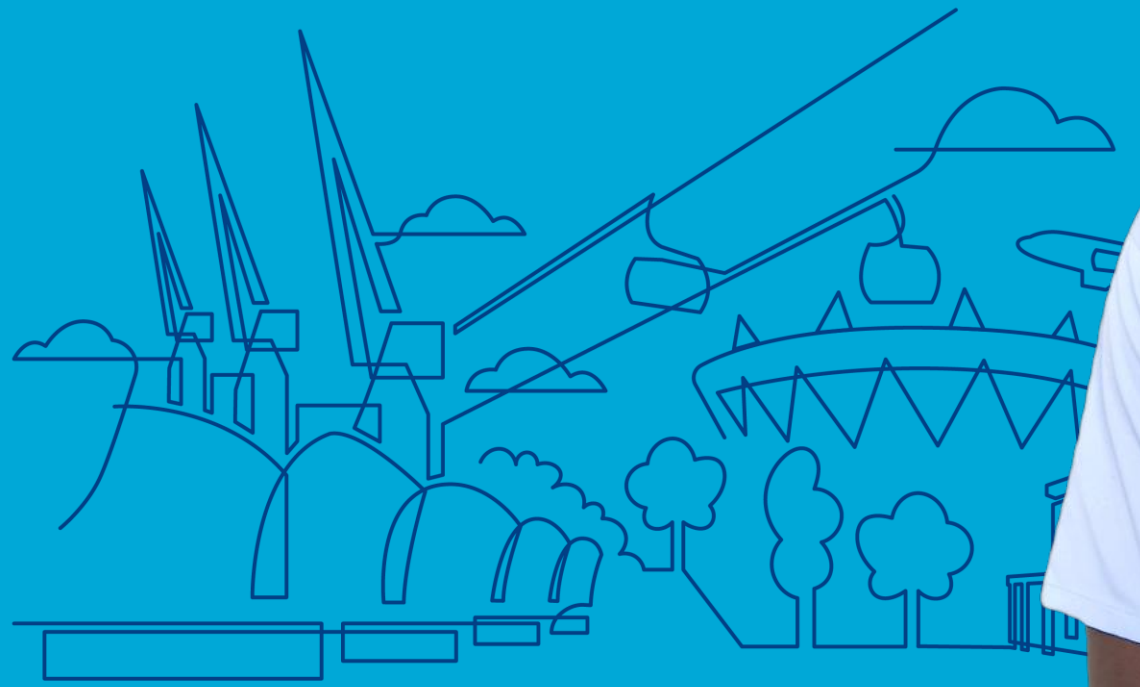
Newham and Tower Hamlets Long COVID Service

Self-Management Strategies for Long COVID

10/05/2022



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NICE guidelines LC/self management

- COVID-19 rapid guideline: managing the long-term effects of COVID-19. Updated: November 2021

- Give advice and information on self-management to people with ongoing symptomatic COVID-19 or post-COVID-19 syndrome, starting from their holistic assessment.

- This should include:

- Ways to self-manage their symptoms, eg setting realistic goals

- Who to contact if they are worried about their symptoms or they need support with self-management

- Sources of advice and support, including support groups, social prescribing, online forums and apps

- How to get support from other services, including social care, housing and employment, and advice about financial support

- Information about new or continuing symptoms of COVID-19 that the person can share with their family, carers and friends

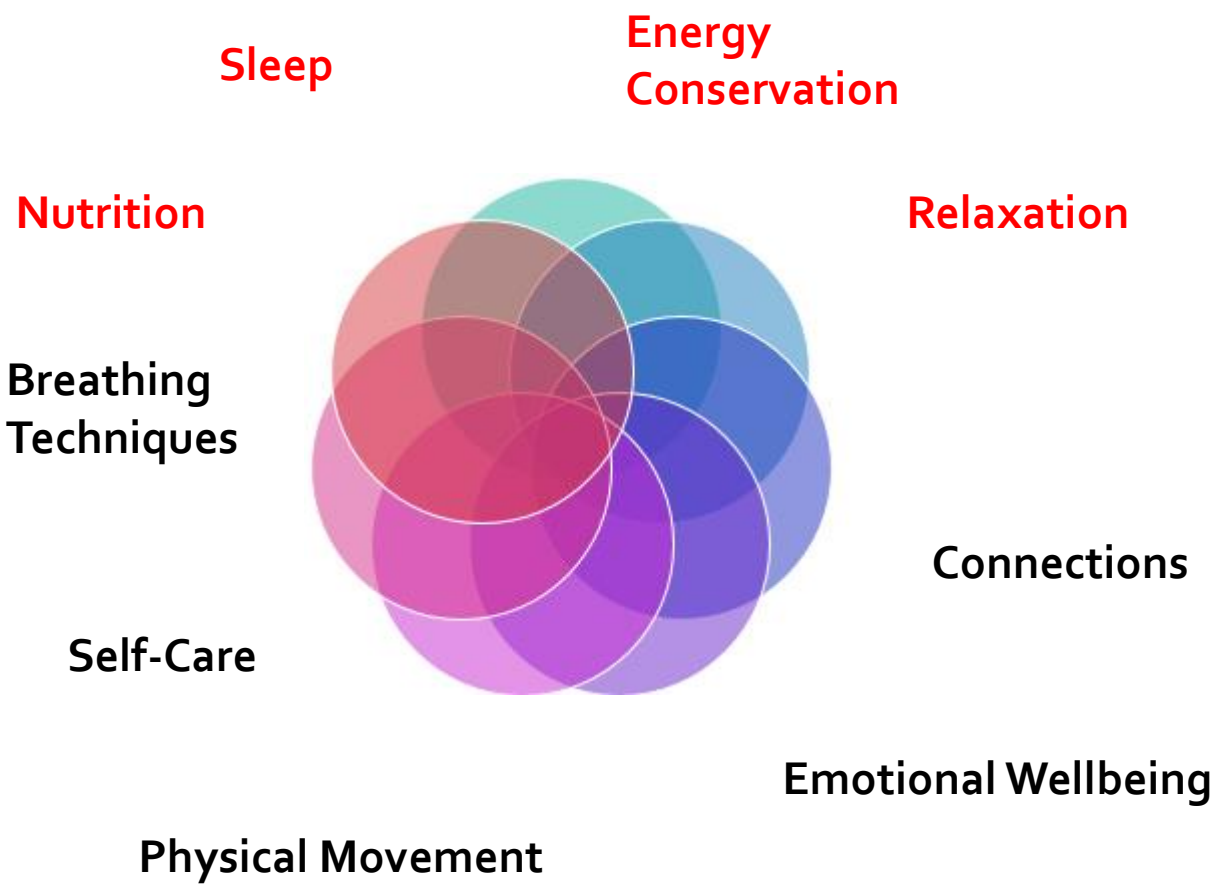
NICE guidelines: LC/Self management/ Rehabilitation

- Rehabilitation: a set of interventions designed to optimise functioning, health and wellbeing, and reduce disability in people with health conditions in interaction with their environment.

