

Ideas and Resources for Supporting your Health and Wellbeing During Isolation and Beyond

Produced by Autumndale Therapies

www.autumndaletherapies.co.uk



'We are all in isolation but that doesn't have to mean being isolated'

Welcome!

The world may feel like a rather odd place to be in right now - and as a result, you may not be feeling quite your normal self.

This is an extremely worrying time for everyone because of the illness caused by the corona virus, Covid-19, that is touching all our lives right now.

If you are feeling frightened, sad or anxious, if you are grieving or experiencing a sense of loss or *any* other difficult feelings – all of which are most likely to be completely NORMAL reactions to this situation - here are some simple ideas that may help.

We are all in isolation but that doesn't have to mean being isolated.

Help is available ...

Always phone your GP or call 111, if you are unwell.

If you have a local communication hub or support group, make a note of the contact details here:

Stay at home, save lives, protect the NHS

There is a more comprehensive list of useful resources and help lines, at the end of this booklet – see pages 9-11

Here are some suggestions to support you in managing your general well being in the days ahead:

Set yourself a daily routine, following a similar pattern to normal. Maybe even write out a daily time table and try to follow it.

It is really important to try to keep as fit and well as possible – the NHS will be very busy for at least the next few months. Accessing healthcare will be harder than usual and attending hospital unnecessarily will put you at greater risk of contracting Covid-19.

Add medication to your timetable, if needed

Include some exercise time, outside if possible. Do whatever is within your capability. You can exercise alone or with the family, do chair exercises or go for a walk - just stay 2m – that's about 6ft - from others, except those you live with everyday. You could even take up something new, such as yoga or Pilates – there are lots of videos to help you get started, if you are online.

Exercising first thing in the morning, especially if outside, will help your body to wake up and get its 'feel good' chemicals, called endorphins, to start working. Exposure to daylight in the morning also promotes better sleep at night.

Try making a list of all the things that you would like to do around your home; baking/cooking; gardening/ re-potting houseplants; singing; drawing; films; activities with the children; puzzles; sorting out the shed; reading; creative writing/writing poetry; crosswords; keeping in touch by phoning friends, FaceTiming, WhatApping, etc; painting. You might like to take up an old hobby or try something new, maybe looking online for inspiration.

Keep a gratitude diary – each day note down 3 things that have felt good, for example, feeling the warmth of the sun on your skin, hearing the birds singing, sharing a joke with someone else, a wonderful meal, an act of kindness.

Eat as healthily as possible, with the supplies available

Make mealtimes special and always sit down to eat – they could become little high points in your day and something to look forward to ... Plan what to have for:

- Breakfast
- Morning refreshments
- Lunch
- Afternoon refreshments
- Supper
- Evening drink

*Try to avoid alcohol, smoking
and recreational drugs*

Drink water regularly, throughout the day and not just when you feel thirsty. Sometimes thirst can feel like hunger, so try a drink of water before reaching for the biscuits (if you have been able to buy any)!

Limit social media contact and listening to the news to once daily - incessant incoming information may increase anxiety. Keep informed but make room for the rest of daily life too.

Laugh - the power of laughter is huge – it also releases endorphins (see above, under exercise time). Listen to something funny / watch a comedy show; share something amusing with the family or on the phone with a friend; make funny faces with the children; be playful and silly!

If things feel difficult and you find you are drifting or lacking in motivation, pick one thing that feels really easy to do and start with that – recognise and celebrate each little achievement. This will help motivate you to take on something else.

Try breaking tasks down into 20 minute chunks – they might feel more doable that way, especially if you are feeling de-motivated.

Here is one example of a daily routine:

7.00 - get up/ have a warm drink/meditate

7.30 - shower and dress

8.00 - breakfast

8.30 - exercise

9.30 - connect with friends and family

10.30 - refreshments / down time. Chill out! Maybe listen to music, hear the birds sing or stare into space

11.00 - activity/concentrating time- do something that requires your complete attention - work, write that novel, do some research, crosswords, puzzles

12.30 - lunch prep

1.00 - lunch

2.00 - do something creative or playful

3.00 - concentrating time

4.00 - refreshments

4.30- concentrating time

5.30 - supper prep

6.30 - supper

7.30 - down time/connecting time

9.30 - screens off, dim the lights

10.00 - prepare for bed and sleep – going to bed at the same time and, more importantly, getting up at the same time, with no screens in the bedroom and the room as dark as you can make it, will help enormously with sleep quality

**Remember that any light, caffeine and alcohol are all significant sleep disruptors that we can take steps ourselves to control*

Understanding Anxiety

Anxiety is a *normal* human response when we feel threatened or in danger – and that can include occasions when we feel overwhelmed by difficult events or when our basic needs, e.g. food, water, sleep, warmth, a safe place to be, etc cannot be met.

