

Wellbeing and mental health during Covid-19:

A guide to looking after yourself and others

Revised Feb 2021



Contents

- 3** What we learnt in 2020
- 4** Looking after yourself
- 5** Beating corona anxiety
- 6** Manage your stress bucket
- 9** Looking after your wellbeing
- 10** Sleeping well
- 11** Money and employment worries
- 12** Alcohol
- 13** Struggling to cope
- 15** Wellbeing plan
- 18** Jar of hope
- 19** Dealing with change and uncertainty
- 20** Coping through Winter
- 21** Supporting young people
- 22** Working well from home
- 23** Long Covid
- 24** Bereavement
- 25** Useful apps
- 26** Looking out for others
- 27** Five steps to helping others
- 28** Spot the signs
- 29** Listening tips
- 30** Thoughts of suicide
- 31** Getting help



What we learnt in 2020

With 11 months of the coronavirus pandemic behind us we have learnt a lot about what helps maintain our mental and physical wellbeing. You will see these themes throughout our booklet.

Know where to get help, support and advice

Whether its anxiety or stress, money problems or employment issues. Knowing where you can get help when you need it, and reaching out early can really help us get through.

Be kind to others

Find ways to help others. Simply checking on a friend can make a huge difference to their day. It will boost their mood, and yours too.

Be nice to yourselves

Lots of us struggle to treat ourselves kindly. In fact, we're often nicer to others than we are to ourselves. Show yourself compassion when things aren't going well, treat yourself, do the things you enjoy.

Get outside

Research has shown us that walking and time in nature were the two things that most helped the nation cope with the stresses of the pandemic in 2020. So wrap up warm and get outside!

Get moving

Moving more is good for your mind and body. Find an activity that you enjoy, and make it part of your daily routine.

Get a good night's sleep

4 in 10 of us has experienced worse sleep during the pandemic due to stress and anxiety. Learning simple ways to improve quality of sleep can really improve your mood.

Look out for burnout

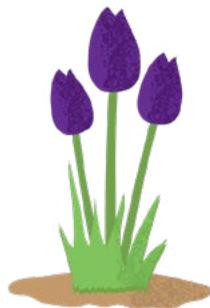
Many of us are working harder than ever, and it can be hard to switch off. Keep an eye on how your job is starting to impact on your mental health and make changes where you need.

Learn new things

Whatever you choose, learning new things can give your mental health a boost with a sense of achievement.

Help is still out there

It may look different but the NHS and our network of charity and community groups are still open for business, taking referrals, providing support – and there to help you.



Looking after yourself

Covid-19 has now had a far reaching impact on people right across the world and it's important during this time to take care of your mind as well as your body.

Everyone will be reacting in their own way. You might be feeling frustrated or lonely. Concerned about your finances, your health or relatives. And you might be feeling down, worried or anxious.

It is OK to feel like this. These are normal reactions to uncertainty and to challenging events.

Covid-19 has also impacted on many of the normal coping strategies we use to deal with stress, and on the everyday activity that underpins our emotional wellbeing. During this time, we may need to be more creative and thoughtful about how we look after ourselves.

This booklet contains practical information about things you can do now to look after your mental health and wellbeing, and how you can support others.



Beating Corona Anxiety

It's natural to feel anxious about what's happening right now, but if it begins to feel too much follow our top tips;

Limit your News Coverage

Avoid constantly checking the news – it only makes your anxiety grow stronger. Limit yourself to 30 minutes a day or particular broadcasts.

Concentrate on the facts

Use reputable sources for news, advice and opinion such as the BBC. Be cautious of social media coverage.

Focus on what you can control

We can't control the Covid-19 crisis but we can control our own responses and behaviours to it. Think ahead, make plans for what you'll do in the coming days and weeks.

Distract yourself

Our minds struggle to hold two thoughts at one time. Distract yourself with exercise, games, books, movies or other activities.

Connect with Others

Reach out and connect with friends and family, in safe ways. Share your fears or talk about nothing in particular.

Be nice to yourself

Add extra time for stress relief in your day. Treat yourself whenever you need and do things you enjoy, within the limits of existing restrictions.

Hold on to Hope

Keep the big picture in mind. The crisis will end, and we will get through this.



- **Anxiety – An NHS Self-help Guide**
web.nrw.nhs.uk/selfhelp
- **Mind – Managing Anxiety and Panic**
tinyurl.com/111jhfqx
- **Young Minds – What to do if you are anxious about Coronavirus**
tinyurl.com/a9yut04a

Manage your Stress Bucket

Stress is a part of everyday life. It can help us take action and work productively. But if our Stress Bucket becomes full it can also overwhelm us and impact negatively on our mental health.

Everyday stressors including work, money and family flow into that Stress Bucket like rain. But we also have ways of coping that allow this stress to flow out, like holes in the bucket. But right now;

- Our Stress Bucket might be getting fuller - it's raining more due to Covid-19.
- Some of our normal ways of coping, the holes in our Stress Bucket, might be unavailable due to the current situation.
- We might need to re-think how we cope with stress and the next few pages give you some ideas of how you can look after your wellbeing during Covid-19.



Challenge - draw your own stress bucket. What are some of the 'rain clouds' but also what are 'our holes'?

