



Take care of yourself

Practical advice for looking after your mental health and wellbeing during lockdown and social distancing



Whether you're social distancing or self-isolating you may be feeling anxious or stressed during this time, and that's completely normal. There are simple steps you can take to look after your mental health and wellbeing.

For many people, looking after your own mental health can be challenging at the best of times, yet the recent health crisis may mean you are more isolated than usual. If you are staying at home more than you usually would, it might feel more difficult than usual to take care of your mental health and wellbeing.

This brief guide provides a range of practical tips, advice, activities and resources to help.

Useful Links:

- Mind, the mental health charity - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus>
- Mental Health Foundation - <https://mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus>
- Mental Health UK - <https://mentalhealth-uk.org/help-and-information/covid-19-and-your-mental-health/>

Mental Health Checklist



Stay Connected

Make plans to video chat with people or groups you'd normally see in person.

Make a plan with someone to watch a show or read a book separately so you can discuss it.

Come up with fun virtual activities for you and your friends and family (online gaming, virtual quiz, play charades etc.)



Get into a routine

Plan how you'll spend your time. It might help to write this down on paper and put it on the wall. Try to follow your ordinary routine as much as possible. Set alarms if that helps.

If you aren't happy with your usual routine, this might be a chance to do things differently, e.g. go to bed earlier, spend more time cooking or do other things you don't usually have time for.



Be more creative

There are lots of different ways that you can relax, take notice of the present moment and use your creative side. These include:

- Arts and crafts
- DIY
- Playing musical instruments, singing or listening to music
- Writing
- Cookery



Appreciate Nature

Spend time with the windows open to let in fresh air.

Sit by a window where you can look out over a view of trees or the sky, or watch birds and other animals.

Listen to natural sounds, like recordings or apps that play birdsong, ocean waves or rainfall. Get as much natural light as you can.



Limit your news intake

The World Health Organisation says: "A near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel anxious or distressed.

"Seek information updates and practical guidance at specific times during the day from health professionals and the WHO website and avoid listening to or following rumours that make you feel uncomfortable."



If you're feeling anxious

If you have panic attacks or flashbacks, it might help to plan a 'safe space' in your home that you'll go to.

You can also find ways to comfort yourself if you're feeling anxious. For example, there are games and puzzles you can use to distract yourself, and breathing exercises which may help. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

Stay Active

One of the most influential factors to maintaining a healthy mind is to maintain a healthy body. The recent restrictions that have been put in place will most likely have impacted your regular exercise routine which can be a major source of frustration.

Exercise has been proven time and time again to improve mental wellbeing so it's vital that you find alternative ways to stay active.

Even if you don't regularly exercise normally, you will still be used to moving around and walking and without even this small amount of gentle exercise you will start to notice the physiological and psychological effects (lack of energy, lethargic, low mood, lack of motivation etc)

Although you may not be able to attend the gym or carry out your usual exercise, it doesn't mean you should stop exercising altogether!

You are still permitted to get outside once per day, so ensure you take that time to have a walk, run or cycle and get some fresh air.

Another amazing source for exercise help is online video fitness classes. There are thousands to choose from and you can vary them up each day just to keep it fresh. Have a look at some of our useful links for a huge range of these at-home workouts.



One of the best things to do to stay active is just to try and build physical activity into your daily routine, if possible. Most of us don't have exercise equipment like treadmills where we live, but there are still activities you can do. Exercising at home can be simple and there are options for most ages and abilities, such as:

- Cleaning your home
- Dancing to music
- Going up and down stairs
- Seated exercises
- Simply changing your position: if you notice you've been sitting down for an hour, just getting up or changing position can help.

The biggest challenge for any of this exercise is always motivation, especially when your isolated and there's no gym instructor barking orders at you! Think of this as just another test of your willpower, literally force yourself to do some exercise and we promise you will feel much better, more energised and happier after.



Useful Links

-  NHS 10 minute workouts - A range of quick light bodyweight workouts.
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minute-workouts/>
-  Joe Wicks - A huge range of youtube videos with workouts to suit all ages and levels
<https://www.youtube.com/user/thebodycoach1>
-  GQ Magazine workout plans - some set routines from several expert fitness coaches.
<https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/lifestyle/article/home-workouts>
-  30 moves to make the most of your home workout with clear tutorials.
<https://www.healthline.com/health/fitness-exercise/at-home-workouts>



Eating Healthy

One of the key challenges to staying healthy when stuck at home is resisting the temptation to spend all day gorging on your favourite foods. When in your work routine you likely have a set eating routine (types of food you eat, times of day etc), yet this routine may have been significantly altered in the recent lockdown which means you have to exercise a bit more self-restraint.

As with other aspects of your life during this challenging time, have a plan and stick to it. Prepare your meals on a daily or weekly basis and make sure it's a well balanced diet. Stick to the same times for meals every day and try not to snack. Also have some discipline when you go food shopping, be strong and power walk through the sweet aisle! (Hint: have something to eat before you go food shopping, shopping whilst hungry will have an impact on your bank balance and waistline alike).

Thankfully the internet is here to help again, with thousands of recipes and meal preparation guides available, it should make eating better during this difficult time much easier. Have a go at the Full English baked potatoes below or look through the useful links for some culinary inspiration.



Useful Links

Tesco Real Food - A huge library of recipes and guides for all meals, tastes and budgets.

<https://realfood.tesco.com/>

BBC good food - User submitted recipes and guides with easy browsing options

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes>

81 really healthy dinner recipe ideas from Goodhousekeeping.com

<https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/food-recipes/healthy/g154/healthy-dinner-recipes/>

Ingredients (Serves 4)

- 4 large potatoes
- 1 tsp vegetable oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 250g cooking bacon
- 250g mushrooms, sliced
- 1 tbsp Worcester sauce
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 150ml crème fraiche
- 2 salad tomatoes, halved
- 30g rocket

Preheat the oven to gas 7, 220°C, fan 200°C. Pierce the potatoes a few times, then microwave on high for 10 mins. Put on a baking sheet and drizzle with a little oil. Bake for 10 mins until golden. Meanwhile, heat 1 tsp oil in a frying pan and fry the bacon. Add the mushrooms and fry for 6 mins. Stir in the Worcester sauce and garlic, fry for 1 min, then add the crème fraiche and season with pepper. Remove from the heat while you finish the baked potatoes.

Put the tomatoes on a tray, season and grill for 10 mins. Halve the baked potatoes, spoon over the creamy mushrooms and top with the bacon. Serve with a grilled tomato and a handful of rocket.