- In the context of ongoing COVID-19 symptoms, this may include:
  - Providing information
  - Education
  - Supported self-management
  - Peer support
  - Symptom management strategies
  - Physical rehabilitation

- Use a multidisciplinary approach to guide rehabilitation, including physical, psychological and psychiatric aspects of management.

Areas of Self-Management



Nutrition

and

Long Covid Recovery

LC recovery: What is required?

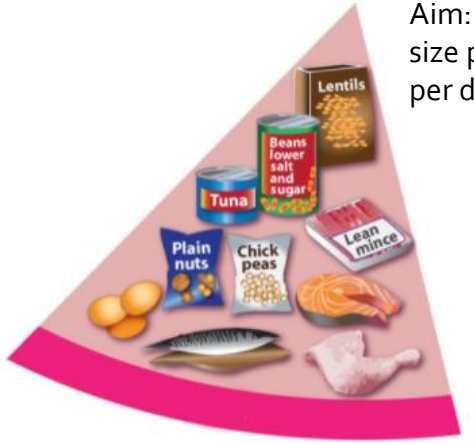
Macronutrients

PROTEINS

Cell/tissue building,

cell repair, immune system function, enzyme production

Aim: 3 palm-size portions per day



CARBOHYDRATES: Slow-releasing energy source, energy storage, support recovery

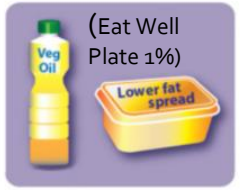
Aim
(Yourcovidrecovery:¼ plate)
(Eat well plate: 38%)

FATS:

(Unsaturated/polyunsaturated, recommended quantity, choose healthy plant sources)

Vitamin absorption, cell structure component, hormone component, thermoregulation

(Eat Well Plate 1%)



Ref:
British Heart Foundation

LC recovery - What do we need?

VITAMINS AND MINERALS (MICRONUTRIENTS)

Recovery, cell function, energy, fibre source, healthy immune system, diverse gut microbiome, anti-oxidant properties

Aim: 5+ portions per day

FLUIDS:

Hydration

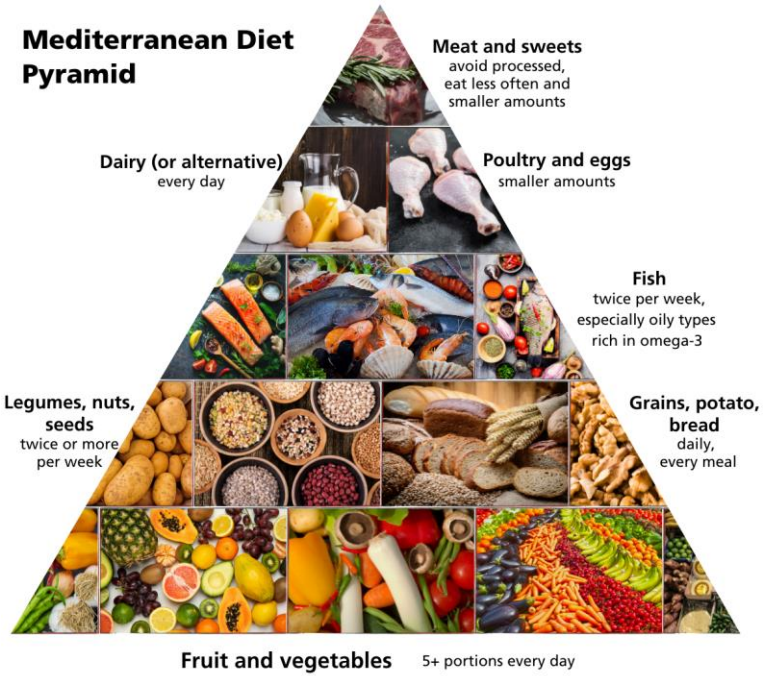
Aim: 6-8 glasses per day

Ref: NHS Eat Well Plate

What is the best diet for recovery?

- No one diet is recommended
- A number of diets would support LC recovery
- Macronutrients and Micronutrients are best sourced from a diverse diet
- Aim: Support physical/psychological/emotional recovery in LC

- Examples of diets:
  - NHS Eat Well Plate
  - Mediterranean diet
  - Lifestyle approach



Ref: British Dietician Association

The Lifestyle Approach to healthy eating and LC recovery

- Choose WHOLEGRAIN carbohydrates (rice, pasta, bread, cereals)

(Key words: Wholegrain, Wholewheat, Wholemeal, Rye, 'Brown bread')

- Lots of PLANT-based foods
- Eat more FRUIT & VEGETABLES
- Add LEGUMES: (kidney beans, chickpeas, mung beans, black-eye beans, peas)
- UNPROCESSED
- UNSATURATED/POLYUNSATURATED FATS (small amount)

- Reduce refined sugars

- Cakes, biscuits, chocolate, sweets, sugar-sweetened drinks

- Reduce saturated fats and trans fats

– Processed foods, meat/animal products, dairy, eggs, confectionary, tropical oils (eg coconut oil, palm oil)

- Reduce processed foods
- Caffeine (in excess)
- Alcohol (in excess)

What is the difference between unprocessed and processed foods?

Foods close to nature

↑ Greater nutrient density

↑ High in fibre, vitamins, minerals

Highly-processed foods

↓ Low in fibre, vitamins, minerals

↑ Often high in saturated fat, sugar & salt

Tips:

- "EAT THE RAINBOW" - Naturally coloured foods. More colourful = variety of nutrients
- ADD HERBS AND SPICES

Ref: heartfoundation.org.nz

Self management techniques

Practical aspects to aid self-management:

- Increasing AWARENESS: Food diary, diary of outcomes
- INDIVIDUALISED self-management
- BALANCE and MODERATION: Restricting a food is difficult /unachievable long term.
- No foods are off limits
- Look for HEALTHIER OPTION the majority of the time

