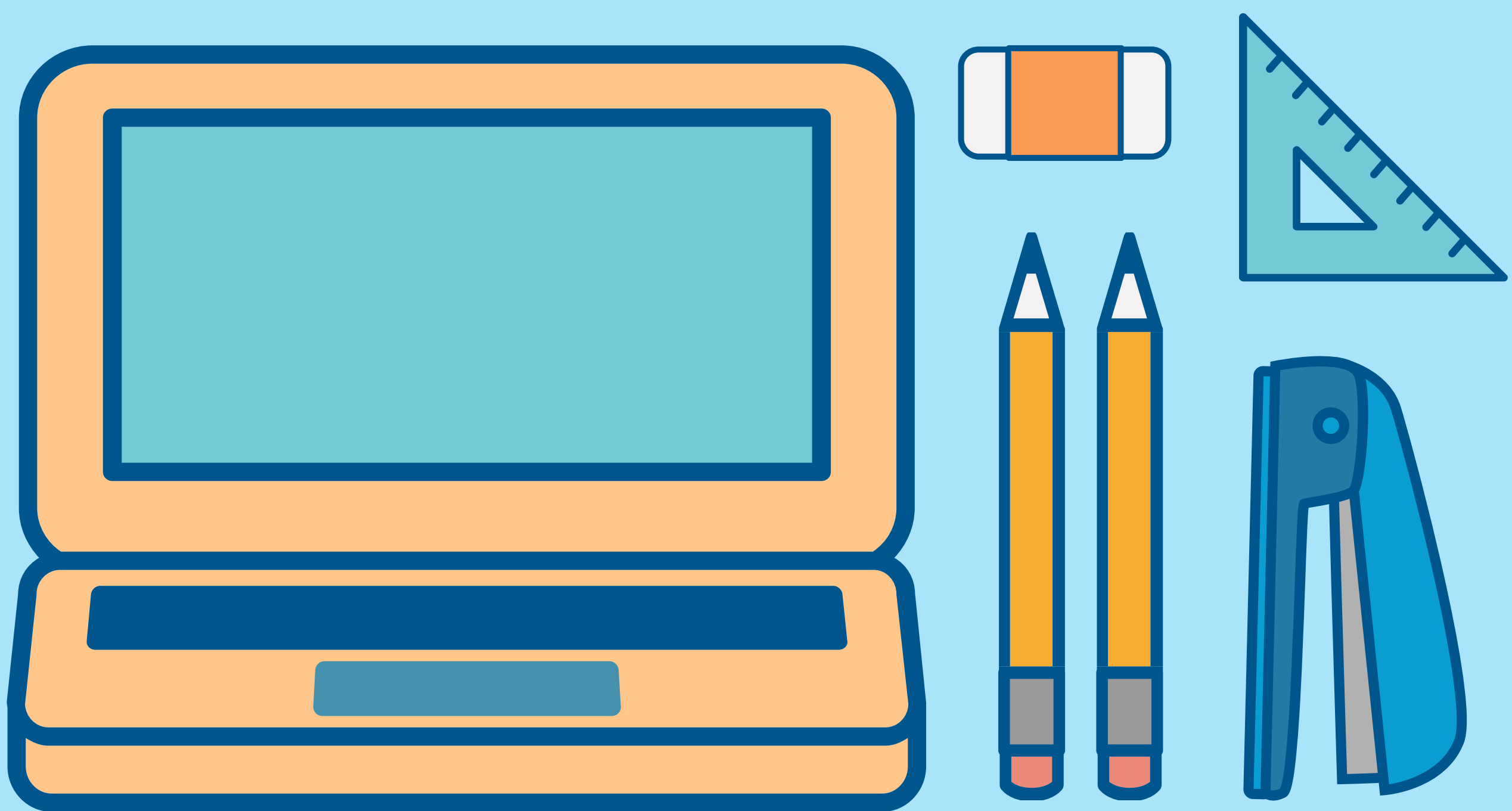


A YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE TO

# STAYING WELL DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK



With school cancelled and lots of news coverage on the coronavirus and its effects, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Whether you're feeling anxious, lost, frustrated, or lonely, know that you are not alone. Experiencing these emotions are an understandable result of the current situation, and there are many ways to cope.



# Health worries, the news, and social media...

Lately, there's been tons of coronavirus coverage in the media and people seem to be talking about it constantly.

