



News Bulletin

No 20

21/01/2021

Dear Students,

Welcome to the third of our weekly bulletins. Our theme this week is 'Stay Connected'. We may have felt a sense of, "here we go again!" when the latest lockdown was announced. Whatever our thoughts and feelings, the importance of staying connected through this current set of restrictions is as vital as ever.

Over these past few months, we have all developed different ways of maintaining social and working contacts and connections, whether through Zoom and other online platforms, or even the good old-fashioned telephone! I've made a few phone calls over the past week to friends I hadn't spoken to for a while, and I really noticed what a boost it gave me, and the difference it made to my week. Just enjoying some interaction with someone I don't speak to on a daily or weekly basis added variety to my routine, and expanded my home life a little.

Here at 'Recovery in Mind' we're endeavouring to stay connected with you all as best we can in these continuing physically distanced times. We hope that these weekly bulletins will help you to feel a part of the 'Recovery in Mind' community. Do please keep sending in your feedback, ideas, suggestions etc - we love hearing from you! It has been a great source of encouragement to us as a team to receive your feedback over the past few months, when we haven't been able to see most of you in person. So, let's all keep the connections going!

You might also like to consider joining us at our new online 'Coffee Catch-Up' sessions on Tuesday mornings, 10.00-11.00am, which started this week. This is an informal space to meet together and encourage one another to keep moving forward positively during these challenging times. We hope to 'see' you there!

We'd also like to encourage you to keep looking at the website for other online courses and resources. We are continually adding to our suite of 'Tips & Tools'. You might also like to have a look through the newsletter we sent out way back on 23rd April 2020 (newsletter no 4) on the theme of 'Connect', as a reminder or for further ideas (look under 'Tips & Tools' and then 'Newsletters'). Connecting with ourselves, one another and the world we live in has been identified as one of the 'five ways to wellbeing', and now is a great time to remind ourselves of those ideas and to put them into practice in our day to day lives.

Connection

I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.

Boni

Stay safe - and stay connected!

With very best wishes from all of us on the 'Recovery in Mind' team

*Stay
connected*

Ideas for Staying Connected

Whatever our individual circumstances, whether we live alone, with one other person, or in family or other groups, we have all undoubtedly had to adapt the ways in which we interact with one another to maintain our social connections during these times of physical distancing. And we have probably adjusted our means and methods of communication over the months, as rules have changed and restrictions eased or tightened in line with the ever-changing course of the pandemic. With 10 months' experience now of living this way, we have all developed new skills, strategies and tenacity for maintaining our social connections. So, now might be a great time to reflect on and review what we've learnt: what we've lost and gained, what's worked well and what hasn't, in terms of maintaining and developing healthy, supportive relationships and support networks in our lives. This puts us in a strong position to make positive, intentional choices about how we can continue to stay connected in ways which are important and meaningful to us, moving forward.

When thinking about the practicalities of staying connected, there are a number of areas we might like to consider:-

1) **One-to-one relationships** with family/friends/colleagues/neighbours through, eg phone calls, emails, texts, WhatsApp or FaceTime calls...etc...Or, maybe even old-fashioned pen and paper!! Many of us may have exchanged cards over Christmas, but written greetings don't have to be confined to particular occasions - we could send letters, cards or messages at any time of the year. And in this digital age, many people appreciate personal hand-written messages. We could even get creative and send pieces of art/craft to our family and friends!



2) **Groups:** This could be family, social, or community groups - eg church or other faith-based groups, special interest or leisure groups, etc. There are many opportunities to engage and interact via online platforms - Zoom etc - which most of us have become familiar with over this past year! And many organised groups are 'meeting' on YouTube. Don't forget that places like the Watermill Theatre, with which 'Recovery in Mind' has links, are still offering activities online, such as 'Scene Change'.

3) **Wider societal/world affairs:** There have probably been times when all of us have wanted to disengage from what's been going on in the world over this past year, and we would certainly be wise to limit our exposure to news and media coverage, and ensure that we access our information from reputable and reliable sources. At the same time, developing a sense of engagement with and connection to our society and wider world can help give us a sense of purpose, and prevent an unhealthy focus on our own circumstances and difficulties. There are so many issues we can inform ourselves about and maybe get actively involved in, depending on our own values, interests and priorities: eg environment and climate change, politics, social/racial/gender equality issues...etc.

