

Staff Support & Counselling Service

Coping and fostering resources to cope with the Coronavirus

With the ever changing situation regarding the virus that is gripping most of the world it is natural to experience varying levels uncertainty, anxiety, panic and a sense of loss of control - over our physical and emotional wellbeing as well as our social and financial security. We may be concerned for ourselves but also for the safety and wellbeing of others who may depend on us. We may have pre-existing health conditions or our age may place us at special risk and of course if you are directly involved in care this can also, understandably, have an impact on you.

Overall, the coronavirus situation has all the ingredients for a highly stressful experience, whether we catch the virus or not. It is often at times like this that teams find a kindred spirit of professionalism and connectedness. It is important to support each other, physically and emotionally, if you are involved in direct care the best support is peer support as you and your colleagues will be sharing the experience.

It is natural at this time to find that your behaviours may take various forms. Some of you will find that you are glued to the TV and social networks – reading and watching all that you can about this virus. This is our way of trying to gain control, making sense of this senseless position we are all in. Some of you may be the opposite and find yourselves avoiding or even becoming irritated or annoyed if others mention it. We all have our own way of coping with things and it is important to recognise this and not to judge ourselves or others at this time. We will all be feeling a sense of heightened awareness which our natural and normal reactions to events that may require us to take action – our natural fight, flee and freeze response is designed to keep us safe will be triggered on a regular basis.

Some of the reactions you may experience, or witness, could be anxiety, panic attacks, sense of depression, hopelessness, stress, physical reactions associated with the fight/flight response, these may include palpitations, sweating, digestive changes, skin outbreaks. You may also find that your sleep is affected and it is not uncommon for people to experience disturbed and broken sleep as well as dreams. These reactions should be self-monitored and you should seek medical advice if you are concerned over your health, however all these reactions are natural given the circumstances. Our strengths lie in what we can actually do at this time for ourselves, our family and our colleagues.

Coping Skills

If you are prone to [anxiety](#) and/or [depression](#), then you may already have developed some coping strategies. It is useful at this stage to remind yourself of the things that you do that alleviates pressure, stress and strain. No matter how chaotic, stressful, overwhelming or fearful a situation becomes it is important to find time to de-stress, relax and disconnect to allow both your mind and body to restore and replenish. I know it is easier said than done to find time, however if we are really going to be dealing with this for longer than we would like you may find it useful to consider some of the following useful to develop your own survival kit:

Look at your diet

It may be useful to ensure that you fuel your body to deal with the physical and emotional pressure that it may experience. Choosing foods that give you energy but also sustained foods that support endurance, you may find the following link useful to look at hints and tips around this - [stress foods](#). You may also find that you are drawn to particular foods at this time such as sugary, fat foods – remember this is natural as your body responds to pressure – however you may find it useful to recognise this and replace those foods with food that is actually useful for you.



Techniques to Help

Explore techniques that can help calm you down, soothe anxiety and help you reframe negative thinking, such as:

- breathing techniques
- mindfulness
- affirmations – remember to endorse all that you do and all that you give
- exercise – if you are already having to expend so much physical energy it is important to allow yourself time to relax. So doing your normal gym routine may be helpful but also may be something that you choose to put aside without feelings of guilt
- meditation or relaxation – 10 minutes to switch off, listen to music, focus on self can be a great source of power
- positive/balanced thinking – this can be hard when faced with such situations however to try and focus on things in your life that are meaningful and will be there once this has passed
- spending time in fresh air – this time of year can be so optimistic with spring showing us that nature is beginning to wake up and about to start

our lighter nights and warmer weather. Try walking into work by becoming more aware and mindful of all that surrounds you

- listening to music – whether this is relaxing ballads or head banging rock music can be a great way to disconnect from a current situation
- reading – lose yourself in a good book and try to resist spending time reading news items all related to the virus

The following link is also a useful source of information and guidance.

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing>

The Staff Support & Counselling Service can be contacted on the number below for confidential counselling support:

0300 124 0104

The service will also be offering a support line between **10.00 am – 1.00 pm** if you wanted to speak direct to a counsellor as follows:

23rd March 2020	Monday
24th March 2020	Tuesday
25th March 2020	Wednesday
26th March 2020	Thursday
30th March 2020	Monday
31st March 2020	Tuesday
1st April 2020	Wednesday
2nd April 2020	Thursday
6th April 2020	Monday
7th April 2020	Tuesday
8th April 2020	Wednesday
9th April 2020	Thursday
14th April 2020	Tuesday
15th April 2020	Wednesday
16th April 2020	Thursday
20th April 2020	Monday
21st April 2020	Tuesday
22nd April 2020	Wednesday
23rd April 2020	Thursday
28th April 2020	Tuesday
29th April 2020	Wednesday
30th April 2020	Thursday

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