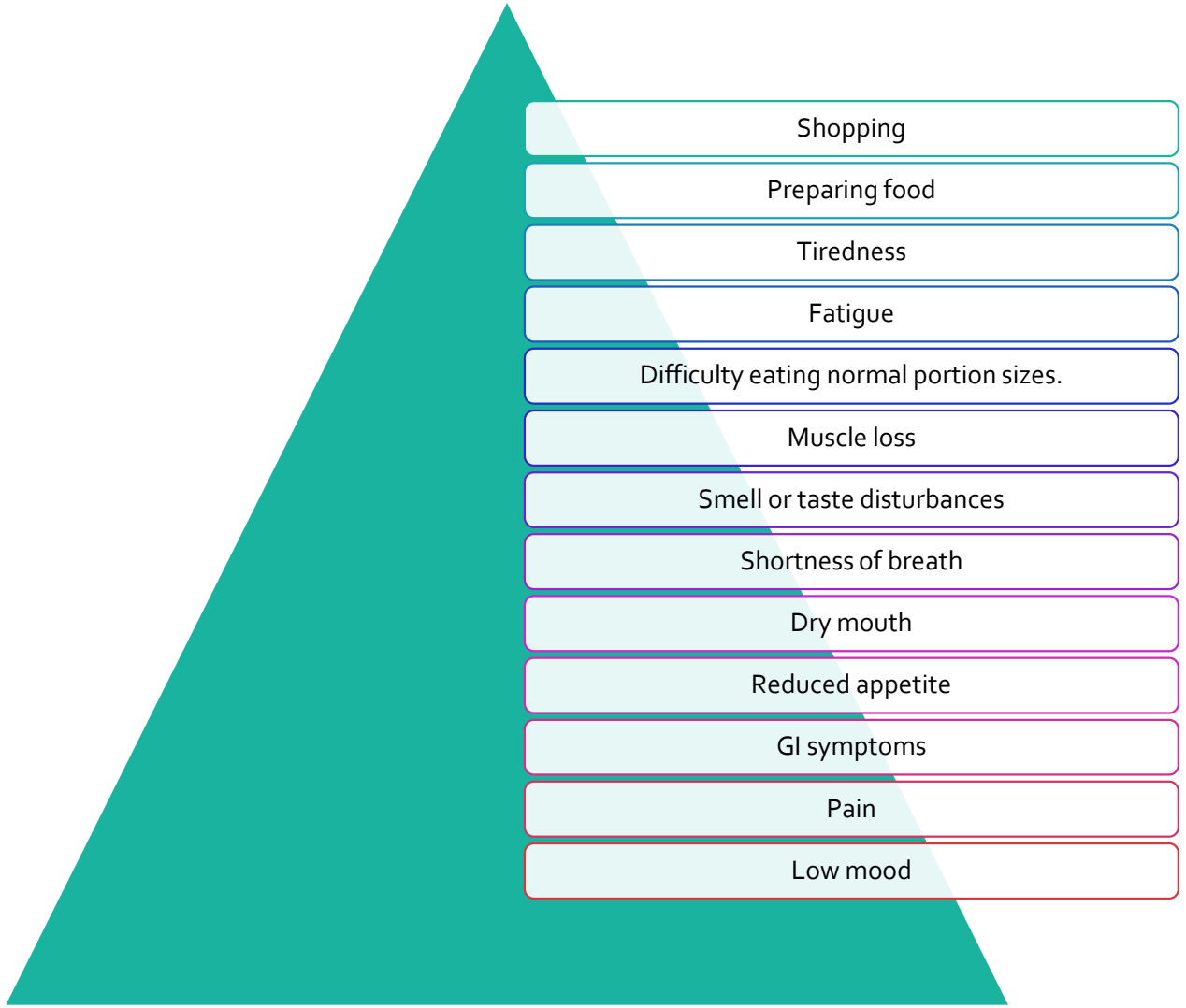
- Goal setting: SMART goals
- SPECIFIC
- MEASURABLE
- ACHIEVABLE
- REALISTIC
- TIME

- Nutrition prescriptions:

-1 extra piece of fruit/vegetable per day
-1 handful of nuts & seeds per day
-1 x fruit after dinner every day
- 1x bowl salad with dinner

Nutrition:

Challenges with Long Covid



See www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk for self-management strategies

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SLEEP
and
Long Covid Recovery

Why is sleep important?

Physical

- Restorative
- Restores energy levels
- Rest for body
- Repair and regeneration
- Immunity

Emotional

- Improved wellbeing
- Improved mood
- Reduce risk of anxiety, depression, PTSD, grief.
- Processing difficult emotions/experiences= more resilience, positivity, happiness

Cognitive

- Improved memory
- Better performance
- Improved cognition,
- Alertness
- Consolidates learning
- Processing new information.

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Sleep & Long Covid

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Difficult staying asleep
- Waking up earlier and not being able to get back to sleep
- Feeling unrefreshed after sleep
- Tiredness despite sleep

Factors contributing:

- Stress
- Anxiety, worries, flashbacks
- Physical symptoms of Covid- breathlessness, dry cough
- Day time napping (?tired, less to do, a learned routine)
- Day time sleepiness (disrupting the day/night cycle).
- Less physical activity
- Not working/working less
- Less stimulation in the daytime
- Being indoors – less natural daylight = less melatonin produced at night

