

Coping with Isolation

Here at Wellbeing we understand that the Covid-19 pandemic and the social isolation/social distancing which has been put in place to help keep us safe, may lead to increased feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and low mood. This can begin to take a toll on our mental health. **Firstly**, know that what you are feeling is understandable and is a completely normal reaction to our current situation.

We as humans naturally evolved to become social creatures. The need to be connected to others helped us to survive harsh environments and external threats. In today's world, being around others is important as it can improve both our physical and psychological wellbeing. Not only do relationships offer company and support but can help us overcome distressing situations by offering reassurance at times of uncertainty.



Isolation and Loneliness

It is often the belief that isolation and loneliness go hand in hand, however whilst they are related, they are different concepts. Isolation occurs when an individual has little or no contact with others and can occur over long or short periods. It can be self imposed, where the individual chooses to self-isolate, or imposed onto us, such as the current social isolation we are currently facing because of COVID 19. Loneliness is more of an emotional state and is defined as feeling alone, separated from others, a feeling of emptiness.

 <p>Think of others, consider your actions & be kind</p> <p>People in every community will face the challenges of Covid-19 in some way – from needing basic provisions to help while they are unwell.</p>	 <p>Connect and reach out to your neighbours</p> <p>As self-isolation increases, we need to find new ways to stay connected and check in on one another for our physical and mental wellbeing. Share phone numbers and stay in touch.</p>	 <p>Make the most of local online groups</p> <p>Keep up to date, share information and be a positive part of your local community conversations.</p>	 <p>Support vulnerable or isolated people</p> <p>Different groups in our communities are at increased risk and social isolation and loneliness are key concerns for all ages. There are things you can do like volunteering for local support services or donating to food banks to help.</p>	 <p>Share accurate information and advice</p> <p>Support anyone who may be anxious about Covid-19. Sign post them to the correct advice from Public Health England and encourage people to follow the correct hygiene practices.</p>
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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**.

Not only is it possible to feel lonely when in a room full of people, and for others they may be alone, but never feel lonely. Therefore for some people, they may not find the current isolation too distressing, however if you are somebody that likes to be around others and the current situation is causing you distress, below is a list of things which you can do to help alleviate these feelings:

Allow yourself to feel what you are feeling. It is ok not to feel ok. Be kind to yourself, do not judge how you are coping based on how you see others coping.

Maintain a routine: having a routine can be hugely important, not only does it ensure that tasks get done, but it can provide a sense of safety, structure, control, reduce feelings of uncertainty and help maintain a sense of normality, therefore improving our overall wellbeing.

Exercise: not only is exercise important for our physical health but is also vital for our psychological health. When exercising, our brain releases “feel good” chemicals which can help regulate emotions and reduce anxiety. Physical exercise also helps to improve self esteem, concentration and is known to improve sleep. Try going for a daily walk or download an exercise app. There are also several online exercises classes, which you can join.

Hobbies: doing things that we find enjoyable helps keep boredom at bay, can reduce anxiety and can help us relax. Spend time on the hobbies which you may not have had time for, or alternatively learn something that you have always wanted to do. There are various online courses and resources, which you can access.

Stay connected: keep in touch with family and friends; send them a letter or card to let them know that you are thinking of them. Whilst it could be argued that modern technology has led us to become disconnected from others, take advantage of how this technology can keep you connected in the current climate. Phone or video conferencing are both excellent ways to stay connected. Video conferencing allows you to connect with more than one person and can allow you to do fun group activities. This can lessen the feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Relax: relaxation is important for our overall wellbeing, it helps to reduce stress, ease anxiety, and improve sleep. Try going for a bath, go for a walk, read a book. Yoga and mindfulness are also helpful ways to try and relax.

Journal: keeping a journal is excellent for your mental health. It is an excellent way to help you process your thoughts and feelings and make sense of the events of the day. There are many online resources which help you learn how to keep a journal.

Gratitude: Whilst it may not seem like it currently, there are things to be grateful for. Reminding yourself of what you have to be grateful for can help keep your mind positive.

Remember..... if you are having a day that does not feel particularly productive (especially if working from home), then that's okay, don't beat yourself up about it. It is okay not to be productive at times. Do not try to force productivity, if you find yourself doing this, take a break and do something relaxing.

Isolating with Others

Try to make it quality time together as this can improve mood, relieve boredom, and reduce anxiety. Try baking or cooking together, play games, go for walks together. Try to find something that you would all find enjoyable.