For some people, this might lead to preoccupations with health worries and create a great deal of stress.

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid, especially about things that are about to happen (or what we think might happen in the future).



## What are some signs that we might be feeling overwhelmed by anxiety?

- We become overly preoccupied by thoughts of how the coronavirus is affecting our lives, how we might contract it, whether we might be experiencing symptoms of it, what is happening to people who have it, what the future of the situation will be like
- We find it harder to stay focused and concentrate on whatever we're doing
- It also gets harder to fall asleep and we feel restless
- We might have trouble breathing or feel our hearts beating faster
- We're constantly refreshing Instagram, checking Facebook, or loading up the news to find out the latest information
  - We need lots of reassurance from friends, families, health experts that we're not seriously ill

## Think to yourself

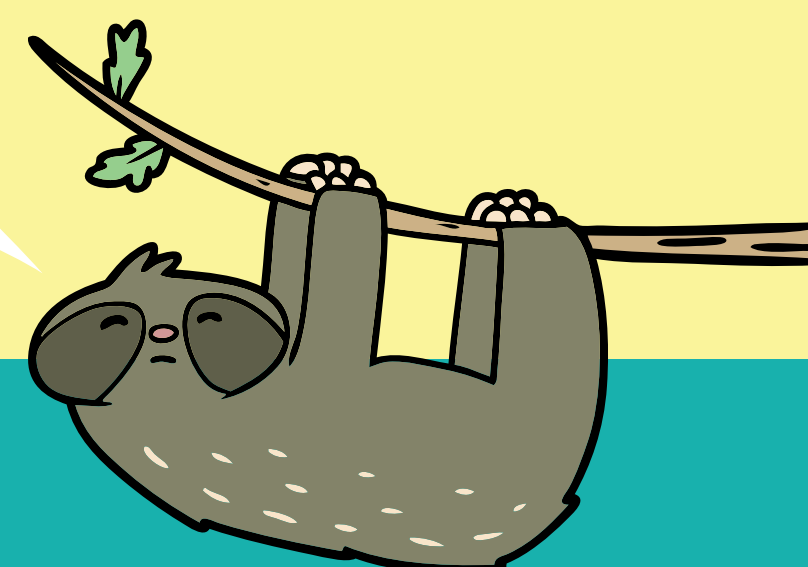


- Is this thought a false alarm?
- Am I overestimating the dangers involved?
- Are my thoughts about this situation affecting how I'm feeling?
- Am I giving my worries too much meaning, power and credibility?
- How likely is this going to happen?
- If it's not very likely, what are some reasons why?

## Often, worries about the virus can spread and grow much more quickly than the virus itself!

Health advice is often presented to the public as a precautionary measure for the worst possible scenario, which doesn't reflect how likely it is to come true. A risk can seem very dangerous and alarming, but it's important to also think of how big that risk actually is. More news is not always better for you.

Preparing for the worst doesn't mean the worst will definitely happen. We can continue to hope for the best!



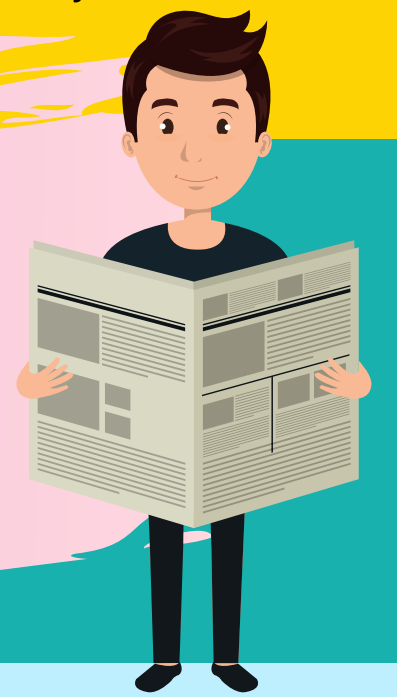


**Social media** can be a good way to stay in touch with friends and classmates during the school suspension, but lately there has been a lot of extreme news and speculation that have contributed to an atmosphere of fear.

Reading up on the news and being surrounded by constant updates may even potentially add to our worries. And since our physical and mental health are linked, stress can impact our immune systems and make us more vulnerable to becoming physically ill. That's why it's a good idea to take regular breaks from social media and switch off from the news.

