

What can help your mental health and wellbeing

Consider how to connect with others:

Maintaining relationships with people you trust is important for your mental wellbeing. Think about how you can stay in touch with friends and family via telephone or social media instead of meeting in person – whether it's people you normally see often or connecting with old friends.

Help and support others: Think about how you could help those around you – it could make a big difference to them and can make you feel better too. Could you message a friend or family member nearby? Remember it's important to do this in line with guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19) to keep yourself and everyone safe. And try to be accepting of other people's concerns or worries.

Talk about your worries: It is quite common to feel worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember that this is a difficult time for everyone and sharing how you are feeling and the things you are doing to cope with family and friends can help them too.

Look after your physical wellbeing: Your physical health has a big impact on how you are feeling emotionally and mentally. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise inside where possible and outside once a day, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs.

Look after your sleep: Feeling anxious or worried can make it harder to get a good night's sleep. Good-quality sleep makes a big difference to how you feel mentally and physically, so it's important to get enough. Try to maintain regular sleeping patterns and keep good sleep hygiene practices – like avoiding screens before bed, cutting back on caffeine and creating a restful environment.

Try to manage difficult feelings: Many people find the news about coronavirus (COVID-19) concerning. However, some people may experience such intense anxiety that it becomes a

problem. Try to focus on the things you can control, including where you get information from and actions to make yourself feel better prepared. It is okay to acknowledge some things that are outside of your control right now but constant repetitive thoughts about the situation which lead you to feel anxious or overwhelmed are not helpful.

Manage your media and information intake: 24-hour news and constant social media updates can make you more worried. If it is affecting you, try to limit the time you spend watching, reading, or listening to media coverage of the outbreak. It may help to only check the news at set times or limiting to a couple of checks a day.

Get the facts: Gather high-quality information that will help you to accurately determine your own or other people's risk of contracting coronavirus (COVID-19) so that you can take reasonable precautions.

Think about your new daily routine: Life is changing for us all for a while. Whether you are staying at home or social distancing, you are likely to see some disruption to your normal routine. Think about how you can adapt and create positive new routines – try to engage in useful activities (such as cleaning, cooking or exercise) or meaningful activities (such as reading or calling a friend). You might find it helpful to write a plan for your day or your week.

Do things you enjoy: When you are anxious, lonely or low you may do things that you usually enjoy less often, or not at all. Focussing on your favourite hobby, learning something new or simply taking time to relax indoors should give you some relief from anxious thoughts and feelings and can boost your mood.

Set goals: Setting goals and achieving them gives a sense of control and purpose – think about things you want or need to do that you can still do at home. It could be watching a film, reading a book or learning something online.

Keep your mind active: Read, write, play games, do crossword puzzles, sudokus, jigsaws or drawing and painting. Find something that works for you.

Take time to relax and focus on the present: This can help with difficult emotions, worries about the future, and can improve wellbeing. Relaxation techniques can also help some people to deal with feelings of anxiety.

If you can, once a day get outside, or bring nature in: Spending time in green spaces can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. If you can't get outside much you can try to still get these positive effects by spending time with the windows open to let in fresh air, arranging space to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight, or get out into the garden if you can.

Excerpts from "Guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus (COVID-19)" published by Public Health England, 2020.

Kindness during the coronavirus outbreak



Struggling with the lockdown? The Mental Health Foundation has some good ideas. They're good ideas because they take us out of ourselves and help to bring some cheer to someone else.

- Call a friend that you haven't spoken to for a while
- Tell a family member how much you love and appreciate them
- Make a cup of tea for someone you live with
- Arrange to have a cup of tea and virtual catch up with someone you know

- Help with a household chore at home
- Arrange to watch a film at the same time as a friend and video call
- Tell someone you know that you are proud of them
- Tell someone you know why you are thankful for them
- Send a motivational text to a friend who is struggling
- Send someone you know a joke to cheer them up
- Send someone you know a picture of a cute animal
- Send an inspirational quote to a friend
- Send an interesting article to a friend
- Contact someone you haven't seen in a while and arrange a phone call
- Spend time playing with your pet
- Reach out to call a friend, family member or neighbour who is experiencing loneliness or self-isolation
- Donate to a charity
- Lend your ear – call a colleague and ask how they're finding it all
- Give praise to your colleague for something they've done well
- Send an inspirational story of kindness from around the world to someone you know
- Donate to foodbanks
- Offer support to vulnerable neighbours