Looking after your mental health whilst self-isolating

Social distancing and self-isolation can be really hard to deal with. It's normal to feel anxious, frustrated or bored, and if you're worried about the effect it will have on your mental health, you are not alone. Here are our tips for looking after your wellbeing during quarantine.

Staying connected

Video calls
Phone calls are amazing, and are a great way to stay connected. But seeing someone's face really can make a huge difference on a phone call. It can lift your mood and make you feel less lonely. There are lots of free video calling services you can use, and if you can connect to wifi this will help if you're worried about your data allowance. Don't be shy about going on camera – your loved ones will really appreciate seeing you, even if you're in your pyjamas! You could really brighten someone's day.

Say: "Can we talk about something different?" This can help stop every aspect of your life being taken over by talk of coronavirus.
Eleanor, Activist

Find a positive online community
There are lots of positive online communities, where you can make new friends, get inspired and chat about things you care about. You could try searching for groups involved in causes, music or TV shows you are passionate about.

But remember to avoid anything that encourages you to do things which are harmful for your physical or mental health. If you're worried by things you're experiencing online, talk to someone you trust.

Take a look at our page on social media and mental health for more tips on how to have a positive time online.

Gaming is a great way to have fun and connect with others from your own home. Our Activist, Wes, talks about how gaming helped his mental health because of the supportive friends he made online.

Read Wes' blog:

How gaming helped my mental health

Reach out
You're probably not the only person feeling worried, bored or frustrated. It's a good time for a catch up, so don't be afraid to make the first move and reach out to someone you haven't heard from in a while. They'll probably be very grateful to hear from you. Send them a message and let them know you care.

Staying calm

Mindfulness
There are lots of great free apps you can use to guide you through breathing techniques and meditation that can help ease your anxiety and clear your mind of anxious thoughts. We like to use Headspace.

Why not also try some yoga as a way to relax and also get some gentle excerise which can boost your mood? There are lots of YouTube videos you can use to suit your ability and level of mobility.

I am managing my anxiety using creativity. I've got back into painting and drawing. I am also continuing meditation.
Jacob, Activist

Clean up your social media
You might be spending more time than usual scrolling on social media. But have you ever thought about how this could be affecting your mental health? Try unfollowing or muting accounts that make you feel anxious, upset or angry. Find positive accounts like @youngmindsuk that boost your mood and share your interests. For more tips on having a positive time online, visit our page on social media and mental health.

What type of social media feed do you have? Take our quiz to find out.

With all that free time, why not try learning a new language? Our blogger Wil, 15, explains how learning a language helped her mental health.

Read Wil's blog:

How learning languages helped my mental health

Take a break from the news
It can be tempting to constantly check the news during times like this, but if you notice this is having a negative impact on your mental health. Try limiting how often you check the news.

Limit the amount of time spent checking the news by allowing a set time of day to do this. For example, saying "I will allow 30 minutes from 6pm," stops you constantly checking for updates which increases worrying.
Eleanor, Activist

Read a book
Getting away from screens and reading a book can help you escape for a bit. Why not re-read one of your favourites, or get your friend to recommend one? It might be difficult to get a new book, but you can access lots of books online.

Plan your days
Your normal routine might be disrupted and that can be stressful. Take some time to write down how you want to spend your day. Creating and sticking to a new routine will give you a sense of order and normality. Decide on your new routine and make sure you build in time to do things you enjoy. If you live with other people, you could ask them to help you.

If school gets closed I'm planning on making food plans/a daily timetable and continuing to work under structure as I know I don't cope well with no firm plans of what I'm doing in the day.
Tara, Activist

Feel productive
Make a list of all those things you said you would do but never get round to. It could be sorting out your wardrobe, doing some gardening, fixing things around your living space etc. These tasks can make you feel productive and give you a sense of accomplishment. Tidying your living space can also make you feel calmer and more positive.

If you want to take the time off to rest and not be productive, that's also fine too. Listen to your body.

Online games you can play with friends
Board games can be a great way to spend time with friends or family while giving you something to focus on. You can play a lot of these games online, like Monopoly or Chess, or via apps like Words With Friends 2.

"Sing in the shower even if you're not a singer- it's super therapeutic!"
Martina, Activist

Dealing with stressful situations at home

Walk away from tense situations if you can
Being cooped up with other people will naturally be frustrating and might create tension between you and those you live with. You can defuse difficult situations by walking away from arguments until everyone starts to feel calmer. If you and those you live with do not have any coronavirus symptoms, you could go outside for a walk.

Create a rota
If you're in a situation where lots of people are fighting over who gets to decide what you watch on TV, who cooks and cleans, or anything else, you might find it helpful to create a rota. This can help you agree a fair system and help avoid arguments.

Get changed in the morning from what you've slept in, even if you change into different pyjamas. Try and get some movement in even if that is through a ten-minute yoga video.
Maddie, Activist

Reach out for help
If your living situation is difficult, please don't struggle in silence. Speak to someone you

trust. Call a friend or a helpline. If you're worried about being overheard, you could try texting or emailing instead. There are lots of helplines which also offer text and online messenger support.