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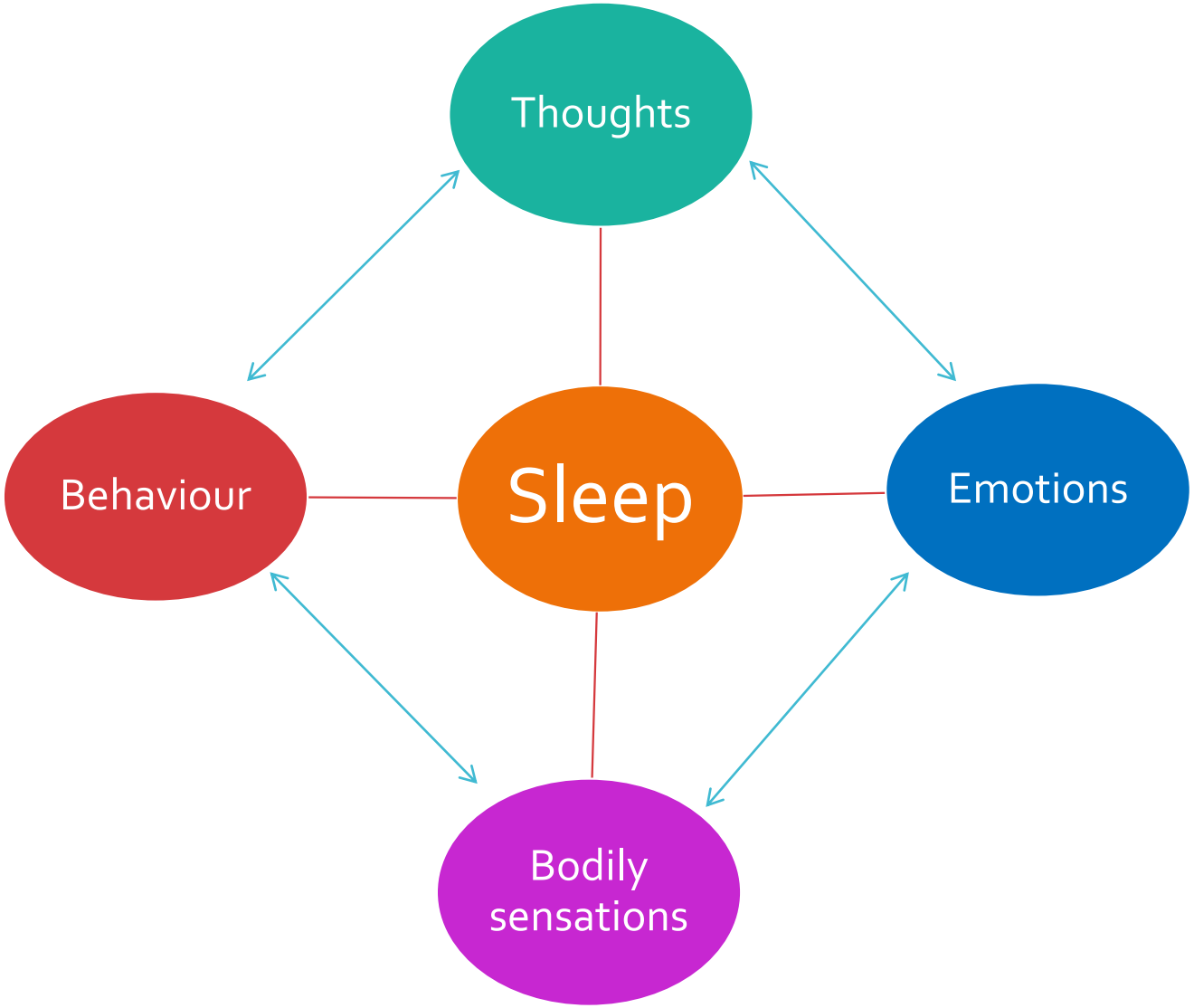
The mind-body connection (CBT approach) & Sleep



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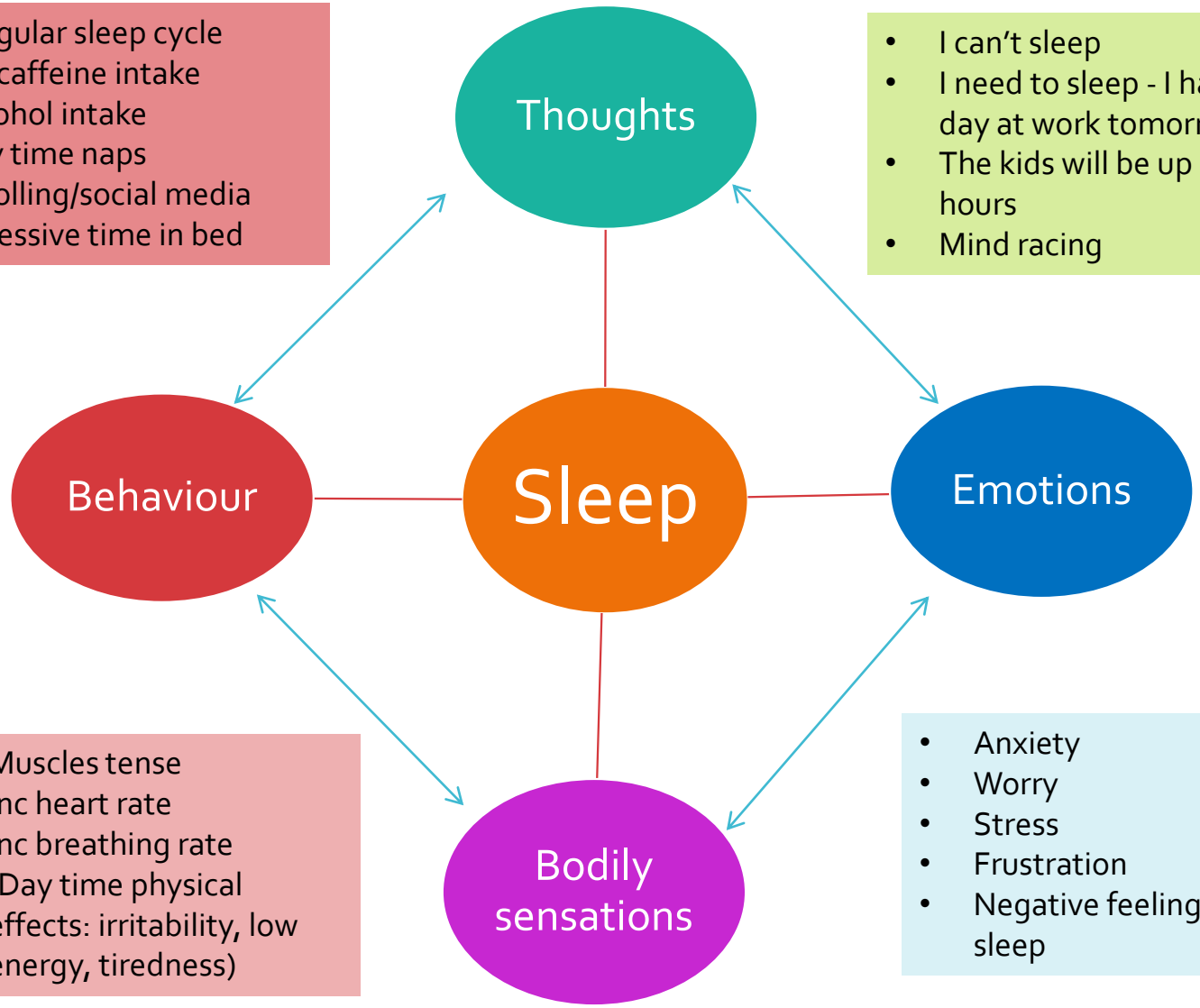
The mind-body connection & sleep



- Irregular sleep cycle
- Inc caffeine intake
- Alcohol intake
- Day time naps
- Scrolling/social media
- Excessive time in bed

- I can't sleep
- I need to sleep - I have a busy day at work tomorrow
- The kids will be up in two hours
- Mind racing

- Muscles tense
- Inc heart rate
- Inc breathing rate
- (Day time physical effects: irritability, low energy, tiredness)

- Anxiety
- Worry
- Stress
- Frustration
- Negative feelings about sleep

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Tips for better sleep

In the Evening	Getting Ready for Bed	Your Sleep Time	During Sleep Time
Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol	Develop a bedtime ritual to prepare you for sleep	Keep to regular 'going to bed' and 'wake up' times	**Do not clock watch!**
Avoid heavy meals within 2 hours of bedtime	Reduce light, temperature and noise in the room	Keep the bedroom for sleep and intimacy only	If awake for longer than 20 minutes, get out of bed, wind down and return when tired.
Avoid energtic exercise within 2 hours of bedtime	Wind down with quiet time spent reading, listening to music etc	Banish screens from the bedroom (TV, iPad, mobile etc)	Do no worry about not sleeping. The more you worry, the more you wake up.

