Hi all,

Hi to those who have joined us this week! I hope you are all looking forward to a restful break from college next week and a few more lie ins! I thought I’d end half term with a bit of an update on stress during the pandemic and lockdown. We have come a long way since last year (although it sometimes might not feel that way) and there are certainly a lot of things to look forward to with the steady roll out of the vaccination program, talks of return dates to education and discussion on when lockdown may stary to be relaxed a little. However, we still need to do what we can to protect ourselves, our families and the NHS.

Lockdown is, lets face it, difficult. I wrote last year and this term about some of the things we can all do to ensure that we are able to take a little control back. Lack of control is something as humans we struggle with. Our brains crave routine and planning ahead which has been harder this year and last. However, making decisions on what we can control, can help to alleviate a bit of the stress and worry we may be feeling at the moment. Here’s some top tips:

* Turn off/ limit news notifications on your phone- It can be tempting to check information relating to Covid throughout the day but if you aim to do this just once at a certain time, it will help you to focus on other things.
* Mute people sharing constant updates or misinformation- if it doesn’t help or if it makes you annoyed/worried/stressed out- best to limit viewing!
* Only use information from trusted sources- The best way to decipher myth from fact is using trusted sources.
* <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>
* [https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/)

#### Discuss your fears with someone you trust- keep an open and honest dialogue at home. I’m sure this will also help those you live with. You can also use the support services on [www.bsfc.ac.uk/mentalhealth](http://www.bsfc.ac.uk/mentalhealth) to speak to a professional.

#### Distract yourself with the things you enjoy- use your down time well and plan it out if that helps. Going for a walk, exercise, reading, watching a film/TV, speaking to friends can all help to lift your mood.

#### Eat well, Sleep well- look after your diet- it fuels your learning and free time. Make sure you go to bed at a decent time during the week and try to get 8/9hours sleep every night.

#### Talk to your GP or mental health team- if your stress levels are concerning you, get a professional involved. Most GPs are offering E-consults so tell them how you are feeling and they will get in touch with further support.

#### These tips and more are widely available on UK mental health websites. If you find any resources that help you during lockdown, feel free to share with me on Teams Chat!

#### Hope you have a productive week and a restful half term!

#### Jen