- **Stress - An NHS Self-help Guide**
web.nth.nhs.uk/selfhelp
- **NHS Every Mind Matters - Feeling Stressed?**
tinyurl.com/1nh7qf22
- **Mind - Managing Stress**
tinyurl.com/k4khuarj

Looking after your Wellbeing

Connect with people

Connections with other people are the bedrock of our mental wellbeing. Though contact with others is challenged by current restrictions it is more important to maintain than ever. You may not be able to pop round for a cuppa or meet with friends in the pub but you can still connect - FaceTime, Telephone, text, social media, a conversation over the garden fence, or even write a letter!

Share your worries

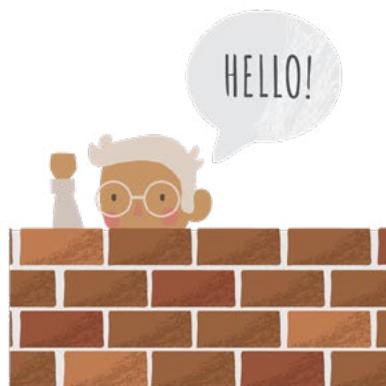
It's normal to feel worried or helpless about the current situation and how its impacting on you. Share your concerns with people you trust - it may also help them to talk about it - or if you are feeling isolated from other people there are a number of helplines and online forums where you can find a listening ear.



Social distancing is about physical distance not emotional distance

Help others

Helping others is a sure fire way of boosting your wellbeing, and now is a time when giving to others can make a real difference. There are a large number of volunteering opportunities to support the Covid-19 response, such as being an NHS responder - but also the opportunity to help practically - shopping for a neighbour and so on.



One of the most important things you have to offer right now is your time. Make contact with others, reach out, check-in and to show you care.

Looking after your Wellbeing

Stay healthy

Our physical health really affects how we feel.

- Eat as healthily as you can and drink enough water.
- Stay active indoors. There is a wide range of online or TV exercise programmes, for all ages. Or develop your own indoor workout, set yourself challenges and plan a daily routine.
- Green spaces boost our wellbeing. Go out for a walk or run, spend time in your garden.
- Getting enough sleep can really impact how we feel – be sure to maintain a regular sleeping pattern.
- Avoid drugs and too much alcohol. It's easy to fall into unhealthy coping patterns that make you feel worse.
- Plan how you will continue accessing treatment and support for any existing physical or mental health problems if possible.

Keep your mind active

Keeping your mind active and learning new things is good for your wellbeing! And a perfect distraction during these challenging times.

Get creative!

Draw, colour, make a playlist, bake, write a song...
Get a new hobby! Play guitar, learn to cook, try a new exercise...

Home school!

There are 1,000's of online courses waiting for you...
Pay attention! Take time to look at what's going on around you...



Mindfulness can help positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges. Look for free mindfulness apps or search online for how to start.

Make Plans (but be realistic about what you can achieve!)

- Get productive! Make a To Do List of jobs around the home.
- Work out what household supplies you need and how you can get them. If you can't get out yourself ask a friend or try a home delivery service.
- Contact your GP or Pharmacist to discuss how you can get any ongoing medicine or repeat prescriptions delivered, or collected.
- Make the most of your time! This could be the perfect opportunity to take up a new hobby, read those books you always wanted to read, pick up that guitar that has been gathering dust in the corner.



Physical Environment

For some people having a clean and organised home environment can really help lift their mood.

Routine

Having a routine is particularly effective at warding off anxiety and worry.

- Write a timetable for your week
- Pick regular times to exercise, eat, watch TV, read, do a crossword etc
- Maintain normal sleep patterns
- If you work from home set regular hours
- Build in regular time to keep in contact with people
- Set yourself goals and build in new activity to your weekly plan.



- **NHS Every Mind Matters - Tips to improve your mental wellbeing**
tinyurl.com/1b7heqf6
- **Action for Happiness - 10 keys to happier living**
tinyurl.com/52sslcah

- **Young Minds - Looking after yourself**
tinyurl.com/4pqrc19l
- **Good Thinking - Digital mental wellbeing Resources**
www.good-thinking.uk

Sleeping well

Finding it hard to get to sleep or waking up in the night are common issues and it is also not uncommon to find this happening more during the pandemic. Here are some tips that may help

Try to keep to a daily routine

This can be hard at the moment but having regular sleep patterns, going to bed and getting up at around the same time, can really help.

Careful what you consume

Avoid too much caffeine or alcohol during the daytime. Avoid big meals 3 hours before going to bed, and try to avoid watching the news and using screens half an hour before going to bed.

Keep it dark

We are physically wired to sleep in certain conditions. Keep your room dark and cool and free from ambient light such as alarm clocks. Try to keep your mobile out of your room or at least have it turned to silent or night mode.

Manage your worries

Try to talk about your worries to someone you trust during the day, if they are on your mind as you go to bed – write a ‘to do list’ or have your own version of worry dolls. Try to unwind and relax before bed with gentle stretches, reading a book or mindfulness.

Get Outdoors

Fresh air and regular exercise are really beneficial for good sleep. With restrictions we may not be able to get out and exercise as much as we like, but be resourceful – being physically tired helps. Strenuous exercise within 2 hours before bedtime however can make it harder to fall asleep.

Don't lie there stewing

If you're lying awake unable to sleep, do not try to force it. Sleep may come naturally but if it hasn't after 30 minutes or so, get up and do something relaxing for a bit, like reading a book or listening to quiet music, and go back to bed when you feel sleepier. And repeat if necessary.

