



# Covid-19 Guide to Maintaining a Healthy Mind

Whilst the start of the pandemic was accompanied by sunshine, good weather and long days, the reality is very different now. We also had the novelty effect at first as we navigated our way through the turbulent spring and summer months. The prospect of cold, short days and limited social events to look forward to is enough to make even the most positive amongst us sigh.

This begs the question, how can we remain feeling upbeat in what appears to be a less than jolly time of the year.

At InsideOut we've put together our best tips for managing and maintaining a positive mindset during the pandemic.

We all have mental health, it's important to recognise that our mental wellbeing can fluctuate between good and poor states during the day, week or month. We all have different coping strategies. There is no such thing as a 'one size fits all' approach when it comes to managing mental wellbeing.

We've put together a comprehensive guide for you which provides tips on how to maintain positive mental wellbeing during the pandemic. We hope that you'll take away some tips on how to take care of your mental and emotional wellbeing during Covid times and beyond.

- 1. Tackle Loneliness**
- 2. Focus on Relationships**
- 3. Strengthening Family Connections**
- 4. Make Time for Self-care**
- 5. Coping with Anxiety**
- 6. Practice Journaling**
- 7. Get a Good Night's Sleep**
- 8. Dealing with SAD**
- 9. Working from Home**
- 10. Visualising your Goals**

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# Tackle Loneliness

Whether you live alone in a big city, or in a peaceful town in the middle of nowhere, lockdown is not easy on our primary need for human interaction.

Seeing friends and family members may become impossible all of a sudden, and whilst you might be one to really value and appreciate your own company, maybe now even you are feeling the need to connect more to others.

It's normal to feel lonely from time-to-time.  
Feeling cut-off and isolated is absolutely normal.  
Feelings of loneliness are personal and everyone's experience of loneliness is different.

**Mind** describes loneliness as *the feeling we get when our need for rewarding social contact and relationships is not met. But loneliness is not always the same as being alone... you may have lots of social contact, or be in a relationship or part of a family, and still feel lonely - especially if you don't feel understood or cared for by the people around you.*

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## Top 5 tips for combating loneliness:

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- 1** Connect to friends and family over a virtual cup of tea/coffee/wine.

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  - 2** Consider taking up a new hobby or going back to an old one.

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  - 3** Join a support group or volunteer for a cause close to your heart.

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  - 4** Try to have more open and honest conversations, fostering depth and mutual understanding in your relationships.

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  - 5** Try talking therapies to explore your feelings of loneliness.

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Whilst loneliness isn't a mental health problem in itself, research shows that the two are closely linked, especially if the feelings of loneliness last for a long time.



# 2



## Focus on Relationships

Being in a relationship during a lockdown may not be plain sailing and may have its challenges. How can we make sure our relationships don't suffer?

Some couples are forced to live and work together 24/7, whilst others are kept apart. Regardless of the circumstances it is natural to notice some strain on your relationship dynamic.

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## Top 3 tips for maintaining positive relationships:

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**1**

Communication is key! Airing your thoughts and frustrations is a great way to stay connected with your partner, friends and/or family members. Acknowledge any pressures that you're experiencing in the relationship. Take time to speak openly and try not to let things build up because resentment may grow over time. In other words don't bottle things up!

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**2**

Having healthy boundaries in place will support your interactions and protect the time you spend together. Trying to remain flexible and compassionate towards each other's needs. It is a new and tough situation after all and it's going to take time to navigate. Even if you have different views and coping mechanisms, it's important to validate each other's points of view by seeking to understand and being empathic even if you don't always agree.

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**3**

Find activities you can do together. That could be a workout, cooking, going for a walk, board games or watching Netflix! Try something new!

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When you feel the frustration rising and misunderstanding growing between you, taking a few deep breaths and remember being patient with one another can really go a long way.

# 3



## Strengthening Family Connections

Whether you're now working from home whilst looking after children; moved home to live with parents; moved in with a new partner, or are caring for a vulnerable relative, family life can become much harder.

