Family Matters staff are all working remotely, we have moved our therapeutic services online, in keeping with Government guidelines on keeping safe, and in order to protect our clients, therapists and staff during this new world we all find ourselves in. Our whole work force continues to be available to as many of you as possible and to identify different ways of working that make it possible to stay in contact with you. We are offering telephone support, therapy online, ISVA/CISVA support, or just a check in now and then to ensure you are coping at present. YOU CAN CONTACT US IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS

- Email: admin@familymattersuk.org
- Telephone: 01474 536661

Healthy Minds

It is at times like this that we will ALL need more support as we find ourselves alone with many different emotions and uncomfortable feelings arising within us. You may find yourself living in a quieter space with more periods of silence in the world around you. This will mean less distractions to take your mind off your worries, in turn you may concentrate more on the impact of the recent, or historic abuse, this will have a tremendous effect on your mind and body. It is at times like this that you WILL need to show yourself a bit of kindness and focus on the good bits of your lives that you can tap into. When you get into self-loathing and negative thoughts, remember that you need to love and accept yourself, none of us are perfect and we all need to improve in some way or another, whether that is being kinder to ourselves, taking more exercise, not eating more than we need, the list goes on, but it's a work in progress and we will change and grow for the whole of our lifetimes. For those of you who feel you made bad choices, or mistakes, you will make more mistakes as you go along, we all do, but we learn from them and build upon our strengths.

Self-Talk

Watch how you talk to yourself and the messages you give yourself. Are they helpful or destructive? Really look at the language you use and the negativity. Would you talk to your friend/s like that? If the answer is no, then don’t talk to yourself like that, you should be your best friend.

Trauma

With all trauma comes pain, suffering, guilt, sadness, loss, anger, and a whole myriad of emotion. You will move in and out of each one and back and forth over time. Take small steps forward at a time instead of trying to climb the whole mountain at once. Start with 5 mins a day to still the negative voices and the messages that come in constant streams. Be gentle with yourself and your abilities from day to day, treat yourself with kindness and remember very clearly, the abuser is not YOU it is ANOTHER.

Thought Patterns

Our patterns of thoughts are a constant stream they bombard us night and day. If you ignore them, they will keep you awake or wake you up during the night to deal with them. Give them space, but limit the time to 5 minutes a day, or 5 in the morning and 5 in the afternoon, whatever you can manage. If they wake you up, write them down, give your self-permission to deal with them in the morning. Even set a timer to practice positive talk, then switch it off after your desired time, increase the time every day, or every other day, to suit your needs, practice makes perfect. Intrusive thoughts are like white noise and will continue in the background, unless you take control of them. Not so easy to do I hear you say, so you take control, you be in charge of them, they are part of your mind, so you need to be creative to take control of them. Switch them off to get some much-needed peace, give yourself a break, or else they will break you.
Monkey Mind

Our monkey minds are chattering all day long, we take in around 150,000 words per second and that is just during our waking hours, imagine trying to process all of them, your conscious mind would go into overdrive. Think about how you handle those messages, which do you store, which do you eliminate, which do you alter. It's time to eliminate some, discard others, where did they come from in the first instance, teachers, parents, abusers, others? Some are not even your own messages they belong to someone else, give them back, you have looked after them long enough and they will destroy you if you let them. Many of us are brought up conditioned to be like everyone else, normal..... what is that? Who knows, I have spoken to hundreds of people all my life and each one feels and acts differently than the other, the one thing we have in common, is that we want to be like everyone else.

Being Normal

I tried to be normal once… worst two minutes of my life. – Unknown

All of us strive to be normal, whatever that is? because conditioning tells us that is what to strive for. Just be yourself at this time, be at peace, be kind to your person, love yourself. Do not judge yourself for what you can or cannot do at this time, your normal will return, meanwhile keep the pressure off. You are unique, there is not another of you, find your quiet, find your peace whether that comes from, Yoga, Mediation, walking, or other forms of exercise. Don't be afraid to be alone, because you know what your heart desires, you are your own best friend, if you will allow yourself to be, don't be your enemy.

