

Wellbeing and mental health during COVID-19:

A guide to looking after yourself and others

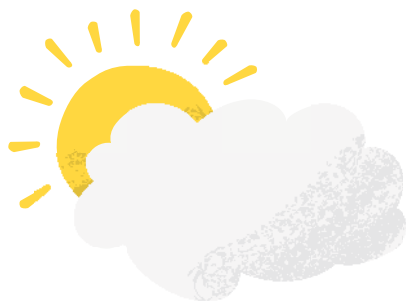


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Looking after yourself

COVID-19 has now had a far reaching impact on people right across the world and it's important during this time to take care of your mind as well as your body.

Everyone will be reacting in their own way. You might be:

- Feeling frustrated or lonely.
- Concerned about your finances, your health, relationships or relatives.
- Feeling down, worried or anxious.

Remember, it is OK to feel like this. These are normal reactions to uncertainty and to challenging events.

COVID-19 may also impact on:

- Many of the normal everyday coping strategies, we use to deal with stress and activity that underpins our emotional wellbeing.
- During this time, we may need to be more creative and thoughtful about how we look after ourselves.

This booklet contains practical information about things you can do now to look after your mental health and wellbeing, and how you can support others.



Beating anxiety during the coronavirus outbreak

It's natural to feel anxious about what's happening right now, but if it begins to feel too much follow our top tips below:

Limit your news coverage

Avoid constantly checking the news – it only makes your anxiety grow stronger. Limit yourself to 30 minutes a day.

Concentrate on the facts

Use credible sources of information you trust such as GOV.UK, or the NHS website, and fact check information that you get from newsfeeds, social media or from other people.

Focus on what you can control

We can't control the COVID-19 crisis, but we can control our own responses and behaviours to it. Think ahead, make plans for what you'll do in the coming days and weeks.

Distract yourself

Our minds struggle to hold two thoughts at one time. Distract yourself with exercise, games, books, movies or other activities.

Connect with others

Reach out and connect with friends and family, in safe ways. Share your fears or talk about nothing in particular.

Be nice to yourself

Add extra time for stress relief in your day. Treat yourself whenever you need and do things you enjoy, within the limits of existing restrictions.

Hold on to hope

Keep the big picture in mind. The crisis will end, and we will get through this.



Manage your Stress Bucket

Stress is a part of everyday life. It can help us take action and work productively. But if our Stress Bucket becomes full it can also overwhelm us and impact negatively on our mental health.

Everyday stressors including work, money and family flow into that Stress Bucket like rain. But we also have ways of coping that allow this stress to flow out, like holes in the bucket. But right now:

- Our Stress Bucket might be getting fuller - it's raining more due to COVID-19.
- Some of our normal ways of coping, the holes in our Stress Bucket, might be unavailable due to the current situation.
- We might need to re-think how we cope with stress. This booklet provides some hints and tips.



Challenge Draw your own stress bucket - what are some of the 'rain clouds' but also what are 'our holes'.



Struggling to cope

It's important to recognise that some people will feel so overwhelmed they need professional support, and some may even think about suicide.

Whether you are struggling to cope with difficult emotions, or are having thoughts of suicide, there is hope and you are not alone.

- Share your feelings with a good friend, a relative or a work mate.
- If it feels hard to find the words, speak to someone who is trained to listen, like the Samaritans on 116 123, or other telephone/text helplines.

Signs to spot, that you or someone else may be struggling

How someone might behave

- Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns.
- Withdrawing from, or avoiding friends and family.
- Stopping telephone or social media contact.
- Losing interest in things, including their appearance.
- Risky behaviour or increased use of alcohol and drugs.
- Carelessness or lack of interest in work.
- Starting or increasing self-harming behaviour.
- Increasing coping behaviour such as hand-washing.
- Struggling to make decisions and concentrate.

How they may be thinking or feeling

- Sadness or anxiety that does not go away.
- Losing enjoyment and interest in people and activities.
- Lack of energy, lethargy and tiredness.
- Extreme mood swings, ongoing irritability or anger.
- Developing unrealistic or excessive fears and worries.
- Increased anxiety about their health.



