



# HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING THE COVID- 19 CRISIS

Since the first news of COVID-19 breaking a few weeks ago, it has been difficult to avoid the updates that have been all over TV and social media.

The impact of the rapidly unfolding situation is huge – for individuals, for families and for businesses, so of course we need to keep abreast of what is happening, so we can make informed choices for ourselves; and for those relying on us.

What if you are one of the 1 in 6 living with a mental health condition that could be made worse by the constantly changing situation and barrage of news and information from all directions?

What if you are one of the 1 in 4, who don't have a diagnosed condition, but you live with anxiety, worry or low mood – and your symptoms are getting worse amidst all of this chaos?

While I do believe that it is important to stay informed about COVID-19, so that we are all equipped to take care of ourselves and make good decisions for our families and businesses; I also think that it is really important to be mindful that having a continuous stream of news and speculation is not necessarily good for our collective and individual mental health and wellbeing.

## SUGGESTIONS

Here are a few suggestions to help you to take care of your mental wellbeing during this unfolding situation:

### **Choose when you will consume news and how.**

It can be tempting to keep picking up your phone and checking for the latest update, but is this really helpful, or necessary? If you want to stay informed, set some time aside each morning and/or evening to tune in to your preferred news platform, or log onto the internet.

### **Rely only on trusted sources.**

Make sure that you only rely on trusted sources of information, for the latest updates on COVID-19. The UK Government, The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the NHS have specific pages set up to provide the latest statistics and guidance.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/coronavirus-covid-19-uk-government-response>
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>

### **Mute the miss-informers**

Social media can be a fantastic way of staying in contact – especially when many people are facing the prospect of social isolation. HOWEVER – social media can also be a source of damaging misinformation

Twitter and Facebook each have the facility to mute individuals. If someone you follow is sharing misinformation, or anything that makes you uncomfortable, you can mute them. Muting someone means you won't see their posts for a while – and they won't be aware that you have done this, so it's a great way of managing what does and does not show up in your news feed.



## SUGGESTIONS

### **Talk with someone you trust, about the things that are worrying you**

If you are concerned about your physical health, first speak to the NHS on 111, or look at the guidance that is provided on the NHS website.

If you are worrying or feeling anxious about COVID-19 or the impact it might have on you, your family, your work or your business; then it might be worthwhile getting a perspective from someone – do think about who might be the right person for you to speak to.

If your concerns are about your work or employment, do pay attention to the communications being shared within the business and if you feel you need to talk to someone internally, speak with your line manager or HR contact about what is worrying you.

If your concerns are about how you are feeling, choose someone that you feel able to be open and honest with.

Find a time and space where you can feel comfortable to sit down and chat openly – or if you are working from home, or in self-isolation; arrange a call or video call at a time that you will both be uninterrupted, so you can talk honestly about your feelings and worries. When faced with uncertainty, it is easy to get stuck in a cycle of negative thought patterns- and talking these through can help break those cycles.



## SUPPORT SERVICES

**If you prefer to speak with someone more privately, you can also contact one of the following support services:**

### **Samaritans:**

Samaritans are available 24/7 to listen to you and help you talk through your concerns, worries and troubles.

Telephone: 116 123

Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

### **CALM:**

Anyone can hit crisis point. CALM run a free and confidential helpline and webchat – 7 hours a day, 7 days a week for anyone who needs to talk about life's problems. 5pm-midnight 365 days a year.

Telephone: 0800 585858

Web chat: <https://www.thecalmzone.net/help/webchat/>

### **Talk to your GP or mental health team**

If you have an existing mental health condition and feel that you need additional help or support during this time, contact your GP or mental health support team. This may include a community psychiatric nurse, if you have one; or the urgent care assessment team, if you are already under the care of mental health services.

The NHS may start implementing changes to appointments to help manage the spread of the virus. Many GPs and mental health support teams now offer telephone consultations - check with your GP surgery or support team to see if this is available where you live. If you need to speak to someone outside of normal surgery hours, you can contact the organisations listed above, or:

### **SANEline**

SANEline is a national out-of-hours mental health helpline offering specialist emotional support, guidance and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends and carers, open every day of the year from 4.30pm to 10.30 pm.



## SUGGESTIONS

### **Eat for wellness**

When we are stressed or anxious, it is very easy to forget to have a well-balanced meal - but good nutrition plays a very important role in maintaining good physical and mental wellbeing. Cooking can also be a good way of keeping busy - even better if you batch cook and stock the freezer up!

Here are some good websites that contain simple and inexpensive healthy recipe ideas:

· <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/>

· <https://cookingonabootstrap.com/>

Also - remember to keep well hydrated!

### **Keep busy, doing things you enjoy.**

Even if you are self-isolating or practicing social isolation, it is still possible to do some of the things that you enjoy - and it is a good way to distract yourself from the unfolding events. There are endless numbers of podcast series to watch or listen to and audible books to download. The TED platform is a fantastic source of interesting talks on literally any subject you could think of!

· <https://www.ted.com/>



## SUGGESTIONS

If you are finding yourself with more time on your hands, you could start a new hobby or explore if there are any free courses on the Open University Open Learn website that you could take part in. Learning something new is a great way to stimulate the brain and break negative thought patterns: <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/>

There is no doubt that the coming weeks and months are going to be very difficult for all of us. We will be facing challenges that most of us have never even imagined. There will be practical issues, financial implications, sickness and for some, sadly there will be loss and bereavement.

For most of us, we will survive; we will get through the other side. It is so important that we all do what we can to take care of ourselves physically and mentally so that we are ready to face whatever comes our way - with strength, resilience and hope.

I will be sharing more help and guidance next week, focusing on self-care and resilience.

Stay safe and stay healthy.

With love,

Claire Russell.

***Founder and CEO, Mental Health in Business.***