

COVID-19: Psychological Wellbeing

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Help and Support

COVID-19 is bringing unrivalled challenges for us as individuals, and as part of a wider Irish society. It is important that we all as individuals do what we can to look after ourselves and also each other as we try to effectively manage this evolving situation.

If we want to check the facts then the best place to get information is from the HSE Website www.yourmentalhealth.ie or www.HPSC.ie where there are regular updates relating to COVID-19 in Ireland.

We are all facing practical and emotional challenges right now and in an effort to assist with grounding ourselves in responding as effectively as we can, we have put together a series of help sheets to provide information and steps that might be helpful.



Understanding and Managing my Emotions

Emotions and feelings aren't good or bad, they just are what they are. The behaviour people engage in, as an expression of their emotions may be helpful or unhelpful. This skill is about helping you know your emotions so that you can deal with them effectively and avoid engaging in problematic behaviour.



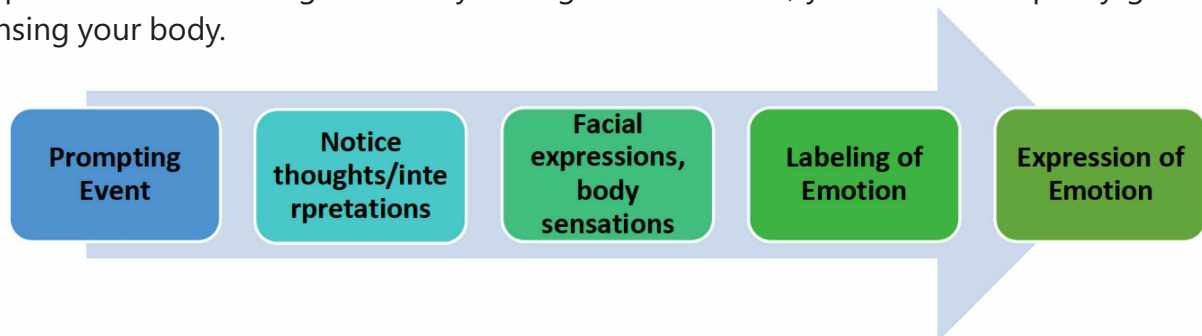
Functions of emotions

- **To communicate to ourselves** - What is going on for me right now?
- **To communicate with and/or influence others** - I am showing others that I am impacted by what is happening and may need support.
- **To organise and prepare for action** - I may need to do something to change how I think or feel or may need to step away from this situation for a while.

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What happens when I experience emotions?

Emotions are very complex and consist of many parts or different reactions happening at the same time. Sometimes we find it hard to tune into or sense our body and body changes. Failure to do so can mean we don't hear our emotions and therefore we often do not respond in a clear or regulated way. To regulate emotions, you have to be pretty good at sensing your body.



External events as well as internal thoughts, emotions and sensations can trigger our emotional response.

Emotions involve



Body changes <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facial muscles• Body movements and gestures	Brain changes Neuro-chemical changes such as those in the limbic system
Sensing "Emotional experience" - the noticing and experience of the changes in body and brain	Action urges The bodies physical urge to respond to the felt emotion

Emotions are expressed through:

- **Body language** – e.g. postural and facial changes eg. Frowning, finger wagging, gritting your teeth, clenching your fists
- **Words** – e.g. "I love you", "I am angry", "I am sad" or "I am sorry"
- **Actions** – e.g. kissing, hitting, running toward someone, withdrawing passively, avoiding, shouting.

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Steps to letting go of emotional distress



- Observe your emotion - acknowledge it, step back
- Try to experience your emotion as a wave, coming and going
- Do not judge it
- Do not cling to it
- Open yourself to the flow of the emotion
- Be aware that you are not your emotion
- Do not act on it
- Do not build a wall around or block your emotion - it just keeps it around longer
- Practice accepting your emotions - be willing to have them, they have a purpose and are justified

Steps for increasing positive emotions

Attend to relationships

- Balanced relationships may increase our sense of happiness
- It is important to note here that we should not place all our happiness on one person or one relationship, stay connected with family and friend even if using phone and multimedia at present.



Avoid avoiding

- Don't give up!
- No one can build a positive life if one avoids problem solving or avoids doing things that are necessary

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Mindfulness of positive experiences

- Be mindful of positive events that occur. Do the following:
- Focus your attention on positive events that occur, even the small daily stuff
- Refocus on positive parts of events when your mind wanders to the negative

Knowing when to shift your focus

Protect positive experiences. For example, if you find your mind beginning to focus on:

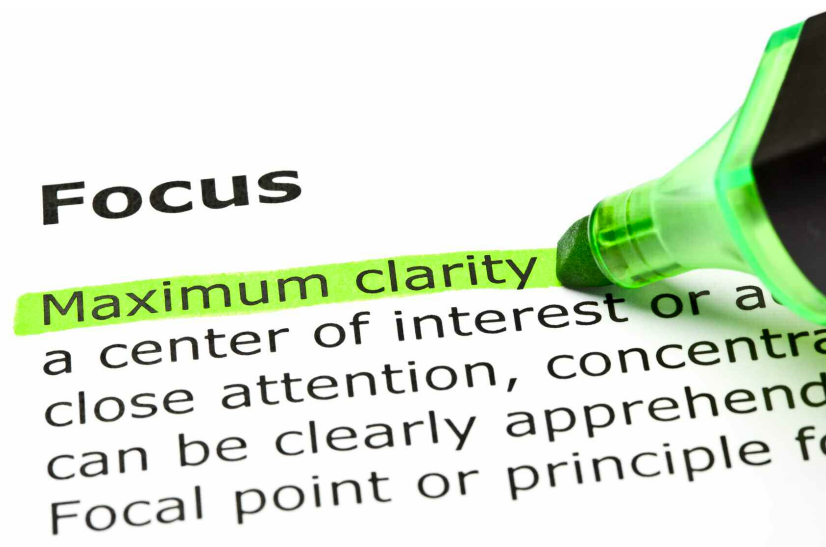
- > Thinking about when a positive experience will end
- > Thinking about whether you deserve it
- > Thinking about how much is expected of you now

Then use the steps for letting go of emotional distress and also the tips from our sheet on Distress Tolerance to help move away from fear or negative thinking and back to a more positive focus.



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Recap: Getting to know and manage my emotions



- Determine what is happening in the environment. Figure out **what happened** in your surroundings just prior to your current emotional state.
- Identify and **describe your emotions** and feelings in concrete language that is non-judgemental.
- Be grounded in your body. **Notice how you experience your emotions** and feelings physically.
- **Pay attention to your thoughts.** Become aware of what thoughts you have when experiencing your emotions and feelings.
- **How are my emotions and feelings influencing my behaviour?** Evaluate if your behaviour is as effective as it could be. If not, ask yourself what behaviour would be more effective here?
- **Think about the potential consequence** of thinking, feeling and behaving in a particular way. If there is a likely negative consequence, are there alternative feelings, thoughts and behaviours that would reduce or eliminate negative outcomes.