Inner Child Work

Can be done with a therapist, but at this time you may not have one available - if you are strong enough you can do some work yourself on your child. Do not focus on the regrets and the 'IF ONLY’s', try some inner child visualisations. Picture yourself as the adult you are now, and then with yourself at the time you had the regrets, meet your child and your adult in your mind's eye formulate a dialogue, visualise everything about your younger self, what are you wearing, how is your hair, are you happy, sad? Listen carefully to each other, talk about your fears, your anxiety, your loss, it will help resolve both your experiences and perceptions of the emotions. Be there for each other and then integrate the young one back into your present self, with the knowledge and understanding that you cannot change history but can learn from it. Often, we judge ourselves from our adult perspective rather than the younger version of ourselves. Get yourself a book on inner child work. You can write a letter to each other, say good things to each other, tell them you love them, no matter what. Draw a picture of your younger self and your adult self, see what images you present with. You may want to get out photos of that time, think about what you liked and what you were doing. Meditate on loving yourself, no matter what you think you were guilty of........
Thought Patterns

Change a constant negative message into a positive one, example below

Recognise your patterns of self-talk and change the dialogue, if you cannot change it permanently, try for 1 minute, 2 minutes, 15 mins, one day, two days, etc. A small change will always do as a start. You do not start to lose weight immediately once you decide to make the change, it takes weeks and sometime months, and then you have to eat healthy. The same principles apply with self-talk, you may have had years of talking to yourself negatively, lots of the messages came from elsewhere and from people in your lives, some who are no longer there, but you have adopted your messages and now give them back to yourself. This is a habit, habits take 21 days to form and 21 days to break, try it, set yourself a goal. One day with trying to still and change the negative voices and thoughts….2 days….3 days, be persistent you can do it. Maybe give the negative person a name, a colour, a shape so when that feeling comes you realise it the negative one speaking.

Do some breathing, and simple yoga moves, they will not only relax the muscles of the body, the relaxing impulses will travel back to the brain and relax the mind. When you use the breath your awareness and attention parts of the mind are made active and it is not allowed to wander into tension and stress, you control its purpose for that moment in time.

Your Body & your Mental Health

We all receive different stress signals in our bodies, your job for now is to start to recognise yours. It may be that you clench your jaw, hunch your shoulders, get frequent headaches. Your chest might tighten, or your stomach may churn over, try to recognise where the stress comes in your body, you will probably then notice that your breath changes and labours more. Try to re-balance yourself with a calmer breath and some good thoughts to give positive energy back to your body. There is a nerve called the Vagus nerve that connects your brain to many important organs throughout the body, including the gut (intestines, stomach) heart and lungs. It runs from the brain through the face and right down to the abdomen, 80% of these nerves fibres sends information from the body to the Brain. It regulates your blood pressure, your heart rate, your digestion and sweat glands. Reduce your anxiety use slow and deep breaths to calm and still your mind and body.

Most people take 10 to 14 breaths each minute. Taking about 6 breaths over the course of a minute is a great way to relieve stress. Breath in deeply from your diaphragm (the muscle at the base of your chest) when you do this your stomach should expand outward. Your exhale should be long and slow. This will stimulate the Vagus nerve and help you reach a state of relaxation.
Triggers

Triggers are things that set off a memory or flashback in your mind, taking you back to the event of your original trauma/problem. Triggers are very personal and different for individuals. When you receive a trigger, you may then begin to avoid situations and stimuli that you think can trigger the event, be wary of triggers and learn to handle them. Get to know your own personal triggers then you can learn to control them. Triggers can be received via all your senses, visual, (seeing) auditory (sounds) kinesthetic (feeling) gustatory (smell)

Tips for Emotional Care

➢ Giving is generous. Keep doing it but be open to receiving as well.

➢ Emotional self-care - Before you agree to another obligation, take a pause, and ask yourself “Am I agreeing to this because I really want to or because I think I should?”

➢ If you are continually backing yourself into a corner, start using your ‘No. ‘

➢ Embrace the importance of having boundaries – for yourself and others. Have them. Set them. Respect them.

➢ Show your body some love every day. Healthy body, happy heart, healthy mind.

➢ Have at least one friend who is your support person in times of struggle. The one who is deserving of listening to your stories, your vulnerability buddy. If you haven’t got a friend or an animal to talk to find something or a picture of someone you care/d for to talk to.

➢ Become better acquainted with your self-talk. If you are being particularly nasty to yourself – work on changing it.

➢ Allow yourself to be open to connection with others. Whether you are experiencing sublime joy, or suffering, there is someone a short distance from you having a similar experience.

➢ All emotions have important information for us. Develop your body awareness so that you can foster this connection. Allow yourself to feel your emotions -even the painful ones. Learn to manage them effectively when required.

➢ Practice self-compassion and use it every time you are having a less than perfect day.

➢ Journal. If you are experiencing emotional distress – get it out of your head and on to paper.
➢ Write yourself a kind letter.

➢ Learn what nurtures your personality type, what lifts you up, what makes you feel down. Learn what type of music makes you feel happy and what type, sad, and only listen to the ones that make you happy currently.

➢ Managing emotional self-care requires ongoing development and support.

➢ When stumped by an emotional crisis, or difficult decision, ask what your best friend, or best self would do?

➢ Practice all the with self-compassion and imperfection.