

Coping with coronavirus

strategies for adults

At this time you may feel a variety of emotions, including but not limited to anxiety and fear about your recovery process and the impact your health issues may have on your loved ones. These emotions and many more are completely normal and understandable in the context of a situation that is very abnormal.

Adapting to a new normal

We have all had to make significant behaviour changes in a very short period of time. Anytime a person goes through major life changes there will be a period of transition in which they feel very unsettled. This is to be expected and as time progresses this will lessen and people will start to experience a “new normal”. We may all wish for life to go back to how it was before coronavirus began but unfortunately that is not possible. Even when it resolves life will not go back to how it was before as we would have all changed, grown and developed as people, communities and countries, hopefully in some ways for the better.

Many of us may feel “as if we were in limbo” and as if “life has been put on hold”. We may find ourselves counting the days and waiting for coronavirus to resolve before we can get back on with life. However, it is important that we focus on aspects of our life that we can control and not spend too much time focusing on things that are out of our influence. Below are some ideas for things that are in your control that may make coping with coronavirus a little more manageable.

Making a new routine

Write out a “new normal” daily routine - many people are going to be spending a lot more time at home than they would normally and for some this may be challenging. It’s important to develop a sense of routine during the week and on the weekend as it will create a sense of predictability during a time when much in our environment is out of our control.

Staying active and connected

Find ways to engage in activities you used to do but possibly in a modified version for example

Exercise

Use YouTube videos, go for walks in open spaces where you will be unlikely to come into close contact with anyone else, buy or rent gym equipment.

Work

Video call meetings using Skype or Zoom so you can see people face to face. Support and seek support from colleagues and keep set working hours so that there are boundaries to your working life. Challenge feelings of guilt about not being able to go into your place of work by reminding yourself that social distancing is the most helpful thing you can do for yourself and others.

Socialising

Make a conscious effort to video call, or telephone friends and family daily. Social interactions are not going to happen naturally in the way they would have previously so think about playing online games together or watching TV shows together on a video call.

Limit news time

Due to the uncertainty associated with coronavirus a natural human tendency is to go looking for information that will reassure us or give us a sense of control. Doing so in a moderate way can be helpful. Doing so frequently and for long periods of time may serve to increase anxiety. Pick one to two times a day to read information online/watch the news about coronavirus and give yourself a time limit (e.g. set a timer on your phone for 10 minutes).

Try to have conversations with people that aren’t focused on the coronavirus.

Things that can help

1

Help others when possible. This will make other people feel cared for and it will make you feel positive and useful. This may be a text, phone call or offer to drop around groceries if the person cannot do this for themselves.

2

Focus on the health behaviours that are in your control.

Hand washing, not touching your face with unwashed hands, who you spend time with and where you go, taking your medication, and attending medical appointments when required.

3

Look after your general physical health by getting enough sleep, exercising on a regular basis if possible, eating a healthy balanced diet, drinking alcohol in moderation, limiting caffeine intake, and reduce or stop smoking. Sleep tips include; having set sleep and wake times, no checking the clock during the night, no exercise, no caffeine or alcohol four hours before bed, ensure your bedroom is conducive with good sleep (cool, dark, quiet), if you are a light sleeper you might want to try listening to white noise, and have no screen time an hour before bed.

4

Practice daily mindfulness exercises. Mindfulness is paying attention to the present moment, on purpose and without judgement. Mindfulness is an evidence-based skill that has been shown to have a positive impact on mental and physical wellbeing. Like any new skill it takes practice, see if once a day you can listen to the guided 'Mindfulness of Breath' exercise

<https://www.cntw.nhs.uk/resource-library/relaxation-techniques/>

You may also find 'Progressive Muscle Relaxation' helpful to practice.

You can find more information on mindfulness at

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/>

5

Try and do things you wouldn't normally have time to do e.g. jobs round the house, reading, watching movies, teaching your child a new skill, engaging in a new hobby, connecting with people you have lost touch with.

6

Spend time in nature, whether that's relaxing in your garden, gardening or going for a walk. Check government guidelines to see what the current guidance on outdoor time is.

Seeking further support

If you would like to use a self-help guide for any mental health difficulties you may be experiencing, e.g. anxiety, anger, low mood you can find them at <https://overcoming.co.uk/7/Home>

You can find further ideas for managing the emotional and social impact of coronavirus on the Mind website <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

If you have concerns about coronavirus specifically related to your health issues then you can contact your medical team or look at national health websites for specific conditions, such as:

British Heart Foundation: www.bhf.org.uk/

Somerville Foundation for Congenital Heart Disease: <https://thesf.org.uk/>

National Kidney Federation: www.kidney.org.uk/

Cancer Research UK: www.cancerresearchuk.org/

British Lung Foundation: <https://www.blf.org.uk/>

UK Government Website: www.gov.uk/coronavirus

NHS Website: www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/