



### **Thoughts from a Therapist, Herbalist and Health & Wellbeing tutor**

The coronavirus pandemic has become an unprecedented event which has created many overwhelming anxieties about our own health and mortality including dying in isolation, financial hardship, social isolation and much more.

Inevitably, these worries about the uncertain future may help to create unhelpful thinking styles (see BH Toolbox and the stress diary), such as `what ifs`, judging, fortune telling, all or nothing and black & white thinking and magnification. These can affect how we feel and behave, so challenging these thoughts, feelings, behaviours and beliefs may help to change the cycle, so that we can try to live more in the moment, until we have gained more details on how we can start to plan ahead. See the audios in the BH toolbox, which may be able to help you with anxieties. Please contact any of the Therapists for additional support.

However, it has also created a huge amount of compassion, kindness and a global unity and a feeling of working together in our local community, which has removed perceived barriers, as we all have the same goal in mind, to fight the virus. Colonel Tom Moore has also been such an inspiration and how one person can make such a difference.

It is quieter with less transport sounds and now in populated places, nature has regained some of its space back. The beauty of nature is one of the constants that we can access via opening the door, being in our gardens or via our allowed daily exercise. We are now enjoying Spring and moving into Summer. Seeing the video clips such as `animals reclaiming the world` and watching the dolphins and swans in the Venice canals and other wildlife returning to `busy` tourist hotspots, can be reassuring. Many are becoming more interested in the concept of `rewilding` and perhaps see the interdependence /reciprocal / symbiosis/mutualism of being a part of the natural world. We can all explore what relationship we have individually with nature and how it may help our own mental and physical wellbeing. Practice ways on how to connect to nature in the BH toolbox.

The video clips that are circulating via social media, can be misleading or can create heavy sadness but others can make us smile and feel the comradery between us all.

We may be trying to get some control back into our lives by finding new meaning/purpose and we have the freedom to choose how we respond, understand, deal and learn from this change and our own anxieties and find the right way for us. Uncertainty and lack of control may make us feel overwhelmed. By challenging and understanding these feelings, it may make us stronger and more able to cope with anything similar in the future. Kierkegaard stated "Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom. Whoever has learned to be anxious in the right way has learnt the ultimate".

The NHS and Care staff are appreciated and understandably been commended. There are many individuals still working very hard, as they are key employers or have found ways to work remotely or abide by the rules. Those who have children at home or who are individual carers with little or no support have extra demands to cope with.

**Walnut Tree Farm, Church Road, Carleton Rode, Norfolk. NR16 1RR**  
**07766 88 5631                      01953 788722**

**[paulameadowsweet@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:paulameadowsweet@yahoo.co.uk)**

**[www.meadowsweetholistichealth.co.uk](http://www.meadowsweetholistichealth.co.uk)**



However, for some, without the work commitments, although uncertainty, there may be more time to:

- Pause, reflect and gain more insights, re-evaluate priorities and find what we value most.
- Gain stronger relationships with those we live with, by listening and respecting each other's feelings. However, the stresses of course, can put extra pressures on relationships too and it is important to seek specialist help with this. (See BH group members)
- Create our own routine and structure the day and tasks to fit all that is required, our wants & needs.
- Be more active and arrange regular physical activity or follow on line virtual exercise or yoga classes or whatever we enjoy and motivates us.
- Let fresh air and nature inside our homes, by nature pictures/videos, sowing seeds and growing and nurturing our own plants on our windowsills or in a garden.
- Be proactive to improve our nutrition and gain vitamins and minerals and drink more water
- Gain a better sleep regime (See BH toolbox)
- Learn ways to relax, whether it be meditation, to listening to the specialist hypnotherapy/relaxation audios in the BH toolbox. All these may help to self soothe at a very deep level. Being calm is opposite to anxiety. Look at the Toolbox to find the difference between control and influence.
- Practice breathing and other techniques-See BH toolbox
- Reading a fiction book, researching a passion or doing a distance learning course via the Open University.
- Using You Tube to learn a new skill
- Virtually visiting a museum or other place of interest!
- Listening to music, playing an instrument or/and singing
- Finding new or renewing activities/ interests.
- Being creative with arts and crafts.
- Keeping our minds active by games, puzzles, exercises, quizzes
- Make best use of physical space at home, to do remote working, having space for time out and so creating special space, so that all can benefit.
- Practice mindfulness, noticing when our mind wanders and bringing our attention and so awareness back to a sensory anchor. Being an observer and giving attention to the "nowness" of daily activities. See BH toolbox
- Learn how to educate children in creative and a holistic way. Look at the BH toolbox showing how children can connect with nature and also see how to be a `good enough` parent.
- Keep connected to others, using social media, emails, text, telephone. (The BH group therapists are using zoom, to work with clients).
- Learn creative ways to make meals with what we have and make fresh food last for longer and use what has been lurking in the freezers. Perhaps relying less on fast food and takeaways.
- Analyse ways that may help us budget but perhaps we are saving a little by not going out or are we using retail therapy on line instead?
- De-clutter and sell items online. What about digital decluttering too?
- What else?

