

Looking after your Wellbeing for you and your family re: Covid-19

The outbreak of Covid-19 might be causing fear and anxiety in both adults and children especially if you are self-isolating. It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis. However, finding ways to cope with this stress will make you, your family and your community stronger. For people who experience anxiety already, the current situation with Covid-19 might exacerbate your fears of being 'out of control' and your inability to 'tolerate uncertainty'.

What are signs of stress?

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs
- Mood changes

What can I do that will help?

ACCEPT that this crisis is going to last sometime and prepare myself

A: **acknowledge** that I am not in control and I need to find ways of coping

C: **compromise** on what I would like to do and work out what I can do

C: know that there will be **consequences** that are not in my control

E: show **empathy** to others, this shows that I and they are not alone

P: be **passionate** about caring for myself and those around me

T: **trust** in myself that I am doing all I can

Look after your mind, body and spirit

MIND

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting. Possibly limit updating yourself once a day only.
- Try not to 'Google' your symptoms – this often increases anxiety
- Establish whether your thoughts are 'FACT' or 'OPINION' and ask yourself 'Is there an alternative way of thinking?' e.g. 'Everyone I know is going to die of coronavirus' (OPINION) 'Plenty of people have survived catching the virus' (FACT). Remember – a thought is just a thought and just because you think something it doesn't make it true.

- Think about learning something new – FUTURE LEARN and OPEN LEARN have free online courses.
- Remember that feelings pass. They may not be comfortable and may seem difficult to manage but they do pass.
- Remind yourself of times when you have coped through adversity and what helped you cope.

BODY

- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals and keep hydrated – contact your support network and/or church if you have run out of food and are self-isolating
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy e.g. baking, knitting, reading, writing, listening to music, watching TV.
- Breathing and grounding exercises – will help keep you in the present instead of worrying about the future. Use the app – CALM or try some Mindfulness using the HEADSPACE app.
- Do some exercise – try using a skipping rope in garden, running up and down the stairs, watch a You Tube video on stretches/ yoga.
- Trouble sleeping? Download the SLEEP SCHOOL app. Have a wind down session before bedtime. Write any troublesome thoughts down as they occur. Decide whether these are thoughts you can do anything about, if so, problem solve, if not let the thoughts go by imagining them floating up into the sky on the top of a cloud or sitting on a leaf as they flow down a river.
- Try to reduce alcohol consumption as this can increase anxiety and replace with a calming tea e.g. camomile

SPIRIT

- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling e.g. Join a WhatsApp group, Nextdoor. If possible, phone rather than text or video call by Skype, Zoom, Whatsapp or Facetime.
- Suggest to friends you all read a book/ watch a film and then discuss it on a Whats app group chat (This will help make sure that not all your conversations are dominated by the virus).
- Stay connected to your spiritual sources – e.g. SOULTIME app. Join a Whatsapp group with your home group? Download DAILY PRAYER app, LIVE FROM REST app, YOU VERSION, BIBLE app, your church's FACEBOOK page. Agree a buddy system in your church to contact.
- Please see Church Of England's guide to online resources
<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>
- <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-action/mental-health-resources/supporting-good-mental-health>

- Try and connect with the outdoors – open your windows, go into the garden, actively notice your present surroundings. E.g. Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste or like the taste of.

What will my children be doing that might indicate stress?

Children and teens react, in part, on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with the COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. Parents can be more reassuring to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some common changes to watch for include

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviours they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviours in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

There are many things you can do to support your child

- Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak. Answer questions and **share facts** about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Limit your family’s exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to keep up with regular routines. If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.
- Help your children connect with their loved ones who might be self-isolating via the telephone/ Whatsapp video.

TIP : We are all in the same boat and whilst some people might be more anxious about what is happening than others, it is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during such times so treat yourself and others with kindness and compassion. Remember this is for a season and seasons don't last forever.

SOURCES: <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/> <https://www.cdc.gov/>

FURTHER RESOURCES : <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse93937>

A useful poster to print out to help cope with stress during the outbreak can be found here:
https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_2