



COVID-19 Support Booklet



ParentingNI



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We're all in this together

In a world that can appear scary and confusing at this time, we need a little positivity. The cover photo was made using daisies by a daughter of one of the dads. We hope that everyone can do as she did – remember the positives and share the love.

We have put together a series of 6 booklets that will be released every few weeks. They have been put together in collaboration with some of the parents we work with to try and support people at a very difficult and challenging time, through change and uncertainty. In the booklets you will find ideas, tips and suggestions about:

- Managing your mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Things to do while your self-isolating / working from home
- Activities that you can do with children
- How to make the best out of face time with your kid and relatives

Through this difficult time, Parenting NI Support Line remains available to support parents and carers on 0808 810 722. If you need any support, please contact us.

We are also putting information on our social media nearly every day, to give people ideas and tips for specific topics.



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Child Contact Guidance During COVID-19 Pandemic

The government has provided clarity around movement, continuing co-parental relationships and child contact following separation/divorce. It was acknowledged that there is a need for parents to continue to invest time and effort in supporting contact. Both parents should try to continue to adopt a consistent, authoritative approach, as well as providing a consistent message around Coronavirus which will prove less confusing for the child /children.

Government suggest movement between homes is facilitated where possible by car instead of public transport. Both parents should observe rules around social distancing, hand washing and other government guidelines. The child's needs should always be put first and this should continue to be the case in these circumstances.

Parenting NI would encourage parents to consider the following in general and throughout this difficult time for everyone:

- Both parents continue to be important in the child's life.
- Parents can provide a feeling of safety at this time of uncertainty.
- Parents are encouraged to agree how they will handle the child's movement between homes.
- Parents should respect that sometimes plans will have to be reconsidered as the situation progresses.
- A consistent message on the current situation by both parents is less confusing for the child.
- Parents should agree how they will answer any questions their child may want to ask.
- This is not a time to point score. This is about keeping our children safe and with the least anxiety as possible.



Dads
project

Supporting separated dads in NI



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parentingni.org

Support Line: 0808 8010 722

Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



Children may respond to stress in different ways such as being more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated, bedwetting etc.

Respond to your child's reactions in a supportive way, listen to their concerns and give them extra love and attention.

Children need adults' love and attention during difficult times. Give them extra time and attention.

Remember to listen to your children, speak kindly and reassure them.

If possible, make opportunities for the child to play and relax.



Try and keep children close to their parents and family and avoid separating children and their caregivers to the extent possible. If separation occurs (e.g. hospitalization) ensure regular contact (e.g. via phone) and re-assurance.

Keep to regular routines and schedules as much as possible, or help create new ones in a new environment, including school/learning as well as time for safely playing and relaxing.



Provide facts about what has happened, explain what is going on now and give them clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected by the disease in words that they can understand depending on their age.

This also includes providing information about what could happen in a re-assuring way (e.g. a family member and/or the child may start not feeling well and may have to go to the hospital for some time so doctors can help them feel better).

Mental health planner

1

Write down 3 things you're grateful for

2

Spend more time with people being social

3

Perform a random act of kindness

4

Sit upright as this can affect your mood

5

Write a letter to someone you love about why they mean so much

6

Start a project or hobby - this can be big or small

7

Spend money on experiences rather than material things

8

Write down 5 positive things about yourself

9

Take photos of nature and things around you

10

Listen to relaxing music

11

Volunteer for a cause you believe in

12

Try some yoga or pilates

13

Take time to savour moments (e.g. stop & enjoy scenery)

14

Spend quality time with friends and family

15

Focus on problem solving & being solution focused

16

Exercise - a 30 minute walk in nature will reduce stress

17

Use positive self-talk and positive affirmations

18

Write down a realistic but optimistic future for yourself

19

Write down 3 good things that happened today

20

Be curious - ask questions about the world and research them

21

Learn to laugh - laugh for 15 minutes a day

22

Watch a documentary on something that interests you

23

Act happy - be more cheerful and smile more

24

Challenge your negative thoughts

25

Write about a really positive experience in your life

26

Practice Mindfulness

27

Use worry periods and stick to the times

28

Practice self-care - look after yourself

29

Spend money or your time on others

30

Think about last week & what has went well - big or small

Managing mental health and wellbeing

Self-isolation and quarantine can have a negative impact on mental health and emotional wellbeing. So it is important that people know some tools and tips for being able to manage their mental health. In each of the booklets, we are going to be looking at 5 of the tips on the Dads Project mental health planner, explaining what they are and giving you some examples.

