**CARE: Home Health Spa – a relaxing day**

This resource seeks to give you ideas on how to create a lovely and relaxing day to yourself. Of course, it is just ideas, you may want to structure your own time. What is important is that you are taking time to have a day devoted to rest, peace, and relaxation. It can help to provide a pivot point in your week, differentiation from the rest of your days in lockdown and of course some self-care for yourself which is so vital for your mental health. Remember it is not selfish to take time by yourself and it can also be in these quiet moments that we draw closer to God.

If you cannot spare a day maybe just take a few of these suggestions and incorporate them into your weekly routine.

This resource incorporates suggestions and ideas from The Church of England Mental Health Resources (<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/mental-health-resources>) and The Home Health Spa by Anna Selby.

*Please remember that these are just suggestions and you must always make sure your own health comes first. This document cannot be considered a replacement for professional medical treatment. Whilst our advice and information are believed to be accurate and the step-by-step instructions have been devised to avoid strain, it is important you listen to your body and make sure you are not causing yourself unnecessary pain.*

**The evening before**

Although we are suggesting a day of your time, you may want to make sure you have a restful evening the night before, so you wake up in the right frame of mind.

**7.00pm Prayerful meditation / Spiritual Communion / Time of Prayer and bible reading.**

To still our minds and overcome the immediate stresses and strains of life we suggest that you spend an hour in quiet and stillness and prayer. Make sure that you are comfortable but alert as you approach your time. Put your phone on silent, make sure people in your household know what you are doing and that you are not to be disturbed. Make sure you are in a quiet spot and its good to be sitting in a straight-backed position whether on a chair or a mat on the floor. You may want to light a candle to give you a focal point in the room, and they provide a lovely warm glow.

* If doing private prayer or just simply having quiet time to read the bible you may want to play a gentle piece of music in the background. This is a lovely YouTube video of Christian Music you could use <https://youtu.be/fOB73qRVGJs> some people prefer to have sounds in the background such as rain <https://youtu.be/o8GrqUSdzi0>
* If you would prefer to watch a service or Spiritual Communion to guide you through this time of quiet, then some suggestions are:
  + Mothers’ Union Spiritual Communion - <https://youtu.be/_akWW3XZs3E>
  + New Years Eve Meditation and Benediction - <https://youtu.be/-iriJtWW64g> although this was held on NYE it is a beautiful service.
  + Church of England Compline - <https://youtu.be/ai15F_69mJc>

**8.00pm Evening Meal**

Although this may sound strange, but there are several skills and treatments in terms of food, that are thought to aid relaxion of the body and mind and can help us keep focused. If our bodies are working overtime to digest rich food, then it is going to be difficult for us to slow down and relax. You may want to choose what you are going to eat before you start so you can have all your meals prepared rather than worrying about preparing and cooking.

A simple evening meal is a nourishing soup – served with a wholemeal roll and maybe some fruit afterwards if you are still hungry. We have some recipe suggestions at the end of this document.

If you want a restful night sleep it is good to eat slowly, making sure we are taking time to thank God for his provision and savouring the taste. Tea and coffee can act as stimulants so make sure you are drinking lots of water or herbal tea instead.

A Grace

*Oh, thank the Lord for giving me the things I need.*

*The sun, the rain, and the apple seed*

*O thank you Lord for loving me.*

**9.00pm Aromatherapy bath / shower**

An aromatherapy bath or shower can be a really good way of slowing down the mind and relaxing the body at the end of the day. Prepare the bathroom to make it as tranquil as possible with warm towels and low lighting. You may want to have a bath with candlelight but please do be careful!

Run a warm bath or shower. If a bath either use a bubble bath with essential oils in it or add some drops of lavender essential oil in with the water. Relax in the bath and take some time to unwind – some tranquil music can help with this.

After your bath or shower wrap yourself in a lovely warm towel and prepare yourself for bed.

**10.00pm Bedtime**

It is hoped that you will have two restful night’s sleep using this resource. You should be nice and relaxed after your evening free from social media and other distractions this can be a perfect time of the day to pause for a minute to pray before bed.

* Before you fall asleep take a couple of minutes to think of three things you feel gratitude for that day, it can be as simple as having a phone call with a loved one or enjoying a walk in the fresh air.
* Use a meditation phrase from the psalms: “I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety.” ([Psalm 4:8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+4%3A8&version=NRSVA)) Repeating this as you go to sleep can help.

**The Day!**

**8:00am Morning gentle stretches**

Once you wake up have a glass of water, herbal tea or warm water with lemon and honey. This will rehydrate you and leave you ready for the day.