Thoughts of suicide

Thoughts of suicide are not uncommon - a lot of people will have them - around one in five of us during our lifetime. Having these thoughts doesn't make it inevitable that you are going to take your own life.

If you are having thoughts of suicide focus on what you need to do to keep yourself safe for now. Learn more about what practical steps you can take to keep yourself safe. The questions below can help you do this.

Key questions to help me

What is upsetting me right now and how is this impacting on my mind and mood ?

What can I do to take my mind off my worries & problems?

The positive things in my life are: List them

Who can I ask for help or speak to - this could be friends', work colleagues' family or professional organisations?

If you feel you can't keep yourself safe any longer, or if you have done something to harm yourself - call 999 now. The number is free.

Signs of someone having thoughts of suicide might include:

- Talk, or posting social media messages, about wanting to die, feeling hopeless, trapped or having no reason to live, or that they are a burden to others.
- Show unexpected mood changes such as suddenly being calm after a long period of depression, giving away possessions or making a will, increased risky behaviour or self-harming, or researching suicide online.
- Have had a major loss or change in their life, an accumulation or build-up of problems before COVID-19, or facing financial, relationship or housing hardship.

Talking about suicide with someone can feel nerve-wracking but the best thing to do is ask directly. “Are you thinking about suicide?” This will not put ideas in their head and will show them they don’t have to struggle alone with these overwhelming thoughts.

**For more information on support available please visit:
www.shininglightonsuicide.org.uk**

Bereavement

Being bereaved can be really hard and it affects everyone in different ways but receiving support from family and friends can help.

During these challenging times, being with those who can help you may be difficult but please remember that you are not alone. Keep in touch with people you know even if you can’t meet face to face at this time or contact a Bereavement Service for support. The information in this booklet provides useful tips as well as information on services available which you could access for yourself or others.

For more information on bereavement support available please visit: Greater-Manchester-Bereavement-Service.org.uk

Making plans & having a routine



Be realistic about what you can achieve!

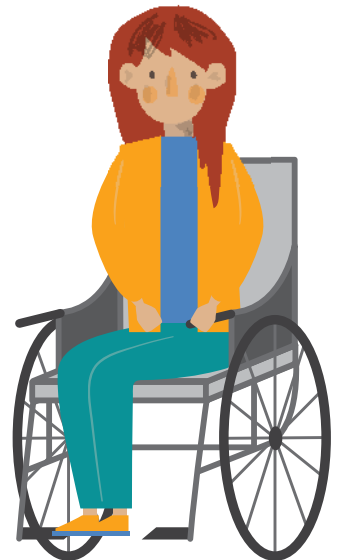
- Get productive! Make a To Do List of jobs around the home.
- Work out what household supplies you need and how you can get them. If you cannot get out yourself ask a friend or try a home delivery service.
- Contact your GP or Pharmacist to discuss how you can get any ongoing medicine or repeat prescriptions delivered or collected.
- For some people having a clean and organised home environment can really help lift their mood.



Routine

Having a routine is particularly effective at warding off anxiety and worry.

- Write a timetable for your week.
- Pick regular times to exercise, eat, watch TV, read, do a crossword etc.
- Maintain normal sleep patterns.
- If you work from home set regular hours.
- Build in regular time to keep in contact with people.
- Set yourself goals and build in new activity to your weekly plan.



Five ways to look after your wellbeing



Stay Connected:

Connections with other people are good for our mental wellbeing. You may not be able to pop round for a cuppa or meet with friends in the same way as you normally do. You can still connect.

- Have a conversation over the garden fence, or even write a letter!
- Arrange a day and time to chat/video call your friends, family or work colleagues.
- Join an online peer support group.
- Where available join in with live community groups to do live telecast, virtual prayers or events.