Higher levels of uncertainty and stress can make daily tasks more tiring and maintaining a harmonious atmosphere can become very challenging. Conflicts may arise often in conversations and patience can be put to the test.



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## Top 5 tips to strengthen family connections:

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- 1** If you are a parent and childcare or home schooling is taking up the majority of your time, set aside some time to focus on your relationship. This time is for you to connect as a couple on a deeper level and nourish your relationship. Expressing love and affection can lower our levels of stress and imbue our bodies with happy hormones such as oxytocin, also known as the 'cuddle hormone'. Regular physical contact can boost your wellbeing and that of your family.
  - 2** Open up the conversation and encourage everyone to talk about their emotions. Ask each family member how they are feeling. Create a time and space to openly discuss and validate each others' feelings. Feeling heard and supported is key in combating loneliness and anxiety both in children and in adults.
  - 3** Schedule in quality family time. Set aside time for everyone in the household to sit down together and do an activity. That could be playing a game, having a meal, going for a walk or watching a movie. Relationships foster a sense of belonging and purpose. It's important to keep bonds strong.
  - 4** Keep to a routine and set clear boundaries for your children between home-schooling and free time. Prepare their materials and then take a brief walk, as if they were commuting to school, before setting up in an allocated space in the house to start school work. Setting clear boundaries and having a daily routine helps children feel contained and safe. This is also true for meal times and bed-time routines.
  - 5** Create a daily physical workout plan for all the family to do. Include something fun that everyone will enjoy. Physical activity not only makes our bodies stronger and makes our immune systems stronger but also fosters a sense of calm and relaxation of the mind. Remember to include outdoor activities too, even if the weather isn't great!
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Normalising the conversation around difficult emotions is key to reminding yourself and your loved ones that it's OK to be struggling, especially in this time of change.

# 4



## Make Time for Self-care

Especially when we're feeling low or anxious, making time for self-care can really save the day. Self-care routines are very personal to each and everyone of us, you'll know better than anyone else what makes you feel good.

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## Top 5 tips for self care:

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- 1** Doing regular physical activity is proven to work wonders on our mental and physical health, be it via a workout or a gentle walk in nature. When we are active our body releases feel-good hormones, endorphins and serotonin, which give you a natural energy boost and reduce cortisol levels, which are released in response to stress.

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  - 2** Make time to enjoy your favourite things such as exercise, listening to music, cooking, playing a musical instrument, speaking to friends, reading a book or running a bath. Make sure you clock in 'me time' to melt away the stress of the day and balance out the time you spend working or taking care of others.

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  - 3** Negative emotions can make it difficult for us to make sense of what is going on in our minds. A great way to bring clarity to and process your thoughts is to keep a journal. Putting your thoughts down on paper helps to gain perspective and frees your mind unleashing any burdens that you may be carrying around.

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  - 4** Try a digital detox if you feel that certain apps, games or media are not helping your mental wellbeing. Turning off notifications can help us to focus and feel less stressed. The on-demand nature of the digital world means we can become very responsive to our phones, emails and other IT.

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  - 5** Enjoy learning something new you've always been interested in, and invest in self-development.
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In time, with practice and discipline, self-care routines can become part of our everyday life. Taking care of one's needs and looking after and pampering ourselves on a regular basis not only has a positive impact on our own wellbeing but also positively influences our relationships and work life.

# 5



## Coping with Anxiety

Dealing with huge amounts of uncertainty is no easy task at any given moment in life. This is especially true if you are prone to feeling anxious. Not being able to plan or understand fully what is going on can be scary, especially if it feels like things are out of control.

If you're feeling scared at this stage and dread the idea of having to cope with your anxiety levels you are not alone. Having survived lockdown 1.0 you have some sense of what to expect going forward and hopefully it has increased your resilience and confidence. You've got this!

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## Top 5 tips for combating anxiety:

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**1**

Practice mindfulness meditations and focus your attention on your breath. This can help us feel grounded and more in touch with the present moment. Try to slow down your breath and focus your attention to the sensation of the air entering and exiting your lungs. Do this as many times you feel is needed before you start noticing a sense of calm spreading through your body.