Follow with these gentle stretches to help you start your day, take them nice and slow – there is no rush.

**Shoulder looseners:** Stand with your feet apart. Slowly roll your shoulders forward towards your chest. Keep your arm relaxed. Gently roll them in circular motions both forwards and backwards, 10 times each way.

Lift your shoulders up towards your ears as far as you can and hold for a couple of seconds before gently dropping them down. Repeat 10 times.

**Arm stretches:** Stand tall with a nice straight back, shoulders relaxed, and navel drawn to your spine, place your feet hip-width apart. Stretch your left hand straight to the ceiling, bend your knees at the same time feeling the stretch all the way up your side. Repeat the stretch on your right side and do this 10 times on each side.

You can also follow this by stretching the hand right out in front of you – reaching forward with arms shoulder level and your body straight. Again repeat 10 times with both left and right arms.

**Waist Twists:** Stand in the same position as you did for arm stretches. Fold your arms loosely in front of you so they are about level with your heart. Turn gently and slowly to the left from your waist only (your hips should remain facing squarely in front) Return to the centre and repeat to the right. Alternate, twisting 10 times on each side.

**Side Bends:** Stand as before, with your hands hanging loosely at your sides. Now place your left hand on your hip and raise your right arm. Stretch over to the left feeling the stretch all the way up the right side of your body. Return to centre and repeat until you have done this 10 times. Then repeat on the other side.

**Leg Swings:** Stand up straight, feet together at the heels and slightly apart at the toes (a narrow V). hold on to a chair back with your right hand if necessary. Lift your left leg and swing it forward. Now swing your leg backwards and forwards so your leg is moving in a relaxed way in the hip socket. You may find it easier to stretch your left arm out sideways when you do this to balance. Do 20 swings and then repeat on the other side with your other leg.

If you want to add some more stretched on you could try one of the following:

**10 morning stretches to help kick-start your day.**

<https://www.bupa.co.uk/newsroom/ourviews/waking-up-stretching>

**Chair Based Pilates**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/chair-based-pilates-exercise-video/>

Pilates is a great form of exercise, but if you do not like getting down onto the floor (or up again), why not try this chair-based session? You really can exercise while sitting down!

**9.00am Breakfast**

Make sure you have a light but substantial breakfast such as fruit, granola and yoghurt or poached eggs and spinach or porridge. A simple breakfast is ¼ galia melon, ¼ watermelon cubed mixed with a tablespoon of honey and topped with 25g flaked almonds.

After breakfast why not fill a jug of water and add some slides of lemon and cucumber (maybe some mint as well if you have it) Pop in the fridge and you have spa water that you can keep drinking throughout the day.

**10.00am Creative time**

This is your time to do something peaceful that you do. Maybe some watercolour painting, some knitting, reading a book or colouring. The important thing is that you are doing it for yourself and because you want to do it – not because you have too!

**11.30am Prayerful meditation / Spiritual Communion / Time of Prayer and bible reading.**

Follow the instructions earlier on in the guide to have some time of spiritual reflection. You could join with Mothers’ Union Midday prayers on Facebook to continue this time, or call the Daily Hope Prayer line if you are not online (free phone 0800 804 8044 – our midday prayers are on this and as well as prayer, bible reflections and music)

**12.30pm Lunch**

Lunch will be your main meal of the day and we have some great lunch recipes at the end of the guide. Make sure you follow with the dessert recipes suggested or some fruit and yoghurt / sorbet.

**1.30pm Walk / Gentle Exercise**

Its now a good time of the day to take a gentle walk for an hour or so. Make sure you are walking at a gentle pace and taking the time to observe what is surrounding you whatever that may be.

If you are unable to go for a walk why not watch our guided walk from the comfort of you own home <https://youtu.be/Re_8YhgNflI>

There are some other online walks - this is a lovely one of Rome <https://youtu.be/EsFheWkimsU> , one of English countryside <https://youtu.be/kpJtqgmTfOQ> and one by the coast in Devon <https://youtu.be/Z6QZkwfYC04>

Alternatively, you could use this time to do some gentle exercise at home the stretches from before or something different like this:

**Silver Swans**

<https://www.royalacademyofdance.org/rad-at-home/silver-swans-classes-online/>

You may have heard of the Royal Academy of Dance’s ‘Silver Swans’ ballet classes for adults. Nine classes have now been put online, so why not give it a try (and for those of you who went to ballet classes as a child, you will be amazed how it all comes back to you!)

**3.00pm Pamper Time.**

Now is the time for you to spend some time looking after yourself!