- **NHS Live well – How to get to sleep**
tinyurl.com/1ah75gee
- **NHS Every Mind Matters – How to fall asleep and sleep better**
tinyurl.com/4drkbbtr
- **Pzizz - Free NHS recommended sleep app**
tinyurl.com/axc3y6k7
- **Mind – How to improve your sleep**
tinyurl.com/13s9goc0

Money & Employment Worries

Covid-19 has brought a lot of uncertainty to our lives; you might be worried about money, have lost your job, be worried about losing your job or be getting in more debt - these issues can have a big impact on your mental health and wellbeing.

Create a budget

Working out a budget can be a good first step in managing money worries as it helps you to track your spending, work out what you can afford and see where to save money.

Don't ignore the problem

We might want to put our head in the sand but this is not going to help in the long run. It can be tempting to avoid tackling debt head on - but the sooner you tackle the issue and get help, the sooner you can start getting back on top of things. There is support out there

Get help and advice

If you are struggling with money or debt it can feel like there is no way out, but there are lots of organisations who can provide you with clear advice and help you come up with a plan to feel more in control.

Know your rights

If you are facing possible job loss, it can help to know where you stand and think about your options. ACAS, Citizens Advice and the Money Advice service all offer a wealth of information and advice for people who are struggling with employment issues.

Talk about how you are feeling

It's good to talk to someone you trust about your situation, whether that's a family member, friend or someone at work. They can support you, or help come up with a plan for what to do.

- **Cumbria County Council - Local & national advice & info**
www.cumbria.gov.uk/welfare
- **Money Advice Service - Free, confidential advice online or over the phone**
www.moneyadvice.org.uk
- **Citizens Advice - Info & advice about benefits, employment, debt, housing and other Covid related issues**
www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- **Local branches**
citizensadvicecumbria.org.uk

Debt advice

- **The National Debtline**
www.nationaldebtline.org
- **StepChange**
www.stepchange.org
- **Debt Support Trust**
www.debtsupporttrust.org.uk

For further information on advice services in your area

- **Cumbria**
www.every-life-matters.org.uk/get-help
- **North East**
www.stopsuicidenenc.org/visitor/need-support

Alcohol and Coronavirus

In times of stress we can easily find ourselves drinking more frequently or more heavily. And with so many of our routines changing it hard to keep on top of just how much we're actually drinking. Keeping a happy, healthy relationship with alcohol is important for our mental health. Here's some ideas.

Work out other ways to relax and treat yourself

Alcohol can be our go-to treat both when we want to relax, and when things are getting tougher than normal. During coronavirus you may have found yourself reaching for alcohol more often than normal. Find some alcohol-free treats. Chocolate, a hot bath, playing video games, watching a favourite box set or film. Whatever it is that helps you unwind.

Keep track of your drinking

With normal routines out of the window and anxiety levels going up, its easy to find yourself drinking more than usual without noticing. If you think your drinking is getting out of hand start to make a record. There are a number of apps and other tools to help you do this. And remember the calories and money you'll save by cutting back.

Look after your wellbeing

Many people are prone to drinking more as their mental health declines. Do what you can to look after your wellbeing. Connect with others, keep active, learn new things and get good sleep. It can all help.

Reach out for support if you need it

If you are in recovery, or are sober and receiving support, services are still available. It may look different, but it's still there. Reach out if you need it. Or maybe you're just realising that you need to cut down and would like some support, but aren't sure where to turn. Again, good news - there are lots options for self-help and receiving support online or over the phone. Check the links below.

- **Alcohol Change - Coronavirus Top Tips**
tinyurl.com/dcqfyfv3

- **Drinkaware - Advice and support**
www.drinkaware.co.uk

For more information about mental health support and services in your area

- **Every Life Matters - In Cumbria** www.every-life-matters.org.uk/get-help
- **North East and North Cumbria Suicide Prevention Network - In the North East**
www.stopsuicidenenc.org/visitor/need-support

Struggling to cope

It's important to recognise that some people will feel so overwhelmed they need professional support, and some may even think about suicide.

Whether you are struggling to cope with difficult emotions, or are having thoughts of suicide, there is hope and you are not alone.



- Share your feelings with a good friend, a relative or a work mate.
- If it feels hard to find the words, speak to someone who is trained to listen, like the Samaritans on 116 123, or other telephone/text helplines. You can talk to them about whatever's getting to you, in your own way, and they can also help you explore the range of help available.
- Contact your GP or ring NHS 111. Be open about how you are feeling. Talk to a friend and plan what you want to say, and if possible get someone you live with to accompany you.
- Other services and support are listed in this booklet and on our website www.every-life-matters.org.uk including talking therapies, peer support groups, online help and apps.



If you are really struggling to cope, or feel overwhelmed by difficult feelings, then reach out for professional help. It's still available and it's OK to ask for more support to see you through this difficult time.

For more information about mental health support and services in your area

- **Every Life Matters - In Cumbria**
www.every-life-matters.org.uk/get-help
- **North East and North Cumbria Suicide Prevention Network - In the North East**
www.stopsuicidenenc.org/visitor/need-support

Struggling to cope

Thoughts of suicide are not uncommon – a lot of people will have them - around one in five of us during our lifetime. Having these thoughts doesn't make it inevitable that you are going to take your own life.