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Some top tips

- Get out into the DAYLIGHT every day (even on an overcast day).
- Review CAFFEINE intake.
- WRITE down your to-do-list and worries.
- Try a regular RELAXING ACTIVITY in the evenings.
- Learn to respect the last hour of the day before bed- have a night-time RITUAL

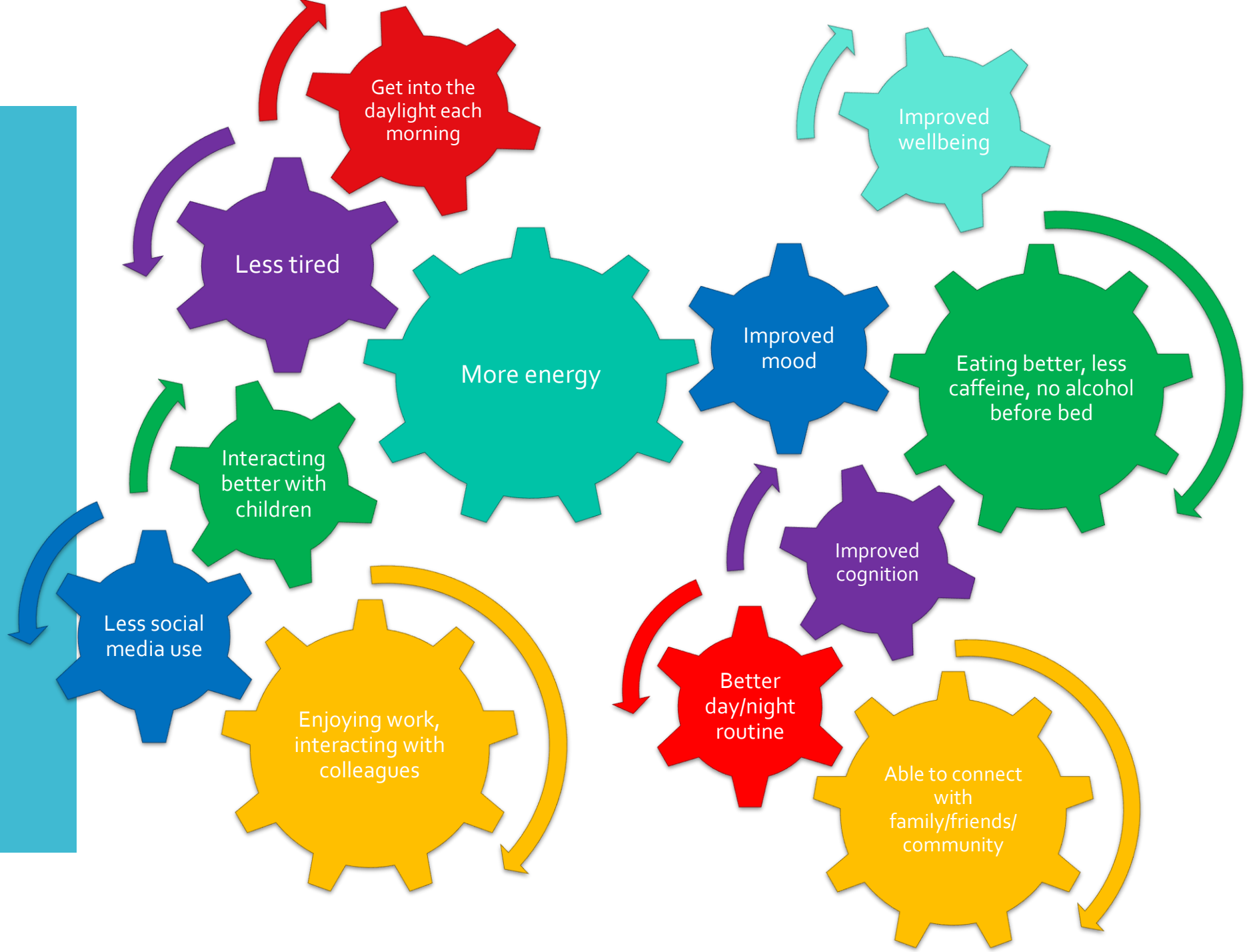
Sleep and technology/ screen time

- TV screens
- Laptops
- Tablets
- E-readers
- LED light sources

REMINDERS:

- Stop scrolling in bed
- Reduce evening screen time
- Be strict
- No screens 1 hr before bed

Why sleep is important for wellbeing in Long Covid



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Fatigue Management and Long Covid Recovery

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Fatigue

- Fatigue continues to be the most common Long Covid symptom with 54% of people self-reporting
- Fatigue is unique to each person

Weak….Exhausted….Lacking Energy….Low Motivation….Irritable….Forgetful….Word Finding Difficulties….Withdrawn….Uselessness….Hopelessness….

- It is invisible and can come on very quickly
- Fatigue can be very debilitating
- Can affect a persons activities of daily living, cognition, physical symptoms, social and thoughts/behaviours

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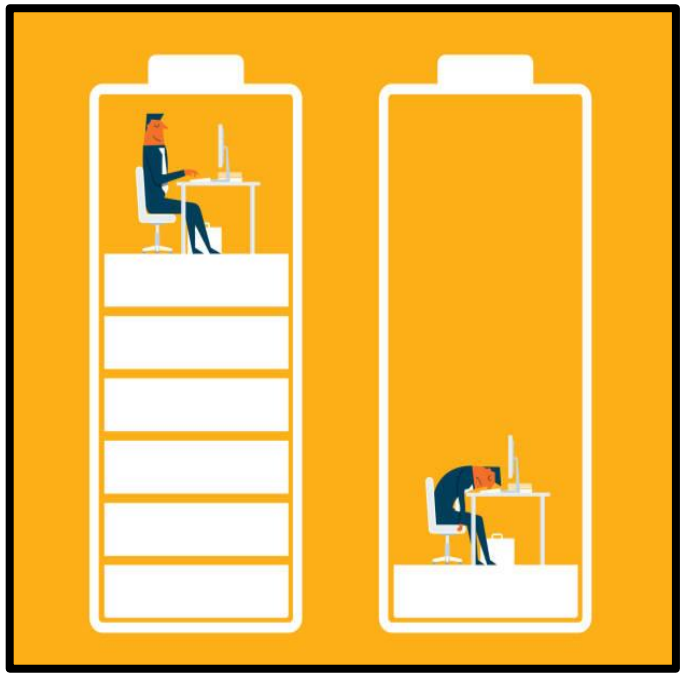
How does fatigue affect someone?