Write down 3 things you are grateful for



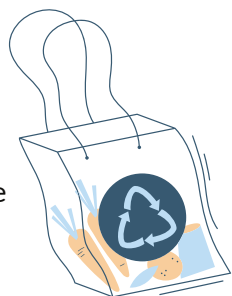
Keep a little notebook or paper beside you and when you wake up in the morning or evening, write down 3 things that you are grateful and thankful for. These may be big things or small things (e.g. you have good health, you have supportive friends and family, you can work from home, you are coping and managing well etc). With all the confusion and negativity, it can be hard sometimes to remember the positives, so this quick exercise will help you focus and think about some of the positive aspects of life.

Spend more time with people being social



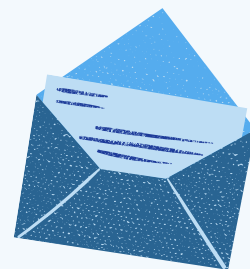
We are social beings and need social interaction. You might think that this is difficult when self-isolating, however, you can still keep in touch with friends and relatives through the likes of video calls. There are also apps that will allow you to connect with more people and some that allow you to have party or social gathering – in the safety and comfort of your own home!

Perform a random act of kindness



We all enjoy it when we have a little unexpected kindness, a small act of niceness (e.g. a hug from a pet, or a text to say that someone is thinking about you) in our lives. Well, you can get that same feeling by doing random acts of kindness for other people! Some things can be small (e.g. helping a neighbour or elderly relative by picking up their shopping, or helping a random person with a voucher to help with costs, or letting someone else collect your shopping points). There are loads of things that you can do! If you want some suggestions, try looking online for some ideas and inspiration. Be the reason someone smiles today!

Write a letter to someone you love about why they mean so much



We all like to receive a little gratitude for the things that we have done, the effort that we have put into things. To get where you are, many people helped along the way – friends, family, neighbours, co-workers, children, schools etc. Take some time to think about someone that you are grateful to, but maybe haven't had the time or the opportunity to tell them how grateful you are. You don't have to send the letter, it can be a way to express your gratitude and thanks.

Sit upright, as this can affect your mood

You may be surprised to learn that simply sitting and walking upright (straight) can have a positive impact on your mood. Slouching tends to bring people down, perhaps because the body language impacts the brain and therefore the mood. So take some time to adjust your posture when sitting and standing to take advantage of this.



Managing time in lockdown

Due to public health advice, people are spending more time indoors, in order to protect other people and themselves. However, what do you do with all that time?! Luckily, we have some suggestions on what you can do while self-isolating

Maintain routines as much as possible

These recent weeks have been full of change, compromises and uncertainty for people. It is easy to let things go. However, having a routine is very important to set up your expectations for the days to come. Try as much as possible to maintain a routine, for yourself and your family. Plan when to get up, when to work, activities to do with children and plan time for yourself as well.



Start a hobby, or re-start an old hobby

Sometimes time gets away with us, and the things that we meant to do, or hobbies we may have had can get neglected. However, this is the perfect time to start an old hobby, or take up a new one. Some people may have played instruments in the past, or may have loved painting, or gardening. If you have always been interested in something, why not give it a try now.



Make a video diary or scrapbook

As people are socially distancing, we aren't having the usual daily chats we would have had with our neighbours, kids, work colleagues, other family members. So, keep a record of some of the things that you have been up to! You'll have something to show and share with people when you do get speaking to them again.



Make some flower boxes, or try growing your own fruit and veg

This is a simple and fun activity that you can also do with kids that really shows the fruits of your labour! Flower boxes can be made from the likes of milk cartons or unused containers, some soil and seeds. Some fruit and veg can be grown in small areas and gardens. This is also a great learning opportunity and teaches children where food comes from.



Start making plans for the future

This will pass – it is easy to forget that. But it will pass – so why not start making plans about what you want to do when it does pass? Have you always wanted to go on a holiday, see some of the world's landmarks, take up a sport? Start thinking about what you would like to do when this has passed, researching if there is anything in the local area. Make a list of some plans.



Take up Sudoku or cryptic crosswords

It's important that you keep your mind active and sharp in these difficult times. Sudoku and cryptic crosswords are a good way to exercise your brain! Some Sudoku and crosswords have increasing difficulty – why not give some a go! For an extra challenge try timing yourself.



