



**Erewash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 1: Cyberbullying**

Just like ours, children's worlds have been turned upside down by Covid 19. Therefore, this is even more of a reason for understanding and acceptance of how their usual persona may change.

Hello. I'm Deb Somerset and today we're chatting about cyberbullying during lockdown.

Cyberbullying can be described as a form of bullying or harassment, but using electronic means, so this could be through text message, social media sites, apps, gaming, e-mails etc.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought unimaginable difficulties and challenges for all of us. The world we once knew, our routines and ability to get up and go have all changed beyond recognition.

Despite children and young people not seeing each other during this time of lockdown, digital or cyberbullying may well still be taking place and in fact, increasing.

As we know, social media has now become so huge and an everyday part of our lives that it can be difficult for parents to work out what their children are doing and many will openly admit that they have at worst, no and at best, very little, idea of what their children may be accessing online or indeed, who they are communicating with.

Parents need at least a glimpse into their child's online life, particularly during these unprecedented times.

Now children's minds, especially those of very young and impressionable children, are like sponges. They can often accept the information given to them without question and this helps them mould the image they have of themselves and can become their truth.

Sadly, this can lead to them being very disconnected from their real selves and the negative messages that they receive, whether that be via cyberbullying, or closer to home, can become hardwired into their subconscious, where it can stay.

Alarmingly, trauma, only has to happen once to impact on a child's psyche. Their sense of self-worth and confidence and being aware of that and monitoring children's behavior, is crucial, so potential difficulties can be identified as soon as possible and addressed.

Children under the age of 5 don't have a fully developed logical mind, it exists in their subconscious. Having an adult perspective in their toolkit is just not possible, they're

not mature enough and let's face it, as adults, we struggle to do this ourselves, sometimes.

So, what can you do that might help? Well, to begin with, try and have some idea of how much time your child is spending online. For those under 5, the World Health Organisation recommends less than 1 hour per day. Older children will, of course, present more challenges in terms of limiting screen time, but at least try and ensure what they are viewing is age appropriate.

Make it your business to check what your children are posting, who they're online friends are, how do they know them, what's their search history and talk openly about the dangers of posting too much information online.

If you discover something has happened, try and stay calm, find out what your child may have seen or done, how and why. It might be that they have accessed pornography or sent something inappropriate. Try and keep those lines of communication open.

Empower your child to say "no" if they are confused, worried or uncomfortable with someone or something, both on and offline.

Don't wait for them to approach you to chat. Engage them in conversation about lots of different things, then when difficult stuff arises, you've got a solid foundation to start from.

Communicate to your child that you are their safe harbour. Home is where they can be themselves, talk about worries and share concerns. Tell them how amazing and how fantastic they are. Do it often and unconditionally and lead by example.



**Erewash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 2: Childrens Anxieties during Covid-19**

Fear is hardwired into the brain, so we can't eliminate it, rather just recognise and manage it. Hello – Deb here!

In this week's window on wellbeing, we'll be chatting about dealing with children's anxieties around COVID-19 on lockdown, and as mentioned when we were last together, COVID-19 has changed the very fabric of all our lives, affecting our routines and security, and most of this we can't control.

Now children, particularly those that are very young cannot link their feelings, thoughts and behaviours. They've got a limited ability to think, to reflect and to be reasoned with and that may explain a few things.

Therefore about all of our efforts to deal with their anxieties and confusion may not be as successful as we would like. Also, bear in mind that it's normal for you to feel some anxiety too. This is not only a new situation for your children, but you also remember to be kind to yourself so that you can carry on carrying.

Now first of all, bear in mind that it's normal for children and young people to feel worried and anxious. We didn't have time to prepare our children for these enormous changes, unlike us, they're living with unprecedented uncertainty, but there are many ways you can support your children, nieces, nephews grandchildren, etc.

It's crucial to talk to them about what's going on, in age appropriate language. Validate their concerns be compassionate stress that however they feel is okay - there's no right or wrong way to deal with this. Try and find out what they're thinking and feeling - reassure them that it's okay to feel scared and uncertain, and this applies to all children to focus on facts limit the amount of information you expose them to. But remember, it doesn't have to be perfect.

Some possible questions to ask children in lockdown and isolation:

- Is there anything you want to talk about?
- When was the last time you were happy?
- What makes you feel calm?
- What can I do to help?
- Would it help if we planned each day together?

Help your child to reflect on how they're feeling and encourage them to think about things that they can do to feel safer and less worried.

Talk about gains and losses - for example, we might not be able to do X, but we've been at home together having fun. Reassure your child. This will pass, and you and lots of other adults are there for them, and you will get through this together for

younger children you can describe COVID-19 as a tidal wave and look at these online.