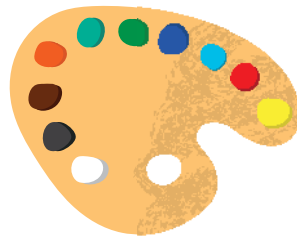


Be Active & Healthy:

Our physical health can affect the way we feel

- Stay active indoor or in your garden. Join an online/TV exercise group, there is wide range for all ages. Set yourself a daily challenge.
- Do some gardening or housework.
- Eat as healthily as you can and drink enough water.
- Green spaces boost our wellbeing. Go out for a walk or run, spend time in your garden.
- Getting enough sleep can really impact how we feel. Be sure to maintain a regular sleeping pattern. Avoid drugs and too much alcohol. It's easy to fall into unhealthy coping patterns that make you feel worse.
- Plan how you will continue accessing treatment and support for any existing physical or mental health problems if possible.

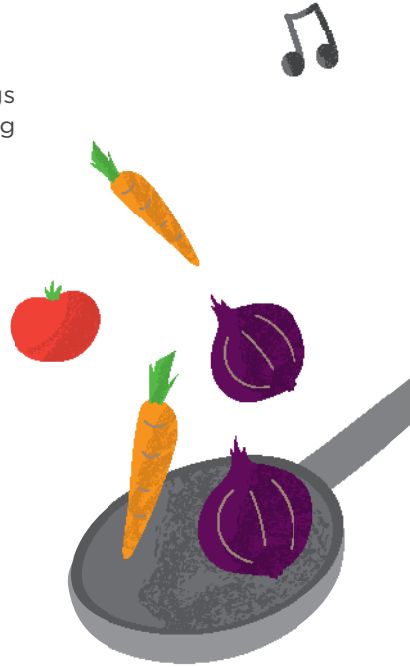




Keep Learning:

Keeping your mind active and learning new things is good for wellbeing. A perfect distraction during these times.

- Download free brain training apps to keep your mind stimulated.
- Sign up for an online course.
- Rediscover old interests and hobbies- sewing, arts, DIY.
- Learn a new language.
- Try a new cooking recipe.
- Make a playlist, learn a song.



Give:

Helping others is a good way of boosting your wellbeing. This can make a huge difference to people.

- Do something nice or help someone, shopping, sharing cooking recipes, or simply checking they are okay.
- Take up volunteering, gain new skills.
- Give something back to the community and make a difference.

Take Notice:

- Take a moment to switch off and focus on the things that give you joy.
- Stay informed with trusted resources.



Wellbeing Plan

During these challenging times, planning a daily schedule and having structure to your day will be crucial to your emotional, mental and physical wellbeing.



Who do I want to keep in contact with?

(Friends, colleagues, family, neighbours)

How will I help others?

(Keeping in contact with people, volunteering, giving practical support)

What will I do to stay healthy?

(Exercise, diet and sleep)

How will I keep my mind active?

(Hobbies, reading, new challenges, online learning etc)

What will I do in my daily routine?

(The time I get up, exercise, contact friends, do a crossword, treat myself, cleaning)

How can I tell when things are getting too much?

(Feeling snappy, sleep issues, feeling low, eating more or less, drinking more)

What will I do to distract myself when I feel stressed, anxious or down?

(Treat myself, phone a friend, go for a walk, mindfulness, watch a movie)

Who can I talk to if things get too much?

(People, helplines or online support)

My Jar of Hope

Things will get better. Use this time to think about all the things you miss and might have taken for granted. Write them down here to look forward to when the crisis is over.

Looking out for others and having positive conversations

In the absence of face to face contact it's more important than ever to find other ways to check-in, to keep contact and to offer support to those around us.

It might feel more difficult than ever for people to look after their mental health. For some the mix of COVID-19 related anxiety, social isolation and/or pre-existing mental health problems could be particularly difficult to cope with.

Five Steps to Helping Others

Be Aware

Watch for the warning signs that someone might be struggling. This is more challenging during the COVID-19 crisis, we may need to be more pro-active about checking in with others by phone and online.