If you are having thoughts of suicide focus on what you need to do to keep yourself safe for now. Visit www.every-life-matters.org.uk to complete a Safety Plan and learn more about what practical steps you can take to keep yourself safe. This can include:

- Finding ways to distract yourself that allow the feelings to pass
- Calling a helpline or someone you can trust
- Avoiding using alcohol and drugs
- Removing things from your house that you could use to harm yourself
- If you can, going somewhere you feel safe
- Knowing who you can contact if you need professional support – this might be your key worker, your GP, NHS 111 or others
- Making a Hopebox – a list, or photos, or objects that remind you of why you want to live.

If you feel you can't keep yourself safe any longer, or if you have done something to harm yourself – call 999 now. The number is free.



Thoughts of suicide do pass and there are things that you and other people can do to make your situation better.



Find out more about coping with thoughts of suicide

- **Every Life Matters – Thinking about suicide?**
tinyurl.com/22lsy8a8
- **Every Life matters – Safety Planning**
tinyurl.com/1vagm3o6
- **Staying Safe – Safety Planning**
stayingSAFE.net
- **North East and North Cumbria Suicide Prevention Network – Do you need support?**
www.stopsuicidenenc.org

Wellbeing Plan

Keep this as a private journal or pull out and pop it somewhere to remind you daily.

Who do I want to keep in contact with?

(Friends, colleagues, family, neighbours)

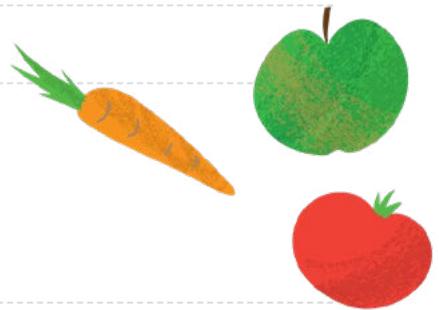


How will I help others?

(Keeping in contact with people, volunteering, giving practical support)

What will I do to stay healthy?

(Exercise, diet and sleep)



How will keep my mind active?

(Hobbies, reading, new challenges, online learning etc)



What will I do in my daily routine?

(Time I get up, exercise, contact friends, do a crossword, treat myself, cleaning)



6am

7am

8am

9am

10am

11am

12pm

1pm

2pm

3pm

4pm

5pm

6pm

7pm

8pm

9pm

10pm

11pm

12am

1am

How can I tell when things are getting too much?

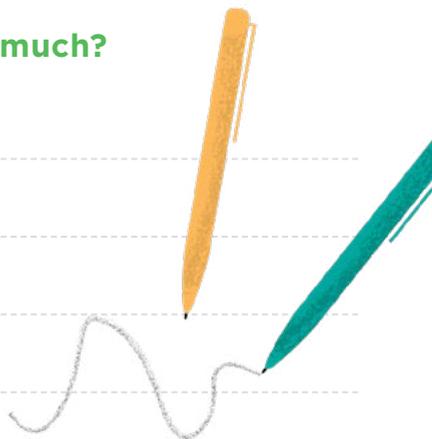
(Feeling snappy, sleep issues, feeling low, eating more or less, drinking more)

What will I do to distract myself when I feel stressed, anxious or down?

(Treat myself, phone a friend, go for a walk, mindfulness, watch Netflix)

Who can I talk to if things get too much?

(People, helplines or online)



Jar of hope

Things will get better. Use this time to think about all the things you miss and might have taken for granted. Write them down here to look forward to when the crisis is over.



A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing, arranged in two columns.



You could encourage children to write and colour their own notes to keep in a real jar.

Dealing with uncertainty

We've all faced change and uncertainty during the coronavirus outbreak, and that looks set to continue for a while longer. It's not a state we usually have to deal with in such large measures but there are some practical steps to help us.

Focus on the short term

The further we look into the future, the easier it is to get overwhelmed by uncertainty. Instead, focus on the day-to-day, and think about what's in your power to do right now. Break down your days, and weeks, into manageable and achievable tasks. This can help us feel more in control.

Acknowledge what's working

Even when everything feels turned upside down there will be some things, however small, that are still working for us. Take notice of the constants that remain in your life like a relationship, a skill or a work task. Maybe even try to write down 3 things each day you are thankful for.

Recognise your achievements

Take some time to list some of your accomplishments or successes over the last 12 months – no matter how big or small. We have all had to adapt, learn new skills and ways of coping.

Reframe your thoughts

In difficult times like this, it can be easy to get caught up in negative thoughts, feelings and actions. This is an understandable response. Maybe you're disappointed about what was "supposed" to happen this year or scared of what the future may hold. It can be helpful to step back, examine the evidence for your thoughts and explore other ways of looking at the situation.

Get practical advice

Talk to people you trust and get support if you need it. There is lots of help out there. Knowing where you can get help when you need it, and reaching out early can really help us get through. If you are worried about money, debt, housing or employment issues there are lots of organisations that can help you understand your rights and find solutions.

- **NHS Every Mind Matters - Looking after your mental health**
www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters
- **Mind - Coronavirus and your wellbeing**
www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing

Coping Through Winter

Lockdowns take their toll on people's mental health and wellbeing, even during the warmer months. However, with the introduction of shorter days, longer nights and cold weather this can create an even more challenging experience for many individuals.