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**2**

Try to notice any negative thought spirals that you may fall into. Remind yourself that these are only thoughts and are not a reflection of reality. Challenge your thoughts. Are they actually based on facts?

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**3**

Practice being fully present in the moment. Experiment with different grounding activities such as gardening, colouring in, painting, dancing or reading for example. If you start to feel anxious once more, pause and bring your attention back to your surroundings. Name things you see and feel and bring your attention to your senses. This will help you get back in contact with the present moment.

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**4**

Notice what you expose your mind to. If you're prone to feeling anxious, limit the time you spend watching TV/Netflix. Be mindful of what social media channels you follow and engage with. Set a time in the day when you read the news and try not to fall into the habit of constantly checking the latest updates.

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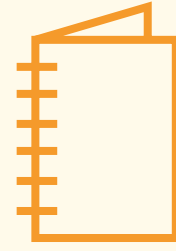
**5**

If you feel your confidence and sense of self-worth is shaking, write down all the challenges you've managed to overcome so far and take a moment to think about what helped you do it. Keeping a journal is a great way to regulate your emotions and keep a perspective on life events and on our coping mechanisms.

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If you're feeling scared at this stage and dread the idea of having to cope with your anxiety levels during lockdown 2.0 you are not alone. Having survived lockdown 1.0 you have some sense of what to expect and hopefully it has increased your resilience and confidence. You've got this!

# 6



## Practice Journaling

The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns have changed our lives dramatically. It's completely understandable if you feel overwhelmed. Writing down your thoughts and feelings on paper is a great way to contain your sense of anxiety and gain a new perspective.

Journaling is a useful tool that helps you get to know yourself better. It helps with managing anxiety, reducing stress levels and coping with low mood. It provides a healthy way to express yourself.

The act of writing helps us to combat stress levels. Writing requires cognitive and rational effort and helps to counterbalance those moments when we feel swept off our feet by the intensity of our emotions. Writing your thoughts and feelings down facilitates self expression and gives time to reflect on what you're experiencing in the present moment.

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## Top 3 tips for writing a journal:

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- 1** Try to be consistent and set the intention to write regularly in your journal. Ideally, you'd set aside a few minutes every day to write. This will help you create a positive habit faster.
  - 2** Choose a nice pen and journal to write in or, if you prefer writing on your phone, iPad or PC, create a specific folder for your reflections. Make the act of writing something enjoyable and easy. Choose a relaxing spot and turn it into a ritual for yourself and your wellbeing. Maybe make yourself a cup of your favourite tea for the occasion.
  - 3** The best part of journaling is that you can write whatever you want. There is no right or wrong thing to write about. Your writing doesn't need to have a particular structure or theme. This is a space for you to freely express what feels true in the moment, regardless of coherence, spelling mistakes or typos. It's a place for you to write down how you truly feel without fear of judgement.
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Writing regularly creates a space for self-reflection where you can more easily identify negative thoughts and behaviours. It supports you to prioritise, identify triggers and find ways to deal with them better. Once you've identified what you find challenging, you can more easily create a plan to solve the issues and enhance your wellbeing. You can also use your journal for drawings, doodles and collages. These are all great ways to relax your mind and enhance positive mental health.



## Get a Good Night's Sleep

You may have experienced sleep problems during lockdown 1.0, from interrupted sleep or insomnia to sleeping too much or vivid dreams. Establishing good sleep hygiene is key when facing sleep problems. While everyone is different, there are proven ways to get a better night's sleep.

If you have experienced sleep problems over a long period of time, it could negatively impact your mental health. If you feel that your sleep problems are having a negative impact on your daily life and wellbeing, it's advisable that you seek support and if need be professional help.



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## Top 5 tips for getting a better night's sleep:

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- 1** Establish a routine. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. This helps your body to associate different times of the day with sleeping.