If you can, spend time doing positive activities to help reassure them and reduce that anxiety – play and laugh! These things are still OK. It'll give your child some space without you necessarily having to have a big chat about how they're feeling, and often these things come out when the atmosphere is more relaxed.

Routines are also incredibly important at this time - structure can help children to feel safe and secure. Again, talking to your child about what might be happening with their body is important. It may reduce their anxiety and help them get more in tune with their own body and teach them some coping skills as well.

Get your child to breathe deeply and slowly - these kinds of breaths are great for helping us to reconnect. Focusing on slow deep breaths means we can't be consumed by anxiety - you can join into.

If your child is younger, you could try the technique loved by parents the world over a bit of distraction, but also physical contact can be massively reassuring. Give them a cuddle, hold their hand, and it might help you to help them to find a safe place in their mind where they can visit when anxiety strikes. This could be a lovely holiday or party that they went to. Your child could keep a diary or a warrior book where they can write things down. This may give you a clearer insight into what's in their mind.

Positivity is key so keep doing lots of lovely things together - dancing, singing, painting, baking, crafting, time in the garden - whatever that is, keeping in touch with other loved and trusted adults is also crucial, whether that's on the phone, online or at a safe distance.

I hope that helped. See you next time when we'll be chatting about more Windows on Wellbeing.



**Erewash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 3: Social Media**

Behind the digital curtain, there can be a very unhappy and troubled individual.

Hello. Deb here, looking again through our Window on Wellbeing and today, during our time together, we will be chatting about social media and low self-esteem.

How should we describe social media? Well, it's all forms of media that allow people to communicate and share information, using the Internet, mobile phones, tablets, blogs, vlogs, podcasts, live streaming and downloading, to name but a few.

Now our self-esteem is absolutely critical to the happiness and satisfaction we have with our lives. It refers to a person's positive or negative view, of themselves. The extent, I suppose, to which we see ourselves as worthwhile and competent.

Social media, of course, is, without doubt, incredibly important to our everyday lives. It can support our self-expression, help us stay in touch, support our education and research in addition to validating us and who we are.

It would also be fair to say there are real concerns about the negative impact that excessive and regular use of social media can bring. There is research, carried out last year that found the average person, whoever they are, spends more than 2 hours per day scrolling through and posting on, their social media platforms.

Comparing oneself to others is a human need and it is essential for acquiring information about ourselves. However, how we then process and act on what is seen on social media can lead to feelings of distress, withdrawal and insecurity.

More research has found that excessive and regular use of social media has been attributed to selfishness, being manipulative, self-centred, lacking empathy and being envious. Of course none of these are positive.

Also, relationship issues can develop, as can not engaging in hobbies and pastimes, progressing with our own goals and lives, being unproductive, having poor body image and eating disorders.

Now people may crave validation and self-worth, where they rely on the opinions of others to make themselves feel better. This could be in the form of likes or positive comments. We make comparisons with our online friend's lives and then perhaps struggle with the pursuit of perfection, should such a thing actually exist. What people often don't remember, when their viewing social media posts, is that these are the highlight reels of our lives. Things might look bright and happy and exciting, but can make our emotional insecurities worse.

Perhaps what we need to ask ourselves is how real online life actually is and accept that it is okay not to have the perfection we see online and that other people are struggling with stuff too.

Also, it's unlikely that social media alone is at the heart of someone's low self-esteem, but what can we practically do to manage things better?

To begin with, we can consider deleting apps that either we don't use, or cause negative feelings.

We can set notifications that allow us only to receive or know about essential things, for example, job alerts.

Review who we follow on Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Setting a time limit each day for engaging in social media may also help us feel more in control.

Try not to engage in social media close to bedtime and use an alarm clock instead of your phone. If necessary, leave your device in another room, so that the temptation to check social media sites is easier to resist.

Think about what you post. In other words, social media etiquette and don't be the one contributing to somebody else's unhappiness.

Let's work on feeling happy with ourselves. Make sure we are setting and achieving our own goals, rather than being envious of everyone else's.

Remember to be savvy with social media!

I hope this has been helpful. Next time, Window on Wellbeing will be exploring the importance of good sleep and how to achieve it.



**Erewash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 4: Sleep**

The way you feel when awake depends in part on what happens when you are asleep.

Hello everyone. Deb here. Welcome to our fourth Window on Wellbeing, where today we will be chatting about the importance of sleep and how to improve yours.

Sleep is a basic human need, like eating, drinking and breathing. It's a vital part of our foundation for good health and wellbeing, throughout our lifetime.

There can be 2 kinds of problematic sleep. The first we call sleep deprivation, when we simply don't get enough sleep. The second kind we would call sleep deficiency, which can include sleep deprivation, but also sleeping at the wrong time of day, not sleeping well or failing to get the different types of sleep the body needs.