I'm sure there are so many other ways that you have found, that has given you the strength to continue in these difficult times and it's important not to undervalue these. Perhaps think what they are and what has worked, as these are your personal resources.

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With all the restrictions, I'm sure we are really appreciating gardens or any outside space. Being outside in nature, can immediately give us a sense of calm and push aside all problems and anxieties. Occasionally pausing and turning off autopilot and taking a deep breath can help us to be mindful. By observing (not describing, understanding) & being intensively alert, silent and sensitive to its beauty, in that moment. It can bring our attention and so awareness back to a sensory anchor, such as sense of sight, scent, sound and the 'nowness' of everyday tasks.

Spring is a great time to start being active and harvesting plants new growth and so benefit from the diversity of the bio chemistry, nutrients and traditional medicinal uses of freshly sprouting herbs and weeds surrounding us. Please only harvest plants yourself at your own risk and if you can identify them correctly and if you are not on any medications that may be contra- indicated. I run workshops/ talks for more information. This harvesting activity may help to be mindful and start to gain an attachment and connection to nature, as well as a pleasing distraction, if following Government advice, in these traumatic times.

Wild garlic leaves and the flowers are prolific at the moment. I collect the leaves and put them in a blender with olive oil and you can add perhaps basil and pine nuts and cheese and then it can be made into a pesto.

Fresh nettle young shoots (before they seed and can be then cut down) can be harvested and made into an infusion/ tea and dried for later. Perhaps try making nettle and garlic biscuits to nettle soup. To gain different constituents, juice them, then it can be dried to have an excellent all round nutrient powder full of vitamins and minerals



Oregano



Dandelion



Lemon balm



Cleavers



Mallow



Wild garlic...



This is the time to harvest leaves and flowers to use fresh or dry for later. Perhaps make a tea, add to salads or food. So many to choose from, such as dandelion leaves, garlic mustard, fat hen, mints, thyme, rosemary, sage, oregano, parsley, angelica, sage, sweet cicely, mallow, chives, hawthorn shoots, salad burnet, tarragon, sorrel, marjoram and flowers of honeysuckle, rose, lavender, calendula, nasturtium, day lily flowers and many more. Yarrow, mullein, elderflowers and cleavers can make a traditional medicinal tea. Lemon balm, especially with Bergamot and catnip leaves makes a refreshing tea.

Some fresh leaves/flowers such as plantain, wild daisy, chickweed, selfheal, comfrey, yarrow, thyme, chickweed, ginger, turmeric, cleavers, St John's wort, marigold flowers can be covered in olive oil and put in a warm place for 2+ weeks, covered with muslin cloth, so can breathe and strained to make an infused oil.

Have you tried the traditional Fire vinegar remedy? A spring tonic or used as a salad dressing, with added honey? Be careful if you have any health issues, as this may be contra indicated. Cider vinegar covers ginger, garlic, onion, apple, cayenne or fresh chillies, lemon juice, turmeric, horseradish, Vit C powder (if have) & possibly oregano, sage, rosemary,

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mint. Leave for 2/3 weeks, strain and put in a jar. Take 1 tsp to start! It is VERY strong. I hope Spring can give us renewed hope and that we will all soon be able to regain the 2020 vision to know how we can best move forward.

If you need any information about any of the above, please contact me. Also see Paula Stone on facebook, twitter- Meadowsweet@HH and Instagram paula.stone.18488

*Paula Stone*

**There are many excellent websites with advice about Covid-19 which include:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mentalhealth-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-ofcoronavirus-covid-19#additional-advice-for-groups-with-specific-mental-health-needs>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

<https://www.healthflix.online/>

<https://mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus>

Samaritans Tel 116123

Anxiety UK helpline 03444 77 5774

Bereavement-Cruse 0808 808 1677

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