

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Northamptonshire Action for Happiness Helpful Hints & Tips for Keeping Physically and Mentally Well – Week Eight

Hello All

I have been a GP for 30 years this August. This has been the toughest time I have known and during the last 2 weeks several members of our practice team have experienced personal bereavements. Using a curious creative hat, close family and friend relationships, mindfulness especially cycling through countryside around Northampton and leaning on and into my Christian faith have all helped me adjust and generally cope. “Life is difficult” and further down the road. “Life is complex” to quote Scott Peck. It is natural for us to be anxious, worry, be angry and frustrated and find it difficult to adjust to changes imposed on us and to rail against them.



The many rainbows remind us of a more positive future and a sense of hope and perhaps opportunity ahead. Some Countries are nervously coming out of lockdown and the Government is due to announce measures on Sunday to relax lockdown..... However storm clouds still linger. So how do we keep resilient and consider what our Personal, Town, County and Country

Over the next few weeks, we are moving between acceptance of a new normal “business as usual” and perhaps worrying what will future recovery plans look like? Also adjusting to more people around and concern over risk. We are approaching a new phase of the COVID experience – how do we come out of lockdown?

Pain can bring growth – we have no choice but to be creative and find new solutions:

- Examples
 - Over the course of a single weekend, as a General Practice, we switched over to virtual consultations – previously around 15% of our consultations were conducted virtually. Now it's over 90%. Feedback has been largely positive, from GPs and patients alike, so it is likely this will continue.
 - People have increased work flexibility with home working and the associated decrease in travel means less pollution, perhaps less need for grand offices.

Our national leaders are aware of the 4 waves of risk to life,

- the first of direct loss of life due to COVID 19
- the second with people not accessing normal care e.g. for Acute Coronary Chest Pain
- the third of interrupted care e.g. For cancer sufferers
- the largest from psychological and financial shock.

An early focus is needed on recovery and mental wellbeing to help us buffer against this last shock.

In Northamptonshire there is already emerging thinking how we can build on the volunteering and learning and continue to build the community resilience that has emerged in this crisis

I am involved with Suzy Dion in a Place based approach in Northampton partnering with Northants Mental Health Collaborative and Northamptonshire Health Care Foundation Trust we have developed awareness of mental health resources:

<http://www.northantsgpalliance.com/what-we-do/mental-health-and-prevention/>

Talking therapies for adults - 03009991616

Crisis Pathway for all ages – 03003301011

Award winning Crisis Cafes run by MIND – www.nhft.nhs.uk/crisis-cafe

We are also working with the local Recovery Colleges at NHFT and St Andrews as well as Adult Learning courses at NMHC to follow Learn2B and Changing Minds IAPT service in offering online wellbeing courses <https://www.nhft.nhs.uk/iapt>

1+1=3 at the Recovery College. By that I mean that the first '1' is that people learn from our teachings, they learn from the tutors and the course materials. The second '1' is that they learn from each other. This is the sort of learning that should happen in any centre for learning. Something else happens at the Recovery College almost serendipitously: people gain self-esteem, self-worth, they feel included whereas in society they often feel excluded or marginalised. In a society where people often feel identified by their diagnosis, we give them another legitimate identity, that of 'student'. None of this extra stuff is in the prospectus or on the curriculum but it happens, nonetheless. This is why I say that "1+1=3 at the Recovery College". Steve Parker Lead Trainer at St Andrews Recover College - REDS

Recovery plans are personal “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom” Victor Frankl.

There are 3 key words to Recovery: Hope, Choice and Opportunity. Our opportunities are and probably will be less than previously but how we choose wisely and retain hope in adversity is going to take practice. The more we can all (as Jon Kabat Zin describes) daily weave our parachutes the better, so that when we need them, we can have a soft landing.

Over the last few years I have been using a “My Wellbeing Action Plan” which gives people a menu of evidence based actions promoted by Action for Happiness called 10 Keys to Happier Living which can be remembered by the acrostic GREAT DREAM.

<http://www.northantsgpalliance.com/media/1302/being-well-action-plan-april-2020-final.pdf>

Lastly **Sleep** is one of the most important parts of the day. It has a hugely restorative function on our bodies, in this lockdown and especially as we come out having good sleep hygiene as well as hand hygiene matters. Going to bed and waking at similar times helps our daily rhythms and functioning. Good sleep also matters to our immune system. Not using my phone within 30 minutes of going to bed or rising from it has really helped me feel more rested, especially when I do remember to give thanks for what I have.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/10-tips-to-beat-insomnia/>

If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to take the Happiness Pledge:

“I will try to create more happiness and less unhappiness in the world around me”

Take the pledge at: bit.ly/A4HNNorthants

I find that starting each day with an awareness of the pledge I have taken helps me to focus my actions on the positive, whilst acknowledging that this is currently a stressful time for most of us and I try to remember **Be... BOLD** (see Dr Mike Scanlan's brief video to explain)

<http://www.northantsgpalliance.com/what-we-do/education-training/mental-health-and-wellbeing-films/>

Also don't forget to download or print off the new Action for Happiness Meaningful May calendar, it can be found <https://www.actionforhappiness.org/calendars>

Remember: Keep Calm, Stay Wise, Be Kind.