Children First
Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire County Council

Looking after your mental health and wellbeing during Coronavirus

Coronavirus has brought about many changes in the way we navigate our health, social lives, work, and our homes. Social distancing and self-isolation can lead people to feel bored and lonely.

With all these changes it is easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour that can make us feel even worse. Now more than ever it is important to look after our mental health and wellbeing, and so we have put together a few tips to help you, adapted from the NHS 5 Ways to Wellbeing. It is not exhaustive, and you can adjust the advice to suit your situation and needs where necessary and possible.

1. Stay Connected to Others

Maintaining healthy relationships with people you trust is important. Think about how you can use current technology to stay in touch with others.

- Reach out by phone, text, or video calls to friends and family
- Consider scheduling 5-minute virtual 'coffee breaks' with colleagues to catch up
- Make use of mobile and web applications that let you have group video conferences and even have remote movie nights. Get creative!

2. Take Care of your Body

Regular physical activity keeps your body healthy and improves mental health.

- If you have access to outdoor space or if it is safe for you to go outside, go for a walk or run, and remember to maintain your 2 metres for social distancing.
- Access online sources and applications to help you work out at home. Try this NHS website for home workout videos as a start.
- Continue making healthy and balanced food choices. This might be a good time to try your hand at cooking if you do not do so already. Try the NHS 8 Tips for Eating Healthy as a guide.
- Keep up your personal hygiene while at home and try and get a good quality sleep. Try NHS How to Get to Sleep for some healthy tips
- Avoid smoking and drugs and try to keep alcohol intake to a minimum.

  = Evidence suggests that smokers may be more likely to develop severe disease if infected with coronavirus. Now might be the time to try and quit smoking, which can rapidly reduce many health risks and help prevent our NHS from being overwhelmed at this time. Contact the London Stop Smoking Portal or call 0300 123 1044 for advice and support on quitting.

3. Find Things You Enjoy Doing

It is important to find time for the small joys in life that can give you 'micro-boosts' to your happiness and mental health.

- Make time to keep up the hobbies that you enjoy while at home.
- Try finding a new hobby! Learning a new skill can keep you engaged and improve your mental wellbeing. There are many applications and online tools to do this – try learning a new language, or take up singing, drawing or painting, or exercising.

4. Give to Others

Acts of kindness create a sense of purpose, self-worth, and help connect us with other people. There may be people in your community that require additional assistance or support during this time.

- Try to help others through peer support and checking in via phone, email, video, or other online applications.
- Remember, your friends, loved ones, and colleagues are likely having similar experiences and concerns to you, so we can all lend a helping hand to support one another.

5. Be Mindful

Being aware of the current world around us and how it affects our own thoughts, feelings and body is known as "mindfulness" and is crucial to keeping good mental health and wellbeing. There are a number of mindfullness online and mobile applications available. To find out about mindlfulness visit the NHS Mindfullness page.

Below are some other practical tips you can use.

Keep a regular routine and try to stick to it.

- A lack of routine can make us feel lost, anxious and isolated. Try to keep a regular structure to your day – if you are working from home take the time to get ready in the morning, get dressed, make a to-do list, or even create a new schedule for yourself.

Plan ahead

Ensure you have essential items and access to the things you need in everyday life can help prevent anxiety and stress.

- Co-ordinate with family and friends or a delivery service to ensure you can receive household supplies.
- If you have medications you regularly use, contact your GP or local pharmacy to see if you can get medication orders on repeat prescription either by phone or online consultation.
- If you see your doctor regularly for a mental or physical health condition, call

them in advance to have a plan to ensure you can continue receiving the care you need.

Children

Recognise that if you have children at home who would normally be in school, the increased demand on parenting may be challenging.

- Try to maintain daily routines as much as possible and schedule learning activities as well as relaxing or fun activities.
- Talk to your children about coronavirus in an honest and age-appropriate way and help them find healthy ways to express their feelings – for example, through play or drawing.
- You can find more helpful resources and ideas on the WHO Healthy Parenting in the Time of COVID-19 page.

Keeping updated

A constant stream of news reports on coronavirus can lead us to feel worried or distressed.

- Limit the how often you seek information updates to a couple of times a day at specified times.
- Seek information from reputable sources. The PHE website is a good place to find the latest information and guidance around coronavirus.
- For updates from the Council on the Coronavirus click here and of course check out emails from the Chief Executive for the latest news.

6. Know When to Get Help!

There are times we can all feel unsure, lonely, or anxious, but if you find yourself struggling with your mental health and wellbeing or it is affecting your daily life then please seek help!

- NHS Every Mind Matters have published pages on stress, anxiety, and low mood, with self-help advice and resources for support.
- If you are finding yourself unable to cope and faced with thoughts of suicide or self-harm, it is important to tell someone and Get Urgent Help or Call 999.