

TIPS ON HOW TO COPE IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT CORONAVIRUS AND IN ISOLATION

This advice is for anyone who is self-isolating and has much higher levels of distress than is normal for you and you are struggling to cope with every day-to-day things.

If you are having trouble dealing with worries about the coronavirus you are not alone. Lots of people will have worries about this which is understandable. Being in isolation might cause you to feel worried and more on edge than normal. The majority of people find these feelings pass. The key thing to remember is that these reactions are normal in times of difficulty. It is helpful to remember that these are ordinary feelings and normal reactions to anyone who is in this abnormal situation.

Self-isolation can still be anxiety provoking for some. It is unusual. Like all unusual events, stress, boredom and worries about health, family or work can feel worse. If you have had previous mental health or psychological difficulties then it is important to know that your normal worries may return or feel worse for a period of time. Isolation can also cause practical day to day difficulties which can cause feelings of frustration or lead you to feel lower in mood. For most people symptoms are minimal and will likely pass in the weeks following a return to normal activities. It is important to remember these feelings will pass. There is also lots you can do to help yourself feel better and use the time in positive ways as health allows.

This handout is designed to help you manage those feelings and learn some tips, tools and techniques.

If you feel overwhelmed when in isolation the following can be helpful:

- Spending time at home with family or friends is often something we want to do but rarely get the chance to do. Use the time to be with those you love and focus on how you can make the time feel positive together.
- The time can be used to strengthen existing family bonds and relationships that can be taken for granted when we are busy. Take the time to reflect on what you value most and help each other through difficult days.
- Instead of dwelling on that might happen, focus on the here and now. Think about ways you can improve what is important in your life and make positive plans and goals about what you want to do when you feel better.
- Be imaginative about how you use your time. If you can maintain a routine and keep busy where possible this is likely to be really helpful.
- Use the time productively (as your health allows) and try new things or things. Think of all the projects you have put off and things like all the books you have not had time to read. This is a great time to do all the things you have not had time to do for yourself before.
- If you take positive steps to improving your skills and getting things done as you can you it will help. Use the time to develop your skills and knowledge about new things and you may come out of self-isolation having a sense of achievement.
- You can try using technology to increase social connection such as making a call or using face time. Set up a local group on social media to support each other. Keep messages positive and help each other develop a strong sense of community.

Coronavirus Isolation Psychological Advice (March 2020)

Produced by Dr Lynne Taylor, Director of Psychology NHS Grampian &
Mr James Anderson Consultant Clinical Psychologist Clinical Lead North of Scotland Trauma Network

- Think about ways you can help someone else as health allows. This can be an encouraging message or a call to someone else in isolation or doing something practical at home for someone you love.
- Limit the time you watch the news, look on social media or look online for information about the virus. Instead look for positive messages and ways communities are supporting each other.
- If you need to, make contact with local services and use professional supports you already have. Isolation does not mean you cannot be in contact with your health or support network.
- Family, friends, faith organisations and community groups can all be a source of support both during, and after, a period of isolation. Contact them for support as needed.
- Be kind to yourself and understand that things might feel difficult for a few weeks. Use the time to look after yourself in ways you cannot normally do due to the busy lives we normally lead.
- Take time out to get sufficient sleep, exercise, and rest, relax. Eat regularly and healthily. This will help your body recover more quickly.
- Talk to others about your experience and how you are feeling. Be open and honest. Others are probably feeling the way you are too.
- Try to reduce demands on you and don't take on extra responsibilities for the time being. Don't be critical of yourself and if you feel you can't do much that's okay too.
- Expect that difficult feelings and thoughts may last for a time and these are normal reactions to this stressful event and will get better for most people.
- If you do want to find out some information get accurate information from a reliable source such as NHS 24 or the online 111 service at www.111.nhs.uk. If you have general worries about coronavirus but are not unwell you can also call 0800 0282816 for support.

Here are some free websites, on line therapies and Apps you can also use to help you manage your feelings:

When in Self Isolation Affected By Coronavirus

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2

<https://psychcentral.com/blog/coronavirus-anxiety-4-ways-to-cope-with-fear/>

General Self Help about managing your own mental health and sleep

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/mental-health-problems-introduction/self-care/>

<https://www.samh.org.uk/about-mental-health/self-help-and-wellbeing>

<http://mentalhealthsupport.co.uk/ns/>

On line self-help programs you can access to help support your mental health and sleep

Coronavirus Isolation Psychological Advice (March 2020)

Produced by Dr Lynne Taylor, Director of Psychology NHS Grampian &
Mr James Anderson Consultant Clinical Psychologist Clinical Lead North of Scotland Trauma Network

<https://www.dbi.scot/aberdeen/>

www.beatingtheblues.co.uk

<https://www.sleepio.com/>

Useful Apps

Mind Shift Mind Shift is a mental health app designed specifically for teens and young adults with anxiety. 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.



Self Help for Anxiety Management 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. You can also use SAM's "Social Cloud" feature to confidentially connect with other users in an online community for additional support.



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.



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

Coronavirus Isolation Psychological Advice (March 2020)

Produced by Dr Lynne Taylor, Director of Psychology NHS Grampian &
Mr James Anderson Consultant Clinical Psychologist Clinical Lead North of Scotland Trauma Network

anxiety to sleep and focus. The app also has a handy “get some headspace” reminder to encourage you to keep practicing each day.



Calm provides people experiencing stress and anxiety with guided meditations, sleep stories, breathing programs, and relaxing music. This app is truly universal; whether you’ve never tried meditation before or regularly practice, you’ll find the perfect program for you.



Smiling mind is a way to practice daily meditation and mindfulness exercises from any device. Smiling Mind is a unique tool developed by psychologists and educators to help bring balance to your life. This is really helpful during times of stress and is a fun and unique way to help you put a smile on your mind 😊



There are many other apps you could try which could be helpful but these are some suggestions to try or you may find your own that you like better. There are also many organisations which can provide support which you might find helpful.

If you feel this advice and your social supports are not enough to manage your feelings, you can email us on gram-uhb.psychologicalsupportforcorona@nhs.net and we can see how we can support you. This is for anyone of any age and is for anyone living in Grampian.

In NHS Grampian we have set up a virtual psychological support team for anyone in isolation with the coronavirus. We can provide a telephone or virtual face to face appointment with someone who can talk through your worries with you when you are in isolation. This would be a one off appointment initially to see how you are and how we can help you. You would be asked to fill in some confidential questionnaires prior to the appointment so we can see what your needs and worries are.

Coronavirus Isolation Psychological Advice (March 2020)

Produced by Dr Lynne Taylor, Director of Psychology NHS Grampian &
Mr James Anderson Consultant Clinical Psychologist Clinical Lead North of Scotland Trauma Network



This new service is for people who have no professionals involved in the psychological or mental health care already. If you already have a professional helping you with your mental health or psychological wellbeing then please contact them as they know you best and can support you through normal pathways of care.

Coronavirus Isolation Psychological Advice (March 2020)

Produced by Dr Lynne Taylor, Director of Psychology NHS Grampian &
Mr James Anderson Consultant Clinical Psychologist Clinical Lead North of Scotland Trauma Network