**Guidance; looking after your wellbeing during times of isolation and change**

The following guidance has been pulled together by the Trusted Relationship’s team based at the Manchester Resilience Hub and is for circulation to staff within Complex Safeguarding teams across Greater Manchester.

At a time of such uncertainty, Mental Health Europe, remind us that “*taking care of your mental health is as important as looking after your physical health*”. Good mental health and wellbeing can help us cope with the uncertainty that COVID-19 is creating. Mental Health Europe outlines 8 ways to look after your mental health (click [here](https://www.mhe-sme.org/covid-19/)) and they have some helpful links with further advice.

The mental health charity [Mind UK](https://www.mind.org.uk/) also has a dedicated page to [Coronorvirus and your wellbeing](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/) and has good advice about managing anxiety caused by the uncertainty.

We have outlined some key areas to think about:

1. **Staying in touch, stay connected;**
   * create WhatsApp groups with neighbours, friends, colleagues to check-in with each other
   * stay connected to people with Zoom/Skype
   * write to or email friends and families
   * help out those less able than yourselves, without putting anyone at increased risk
2. **Maintain a routine;** tempting though it might be to treat isolation as an extended holiday, over the longer-term this can have a detrimental impact on how you feel and others may feel. Try to maintain some routine in your life;
   * eat well
   * sleep well
   * get outside every day, even if it’s just to have a cup of coffee on your front door step or back yard
   * try to exercise daily, just 10 minutes can be enough
   * engage in your hobbies or take up some new ones
   * keep a video or written diary to track how you are doing
   * plan activities with those in your house but also make sure you get some time alone
3. **Manage your screen time;**
   * try to avoid using a screen for work, socialising and entertainment
   * take breaks from the news; catch headlines rather than regularly checking for updates
   * take breaks from social media including WhatsApp
   * reduce screen time before bed
4. **Worries & Anxiety;** it’s normal to worry about the unknown and feel anxious about the health threat of COVID-19. There are some things you can do to try and keep your worries and anxieties in-check:
   * try to focus on what you can control rather than things that are out of your control
   * while some things you worry about ‘might’ come true it is important to remember that they ‘might not’ come true – these are just worries, not facts
   * write down your worries and feelings
   * remember that COVID-19 won’t always dominate our lives in this way
   * talk to people you trust about how you are doing
   * if you notice that you are more worried when you are reading news updates then turn off notifications and take a break for a day or two
   * if WhatsApp groups become focused on worries and stresses then take a break, leave the group for a while
   * reduce ‘nervous’ energy by doing a brief session of exercise – anything that gets you using up your adrenaline and releases more soothing chemical, such as endorphins
   * “take a breath” - stopping and taking 2 or 3 slower breaths can help to settle a busy head and a racing heart, practice doing this as many times a day as you can
   * use your 5 senses to settle your mind and body; find smells, tastes, sounds, textures and things to look at (like photos or memories) that sooth and calm you
   * don’t forget to make plans for the future with friends and family
   * the [Centre for Clinical Interventions](https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Anxiety) has some good worksheets and information about worry and anxiety

Some other websites you might find helpful:

[www.anxietyuk.org](http://www.anxietyuk.org/)

[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

[www.hubofhope.co.uk](http://www.hubofhope.co.uk)

**If you notice that your worries and anxieties are starting to impact on your mood, your sleep, your eating, your relationships then please seek help by contacting your GP.**

1. **Home with kids;** while kids might be excited about being off and will want to treat it as a long holiday, it is really important to recognise that over a longer period of time kids need some routine (even big kids). And adults often do better if their kids are in a routine.

* keep to normal sleep patterns (e.g. avoid late nights unless a weekend)
* break the day down in to chunks, with snacks and meals planned in the routine
* plan for some ‘school work’ during the day
* offer shared time as a family; board games, cards, drawing & colouring, lego, etc
* get kids involved in house hold chores
* get outside at least once a day (while guidance allows)
* help them stay in touch with friends and family by writing, emailing and using video calling
* if you are in isolation then use your garden or yard to do simple activities
* talk to your children about what is happening; listen to their worries and talk simply and realistically to them (this will depend on their age). Click [here](https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.filesusr.com/ugd/64c685_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf) to download a simple booklet for younger children explaining COVID-19
* share ideas about self-care with your kids and get them to practice with you
* help them make simple plans for the future, short, medium and long-term

Some websites you might find helpful:

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/)

[www.anxietyuk.org](http://www.anxietyuk.org/)

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

[www.hubofhope.co.uk](http://www.hubofhope.co.uk)

[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

**If you have any concerns about your children and you notice that their behaviour or mood changes for an extended period of time then please seek professional help by contacting your GP**