How have you been coping during the pandemic?

We know it's been a tough year for everyone and people have found different ways to get though the lockdowns and not seeing their friends and families.

Some of our ResearchNet colleagues have been sharing how they have been coping, what has worked well and what hasn't worked as well for them. Here's what some of them had to say:

Contacting people with mental health conditions and having a conversation about how they are, how they're coping with the restrictions and a general conversation has been a connection to the outside world and an opportunity to check up on and help people which is rewarding.

Doing Common Foundations since the beginning of the pandemic feels like you might actually be able to make a difference to someone who's struggling, who can't access services at the moment. That's been quite helpful for my own mental health.

Studying at university has been a bit strange as it's all online, but it's been quite useful in keeping my mind occupied on other things than just the pandemic which was what was happening during the summer.

I've been baking a lot and my favourite thing to bake is gingerbread. On the days I want to bake I structure time into the day to do this.

This lockdown has shown me how much I enjoy the simplicity of life. I really need my structure and routine and that's what keeps me going. I'm quite strict with myself how I structure my day every day.

For me, the most important thing is exercise. My mood goes really low if I don't train and I start to struggle a bit. I'd normally go to the gym every day, so I now stick to my own regime and love it. Before I start work I go running and I train in the evening after work.

I've not been doing much, just a lot of TikTok. I've ordered a couple of books to try and read instead of spending 8.5hrs looking at TikTok and Instagram.

In the first lockdown (and never reinstated) I turned off all my notifications of the news so that I don't get bombarded with bad news all the time because that can be so soul destroying. I am controlling what I can control.

What I've found really useful is thinking about when I was in hospital and literally being locked up and comparing it to now and being so grateful that I'm well and I know it's a blessing having been so ill as I know what makes me unwell, what my

triggers are and what I need to stay well. I suffer a lot from intrusive thoughts and images and found my biggest challenge is learning how to manage these whilst being on my own 99% of the time. The way I manage this is mainly through exercise and sleep. If I have those, I know I'll be alright and knowing that the people I love are well.

I'm lucky that I live opposite a park but I've been self-isolating at home because I've been too scared to go to the park because I'm worried about catching the virus from runners as they run past. I know it's affecting me more because if I go out I just want to go straight back home and I'm only going out once a week.

I find excuses, if it looks like rain, etc. I can't go out. I look at the weather forecast and self-sabotage by delaying but I don't know why. I don't need to be in, I can go out and I'm not particularly scared, I've become so depressed being indoors that it's now this cycle of what's there to do outside, there's nothing to do so what's the point?

Try to project into the feeling you've had once you've been out and know that you'll feel better and hold that in mind. Rather than think of the negative things first, think about how good you're going to feel at the end of it.

Reward yourself. If you're thinking you've got something to do that you don't want to do, have a treat at the end of it. Have lots of little 'baby' rewards throughout the day.

Don't be alone with thoughts and images. Do something that isn't about yourself but you may need to push yourself to do this, little steps are ok.

You may find some of our Common Foundations webinars helpful. These are a range of webinars co-facilitated by Oxleas' Lived Experience Practitioners (someone who has lived experience of mental health problems, and mental health services) and Health Care Professionals for people who have difficulty managing emotions and in interpersonal relationships.

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