



Welcome to your first **HFCS Wellbeing Newsletter**. This resource will be available weekly for the duration of the current school closures. The resource comprises ideas and suggestions which you can use to support your wellbeing and that of others during this time.

Here are some tips for using this Newsletter:

- You can use this resource as much or as little as you require.
- Dip into it, try some of the suggestions and ideas out, and explore what works to support your wellbeing.
- The **HFCS Wellbeing Newsletter** uses the NCCA's Indicators of Wellbeing to explore how to support your wellbeing. The indicators are:
 - **ACTIVE, AWARE, CONNECTED, RESILIENT, RESPECTED** and **RESPONSIBLE**.
- This week the Newsletter will focus on three indicators: **ACTIVE, AWARE** and **CONNECTED**.
- The resource is divided into three sections, one for each indicator, and at the end of the Newsletter, you will see a weekly reflection - something short to read and reflect on over the next week.
- If you have feedback on this resource or content suggestions, please email wellbeing@hfcs.ie

Last, but not least, THANK YOU for taking the time to explore the **HFCS Wellbeing Newsletter**.

Pádraig Meredith, Wellbeing Coordinator

ACTIVE

Staying active at a time when sports clubs, gyms, and most activities are closed is challenging, but not impossible. Being physically active keeps us fit and healthy, but it also supports our mental and emotional wellbeing. Physical activity releases endorphins which are “feel good” hormones that interact with receptors in your brain and make you feel happy and positive. This is why physical activity is a

recommended treatment for stress, anxiety, and depression. The most important aspect of being physically active is to build a routine. It is more challenging to build a routine presently because many of the activities you used to engage in are currently closed, but now is the time to build a new routine.

The National Guideline on Physical Activity for Ireland states that Young People your age **"should be active, at a moderate to vigorous level, for at least 60 minutes every day.** This should include **muscle-strengthening, flexibility, and bone-strengthening** exercises three times a week.

1. What counts as moderate to vigorous activity?

Moderate activity includes walking briskly (quickly), cycling, dancing, sweeping floors, vacuuming, washing windows and even gardening, whereas vigorous activity includes running or jogging, walking very fast, swimming, aerobics, jumping rope. It's all about the amount of oxygen the activity requires and how fast your heart beats. As a rule, you can use the **talk test** to check how vigorous the activity is. If you are doing a moderate-intensity activity, you can talk, but not sing. If you are doing a vigorous activity you will not be able to say more than a few words without taking a breath.

2. What are **muscle-strengthening, flexibility, and bone-strengthening** exercises?

Muscle-strengthening activities include lifting weights, working with resistance bands, heavy gardening, hill walking, climbing stairs, cycling, push-ups, sit-ups, and squats. Here is a link to a short routine you can do at home with virtually no equipment: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wx1gQoHdYkA>

Flexibility activities include stretching, Yoga, Tai Chi, and Pilates. Here is a link to a short routine you can do at home with no equipment: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_xrDATykMI

Bone-strengthening activities include hip rotating, incline push-ups, chair squats, pop squats, balance reach, planks, hopping, skipping, jumping rope, running, gymnastics and lifting weights. Here is a link to a short routine you can do at home with virtually no equipment: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lfr4sl0ZCE

During the week reflect on these questions:

- How physically active am I?

- How can I ensure I am engaging in 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous level exercise each day?
- What kinds of muscle-strengthening, flexibility, and bone-strengthening training can I do each week?

AWARE

What do we mean when we talk about being **AWARE**? Dr. David Cox offered a brilliant analogy for understanding the concept of being aware in his Headspace article.

"Imagine watching a horror movie alone, at home, with the lights off. We've all done it. The movie *OWNS* you. It's terrifying. It's all you're aware of and so it has complete control over your emotions. Now contrast that with watching the same movie at home with the lights on. It's the same movie; you're still alone. But with the lights on, you have more context. You can see that the movie is playing on a TV. You can see other things in the room that remind you you're at home watching a movie. It's still scary, but it's not as bad as it is with the lights off because you have a bit more perspective. So awareness of our thoughts is like having the lights on while we think - we're still having the same thoughts, but with continuous awareness of them, We're not totally owned by them because we can see them for what they are. We have more perspective. They come, they go. They're just thoughts".

In a time when some people feel anxious and stressed out about many things, it is especially important to practise being **AWARE**. Here is the most important question for you in terms of practising awareness:

- Am I **AWARE** of my thoughts, feelings, and behaviours and can I make sense of them?

