

Responding To Change

How to Manage Your Wellbeing During Covid-19



You Are Not Alone...

No two people are the same, we all respond to change differently. This pack is designed to help you explore and manage how you are feeling during this unsettling period.

This pack will support you to:

- Plan how you and your family manage social distancing or as it's also called, physical distancing
- Support friends and family who are finding this time difficult
- Help you get through periods when things are feeling more difficult
- Make realistic plans
- Manage your own wellbeing



Distancing

Loss does not always refer to losing a person. Right now, people are facing many different losses, the loss of loved ones, of good health, of jobs and education and of the freedom we normally have. Loss is varied and can feel completely different for one person than it does for someone else. This can be especially difficult to deal with when you are in a confined space with your family.

Lots of people are talking about social distancing. What this really means is trying to keep a couple of metres apart from as many people as possible. It's probably more helpful to think of it as physical distancing. At this time, keeping up our social connections and relationships is more important than ever.

Tips To Deal With Staying At Home

Set some ground rules together. This might seem like a bizarre concept at first as it is usually the parents / guardians who set the rules. However, as we find ourselves spending more time than normal together, things like privacy and personal space might get more important. Try not to argue but rather find a solution everyone is happy with.

Listen. This one goes hand in hand with the last tip. If your parents / guardians are not ready to compromise, ask them why this is the case and listen to the reason they give you. This might help you understand what they are feeling and why they set certain rules/expectations.

Talk. Talking about what is going on can help you make sense of the situation. The easiest way to talk about how you feel is to use "I" statements, for example "I feel very anxious when you watch the news all the time". Open and honest communication about feelings can help to resolve any problems that might arise.

A useful way to talk about how you are feeling is to be able to talk to others about it in a few different stages. Before you do this, it may be helpful to try some of the advice below about recognising your emotions. Try and describe what you are experiencing in these stages:

Feelings

Describe the emotions or sensations that are coming up for you.

- "I'm feeling really frustrated at being stuck in the house".
- "I'm feeling really sad at not seeing my friends".

Needs

Describe what your needs are at this time:

- "I need some time and space on my own".
- "I need to have more contact with my friends" or "I need to be able to talk to someone about how I'm missing my friends".

Distancing

Requests

Clearly make a request that would help to meet your needs (but not a demand, with the listening above, be ready to hear reasons someone may not be able to meet your request).

- “I’d like it if I could have the living room to myself between 5.00 and 6.00”.
- “It would really help if I can speak to two of my friends everyday”.

Stay focused. When we are upset about something we are likely to bring something up that has made us feel upset in the past. It is important to focus on what is happening at the moment in order to find ways to move forward together.

Different opinions are okay. It is not uncommon to have a different opinion than someone else. As mentioned above it is important to find a solution that works for everyone.

Plan some alone time. It can be hard being together all the time but it’s good to mix things up and not just be shut in your room all the time. It might be an idea to make up a rota so you know when you can have the kitchen/living room to yourself or just a parent, without siblings.

Be kinder than you need to be. This time is challenging for everyone and it’s easy to find yourselves arguing...lots! Behaviours may be annoying, they may be wrong, things probably are unfair but sometimes it doesn’t need said and you can just let it go.

- You could try the idea of random acts of kindness. Once a day, (or as often as you like!), do something kind and helpful for someone without expecting anything back. You might be surprised how much this helps everyone feel better.
- You can get ideas for this here: <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-ideas>

If you find it hard to talk about things you may want to write a note to your family.

Handling Emotions

Emotional Rollercoaster

What are you feeling?

Sometimes it can be really hard to know how you are feeling without even beginning to know how to manage that emotion.

Take a moment to stop and think, "how do I really feel?"
push yourself to go beyond OK, bad, fine.

Do any emojis represent how you feel? Do you need to invent a new one?!

Once you recognise what you are feeling you can think about how to manage your emotions in a healthy way. Sometimes this will be easier than others, but the more you practice the easier it will become. Set yourself the challenge of caring for yourself and your emotions the best you can.

Try complete the following sentences:

To feel less worried I can ...

To feel less annoyed I can ...

To get over disappointment I can ...

To get past fear I can ...

To feel less guilty I can ...

To feel happier I can ...

To feel more hopeful I can ...



Handling Emotions

It can also really help to think about what you would prefer to feel like. Our imaginations are really powerful. The more we can focus on how we would prefer to be feeling, the easier it is for our minds to take actions that will help get us there.

I'm feeling quite anxious.

- What would I be feeling if I wasn't anxious?
- If wasn't anxious anymore, how would I know?
- What would I be doing differently?
- What would be the first thing I would notice if I woke up tomorrow and my anxiety was gone? What would tell me it was gone?
- What would other people notice was different about me that would tell them I was feeling less anxious?