You should try to find reliable news sources (such as medical websites and health associations like the WHO) rather than trusting social media posts or updates that do not specify where they got their information from.

**It's important to remember that not everything we read online may be accurate or true.**



It's also tough if you feel like you're being expected to be online all the time now that many schools have moved over to online teaching. An unintended consequence may be that you might feel **pressured** to **stay connected** on social media all the time.

Remember to **take some time to wind down** after a long time of looking at the screen. Even if your teacher has set you online work, you are **not expected** to be spending every minute of your day sitting in front of the computer! Just as you would with "normal" school, you are allowed to take a break offline.

**Tip: Draw a fine line between study and breaks, both online and offline.**



If your friends or followers keep sending you messages that make you feel **scared, worried, or upset**, you can ask them to please **stop** or **explain** that it isn't healthy for you.

You have the right to choose what you want to engage with!

### **Quick and easy ways to reduce your social media use**

- Switch off notifications from your apps
- Turn on airplane mode
- Hide apps in folders or move them away from the home screen
- Log out of your accounts so you have to log back in again each time (helps you stay mindful of whether you actually want to go online, or if you're just passing time!)
- Monitor how many minutes you're spending online each day and keep a record



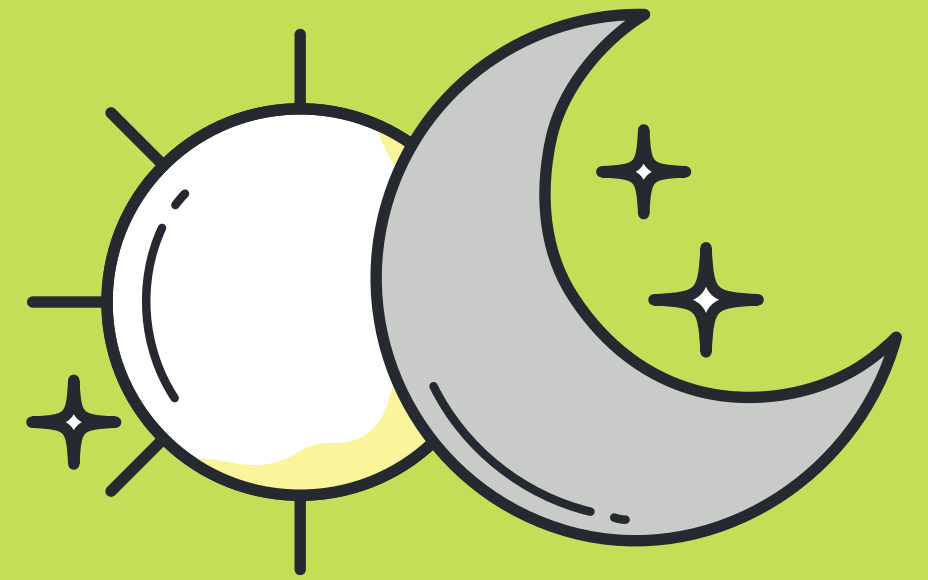
# CLASS SUSPENSION

and the fear of falling behind

You might be feeling worried about **missing out** on face to face learning. Perhaps you're worried about **falling behind**, or that you won't be able to **catch up** once you return to campus.

Know that many students feel the same way too, and **you are not alone** in this struggle.

**Email** your teachers or school counsellor if you feel worried, or have **questions** about upcoming exams, assignments, or your progress. **Recognise** that the situation is largely **out of our control**, and that **it isn't our fault**. It's understandable to feel frustrated, especially when we've worked very hard to come this far. Even if your teachers can't provide you with specific dates and concrete plans, they can support you to the best of their abilities.

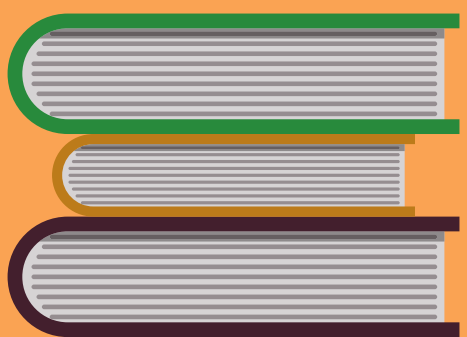


It's also helpful to try and put things in **perspective**, for example, thinking of where you are now in relation to the entirety of your life ahead.

