

## Relationships during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Here at Wellbeing we understand that as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic you may experience a change in your relationships for many reasons. It is natural to feel overwhelmed in the current situation however, relationships are important in helping you get through this difficult time.



It is important to remember that every relationship faces challenges now and again. Relationships were never built with the aim of spending every minute of every day with your partner, so give yourself a break if you are finding it challenging. Any issues in your relationships before Covid-19 may now be heightened due to being forced to be in close confines 24/7.

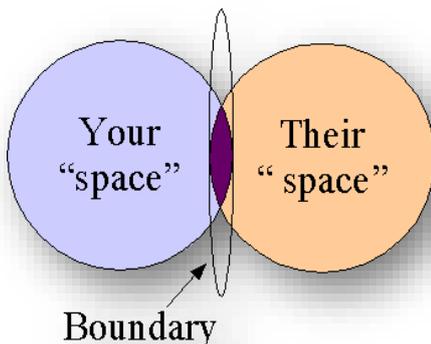
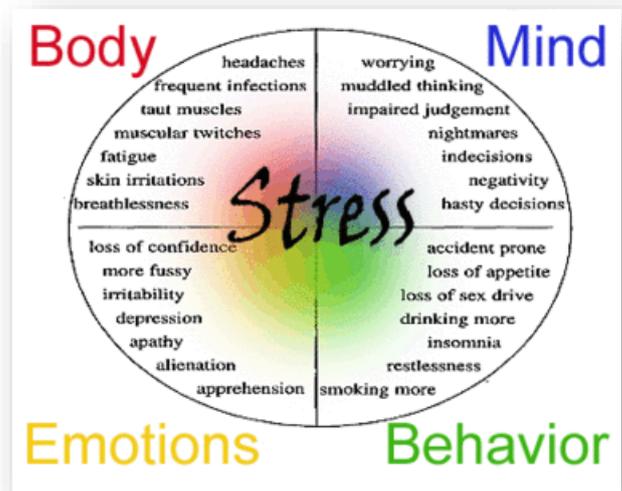
You may be isolating from your loved ones and social distancing from those who would normally provide you with support. You may be experiencing anxiety, panic, fear and uncertainty. You may be worrying about how to pay your mortgage/rent, buy food or may even be facing unemployment. You may also worry about your or your loved ones' health. If you are worrying about these or other issues, you are going to be less emotionally available to your partner and maybe unable to support one another.



It has been reported that lawyers are predicting a very high increase in the divorce rate at the end of this enforced isolation. Indeed, the peak times for divorce petitions generally follow times where couples spend an extended amount of time together, such as Christmas holidays or summer holidays or following retirement.

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If you are under prolonged stress, this will have an impact on your mental health and in turn on your relationship with your partner. Low level stress under the current situation can take its toll. You may be trying to balance work, children and household responsibilities, waiting in long queues for shopping. This may include home schooling children while trying to work from home and still maintain your normal household responsibilities and relationships. You may be struggling to get privacy and little worries/problems can become a big issue. **You can't be a parent, a spouse, an employee and a teacher all at the same level.** These worries/stresses can lead to an increase in tension and conflict.



If you don't take proactive steps to keep your relationships healthy, they could disintegrate. Learning to accept personal boundaries for everyone is crucial in maintaining healthy relationships. Remember we don't all deal with stressful situations in the same way. You may want to know as much as possible about the situation whereas your partner may not want to know anything. Try to accept and respect each other's ways of handling the situation. Difficult conversations about big issues may need to be put on hold while you deal with the Covid-19 situation. If you have been

arguing prior to Covid-19, then try calling a truce if the issue is not resolved, in order to make the lock down situation more bearable. If you were having difficulties in your relationship previously, the lock down situation may bring these to the surface. You can contact some of the organisations listed at the end of this information sheet for details on how to access counselling or support during this time.

Couples thrive when they have a healthy balance of time together and time apart. However, due to the lockdown in place as a result of Covid-19, it may be more difficult to get that time apart. Try to make this a part of your relationship at home by being creative. Go into your children's bedroom, your office or your own bedroom for 1-2 hours per day, if possible. If you don't have spare rooms, try to create space in a room where both you and your partner can go for alone time when you need to. It is important that you communicate with your partner about when you need alone time and vice versa and respect each other's wishes. The time may be the same time each day or it may vary, depending on the demands of that day.