Ongoing sleep deficiency is linked to an increased risk of heart and kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and strokes, mental health problems and a greater risk of suicide can also occur.

Now, interestingly, there are 2 types of sleep, which are REM (Rapid Eye Movement) and non REM. Dreaming occurs during REM, or our 'deep' sleep.

We've all got an internal body clock, which controls when you are awake and when your body is ready for sleep. Our bodies typically follow a 24 hour repeating rhythm, also known as the Circadian Rhythm. Now, pressure to sleep builds each hour we are awake and is at a peak in the evening, when most of us will fall asleep. Also, our internal body clock is in synch with certain cues in the environment so, for example, light, darkness and other cues help determine when you both feel awake and drowsy.

Our body releases chemicals in a daily rhythm which our body clock controls, so when it gets dark, our body releases a hormone called melatonin. This then sends a signal to our body that it's time to prepare for sleep and help us to feel drowsy. Melatonin also dictates how much of a suntan we might get.

Exposure to bright, artificial light, for example, TV and device screens late in the evening can disrupt this process, making it harder to fall asleep. Then, as the sun rises, our bodies release cortisol, a hormone which naturally prepares the body to wake.

The rhythm and timing of our body clock changes with age, so, for example, babies need much more uninterrupted sleep and teenagers may fall asleep much later at night and therefore wish to sleep for longer the next day.

If we are not getting enough sleep, sleeping at the wrong time or having poor quality sleep, we are likely to feel very tired during the day and also may not feel refreshed and alert when we wake up.

Sleep deficiency can interfere with work, school, driving and social functioning. We may also encounter difficulties with both focusing on and reacting to, other people's emotions. Worryingly, being deficient in sleep can also increase our risk of obesity. We may also experience episodes of micro sleep. These are brief moments of sleep that occur when we are normally awake. We can't control them and may not even be aware of them.

How, then, can we get better quality sleep?

Try and go to bed at the same time each day. Have no more than one hour's difference between weekday and weekend bedtimes.

Have a quiet time, 1 hour before bed.

Avoid strenuous exercise close to bedtime.

Avoid large meals, especially those laden with carbs, e.g., pasta, rice and noodles.

Ideally, no alcohol, caffeine or nicotine close to bedtime.

Ensure your bedroom is quiet, decluttered, with a good temperature.

Consider blackout blinds and check that your mattress still gives you support.

A hot bath and some relaxation time may also be helpful.

Think about your bedding and if it's too heavy or light and the same about the clothing you may wear in bed.

Lavender on your pillow can aid you falling asleep and **DO NOT WORK IN BED!!**
Separate work and relaxation!

I hope this has been helpful. Join me next time. Sleep well.



**Erewash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 5: Dealing with Bereavement and Loss**

There is no right or wrong way to feel, when grief strikes.

Hello everyone and welcome to our fifth Window on Wellbeing. It's Deb here and today we will be learning about dealing with bereavement and loss.

To begin with, bereavement means a period of mourning after a loss. Most people will experience some kind of grief in life. This could be when they lose someone, or something, that is important to them. However, a loss can also include losing a job, home, end of a relationship or moving to a new location.

It is really important to accept that bereavement and loss are very personal and will affect each individual in different ways, which makes talking about them quite difficult. The kind and intensity of feelings are likely to be influenced by your personality, cultural background and religious beliefs. There are different cultural attitudes to death, which could mean someone's behaviour and attitude is different to what you were expecting.

It is commonly accepted that there are 5 stages to grief, a theory developed in 1969, by American, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. Not everyone will pass through all 5 stages and if they do, it may not be in a perfect order. It may also feel chaotic and out of control. These 5 stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

Common symptoms of bereavement and loss include shock, numbness, crying, tiredness, anger, guilt and being in a daze. Physical symptoms may include nausea, headaches, aches and pains, shortness of breath, weight gain/loss, tightness in the chest and generalised tension.

There are generally 2 recognised kinds of loss. The first is called anticipatory loss, where we expect a death. For example, if someone is old or very ill.

Secondary loss is the struggle we may have when thinking about future experiences the deceased person will not be there to see, e.g., grandchildren being born or people getting married. Grief can be further complicated when someone does not accept the person has actually died. They may also become preoccupied with their loved one and how they died.

Intense sorrow and emotional pain may also be experienced. The person suffering the loss may blame themselves for the death and perhaps also wish to die. Finally, they may feel detached from others and lose their purpose.

Dealing with bereavement and loss will never be easy, but there are some really sensible and helpful ways of dealing with the devastation felt.

First of all, accept there may be mixed feelings about the loss, especially if the relationship was a difficult one.

