

## Keeping yourself well in your being.

'I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you in my righteous right hand.'

Isaiah Ch 41:10



This time has been very challenging for many people in all sorts of situations in life. Apart from Covid-19, people still have unfortunate things happen in their lives at this time, when it's not easy to cope with life's challenges. How do we then attempt to survive and thrive through this pandemic?

We could say that healthy Wellbeing is when someone is creating a balance physically, mentally, and spiritually. I believe that those three parts are interconnected. When one part is affected, the others often suffer. Sadly, creating a balance in our lives is not easy in this very complex world. So, what will help us get through this difficult time and how can we consciously put things in place to help our wellbeing? Here are my five suggestions.

1) **Taking pleasure in Leisure** - Many of us cannot access our natural resources that usually help us with our stress levels without always recognising it. We shape life to suit our needs. Our leisure times help us get through in life. When I feel stressed, I usually go swimming or meet for a meal with friends for a good chat and laugh. My husband and I go to the cinema or the theatre. However, as we cannot do these things, we have to think positively and find opportunities to take pleasure in other pastimes. I walk a lot and notice God's creation. I love smelling the fresh air and listening to the natural noises. I like bumping into (but not too close!) people I meet on the street. This period has made us go back to basics. To learn to be satisfied with simple things. Exercise is important too, in whatever form we can and enjoy. It's important to enjoy the feeling after, of our body that feels healthily worn out, and take pleasure in sensing that when our body lets go afterwards. It's important to keep our endorphin levels stimulated and take delight in things that are under our nose. Leisure doesn't have to be about spending money.

2) **Keep connected** – Whether we are individually outgoing or whether we are more introverted, we all need each other to a degree. With life as it is, we don't have an easy choice and it may seem as if we've been deprived of seeing friends and spending time with those we love. My message would be to think outside your usual box! I often hear people say: 'I would never do social media'. Or 'I would never spontaneously phone someone I don't know very well'. 'I couldn't knock on someone's door.' (At a distance of course!) Take advantage of this time and make contacts you might not normally make for your benefit as well as for others. When I walk, I do knock on doors and chat at friends' doors safely (when this is allowed). I make zoom times with friends and send messages by text, email and messenger sharing our daily thoughts and activities. Be bold and enjoy each other!



- 3) **Keeping Occupied** - Spending time alone or with more time to sit and ruminate can cause some distress if your thoughts drift into distressing and fearful places. Sometimes we can't get out of our minds things we regret, or things we perhaps even unhealthily desire. Anxieties can be triggered with negative thoughts. I would say keep your mind healthily occupied. Learn a new skill. Write a letter. Lift the phone. Turn out that cupboard or the garage you've meant to do for years. Try out new recipes. I have heard people, who live alone, say I can't cook something special just for me – I'd say 'yes you can'! Make small goals ahead of time for each day and train yourself to be pleased with your task, however small. Purpose is important.
- 4) **Your relationship with God.** Firstly, I need to say that Christians are not exempt from being 'out of kilter' or feeling anxious or depressed at this current time. I certainly do not believe natural feelings are a sin! We may find ourselves facing fragile parts of ourselves at the moment. I try to practice a God-centred rhythm each day. Each morning I wake to a silent time with God followed by morning prayer. This year in working more from home, I also stop for evening prayer. I believe the most important thing God wants of us is to 'be' with Him. I get up each morning being grateful for what the day holds. In amongst the chaos and fears that life holds, in all of this I am assured by the sun rising and the sun setting, and they remind me of God's certain presence and His hope and love for us. We can encourage our children to take moments of silence and wonder. I recognise that growing a rhythm of what I call the 'inner monastery' within myself is fundamental to practice in a discipline. This is sometimes hard if my discipline is threatened by 'things to do', though if I focus in the right way, the discipline is one that comes from pleasure and, for me, this desire has become stronger throughout this pandemic. Perhaps because I know I certainly need to anchor myself with a reminder of God's character in these frightening days.
- 5) **Go gently, be understanding and love.** Do you know that love is described as a mirror? If you love Jesus by letting love flow through you, you will become more loving. You can simply do this by just sitting quietly in a chair and visualise his healing light surround you. Many people are hard on themselves; they expect perfection in themselves or others. There can be a tendency to project angry feelings onto others in relationship. Consider how destructive it is when you perhaps tear yourself apart or to be unforgiving to yourself or others. You might like to decide to pray for yourself and others. I would say treat yourself with care, have a long bath, wrap yourself in a soft blanket for comfort, give yourself kind messages and it will in turn become easier to go easier on others. Above all, we need to be able to ask for help and support if we are in a difficult place. There are people that can help if things have gone askew.



Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage: Yes, wait for the Lord.

Psalms 27:14