Therefore, it is not surprising in the current circumstances, with COVID-19, that many of us are feeling anxious.

The experience of anxiety itself can feel terrifying but remember:

ANXIETY IS A NORMAL BODY REACTION

Like all animals, human beings have a 'fight, flight, freeze or flop' response to threat. It has evolved to help protect us from danger.

When we feel under threat our bodies react by releasing stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones generally:

- make us feel more alert, so we can act faster
- make our hearts beat faster, quickly sending blood to where it's needed most

Imagine a caveman coming face to face with a bear. To survive he needs to either fight, run away or play dead so his body automatically and immediately gets ready for action. The thinking brain is off-line – there is no time for thought.

His heart starts pumping harder; he starts breathing more heavily so the blood can carry oxygen to his muscles more efficiently; he starts sweating; he may need to pass more water more to lighten his load; digestion and other non-essential processes shut down and his body is ready to fight, run or freeze.

Occasionally, the opposite happens – bodily functions slow right down, blood pressure falls and he falls to ground, as if dead.

These automatic reactions help to keep the caveman safe.

In fighting, running away, freezing or playing dead, the stress hormones are used up and gradually the body returns to its normal state. Shaking or trembling (neurogenic tremors) after a fright helps to use up the last of the stress hormones – it is to be encouraged rather than suppressed or feared.

Stress and anxiety provoke this same response in our bodies today. But generally we have nothing to actually fight or run away and often, there are constant small stresses – micro-stresses – which accumulate and mean that we may have stress hormones constantly circulating around our systems. This may eventually damage our bodies.

Anxiety not only comes from external sources but may also be experienced through our own thoughts, feelings and physical sensations.

Most people feel anxious at some time in their life. It's particularly common to experience some anxiety while coping with stressful events or changes, especially if they could have a big impact on your life.

Anxiety management, understanding and awareness of your body and your feelings will help you to feel more comfortable. Things like breathing exercises, yoga, physical exercise, cognitive behavioural therapy, meditation/mindfulness techniques, hugs, massage, stroking including pets, journalling, counselling, connecting with others, etc are all good ways to help manage anxiety.



A season of loneliness and isolation is when the caterpillar gets its wings.

Remember that, next time you feel alone

Mandy Hale



Here are some **calming techniques** to try – they are useful for all.

Practice them when you are feeling OK and then, if you feel anxious, it will be easier to use them and they could help you more quickly. Don't expect to do them once and feel better immediately.

Shaking/Moving – swing your arms, crawl on all fours, dance, shake your arms or any part of your body that feels tense; shout or make any sound that feels natural, if you can – the more uninhibited the better!

Belly breathing - sit somewhere comfortable put one hand below your belly button and the other above. Breathe in normally through your nose, hold your breath for a brief moment and then breathe out through your mouth very slowly, all the way, as far as you can go. You should only feel your lower hand moving. Just try this for 3 breaths initially and gradually build up until you can do 5min or even a bit longer.

Cold Water – splash your face with cold water, take a cold shower or swim in cold water.

Grounding

Take your shoes off, perhaps socks too. Maybe stamp or dance around.

Feel the ground under your feet and notice the sensation... is it cold, warm, soft, hard, wet, scratchy? Try doing this on different surfaces - even outside - wet grass feels great!

Brush down your body vigorously, with your hands

Butterfly hugs (see resource section for instructions)

Engaging the senses

Sit or stand comfortably somewhere and ask yourself:

What can I see?

What can I taste?

What can I feel?

What can I hear?

What can I smell?

Really concentrate on every little incoming sensory detail and try to identify as many different EXTERNAL sensations as possible.