It can also be helpful to use scales to think about how you are feeling, or about things you would like to achieve. Eg. If you're feeling anxious on a scale of 1-6, where zero was no anxiety at all and 6 was the worst anxiety you can imagine, where would you put yourself on the scale?

Then ask yourself a couple of questions:

The first question may seem the opposite of what you might expect. It's not how do you move up the scale (we'll come to that).

The first question is "why am I at this number and not lower?". Say you have put yourself at a score of 3 for anxiety:

- Why am I not a 1 or 2?
- What have I been doing that has helped me to be at my number?
- What strengths do I have that help me to cope that has meant I'm above 2?
- Who else helps me to stay above 2, what do they do that helps?

Then think about moving up the scale. Imagine you are already one point up the scale:

- If I was at 4 on the scale, what would I notice that would be different?
- What would I be doing differently that would tell me I was now above 3?
- What would I feel in my body that would tell me I was above 3?
- What would other people notice about me that would tell me I was above 3?

It could be helpful to do this everyday to check in with yourself and think about ways to keep moving towards where you want to be.

What is anxiety?

It is normal to feel anxious at times, especially when things are stressful and there is a lot of change. Anxiety can make us have lots of different feelings, some are listed below.

- **Churning stomach**
- **Fearing the worst**
- **Worrying a lot about things that might happen in the future**
- **Pins and needles**
- **Light-headed or dizzy**
- **Feeling like bad things will happen if you stop worrying**
- **Unable to sit still or relax**
- **Thinking over a situation again and again**
- **Feeling like the world is speeding up or slowing down**
- **Faster breathing**
- **Irregular heartbeat**
- **Feeling paranoid**
- **Sweating**
- **Needing lots of reassurance**
- **Headaches/ aches and pains**
- **Problems sleeping**
- **Feeling like the world isn't real**
- **Feeling disconnected from your mind or body**

If you are struggling with feelings of anxiety you might want to try some of these activities:

Talk To Someone You Trust – This could be a friend, relative or a helpline.

Set Aside Worry Time – Having a set time in the day for worries can help you manage though. Postponing when you worry can even help you forget worries.

Know Your Triggers – Understanding what causes you to be anxious can help prepare for or avoid these things in the future. Keep a diary of how you are feeling and why.

Try Breathing Exercises – You can find a couple of exercises on the next page.

Avoid Avoidance – Putting things off is common with anxiety. Try planning regularly to achieve one goal per day. The next page has some guidance on how to plan and set goals.

Use Worry Strips – write down your worries then scruple or tear them up.

Breathing Exercises

(NHS Recommended)

Try these techniques a few times and see how they feel. If at any time you feel faint or light-headed, stop and return to normal steady breathing.

Abdominal Breathing

Abdominal breathing is the type of breathing you use in yoga. Babies breathe this way, as do you when you're asleep. It involves letting the air you breathe in push out your abdomen.

- Close your eyes and make yourself comfortable.
- Place both hands gently on your tummy so you can feel the rise and fall of your breath and make sure you're doing it correctly.
- If possible, breathe in and out through your nose, or, if you prefer, in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Imagine you have a round balloon in your stomach you want to inflate – as you breathe in, imagine the air going down through your lungs and continuing into the stomach, fully inflating the balloon, as you exhale, the balloon deflates.

Energy Breathing

This exercise brings more oxygen into your body and energises. Do this exercise standing rather than sitting – best done outside or by a window to get some cool fresh air, follow it up with a big glass of water.

- Breathe in for five counts.
- Hold for 20.
- Breathe out for 10.
- Repeat three times.

Square Breathing

This is a yoga-style breathing technique. It focuses your mind on the breathing (and not the issue or problem), calms your body and reduces your heart rate. Do this sitting down.

- breathe in for four counts.
- hold for four counts.
- breathe out for four counts.
- hold for four counts.

Calming Breath

This is especially good to use during arguments before you react or speak.

- Breathe in for seven counts.
- Don't hold.
- Breathe out for nine count.



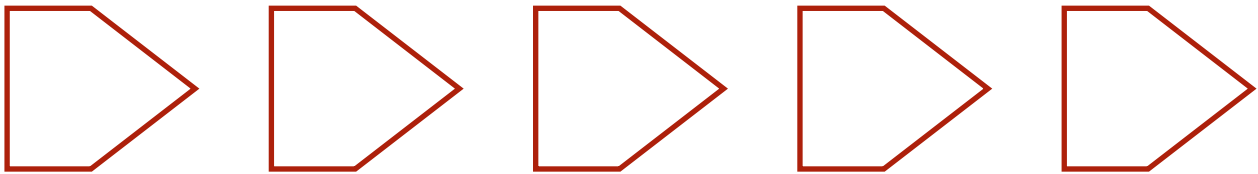
Making Plans

We are living in very strange times and you may have had lots of disappointments as your plans have had to change and things are not how you thought they would be. It is likely they will continue to change over the coming year but that doesn't mean you can't make plans.

