

Coping with self-isolation

Many of us are feeling anxious as we navigate the uncertainty of corona virus (COVID-19).

The DISCOVER team have outlined some advice during this period, including ideas to keep ourselves occupied and tools to use to take care of our mental well-being and stay grounded. The information has been compiled from: Mind, WHO, Childline, YoungMinds and Calm.

Social Media Advice

- Avoid watching, reading or listening to news that could cause you to feel anxious or distressed. If you want updates, only seek information and updates at specific times.
- Have breaks from social media and mute threads or hide posts which may contribute to you feeling overwhelming. Feel free to mute Group Chats or unfollow accounts that make you feel anxious.
- Seek information instead to take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself and loved ones

Stay Connected

- Agree regular check-in times and feel connected to the people around you.
- Remember you can video chat, watch shows / do activities separately and discuss them, or send emails to a friend.
- Strike a balance between having a routine and making sure each day has some variety
- Ring someone if you are unable to see them.
- Continue to access nature and sunlight wherever possible.
- Think about putting extra pictures up of the people you care about or listen to a chatty radio station or podcast if it feels too quiet.
- Schedule in down time if you are working from home to avoid burnout.
- MIND runs an online peer support community called Elefriends, where you can share your experiences and hear from others.

(<https://www.elefriends.org.uk/>)

Stay Calm

- If you're feeling anxious plan a 'safe space' in your home that you'll go to.
- Try looking at the sky out of the window or from your doorstep – this can help give you a sense of space if you're feeling claustrophobic or trapped. Open any windows and let fresh air in.

- If reading about washing your hands is making you feel stressed or anxious, don't keep re-reading the same advice if it is unhelpful for you; let other people know you're struggling; set limits for washing your hands, (20 seconds); plan something to do after washing your hands.
- Breathing exercises can help you cope and feel more in control.
- Try to keep active and build physical activity into your routine.
- Find ways to relax and be creative (e.g. arts and crafts, DIY, colouring, mindfulness, playing musical instruments, writing, yoga, meditation).
- Call someone, play a game or watch something you enjoy.
- Calm have made a series of resources with meditations, sleep stories, music and talks freely available for anyone who might benefit from them (www.calm.com/take-a-deep-breath)

An example of a helpful exercise to Calm yourself and feel better:
The APPLE technique (from BBC website)

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. 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. Right now. 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.

Stay Organised

- Find the right place to stay and work but remember to regularly change the rooms you spend time in and take breaks.
- Decide on your routine and plan how you'll spend your time – write it down on paper and put it on the wall.
- Try to follow your ordinary routine as much as possible. If you live with other people, it may help to agree on a household routine and try and respect each other's privacy and give each other space.
- Find ways to spend your time, it could be a great chance to have a clear out! Write letters or emails, or make phone calls with people you've been meaning to catch up with.

- Keep your mind simulated- FutureLearn and OpenLearn have free online courses.

Practical Tips

- Look after your immediate environment, keeping things clean and tidy as this will reduce the spread of germs.
- If you share your home with others, you could help to decide together how you'll use different spaces and discuss what each person needs to feel comfortable.
- Eat well with a balanced diet and stay hydrated. Consider getting food delivered or who could help you to get groceries.
- Keep taking your medication and ask your pharmacist if your medication can be delivered or call 111 if you are worried about accessing medication.
- Be careful about buying medication from new places online.
- Continue accessing treatment and support if possible: ask about having appointments by phone, text or online if you cannot see your therapist face-to-face.
- If you have care needs, your Local Authority should have policies for this situation and should tell you how they can meet your needs.

Further resources:

Information about Coronavirus:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Tools to help with anxious feelings:

- www.calm.com/take-a-deep-breath
- <https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/calm-zone/>
- <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/anxiety-stress-panic/worries-about-the-world/>
- www.anxietyuk.org.uk/coronanxiety-support-resources/
- <https://www.elefriends.org.uk/> - Mind's online peer support community

Other useful organisations:



Advice from Childline:

5 things to try if you're worried

1. talk to an adult you trust
2. get support from our counsellors
3. share your thoughts and feelings on our message boards
4. focus on positive things around you
5. use our mood journal to track your feelings.

Advice from Mind:

Checklist: are you ready to stay at home for two weeks?

- Food: do you have a way to get food delivered?
- Cleaning: are your cleaning supplies stocked up?
- Money: can you budget for any higher bills or expenses? Will you save money from lower transport costs that you could spend elsewhere?
- Work: can you work from home or not? If not, what are your rights to payment or benefits?
- Medication: do you have enough medication, or a way to get more?
- Health: can you reorganise any planned therapy or treatments?
- Commitments: can someone else help you care for any dependents, walk your dog, or take care of any other commitments?
- Connectivity: have you checked the contact details of the people you see regularly, like their phone numbers or email addresses?
- Routine: can you create a routine or timetable for yourself? And if you live with other people, should you create a household schedule? Do you need to agree how the household will run with everyone at home all day?
- Exercise: is there any physical activity you can do inside your home, such as going up and down the stairs, using bean tins as weights, or exercises you can do in your chair?
- Nature: have you thought how you could access nature? Can you get some seeds and planting equipment, houseplants or living herbs?
- Entertainment: have you thought about things to do, books to read or TV shows to watch?
- Relax: have you got materials so you can do something creative, such as paper and colouring pencils?

