

## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

**18-24 MAY 2020**

This year we will spend mental health awareness week celebrating the acts of kindness that have emerged whilst the world has suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic. By focusing on the importance of kindness and the role that it plays in our mental health, the goal of the campaign is to help shape our outlook on mental health as we return to normality in the future.

Studies have shown that practicing kindness can boost serotonin and dopamine levels in your brain, which are known as the “feel good, happy hormones.” Negative emotions such as anger contribute to the production of cortisol which is otherwise known as the stress hormone. Put simply, being kinder in our daily lives can reduce stress and improve our emotional wellbeing and physical health.

With the COVID-19 outbreak causing concern around the world, this is an ideal time for us all to show each other more kindness and compassion. From residents singing on their balconies in Italy, to people clapping in their doorways for the NHS and key workers in the UK, there has been an inspiring amount of kindness seen around the world during these uncertain times.

If you need some suggestions on how you can get involved with Mental Health Awareness Week 2020, here are a few ideas:

**Random acts of kindness** - Use the extra time we have at home to make the world a happier place by carrying out random acts of kindness. These can be as big or small as you would like, as long as they come from a place of sincerity and compassion.

For example, you could check in on someone who is going through a hard time, send flowers to a friend or a family member, tell your family how much you love and appreciate them or perhaps find out if a neighbour needs any help with shopping.

**Be kind to yourself** - It can be easy to forget about yourself whilst practising kindness, however, self-care is essential in maintaining healthy general wellbeing. Treat yourself to something you enjoy, such as watching your favourite film or spending an evening relaxing with a bath and a book.

**Spread the word** - Use the hashtag [#WorldMentalHealthWeek](https://www.instagram.com/WorldMentalHealthWeek) on social media and share any stories that you have found inspiring during these times. The more positivity and kindness that we can spread, the better.

Please remember that our Employee Assistance Programme which is provided by **Health Assured** remains available to all our employees. Health Assured can provide support on a wide range of wellbeing issues. Health Assured can be contacted 24/7 on **0800 030 5182** where professionally trained counsellors are available to take your call and provide confidential advice and support on any issue that may be concerning you. There is no cost to you for accessing the service.