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  - 2** Avoid working from your bedroom or using it for other leisure activities such as watching movies. Create a comfy and inviting space to sleep in. Make sure the temperature isn't too high or low, and that the levels of light and noise in the room are right for you. Dark, quiet and cool environments generally make it easier to sleep.

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  - 3** Try to relax before bedtime. Limit any stimulating activities such as working, doing exercise or looking at a blue screen. Doing something calming before you go to bed such as taking a bath, reading a book or listening to some music can help you fall asleep faster. Breathing exercises, visualisations and meditations may also help. If you have something on your mind, write it down before you go to sleep.

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  - 4** Diet can play a key role when tackling sleep problems. Avoid alcohol, caffeine and nicotine before bed. They are stimulants that can affect how well you sleep. Try to avoid large meals and big quantities of liquid in the evening too.

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  - 5** Keep a sleep diary. Write down how well you sleep. This can help you identify the factors that are affecting your sleep, especially if you have experienced sleep problems for a long time. Try to identify stresses and worries in your life that might be affecting your sleep and make a note of them.
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If you have experienced sleep problems over a long period of time, it could negatively impact your mental health. If you feel that your sleep problems are having a negative impact on your daily life and wellbeing, it's advisable that you seek support and if need be professional help.

# 8



## Dealing with SAD

The closure of leisure spaces such as restaurants, bars and gyms, makes socialising especially harder in the evenings when the nights are cold, dark and wet.

SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) can affect people during any time of the year, but symptoms are usually more prominent during the winter months. It's not uncommon to be affected by the change in seasons and the weather. You might notice that your mood or energy levels are impacted when it gets colder, or experience changes in your sleeping or eating habits.

It's common to experience SAD and if you're struggling with dealing with its affects remember you are not alone.

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## Top 3 treatments available for SAD:

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- 1 Lifestyle measures**  
including getting as much natural sunlight as possible, exercising regularly and managing your stress levels.
  - 2 Light therapy**  
where a special lamp is used to simulate exposure to sunlight.
  - 3 Talking therapies**  
such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or counselling.
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## Top 3 tips for combating SAD:

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- 1** Set an alarm to wake up at the same time each day. It will help regulate your melatonin levels. Fluctuation in the time you wake up and oversleeping increases levels of the hormone melatonin, which can have a negative impact on your mood.
  - 2** If you're finding it difficult to get out of bed or hate the sound of your alarm clock, try out alarm clocks that gradually increase the light in your room. Set it for approximately 30 minutes before you're meant to wake up.
  - 3** When possible spend time outdoors and stay active. Physical activity, be it a walk or a cardio routine, releases serotonin in our body which reduces stress levels.
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It's common to experience SAD and if you're struggling with dealing with its affects remember you are not alone.



# Working from Home

We're at home, we're back at work, we're at home again! For those of us who thrive off human interactions working from home may come as a blow.

As many people thrive off medium to high levels of regular human interaction, working alone and remotely can prove to be quite difficult. To fully embrace the positives of remote working, it is important to pay attention to how your mental and emotional health is responding to a remote role.

## Isolation is not the only challenge remote workers face.

Creating an effective work routine can be challenging.

Here's our top 8 tips for getting the most out of your working day:

1. If possible, decide what time of the day is best for you to work. Are you more productive in the morning or in the evening? Always be mindful of what times of the day you're most alert and productive when setting your routine.
2. Make a clear start and end to your working day. Consider creating a ritual that symbolically signifies when you're starting your job and signing off.
3. Try different kinds of music to help you get through those intense moments just before a deadline or when you feel you need to focus more.
4. Always dress for success. Working from home is no excuse for working in your PJs. Getting dressed and presenting yourself as if you were going to the office can go a long way towards getting you into a working mindset.

## Top 3 tips for working from home:

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1

Schedule regular coffee breaks with colleagues.

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2

Book virtual lunches with friends.

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3

Try working in different places in the house to see where you are most productive.

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4

Choose video calls over phone calls whenever possible.

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5

Build meaningful connections with colleagues on non-work related topics.

