

“Maintaining well-being among the officiating community”

**Heather Vernon ECB ACO National Scorer Officer
Accredited Counsellor and Psychotherapist**



Spring is here and summer is around the corner! As Umpires and Scorers, we'd expect the cricket season to be in full swing but sadly, that's not the case this year in this country and world-wide, due to the significant measures implemented to minimise the effect and spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19). We are all having to make changes to our way of life and for many those changes can have a huge impact. What started out feeling a bit like a holiday-at-home is beginning to prove taxing and it is easy to minimise the effects of a prolonged isolation that can creep up on us.

Last season, the topic of the day to either engage in or avoid, was Brexit. This season life has thrown us a googly, on a world-wide scale, and when we thought we would be talking about The 100 or the forthcoming County Championships, T20 Blast, or Test Matches, the subject is Covid-19. Our vocabulary, when we can exchange conversations, often across a driveway or the



width of two shopping trolleys, has extended to include phrases like lockdown, social distancing, furlough, and sadly self- isolation.

The restrictions in place for lockdown have begun to place a strain on many people and the longer they go on the greater the impact on our emotional, mental, spiritual, and physical well-being. Various organisations, from a wide variety of perspectives, are producing guidance on how to cope and so here's something for Umpires and Scorers.

Grieving – this might seem an odd thing to say, but many of us are grieving for the things we cannot do and the things we have lost. For some, their grief is even greater as they have lost loved ones under circumstances where saying 'goodbye' has not always been possible. Even if you're someone who can embrace the changes loss brings it can still be tough as there has been so much change in a very short space of time. For those who have been 'furloughed' there can be an initial holiday feeling and a welcome opportunity to rest and relax but after a couple of weeks that can wear off and leave a loss of purpose. Some people have found they 'hit a wall' around that time and can't seem to get motivated or enthusiastic about anything. Loss and grieving



can leave us feeling low, sad, demotivated, tired, lonely, listless, and yearning for things to be back the way they were. It's important in tackling the feelings of loss to establish a routine.....

Routine – even though many of us are able to get out briefly for a short walk and essential shopping, our normal routine has been turned upside-down. For some, there is the addition of an enforced isolation and leaving the house is not an option. In both cases, finding a new routine is very important. We can easily succumb to the temptation to lie that little bit longer in bed or to

become a couch-potato watching endless television programmes. But now is the time to revive the art of making lists and tackling the things that never seem to get to the top; the time to maintain a regular sleep pattern; the time to eat regular meals, to take regular exercise, and to avoid over-indulging in comfort strategies such as alcohol and chocolate (even if you are missing some of the wonderful cricket teas!). Keeping our minds and bodies busy prevents us slipping into unhealthy habits, and reaching for the chocolate and biscuits is often the sign of being bored and demotivated so.....

Regular Exercise - is good both physically and mentally. Exercise encourages our body to produce endorphins in our brain which lift our mood and help work off the tensions from the adrenaline produced by being stressed or irritable. You may not be a Couch-to-5K person but a 30-minute walk or even a brisk 10-minutes-round-the-block are good as part of a daily routine. If you can't get out of the house then try some simple chair-exercises. You can find help with these at www.verywellfit.com or via YouTube. Regular exercise also promotes a healthy appetite so.....



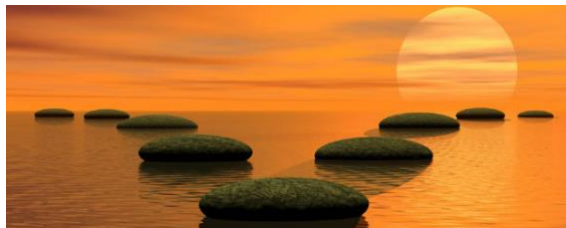
Healthy Eating - is another important part of a good routine. If you usually cook your own meals then make a healthy meal plan and try new recipes. Slow things down by taking time to put a meal together rather than rushing through the process. If you don't usually cook then maybe now is your chance to learn. You don't have to aim to be a Jamie Oliver but producing something, however simple, can be very satisfying. It's about doing something creative too.....

Being Creative - helps to stimulate our mental well-being. When we have a period of enforced inactivity we can lose our sense of purpose. We no longer have the responsibilities of being at work and this can be a fertile ground for depression to set in. Even those who have retired from full-time employment can also experience that same sense of a lack of purpose when we can't umpire or score as we would expect to at this time of the year. Finding things to stimulate our creative and thinking sides such as arts and crafts, gardening, puzzles and quizzes, music, reading, watching documentaries, learning a new skill, and many more activities can increase our sense of emotional and mental well-being and prevent the negative thoughts that so easily pop into our heads.....

