

Supporting your emotional-wellbeing and mental health during Covid-19

Understandably, the current situation is an unsettling and distressing time for everyone. The government is now advising us to avoid all but essential social contact. You may find that social distancing can be boring, frustrating or lonely. You may find your mood and feelings are affected and you may feel low, worried or have problems sleeping. You may also miss being outside with other people.

At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse. There are simple things you can do that may help, to stay mentally and physically active during this difficult time. Here are some ideas we hope will help you, your friends and family look after your mental health at a time when there is much discussion of potential threats to our physical health.

Looking after your mental health while you have to stay at home

The government advice to avoid all but essential social contact will mean that more of us will be spending a lot of time at home and many of our regular social activities will no longer be available to us. It will help to try and see it as a different period of time in your life, and not necessarily a bad one, even if you didn't choose it.

Think about ways of looking after yourself physically and keeping a healthy routine and focus on the things that you can do, if you feel able to, such as:

- Keeping active and looking for ideas of exercise that you can do at home (the NHS website have some good ideas)
- keep your windows open to let in fresh air, get some natural sunlight if you can
- going for a walk outside
- trying new relaxation techniques (you can find lots on the internet)
- maintaining a well-balanced diet
- drinking enough water
- try avoiding things that might make you feel worse such as alcohol and drugs

Taken from:

Public Health England (2020) Guidance on social distancing for everyone in the UK and protecting older people and vulnerable adults.
Mental Health Foundation (2020) Looking after your mental health during the Coronavirus outbreak.

Children's and Adults' Services

- make sure your wider health needs are being looked after such as having enough prescription medicines available to you.

Create a new daily routine that prioritises looking after yourself and your family. Spend time doing things you enjoy – this might be reading more or watching films, cooking or playing games.

Social distancing can also be challenging if everyone is at home. Long periods of time at home all together may feel stressful and intense. At times of stress and anxiety, family arguments and conflict can be more likely. It is important to look after yourself and your family at these times. Looking after your emotional well-being and the emotional well-being of your family and children might mean sometimes taking a break if you need it. This might be going into a different room, having a shower or going for a walk, if it's safe to do so/ there is someone at home to look after your little ones. Trying to do things that help you manage your stress and stay calm or calling someone outside of the home may help.

Staying connected to others

At times of stress and worry, we work better in company and with support. These circumstances will mean a different rhythm of life and being in touch with others in different ways than usual. Draw on support you might have through your friends, family and other networks during this time. Try to stay in touch with those around you over the phone, by social media or through email. Let people know how you would like to stay in touch and build that into your routine. This might feel very different but they are ways of being and feeling close to the people who matter to you. This is also important in looking after your mental wellbeing and you may find it helpful to talk to them about how you are feeling. Remember it is OK to share your concerns with others you trust and in doing so you may end up providing support to them too. Or you can use a [NHS recommended helpline](#).

Managing how you follow the outbreak in the media

There is extensive news coverage about the outbreak. If you find that the news is causing you huge stress, it's important to find a balance. It's best that you don't avoid all news and that you keep informing and educating yourself, but limit your news intake if it is bothering you. Rumour and speculation can fuel anxiety so having access to good quality information about the virus can help you feel more in control. You can get up-to-date information and advice on the virus here:

- Gov.uk
- [Health Protection Scotland](#)
- [Public Health Wales](#)

It might also be helpful to think about your use of social media and how this is impacting you. Tune in with yourself and ask how social media is making you feel. Are there particular accounts or people that are increasing your worry or anxiety? Consider muting or unfollowing accounts or hashtags that cause you to feel anxious.

Distress and worry is normal

It is OK to feel vulnerable and overwhelmed as we read news about the outbreak, especially if you have experienced trauma or a mental health problem in the past, or if you have a long-term physical health condition that makes you more vulnerable to the effects of the coronavirus. It's important to acknowledge these feelings and remind each other to look after our physical and mental health. We should also be aware of and avoid increasing habits that may not be helpful in the long term, like smoking and drinking. Try and reassure people you know who may be worried and check in with people who you know are living alone.

Talk to your children

Involving our family and children in our plans for good health is essential. We need be alert to and ask children what they have heard about the outbreak and support them, without causing them alarm. We need to minimise the impact this may have on our children and explain the facts to them. Discuss the news with them but try and avoid over-exposure to coverage of the virus. Be as truthful as possible. Let's not avoid the 'scary topic' but engage in a way that is appropriate for them. We have more advice on [talking with your children about world news](#).