

## Looking After Yourself During the Coronavirus Outbreak

Public discussion of COVID-19 can be distressing, and it's normal to experience symptoms of stress. The information below explains how to manage your emotional wellbeing if you feel affected by the Coronavirus outbreak, are self-isolating or social distancing.



While it's helpful to stay up to date with the latest information about COVID-19 and how to protect our physical health, it is equally important to manage our emotional wellbeing too, as well as supporting others who may also be struggling. The outbreak of infectious diseases such as the Coronavirus (COVID-19) can be an upsetting experience for a lot of people, and the emotional distress this may cause can significantly impact our emotional wellbeing. The anxiety of feeling more at risk or not knowing what the future holds can make existing mental ill-health problems worse.

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Below is some information as well as hints and tips, you can use to ensure you stay on top of your wellbeing during what may feel like a challenging and stressful time for you, particularly if you are susceptible to mental health problems, are self-isolating or social distancing from others.

## 10 ways to manage your wellbeing during self-isolation



If you have taken the decision to self-isolate, it's perfectly normal to feel frustrated and stressed. However, there are steps you can take to manage your wellbeing during what may be a challenging time for you.

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Here are 10 tips you can use to help protect your emotional wellbeing while you self-isolate:

**1 Do keep connected with others using technology**

Plan phone calls or Skype calls with friends and family and utilise social media to stay connected with people whilst you self-isolate.

**2 Keep up with self care**

Include things like long baths, showers or skin treatments within your daily routine.

**3 Keep a schedule**

This should be full of routine, pleasurable and necessary activities that you can do within your home. This may include activities such as cooking, exercise or getting round to doing tasks you may have been putting off previously. If you would like to learn more about keeping a schedule, you may benefit from taking our Managing Depression self-help course.

**4 Add variety to your day**

Try to strike a balance between having a solid routine and a varied day so that every day doesn't feel the same. Adding variety boosts our mood and motivation levels.

**5 If possible get some fresh air**

Fresh air and natural light are both helpful for our wellbeing. Spend some time in your garden every day. Planting vegetables, setting bird feeders and potting plants are just some outdoor activities you can use to improve your wellbeing. If this is something that might be tricky, arrange some flowers/pots on your balcony, window sill or internal window ledge.

**6 Try to remain active**

Remember that exercise is beneficial for your physical and mental health. You may need to think creatively about how you exercise if you are not used to exercising at home, e.g. taking online classes or working out using exercise DVD's.

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## 7 Download a relaxation app and practice relaxation

Think of this as taking your mind to the gym, Just 10 minutes of relaxation per day is proven to reduce stress and improve your wellbeing.

## 8 It's okay to feel some anxiety

Understand that it is perfectly normal to feel some stress and anxiety, and you are not the only one experiencing these emotions whilst self-isolating.

## 9 Set yourself small goals

Think of this as an unusual period of time to do something you wouldn't usually have the time to do. This could be learning a new skill, hobby or getting that job done that you have been putting off for a while.

## 10 Have breaks from things that you are finding triggering

Set limits with how much you engage with anxiety-provoking conspiracy theories, Whatsapp groups and social media channels, if they are causing you distress. Try to stick to reliable sources for your COVID-19 updates such as the ones listed below (bottom of article) within your local area.

## Managing stress and worry whilst self-isolating

If you are experiencing increased amounts of stress and worry while self-isolating, understand that this is perfectly normal, especially if you would class yourself as a worrier. Try to focus on the worries you can deal with now that are within your control, rather than hypothetical situations beyond your control.

If this is something you would like to learn more about, you may benefit from taking our Stress & Worry self-help course.

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## The Apple Technique

If you are finding that your anxiety levels are getting the better of you, using the Apple Technique is a great way to pull yourself back into the present moment and navigate your way out of uncomfortable waves of anxiety.

- ✓ Acknowledge: Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind.
- ✓ Pause: Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Pause and breathe.
- ✓ Pull back: Tell yourself this is just the worry talking, and this apparent need for certainty is not helpful and not necessary. It is only a thought or feeling. Don't believe everything you think. Thoughts are not statements or facts.
- ✓ Let go: Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond to them. You might imagine them floating away in a bubble or cloud.
- ✓ Explore: Explore the present moment, because right now, in this moment, all is well. Notice your breathing and the sensations of your breathing. Notice the ground beneath you. Look around and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch, what you can smell, at this present moment. Then shift your focus of attention to something else - on what you need to do, on what you were doing before you noticed the worry, or do something else - mindfully with your full attention.

Source: AnxietyUK

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## 3 quick Mindfulness meditations

**1 Mindful Breathing**

[https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful\\_breathing](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful_breathing)

**2 Object Meditation**

[https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/raisin\\_meditation](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/raisin_meditation)

**3 Body Scan Meditation**

[https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/body\\_scan\\_meditation](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/body_scan_meditation)



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## Stay up to date with using reliable sources



Currently, you will have heard an overwhelming amount of coverage on the radio, your social media channels and TV, about the COVID-19 virus and the impact this may have on our physical health. With so much conflicting information available, it can sometimes be difficult to know what to believe. Sometimes news outlets purposefully use rumours and speculation to grab your attention, and this can feel overwhelming. If this is something that is causing you distress, try to set a limit on how much TV, radio and social media you engage with. Avoid jumping to conclusions about who is responsible for the spread of the disease. The Coronavirus can affect anyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity or sex.

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Below are some reliable websites that you can use to stay up to date with the latest COVID-19 information in your local area:

England

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Scotland

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/wuhan-novel-coronavirus/>

Wales

<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>

New Zealand

<https://www.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/>

Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>