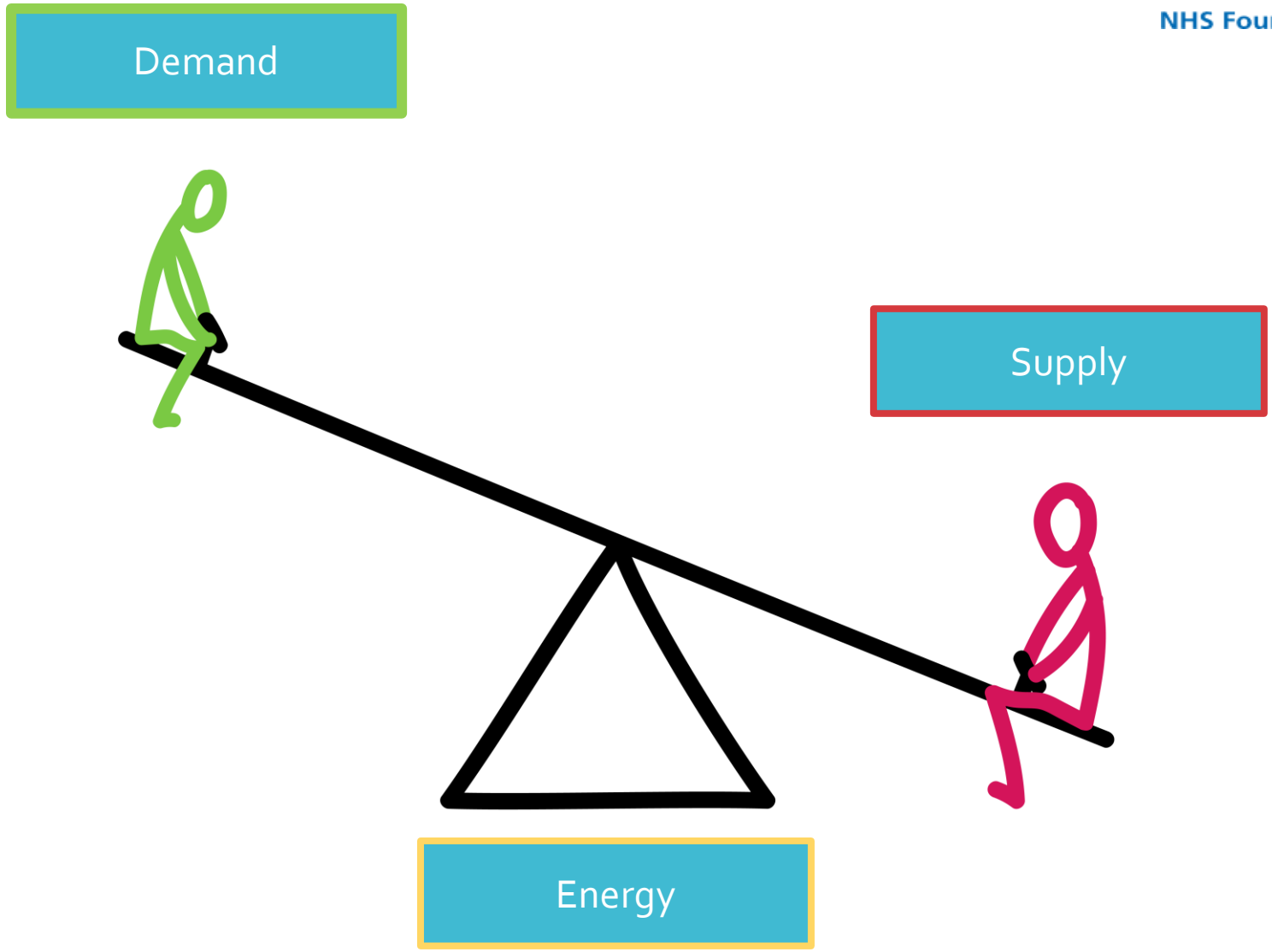
- Fatigue can affect:
  - Relationships
  - Home Life
  - Choices
  - Mood
  - Spontaneity
  - Work
  - Leisure

Fatigue: Your human battery

- Fatigue is often described as having a ‘flat battery’
- Fatigue management aims to improve the function of your ‘battery’
- There is a need to help energy be produced and manage how much energy is being used



Fatigue Management



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Fatigue Management Strategies

Energy Conservation – 4 main principles

1. The 3Ps
   - Pace
   - Plan
   - Prioritise
2. Organise living & work space
3. Adopt a good posture
4. Lead a healthy lifestyle

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Fatigue Management Strategies

My weekly activity diary

Health Navigator

To keep track of what I am doing

Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Keeping well Healthy eating Being active Managing symptoms Rest and sleep							
Getting things done Work Chores Study Relationship							
Building my support team Friends Family Whānau Work Healthcare team							
Enjoyment Fun Pleasure							

For more copies, visit **www.hn.org.nz/takecharge**

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Relaxation Techniques and Long Covid Recovery

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Mindfulness

- Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to the present moment, using techniques like meditation, breathing and yoga. It helps us become more aware of our thoughts and feelings so that, instead of being overwhelmed by them, we are better able to manage them.