Our top winter lockdown tips!

Get outside!

Make friends with cold, dark winter days. Research has shown us that walking and time in nature were the two things that most helped the nation cope with the stresses of the pandemic in 2020. Put on a warm coat and wellies and go for a walk - play in the snow, jump in muddy puddles - be mindful of the seasons, look around at the changing landscape, the emerging snowdrops.

Treat yourself

Reward yourself for the little wins. Managed to get your work done on time? All the kids school work finished? Brilliant, little treats can help motivate you and those around you. Get warm & cosy and most importantly allowing yourself time to recharge after a difficult year.

Get busy

Colder weather means more opportunities to follow indoor pursuits or hobbies. Make lists and knock out projects. Try to build in at least some exercise or movement everyday into your schedule. Keep your mind active too!

Manage your money

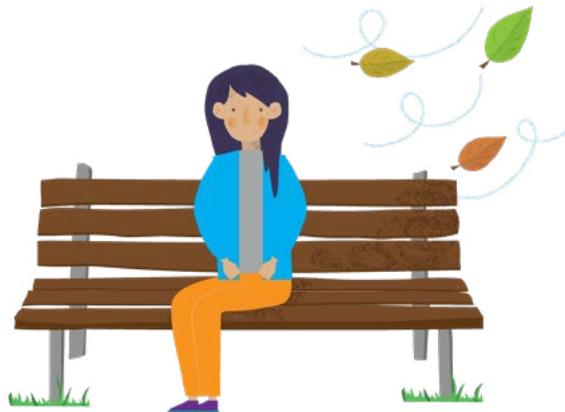
Plan your finances - post Christmas is always a difficult time financially for people. Take stock, use this time to plan for the upcoming year or work out if you are receiving the benefits you are entitled too.

Get away from screens

Allow yourself time away from screens to connect with family members, neighbours or friends around you. Get some fresh air at least once a day.

Grumble about the weather

Its ok to get things off your chest if you are feeling frustrated. Don't be afraid to reach out and have a good grumble with a friend or relative. Talking really helps us get through.



Supporting Young People

The sudden change in children and teenager's routine, combined with the Covid-19 crisis will be unsettling, and younger ones might find it difficult to understand what's happening and why everyone is so worried. But there are lots of things we can do to look after children's mental health and wellbeing during this crisis.



Be kind to yourself and stay flexible!! Juggling working from home and looking after children is challenging.

Beat Corona Anxiety for Kids

- Create a routine and structure
- Keep them connected with friends
- Re-assure them they are safe
- Let them talk about their worries
- Teach them coping skills
- Limit their exposure to news

Talking to Children about Covid-19

- Children may not talk directly about Covid-19 but still check-in with them.
- Explain its normal to feel scared or unsure.

- Be honest, speak calmly, use age appropriate language.
- Re-assure them that elderly family members are being looked after.
- Pay attention to individual worries, these may seem trivial to you, but may feel important to your child.
- You don't need to have all the answers, if you don't know you can find out together.
- Explain how they can help. For instance, good hygiene and social distancing, and how this can keep them and others stay safe.

Create a structure and routine. This is an important way children manage their anxiety and other emotions.

- **Every Life Matters - Directory of local/national mental health support for young people** www.every-life-matters.org.uk/get-help
- **NHS Every Mind Matters - Mental health and self-care for young people** tinyurl.com/2b3hg2e3

- **Young Minds - Information, advice and parent's helpline** www.youngminds.org.uk
- **Papyrus - Support for young people who may be feeling suicidal** www.papyrus-uk.org
- **Every Life Matters - Self-harm Information** www.every-life-matters.org.uk/self-harm

Work well from Home

For many of us home working is now the standard. Here's a few simple ways that you can focus on improving your wellbeing whilst still remaining productive;



Get Work Ready

Shift your mindset. Set a designated space in your house to work from. Ditch the hoodie, think about dressing as if you are leaving for work!

Set Schedules and Goals

Set yourself some simple goals for the day and break your work down into bite sized portions. Schedule regular breaks and leave your workspace.

Be flexible

It can be hard to focus at home, so be flexible. Adapt your working hours to the way your home runs. Spend time with the kids and work in the evening.

Get Fresh Air

Make sure you get time to leave the house, even if it's your garden, or leaning out a window. Go for a walk, run or ride if you can.

Connect with Colleagues

Workmates are a big part of our life. Connect through virtual meetings, Skype or a phone call. Keep the conversations and banter going.

Circle of Support

If you are struggling to cope, reach out to you colleagues, or too any support schemes your workplace or union offers. Check in with your workmates and look out for each other.

Give yourself some Slack. Adapting to home based working takes time. Be patient, and be kind to yourself.



- **Mind - Coronavirus and work**
www.mind.org.uk/workplace/coronavirus-and-work
- **NHS Every Mind Matters - Tips to tackle working from home**
www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/7-simple-tips-to-tackle-working-from-home
- **BBC - Be happier working from home**
www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54886125

Long Covid

Recovery after any illness is never straight forward and Covid is no exception. As a new illness the long term effects are still being discovered and your recovery will depend on a lot of different factors such as your age, how long you had the virus and whether you have other health issues.

Long Covid symptoms can last between 8-12 weeks and can include fatigue, muscle pain, breathlessness, palpitations, anxiety & depression and the inability to think straight - brain fog. Your Body, and your Mind, need to be given the best possible opportunity to recover, so don't expect everything to just go back to normal right away.