Communication is the key to any relationship; intimate, family, personal, work, friendships. Try to spend time with your partner and devise a routine or plan to manage the tasks that need to be taken care of such as how will you work from home, how will you home school your children, how will you manage any healthcare needs, how will you deal with getting repeat medication from the pharmacy and how will you manage the household shop. It is managing the day to day tasks that can reduce the sense of uncertainty or lack of control and this can strengthen your relationship by working together as a team.

### Relationships and Mental Health

Have you noticed a change in your partner's mood recently? Have they been anxious, low in mood or irritable? Remember in times of prolonged stress these changes are common. Covid-19 makes this more challenging as it is something none of us have ever faced before.



If you have noticed any of these changes in your partner, try not to read too much into it. If you think something you said or have done is what has triggered these changes, ask them when you are both calm and be direct. If they tell you that you haven't done anything to make them feel like that, believe them. Don't dwell on reading more into the situation.

If you find yourself being snappy, critical or judgemental, take a breath and pause. Try to find something kind to say and be patient. Remember, your partner is very likely feeling the same worries and stresses that you are. Try to make a point of saying please and thank you to each other, even for the little things. Be kind to one another and you will get through this challenging time together.

Remember you are not alone. The feelings of anxiety, fear, anger, frustration and uncertainty are all normal in the current situation and are all okay. Don't add to these difficult emotions by blaming or criticising yourself for what you are experiencing. If you find that you are irritated with your partner, remember being over exposed to anyone or anything can cause us to feel irritated. Remember you generally like them and this is a difficult situation and it is hard for any of us to be at our best all the time.



If you find that you are constantly irritated with your partner, think about what the deeper issue may be. Try to talk to your partner about how you are feeling. Remember to own your feelings e.g. I feel angry when you do .... **not** you make me angry when you do.... Using blame will make it difficult for your partner who will very likely become defensive and they have no outlet to manage these feelings. This will very likely just make the situation worse for both of you.

#### **If you are living apart: -**

- Use this time as an opportunity to get to know one another better. Set up dates via online resources such as Whats App, Face Time, Skype or Zoom. Use this quality time to focus on getting to know one another by discussing fears and worries and also plans for the future.
- Some people are better than others at chatting online. If you are feeling pressured or worried – plan a time each day and maybe for how long you will spend chatting. Remember, a conversation is a two way activity, don't feel you have to come up with the topic all the time.

#### **If you are self-isolating together**

- Remember you will both very likely be feeling equally stressed.
- Plan together how you are going to manage your time and space at home. Do you like music in the background, do you prefer to work in silence?
- Plan together time, perhaps a meal together and try to stick to the plan as much as possible; take turns to do the cooking.
- Plan a project you would like to do together or do something you have both been planning to but not had the time before; perhaps take up a new joint hobby.
- Plan alone time to have a bath, 'phone a friend or watch a favourite t.v. show or listen to music. (Try to make this time at least one hour each day to relieve pressure/tension.)

#### **If your partner is experiencing anxiety or low mood**

- Check in each day by asking him/her how s/he is feeling.
- Don't judge him/her for how they are feeling.

- Ask him/her if there is anything that you can do that will help reduce his/her anxiety or improve his/her mood.
- Try not to bring up big issues to be addressed unless absolutely necessary.
- Refer to our website where you will find a range of self-help materials, virtual groups etc. that both you and/or your partner can access.

## Avoiding fall outs

- Be kind to one another.
- If you are self-isolating, think about how you can use the time to strengthen your relationship in the long term.
- If you feel frustrated or upset by something your partner does, try not to react but instead count to 10 or take yourself out of the room until you feel calm.
- Remember with the best will in the world, it is natural to get on one another's nerves in this challenging situation. It is how you act that will make the difference.
- Keep in mind if you have children that they learn from what they observe.
- If you are being abused or think you may be, seek out support to keep safe. (see details at back of this information sheet)

Having suicidal thoughts? Discuss with a loved one, call Samaritans on **116 123** or access your **G.P.** or **Crisis Service** via **NHS** on **111**. **Our other recommended resources are below:**