Solve a Rubik's cube

We've all tried it at one stage and probably gave up and left it in the drawer. Did you know that no matter how mixed up a Rubik's cube is, it would only ever take a maximum 20 turns to return it to its complete and original form? Learn this skill and you will be able to impress friends, children and work mates. Once you have, start timing yourself for an extra challenge.

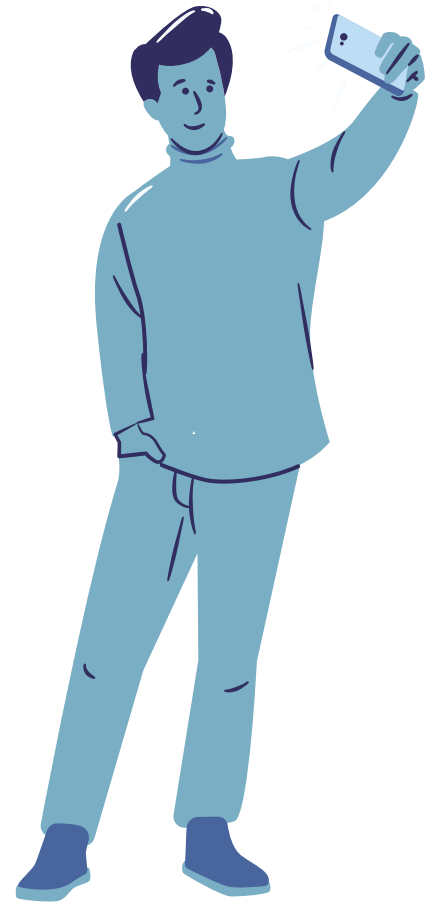


What to do on video calls with kids

A lot of families in self-isolation are using video calls with children, friends and other family members to stay in touch and maintain relationships. We have put together some suggestions to try and enhance the experience.

Video call ideas for children aged 0-3 years

- **Storytime:** You can still have story time, use picture books, or for older children a chapter from the book they are reading
- **Sing Songs:** Younger children especially will love the action songs (e.g. wheels on the bus, itsy bitsy spider). For older children, you can both sing.
- **Learn a language:** Young children are especially good at learning a language - give sign language a go!



Video call ideas for children aged 4-8 years

- **Help with homework:** Many children have been sent home with school work to do while schools are closed. Help them maintain some structure and routine and use encouragement and praise.
- **Play statues:** Cover your eyes and have your child move toward the camera. Take turns so you have to do the same.
- **Play Charades:** This is entirely visual, and you can take turns. Get creative with some of your actions.

Video call ideas for children aged 9-12 years

- **Pictionary:** This is all visual - both of you set up a note pad in front of the camera, one person draws while the other one guesses.
- **Do pilates together:** Pilates helps you focus and is a good low impact exercise. It doesn't have to be pilates - do some exercise together - use lots of praise and encouragement
- **Build some Lego:** Get creative and have a lego building competition! You can build the same thing separately, invent something and build it or do different sets.



What to do on video calls with kids



Video call ideas for children aged 13-16 years

- **Play minute to win it games:** There are loads of fun games and challenges that you can both try - see who can do it quicker or better.
- **Make memoji's of relatives:** This can be done on most devices, or you can draw them and make them later. Try making memoji's of each other!
- **Tell Jokes:** Laughter is good for you and kids - try telling jokes to each other and doing the 'try not to laugh' challenge.

Video call ideas for children aged 16 years +

- **Make positivity boards:** Kids will have some very challenging choices to make going forward - help them keep focused and remain positive by making positivity boards together.
- **Cook or bake together:** You can do a ready steady cook style competition and pick each others ingredients, send recipes and make the same thing and compare dishes.
- **Help them plan for the future:** Talk to them and help them sort out their ideas and plans for the future, help them source courses, apprenticeships, placements etc.



If anyone is looking for any inspiration of what kids and families have been up to in the midst of self-isolation – here's some photo's from the Parenting NI team and their families of what they have been doing: some baking (and eating, off course), planting some seeds and flowers, some arts and crafts. Send in your photo's to get added to the next booklet!