Ask

Trust your instincts and ask the person directly how they are doing. If necessary, ask twice. "Are you really OK?". If you feel they may be struggling let them know that you are worried about them and that you care.

Listen

Give them time and space to talk. Have a look at our listening tips on the following pages. During the COVID-19 crisis you may need to do more of this by telephone and online.

Build Support

Explore what help they might need. Build a circle of support through family and friends. Have a look together at the resources at the end of this booklet, or on our website. Set goals about what they can do next.

Check-in

Keep checking in and letting the person know you are there for them. Knowing someone cares can make all the difference.



Key Tips for Having Positive Conversations



Listening:

Avoid offering solutions

Listening to someone's problems is not always easy and most of us want to make things better, but this not usually helpful. Avoid fixes such as 'Have you thought of doing this?' or 'You should try that'.

Ask open questions

These are questions that invite someone to say more than 'yes' or 'no', such as 'How have you been feeling?' or 'What happened next?'

Offer prompts

Encourage someone to talk more through phrases such as 'Tell me more' or 'Can you say more about that?', or through repeating back important words they say.

Give them time

It helps if you let them take the time they need to describe where they are at. Make sure you have time to listen.

Take their feelings seriously

Take whatever they say seriously and without judgment. Don't offer words that belittle their feelings.

Avoid judgements

You might feel shocked or upset by what someone says, but it's important not to blame the person for how they are feeling. It may have been a big step to talk to you, and to place their trust in you.

You don't have all the answers

It's okay to not know what to say! You're a human being too and what you're hearing might be upsetting or confusing. If you don't know what to say be honest and let the person know.

Give re-assurance

Let the person know there is help available and that you care about them.



Starting the conversation

If you're having a conversation you could say something like:

- You sound like you're having a difficult time etc., *how are you? What has been going on for you?*
- If someone responds with lots of issues and problems that have been happening, try responding with: *That sounds challenging/difficult. How are you managing/ coping/feeling about that? This will bring the focus back to the person's emotional wellbeing and mental health.*

Responding:

You might not be able to fully understand or identify with what the person is saying to you. Useful responses might be:

- Sounds like this is difficult/upsetting/confusing for you.
- I may not be able to understand exactly how it is for you just now, but I am listening.
- Tell me about your circumstances, do you live alone or with others? How do you look after yourself?
- What support do you have in place?
- It might not seem like it just now but the way that you are feeling won't last forever.

Offering support and getting help:

It is important to only offer help and support that you know you will be able to give. Help and support should be offered around what the person says that they need, not what you think that they need. You could also offer to help them to access other help:

- What help or support do you need to get around that? How does that affect your daily routines?
- What would help you right now? How can I support you to get the help that you need? Or what support are you getting? We could talk this through together to see what support is available.

Supporting young people

The sudden change in children's and teenagers' routine, combined with the COVID-19 crisis will be unsettling, and younger ones might find it difficult to understand what's happening and why everyone is so worried. But there are lots of things we can do to look after their mental health and wellbeing during this crisis.

Beat corona anxiety for children and young people

- Create a routine and structure.
- Keep them connected with friends.
- Re-assure them they are safe.
- Let them talk about their worries.
- Teach them coping skills.
- Limit their exposure to news.



Talking to children about COVID-19

- Children may not talk directly about COVID-19 but still check-in with them.
- Explain it's normal to feel scared or unsure.
- Be honest, speak calmly, use age appropriate language.
- Reassure them that elderly family members are being looked after.
- Pay attention to individual worries, these may seem trivial to you, but may feel important to your child.
- You don't need to have all the answers, if you don't know you can find out together.
- Explain how they can help. For instance, good hygiene and social distancing, and how this can keep them and others safe.

Work well from home

For many of us home working is now the standard. Here are a few simple ways that you can focus on improving your wellbeing whilst still remaining productive.



Get work ready

Shift your mindset. Set a designated space in your house to work from. Ditch the hoodie, think about dressing as if you are leaving for work!

