

COVID-19 - SECURE STAIRS

TOP TIPS FOR SUPPORTING STAFF & YOUNG PEOPLE

1) CONNECT, CONNECT, CONNECT:

The single biggest risk to mental well-being is isolation and disconnection from others. In the Secure Estate, given the increased risks of social isolation at this time, it is essential we **maximise opportunities for relational connection, whilst maintaining physical distance.**

MAINTAIN PHYSICAL DISTANCE BUT STAY SOCIALLY & RELATIONALLY CONNECTED

2) Promote Physical Health:

Maintain a healthy diet, find opportunities to exercise, and maintain a good sleep routine. Maximise personal and hand hygiene. Ensure continued access to medication, including those who may have received a diagnosis of ADHD.

3) Provide as much fresh air as possible:

Try to maximise access to fresh air – if it is not possible to safely maintain physical distance outside, then try and keep windows open or set up a place where Young People can access sunlight / with a view of an open space.

4) Structure the day & Create Routine:

Structure can be helpful especially when living with others, as it allows a sense of predictability and control. Establishing (or maintaining) as sense of routine is essential. However, don't worry if the routine is not perfect. **Remember, this isn't a normal situation.**

5) Ensuring there are things (activities) to do:

The need for meaningful activity is paramount in protecting well-being and preventing challenging behaviour. Be creative – maximise opportunities for young people to 'keep busy' – even if this is in their cell (e.g. books, projects, games, exercise). Creating times or events to 'look forward to' is also essential in maintaining morale and preventing well-being difficulties

6) Allocate or maintain meaningful ROLES:

Where possible, allow young people to maintain or develop particular roles and responsibilities, either as individuals or groups. This may be as helpers, mentors, entertainers etc. Developing a respected role is important in maintaining purpose, and belonging with others.

7) Limit the amount of time spent watching/reading the news.

Information is useful, but it can also be unhelpful if there is too much of it and especially if it is from unreliable sources. If young people have access to television or radio, encourage listening to music or things other than the news/Coronavirus. Too much access to rolling news can be traumatising and detrimental to mental health in the longer-term.

8) Promote openness – Normalise anxiety and encourage young people to access support if they need it:

This is not a normal situation for any of us. Feelings of anxiety and distress are likely – so normalise them where you can. Encourage young people to ask for help – **be particularly watchful over those that are withdrawn, quiet or find it difficult to ask for help.** Just because someone says they are ok, does not mean that they are!

9) Crisis Plan:

Make sure you are clear about who you will contact if you identify young people with particular difficulties or high levels of distress. Be pro-active in planning for those young people that you suspect may find periods of isolation or high stress particularly difficult. Ask colleagues for support.

10) BE KIND TO YOURSELF:

Remember, this isn't a normal situation. No-one has all the answers or knows exactly what to do in any given situation. You cannot be 'perfect' at all times. Ensure you are kind to yourself and connect with colleagues, family and friends as much as possible.

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