



## MAINTAINING YOUR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND MENTAL HEALTH WHILST IN SELF- ISOLATION

<b>Stay connected</b>	Human connection and social interactions are important for our well-being. Try making a phone call rather than email, make a Whatsapp group of others working from home, and try to protect time with your family to socialise and relax together.
<b>Routine and structure</b>	Research shows that having a consistent structure to your day can facilitate a sense of control and reduce feelings of uncertainty. Make sure you schedule in regular breaks, spend time outside to get a change of scenery, get dressed each day, and try to work somewhere separate from where you eat, sleep or relax. Also schedule in a variety of activities to avoid feelings of monotony (e.g. reading, listening to music, playing games, exercise, etc.).
<b>Self-care</b>	Exercise to relieve stress, boost mood and counteract feelings of boredom. There are lots of guided exercise classes being live streamed for free during this time to support those in isolation, and they will help you to feel connected to a wider community. Ensure that you get enough sleep and keep to your usual sleep times to maintain a good routine. Spending a lot of time indoors can affect sleep rhythms, so try to get some fresh air and daylight especially during the morning. Being in close proximity with others for an extended period can be difficult, but identifying an area of personal space may help with this.
<b>Focus on positives</b>	Try to reframe your thoughts by focusing on positives of the situation, such as the kindness shown by strangers, the incredible work being done by the emergency services, the resilience shown during times of adversity, and the way that communities pull together.
<b>Challenge negative thoughts</b>	Our emotional response to the situation that we are facing can lead us to catastrophise (e.g. expect the worst-case scenario). Research suggests that distancing yourself emotionally from the situation and trying to be rational and balanced in our thinking, can reduce feelings of anxiety. Focus on what you can control, rather than things that you cannot.
<b>Do something you can control</b>	Write a to-do list each day. To maintain motivation and a sense of control, focus on the now and what can be achieved in the immediate and short-term, rather than looking to an end-point which is currently unclear.
<b>Limit access to the news</b>	Having a constant stream of bad news can increase our anxiety levels. Monitor how the news impacts upon your mood and consider limiting it if needed.
<b>Relaxation strategies</b>	Prayer, progressive muscle relaxation, distraction, and mindfulness are all excellent ways to decrease the activation of our body's stress system. <a href="#">Calm</a> have lots of guided meditations and sleep stories that are freely available during this time.
<b>Be kind</b>	<b>To others-</b> Research shows that acts of kindness (e.g. send someone a letter, a thoughtful gift, make a phone call to someone who may be feeling lonely) can significantly improve our feelings of happiness, whilst making someone else's day. <b>To yourself-</b> Understand that this is a huge adjustment that will take a bit of time to get used to. Take comfort in knowing that it is perfectly normal for mood and motivation to ebb and flow. Many people self-isolating will also have other responsibilities, such as caring for children, relatives, and looking after your own health if you are unwell. <b><u>Accept that doing your best is good enough.</u></b>