Recognise and accept your emotions

Take each day as it comes and don't worry too much about long term planning

Talk about how you feel, whether that is to family, friends or a professional

Think about delaying important decisions for a few months, after the loss

Try and maintain some kind of routine. It is important to take care of yourself by eating and sleeping well, staying strong, managing your stress levels and exercising, if possible.

Forgive yourself for all the things you did or did not say, or do. It is okay to take a break from grief.

Prepare for anniversaries and birthdays so you mark the occasions in the best way for you. This could be by writing a letter to the deceased person, keeping a journal or scrapbook. Also, painting a picture, playing special music, planting flowers/trees, lighting a candle, saying a prayer etc.

I hope this has helped. See you next time, for more Windows on Wellbeing



**Erewash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 6: Loneliness in Lockdown**

Loneliness is about more than just a physical distance.

Hello everyone. This is Deb, welcoming you to our 6th Window on Wellbeing. Today`s topic is around loneliness, which for many people has become significantly worse, during lockdown.

It is true to say that, as we have stayed at home, on order to stay safe and lives, our usual ways of seeing family, friends or other familiar faces, have been put on hold.

There are many people who have experienced loneliness during lockdown, but also significant numbers that live with it, on a daily basis.

It is agreed that short-term feelings of loneliness should not harm our mental health. However, the longer not being allowed to see family and friends has lasted, the more serious loneliness may have become.

Loneliness has been described as not necessarily being on our own, but feeling a disconnect. Relationships don`t satisfy our emotional needs. Loneliness is a very individual thing and so may not be noticed by other people.

Long term loneliness can be associated with an increased risk of certain mental health problems, including depression, anxiety and increased stress. Therefore, if we can create and maintain those strong social networks, these can prove to be a really important buffer against poor mental health.

It is also important to see the difference between being alone and being lonely. Being alone could be a positive choice someone has made, whereas loneliness may not be and the impact may also be significantly different.

As we are built on connections, as human beings, prolonged isolation is confusing and contrary to what many of us need.

Being able to deal with loneliness is important, whatever the circumstances and there are lots of things we can do to try and see if they work for us.

We may have to keep a physical distance, but there is no reason why we still can`t be close, socially. If possible, embrace or continue to use, technology. This could be video calls, WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype etc.

There are podcasts you can listen to and apps, e.g., Headspace that can be downloaded, dealing with loneliness and mental health. Facebook groups and online communities have both started and increased in number, during lockdown.

If this does not feel comfortable or just isn`t you, texts, phone calls and writing letters and cards are still positive ways to stay in touch, with family and friends.

Now some restrictions are lifting, you could perhaps, where safe to do so, meet at a distance, in a garden, kitchen, outdoors, across a balcony etc. Walking your dog will also bring contact with other people.

If you share your home with others, make space for privacy. Be honest about how you may be feeling and draw up some guidelines, if necessary.

Time alone could also be an opportunity for you to find, or rediscover, previous interests and hobbies. Loneliness, especially when suddenly forced on us, can seem overwhelming. Therefore, try not to think too far ahead or make big decisions. Small steps may be best.

Allocate different spaces in your home for specific activities, e.g., you may work in the dining room, cook in the kitchen and exercise in the garden.

Don't underestimate the importance of having structure and routine in your day. Set achievable goals, e.g., getting up and having breakfast.

Self-care and relaxation during anxious times is so important. This structure may include crafting, exercise, learning a language, discovering new recipes, catching up with old films, audio books, getting financial matters in order or cleaning out those pesky kitchen cupboards.

Accept there are some aspects of this situation you cannot control, but where you can, do so.

I hope this feature has been useful. Until next time, remember to both take...and give....care!



**Erewash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 7: Maintaining a Good Work/Life Balance**

The cumulative effect of increased working hours is having an important impact on the lifestyle of a huge number of people.

Hello everyone and welcome to our 7th Window on Wellbeing. Deb here. Today's topic is all about maintaining a good work/life balance and this edition has more of a business focus.

A work/life balance is the amount of time and focus a person gives their work, versus other aspects of their life, e.g. raising a family, hobbies, relaxation etc. The exact balance will vary, depending on your age, career, goals and other commitments, but it is essential to try and keep things as even as possible.

A lack of a work/life balance can take its toll in many ways, be that physically, emotionally and financially. It can cause a breakdown in relationships and impede work performance.

The Mental Health Foundation is concerned that a sizeable group of people are neglecting the factors in their lives that make them resilient or help shield them from mental health problems.

As a result of the work/life lines being blurred, it is important to focus on your strengths.

Number one, don't try to be all things to all people. Where possible, outsource tasks that divert you, don't fit with your skillset or are just not a good use of your time.

