curiosity and love,  
Be here as you are.

## The Peace of the Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Wendell Berry



## Quick ('take notice of it rising in the oven!') soda bread

### Ingredients

500g wholemeal flour (white will be fine but it's not so good for you)  
2 tsp (sea) salt  
1 tsp bicarbonate of soda  
400ml whole milk  
Juice of 1 lemon  
2 tsp honey (or syrup or other liquid sweetener)

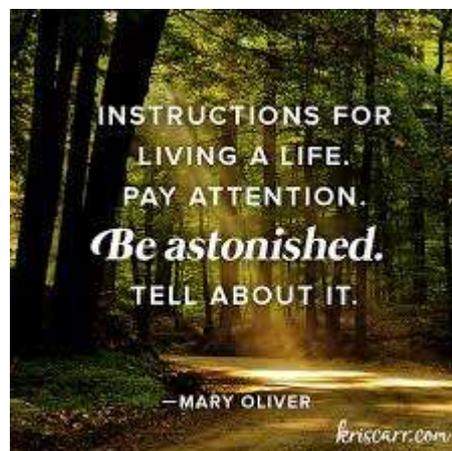


### Method

1. Heat oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Mix together the flour, salt and bicarb in a bowl.
2. Mix together the milk and lemon juice in a jug, and wait for a minute as it magically turns into buttermilk. Then stir in the honey, and simply pour it into the flour mixture. Stir it with a knife for a minute until the whole thing comes together into a sticky dough. (Add any extra flavouring whilst you're making it into dough).
3. Tip onto a floured work surface and shape it into a flattened ball.
4. Put the ball on a floured baking tray and, using a sharp knife, make a deep cross on top. (This helps it to rise evenly)
5. Put in the oven and bake for 40 mins.
6. Cool on a wire rack until warm, then slice and serve. (especially good with a big bowl of soup)

You can add extra flavours to this as you like:

1Tbs chopped dried or fresh herbs (Rosemary, thyme, sage etc)  
2 tbs chopped sundried tomato & 75g any cheese in small chunks  
75g dried fruit (sultanas, raisins, chopped apricots or cherries)  
75g chocolate drops (or simply chopped chocolate bar)  
75g chopped & toasted walnuts



## Take Notice - a growing project

A great idea for a 'Take Notice' project in our current lockdown situation would be to grow something and really pay attention to the wonderful growing process and taking care of your part in this. You might have some seeds that could be planted? Even years after their use-by date, I have managed to get allotment produce from old seeds....it's worth a try! Keep some bean seeds from inside your runner beans from the shop or allotment this year as they'll dry out & make new plants next year. Avocado stones can be grown into lovely indoor plants with patience & there are numerous projects on the internet which can help you with this. My favourite growing trick is to buy a pack of 'living salad' leaves (Lidl seemed to sell them last year in their salad aisle for about 80p) and plant them out in the garden. Last year one box seemed to give me about 30 lovely little cut & come again lettuces in 2 colours all summer long (pick a few leaves from each plant every-so-often). What amazing value was that?...plus it's fun to watch them growing.

Fresh lemongrass from the supermarket can be left to root in a jar of water for a few weeks & then planted out. That's especially fun if you can get it from the reduced basket in the first place. I found it last year for 20p & had 'Thai' flavouring in loads of things as a result.

If you want to try a growing project with kids but want to do it on a budget, don't forget that the top slice of a carrot will grow a lovely carrot top fern by sitting it in a saucer of water. A packet of mustard & cress seeds (sometimes available from the supermarket) can be grown on a piece of kitchen roll on a saucer on the window sill & is really good in an egg mayo sandwich a few weeks later!

Good luck with befriending 'mother nature' whilst you 'Take notice'.



## Take Notice- Looking up a tree

I have a friend who is a retired GP and she doesn't ever need to wear spectacles. When I asked her about this, she responded by telling me of an 'eye exercise' which she was told about as a medical student that would keep her sight good, and that she's practised ever since. I thought this was a brilliant idea as it combines 'sight saving with Mindfulness' and takes only a few minutes a few times a day.

She stands beneath a tree, the larger the better, and purposely, (clearing her mind of anything else) looks at the lowest branch and notes anything about it (only a few leaves ...or a fly sitting on it etc). She then looks at the next branch up and does the same and carries on looking up the whole tree, thus exercising her eye muscles.