* Mani / pedicure – take some time to really look after your hands and feet! Soak them in warm water maybe with some essential oils in. Dry them off and the trim your nails and file them. Mostirise with hand and foot cream and then paint your nails in whatever colour you fancy!
* Try a homemade face mask! For dry skin put 2 teaspoons of honey in a bowl, add in 2 drops of lavender oil and 2 drops of rose – blend well. For normal to oily skin put 2 teaspoons of natural yoghurt in a bowl and add 2 drops on lemon oil blend well. Alternatively, you can always treat yourself to a face mask many are around £1.00 and clay masks are highly recommended. Wash your face with warm water and pat dry with a towel. Apply the mask gently to your face avoiding the eyes. You may also want to put some slices of cucumber on your eyes (or cotton pads soaked in a gentle toner) rest and relax for 10-20 minutes before rinsing the mask off with warm water.
* Hair masks are also brilliant – this can very simply be Moroccan oil or coconut oil applied to slightly dampened hair and then massaged into the scalp and through the hair before wrapping in a towel. Or make your own take half an avocado and mix with 1 egg, 1 tablespoon of olive oil, and 1 tablespoon of honey. Apply to wet hair with your fingertips, starting at the bottom and working your way up. Then again, wrap your hair in a towel. You can wash these off either half an hour later or why not wait until you have your bath later!
* You could make your own facial steam with essential oils. An essential oil facial steam opens your pores to release dirt and oil and helps to lift and balance your mood. Choose one essential oil to use solo (like one of these basics) or create a blend with your favourites. I recently did a facial steam using eucalyptus essential oil because I wanted to clear up some congestion. Wash your face using your normal method. Boil 3 cups of water; pour into a glass or ceramic bowl and add 5 drops of essential oil to the water (no need to stir). Drape a towel over your head and lower your face until it is about 12 inches above the water. The towel will create a tent to trap the steam. Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and enjoy the steam for 10-15 minutes. If the steam is too intense, raise your face a few more inches from the bowl, or remove the towel for a few seconds. If the steam becomes too cool, lower your face closer to the bowl. When you are finished steaming, splash your face with cool water, pat dry, and apply your favourite moisturiser.

**5.00pm Breathing Exercises**

Breathing exercises can be great for improving oxygen intake and circulation. These exercises can also improve mental alertness, concentration and creativity as well as being deeply relaxing, producing a sense of calm and can dispel tension is you are feeling stressed.

Deep breathing – this exercise helps establish a slower, deeper breathing rhythm which in turn slows the heart rate and aids relaxation.

1. lie on the floor on a mat or a blanket. Place your hands on your abdomen, fingertips touching. Take a long slow breath in through your nose counting to five your lungs and abdomen will expand making your fingertips part.

2. Hold a deep breath for the count of five. Then very slowly, this time on a count of ten, exhale through your mouth. Feel your fingertip touch again and continue going until you feel like you have emptied your body of a lot of its air. Then repeat the process again taking a deep slow breath in. repeat the whole sequence 10 times if you can. If not just take some long slow deep breaths.

Alternate nostril breathing – For this exercise sit comfortably crossed legged on your mat or blanket keeping you back straight – you may want you use a cushion to support you. You can also do this sitting on a chair.

1. close your eyes and breathe in. Lift your fight hand up so it is level with your face and using your thumb gently close your right nostril. Exhale slowly through your left nostril and then breathe in again.

2. Now close your left nostril with your middle finger. Exhale and inhale through your right nostril. Repeat the whole sequence 10 times.

**5.30pm Leisure time**

Now you are feeling lovely and relaxed take some time to do something that you enjoy and does not use up too much energy! Watch that film you have been meaning to get round to for ages, or that television series your friend recommended. You could do a jigsaw puzzle or some embroidery. Again, make sure it is something you enjoy and that you are not feeling pressure to achieve. Today is about you pausing.

**7:30pm Evening Meal**

Again, we suggest a simple evening meal of nourishing soup again – served with a wholemeal roll and maybe some fruit afterwards if you are still hungry. We have some recipe suggestions at the end of this document.

If you want another restful night’s sleep it is good to eat slowly, making sure we are taking time to thank God for his provision and savouring the taste. Tea and coffee can act as stimulants so make sure you are drinking lots of water or herbal tea instead.

**8.30pm Restful Evening and Bedtime**

After dinner you may want to have a bath again as you did yesterday and rinse off your hair mask if you did one. You could read you book or some psalms which have a lovely rhythm for a relaxing day. You could have some time of this day of self-care means you wake up tomorrow ready for you day, fully rested and calm.

