

MENTAL HEALTH

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Isolation, physical distancing, the closure of schools and workplaces are challenges that affect us and it's natural to feel anxious, stressful, worried, sad, bored, lonely and frustrated due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

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It's OK to feel like this, everyone deals with things differently - remember this is a temporary situation and whatever you're feeling, it will pass in time. Coping with your anxieties will make you, the people you care about and your community stronger.



If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions or feel like you want to harm yourself or others call the Samaritans FREE on

116 123

Here are some things that we can all do to take care of our mental health and well-being during these uncertain times.

- **Stay connected with people** - think about how you can stay in touch with family and friends whilst staying at home by phoning, using video calling or communicating through the many social media platforms that are available.
- **Talk about your worries** - it's normal to feel anxious or scared about the current situation and by sharing your anxieties with others you trust you could help both of you.
- **Maintain perspective** - remember that medical, scientific and public health experts around the world are working hard to contain the virus, treat those affected and develop a vaccine as quickly as possible.

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- **Remember If you're self-isolating**, remind yourself that this is a temporary period of isolation to slow the spread of the virus and your effort is helping others in the community avoid contracting the virus.
- **Support and help others** - helping others can also help you overcome your fears. Is there a local community group that you could join to support others whilst still complying with the Government's guidance on social distancing?
- **Be prepared** - if you are unable to work, you'll have more time to think about things going on around you. Therefore try and normalise your time at home and plan things to do so you have a daily/weekly routine.
- **Consider volunteering** to support people or organisations who are struggling at the moment.
- **Working from home** - try to maintain a healthy balance by allocating specific work hours, take regular breaks and, if possible, establish a dedicated work space.
- **Home schooling** - plan a structured timetable for your children which will be more effective for you all.
- **Need physical support** - contact local community groups if you feel you need help whilst self-isolating as they may be able to help you with food shopping and medicine collection.

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- **Need emotional support** - activate your support network, seek professional support early and if you're on medication for mental health issues, make sure you continue with your normal treatment plan whilst monitoring for any new symptoms.
- **Use professional helplines** if you don't want to talk about your concerns with people you know. Helplines Look after your body - our physical health has a big impact on how we feel.
- **Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise** at least once per day whilst complying with the social distancing guidelines, avoid smoking or drugs and try not to drink too much alcohol.
- **Manage your exposure to negative information** - while it's important to stay informed, you may find it useful to limit your media intake if it is upsetting you or your family, especially young children.
- **Stick to the facts** - It's important to get accurate information from credible sources such as those listed below to help you maintain perspective and feel more in control.

[NHS - Coronavirus Information](#)

[World Health Organisation - COVID-19 outbreak](#)

[GOV.UK - COVID-19 what you need to do](#)

- **Stay on top of difficult feelings** - feeling concerned about the coronavirus is perfectly normal but dealing with the sort of situations which you can't control can adversely affect your life. If you're feeling anxious about things, then go to the [NHS Every Mind Matters website](#) and you'll find some techniques to help you deal with your anxieties.

- **Do things you enjoy** - if you're feeling worried, anxious or low, then distract yourself with something that you enjoy doing or think about doing something new. There are lots of free tutorials, online courses and you can join online quizzes and listen to online concerts.
- **Focus on the present** - rather than worrying about the future, focus on the now. This can help with difficult emotions and improve your wellbeing. If you're struggling with dealing with your emotions, then try some relaxation techniques or breathing exercises.
- **Look after your sleep** - good quality sleep can make a big difference to how we feel mentally and physically. It's important to maintain regular sleeping patterns and avoid certain activities prior to bedtime to ensure a restful environment. For more advice go to the NHS website.
- **Be kind** - it's important to recognise the pressure the health and social care sector and the retail , utilities and public service sectors are under currently so take steps to support them where possible.

Following Government advice about ways individuals can help slow the spread of the virus, will support the health care workers who are saving lives and keeping people safe.