Take things Slow

Make sure to get plenty of rest to recharge, give yourself permission to take it easy & don't over exert yourself.

“What do I have to do today?”

Many activities may be necessary while other may not be, don't be afraid to put off jobs if they are unimportant and make sure to do some fun activities to help keep you entertained and motivated.

Battle brain fog

Make notes so you don't forget important information and reduce distractions by not taking on too many complicated tasks at a time.

Organize your daily tasks

Break jobs up into manageable chunks, spread things out over the week to save energy and don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.

Stay active

Short exercise, simple walks or stretching, not only boosts your mood but also helps with flexibility. Try to get outside if you can, even if for a quick walk around the block.

Keep connected

Reach out to friends, connect with online communities or even chatting with your neighbours can all help combat isolation

Its important to remember that recovery takes time, be patient, give yourself the time you need to get back to your best

- **NHS England – Supporting your recovery after Covid-19**
www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk
- **NHS England – Long term effects of Covid-19**
www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/long-term-effects-of-coronavirus-long-covid

Bereavement

Losing a loved one under any circumstance is a difficult time in anyone's life. Throughout the pandemic this loss can be more complex due to the circumstances of the death and the inevitable restrictions put in place to reduce the spread of the virus.

For many this grief is confounded by constraints imposed on Funerals, visiting the deceased and religious services, so it is vital to be aware of the current guidelines and be aware of what support is out there to help with your grief.

- Grief is as unique as your fingerprint, and people feel it in many different ways. You may experience a variety of unexpected emotions or even physical symptoms. There is no set way to grieve and there is no shame in the way you feel at this difficult time.
- You may experience really difficult days, and others may be more manageable, its important to understand that grief is not a set process and your mood and feelings will fluctuate from day to day
- Being isolated and withdrawn from family members can compound your feelings of loss, and make it more difficult to process your grief. Ensure you reach out, or if you know of someone recently bereaved stay in contact with them.

Sudden and unexpected Bereavement

For many the death of a loved one due to Covid 19 can be sudden and unexpected. Often this type of loss is the most difficult and tragic to bear for those left behind and has perhaps come at time when they may be dealing with other challenges associated with the pandemic.

It is important to remember that across Cumbria and the North East there are many services that can provide support if things become too difficult to bear.

- **NHS Cumbria – Local and National Bereavement Support**
northcumbriaccg.nhs.uk/contact-us/bereavement-support-cumbria
- **NHS England – Bereavement during Covid-19**
www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/social-distancing/bereavement-advice-and-support

Useful Apps



Catch It

Learn to look at problems differently, turn negative thoughts into positive ones and improve your mental wellbeing.

www.nhs.uk/apps-library/catch-it



My possible self

Pick from 10 modules to learn how to manage fear, anxiety and stress, and take control of your thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

www.mypossibleself.com



Feeling good

Improve your thoughts, feelings, self-esteem and self-confidence using the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy.

www.nhs.uk/apps-library/feeling-good-positive-mindset



Stress and Anxiety Companion

Guided breathing exercises, relaxing music and games made to help calm the mind, and handle stress and anxiety on the go.

www.nhs.uk/apps-library/stress-anxiety-companion



Calm Harm

An app designed to help people resist or manage the urge to self-harm.

calmharm.co.uk



DistrACT

Get quick, easy and discreet access to information and advice about self-harm and suicidal thoughts.

www.nhs.uk/apps-library/distract



SAM

An app to help you understand and manage anxiety.

sam-app.org.uk



STOPP

An app help you to change vicious, negative cycles of behaviour and positively enable you to make changes to your thoughts, feelings and behaviours to live a more skilful, less impulsive life

www.thedecider.org.uk/resources-downloads/stopp-app



Looking out for others

Be Vigilant - In the absence of face to face contact it's more important than ever to find other ways to check-in, to keep contact and to offer support to those around us.

During periods of social isolation, it might feel more difficult than ever for people to look after their mental health. For some the mix of Covid-19 related anxiety, social isolation and pre-existing mental health problems could be particularly difficult to cope with. In addition, the current situation may have taken away some people's previous coping mechanisms, and their access to face-to-face support.

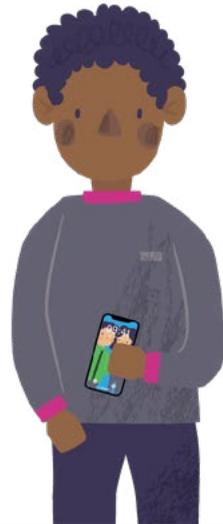
We can all play a role in helping people whose mental health is at risk. Showing you care, offering support and a listening ear can all go a long way.



Mental health support is still available for people who need some extra help to get through.

In addition to offering practical and emotional support we can help others by making them aware of the range of services and support still available to:

- Support their mental health
- Address the broader range of problems that arise out of the crisis such as housing, money, domestic violence and employment issues.



For more information about mental health support and services in your area

- **Cumbria**
www.every-life-matters.org.uk/get-help
- **North East**
www.stopsuicidenenc.org/visitor/need-support

Five Steps to Helping Others



Be Aware

Watch for the warning signs that someone might be struggling. This is more challenging during the Covid-19 crisis, and we may need to be more pro-active about checking in with others by phone and online.