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5. Use a timer to help you focus, especially when you're working under time pressure.
6. Consider ergonomics. Pay close attention to seating and posture, as well as repetitive stress on arms and wrists. It's worth investing in equipment designed to help you work healthier. Saving money in this area now can lead to chronic pains in the future.
7. Avoid any distractions in your working space. This can be anything from ambient sounds, visual distractions or snacks!
8. Create a dedicated work space. This will help you to focus specifically on work and healthily disconnect from the working day when you leave that space.

Having a clear structure to your day can really make a difference. Setting clear boundaries is key to managing a work/life balance especially when working remotely.

# 10



## Visualising your Goals

The pandemic is a rollercoaster. We've been through a lockdown, are currently enduring #2 and there are likely to be more before the pandemic ends. Vision boarding is an uplifting, positive and fun experience.

The concept is based around the Law of Attraction with the intention of helping you to clearly express and then materialise the goals and outcomes you wish to achieve in your life. Now more than ever, it is crucial that we are able to visualise the future and look ahead to a time when we can reflect back on what you we achieved.

By creating a view of what we want the future to look like, we can start to identify what we need to do to achieve that future state.

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## Top 3 tips for visualising your goals:

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**1**

### Manifest Your Goals and Aspirations

Write down 3—5 personal and professional life goals you wish to achieve within the next 6 months to 5 years. These might relate to your career, family, relationships, health and wellbeing and personal growth. Then, sift through a pile of magazines, newspapers, and other publications to find words and images that encapsulate these goals and aspirations for your future. It's best to create a physical board as the process of cutting, pasting and visually representing your desires helps you powerfully manifest them.

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**2**

### Build a Collage

Next, take the images and words that resonate with you and build a collage. If a single image doesn't quite capture your desires, then overlay the image with meaningful words. Be sure not to clutter the board as you want to make sure that your goals are focused and organised.

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**3**

### Crystallise Outcomes

The end result is a board representing a visualisation of your personal and professional purpose. Formulating your vision board helps you crystallise the outcomes you desire and manifest the life you want for yourself.

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Place your vision board in an accessible position to serve as a visual reminder of the life goals you seek. This will help you regularly manifest your goals and outcomes and inspire and motivate you to find ways to achieve them.





# It's time to let the InsideOut!

InsideOut is a mental fitness and wellbeing platform providing 360 degree on-demand mental health care for your employees in the palm of their hand.



## Happy, healthy employees

Open up mental health issues that may be a blocker to individual performance and business profitability. Give employees access to personalised on-demand mental health care on the go that can be accessed anywhere, anytime, anyplace.



## InsideOut Education

Our workshops open up the mental health conversation, raise awareness and empower employees to support colleagues with their mental wellbeing.



## InsideOut 1-2-1 Talking Support

We understand the power of talking. Sometimes life can be overwhelming and we need a little help.

Using our platform, you and your employees can talk to one of our specialist Coaches, Counsellors or Therapists within 24 hours of signing up. No pre-screening phone calls or long wait times.



## InsideOut Mental Fitness Programme

Designed by leading clinical psychologists, our evidenced based mental fitness programme uses AI technology to provide employees with a personalised mental fitness plan consisting of a range of tools, exercises and audio courses.

# Platform options



## Bespoke Package

Whether you're looking for a preventative mental fitness programme or 1-2-1 support in the form of talking therapy and coaching, we've got your back! We can tailor our platform's features to meet your needs.



## Holistic Care

Health is holistic. All elements are interlinked. By addressing physical, mental, nutritional and financial health we empower employees to take control of their holistic wellbeing.



## Personalised

Our platform uses the latest AI technologies to provide our users with a highly personalised experience. Our interactive tools and exercises are tailored to the needs of the employee based on the areas they need support with.



## Evidence Based

We work with leading industry experts. Using a unique range of evidenced based, and clinically backed interactive tools, we cater for anyone wanting to improve or maintain their mental well-being.

Our content is underpinned by the NICE clinical standards framework.

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5 ways to wellbeing

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DBT

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SAD

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To find out more about how InsideOut  
can help support your organisation