

# STAYING WELL IN A COVID-19 WORLD

## (Haringey Let's Talk IAPT - Whittington Health NHS Trust)

This information is up-to-date as of the 23rd of March 2020.

Please be aware guidance may have changed given the fast-evolving situation.

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[Stay up to date - Coronavirus Advice in community languages from Doctors of the World](#)

[Dealing with a Mental Health Crisis](#)

[PsychologyTools: "Guide to Living with Worry and Anxiety amidst Global Uncertainty"](#)

[MIND: Coronavirus and your mental wellbeing](#)

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## Helpful Links

Stay up to date - Coronavirus Advice in community languages from Doctors of the World

Doctors of the World are really pleased to be able to share with you the Coronavirus (Covid 19) advice in 21 languages, which is based on the government's updated advice and health information. Languages include English, Albanian, Dari, French, Pashto, Portuguese, Bengali, Vietnamese, Kurdish Sorani, Mandarin, Hindi, Urdu, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, Malayalam, Turkish, Farsi, Amharic, Tigrinya, Somali.

You can find them on this page: <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk/coronavirus-information/>

### Physical symptoms of COVID-19?

NHS guide around what to do if you are exhibiting possible symptoms of COVID-19: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>.

### Dealing with a Mental Health Crisis

What to do if you feel severely mentally unwell, or if you are seriously contemplating suicide or self-harm (a MIND guide):

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/crisis-services/getting-help-in-a-crisis/>

### PsychologyTools: "Guide to Living with Worry and Anxiety amidst Global Uncertainty"

A very useful workbook - highly recommend using this alongside this pack!

<https://www.psychologytools.com/articles/free-guide-to-living-with-worry-and-anxiety-amidst-global-uncertainty/>

### MIND: Coronavirus and your mental wellbeing

MIND UK's summary on how to cope during this difficult time:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

### Managing childrens' coronavirus anxiety

A step-by-step workbook which incorporates some of what we discuss in this pack as well as ideas around how to entertain children during this time:

<https://mummymatters.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Corona-Anxiety-Download.pdf>

UNICEF's guide on speaking to children about COVID-19:

<https://www.unicef.org.au/blog/news-and-insights/march-2020/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-coronavirus>

More tips about managing children's anxiety regarding COVID-19:

<https://childmind.org/article/supporting-kids-during-the-covid-19-crisis/>

A webpage by Young Minds to send to a teenager:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>

Carers' First resources (Haringey)

<https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/haringey>

The Carers Hub remains open Monday-Thursday 9am – 5pm and Fridays 9am – 4:30pm. Carers and professionals can get in contact on 0300 303 1555. The evening virtual drop in will continue to run every Wednesday evening via webchat from 6-8pm.

Carers can access the Carers On-line Forum (<https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/forum>) and they plan to hold regular live wellbeing sessions with a support worker.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy resources by Dr Russ Harris

Workbook accessible via

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/117HY4z4mY5izJpR44ejuZ8rhTyoWEGEG/view?usp=sharing>

Mobile app free via <http://www.actcompanion.com/> (code: TOGETHER)

The Happiness Planner: Free Journals

Gratitude Journal

[https://thehappinessplanner.co.uk/products/gratitude-ejournal?\\_pos=2&\\_sid=3675a7d2b&\\_ss=r](https://thehappinessplanner.co.uk/products/gratitude-ejournal?_pos=2&_sid=3675a7d2b&_ss=r)

Resilience Journal

[https://thehappinessplanner.co.uk/products/resilience-ejournal?\\_pos=1&\\_sid=dfadaf3d3&\\_ss=r](https://thehappinessplanner.co.uk/products/resilience-ejournal?_pos=1&_sid=dfadaf3d3&_ss=r)

Self-Help workbooks

Extensive workbooks for all mental health difficulties, by CCI (not COVID-19 or UK specific):

<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself>

NHS self-help leaflets for all mental health difficulties (not COVID-19 specific):

<https://web.nrw.nhs.uk/selfhelp/>

A workbook for managing stress during COVID-19 (not free / downloadable, but each page can be visualised via this website):

