



Coronavirus Isolation Psychological Advice

19th March 2020



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

This advice is for you if you are self-isolating and experiencing much higher levels of distress than is normal for you, and you are struggling to cope with 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 for 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 your 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:

- For some people, this can be an opportunity to strengthen relationships across your life both with those in the household and across your network, using digital ways of connecting.
- Be aware that time together can also highlight tensions and challenges in relationships, so consider how to manage inevitable stresses. If you are not safe at home, please contact support agencies such as Scottish Women's Aid or your Police Scotland.
- Take the time to reflect on what you value most and help each other through difficult days.
- Instead of dwelling on what 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. Think of all the projects you have put off and things such as all the books you have not had time to read. This is an opportunity to do things you have not had time to do for yourself before.
- Taking positive steps to improve your skills and get done what you can will help. Use the time to develop your skills and knowledge about new things and you may come out of self-isolation

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Director of Psychology NHS Grampian & Mr James Anderson Consultant Clinical Psychologist
Clinical Lead North of Scotland Trauma Network**

having a sense of achievement. Shakespeare wrote King Lear while quarantined for the plague!

- 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.
- 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. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel worried. Seek information updates at specific times during the day, once or twice and consider turning off 'notifications' from news apps on your mobile phone outwith these times. Instead look for positive messages and ways communities are supporting each other.
- Get the facts - from trusted websites and local health authorities' platforms, in order to help you distinguish facts from rumours. Facts can help to minimise fears.
- 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 usually lead.
- Take time out to get sufficient sleep, exercise, rest, and relaxation. Eat regularly and healthily. This will help your body recover more quickly.
- If you can, consider how you might make physical activity or exercise a regular part of your day. Perhaps by using online exercise videos or yoga routines which you can find on YouTube.
- 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 placed 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.
- Be aware that difficult feelings and thoughts may last for longer than you might expect. You may notice a disruption to your thoughts and feelings for days or even weeks. Such reactions are within the normal range when faced with stressful events and will get better for most people. Some people may experience persistent problems with difficult thoughts or feelings that interfere severely with your sleep or role functioning. Such persistent problems may be a sign that you could benefit from seeking help for your mental health.

If you do want to find out some information, get accurate information from a reliable source such as [NHS Inform](#), [NHS 24](#) or the [online 111 service](#).

If you have general worries about coronavirus but are not unwell you can call: 0800 0282816.

If you feel low, anxious or depressed you can call [Breathing Space](#), a free and confidential phone service in Scotland: 0800 83 85 87.

Here are some free websites, online 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-coronavirusoutbreak>

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-healthconsiderations.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.samh.org.uk/about-mental-health/self-help-](https://www.samh.org.uk/about-mental-health/self-help-and-wellbeing)

[and-wellbeing http://mentalhealthsupport.co.uk/ns/](http://mentalhealthsupport.co.uk/ns/)

<https://breathingspace.scot/>

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

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

Useful Apps



situations.

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



Self Help for Anxiety Management (SAM) might be perfect for you if you're interested in selfhelp, 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.

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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 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; you may find your own that you like better. You can find a list of mental health apps recommended by the NHS [here](#).

There are also many organisations that can provide support which you might find helpful.