<p><b>National Domestic Abuse Helpline</b></p>	<p>Offering support to women and children who are victims of domestic abuse.  <b>Open 24 hours, 7 days per week.</b>  <b>Please visit:</b> <a href="http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/">www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/</a>  <b>Telephone:</b> 0808 200 0247.</p>
<p><b>Scottish Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline</b></p>	<p>Offers support to women who are victims of domestic abuse and women who are victims of forced marriage.  <b>Open 24 hours, 7 days per week.</b>  <b>Please visit:</b> <a href="mailto:helpline@sdafmh.org.uk">helpline@sdafmh.org.uk</a>  <b>Telephone:</b> 0800 027 1234.</p>
<p><b>National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline</b></p>	<p>Offers support services to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans+ victims/survivors of hate crime, domestic abuse and sexual violence.  <b>Please visit:</b> <a href="http://www.galop.org.uk">www.galop.org.uk</a>.  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:help@galop.org.uk">help@galop.org.uk</a>.  <b>Telephone:</b> 0800 999 5428.</p>
<p><b>Rape Crisis Scotland</b></p>	<p>Offers support to anyone affected by sexual violence, no matter when or how it happened. <b>Operates 6pm to midnight, 7 days per week.</b>  <b>Please visit:</b> <a href="http://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk">www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk</a>.  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk">support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk</a>.  <b>Telephone:</b> 0808 801 0302.</p>
<p><b>Scottish Women's Aid</b></p>	<p>Offers support to women who are victims of abuse.  <b>Operates 9am-9pm Mon – Fri. Offering support Sat &amp; Sun at present also.</b>  <b>Please visit:</b> <a href="http://www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk">www.scottishwomensaid.org.uk</a>.  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:info@womensaid.scot">info@womensaid.scot</a>.  <b>Telephone:</b> 0131 226 6606.</p>

<p><b>Hemat Gryffe Womens' Aid</b></p>	<p>Our refuge and support to Asian, Black and Minority Ethnic women, children and young people fleeing domestic abuse. <b>Currently only offering telephone support 9am to 5pm - 07792 017442 /07879 898261.</b>  <b>Please visit:</b> <a href="http://www.hemat-gryffe.org.uk">www.hemat-gryffe.org.uk</a>.  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:womensaid@hematgryffe.org.uk">womensaid@hematgryffe.org.uk</a>.  <b>Telephone:</b> 0141 353 0859.</p>
<p><b>The Men's Advice Line</b></p>	<p>Offering support to men who are victims of domestic abuse.  <b>Opening hours Mon &amp; Wed 9am-8pm, Tue, Thu &amp; Fri 9am-5pm.</b>  <b>Please visit:</b> <a href="http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk/">http://www.mensadviceline.org.uk/</a>  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:info@mensadviceline.org.uk">info@mensadviceline.org.uk</a>  <b>Telephone:</b> 0808 801 0327.</p>
<p><b>AMIS – Abused Men in Scotland</b></p>	<p>Offers support to men who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse.  <b>Please visit:</b> <a href="http://www.abusedmeninscotland.org">www.abusedmeninscotland.org</a>.  <b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:support@amis.org.uk">support@amis.org.uk</a>.  <b>Telephone:</b> 0808 800 0024.</p>
<p><b>The Spark</b></p>	<p>Offers support and counselling to anyone experiencing relationship problems.  <b>Opening hours Mon-Wed 9am-9pm, Thur 9am-8pm and Fri 9am – 3pm - Counselling.</b>  <b>Opening hours Mon-Thu 9am-9pm, Fri 9am-4pm, Helpline.</b>  <b>Please visit:</b> <a href="http://www.thespark.org.uk">www.thespark.org.uk</a>.  <b>Telephone:</b> 0808 802 0050 or 0141 222 2166 – Counselling.  <b>Telephone:</b> 0808 802 2088 – Helpline.</p>
<p><b>Relate</b></p>	<p>Offers support and counselling to anyone experiencing relationship problems.  <b>Please visit:</b> <a href="http://www.relatecounsellingglasgow.co.uk">www.relatecounsellingglasgow.co.uk</a>.  <b>Telephone:</b> 0845 367 7200.</p>
<p><b>Relationships Scotland</b></p>	<p>Offers support and counselling to anyone experiencing relationship problems.  <b>Opening hours Mon-Thu 9.30am-9pm and Fri &amp; Sat 9.30am–1pm.</b>  <b>Currently only offering online and telephone support.</b>  <b>Please visit:</b> <a href="http://www.relationshipsscotlandglasgow.org.uk">www.relationshipsscotlandglasgow.org.uk</a>.  <b>Telephone:</b> 0141 248 5249.</p>
<p><b>Wellbeing</b></p>	<p>Our website offers a variety of self-help materials, groups, and courses for varying problems that you may be facing. Anyone can download the self- help materials.  <b>Please visit:</b> <a href="http://www.wellbeing-glasgow.org.uk/">www.wellbeing-glasgow.org.uk/</a></p>