[https://issuu.com/thebctresource/docs/managing\\_stress\\_during\\_the\\_covid-19\\_outbreak?fbclid=IwAR2jfFA1qbMnbO54V0veJarSU5bn7ZL2DrfTZt0uamHfLb1GpLONW79Tclc](https://issuu.com/thebctresource/docs/managing_stress_during_the_covid-19_outbreak?fbclid=IwAR2jfFA1qbMnbO54V0veJarSU5bn7ZL2DrfTZt0uamHfLb1GpLONW79Tclc)

## Situation-specific advice:

If you're lucky enough to work from home

We all know how easy it is to get wrapped up in work. But now, it's even easier for work to spill past 5 or 6pm - you're already home, so you may as well send that email, ring that client, think about that report - oh no, it's 8pm. If this keeps happening, you'll burn out. How to avoid this?

### 1) Declutter!

Try and keep work to a specific place that ISN'T your bed. Of course, easier said than done when living in a small London flat or having to share the kitchen table with your three also-working-from-home flatmates, but it's pretty important to keep your bed a work-free sanctuary. Your sleep patterns, and your partner if you have one, will thank you for it.

Keep your work-area decluttered. It will help you focus on the task at hand and hopefully will reduce your overall anxiety levels.

Use a different virtual desktop! People are all using various types of computers / laptops / tablets to work from, but some computers give you the option to have a second, virtual "desktop". You can open a second browser, and you can also have Slack open on there. Use your other "desktop" for non-work related things. It might make it easier to focus on work rather than being able to see your other open tabs for Netflix, that outfit you were going to buy from asos, the YouTube tab you're playing music from...

### 2) Morning routine

Sure, you're cutting out the commute so you may be able to sleep in a bit, but make sure you actually get up, have a shower and get dressed before work. You might just be going from pyjamas to leggings and jumper, but that will still help you feel more ready for the day. Have breakfast, make a cup of tea... THEN turn on your laptop / computer.

### 3) Lunch time

Have your lunch at a regular time. Actually eat something substantial, even though your appetite might not be the same as usual.

Try to set up a team Slack workspace or Zoom meeting - Slack could be a way to feel that "camaraderie" you're used to in the office, continue to chit-chat about that Netflix

series everyone is bingeing... Or you could host lunch-time catch-ups over Zoom - it's surprisingly delightful to see everyone's lovely mug.

#### 4) Have regular short breaks

You're not walking around your workplace as usual, or having chats with people in the same way. You might even find yourself being more productive than usual. If you're finding yourself more distracted, then setting that dedicated time aside for those distractions might help you focus the rest of the time.

So, try and break it up by taking 5-10 minutes away from your laptop every hour. Do some jumping jacks, play with a pet, stick your head out of the window: the world is your oyster.

#### 5) End of day

Finally, and very importantly: when it comes to 5pm, close your browser down, shut your laptop and turn your work-mobile off (if you're afforded that luxury). Clear up your kitchen table so it actually looks like a kitchen table again, and go do something else for a while.

Cook a nice meal using all of the ingredients you've managed to salvage from the shops, do a bit of exercise (see tips below), go for a walk in a park (ensuring to maintain social distancing - no less than 6ft apart from each other)... Whatever it is, make sure you've switched off from work. You'll be really glad for it tomorrow, when you've actually had some time away both physically and mentally, and you're feeling semi-refreshed.

If you're still going into work, as a critical worker or someone who simply can't afford to stop going in currently (based on Red Whale guide)

- You are amazing and we are grateful!

Remind yourself that you are doing a really important job. You are either looking after others, be it by treating their symptoms, feeding their families or keeping the country going; or you are ensuring you and your family keep a roof over your heads. That's incredible, selfless and brave. The country respects you for it, and we hope that they will remember you after this passes.

Is this situation ideal? Far from it. But you are doing only as much as you can do right now. Pat yourself on the back, and ensure to look after yourself in these turbulent times.