**Lunch Recipes**

**Greek Salad with Tahini Dressing (Serves 1)**

½ small green pepper, de-seeded and sliced.

½ small cucumber, cut into half-moons about 1cm thick.

A couple of tomatoes cut into wedges.

½ small red onion thinly sliced.

8 small black olives, halved.

50g feta, cubed.

Wholemeal pitta bread, to serve.

Tahini dressing:

1 tbsp tahini paste

2 tablespoons low fat yoghurt

Squeeze lemon juice

1 tablespoon chopped parsley

1 small garlic clove, crushed.

Salt and pepper

1. place the ingredients of the salad bar the cheese into a large bowl. 2. To make the dressing, spoon the tahini paste into a small bowl and then mix in the yoghurt and lemon juice. Stir in the parsley and garlic and season. 3. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss. 4. Sprinkle the cheese over the salad. Serve with warm pitta.

*(Home Health Spa Book)*

**Brown Rice Salad (serves 2 with leftovers)**

250g cooked brown rice.

3 spring onions thinly sliced using some of the green tops.

1/2 red and 1/2 green or yellow capsicum/pepper, finely diced.

handful chopped parsley.

25g currants

25g chopped peanuts or cashews or both!

1 tbsp soy sauce

2 tsp balsamic vinegar

2 tsp honey

1 tsp sesame oil

Juice of 1/2 lemon

1. Very simply, while rice is cooking mix together the soy sauce, vinegar, honey, oil, and lemon juice. 2. Pour over cooked rice while still warm. 3. Stir through rest of ingredients and then you are ready to serve!

Spiced Pears

2 large pears

½ lemon

8 cloves

½ cinnamon stick

300ml apple juice

2 orange slices

2 bay leaves, to decorate.

1. Peel pear leaving stalk intact. Rub them all over with the lemon half to prevent discolouration. 2. Stud each pear with 4 cloves each. Stand them upright in a pan and add the juice and cinnamon stick. Top up with water until the pears are just covered. 3. Bring to the boil and simmer gently until the pears are tender and then take them off the heat and leave to cool. 4. Place an orange slice on each plate and top with a pear. Pour a little of the remaining juice over the pear if you wish and garnish with a bay leaf.

*(Home Health Spa Book)*

**Frozen Strawberry Yoghurt**

140g strawberries

½ x 405g can light condensed milk.

500g tub 0%-fat Greek yogurt

1. Roughly chop half the strawberries and whizz the rest in a food processor or with a stick blender to a purée. 2. In a big bowl, stir the condensed milk into the puréed strawberries then gently stir in the yogurt until well mixed. Fold through the chopped strawberries. 3. Scrape the mixture into a loaf tin or container, pop on the lid or wrap well in cling film and freeze overnight, until solid. Remove from the freezer about 10-15 mins before you want to serve the frozen yogurt.

*(BBC Good Food website)*

**Evening Meal Recipes**

**Mothers’ Union Vegetable and Tomato Soup**

1 tbsp oil

2 carrots peeled & chopped.

1 leek trimmed & sliced.

2 sticks celery

1 small onion

113g red split lentils

1 pint vegetable stock

400g tin chopped tomatoes

1tsp tomato puree

Seasoning to taste

1. Heat oil and fry onion, celery, leek & carrots for 8 to 10 minutes until golden. 2. Add rest of the ingredients and simmer for 30 minutes. 3. Serve.

**Pumpkin Coconut Soup with Turmeric Chickpeas**

3 tbsp veg oil.

1 medium onion, diced.

2 cloves garlic, minced.

1/2 tbsp ginger, minced.

560g pumpkin, cubed into large chunks.

240ml water

240ml coconut milk

1 small cinnamon stick

2 tbsp veg oil.

1/2 tsp minced ginger

2 cloves garlic, sliced.

Salt and pepper

Chili flakes

Cilantro / coriander leaves

Chive, chopped.

1. Add 3tbsp oil to pot on medium heat. Sauté onion, garlic and ginger until onions become translucent. 2. Add pumpkin and season with about 1/4 tsp salt. Pour on water and cover. 3. Continue to cook on medium heat until pumpkin is cooked through and soft. (About 10 - 15 mins). 4. Pour into blender or food processor and add coconut milk and purée until smooth. 5. Return to pot and heat for about 5 mins with cinnamon stick. Season. Remove cinnamon stick to serve. 6. Pour soup into bowl. Sprinkle with chives and coriander and chili flakes

All recipes unless stated are from the Mothers’ Union Food and Fellowship Cookbook available to purchase from the Mothers’ Union Shop for just £5.00 - <https://mueshop.org/>