



*Promoting Psychological Wellbeing at Every Level*

# **SUPPORTING WELLBEING DURING COVID-19**

A brief guide to support wellbeing during self-isolation, quarantine and lockdown

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Dear Colleague

As we all continue to tackle the challenges this unprecedented situation has brought to our vulnerable clients and their care teams, the world around us – our daily news, conversations, and lives – can feel completely saturated with negativity, worry and concern for ourselves, our clients, colleagues and loved ones. Never before have we been so aware of our responsibilities to others as well as ourselves: to keep going and get through this time of immense uncertainty.

As a psychologist well into my second decade of post-qualification practice as well as a case manager with over ten years' experience, I have been touched by these efforts. So much so that I have never before been so compelled to offer my case management colleagues psychologically helpful ideas, as reminders to maintain a sense of wellbeing and self-care during difficult times. These ideas have shown to help individuals during crises and also when recovering from crises. They are not necessarily about you as a professional, but more about you as a parent, an adult child, a partner or friend, but crucially, you as a human being who wants to get through this period as unscathed as possible; in order to pick up your responsibilities, once this time passes, as well as you possibly can.

Our team of psychologists has therefore compiled this short guide to help support your wellbeing should you find yourself in *self-isolation* because you or someone you live with has vulnerabilities, *quarantine* because you are potentially or actively symptomatic, or simply living under restrictions due to the Government-directed *lockdown*.

This guide offers a framework from an established, albeit relatively recent, branch of psychology. It is called Positive Psychology and focuses on enhancing wellbeing. We have selected the 'PERMA' model, offering ways to consider its five domains, each of which can be used according to what works best for you.

On behalf of our team, I sincerely hope that this guide can prove helpful to you and that there is something, even if just one thing, in here that can support you during this tricky time.

Wishing you safety and general good health.



**Dr Shabnam Berry-Khan**  
**HCPC Registered Clinical Psychologist & Case Manager**

## Brief introduction to Positive Psychology and the PERMA model

The ideas in this guide are informed by a growing and popular branch of psychology called Positive Psychology. This branch was progressed by Martin Seligman, an American psychologist, in the late 90s after being influenced by Csikszentmihalyi's work on *flow* in the 70s. Seligman's idea was to move away from a typical 'deficit model' of human functioning to instead focus on optimising one's abilities in a given context.

Amongst other aspects, Positive Psychology aims to create a sense of contentment and well-being in the present. To this end, there is a focus on various roles such as confidence, hope, our strengths, meaning, contentment and satisfaction in life (eg Compton & Hoffman, 2005, Snyder & Lopez, 2005, Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Seligman (2011) says our sense of wellbeing is contributed to by helpful actions in five key elements of cognition – he has converted his theory into the mnemonic, 'PERMA':

<u>Element</u>	<u>Related actions</u>
<b>Positive emotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spending time on healthy and positive experiences.</li> <li>• Viewing your past and future from an optimistic stance.</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immersing ourselves in worthwhile pursuits.</li> <li>• Applying our strengths in the pursuit of a goal.</li> <li>• Being absorbed so that 'time flies'.</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting positively with others</li> </ul>
<b>Meaning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acting with purpose.</li> </ul>
<b>Accomplishment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a sense that one's actions contribute to a greater goal or something greater than oneself (eg community).</li> <li>• Achieving goals, managing setbacks, growing, learning and developing.</li> </ul>

### So, what now...?

The next sections offer opportunities within each domain that help address each element of PERMA, suggesting ways to plan actions or just reflect on your experience positively and non-judgementally.

Each of the questions below is simply a possibility, and you certainly do not have to do them all – take what you want from the suggestions and leave the rest!

## QUESTIONS FOR PLANNING ACTIONS IN THE 5 PERMA DOMAINS OF WELLBEING

### Positive emotion

What's **going well** at present?

What can I be **grateful** for today?

What small **act of kindness** can I do for someone else today? This week?

When was I last **proud** of myself?

How can I achieve a **moment of calm**?

What positive wellbeing **experience(s)** can I plan for today? (e.g. reading, music, food, games, exercise, meditation, learning, gardening...)

What can I **savour** today?  
(it could be an experience, activity, food, drink)

Who or what **inspires** me?

Who do I feel **love** for? How can I show that love?

What can I do for **fun** today?

## Engagement

What  
**absorbs**  
me?

What am I  
**passionate**  
about?

What has  
intrigued me  
or **caught**  
**my attention**  
today?

Can I **use**  
any of my  
strengths  
today?

If I did use  
any of my  
strengths,  
what could  
I **achieve**  
or gain?

What are  
my  
**strengths?**

What have I  
**enjoyed** today  
or this week?

## Relationships

Have I  
**smiled** at  
anyone  
today?

Who do I  
**connect**  
with? Have I  
connected  
with them  
recently?

How can I  
make a  
**positive  
difference**  
to  
someone?

How can I  
show  
someone  
important to  
me that I  
**care**?

How can I  
show  
**kindness** to  
my pet or to an  
animal?

## Meaning

What does  
**purpose**  
mean to me?

(this might be a bit  
tricky to answer so  
don't worry if it is!)

How can I  
pursue my  
purpose or  
**develop a  
purpose**  
today?

Do I have a  
**purpose?**

What are the  
**values** that I  
live my life by?  
(eg hardworking, loyalty,  
good health, kindness  
etc)

How can I  
**contribute**  
to my  
community?

How can I send some  
**positivity** to the world  
today?

What can I  
do today  
that **fits my  
values?**

## Accomplishment

What **goals**  
however  
small can I  
achieve  
today?

Can I  
**challenge**  
myself  
today?  
How?

Who am I  
**striving to**  
**be**? How  
can I take a  
step closer  
to that  
model?

What will I  
**do today**?

When have I been brave? Can  
I do something to make me  
feel that way today?

Is there  
something  
I've always  
wanted to  
**start up**  
**again**?



## FURTHER READING

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2002). *Flow: The Psychology of Happiness*. London: Rider.

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