Set schedules and goals

Set yourself some simple goals for the day and break your work down into bite-sized portions. Schedule regular breaks and leave your workspace.

Be flexible

It can be hard to focus at home, so be flexible. Adapt your working hours to the way your home runs. Spend time with the kids and work in the evening.

Get fresh air

Make sure you get time to leave the house, even if it's your garden, or leaning out a window. Go for a walk, run or ride if you can.



Connect with colleagues

Workmates are a big part of our life. Connect through virtual meetings, Skype or a phone call. Keep the conversations and banter going.

Circle of support

If you are struggling to cope, reach out to your colleagues, or to any support schemes your workplace or union offers. Check in with your workmates and look out for each other.

Give yourself some slack. Adapting to home based working takes time. Be patient, and be kind to yourself.



Getting help

There may be times when we need some extra support to get through - it's ok to ask for help, and there's lots of support out there.

For more details about wellbeing support available during COVID-19 visit www.togethergm.org. For more specific mental health support and resources visit: hub.gmhsc.org.uk/mental-health/

COVID-19 community response line

Community Hubs have been established in each local authority area to provide support for the most vulnerable. If you require help accessing food or medical supplies and have no other means of doing this contact your local hub;

Borough	Phone number	Opening times
Bolton	01204 337 221	Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 5.30pm, Saturday: 9am to 1.30pm
Bury	0161 253 5353	7 days a week, 9am to 5pm
Manchester	0800 234 6123	Monday to Saturday: 8.30am to 5.30pm
Oldham	0161 770 7007	Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm, Saturday and Sunday: 11am to 2pm
Rochdale	01706 923685	Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm
Salford	0800 952 1000	Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 6pm, Saturday: 9am to 1pm
Stockport	0161 217 6046	Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm, Saturday: 10am to 4pm
Tameside	0161 342 8355	Monday to Wednesday: 8.30am to 5.00pm, Thursday: 8.30am to 4.30pm, Friday: 8.30am to 4pm
Trafford	0300 330 9073	Monday to Friday: 8.30am to 5.30pm
Wigan	01942 489018	Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm, Saturday and Sunday: 9am to 12 noon

Money concerns

There is a wide range of support available if you are struggling financially at this time. Please visit www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk for information about employment and benefit support. For free and impartial money advice visit: www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk or call 0800 138 7777 Mon-Fri 8am-6pm.

Coronavirus scammers

The public has been warned to be aware of people offering or selling:

- Virus testing kits. These are only offered by the NHS
- Vaccines or miracle cures. There is currently no cure
- Overpriced or fake goods to protect against coronavirus, such as anti-bacterial products
- Shopping or medication collection services
- Home cleaning services

For advice on scams, call the Citizen's Advice Consumer Helpline on 03454 04 05 06. Report suspected scams to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.

A GOV.UK WhatsApp Coronavirus Information Service

This has been launched to combat the spread of misinformation. The aim is to ensure that people have a trusted source for the right information about coronavirus and are not misled by any of the false information circulating. To use the service, add +44 7860 064422 to your contacts and send a WhatsApp message saying "Hi".

Every Mind Matters

For mental health advice and tips <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/top-tips-to-improve-your-mental-wellbeing/>

Getting help

Greater Manchester Health Hub

Greater Manchester health support, advice and tips around smoking, alcohol, sexual wellbeing, moving, feelings and eating visit: <https://www.gmhealthhub.org>

Find help and support near you

For a list of helplines and local mental health services near you visit: <https://hub.gmhsc.org.uk/mental-health/in-your-area/>

SHOUT crisis text line - text GM to 85258

Free advice for anyone struggling with a host of issues, including anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, abuse or assault, self-harm, bullying or relationship issues. SHOUT can be contacted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Samaritans

Whatever problems you are facing, Samaritans are there to listen in confidence and without judgement 24 hours a day for free. Contact them on 116 123 (Freephone) or email jo@samaritans.org.