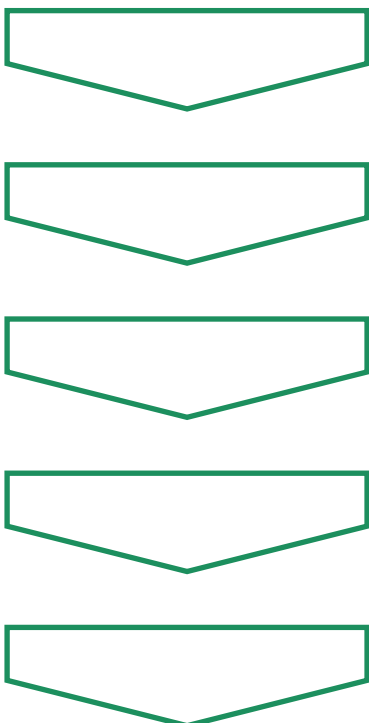
Think about how you want to emerge from this period? What new skills could you have? This period offers the chance to learn things you never had the time to do before. Learning new things gives more structure to your day. It also helps you focus on the future and can help you remain positive. Dust off a football and master keepy-uppies, ask a bilingual friend to help you develop a second language, start daily sit ups and get abs of steel or jump on line and become a master in....almost anything!

In the future you may well be asked when applying for job or course what did you do during this time. Find a goal and work toward it, even if you're not sure when you'll get to use your new skills

Steps I Could Take:



To Reach My Potential I Need:



Thinking Positively

Making plans for the future is a real challenge just now but a positive attitude will help a lot. When you start to doubt your self and fear the worst you can try working with your thoughts.

My negative thought is...

Now challenge your negative thought by working through each of the questions.

- What would suggest this thought is correct?
- Is there anything that would suggest this thought is incorrect?
- What would a friend think about this situation?
- What would I tell a friend if they were thinking this thought?
- If I look at the situation positively, how would this change my thought?
- If I believe this negative thought, what things might I miss out on?

Remember the good stuff. Positive thoughts...

- I like myself because...
- I am good at...
- I feel good about...
- My favourite place is...
- People think I am good at...
- I'm loved by...
- My favourite thing to do is...
- The person I admire the most is...
- Things I admire about this person are...
- People compliment me about...
- It feels good when I...
- I have been successful at...
- I have a natural talent for...
- I laugh when I think about...

Be Part of The Response

It is all too easy to feel helpless when events are happening on a global scale but you can have a part to play in the response.

In your home

What can you do to help your friends and family? Do you have a friend who is really struggling or a relative living alone? Reach out and give them a call. Let them know you are thinking of them. At home things may be very different to normal, what can you do to help?

All over the country, kids are looking for windows with rainbows, jokes or teddys. What can you do to make your house a talking point?! Share what you have done with your friends and encourage them to get involved too.

Loads of charities are stepping up their actions to help people during this challenging time. Could you do a fund-raiser from your home? Marathons etc have been cancelled but you could still set yourself a challenge, if you have a pedometer you could track your distance covered around your house, could you “climb Kilimanjaro” using only your house stairs?! It could be a team effort, how about a 24-hour relay dance-a-thon on line! If a physical challenge isn't for you what about a sponsored silence, a daily drawing challenge or a musical achievement.

Any additional time outside increases your risk to Covid19 and your potential to be contagious to others. If you are going to do anything which involves leaving the house you should discuss it with those that you live with.

In your block/street

Do you have neighbours who are self-isolating and may need supplies? Message or pop a note through local doors offering help if required. It's much easier to ask for help if an offer has been made.

In your community

If you are over 18 you may wish to volunteering. Healthy people are being sought for a wide variety of jobs including delivering food parcels and offering phone support.

Know Yourself

You will have heard all the advice, for the sake of all those around you, stick to social distancing. However, you still need to find ways to feel like yourself. Have something to look forward to, get some dates in the diary how about...

A virtual “house party” with your mates–take it in turns to be the DJ!

Get the giggles with live online comedy

Check out a virtual music festival

Set “Taskmaster” teams and challenges between friends/families

Have “virtual” date with just one friend: Take an opportunity to talk about what is on your mind and reflect on it together with a person you trust.