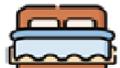
However, spending a lot of time with others in a confined space can easily cause friction and conflict can arise. It is therefore important to respect yourself and other peoples needs. some people may need more space than others, if this is you and you feel you need time alone, take it, don't feel obliged to spend all your time with the people that you live with. Alternatively respect the fact that others may need alone time too. Use assertive communication to negotiate the space that you and others need.



If you are isolating with small children, it is likely that they will be experiencing the exact same feelings as you. There are many online resources, which suggest fun activities you can do with your children at home. Joe Wicks has daily exercise classes that your children may enjoy and many museums have virtual tours, which your children can access.



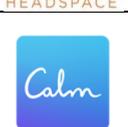
During these difficult times, we are facing globally, it is important to take the correct measures to protect your mental health. We have put together some helpful resources and apps that you can utilise to limit the effects of Covid-19 on your mental health and we hope you find these beneficial.

<p>Walk a different route. You can go out for exercise once daily. Follow social distancing.</p> 	<p>Make something different. A nice meal? Try some online recipes.</p> 	<p>Try a new class. (Online) Many online free fitness classes are available.</p> 	<p>Search online positive world news.</p> 
<p>Watch a film on TV, youtube or netflix.</p> 	<p>Have a different lunch every day.</p> 	<p>Read a different newspaper, or something by a new author.</p> 	<p>Talk online or to a neighbour from a safe distance... (ask a question, pay them a compliment).</p> 
<p>Wear something 'new' for you (e.g. style, brand).</p> 	<p>Do an activity that you might enjoy :0) (scrapbooking, gardening, baking, painting).</p> 	<p>Talk to people via skype, or telephone. Chat about future plans and goals!</p> 	<p>Listen to music that you wouldn't normally listen to.</p> 
<p>Sit in a different place than you normally do. (at home or in garden)</p> 	<p>Delegate tasks to others. (within the household)</p> 	<p>Sleep on a different side of the bed.</p> 	<p>Self-care activities such as pampering yourself at home.</p> 

Our recommended resources (click for direct access):

NHS Inform	Offers the most up-to-date information on coronavirus. Please visit: NHS Inform
Wellbeing	Our website offers a variety of self-help materials, groups, and courses for all sorts of problems that you may be facing. Anyone can download the self- help materials. Please visit: Wellbeing Website Glasgow
Mental Health Foundation	A range of content designed to give you more information about mental health and to help you to look after your mental health. Please visit: Mental Health Foundation - Coronavirus
World Health Organization	Trustworthy source for accurate and up-to-date public information regarding current pandemic. Please visit: World Health Organization - Coronavirus
Psych Central	Run by mental health professionals offering reliable, trusted information to individuals struggling with a problem in their lives. Please visit: PsychCentral for Mental Health
MIND	Information hub provides advice on how to support your mental wellbeing during this period. Please visit: MIND for Mental Health
SAMH	Hub of information and guidance about looking after mental health as the coronavirus developments continue. Please visit: SAMH Mental Health During Coronavirus

Useful Apps:

	Mind Shift	Rather than trying to avoid anxious feelings, Mind Shift stresses the importance of changing how you think about anxiety. It can encourage you to take charge of your life, ride out intense emotions, and face challenging situations
	SAM	SAM might be perfect for you if you're interested in self-help, but meditation isn't your thing. Users are prompted to build their own 24-hour anxiety toolkit that allows you to track anxious thoughts and behaviour over time and learn 25 different self-help techniques.
	Happify	Need a happy fix? With its psychologist-approved mood-training program, the Happify app is your fast-track to a good mood. Try various engaging games, activity suggestions, gratitude prompts and more to train your brain as if it were a muscle, to overcome negative thoughts
	Headspace	The Headspace app makes meditation simple. Learn the skills of mindfulness and meditation by using this app for just a few minutes per day. You gain access to hundreds of meditations on everything from stress and anxiety to sleep and focus.
	Calm	Calm provides people experiencing stress and anxiety with guided meditations, sleep stories, breathing programs, and relaxing music.
	Smiling Mind	Smiling mind is a way to practice daily meditation and mindfulness exercises from any device. This is helpful during times of stress and is a fun and unique way to help you put a smile on your mind.
	Moodpath	Do you struggle with some of your thoughts and emotions? Are you looking for ways to improve your emotional well-being? Moodpath is your personalized mental health companion and supports you in phases of stress, depression, and anxiety.