There is no such thing as "being behind in life" and there is **so much more time** to accomplish what you set out to do.

Just as there is no comparison between the sun and the moon, which both shine when it's their time, **we can't compare our lives to others** because every person is different and unique.

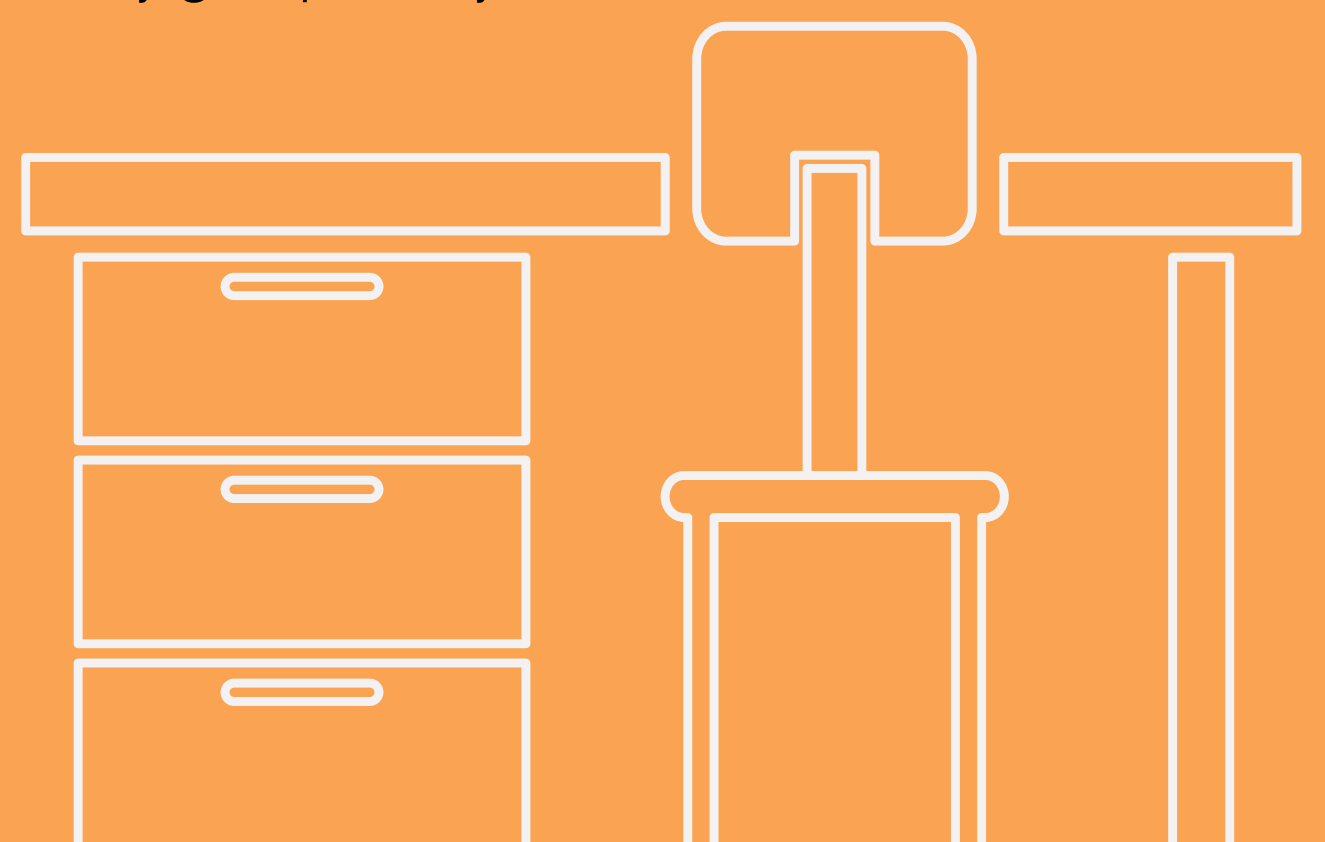
**Try not to be too harsh on yourself**, as you're experiencing an unfamiliar and new situation.



