

## PROTECTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Outbreaks of infectious diseases like the current Coronavirus can be worrying and can affect our mental health. Whilst it is important to stay informed of developments, there are also many things we can do to support and manage our wellbeing during such uncertainty.

It is now more important than ever to look after your mental health at a time that is challenging and uncertain.

### Staying at home

We have been advised to stay at home and only leave our homes for a limited number of reasons. Unfortunately, many of our regular social activities will no longer be available to us. It will help to try and view this as a different period of time in your life, and **not necessarily a bad one**.

The recent developments will no doubt mean a different pace of life but this also offers a chance to be in touch with others in different ways than usual. Be in touch with other people regularly on social media, email or on the phone as these are still good ways of being close to the people who matter to you.

You may wish to consider creating a new daily routine that prioritises looking after yourself. Try and rest and view this as a new, if unusual experience, that might have its benefits.

### Take the opportunity to spend more time with your kids

We came across the below quote which we really like and wanted to share it with you.

*“Arguing with your kids to do work is not what anyone needs right now. Instead, cuddle up together and read, read, read. Take turns reading. Read them your favourite novel (yes you can read novels to small children). Do a puzzle. Build a fort. Bake. Watch TV together. Paint. Get out the Lego and build together. Set up a tent in your living room and camp out. Look at photos of when you were a kid. In other words...*

*Don't stress about home schooling them. Just spend time together. Your kids won't learn much if they are feeling stressed. Though this is a scary time, it could very well be a time they remember as the best time in their life.”*

### Avoid speculation

Rumour and speculation can fuel our fear. Having access to good quality information about the virus can help you feel more in control. You can get up to date information and advice on the virus here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

It is recommended that you follow hygiene advice such as washing your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds with soap and hot water. You should do this whenever you get home or into work, blow your nose, sneeze or cough, eat or handle food. If you can't wash your hands straightaway, use hand sanitiser and then wash them at the next opportunity.

You should also use tissues if you sneeze and make sure you dispose of them quickly.

### **Stay connected**

At times of worry and uncertainty such as now, we work better in company and with support. Try and keep in touch with your friends and family. Stay in touch with friends and family on social media but try not to sensationalise things. If you are sharing content, use this from trusted sources, and remember that your friends and family might be worried too.

Remember to regularly assess your social media activity. Tune in with yourself and ask if they need to be adjusted. Are there particular accounts or people that are increasing your worry? Consider muting or unfollowing accounts that cause you to feel more worried.

### **Try to manage how you follow the outbreak**

There is extensive news coverage about the outbreak. If you find that the news is causing you to feel very overwhelmed, it's important to find a balance.

It is important to keep informing and educating yourself but limit your news intake if it is causing you to feel overwhelmed or excessively worried.

### **It is okay not to be okay**

It is okay to feel vulnerable and overwhelmed as we read news about the outbreak. It's important to acknowledge these feelings and remind each other to look after our physical and mental health.

Try and reassure people you know who may be worried and check in with people who you know are living alone.

### **Try not to make assumptions**

Please avoid judging people and avoid jumping to conclusions about who is responsible for the spread of the disease. The coronavirus can affect anyone, regardless of gender, ethnicity or sex.

**Please remember that all of our employees, and their partners and dependants, have access to an Employee Assistance Programme which is provided by Health Assured. Health Assured can help with any support required in relation to your wellbeing. All support given is provided in the strictest confidence.**

Employee Assistance Programme, Health Assured: 0800 030 5182

Download the Health Assured App, **Login Name:** Bell **Password:** Group

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