It is surprising what you can see when you 'take notice' but also how your mind clears too. She reckons this regular exercise has kept her eye muscles in tip-top health and flexibility, meaning she can still read small print or work on her laptop without the aid of glasses.....even on a dark evening!

## 'Take Notice' Wordsearch by Fiona

S	E	C	I	O	H	C	D	O	O	G	S	W	O	L	L	A	C
E	S	T	N	E	M	O	M	E	H	T	R	U	O	V	A	S	L
L	S	D	V	N	P	A	Y	A	T	T	E	N	T	I	O	N	E
F	E	N	A	V	F	R	C	S	E	U	L	A	V	N	W	O	A
U	N	U	L	I	E	T	A	R	T	N	E	C	N	O	C	I	R
N	E	O	U	R	S	E	N	H	T	A	E	R	B	L	P	T	T
D	R	S	A	O	M	S	D	F	O	C	U	S	T	I	R	A	H
E	A	S	B	N	E	N	L	K	R	A	M	E	R	A	E	S	E
R	W	E	L	M	L	U	E	W	I	H	C	I	A	T	S	N	C
S	A	N	E	E	L	S	S	U	O	I	R	U	C	E	E	E	L
T	N	L	E	N	O	I	T	A	T	I	D	E	M	D	N	S	U
A	E	U	S	T	R	E	N	G	H	E	N	O	W	T	T	Y	T
N	D	F	E	E	L	I	N	G	S	E	R	A	W	A	M	L	T
D	A	D	S	U	N	E	M	I	T	E	K	A	M	K	O	I	E
I	O	N	M	I	R	N	O	I	T	A	V	I	T	O	M	D	R
N	R	I	E	D	I	S	Y	R	T	N	U	O	C	O	E	O	D
G	B	M	I	N	D	F	U	L	W	A	L	K	S	L	N	B	A
A	S	T	H	G	U	O	H	T	F	O	M	A	E	R	T	S	Y

Self understanding  
 Invaluable  
 Stream of thoughts  
 Tai chi  
 Present moment  
 Candles  
 Own values  
 Sound  
 Mindfulness  
 Concentrate

Countryside  
 Remark  
 Pay attention  
 Smell  
 Allows good choices  
 Focus  
 Environment  
 Aware  
 Broaden awareness  
 Now

Bodily sensations  
 Make time  
 Mindful walks  
 RIM (Recovery in Mind)  
 Clear the clutter day  
 Breath  
 Strengthen  
 Look at detail  
 See  
 Meditation

Motivation  
 Sun  
 Curious  
 Savour the moment  
 Feelings  
 Sunset

There are walks on which I lose myself, walks which return me to myself again.

Thomas A Clark

## External Links

A guide to 'slow looking' at Art.

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/guide-slow-looking>

Looking after yourself and nature, lots of ideas for activities.

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/looking-after-yourself-and-nature>

Identify bird songs

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/bird-songs/what-bird-is-that/>

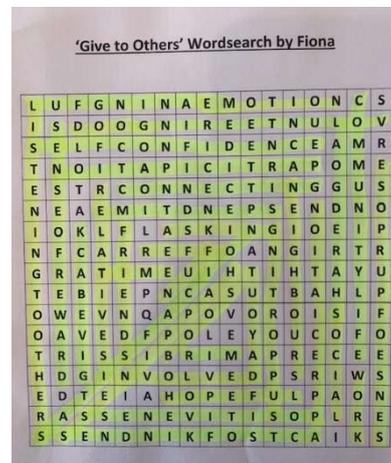
Glorious Gardens

<https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/blog/glorious-gardens>

Drawing and Mindfulness, seeing and stillness exercises

<http://www.royaldrawingschool.org/blog/drawing-and-mindfulness/>

## Answers to last week's wordsearch



## Further Help and Support

If you are struggling with your mental health and feel that you need further help & support here are some contact numbers for you:

**West Berkshire Community Mental Health Team**- 01635 292020

**CRHTT (Crisis Response and Home Treatment Team)**- 0300 365 9999

**Samaritans** - 116 123

**NHS** - 111 (number to call should you feel you are physically unwell with Coronavirus or indeed any other physical health condition which is deteriorating.

**West Berkshire Community Hub** is where you can find out information and support locally for a variety of matters relating to Coronavirus - look at their website (cut and paste this into your internet browser) <https://info.westberks.gov.uk/coronavirus-communityhub>

999 is for **EMERGENCY** calls only.