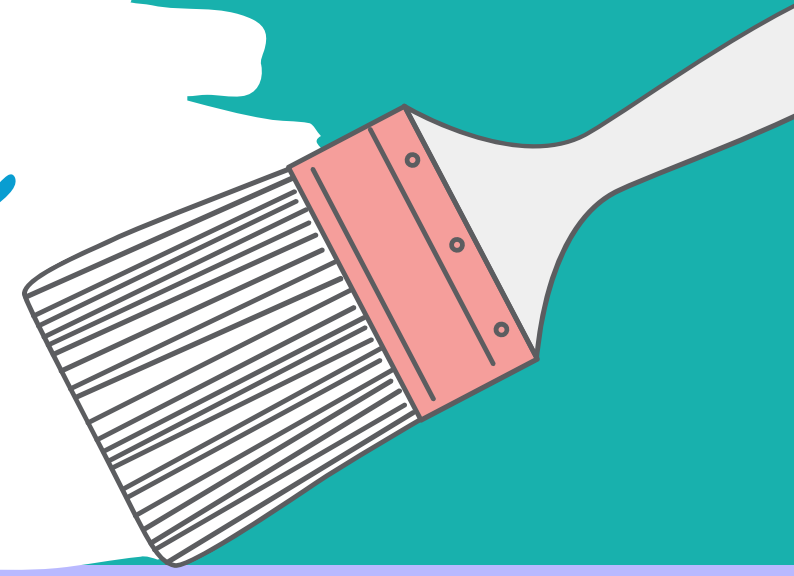
**Managing your expectations** can give you a clearer and more realistic picture of what you will be able to do during these unusual circumstances.

Avoid comparing yourself to your peers too; **everyone learns at their own pace and style** - some people might prefer self-learning, whilst others learn best in a classroom setting.

This could even be a chance to figure out your **best approach to studying**. You might notice that you need a study partner (maybe set up Zoom for a study together session with your friends), or you study best with discussion. You could try creating an online study group with your classmates.



# managing loneliness



**Loneliness** is the feeling we get when our need for **social interaction** is not fulfilled.



In the past few weeks many of us have gone from going to school and seeing our friends five days a week to suddenly finding ourselves at home, away from the familiar school buildings and teachers and classmates we've grown used to.

Maybe some of us are beginning to feel isolated from the rest of the world as we study from home. Maybe your days are beginning to feel unproductive, or you feel restless and miss being greeted by your peers every weekday morning.

This can have a big impact on our mental health so it's important we recognise our feelings early. There's no shame in saying you feel lonely. **It does not mean you don't have people who care about you.**

If you can't go outside and meet others physically, you can try these fun ways to maintain social contact:

## Pick up a new indoor hobby

try **cooking** or **baking**, learn a new **language**, grow a **houseplant**, practice an **instrument** or **sing** in the shower!



## video call with your friends

TRY USING FACETIME, WHATSAPP OR ZOOM!



You can chat to go over what's been bothering you lately, or try one of these activities over video call:

- Watch a movie together
- Have lunch together over video call, just as you would in the school cafeteria
- If both of you have pets, arrange virtual hangouts with your furry friends so they can e-meet each other
- Take a quiz together (e.g. BuzzFeed!)
- Download a new app and start playing a game together

If you live with other **family members** or friends, be sure to take advantage of the extra time at home and **connect** with them too!

Catch up on **TV shows** or get round to **reading** that book you got as a gift years ago but never had the time to pick up!

**Stay active** and try finding **exercise** videos online (try searching on Youtube for videos about HIIT or yoga) to keep yourself physically fit and healthy. Keep each other accountable by sharing updates with your friends.



# peer support

TIPS TO HELP A FRIEND WHO MAY BE STRUGGLING



- P**ower of positivity
- E**mpower one another
- E**ncourage and motivate
- R**eflective listening
- S**upport and be there for each other
- U**nderstand each other
- P**ractice self-care
- P**rivacy and confidentiality
- O**bserve, approach and assist
- R**espect your peers
- T**alk to a professional for help

It's not easy to know what to say when you notice a friend struggling. You could start a conversation by simply asking, "**How are you?**" or "**What's going on?**"

They might not want to talk about it, in which case you could suggest speaking to an older, trusted individual like a parent or teacher.

If a friend opens up to you, it's important to be **open-minded** and **non-judgmental**. Even though you might feel like you're not contributing much if you are quiet, listening is hugely beneficial and a sign that you care about the person.

A good reminder for anyone who is struggling is to let them know that **they are not alone**, and that asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Often, reaching out is the first step to feeling better.