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How can Mindfulness help

- Mindfulness can be used as a tool to manage a persons wellbeing and mental health
- We all have times when we feel down, stressed or frightened
- Evidence has suggested the benefit of mindfulness to health and wellbeing
- Positive effects on mind, the brain, the body, and behaviour
- Mindfulness can help with:

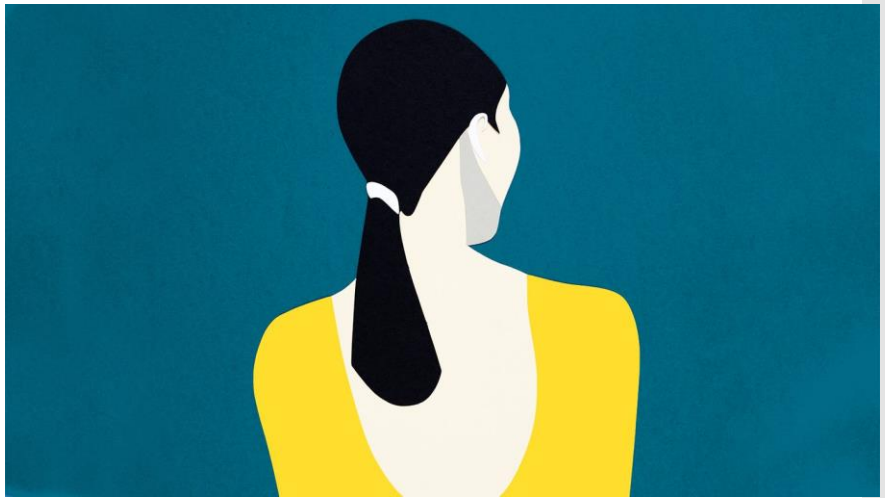
  Stress

  Anxiety

  Depression

  Addictive Behaviours

  Physical Health



Evidence supports the practice

- Mindfulness might change the way you relate to experiences
- Recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) as a preventative practice for people who experience recurrent depression.
- Mindfulness can give more insight into emotions, can boost attention and concentration, and can improve relationships.

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Be Mindful Online

- A study by the University of Oxford (2013) on the effectiveness of the Be Mindful online course found:

  58% reduction in anxiety levels

  57% reduction in depression

  40% reduction in stress

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The basics of Mindfulness practice

- Set aside some time
- Observe the present moment as it is
- Let your judgments roll by
- Return to observing the present moment as it is
- Be kind to your wandering mind

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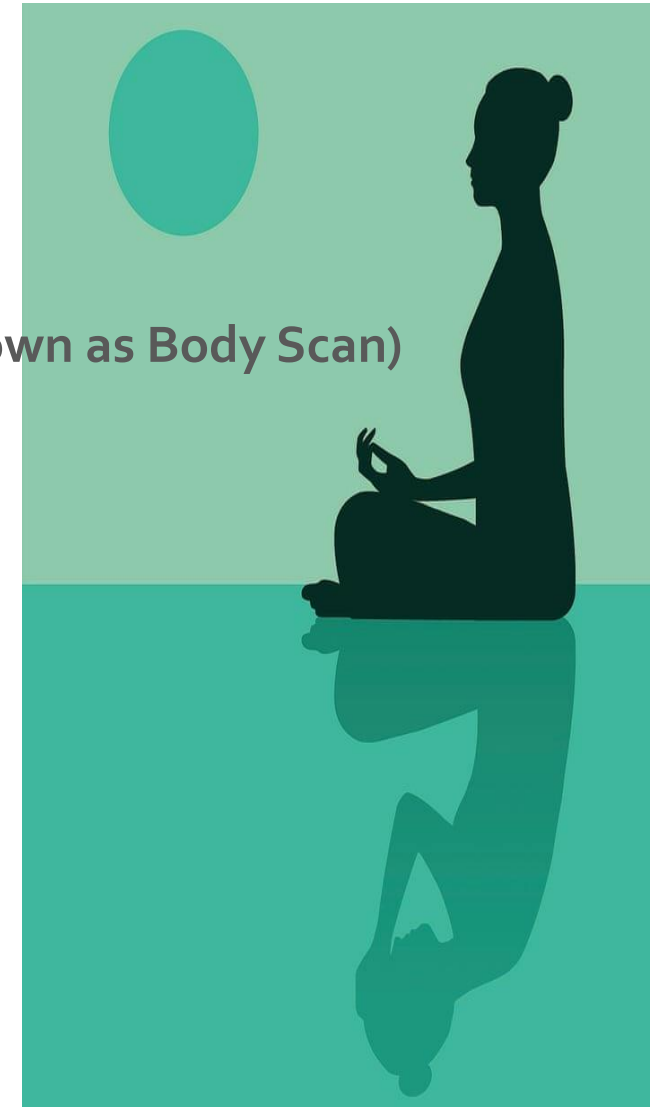
Different types of Mindfulness

- Mindfulness of body meditation (also known as Body Scan)
- Mindfulness of sounds meditation
- Mindfulness of walking
- Mindfulness of eating
- Mindfulness of showering or bathing



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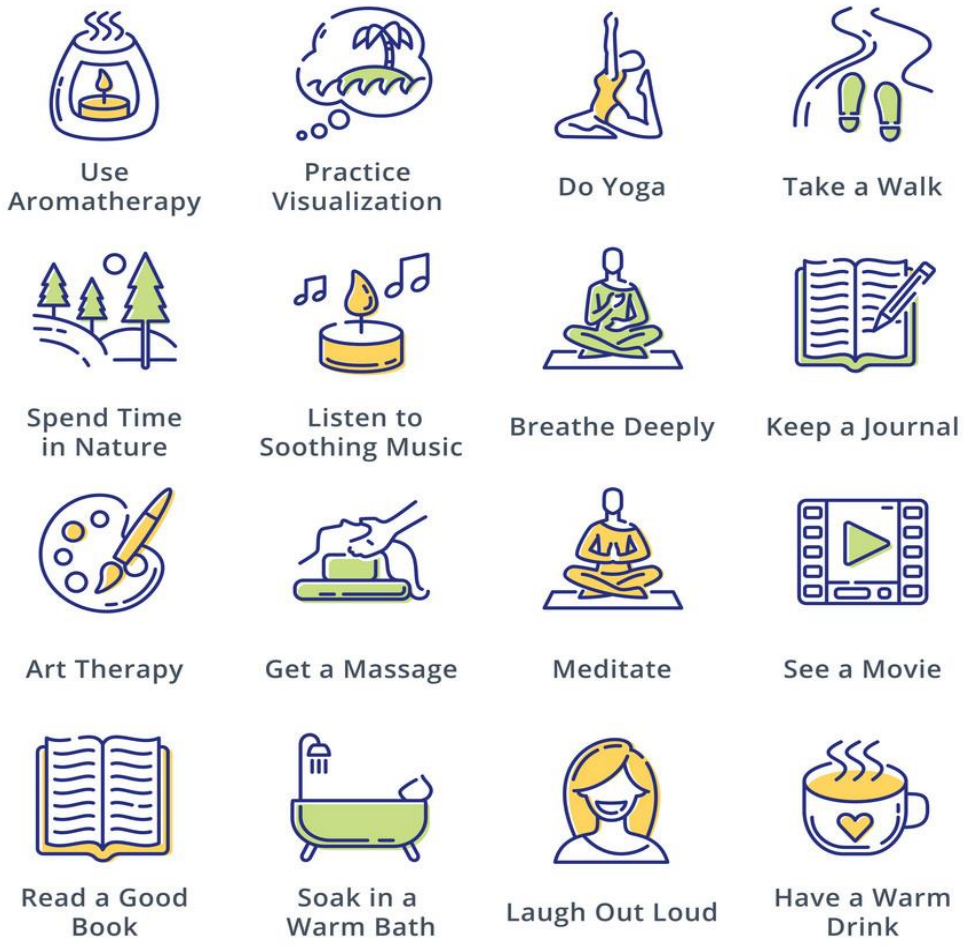
Other Relaxation Techniques