National helpline for those shielding

For those who have been advised to shield, you can contact the government helpline for help on 0800 0288327

Greater Manchester Suicide Bereavement Information Service helpline

This is a confidential information service for people bereaved or affected by suicide. You can call them on 0161 983 0700 Monday - Friday between 10am-4pm.

For more information, please visit www.shiningalightonsuicide.org.uk.



Greater Manchester Bereavement Service

The service offers support and information to anyone in Greater Manchester bereaved or affected by a death. Information will be offered for practical or emotional issues that losing a loved one may bring, and details shared about local and national support available in the months ahead.

Call 0161 983 0902. It is available Mon to Fri, 9am -5pm & Wed, 9am-8pm (excluding bank holidays).

Website: Greater-Manchester-Bereavement-Service.org.uk.

NHS Bereavement Service

This helpline offers bereavement support to anyone who may need it. It is available 7 days a week from 8am -8pm.

You can call them on 0800 2600 400.

Domestic Abuse

This a difficult and worrying time for everyone, but we're still here if you need us.

You can contact Greater Manchester Police by phoning 101 or using their live chat facility. If you or someone else is in immediate danger always dial 999.

But you don't have to report anything to the police if you don't want to. Support is available regardless of whether you want to speak to the police or not.

Whether it's yourself or someone you know, if feeling anxious and unsafe at home please contact Greater Manchester Victims' Services by calling call 0161 200 1950 or visiting gmvictims.org.uk, where you can access confidential help and advice, including how to contact local support services. You can also access Victim Support 24 hour livechat facility.

If you're worried about your behaviour towards a loved one, you can contact Respect online or on 0808 802 4040, for confidential advice and support.

Getting help

Victim Support

You can contact the local victim care team on 0300 303 0162 between 9am- 7pm Monday -Friday or Saturday 9am-5pm. Outside of opening hours, call their support line for free on 08 08 16 89 111 or visit their website - www.victimsupport.org.uk

Safeguarding Children - keeping children safe

During COVID-19 children may become more vulnerable to abuse or neglect. For adults worried about a child or needing advice or information about child protection call the NSPCC; 0808 800 5000

Children & Young People support

Kooth

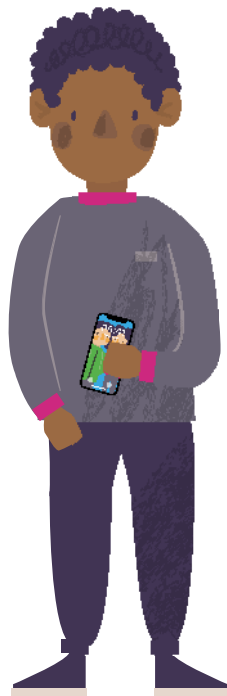
Online counselling for children and young people in Greater Manchester from 11- 25 years old.
www.kooth.com

Childline

ChildLine is a private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of nineteen. You can contact a ChildLine counsellor for free about anything - no problem is too big or too small.
Call: 0800 1111 or visit: www.childline.org.uk

Papyrus Hopeline

Papyrus offers support and advice to young people and is available 9am-10pm from Monday to Friday and at weekends available from 2pm - 10pm. Call: 0808 808 4994



For Adults

Drinkline

Advice to those worried about their own, or a loved one's, alcohol use. Call: 0300 123 1110

Frank

National helpline providing advice and information about drugs. Call: 0300 123 6600

Living Life to the Full

Free online courses covering low mood, stress and resiliency
www.gmhealthhub.org/feeling/living-life-to-the-full

Silver Cloud

SilverCloud offers online programmes for adults (aged 16 years+) to help ease your levels of stress, sleep better or to build resilience. You can choose to use any of the programmes. They are self-help, confidential and secure. <https://hub.gmhsc.org.uk/mental-health/shout-24-7-text-messaging-service-to-support-those-in-crisis/>

Silver Line

Free information, friendship and advice for older people 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Call 0800 470 8090 or visit www.thesilverline.org.uk





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