## LITTLE REMINDERS

### 1. IT'S OKAY NOT TO BE BUSY

it's okay to be busy too, but only if we don't overwhelm ourselves.

### 2. IT'S OKAY TO TAKE BREAKS

a break is not going to last forever

### 3. YOU ARE NOT DEFINED

by how much work or studying you've done in one day

### 4. YOU DESERVE TO MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

### 5. YOU ARE NOT A FAILURE

if you didn't finish what you set out to do for the day

### 6. WHERE YOU ARE NOW

is not your final destination

### 7. IT TAKES TIME TO ADAPT

to a change, like the current class suspension

### 8. WORRYING WILL NOT CHANGE THE OUTCOME.

### 9. SOMETIMES, WE ARE OUR HARSHTEST CRITICS.

it's okay to feel your feelings

good things ahead

start somewhere

you are enough

take care of your mind

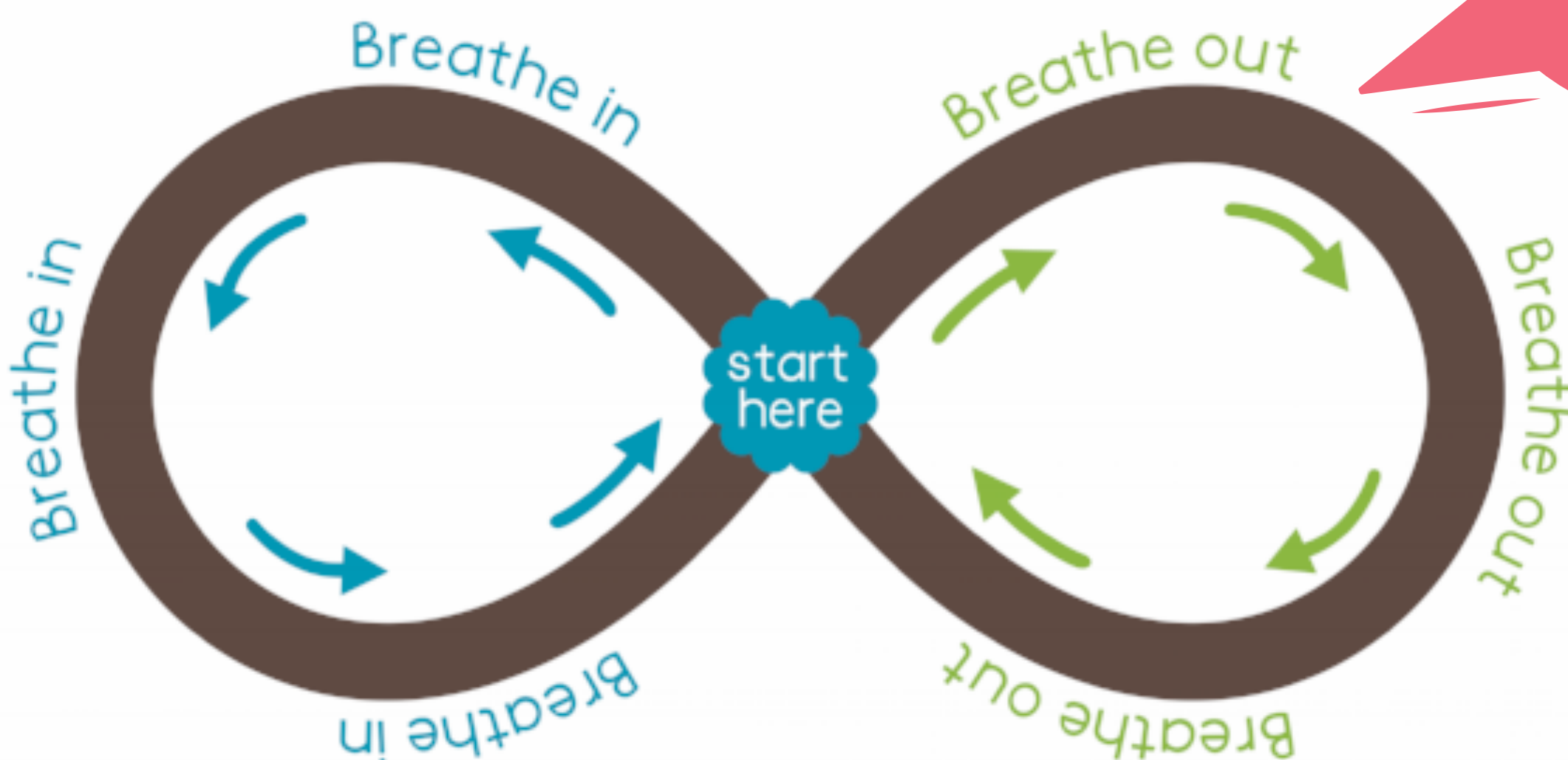
do what makes you happy

# Lazy 8

## Breathing Exercise

- Place the index finger of one hand onto the palm of the other hand.
- Slowly begin to trace the shape of the lazy 8, or the infinity sign, onto your palm.
- Notice what it feels like to trace the shape.
- Now turn your attention to your breathing.
- As you slowly breathe in, circle your finger to the left part of the 8.
- Notice how it feels as the air enters your mouth and your lungs.
- As you breathe out slowly, circle your finger around to the right hand part of the 8.
- Notice how it feels as the air leaves your lungs and mouth and your stomach relaxes.
- If you find that you are thinking about something else, that is fine, notice it and then turn your attention back to the lazy 8s.
- Keep doing this for a few more moments, just tracing your finger, noticing your breathing, and bringing your thoughts back to the way that this feels.

HOW DID  
THAT FEEL?



We can take one day at a time  
and remember to breathe!



Another useful thing to do is to **make a plan** of your daily routine and to keep up with as many of the activities you'd usually do when you go to school. **Sleeping** at regular hours, taking **breaks** to stand up and **walk** around, and **eating** around the same time you'd normally eat are all important to maintaining your wellbeing.

Planning a schedule can also help you **pace yourself**, so that you don't feel **overwhelmed** by the length of time you have before school resumes again.

**Check out** our **daily** and **weekly** planner inserts at the back of this booklet to help you reflect on your day and be more organised as you plan out what tasks you need to do.



Given that we may be spending more time online currently, as most classes are being held remotely, it may be important to consider how we are currently **managing our time**. Being online, rather than in class is also likely to create more **distraction**, given that social media platforms are more accessible.

