

Looking after your mental health while self-isolating

17 March 2020

If you are self-isolating or social distancing because of coronavirus (COVID-19), it is important to look after your mental health. Here are some tips that may help.

- [Staying connected](#)
- [Staying calm](#)
- [Dealing with stressful situations at home](#)
- [Helplines and resources](#)

Talking to your child about coronavirus

If you are a parent or carer and want advice on how to talk to your child about coronavirus (COVID-19), here are some tips from our Parents Helpline team.

[Talking to your child about coronavirus](#)

Social distancing and self-isolation can be really hard to deal with. It's normal to feel anxious, frustrated or bored, and if you're worried about the effect it will have on your mental health, you are not alone. Here are our tips for looking after your wellbeing during quarantine.

Staying connected

Video calls

Phone calls are amazing, and are a great way to stay connected. But seeing someone's face really can make a huge difference on a phone call. It can lift your mood and make you feel less lonely. There are lots of free video calling services you can use, and if you can connect to wifi this will help if you're worried about your data allowance. Don't be shy about going on camera – your loved ones will really appreciate seeing you, even if you're in your pyjamas! You could really brighten someone's day.

Say: "Can we talk about something different?" This can help stop every aspect of your life being taken over by talk of coronavirus.

Eleanor, Activist

Find a positive online community

There are lots of positive online communities, where you can make new friends, get inspired and chat about things you care about. You could try searching for groups involved in causes, music or TV shows you are passionate about.

But remember to avoid anything that encourages you to do things which are harmful for your physical or mental health. If you're worried by things you're experiencing online, talk to someone you trust.

Take a look at our page on [social media and mental health](#) for more tips on how to have a positive time online.

Gaming is a great way to have fun and connect with others from your own home. Our Activist, Wes, talks about how gaming helped his mental health because of the supportive friends he made online.

Read Wes' blog:

[How gaming helped my mental health](#)

Reach out

You're probably not the only person feeling worried, bored or frustrated. It's a good time for a catch up, so don't be afraid to make the first move and reach out to someone you haven't heard from in a while. They'll probably be very grateful to hear from you. Send them a message and let them know you care.

Staying calm

Mindfulness

There are lots of great free apps you can use to guide you through breathing techniques and meditation that can help ease your [anxiety](#) and clear your mind of anxious thoughts. We like to use [Headspace](#).

Why not also try some yoga as a way to relax and also get some gentle exercise which can boost your mood? There are lots of YouTube videos you can use to suit your ability and level of mobility.

I am managing my anxiety using creativity. I've got back into painting and drawing. I am also continuing meditation.

Jacob, Activist

Clean up your social media

You might be spending more time than usual scrolling on social media. But have you ever thought about how this could be affecting your mental health? Try unfollowing or muting accounts that make you feel anxious, upset or angry. Find positive accounts like [@youngmindsuk](#) that boost your mood and share your interests. For more tips on having a positive time online, visit our page on [social media and mental health](#).

What type of social media feed do you have? Take our [quiz](#) to find out.

With all that free time, why not try learning a new language? Our blogger Wil, 15, explains how learning a language helped her mental health.

Read Wil's blog:

[How learning languages helped my mental health](#)

Take a break from the news

It can be tempting to constantly check the news during times like this, but if you notice this is having a negative impact on your mental health. Try limiting how often you check the news.

Limit the amount of time spent checking the news by allowing a set time of day to do this. For example, saying "I will allow 30 minutes from 6pm," stops you constantly checking for updates which increases worrying.

Eleanor, Activist

Read a book

Getting away from screens and reading a book can help you escape for a bit. Why not re-read one of your favourites, or get your friend to recommend one? It might be difficult to get a new book, but [you can access lots of books online](#).

Plan your days

Your normal routine might be disrupted and that can be stressful. Take some time to write down how you want to spend your day. Creating and sticking to a new routine will give you a sense of order and normality. Decide on your new routine and make sure you build in time to do things you enjoy. If you live with other people, you could ask them to help you.

If school gets closed I'm planning on making food plans/a daily timetable and continuing to work under structure as I know I don't cope well with no firm plans of what I'm doing in the day.

Tara, Activist

Feel productive

Make a list of all those things you said you would do but never get round to. It could be sorting out your wardrobe, doing some gardening, fixing things around your living space etc. These tasks can make you feel productive and give you a sense of accomplishment. Tidying your living space can also make you feel calmer and more positive.

If you want to take the time off to rest and not be productive, that's also fine too. Listen to your body.

Online games you can play with friends

Board games can be a great to spend time with friends or family while giving you something to focus on. You can play a lot of these games online, like [Monopoly](#) or [Chess](#), or via apps like [Words With Friends 2](#).

Sing in the shower even if you're not a singer- it's super therapeutic!

Martina, Activist

Dealing with stressful situations at home

Walk away from tense situations if you can

Being cooped up with other people will naturally be frustrating and might create tension

between you and those you live with. You can defuse difficult situations by walking away from arguments until everyone starts to feel calmer. If you and those you live with do not have any coronavirus symptoms, you could go outside for a walk.

Create a rota

If you're in a situation where lots of people are fighting over who gets to decide what you watch on TV, who cooks and cleans, or anything else, you might find it helpful to create a rota. This can help you agree a fair system and help avoid arguments.

Get changed in the morning from what you've slept in, even if you change into different pyjamas. Try and get some movement in even if that is through a ten-minute yoga video.

Maddie, Activist

Reach out for help

If your living situation is difficult, please don't struggle in silence. Speak to someone you trust. Call a friend or a helpline. If you're worried about being overheard, you could try texting or emailing instead. There are lots of helplines which also offer text and online messenger support.

See below for a list of helplines and other resources.

Helplines and resources

Get urgent help

YoungMinds Crisis Messenger service

Save our Crisis Messenger number on your phone. Text YM to 85258 for free 24/7 mental health support if you are having a mental health crisis.

Emergency services (999)

If you or someone you live with is seriously injured, call 999.

More information and support

Have a look on the following pages if you need more information or support:

- [Anxiety](#)
- [OCD](#)
- [Looking after yourself](#)
- [Abuse](#)

Other helplines and services

childline

- www.childline.org.uk
- if you're under 19 you can confidentially call, email or chat online about any problem big or small

- freephone 24/7 helpline: 0800 1111
- [sign up for a childline account](#) on the website to be able to message a counsellor anytime without using your email address
- chat 1:1 with an [online advisor](#)

Samaritans

- www.samaritans.org
- if you're in distress and need support, you can ring Samaritans for free at any time of the day or night.
- freephone (UK and Republic of Ireland): 116 123 (24 hours)
- email: jo@samaritans.org

The Mix

- www.themix.org.uk
- if you're under 25 you can talk to The Mix for free on the phone, by email or on their webchat. You can also use their phone counselling service, or get more information on support services you might need.
- freephone: 0808 808 4994 (1pm - 11pm daily)

Women's Aid

- www.womensaid.org.uk
- if you think you may be experiencing domestic abuse and you identify as a woman, you can talk to Women's Aid for free and confidential support
- email: helpline@womensaid.org.uk
- you can also chat to a support worker using their free [instant messenger service](#), Mon-Fri (10am-12pm)

Citizen's Advice

- www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- if you have money or work worries, Citizen's Advice can help
- freephone: 03444 111 444 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)
- text service: 03444 111 445
- you can [talk to a debt adviser](#) online for free Mon-Fri, 8am-7pm
- for advice on anything else, you can [chat to](#)