- Try and minimise contamination
  - When you go out, we would recommend you wear one "travelling" set of clothes to work, then change once you're there, and then change back into your "travelling" clothes on your journey home. Once you get home, chuck both sets of clothes into the wash immediately.
  - After travelling anywhere, wash your hands thoroughly with soap, for at least 20 seconds: <https://www.nhs.uk/video/pages/how-to-wash-hands.aspx>. When you get home, take a shower and wash your hair if possible.
- You're not alone: reach out
  - Don't try to do this all alone, powering out like a lone ranger or single superhero who can cope with everything because they must. That's unrealistic, and it's unhealthy. You're probably coping with a lot of stress and anxiety, and it's absolutely fine (and recommended) to reach out to others and let them know how you are feeling.
  - Speak to your line manager, speak to your therapist, speak to a friend or family members, call a helpline... There are many ways to reach out. If you are feeling overwhelmed, it will be that much harder for you to do a new job.
  - No one will look down on you for speaking up - and if they do, then they're not worth worrying about. No one should begrudge you for having normal, human feelings about the current situations. If you are putting yourself at risk to do your job, then that's something we should all respect and support.
- If you are a first-responder / healthcare worker, this webpage by the American CDC outlines some guidance and information to bear in mind:  
<https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/responders.asp>

If your company has closed down, or you are newly out of work and panicking

This is a really scary time, scarier still if you're finding yourself without financial security. We have to hope that the government's measures will work as they assure us that they will. Your best bet is to reach out to the DWP and your local JobCentre to find out more about the next steps.

Information from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

You can get up-to-date information about the government's plan to pay 80% of employees' salaries, learn more about applying for Universal Credit, and figure out how Statutory Sick Pay works via

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19/support-for-those-affected-by-covid-19>.

New jobs?

If you are able and willing to continue working, most supermarkets and delivery services are hiring people to start immediately at competitive hourly rates. Check their websites out to find out more.

Feeling anxious is totally understandable, let alone if you're now out of a job. Use the anxiety / worry management techniques outlined above, and try not to let this affect your self-esteem: this has nothing to do with you and your ability to work hard and well. It has everything to do with COVID-19, and we can only hope that this situation resolves itself soon and that you will return to work when that happens.

## Practical techniques to manage your mental health

On going outdoors (based on official guidance, as of 23/03/2020)

Don't go out more than you need to: try to limit yourself to one grocery shop a week. You can go outside, but ensure you aren't going to a busy park, or down a crowded street. Don't go into shops to browse, don't get your hair cut or your nails done (non-essential even though nice), just... don't.

That being said, you can and should still see friends! When it comes to socialising, don't meet anyone you don't already live with in person. Plan some meet-ups into your diary, just like you would if you were meeting face-to-face, and then call, Skype, Zoom, House Party app, Google Hangouts... instead.

You could meet for virtual coffee with a friend, watch a family film and chat about it by WhatsApp or Netflix Party (<https://www.netflixparty.com/>), have a dinner date with a far away loved one... You might even end up "meeting up" with friends who previously were too busy or far away to catch up properly! Use your imagination - this is a challenging time but you needn't feel alone in it.

Control what you can (your behaviour)

Try to keep your usual routine:

Participate in usual activities (more on this below), even if you have to be a bit creative, e.g. doing a HIIT workout in the garden or indoors rather than going for a run; watching a live concert online rather than in person

(<https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/list-of-online-resources-for-anyone-who-is-isolated-at-home>);

wandering around a museum's virtual tour rather than visiting

(<https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>).

Social media:

Reduce the amount you consume overall. Notice how it makes you feel and find your own balance. There is good and bad – it can be helpful to reach out, connect and find support, but it can also escalate how anxious you feel. You could use an app like Screen Time, to monitor and restrict your daily usage of certain apps

([https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=master.app.screentime&hl=en\\_GB](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=master.app.screentime&hl=en_GB)).

News updates:

Set specific and time-framed periods to look at the news, e.g. 10 minutes twice daily. Consider using the press conferences as a reference point.

Look after yourself.

Life feels thankless and you feel exhausted, but it's important to ensure you keep doing some things that make you feel good. Otherwise, well... You won't feel good. Makes sense.

