



## BE KIND TO YOURSELF: STAY CONNECTED

The current situation means that life is changing for all of us for a while. It may cause you to feel anxious, stressed, worried, sad, bored, lonely or frustrated. It's important to remember that it's ok to feel this way and that everyone reacts differently. You might also have been feeling like this before the COVID-19 outbreak, and that's ok too.

There are some simple things you can do to help you take care of your mental health and wellbeing during times of uncertainty, and it's important that you take the time to do this to be kind to yourself. Doing so will help you think clearly, and make sure you are able to look after yourself and those you care about.

One way you can help to improve your mental health and wellbeing if you are feeling worried or anxious is to **stay connected to those around you**. We've shared some ideas below of ways you might like to do this.



### STAY IN TOUCH WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Maintaining healthy relationships with people you trust is important for your mental wellbeing. Think about how you can stay in touch with friends and family while you are all staying at home – by phone, messaging, video calls or social media – whether it's people you usually see often, or connecting with old friends. Lots of people are finding the current situation difficult, so staying in touch could help them too.

Family ties and supportive friends can help you deal with the stresses of life. Friends and family can make you feel included and cared for, and can offer different views from whatever's going on inside your own head. They can keep you active, keep you grounded and help you solve practical problems.

It's worth working at relationships that make you feel loved or valued. But if you think being around someone is damaging your mental health, it may be best to take a break from them or call it a day completely. It's possible to end a relationship in a way that feels ok for both of you.

Remember, reaching out to your family and friends isn't just a great way to be kind to yourself – the person that you contact might have been feeling lonely themselves, and your phone call or text message may have just made their day.



## TALK ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL

It's ok to feel worried, scared or helpless at any time, but particularly during the current situation. Remember: it is ok to share your concerns with others your trust – and doing so may help them too.

Talking about your feelings can help you stay in good mental health and deal with times when you feel troubled. Talking about your feelings isn't a sign of weakness; it's part of taking charge of your wellbeing and doing what you can to stay healthy. Talking can be a way to cope with a problem you've been carrying around in your head

for a while. Feeling listened to can help you feel more supported. And it works both ways. If you open up, it might encourage others to do the same.

It's not always easy to describe how you're feeling. If you can't think of one word, use lots. What does it feel like inside your head? What does it make you feel like doing?

You don't need to sit your loved ones down for a big conversation about your wellbeing. Many people feel more comfortable when these conversations develop naturally – maybe when you're doing something together. If it feels awkward at first, give it time. Make talking about your feelings something that you do.

## ASK FOR HELP IF YOU NEED IT

None of us are superhuman. We all sometimes get tired or overwhelmed by how we feel or when things don't go to plan.

If things are getting too much for you and you feel you can't cope, ask for help. Your family or friends may be able to offer practical help or a listening ear. However, if you cannot speak to someone you know, or if doing so has not helped, there are helplines you can try instead. Never be afraid to use the support available to you. Local services are there to help you. For example, you could:

- Join a support group, like Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous, to help you make changes to your life
- Visit [www.self-help.org.uk](http://www.self-help.org.uk) for more information about groups across the UK
- Find a counsellor to help you manage your feelings
- Visit a Citizens Advice bureau, or contact StepChange if you want advice on debt – [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) – <http://www.stepchange.org/>
- Your GP may be able to refer you to a counsellor

You can also consider getting help from your GP if difficult feelings are:

- Stopping you from getting on with life
- Having a big impact on the people you live or work with
- Affecting your mood over several weeks

Over a third of visits to GPs are about mental health. Your GP may suggest ways that you or your family can help you, or they may refer you to a specialist or another part of the health service.

Remember, **you are never alone**. If you need urgent help, the below helplines can help:

**NEVER ALONE**

**NSPCC**  
**0808 800 5000**  
(24hrs)

**National Domestic Abuse Helpline**  
**0808 2000 247**  
(24hrs free)

**Mind**  
**0300 123 3393**  
(Mon-Fri 9-6)

**Victim Support**  
**0808 168 9111**  
(24hrs)

**Cruse Bereavement**  
**0800 808 1677**  
(Mon-Fri 9-5)

**ChildLine**  
**0800 1111**  
(24hrs)

**Action on Elder Abuse**  
**0808 808 8141**  
(Mon-Fri 9-5)

**Respect - Men's Advice Line**  
**0808 801 0327**  
(Mon-Fri 9-5or8pm)

**Samaritans**  
**116 123**  
(24hrs free)

**National Centre for Domestic Violence**  
**0207 186 8270**