Prioritise that time. If you have tasks to perform, think about them in the following way. Are they urgent AND important? Important but NOT urgent? Urgent but NOT important or NEITHER urgent NOR important, in which case, why are you doing them?

Know your peaks and troughs. If you are a morning person, like me, tackle the tough tasks first!

Don't forget to plot your personal time. You can't work effectively if you are tired. Have set work hours and try and stick to them. Also, turn off your work mobile, after this time.

Finding time to understand your finances is essential. Get yourself an accountant, bookkeeper or adopt software that tracks your cash flow. Remember. Cash IS king!

Manage your time, long term. Create a timeline of activities. There are specific computer programmes that can help, or simply customise a spreadsheet or Word document. Include family commitments, ensuring you get that much needed time away.

Make your workspace work for you! If you are going to be working long hours, with not much downtime, it makes sense to invest in good equipment. For example, buy a comfy chair, ergonomic keyboard or support stand for your laptop.

See exercise as a `must do` not a `should do`. A healthy body needs a fresh mind. You will function better and hopefully complete tasks in less time.

Sounds corny perhaps, but do what you love. This should be something other than work, e.g., crafting, cooking, learning a language or instrument. Give it the time it deserves. It will energise and refresh you.

Be realistic. At the end of each working day, undertake a little self-analysis. Ask yourself what went well today, what didn't and how we can avoid it happening again.

Manage your mind. Especially at the moment, fear and anxiety about your business can creep in. Do some work on your mental health, e.g. mediation or mindful practice. Alternatively, spend time with someone who will support and lift you.

The importance of regular breaks in your day cannot be overstated. Try and take at least 30 minutes for lunch. Go for a walk. Eat your lunch in the garden or park, do some online exercise or listen to music and please get up and move around regularly.

I hope this has helped. Join me next time for more Windows on Wellbeing. Until then, remember to both take.....and give.....care.



Erewash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 8: Change

Whether it's a new job, relationship, baby or way of working, something difficult or positive, change can be tough. This is especially true of the Covid-19 outbreak, as major changes, to our lifestyles happened almost overnight.

Hello everyone. Deb here, welcoming you to our 8th Window on Wellbeing. Today's chat is all about coping with change.

It's a fact that 1 in 3 people would avoid change if they could, as it is seen as a worry, rather than welcome development. A large part of this is because our brains are wired to expect familiarity and the brain will always try and take the path of least resistance. It creates pathways for habits that can easily be followed.

Change unsettles us because that sense of familiarity is no longer there and we have to re-evaluate. As we get older, it can also be more difficult to deal with change because we have experienced life a certain way, for longer. Change can often feel scary, as things that were once familiar no longer are and that can be difficult to adjust to.

Psychologists and other researchers have been unpicking the way our brains respond to change for many, many years.

They tell us that there are 2 different ways of coping with change. The first we call escape coping, where we simply avoid the situation. The second is control coping, where we are positive and proactive, actively wanting to be part of the change.

It is true to say that specific changes will be personal to each and every one of us, but research has shown that our response to change usually follows a particular pattern called the 'Change Curve'

In this curve, there are 6 distinct and different phases we experience after a change.

Stage 1 is shock and denial, but blaming ourselves. This is usually our immediate reaction.

Stage 2 is shock and denial, but blaming ourselves. Emotions are running high as we try and get through the confusion. Stages 1 and 2 may last for some time and we can move back and forth between the 2. Unfortunately, we cannot accept the changes until we move beyond stages 1 and 2.

Stage 3 finds us experiencing uncertainty and confusion. We will ask questions and express doubts.

Stage 4 is when we find rationalization. We begin to accept the change, focusing less on what has been lost and starting to explore the implications of what has changed.

At stage 5, we begin to problem solve. This is sure sign we have started to embrace change. Creativity means we can build new ways of doing things.

Finally, at stage 6, there is a sense of moving on. People feel better about change and can face the future with hope and purpose. We experience our 'new normal'

All of us will experience change at some point in our lives, so let's think about practical ways to deal with it more positively. How you respond to change will be massively important with regards to your mental health.

First of all, where appropriate, humour can really help a situation. Injecting some lighter moments can bring light relief.

Accept that things may be like this for a while, so try and be patient.

Ask for help. Struggling alone isn't necessary and will add more pressure to a difficult situation.

Believe in your ability to come through this situation and that being out of your comfort zone is not necessarily a bad thing.

Keep a sense of reality and perspective. Remember where you want to reach. Prioritising goals may help here.

When you are feeling particularly challenged by change, perhaps step away from social media for a while.

As I always remind you, self-care is massively important. There is only one of you. We need you!

Keep a regular routine where you can, so you have something that is familiar and feels safe.

I hope this has been helpful. See you next time for more Windows on Wellbeing. Until then, remember to both take.....and give.....care.



