

BUBBLING OVER? MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

As the global pandemic takes hold, for many of us our mental health has been impacted. This poster visualises mental health during this period to help us make sense of what we may be feeling.

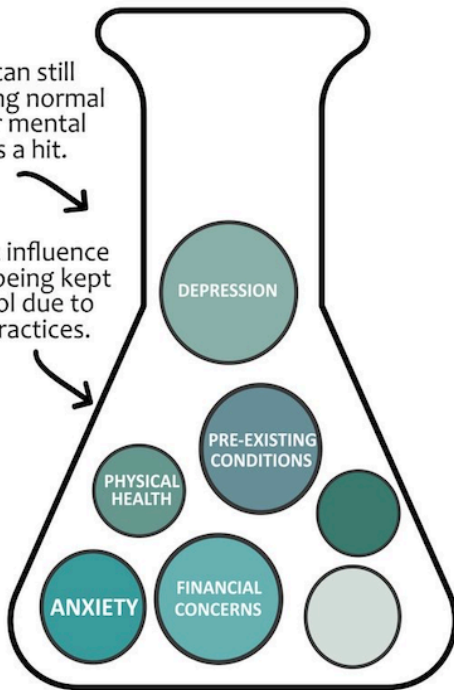
This visualisation is an adaptation of the jam-jar metaphor¹ for mental health. Once the vessel is full, a person has no more room to cope with environmental stress and feelings may 'bubble over' leading to a psychiatric episode. By building coping strategies, we can learn to adapt, prioritise our health and grow the size of the flask.

The exact mix of factors that are in the flask vary person to person.

PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC

The beaker can still overflow during normal life when our mental health takes a hit.

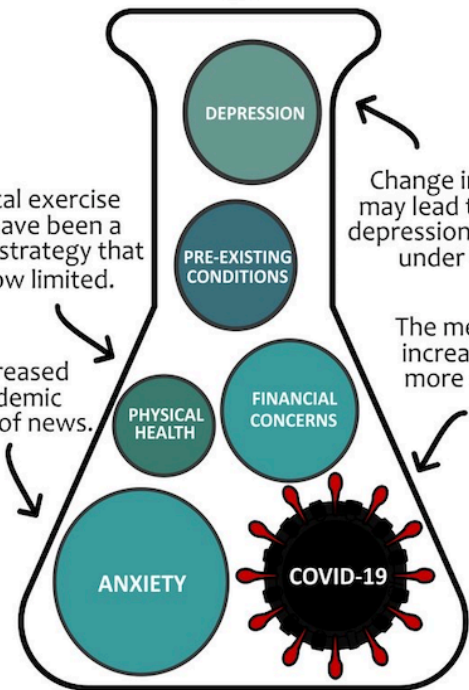
Factors that influence overall wellbeing kept under control due to self-care practices.



DURING THE PANDEMIC

Physical exercise may have been a coping strategy that is now limited.

Anxiety increased due to pandemic and barrage of news.



Additional emotional tolls can impact our mental health.

Change in schedule may lead to increased depression usually kept under control.

The mental load has increased taking up more space in the flask.

SOME TIPS TO MANAGE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19 (AND PREVENT THE FLASK GETTING FULL)



SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Speak to a medical professional about how you are feeling. Your feelings are valid irrespective of a pandemic. This may lead to intervention such as medication or counselling to help you manage your mental health.

FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL



In a time where many things feel out of our control focusing on what we "can" control can help us be less anxious and worried. We can then channel that energy into other areas.



MAKE TIME FOR EXERCISE

Endorphins released during sport can lift our mood. If it's getting outside for a run, or lifting tin cans of beans in the house, or stretching, doing a little bit of exercise is important.



CREATE A SCHEDULE

By planning your days you can concentrate on the things you "can" control. The important thing here is to give yourself both a degree of accountability, yet be forgiving if you don't achieve everything you aim for.



COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS

Talk through how you are feeling with others. Reach out to loved ones and make sure to stay connected during this time. There are a range of support groups and forums online.



PRODUCTIVITY COMES SECOND

We must recognise that basic needs like food, health and family need to come first during this time. Only then can we be productive. Let people know if you are struggling to hit deadlines.



LEARN SOMETHING NEW

If you have the capacity to, learning a new hobby or skill to distract over this period may be a way to help you manage your feelings and distract you from what is happening.



LET GO OF THE GUILT

Even if it's just a minute per day, taking the time to reflect, be present, and relax can be incredibly calming. There are some excellent apps available to get you started.

STRUGGLING WITH ISOLATION? NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO? CALL SAMARITANS NOW ON 116-123

Find more about the Jam-Jar concept for mental health here:

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/mediapacks/mental-health-and-me/depression>

Part of the #mentalhealth series by Dr Zoë Ayres (@zjayres). Free to distribute.