Invictus

by William Ernest Henley

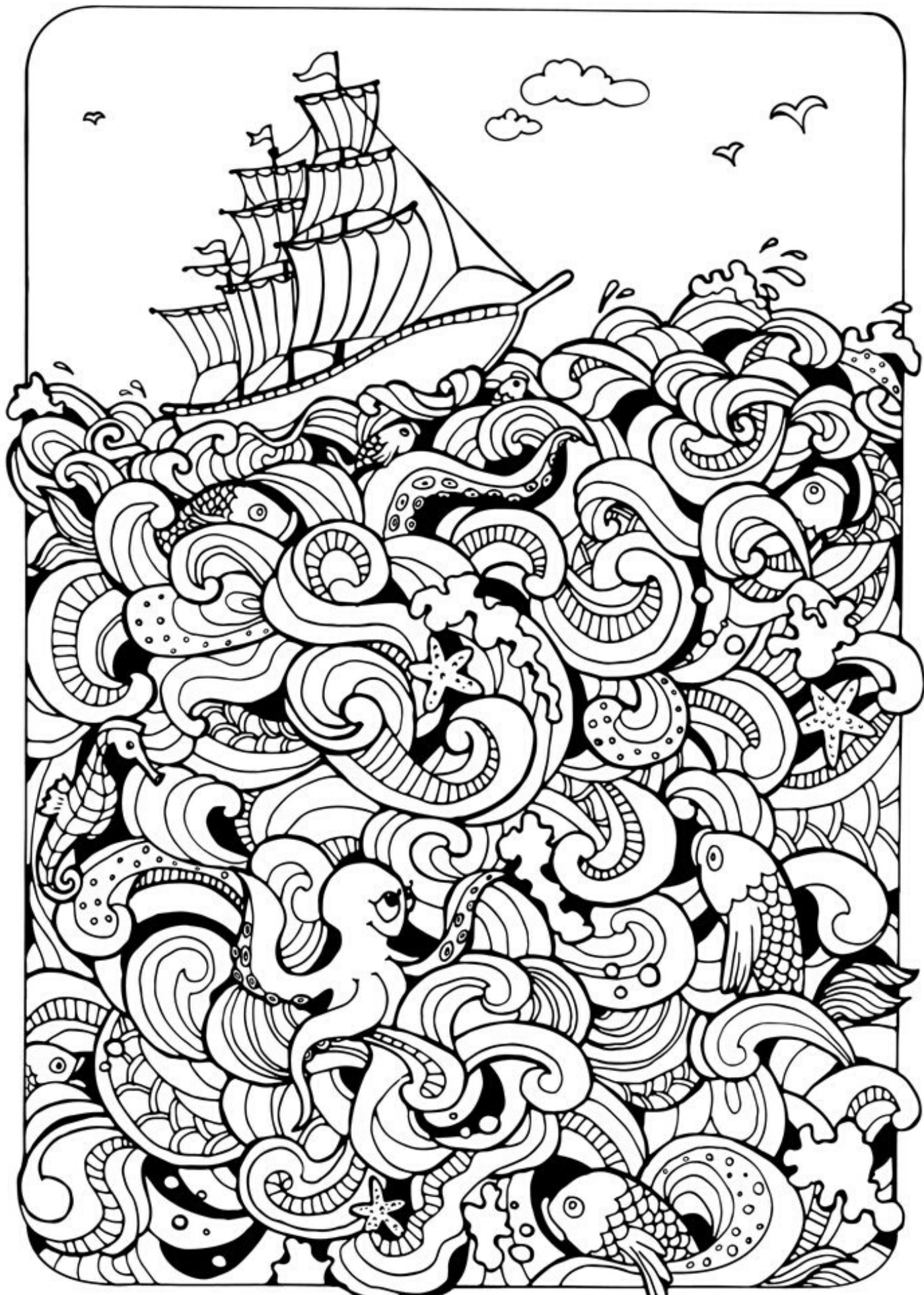
Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

Mindful Colouring



Managing mental health and emotional wellbeing

Below there is some space to add some of your own ideas and suggestions about the tips for managing your mental health and emotional wellbeing.

What am I grateful for today?

How can I connect with more people? Who can I connect or reconnect with?

What random acts of kindness can I do for people?

Managing mental health and emotional wellbeing

When have I noticed that I slouch? How can I correct this?

Who has helped me? Who am I grateful to and what would I like to say to them?

Remember, it's important to look after yourself and make yourself a priority sometimes to be able to cope with everything else going on in your life.

We've included a weekly planner to help you build a routine and plan some activities for you and your family.