**Erewash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 9: Intrusive Thoughts**

Some of us are simply wired to dwell on worrisome thoughts.

Hello everyone, it's Deb, welcoming you to our 9th Window on Wellbeing. Time is flying by! This week we will be exploring the topic of intrusive thoughts.

Unwanted, intrusive thoughts are stuck thoughts, causing great distress. They can seem to come out of nowhere, arrive powerfully and cause a great deal of anxiety, making us feel out of control.

People often worry that these thoughts mean something terrible about them. These thoughts can involve, for example, relationships, large and small decisions, sexual orientation, death, violence and things that cannot be answered with any certainty.

Some of these intrusive thoughts can appear weird and very explicit. As a result, many people are ashamed and worried about them, resulting in the thoughts being kept a secret. This, in itself, is exhausting.

One of the most distressing myths about unwanted, intrusive thoughts is that having them means you unconsciously want to do the things that come into your mind, whereas, in fact, the opposite is true. Trying desperately to get rid of these thoughts can often mean they are experienced more intensely.

It may be reassuring to know that everyone has the occasional weird, overwhelming and sometimes, socially improper, thoughts. Our brains sometimes just create so called, 'junk' thoughts and they are meaningless. If you don't pay attention or get involved with them, they fade and get washed away in a flow of consciousness.

Some intrusive or fixated thoughts are clearly chemically induced. Research on individuals with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), suggest that the problem has a neurological basis or is to do with the nervous system. Also, being able to control these thoughts has, by some, been closely related to self-esteem and is a measure of an individual's sense of power or control, over events in his or her life. If you feel events are essentially out of your control, you're probably going to be much more vulnerable to forbidden or unwanted thoughts.

Intrusive thoughts have also been linked to our larger system of values and are our internal template for judging right from wrong. For example, once we realise inflicting violence on another person is wrong, we step away from the thought.

How we are reared may also play a part in our relationship with intrusive thoughts. For example, a heavily religious upbringing means we are more likely, than non-religious counterparts, to fixate on thoughts we feel are sinful or otherwise inappropriate.

How then, can we deal with intrusive thoughts?

First of all, don't worry too much about them, you aren't unusual.

Treat the thoughts as if they are of no interest

Don't try and work out what the thoughts mean. Accept them and let them go. Give yourself time to do this, there is no urgency.

Focus on the present and what is around you.

Try and continue with what it was you were doing before the intrusive thoughts appeared.

Remind yourself a thought cannot hurt you and isn't always something you have to act on

Know you are in control of what you do and the thought is just a curiosity

Mediate or engage in mindful practice. This will help you train your mind to be still, which may prevent intrusive thoughts being able to take hold.

I hope this has been helpful. I look forward to opening up more Windows on Wellbeing. Until next time, remember to both take.....and give....care.



**Erewash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 10: Relaxing**

Relaxation is a key part of calming your busy mind.

Hello to all my Window on Wellbeing listeners. It's Deb here and we have arrived at week 10. Today's chat is all about relaxation techniques.

We all have stressful situations throughout our lives, ranging from minor annoyances, like traffic jams, to more serious worries, such as the illness of a loved one.

Stress can flood our body with hormones and is a normal reaction to threatening situations, going back to prehistoric times, to help us survive threats like an unwanted attack, or flood. We cannot avoid stressful situations, but can develop healthier ways of responding to them.

For many of us, relaxation means flopping on the settee at the end of a hard day, possibly with a drink and zoning out. This may work, but also think about setting in motion our bodies natural relaxation response, so you can slow your breathing and heart rate, lower your blood pressure and balance your body and mind.

Relaxation techniques can help us enjoy a better quality of life, especially if we have an illness, stressful job or home life. Everyone can benefit from learning simple relaxation techniques, which are often free or low cost, relatively little risk and can be done almost anywhere.

Relaxation techniques work best when they are combined with other positive coping methods, such as thinking positively, humour, problem solving and exercise, to name but a few.

These techniques take practice and will help you become more aware of muscle tension and other physical sensations of stress.

A good time to start using a relaxation technique would be the moment you begin to feel out of control. Do bear in mind, however, that there may be feelings of emotional discomfort when involved in some relaxation techniques. You may also have to try a few different techniques before you find the one, or ones, that fit with both you and your lifestyle. You can use free audio downloads or apps on your phone to make things more interesting and give you some direction.

Here then, are some popular relaxation techniques.....

To begin with, laugh out loud! It really is good for you as it lowers stress levels and boosts your endorphins, the happy hormone.

Be grateful. Keep a journal or diary and record all the positives and things to be grateful for, in your life.