4) **Reading:** There has been a renewed interest in reading since the onset of the pandemic, which many people have found a hugely beneficial occupation during this time. Whether it's

fiction, non-fiction, biography, poetry - any genre really - getting absorbed in a good book (or magazine article or short story, which can sometimes be more manageable) can be a great way to nurture different forms of connections. We may, for example, relate to characters in a story, and through that connect with our own emotions and experiences. Or we may read about a historical or event or person/people, and feel more connected to the world at large as a result. This form of developing our 'internal connections', so to speak, can be very powerful, particularly at a time when our 'external' connections have been somewhat curtailed. We might experience something similar by getting absorbed in a good film or documentary.



5) Connecting with ourselves: Interpersonal connections are vital, but so too is keeping in touch with our own bodies, minds and emotions. It might be helpful to pause at regular intervals during the day, just for a minute or two, to consciously 'check in' with ourselves and how we're feeling - eg, are we feeling tense or relaxed? Under pressure or overwhelmed, or are things feeling manageable? Happy or sad? Positive or negative? Hungry, thirsty, tired or energised? If we intentionally take notice of how we're feeling, we can take steps to improve anything that may be out of balance within ourselves.

This is not an exhaustive list, but gives a few pointers and suggestions for ensuring we maintain our connections and connectedness. Do add anything else which you might find/have found helpful and, as always, we'd love to hear your ideas.

No man is an island, entire of itself;
every man is a piece of the continent,
a part of the main.
John Donne

Young Connections



My daughter is in year 2 at Primary school and her class is split once again. Many of them are home learning and some of them are in school. They are such a lovely group of children and close friendships have formed since most of them have been at nursery together since they were 3 years old. They 'see' each other daily in their Zoom lessons but this is learning time so I wanted them to have some fun time together so that they continue to 'stay connected'. On a Monday afternoon I organise a 45-minute session where we do various fun activities and play together online. It has been a real success and I know many of the parents are enjoying a brief break from home learning and all that it entails. They chat away, giggle, dance and shout at every opportunity and really throw themselves into the moment of 'staying connected'. I'm enjoying it too and getting to know them all much better as a result.

Lessons from Trees

I learnt something this week about one of the ways in which the natural world maintains its connectivity. Apparently, when trees grow close together their roots connect with each other to form a support system, using a network of fungi to communicate. One has access to water, another to nutrients, and another to sunlight. No single tree has everything, but together they can grow, thrive, and withstand the storms of life.



I found this fascinating, and a great illustration of how our inter-dependence and connectedness as human beings, and the development of healthy mutually beneficial support systems in our lives, enables us to grow, flourish and build our resilience.

So, next time you go for a walk in the woods, it might be worth pausing for a moment to think about what is taking place right under your feet! Connections are everywhere!!

Connected

by William Dean Ford

Once upon time there was a world
Not so very long in the past
When staying at home meant being alone
No such thing as a mobile phone mast

Four walls to a room, before there was Zoom
Landline might ring or might not
No Wikipedia, no social media
Computers made noise and got hot

A mouse was a thing cats wanted to catch
And tablets didn't have screens
And if you dreamed of unusual stuff
No Googling what it might mean

Losing touch is a choice these days
Even the far side of the Earth
Isn't too far away to say have a nice day
To a loved one who's just given birth

Dial up supplanted, now taken for granted
That everyone's big on the net
Signals crossing oceans conveying emotions
That make even happy eyes wet

When we can't be in the very same place
We can still say hi without fuss
Even synch up and watch at the very same time
Prime, Netflix or Disney Plus

Eye shadow and lippy for hipster or hippy
Cuts down on the video call dramas
Life doesn't stop because they've closed all the shops
And you're only wearing pyjamas

Remember we're in touch on camera now
Don't wander in nude, unexpected
And remember no matter
How long we're locked down
Sweet broadband keeps us
Connected

William Dean Ford

Students' Corner

Inspired by Angela's hoar frost pictures last week, Sue had fun with her camera and captured a fantastic spider's web covered in frost and another picture of berries and lichen from her walk on Crookham Common.



External Links

Radio 2 Wellbeing programme on 24th January [BBC Radio 2 - Dr Rangan Chatterjee, 24/01/2021](#)

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>

The Age UK Berkshire Befriending and Buddying scheme is now open for referrals. Enquiries should be made directly to Age UK Berkshire by emailing info@ageukberkshire.org.uk or calling 0118 959 4242

999 is for **EMERGENCY** calls only.