If you are looking after others, be that at work or at home, you might feel like you simply DO NOT HAVE TIME to do these things. When you feel that way, remember the air-mask analogy: when the air-masks drop in the airplane, we are instructed to put ours on before helping others. This is because the lack of oxygen would make us incapable of fitting someone else's air-mask or subsequently putting our own air-mask on. Similarly, you need to help yourself before you help others. If not for you, do it for them.

These self-care activities might also be good options to do when you notice you're starting to worry or feel low, as a short-term distraction technique. The PsychologyTools guide includes quite a few ideas too.

- Exercise - Go for a bike ride somewhere quiet; put on the radio and dance; walk briskly up the stairs; stretch or do yoga; go for a jog; do some vigorous cleaning.
- Be creative - Draw, paint or sculpt; write in a diary; sing; play a musical instrument; knit; sew; carry out a DIY project.
- Connect with others - Phone / video call a friend; help an elderly or vulnerable neighbour; have a hug from someone special; talk about your problems with someone you trust; call a helpline.
- Soothing and calming - Take a bath or shower; stroke a pet; have a warm drink; have a massage; listen to soothing music; practice meditation, mindfulness or relaxation activities.
- Constructive activities - Work through all those emails just sitting in your inbox; mow the lawn; deep-clean the kitchen cupboards or your car or your bookshelves; meal-prepare your week's meals (especially helpful if you're cooking for a family!); wash and store your winter clothes.
- Activities requiring concentration - Do a puzzle, crossword or sudoku; play solitaire, computer games or apps; watch a movie or a funny video clip.
- Self-care - Paint your nails; put on a face mask; get really dressed up; watch your favourite trash TV show; decorate the living room and have a little party with those you live with; make a pillow fort with your children.
- Release - Clench an ice-cube; bite a piece of chilli or ginger; sprint for 30 seconds on the spot; snap a band on your wrist; punch a pillow or a punch-bag; listen to loud music, sing really loudly and jump up and down.

If you are freaking out and your worries are spiralling...

Think of life one day at a time

What can you do to stay in the moment? You could use mindfulness techniques (<https://www.headspace.com> has a new free module about managing COVID-19 anxiety).

Worry management

Try **Worry Time** (see PsychologyTools guide). Refocus your thoughts away from the worries using one of the self-care activities outlined above.

Challenge (re-frame) your thoughts

Look at the balance of evidence for the REAL rather than mind-created risk, then reframe it, e.g. "The story I'm telling myself is: I am going to die and my children will be left without a mother", and compare this with the reality: "It is unlikely I will die; I am relatively young and have no other health problems."

Notice your thought patterns

Are you catastrophising, jumping to conclusions, focusing purely on the negatives (more on <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/UnhelpfulThinkingHabitsWithAlternatives.pdf>)?

It's understandable to be doing that, but is it helpful? Is it kind? Is it true? Overarchingly, is it making you feel better? Catch yourself when you start to think that way ("Oh, here I go again with the catastrophising, that's supremely unhelpful!", and try to redirect your thoughts elsewhere.

Try not to focus on your body

If I told you to focus on your right big toe now, for the next five minutes, you would probably start to notice all kinds of sensations. Maybe it feels hot, or you've got pins and needles, or it feels uncomfortable in your shoe, maybe there's an itch you hadn't noticed... The funny thing is, you would never have realised that you could feel so much if you hadn't focused on it.

Similarly, we can sometimes focus "too much" on our body when we are feeling anxious about our health. Try to take a step back and refocus your attention elsewhere, like on what you can hear, smell and see, in order to stop panicking about your totally normal physical sensations.

More information about this on the following worksheet:

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/SuperScanner.pdf>.

Some other ideas via the following article:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/16/coronavirus-health-anxiety>

## Talk to people!

Your friends, your family, your colleagues, your therapist. Sharing could help you feel more “normal”; knowing others are feeling similarly and you are not alone, can sometimes lessen the blow.

## If you're starting to feel low...

Being stuck indoors, feeling isolated, and not doing very much tend to lead us to feel a bit low and depressed. To avoid these feelings setting in, try to follow the guidance below in a very balanced, structured way.