Decompress. Do this by placing a warm heat wrap around your neck and shoulders for 10 mins. Relax. Close your eyes. Remove the wrap and use a tennis ball or foam roller (easily purchased from the Internet) to massage away the tension by leaning into the ball, holding gentle pressure for 15 seconds

Yoga and tai chi (deep breathing with flowing movements) can both assist in helping us being balanced, calm and focused.

Guided meditation. Apps such as Headspace or Muse may be useful. These are helpful if you find traditional meditation has no direction and you aren't quite sure what to do.

As you know by now, my personal favourite is self-care! This includes diet, slowing down, time management, setting goals, social support, treating any physical illness and good sleep.

Getting a massage. The appropriate one will depend on your needs. Popular ones will include deep tissue, hot stone, sports and aromatherapy.

Stretching. This is especially good to counter sitting at a computer all day. Try shoulder shrugs, chin dips and head tilts each side, forwards and backwards. Stretch your back. Also, raise each arm in the air, bend it behind your head and push your elbow towards the floor. Hold for 15 seconds.

I hope you have enjoyed listening and will try some of the ideas.

See you next time for more Windows on Wellbeing. As always, remember to both take... and give... care.



**Erewhash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 11: Self-harm**

It is a behaviour and not an illness.

Hello everyone. Deb here, bringing you our 11th Window on Wellbeing. Today's topic is a sensitive one, around self-harm. The following information may prove to be distressing for some listeners. Therefore, I ask you to be kind to yourself and seek support should you need it.

People self-harm to communicate their distress about a whole range of different things. Self-harm can be treated as a problem in its own right, but can also be seen as a reflection of distress, inner turmoil and despair. It can also be seen as a common crisis associated with other mental health issues, for example, depression or anxiety. Therefore, in order for a person to recover, it usually involves addressing both the behaviour and the underlying mental health issue, which brings about the distress in the first place.

It is also quite important to acknowledge that for some individuals, e.g., those that have suffered abuse as a child, self-harm can occur seemingly out of that person's control or even awareness, which can be very difficult for others to understand.

Self-harm is on the increase in young people and does tend to be more common in women. However, the stereotype of only teenage girls self-harming is not true. It is a situation that occurs in people of all backgrounds, sexualities, genders etc. It is important we also consider that some everyday behaviour could be considered as self-harm, e.g., driving too fast or not taking prescribed medication.

The term self-harm actually covers many different things and can include cutting or scratching the skin with knives, razor blades or other sharp implements. It could also be burning oneself with flames or chemicals, compulsively pulling out large amounts of hair, interfering with the healing of wounds and taking risks, including walking into traffic and risky sexual behaviour.

The question about why people may self-harm is a good one, but there is no one reason and, as you might expect, everyone's experience will be different. What we do know, however, is that there is a common theme of underlying distress and self-harm is then used as a coping strategy.

People self-harm to cope with psychological trauma, to survive overwhelming emotions and help feelings of helplessness and powerlessness, by giving back some control. Self-harm can also fulfill an individual's need to punish themselves, for perceived or actual mistakes made.

Inflicting pain on our bodies can also lead to the release of endorphins, sometimes known as the 'happy hormone'. Less well known is the fact that endorphins are the body's natural painkillers.

There is a temporary lift in mood, but unfortunately this can then become the starting point of using self-harm to manage more overwhelming emotions.

When the temporary lift in mood passes, there may be feelings of intense guilt or shame, often leading to the self-harm being repeated.

It is really important to note that self-harm is not the same as attempted suicide. In many cases, it can often be a way of staying alive, rather than taking one's life. Often suicide is not considered at all, but those that self-harm are at increased risk of suicide.

As daunting as it may seem, the only way to truly know if someone is experiencing suicidal thoughts is to directly ask them.

Some sources of support are Self Harm UK – www.selfharm.co.uk

The Big White Wall – www.legacy.bigwhitewall.com

Self-Injury Support – www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk

I hope this has been helpful. See you next time. As always, remember to both take....and give....care.



**Erewash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 12: Addictions**

According to Action on Addiction, 1 in 3 people are addicted to something.

Hello to all my Window on Wellbeing listeners. Deb here again, welcoming you to our 12th session. This week, we will be chatting about the difficult issue of addictions.

An addiction is defined as not having control over doing, taking or using something, to the point where it could be harmful to you.

Addiction is most commonly associated with gambling, drugs, alcohol and nicotine. However, it is possible to be addicted to just about anything, including work, the Internet, sex and shopping. A person can move between intense and mild use and engaging in a particular behaviour, so it is not always high or low level.

It has been suggested that addiction is a way of blocking out difficult issues and there are lots of reasons why addictions begun. It could be that feelings, both physical and mental, are affected. Feelings can be enjoyable and create a powerful urge. The person needs to recreate that feeling and therefore the concerning behaviour can develop into a habit that is then very hard to stop.

