Mental Health and Wellbeing - Factsheet

How to look after you mental health and wellbeing
Following the Government announcement that we must all stay home as much as possible, it's important that we think about how we can best take care of our mind as well as our body. You may feel bored, frustrated or lonely and miss being outside with other people. You may also feel low, worried or anxious, or concerned about your finances, your health or those close to you.

It is OK to feel like this – everyone reacts in their own way to challenging events and uncertainty. It is important to remember that staying at home may be difficult and challenging particularly if you don't have much space or access to a garden.

This guide provides advice on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and prevent you from falling into unhealthy patterns of behaviour and cope with your emotions while staying at home.

For wider guidance on how to protect yourself and others, and actions to take if you think you may have contracted the virus please see the guidance on this page.

This guidance will be updated in line with the changing situation.

Simple things to do at home to keep you mentally and physically active:
- Look after you Physical wellbeing. Check for ideas to exercise at home using the NHS Fitness Studio and if you are able to go outside consider walking or gardening gardening (keeping the recommended 2 metres from others as outlined in the social distancing guidance)
- Spend your time doing things you enjoy, such as reading, cooking, listening to music and watching your favourite television programmes
- Keep your mind active: Read, write, play games, do crossword puzzles, sudokus, jigsaws or drawing and painting. Find something that works for you.
- Stay in touch with family and friends over the phone or on social media
- Maintain a healthy diet, eat well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise regularly, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs
- Keep your windows open to let in fresh air, get some natural sunlight if you can, or go outside into the garden. You can also go outside to exercise once a day – either by yourself or with members of your household. If you do this, you must stay at least 2 metres away from other people.
- Look after your sleep and try to maintain regular sleep patterns– this makes a huge difference to how you feel mentally and physically. Keep good sleep hygiene practices like cutting back on caffeine and avoiding screens before bed. The Every Mind Matters sleep page provides practical advice on how to improve your sleep.
- Try to limit the time you spend watching, reading or listening to COVID-19 media coverage and follow only credible sources such as GOV.UK, or the NHS website, and fact check information that you get from newsfeeds, social media or from other people.

How to stay connected with family and friends during this time at home?

- Make plans to video chat with people or groups you'd normally see in person. There are many applications to do this, such as Whatsapp, Facebook and Skype.
- Arrange phone calls or send instant messages or texts
- Put on the radio, television or listen to a podcast if your home feels too quiet
- Choose positive television programmes and films over those that will cause you to feel negative, hopeless or worried. Limit your media and news consumption to twice a day
- Think about how you could help those around you, this could make a huge difference to them and can make you feel better. Do this in line with the COVID-19 guidance. You can search and download online community apps on the NHS apps library.
- Talk about your worries and share how you are feeling and what you are doing to cope with family and friends. If you do not feel able to do that, there are people you can speak to via NHS recommended helplines or you could find support groups online to connect with.

Remember it is OK to share your concerns with others you trust. They are likely feeling uneasy during this time too. By talking to others, we can help keep each other stay healthy and happy.

There is a lot of information online on mental health and wellbeing and it is important to look at information from trusted resources only. The following platforms provide tips to help you keep on top of your mental health during this time.

Every Mind Matters
Visit the NHS Every Mind Matters website. Having good mental health helps us relax more, achieve more and enjoy our lives more. There are simple things we can all do to look after our mental health and wellbeing – take the NHS Every Mind Matters (one you) quiz to get started today with a free plan, expert advice and practical tips.
Every Mind Matters has now released expert advice and top tips on how to look after your mental wellbeing when staying at home during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. It also includes guidance about what you can do if you are feeling worried or anxious about the outbreak.
Please visit: www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/

If you are feeling anxious and overwhelmed, please visit The Every Mind Matters page on anxiety and NHS mental wellbeing audio guides provide further information on how to manage anxiety.

Five steps to mental wellbeing
Visit the NHS website 5 steps to mental wellbeing. Trying these steps could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.

Managing physical symptoms that are triggered by stress and anxiety

It is quite common to experience short-lived physical symptoms when your mood is low or anxious, for example:

- faster, irregular or more noticeable heartbeat
- feeling lightheaded and dizzy
- headaches
- chest pains or loss of appetite

It can be difficult to know what is causing these symptoms, but often people who experience them due to stress, anxiety or low mood find that they get worse when they focus on them. See advice from the NHS on managing the physical symptoms. If you are concerned about your physical symptoms, then do contact NHS 111 online.

If you are experiencing stress, feelings of anxiety or low mood, you can use the NHS mental health and wellbeing advice website for self-assessment, audio guides and practical tools Every Mind Matters also provides simple tips and advice to start taking better care of your mental health. If you are still struggling after several weeks and it is affecting your daily life, please contact NHS 111 online. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111.

In a medical emergency, call 999. This is when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk. A mental health emergency should be taken as seriously as a physical health emergency.