If we don't manage our time effectively, this can easily lead to stress! Jobs and tasks can often pile up very quickly and it can feel like we have a "mountain to climb"!



## Tips on Time Management

BY TERESA CHAN, CLINICAL ADVISOR TO COOLMINDS

- Set out a **plan** of what you intend to achieve and do each day.
- You could make a **list** of what you need to do and allocate yourself a realistic time frame for each task.
- **Break down big tasks** into as many smaller tasks as possible if certain tasks seem overwhelming.
- Put these **smaller** tasks into order of **importance**, and deal with the most important one first.
- Keep an up-to-date list of what you **need** to do and get into the habit of **crossing** each thing off as soon as you've done it.
- As well as the things you need to get done (i.e. homework), also plan in **breaks** and respite time, to allow yourself to do something you enjoy or something that will help take your mind off of work.
- If you do decide to access social media, set yourself a **time-limit** for this and stick to this plan as best you can.
- Ensuring you take time out to **get away** from your desk (or working space) is also essential. You could go for a **quick walk** or get some fresh air, or you could go make yourself a quick **drink** or **snack** for example.
- Planning in a **balance** and a mixture of activities into your day is key!

If it's hard to get into a routine of organising your time, give yourself a small reward each time you complete a task (as we often learn new behaviours a lot quicker through reward!)



## More time at home may lead to more conflicts with family

HOW TO NAVIGATE STICKY SITUATIONS

Given there is still so much uncertainty around the current situation, and there has been so much change to our daily routines, it is normal that conflicts within the family may arise.

Stressful situations often lead to a breakdown in communication and feelings of frustration.

When a disagreement or difficult conversation occurs it is really important to recognise these feelings, so that we can pause and take a step back. Often when our emotions are high, we can sometimes say things that we don't mean, or communicate in a way that is misinterpreted. Therefore, if we find ourselves feeling frustrated, upset or stressed, try to take a step back and revisit the conversation once we are feeling more settled.

You might have trouble studying at home when other family members need to use the table because you might not have your own study desks. Or, perhaps it might be challenging to build a productive study environment because of distractions from siblings, pets or external noise at home.