Being addicted to something means that not having or doing it, causes withdrawal symptoms, or causes come down. This can be unpleasant and it is easier to carry on having, or doing, what you crave. The cycle then continues.

Possible causes or explanations for addictions include chemical imbalances in the brain, mental disorders, poor coping skills, negative thinking and underlying anxiety or depression. Other studies suggest addiction is genetic, that is between generations, but environmental factors, such as being around other people with addictions are also thought to increase the risk of an individual developing an addiction themselves.

Often, an addiction gets out of control, because the individual needs more and more of whatever it is, to satisfy their craving and achieve that 'high,' which is the reward.

It has been written that there are 4 stages of addiction.

Stage 1 – experimentation. The person uses or engages out of curiosity

Stage 2 is social or regular, where the individual uses or engages in social situations, or for social reasons

Problem or risk is **Stage 3**. The individual uses or engages in an extreme way, with disregard for the consequences.

Unfortunately, the final stage, **Stage 4**, is dependency, where the individual engages in behaviour on a daily basis or several times per day, despite possible negative consequences

Signs and symptoms that someone may have an addiction includes sustaining injuries whilst under the influence of a substance, feelings of anxiety, depression and irritability and trouble thinking clearly. There may also be blackouts, problems with relationships, not spending money on essentials such as food, denial regarding ones situation and hopelessness

Complications of an addiction, especially substances, can include heart disease, stroke, HIV/AIDS, anxiety, stress and job loss. Also bankruptcy, jail, a damaged reputation and marital breakdown.

Treatments available for all kinds of addictions include medication, psychotherapy, inpatient services self-help and support groups.

Sources of support can also include MIND, Action on Addiction and Turning Point

I hope this has been helpful. Join me next time and as always remember to take and give care



**Erewash Sound Window on Wellbeing
with Deb Somerset
with DLS Safeguarding and Wellbeing Solutions
Week 13: Being positive**

Undeniably, life is less positive right now.

Hello everyone, Deb here, welcoming you to our final Window on Wellbeing. Today, we will be exploring the idea of staying positive and moving forwards

Remaining positive and focused during difficult times can be extremely tricky but here are some ideas that may just help you!

Distract yourself, so you are not constantly thinking about what isn't working well. This is not the same as ignoring the issue, but may give you some space.

Reframe the situation. A tennis player may go into a game thinking they must win. If they don't, this may lead to guilt, shame and anger, as can be the case with perfectionists. Instead, if we think about doing the best in any given situation, it takes away some of the pressure.

Think about the things we can and can't control, or maybe influence. Focus on what you can change.

It may sound slightly unusual, but don't obsess over being positive or happy. If we over focus on ourselves, we perhaps don't feel the same about the happiness of those around us. This in turn can lead to feelings of isolation and disconnection from others.

Focus on small things, which is an idea from positive psychology. Ask yourself questions such as:

- What made you feel grateful? Was it that bird you saw in the garden or the flower that has bloomed?
- How did you express kindness? Did you let someone out at a busy junction?
- What were your achievements, however small?

Keep a daily journal, which can also double up as an archive for when you need to gather together some positivity. Another variation might be to write a gratitude letter to someone, telling them why you appreciate them.

If possible, bearing in mind travel restrictions, get out and visit places. It has been found that people in cities suffer disproportionately high rates of mood disorder. Getting out may just help.

Share your good news with others. I am about to have a third grandchild and when that happens, I will be sharing it. Let people celebrate your good news and achievements.

Think about a positive future and see the silver linings. Ask yourself if your relationships have grown stronger now or possibly you have developed new skills, through these difficult times?

Avoid negative situations and thinking. With practice, you can resist worrisome thoughts and perhaps even transform your internal critic to being a cheerleader! Ask yourself if this situation is really worth your energy. Tell yourself you will worry about whatever it is at a later date, if at all!

Change unhealthy self-talk. Imagine what you would tell a friend if they were struggling like you. Consider alternative explanations, so for example, that person across the road didn't ignore you. It may simply be that they didn't see you!

Set and accomplish goals, e.g. moving house, holidays, learning a language etc. Do this with a partner, friend or coach etc.

Take responsibility for your own actions and don't jump to blame other people for them

Be flexible where you can.

Always my favourite - asking you to take care of yourself by eating and sleeping well and keeping your boundaries.

Surround yourself with positive people that have the same ideas as you.

Add value and positivity to someone else's life by listening and boosting their mood.

Learn to take criticism in a healthy way. Act on it if necessary!

Mindfully move through your day by concentrating on one thing at a time and not cramming too many things in.

Well, I hope you have found the past few weeks useful. We may be back with more Windows on Wellbeing at some point, but until then, remember to both take...and give...care.