Negative Thoughts - rob us of time and energy. They are the 'what-ifs' in life and we can't avoid them but we can choose what we do with them. Dwelling on the 'what-ifs' takes our time and energy and only leaves us feeling anxious. It's like trying to catch a cloud – a tiring task that leaves us empty-handed. We need to bat away the 'what-ifs' and focus on the concrete anxieties that will happen – if not immediately but at some time in the future – and use our time constructively in problem-solving the things we can tackle. Apps such as 'Headspace' can help us to stay positive and not feel overwhelmed by anxiety or stress. We cannot change the current situation we are in but we can find ways to manage it effectively. If you've never tried Mindfulness then maybe now is the time.....



Mindfulness - is a simple meditative exercise that encourages you to notice the world around you with interest and curiosity, and your reactions to it, by staying in the present moment and not condemning yourself for 'being silly'. Although we don't always acknowledge it, we all have a spiritual side and faith can be an important part of staying healthy in mind and body. Engaging with a faith – or any - community, using YouTube, Zoom, or similar software, can help to remind



us we are part of something. Whatever your faith, whether you have one or not, a few minutes spent listening to the sounds of birdsong in a garden, or smelling the fresh air, can lift our spirits. Combine a few minutes of relaxation every morning with some deep breathing (be careful standing up afterwards as

all that oxygen you take in from breathing deeply can make you feel a little light-headed!) and you will find your stress and anxiety levels decreasing. Try simple yoga, Pilates, or other exercise regimes. Keep your mind exercised too and focus on positive subjects and images. The ECB ACO's Over-&-Out and other regular emails from colleagues are proving to be excellent ways to encourage a sense of belonging and community, as are the Thursday evening clapping in celebration of the NHS and other Key-Workers. Even over a garden fence or driveway – take a chair outside when you have your morning coffee and share that time with neighbours across the street as it helps to have contact with other people.....

Social Contact - has been severely curtailed since the lockdown and we are getting used to 'social distancing' as a new form of queuing. This is necessary, under government advice, to minimise the spread of the virus but we are relational beings and we all need contact with people – some more than others. For many, it is the loss of physical contact that is proving hard - the hugs from a child/grandchild, family member or friend, and even shaking hands or a pat on the back have become taboo. Making use of social media can help to 'see' that we are not alone and if you've never classed yourself as being very good at using technology then maybe this is an opportunity to learn a new skill. Linking with family, friends and colleagues via Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype, Facetime, or other media is good for keeping in touch but it can also be a great way to play games too. Maybe try playing bingo or doing a quiz. If you're having a clear-out try putting up an old garden table at the end of your driveway or outside the front door and share the books, magazines, etc that you no longer want. It's amazing but your 'throw-away' can be someone else's 'Just-what-I-needed'! Or you could try some of the Umpire's and Scorer's on-line training.....



Continuing Professional Development and Training - are good ways to keep your mind active. There are more opportunities being released all the time so keep in touch with the Over-and-Out bulletins produced centrally and with your local ACO. There are on-line courses for umpires and scorers and what is becoming a regular YouTube session on scoring (Wednesday 7pm on the 'RunsWktsOvers' YouTube channel) by Sue Drinkwater. As an organisation, the ACO is looking at extending these on-line opportunities so keep a watch out for further news. You can look at other opportunities for learning too, such as the Open University. Some organisations are offering 'taster' courses free of charge and the range of distance learning courses is varied enough to provide something for everyone.

The uncertainty of the current situation **and the adjustments** we are having to make during lockdown are a challenge for each of us. Some are struggling with the lockdown alone while others find having someone else there all the time can be equally as difficult! We are anxious for ourselves, our families, our loved ones, and the future of the game we love but until things are clearer we must learn to manage the situation and **find the positives in it so that we emerge stronger, more resilient, and healthier than before.**



Speak to someone – a friend, colleague, family member - if you have concerns about your mental health. If they can't help then they can contact someone who can. Your GP can still support you with any health issues so don't neglect any concerns you have just because they are not Covid-19. And the ECB ACO is here to keep you up to date with what's happening in the world of officiating.

So, stay safe, look forward, and if you are anxious about anything please don't be alone with it.

Heather Vernon
ECB ACO National Scorers' Officer

Help to find Counselling – www.bacp.co.uk

National NHS Helplines - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/> and www.nhsinform.scot (for those in Scotland)

National guidance on health issues including Covid-19 – www.nhs.uk and the NHS 111 helpline for advice with symptoms and other health concerns

YouTube for scorers (& anyone interested) -<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoBu7VMwO-d6mxDDxYgPx7w>

ECB ACO Officiating Courses - <https://www.ecb.co.uk/be-involved/officials/find-a-course>

Keeping fit - www.verywellfit.com or <https://www.saga.co.uk/magazine/health-wellbeing/exercise-fitness>

Mental well-being - <https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness> or try Ruby Wax's 'Frazzled Café' community on YouTube - <https://www.frazzledcafe.org>

.....and you can always search Google, YouTube, or your usual web-browser for other topics.

Heather Vernon
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