Plan ahead so when you feel in a slump you know what you can do to pick yourself up.

One way you could do this is to create a wellbeing box to remind yourself of things you enjoy. You could write notes to yourself, a favourite feel-good playlist or include physical things to cheer you up. This might be a emergency ration of chocolate, crazy bright nail polish, a guaranteed laughs DVD or your favourite board game.



And Relax...

- Staying in touch with friends is great but sometimes it can be too much and you need peace. Take some time to switch off the screens: Switch off your phone, tablet, laptop, TV, etc. and try something different.
- Exercise releases endorphins, the body's 'feel good' hormone. Do your own thing or check out the many free exercise workout online. Take time to be mindful of your body. How does each stretch feel? Is your heart rate changing? Can you do more than last time? Yoga and Pilates are based on controlled movements and breathing techniques which can help you relax both your mind and your body. There are plenty of beginner's tutorials on YouTube which can guide you.
- Get some air: Whether you are able to go walking, sit in a garden or by an open window, fresh air is beneficial to our overall wellbeing. It can help us to relax and can improve the quality of our sleep. Natural light is also a great help, open the curtains as wide as possible and sit in a sunbeam when you can!
- Watch a film / read a book: This can help to 'escape' reality and to relax your mind.
- Try a new hobby: Trying something new can help you focus on something different than what is happening in your life at the moment.
- Run a warm bath: Try it with music, candles and a relaxing bubble bath. Be aware of your surrounding; How does the water feel on your skin? How does the temperature feel?



Zzzzzz...

Getting a good nights sleep is really important to your wellbeing, whatever your age.

Less caffeine

Cut down on stimulants such as caffeine in tea, coffee and energy drinks; especially in the evening. They can stop you falling asleep and prevent deep sleep.

Watch What You Eat

Too much food, especially late at night, can interrupt your sleep patterns.

Relax

Try to relax your mind and body before going to bed. Have a warm bath, listen to relaxing music or do some gentle yoga to relax the mind and body. Simple breathing exercises can also help.

Body Clock

Make sure your body knows when it's day and night. Open curtains wide in the day and try and get as much sunlight as possible. As bedtime keep it mellow. Bright room lighting, TVs, games consoles, mobiles, tablets and PCs can all emit enough light to stop our bodies producing melatonin, the chemical our body needs to go to sleep.

Write Away Your Worries

Deal with worries and stress by making lists of things to do the next day. If you tend to lie in bed worrying or thinking about things you need to do, set aside time before bedtime to review the day and make plans for the next.

Don't Worry In Bed

If you cannot sleep, do not lie there worrying about it. Get up and do something you find enjoyable or relaxing until you feel sleepy again, then return to bed. Or try keeping a pad and pen by your bed so you can write down what is on your mind and then get back to sleep.

Social Media

Thank goodness for social media! We may not be able to be with our friends and family in person but social media offers us so many ways to stay in touch. Whilst this is a great time to make use of all the tools and apps on offer remember to also look out for your safety...

Advice for staying safe when using social media:

- **Be aware of the dangers:** Not everyone on social media platforms is friendly and wants to stay connected with their friends and the world. Some people may use social media to gather personal information from others. They pretend to be people they are not to make contact with others and use their personal information to their own advantage.
- **Do not click on links:** If someone sends you a link you do not expect to receive, do not open this. These types of links may be dangerous and aim to access your personal information. Be aware that these links may also be sent through your friends' accounts if someone managed to log on to their account. Make sure to always type in the actual links yourself instead of clicking on the ones that are shown on screen.
- **Do not share photos and other types of media that you are not absolutely comfortable for everyone to see:** Anything you upload to the internet will be difficult to delete completely. Once it is uploaded, people may be able to share or download the media you share. Always keep in mind that nothing on the internet will ever go away. If you are happy for a photo to always stay online, that's fine, post away.
- **Know your privacy settings:** Make sure to familiarise yourself with the privacy settings of the social media platforms you use. Never share any personal information with others (for example your email or home address or phone number). Set your profile so only your friends can see what you post and upload.
- **Be picky about friend you make:** Receiving new friend request can be exciting but always ask yourself whether you know the person and they are who they say they are. This decreases the chances of making friends with people who may want to access your personal information like photos and hobbies, etc.
- **Think before you click:** Always think about what you are agreeing to. Are apps or websites asking to gain access to your personal information or share posts on behalf of you? Are you happy to share the information the app or website is asking for? If not, do not agree and decline the agreement.



Stay Safe

Find what works for you: This pack is full of ideas and not one thing works for everyone. It is important to try different things and find the ones that work for us. Once you have found a few different things that help you de-stress, you can use them whenever you feel a little overwhelmed.