This allows you to ground yourself, to stop and concentrate on something other than what may be going on internally, i.e. the anxiety in your mind.

Do something in a different way to usual:

Called habit releasers, these techniques interrupt old and unhelpful thought and behaviour patterns, allowing headspace for different patterns to be developed. Examples might be: brushing your teeth with the opposite hand; sitting in a different place to usual; doing your daily walk in the opposite direction. These are great fun to do with children – you can have some fun and laugh at the same time!

If you feel you need a little more help, try giving our community hub a call.

Always phone your GP or call 111, if you are unwell.

Make use of technology ... stay connected.

And remember to ALWAYS BE KIND TO YOURSELF!

Self care is not selfish.

Stay at home, save lives, protect the NHS

But there is help available if you need support or someone to talk to - don't be afraid to ask. You don't need to deal with things on your own.

Your GP:

Emergency services: 999 or 112 (same function – to connect to emergency services)

NHS: 111 (for any medical advice, not just Covid-19)

NHS: <https://111.nhs.uk/> (online support in relation to Covid-19 only)

Police: 101 (non-emergency number)

Other Useful Resources:

- The Samaritans: 116 123
- UK Government advice re Covid-19: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- NHS advice re Covid-19: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- NHS Every Mind Matters: https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/your-mind-plan-quiz/?WT.tsrc=Search&WT.mc_id=Brand&qclid=EAlaIqobChMI5uuXpJ-96AIVF-DtCh3row2REAAAYASAAEgLs3_D_BwE

- Suzy Carter, BACP accredited, enhanced DBS certificated, psychotherapeutic counsellor, tel: 01730 892774 (9.30am – 8pm). Email: suzy@autumndale.plus.com or visit www.autumndaletherapies.co.uk
- The Help Hub (access booking system for free 20min session with a qualified therapist, during Covid-19 crisis): <https://www.thehelpub.co.uk/>
- Get Self Help (CBT-based information and help sheets for most mental health issues): <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/index.html>
- No More Panic (information for sufferers and carers of people with panic, anxiety, phobias and OCD): <https://www.nomorepanic.co.uk/>
- What's on Stage (songs from the shows for an indoor workout): https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/stagey-songs-musical-indoor-workout_51245.html
- Good News! (news to raise your spirits on Instagram): follow [goodnews_movement](https://www.instagram.com/goodnews_movement/)
- Meditation apps to download from Google Play or the App Store for android or iPhones: Insight Timer (loads of free stuff); Frantic World (free Mindfulness training programme); Headspace; Calm
- Butterfly Hug grounding technique: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOarGok-pK4>
- Book: The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse by Charlie Mackesy

Helplines

The Military Mental Health Helpline: 0800 323 4444

Shout: text to 85258 (24/7 crisis text line)

The Silver Line (free, confidential, 24hr helpline for older people): 0800 470 8090

BEAT (eating disorders): 0808 801 0677

The Princes Royal Trust for Carers (Hampshire): 01264 835246

Winston's Wish (childhood bereavement): 08088 020 021

Cruse (bereavement): 0333 252 9152

National Domestic Violence Helpline: 0808 2000 247

Relate (relationship issues): 0300 100 1234

Alcoholics Anonymous: 0800 9177 650

Gamblers Anonymous: www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk

Narcotics Anonymous: 0300 999 1212

MIND (mental health issues): 0300 123 3393

Switchboard (LGBT+ support): 0300 330 0630

Young Minds (parents' helpline for child and young person mental health and wellbeing issues): 0808 802 5544

Childline (for all young people, no matter the issue): 0800 1111

STOP IT NOW (support for child abusers): 0808 1000 900

Survivors UK (male rape and sexual abuse): 020 3322 1860 (text) or 074 9181 6064 (What's App)

The Survivor's Trust (rape and sexual abuse): 0808 801 0818

Talk to Frank (recreational substance advice for young people): 0300 123 6600

Adoption UK (for any adoption issue, adopter or adoptee): www.adoptionuk.org/resources/article/post-adoption-support

Papyrus HOPELineUK (prevention of young suicide): 0800 068 41 41

CALM (prevention of male suicide): 0800 58 58 58

SOBS UK (survivors of bereavement by suicide): 0300 111 5065