Weekly Planner

MONDAY

7 AM
9 AM
11 AM
1 PM
3 PM
5 PM
7 PM
9 PM

TUESDAY

7 AM
9 AM
11 AM
1 PM
3 PM
5 PM
7 PM
9 PM

WEDNESDAY

7 AM
9 AM
11 AM
1 PM
3 PM
5 PM
7 PM
9 PM

THURSDAY

7 AM
9 AM
11 AM
1 PM
3 PM
5 PM
7 PM
9 PM

FRIDAY

7 AM
9 AM
11 AM
1 PM
3 PM
5 PM
7 PM
9 PM

SATURDAY

7 AM
9 AM
11 AM
1 PM
3 PM
5 PM
7 PM
9 PM

SUNDAY

7 AM
9 AM
11 AM
1 PM
3 PM
5 PM
7 PM
9 PM

NOTES

Couch to 5k (3 runs a week)

Week one

For your first 3 runs, begin with a brisk 5 minute walk, then alternate 1 minute of running and 1.30 mins walking for a total of 20 minutes.

Week two

For your 3 runs, begin with a brisk 5 minute walk, then alternate 1.30 mins of running with 2 minutes of walking for a total of 25 minutes.

30 day lunge challenge

Day 1	20 lunges	Day 11	65 lunges	Day 21	110 lunges
Day 2	25 lunges	Day 12	70 lunges	Day 22	115 lunges
Day 3	30 lunges	Day 13	75 lunges	Day 23	120 lunges
Day 4	35 lunges	Day 14	80 lunges	Day 24	Rest day
Day 5	40 lunges	Day 15	85 lunges	Day 25	125 lunges
Day 6	45 lunges	Day 16	Rest day	Day 26	130 lunges
Day 7	50 lunges	Day 17	90 lunges	Day 27	135 lunges
Day 8	Rest day	Day 18	95 lunges	Day 28	140 lunges
Day 9	55 lunges	Day 19	100 lunges	Day 29	145 lunges
Day 10	60 lunges	Day 20	105 lunges	Day 30	150 lunges



Weekly Exercise Planner

WEEK
ONE

COUCH
TO 5K

30 DAY LUNGE
CHALLENGE

CALORIES
BURNT

SUN

MON

TUES

WED

THURS

FRI

SAT

Weekly Exercise Planner

WEEK
TWO

COUCH
TO 5K

30 DAY LUNGE
CHALLENGE

CALORIES
BURNT

SUN

MON

TUES

WED

THURS

FRI

SAT

Vegan Chili

(Serves 4 people, or freeze it for later)

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- 2 teaspoons smoked paprika
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 1 onion (chopped)
- 2 carrots (peeled and chopped)
- 2 garlic cloves (crushed)
- 1-2 teaspoons chili powder (depending on preference)
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 red pepper (cut into chunks)
- 2 X 400g tins chopped tomatoes
- 400g tin black beans (drained)
- 400g tin kidney beans (drained)
- 400g soya mince
- 500g rice

Method

- 01** Heat the oil in a large saucepan over a medium heat.
- 02** Add the onion, carrot and celery. Cook for 8-10 mins, stirring occasionally until soft.
- 03** Crush in the garlic and cook for a further minute.
- 04** Add the remaining dried spices, tomato puree and soya mince. Give everything a good mix and cook for 1 min more.
- 05** Add the red pepper, chopped tomatoes and 200ml of water. Bring the chilli to a boil then simmer for 20 mins.
- 06** While the chili is simmering, cook the rice to (using instructions on the back of packet).
- 07** Tip in the beans and cook for another 10 mins.
- 08** Season to taste then serve with rice.

What I can control

The 3 C's (Catch it, Check it, Change it) is a technique that can help you combat negative self-talk, helping you to recognise emotions, reflect on unhelpful thoughts and change them into more positive outlooks.

Catch

Identify the thought that came before the emotion

Check

Reflect on how accurate & useful the thought is

Change

Change the thought to a more helpful one





About the Dads Project

The Dads Project supports dads in Northern Ireland who are separating, separated or currently involved within the courts service.

The Dads Project promotes dads being engaged and involved in their children's lives. This project will help you to develop more confidence in your parenting ability and to build positive connections with other dads in a similar position in your community.

The Dads Project aims to

- Provide services to empower and support separated dads
- Provide dads with knowledge, information and choices
- Promote children's rights to having access to both parents
- Promote the importance of children having an ongoing relationship with their dad
- Influence policy change to ensure dads are considered on an equal basis to mothers
- Educate professionals about the importance of ongoing engagement with dads

The Dads Project is a Parenting NI initiative. Parenting NI provide a range of supports to parents throughout Northern Ireland. For more information and further support visit parentingni.org or call for free on 0808 8010 722.



Parenting NI . 42 Dublin Road . Belfast . BT2 7HN
FREE Support Line: 0808 8010 722 . Email: help@parentingni.org
Visit: www.parentingni.org

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