



# Supporting Document 10. COVID-19: Information and Guidance

## Mental Health NHS Scotland Tips :-

**If you are having trouble dealing with worries about the coronavirus you are not alone. If you feel overwhelmed when in isolation the following can be helpful:**

If you are having trouble dealing with worries about the coronavirus you are not alone. Lots of people will have worries about this which is understandable. Being in isolation might cause you to feel worried and more on edge than normal. The majority of people find these feelings pass. The key thing to remember is that these reactions are normal in times of difficulty. It is helpful to remember that these are ordinary feelings and normal reactions for anyone who is in this abnormal situation. Self-isolation can still be anxiety provoking for some. It is unusual. Like all unusual events, stress, boredom and worries about health, family or work can feel worse. If you have had previous mental health or psychological difficulties then it is important to know that your normal worries may return or feel worse for a period of time. Isolation can also cause practical day to day difficulties which can cause feelings of frustration or lead you to feel lower in mood. For most people symptoms are minimal and will likely pass in the weeks following a return to normal activities. It is important to remember these feelings will pass. There is also lots you can do to help yourself feel better and use the time in positive ways as your health allows. This handout is designed to help you manage those feelings and learn some tips, tools and techniques.

For some people, this can be an opportunity to strengthen relationships across your life both with those in the household and across your network, using digital ways of connecting. Be aware that time together can also highlight tensions and challenges in relationships, so consider how to manage inevitable stresses.

If you are not safe at home, please contact support agencies such as Scottish Women's Aid or Police Scotland. Take the time to reflect on what you value most and help each other through difficult days. Instead of dwelling on what might happen, focus on the here and now. Think about ways you can improve what is important in your life and make positive plans and goals about what you want to do when you feel better. Be imaginative about how you use your time. If you can maintain a routine and keep busy where possible, this is likely to be really helpful. Use the time productively (as your health allows) and try new things. Think of all the projects you have put off and things such as all the books you have not had time to read. This is an opportunity to do things you have not had time to do for yourself before. Taking positive steps to improve your skills and get done what you can will help. Use the time to develop your skills and knowledge about new things and you may come out of self-isolation having a sense of achievement. Shakespeare wrote King Lear while quarantined for the plague!

You can try using technology to increase social connection such as making a call or using Face Time. Set up a local group on social media to support each other. Keep messages positive and help each other develop a strong sense of community. Think about ways you can help someone else as health allows. This can be an encouraging message or a call to someone else in isolation or doing something practical at home for someone you love. Limit the time you watch the news, look on social media or look online for information about the virus. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel worried. Seek information updates at specific times during the day, once or twice and consider turning off 'notifications' from news apps on your mobile phone outwith these times. Instead look for positive messages and ways communities are supporting each other. Get the facts - from trusted websites and local health authorities' platforms, in order to help you distinguish facts from rumours. Facts can help to minimise fears. If you need to, make contact with local services and use professional supports you already have. Isolation does not mean you cannot be in contact with your health or support network. Family, friends, faith organisations and community groups can all be a source of support both during, and after, a period of isolation. Contact them for support as needed.

Be kind to yourself and understand that things might feel difficult for a few weeks. Use the time to look after yourself in ways you cannot normally do due to the busy lives we usually lead. Take time out to get sufficient sleep, exercise, rest, and relaxation. Eat regularly and healthily. This will help your body recover more quickly. If you can, consider how you might make physical activity or exercise a regular part of your day. Perhaps by using online exercise videos or yoga routines which you can find on YouTube. Talk to others about your experience and how you are feeling. Be open and honest. Others are probably feeling the way you are too.

Try to reduce demands placed on you and don't take on extra responsibilities for the time being. Don't be critical of yourself and if you feel you can't do much that's okay too.

Be aware that difficult feelings and thoughts may last for longer than you might expect. You may notice a disruption to your thoughts and feelings for days or even weeks. Such reactions are within the normal range when faced with stressful events and will get better for most people. Some people may experience persistent problems with difficult thoughts or feelings that interfere severely with your sleep or role functioning. Such persistent problems may be a sign that you could benefit from seeking help for your mental health.

If you do want to find out some information, get accurate information from a reliable source such as NHS Inform, NHS 24 or the online 111 service. If you have general worries about coronavirus but are not unwell you can call: 0800 0282816. If you feel low, anxious or depressed you can call Breathing Space, a free and confidential phone service in Scotland: 0800 83 85 87.