Ask

Trust your instincts and ask the person directly how they are doing. If necessary, ask twice. "Are you really OK?". If you feel they may be struggling let them know that you are worried about them and that you care.



Listen

Give them time and space to talk and be helpfully nosy. Have a look at our listening tips on the following pages. During the Covid-19 crisis you may need to do more of this by telephone and online.



Build Support

Explore what help they might need. Build a circle of support through family and friends. Have a look together at the resources at the end of this booklet, or on our website. Set goals about what they can do next.



Check-in

Keep checking in and letting the person know you are there for them. Knowing someone cares can make all the difference.

- **NHS Every Mind Matters - Helping others with mental health problems**
www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/helping-others
- **Every Life Matters - Helping others**
www.every-life-matters.org.uk/helping-others

Spot the Signs

The current situation and uncertainty will lead to heightened levels of anxiety for many people, and potentially in the longer term to a range of mental health problems if people don't get the early support they need.



Look out for signs that someone may be struggling to cope

How someone might behave

- Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns
- Withdrawing from, or avoiding friends and family
- Stopping telephone or social media contact
- Losing interest in things, including their appearance
- Risky behaviour or increased use of alcohol and drugs
- Carelessness or lack of interest in work
- Starting or increasing self-harming behaviour
- Increasing coping behaviour such as hand-washing
- Struggling to make decisions and concentrate.

How they may be thinking or feeling

- Sadness or anxiety that does not go away
- Losing enjoyment and interest in people and activities
- Lack of energy, lethargy and tiredness
- Extreme mood swings, ongoing irritability or anger
- Developing unrealistic or excessive fears and worries
- Increased anxiety about their health
- Chest pains, shortness of breath

Be helpfully nosy

This is a challenging time. Show interest in the people around you.

Show you care through asking questions about how they are thinking and feeling. And don't be afraid to ask twice if you are worried. Check in, and continue to check in.

ARE YOU OK?

Listening Tips

The smallest displays of kindness, like picking up the phone to check-in on someone, and the conversation that follows, could make the difference...

Avoid offering solutions

Listening to someone's problems is not always easy – and most of us want to make things better, but this is not usually helpful. Avoid fixes such as 'Have you thought of doing this?' or 'You should try that'.

Ask open questions

These are questions that invite someone to say more than 'yes' or 'no', such as 'How have you been feeling?' or 'What happened next?'

Offer prompts

Encourage someone to talk more through phrases such as 'Tell me more' or 'Can you say more about that?', or through repeating back important words they say.

Give them time

It helps if you let them take the time they need to describe where they are at. Make sure you have time to listen.

Take their feelings seriously

Take whatever they say seriously and without judgment. Don't offer platitudes or minimize their feelings.

Avoid judgements

You might feel shocked or upset by what someone says, but it's important not to blame the person for how they are feeling. It may have been a big step to talk to you, and to place their trust in you.

You don't have all the answers

It's okay to not know what to say! You're a human being too and what you're hearing might be upsetting or confusing. If you don't know what to say – be honest and tell that person.

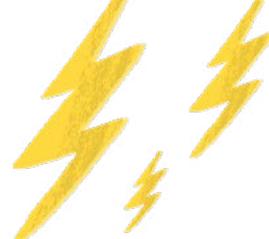
Give re-assurance

Let the person know there is help available and that you care about them.

- **Samaritans - Listening Tips**
tinyurl.com/4llzt6dk
- **Every Life Matters - Helping others**
www.every-life-matters.org.uk/helping-others



Thoughts of suicide



Being there to listen and to provide emotional support can be a lifesaver.

If you're worried that someone you care for may be feeling suicidal it can be really hard to know what to say to them, or how to help. But thinking about suicide does not make it inevitable that someone is going to take their own life, and all of us have the ability to support someone who is experiencing thoughts of suicide, and to save lives.



Trust your gut instincts. If you are at all concerned that someone is having thoughts of suicide - ASK them directly - LISTEN compassionately - GET HELP if needed.

In addition to the general signs of mental health problems listed earlier someone having thoughts of suicide might;

- Talk, or post social media messages, about wanting to die, feeling hopeless, trapped or having no reason to live, or that they are a burden to others.
- Show unexpected mood changes such as suddenly being calm after a long period of depression, giving away possessions or making a will, increased risky behaviour or self-harming, or researching suicide online.
- Have had by a major loss or change in their life, an accumulation or build-up of problems before Covid-19, or be facing financial, relationship or housing hardship.

Talking about suicide with someone can feel nerve-wracking but the best thing to do is ask directly. "Are you thinking about suicide?" This will not put ideas in their head and will show them they don't have to struggle alone with these overwhelming thoughts.

- **Every Life Matters – Worried about someone?**
www.every-life-matters.org/worried-about-someone
- **North East and North Cumbria Suicide Prevention Network – Concerned about someone?**
www.stopsuicidenenc.org

You can find important helpline and mental health crisis numbers on the opposite page

Getting Help



There may be times when we need some extra support to get through - Its ok to ask for help, and there's lots of support out there.

For more information about mental health support and services

Cumbria www.every-life-matters.org.uk/get-help

North East www.stopsuicidenenc.org/visitor/need-support

Telephone/Text Helplines

Samaritans 116 123

Whatever problems you are facing Samaritans are there to listen 24/7

SHOUT Text Shout to 85258

Crisis text service for support with any mental health concern 24/7

MindLine Cumbria 0300 561 0000

Information, guidance and support. Midday-11pm
Mon-Fri. 5-11pm Weekends.