- Visualization
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Taking a walk
- Massage
- Tai chi
- Yoga
- Soak in the bath
- Music and art therapy
- Aromatherapy
- Read a book
- Spend time in nature
- Watch a movie
- Have a warm drink



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Summary

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Other self management strategies for Long Covid

- PRIORITISE looking after yourself
- Be KIND to yourself
- EAT well, SLEEP well, MOVEMENT
- STRESS MANAGEMENT, mental and emotional health
- REST and RELAXATION: REST IS PRODUCTIVE!
- MINDFULNESS- Eating, walking, drinking your cup of coffee
- Find things you ENJOY
- Connect with NATURE
- CONNECT with friends/family
- Healthy RELATIONSHIPS

Individualised care:

A Long Covid tool box

- Empower patients to make positive changes

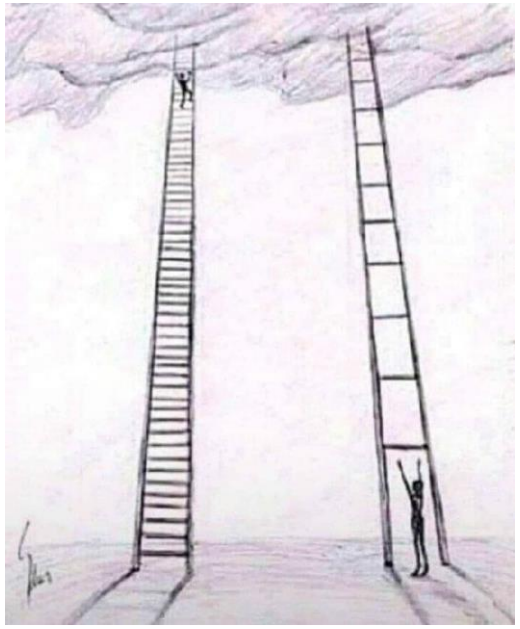
- Start with one change at a time
- Start with easy changes

- Individual barriers
- How can you overcome these?

- Patients will have good and bad days
- Long Covid 'toolbox'

- self-management strategies

to work through good and bad days



Guided Mindfulness Resources

Guided Mindfulness:

- Breathe

https://breethe.com/

- Calm

https://www.calm.com/signup-flow

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChSpME3QaSFAWK8Hpmg-Dyw

- Headspace

https://www.headspace.com/

https://www.youtube.com/user/Getsomeheadspace

- Oxford Mindfulness Organisation

https://www.oxfordmindfulness.org/learn-mindfulness/online-sessions-podcasts/

- Stop, Breathe and Think

https://www.stopbreathethink.com/about/

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkB9zEEqnP9kMIf5VChd99Q/featured

Mindfulness Information

- **Supporting Information for Mindfulness**
- https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/How%20to...mindfulness.pdf
- https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/2891/mindfulness-2018.pdf
- https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/
- https://patient.info/mental-health/stress-management/mindfulness
- https://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=1af56392-4cf1-4550-bdd1-72e809fa627a
- https://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/mindfulness-all-party-parliamentary-group

Mindfulness Journals

- **Mindfulness Journals**
- Cavanagh K, Strauss C, Forder L, Jones F (2014). *Can mindfulness and acceptance be learnt by self-help? A systematic review and meta-analysis of mindfulness and acceptance-based self-help interventions*. Clinical Psychology Review 2014; 34(2): 118-129.
- Gullaumie. L, Boiral O, Champagne, J. (2017). *Mindfulness training can reduce depression and anxiety among nurses.* Journal of Advanced Nursing 73 (5):1017-1034.
- Mizera Carin M., et al (2016), *Facets of mindfulness related to a change in anxiety following a mindfulness-based intervention*, Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 26 (1), 2016, pp.100-109.
- Morgan, P., Simpson, J. & Smith, A. (2015) *Health Care Workers' Experiences of Mindfulness Training: A Qualitative Review*. Mindfulness 6, 744–758.
- NHS, Mindfulness 'as good as drugs for preventing depression relapse'. April 2015
- https://www.nhs.uk/news/mental-health/mindfulness-as-good-as-drugs-for-preventing-depression-relapse/

General Resources

- For more information on long covid and national support available, visit https://www.post-covid.org.uk/ and https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/
- Supporting your recovery after covid - https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/
- The Royal college of Occupational Therapists Resources
- - Advice on pacing activates - https://www.rcot.co.uk/conserving-energy
  - How to manage post viral fatigue after covid - https://www.rcot.co.uk/node/3540
- COVID 19 Patient Rehabilitation Booklet - produced by Leeds University Hospital - http://flipbooks.leedsth.nhs.uk/LN004864.pdf
- Resources and webinars - https://www.longcovid.org/resources/patients
- Apps – "Your covid recovery" and "Covid recovery"
- Yoga for post covid patients - https://www.theyogaforlifeproject.co.uk/book-online

General Resources

- Recovery Focused Nutritional Therapy across the Continuum of Care: Learning from COVID-19. E Cereda et al Nutrients. 2021 Sep; 13(9): 3293.
- Eating Well [Internet]. Your COVID Recovery. 2022. Available from: https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/your-wellbeing/eating-well/
- **BDA resources: Long Covid and Diet: Food Fact Sheet. https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/long-covid-and-diet**
- https://covid.joinzoe.com/post/long-covid-diet-nutrition
- Dietary Recommendations for Post-COVID-19 Syndrome. Nutrients. 2022 Mar; 14(6): 1305. L Barrera et al
- https://sbuhb.nhs.wales/files/covid-19-recovery/post-covid-therapy-pack-final3-pdf/
- https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng188/resources/covid19-rapid-guideline-managing-the-longterm-effects-of-covid19-pdf-51035515742
- British Society of Lifestyle Medicine: https://bslm.org.uk/evidence-resources
- The Lifestyle Medicine Board Review Manual 2nd Edition J Kelly & J Shull

Q&A