One way to get around this is to plan ahead and know when your family member needs to occupy the table. Instead of feeling frustrated, you can plan study breaks during that period; it would also be a chance to do stretches and a little bit of exercise to let your notes sink in before diving into the books again.

**Tip: Communicate with family members to let them know you will have to use the table for a certain time period, ask for their understanding to build common ground.**







No matter what you're going through, there are **lots of ways** to look after yourself. Although they won't provide a magic cure for the virus, nor will they prevent any future outbreaks, hopefully the tips in this little booklet will help you **make yourself feel better** and **cope** with challenges.



## Making the Most of Online School

STUDENT SHARING BY YAERIN WALLENBERGER,  
COOLMINDS YOUTH SUMMIT AMBASSADOR AND HIGH SCHOOLER

"With the recent outbreak, many of our schools have switched to an online learning platform. Learning online is quite different from learning in a real-life classroom: from the increased screen time to the feeling of detachment from your teachers, classmates, and school life in general, it's definitely a bit of an adjustment."

"Personally, I've been working with a type of clay that I used to work with a lot when I was younger, and I find it really relaxing. Whether your exploration is with music, art, science, literature, or another area of passion, it could be a rewarding way to give yourself a break. Being at home all day and attending class online can feel isolating and stressful at times, but it also can provide valuable opportunities to explore and relax in ways that we wouldn't be able to while school is in session."

"Best of luck with online schooling until we go back to non-digital school!"

## 5 Tips from a Current Student

1. Set a (rough) routine for your out-of-school hours
2. Find ways to stay physically active (there are tons of workouts that can be done in the comfort and privacy of your own room! Jump rope, a body weight circuit, etc.)
3. Keep in contact with your teachers, especially if you don't understand something
4. Reach out to friends and family, especially those you may not talk to regularly (it's the perfect opportunity to write to that person you've been thinking of and ask them how they're doing— both you and the person you write to will be better off for it!)
5. Set aside time for exploration and relaxation leave time to explore and get creative— this can be with both things you already enjoy doing and things that you have had an interest in but haven't had the time to get around to while school is in session.

## EMERGENCY SUPPORT

Emergency hotline: 999

The Samaritans 24-hour hotline (Multilingual): (852) 2896 0000

Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong 24-hour hotline (Cantonese only): (852) 2389 2222

Suicide Prevention Services 24-hour hotline (Cantonese only): (852) 2382 0000

OpenUp 24/7 online emotional support service (English/Chinese): [www.openup.hk](http://www.openup.hk)

More support services can be found here: <https://www.mind.org.hk/find-help-now/>

More non-urgent support services can be found here: <https://www.mind.org.hk/community-directory/>

If you are experiencing strong levels of distress or trauma which are interfering with your life, remember that **you do not have to face it alone**, and that **help is available**.

For emergency support, please contact the hotlines below:

## RESOURCES

[www.coolmindshk.com](http://www.coolmindshk.com)

IG: @coolminds.hk

FB: @coolmindshongkong



For more youth mental health information and resources, check out our Coolminds website. You can learn more about our upcoming events and trainings for parents, teachers and students, and read blog articles and stories written by young people in Hong Kong.

# STUDY @ HOME PLANNER

NAME:

DATE:

MONDAY



TUESDAY



WEDNESDAY



THURSDAY



FRIDAY



# STUDY @ HOME PLANNER

HOW AM I MAKING TIME TO BE SOCIAL THIS WEEK?

You don't have to leave the house to be social !!



5 OF MY ACCOMPLISHMENTS THIS WEEK

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



## Daydream Corner



if i had time, what would i do?

Where have I never been that I'm dying to go?

Do I have enough quiet time?

# Daily Positivity Planner

Date:

## Tasks for Today

AM:

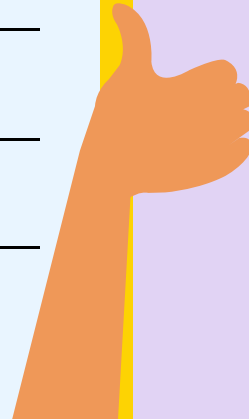
 \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

PM:

 \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

Today, I'm  
for...

*Grateful*



One piece of advice I  
would give myself  
today is...

What brought me joy today?/ What let  
me down today?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What can I do tomorrow to bring me joy?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



YOU'VE  
TOTALLY GOT  
THIS!