CALM Campaign Against Living Miserably 0800 58 58 58

Helpline for men of all ages 5pm – Midnight.

Silverline 0800 470 80 90

Information, friendship and advice for older people 24/7

Young Minds Parent Line 0808 802 5544

Advice for parents and carers worried about a young person 9.30-4pm Mon-Fri.

Young Minds Crisis Messenger Text YM to 85258

Crisis text support for under 25s 24/7

Papyrus Hopeline 0800 068 4141

Support and advice for Young People. 9am-10pm
Mon-Fri. 2-10pm Weekends.

The Mix 0808 808 4994

Advice and support for under 25s 4-11pm

Childline 0800 11 11

Support currently available 9am-Midnight and online 1-2-1 chat www.childline.org.uk

NHS 24hr Universal Mental Health Crisis Lines

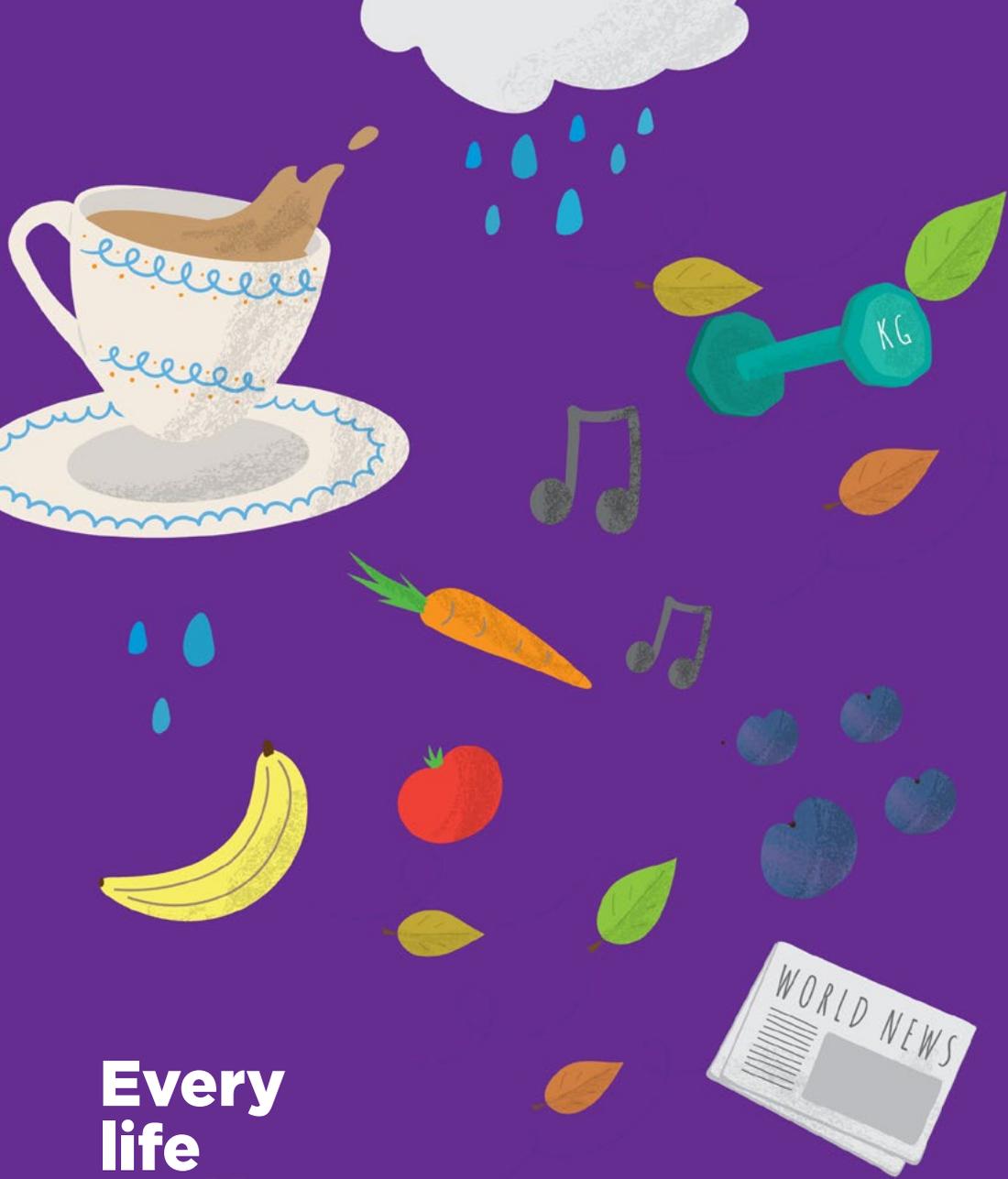
North Cumbria **0800 652 2865**

South Cumbria **0800 953 0110**

Newcastle or Gateshead
0800 652 2863

North Tyneside or
Northumberland
0800 652 2861

South Tyneside or Sunderland
0800 652 2867



Every life matters ...

www.every-life-matters.org.uk

Suicide Safer Communities in
Cumbria Charity No. 1180815

NORTH EAST AND NORTH CUMBRIA

Suicide Prevention

NETWORK