Building your awareness takes practice. Here are a couple of ideas to support you, based on Vex King's *Good Vibes, Good life*.

1. Get into the habit of a self-care routine - including a balanced diet & daily exercise.
2. Spend time "offline" each day to protect your mental health.
3. Take a few moments each day to meditate or practice deep breathing exercises.

4. If you watch the news, watch it to stay informed about what is happening, but avoid becoming absorbed by it.
5. Check-in with people who make you feel comfortable and at ease either online or in person.
6. Keep yourself busy with activities that help you relax.
7. Write about the things you're thankful for either in a journal or on your phone.
8. Listen to uplifting or relaxing music.

One of my favourite ways of practising being **AWARE** is to go "offline", lie down, close my eyes and listen to music. I prefer music without words for this purpose. One of my favourites is called *Spiegel im Spiegel* by Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. *Spiegel im Spiegel* translates as "Mirror in the Mirror" or "Mirrors in the Mirror", which is like looking into a mirror and seeing an endless amount of reflections. When I am practising being **AWARE**, sometimes a multitude of thoughts enter my mind, some are positive and some are negative. Just like the many reflections in the mirror, being **AWARE** is about allowing these thoughts to appear, and then letting them go. Why not try listening to *Spiegel im Spiegel*? It takes less than ten minutes and is guaranteed to make you feel more peaceful.

Link to *Spiegel im Spiegel*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Saxe2WIIAuk>

Additional Resources:

Dr. David Cox's article: <https://www.headspace.com/blog/2015/12/29/what-does-awareness-mean/>

Vex King Instagram link: <https://www.instagram.com/vexking/>

CONNECTED

There's never been a time in human history when it's possible to be more **CONNECTED** to other people, and that's important because human beings are social animals. We are happiest when we feel **CONNECTED** to others, but what does connection mean? Brené Brown says:

"I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgement; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship".

To build this type of real connection Brené Brown says "we have to allow ourselves to be seen, really seen". This isn't a new idea, Leonardo da Vinci said

"Learn how to see. Realise that everything connects to everything else".

Being seen sounds easy, however, being seen can make a person incredibly vulnerable; vulnerable enough to share our fears and weaknesses as well as our hopes and strengths. How often do you want to share something with someone, feel it on the tip your tongue, but instead bite your lip and not say it? Why do we do that? In case we look stupid, weak, or vulnerable?

It takes great courage to share with honesty. Being vulnerable means to feel uncertain, to take a risk, and to expose our emotions. During this time away from school your daily interactions with your friends might be more limited, and social media is one way to combat this and stay **CONNECTED**. Simon Sinek said:

"Trust is the result of something ... it comes over time, and it involves takes of little risks, exposing yourself to more danger, making yourself feel more vulnerable, sharing something personal ... it is the result of you making someone feel safe, and them making you feel safe".

Here are some questions?

- How can you stay **CONNECTED** with others during the school closure?
- Can you think of one person with whom you can practice **CONNECTING** more deeply?
- Try being brave enough to share some of your fears and weaknesses as well as your hopes and strengths with them.

Additional Resources:

Brené Brown on Trust: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6442YcvEUH8>

Simon Sinek on Trust: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQ+KV+Hb9co>



Everyone is talking about Coronavirus. The word "Corona" is a Latin word that means "a crown or garland". In ancient Rome and Greece, a crown or garland of metal, leaves, or flowers, was worn around the head or neck. You only received a crown for doing or achieving something special. You received a crown as a reward

for your talent, your bravery in war, or for the contribution to society. Throughout history, emperors, Kings and Queens and Olympic winners wore crowns.

Wearing a crown symbolises that you are revered and respected. The coronavirus has spikes that protrude from its membranes and resemble the tines of a crown or the corona of the sun. We are all becoming more and more aware each day of what the coronavirus means. It is important to reflect on those in our society who are in the frontline of the public services.

Those who are continuing to work on the front line of our health and public services, such as paramedics, firefighters, Gardaí, nurses, doctors, and members of our defence forces. These heroes deserve crowns because they continue keep us safe. They deserve our respect and admiration as they continue to protect us.

Thought for the Week

The next time you see a member of the health or public services why not show them your gratitude by saying thank you for your service and thank you for protecting me and keeping me safe.