## Make a list

Make a list of the activities you want to ensure you continue doing over the next few weeks. Try to ensure there is a balance: you want activities that make you feel productive, activities that you enjoy and activities that make you feel close to others. Another way to think of it is in terms of routine activities (laundry, showering, groceries), necessary activities (paying bills, calling aunt on her birthday) and pleasurable activities (varies from person to person - exercise, cooking, reading, speaking to friends).

## Break it down

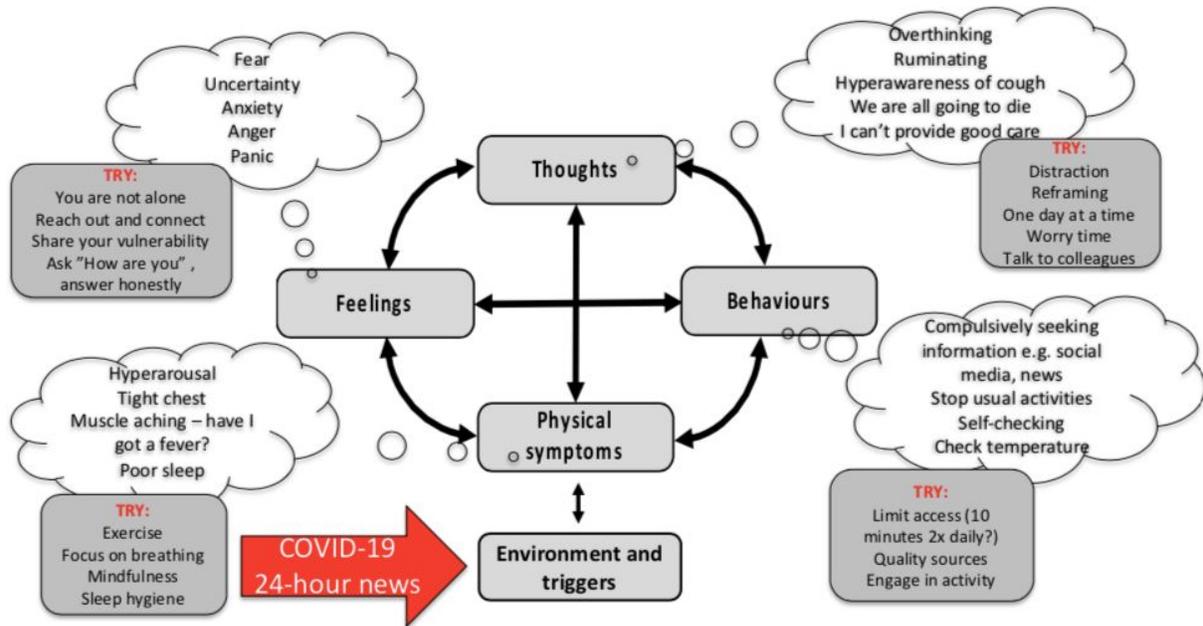
Once you've made your list, break it down. For example, if you wrote “clean the kitchen”, what that really breaks down to is: “wipe the countertops”, “do the dishes”, “put the dishes away”, “declutter the cupboards”, etc. It will feel a bit easier to complete your activities if they are really specific. If you wrote “catch up with friends”, you need to ask yourself “who?”, “what time?”, “how will we speak?”, “will we play a game together?”, “do I need to text them first?”, etc.

## Activity diary

Finally, use an activity diary (such as <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/ActivityDiary.pdf>) to plan your activities. This is the part that might seem a bit obvious, or not so fun, but ensuring you know when exactly you're doing each activity, and how long for, will make it more likely you actually do it. **Try to follow your plan, NOT your mood** (which will likely tell you to just keep watching Netflix).

## Summary of helpful strategies (diagram)

### Summary of helpful strategies



(extracted from Red Whale - COVID-19: An emotional and psychological survival guide)

**Remember, nothing lasts forever. We will get through this, one step at a time.**

**Look after yourself, and remember to ask for help if you want or need it.**

**Always dial 999 in an emergency.**