**Supporting your wellbeing during the Covid-19 crisis.**

**Managing your psychological health at this time is as important as your physical health and you may be feeling a range of emotions at this time. Taking care of your basic needs and employing helpful coping strategies are top priorities and so we’ve pulled together advice and support to help you.**

**Support for your overall wellbeing**

It is likely that there will be a new normal for a while and so there are things that we can do or adopt across our work and home life boundaries to support this, linked to the six elements of wellbeing:

**Emotional Wellbeing:**

**At Work**

Demands at work are going to increase and we will most likely be working differently under pressure. In order to look after others, your own self care needs to be top priority.

* **Take care of your basic needs.** The saying ‘You can’t pour from an empty cup’ is important now. You

won’t be able to look after others, if you don’t look after yourself. Things to fill up your cup:

* 1. o Rest and respite from the work environment
  2. o Sufficient, healthy food & hydration
  3. o Keeping active
  4. o Stay connected to loved ones, even if that’s virtually.

• **Take a break.** We don’t know how long this is going to last, so you will need to pace yourself. Everyone benefits if you take a break. If you are **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**ate or **T**ired, you are less productive and it is difficult to make decisions effectively. Think HALT and take a break.

Go to the toilet, get some fresh air, walk to the end of the room and back. Why not create a care & comfort pack for your team so people can help themselves to food and drinks or deodorant during their break?

• **Breathe. Take a moment.** There are many models you can use to ‘take a breath’ and in the resources at the bottom of the document we have identified a few. Practice at home and then try it out at work. Taking that step out of the moment, will help clarify thoughts, reset and then reengage with your situation.

* **Don’t be afraid to seek help.** If your stress worsens and you feel overwhelmed, don’t worry,

everyone experiences stress and copes with it differently. This may manifest in how you are feeling. Seeking help is often the first step towards feeling better and there is a list at the bottom of this guide of places that will help.

**During Isolation**

Most of us will need to isolate at some point and once the government introduce a formal lockdown it can make looking after ourselves feel more difficult, so here’s some top tips to help during this period. Some of this can be planned for in advance so it’s easier when the time comes. (If you’re working from home, there is a separate section on this).

• **Keep a routine.** Plan how you will spend your time – it might help to write this down on paper and put it on the wall. Reflect on how much of your ordinary routine you want to follow and how you can use this as an opportunity to change some habits for example going to bed earlier, cooking from scratch and exercising.

• **Set household rules.** If you are isolating with others, consider a household routine which gives everyone a say. This is even more important if you have children at home with you, especially now as the schools have taken the decision to temporarily close. Respect that everyone is different and need privacy. For example, some people will want to talk about everything, others won’t.

• **Get some sunlight and fresh air.** Spending time in green spaces can benefit us physically and mentally. This could be as little as sticking a jumper on and opening the windows or eating lunch in the garden if you have access.

• **Find ways to spend your time.** There are lots of different ways to keep busy during the day. You could focus on admin/clear out tasks around the house or more creative things such as puzzles, books, films, crafts, podcasts, writing and yoga.

**Media Coverage and emotional wellbeing**

Media coverage is everywhere and it can be difficult to get away from the news, which for some people can cause even more anxiety.

In the face of uncertainty, it’s natural to feel increased feelings of anxiety or worry, feelings that can be worsened by the constant stream of news and information. We’ve put together some top tips to help you and those around you consume media more mindfully and protect your mental wellbeing.

**1. Stay up to date using trusted information…**

The best places to follow for up to date official information are:

• The [UK coronavirus (COVID-19) page](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) will keep you in touch with how the Government is responding.

• The [NHS coronavirus (COVID-19) page](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/) includes a wide range of health-related information.

• If you are planning to travel abroad check the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice page](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice), however, you will need to check with your manager about travelling at this time and the implications this will have on work.

• Follow [Public Health England](https://twitter.com/PHE_uk) or The [Department of Health and Social Care](https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk) on Twitter for regular updates.

There will also be daily TV briefings from the government and senior experts which you can access on the standard news outlets.

If you see or need further information, make sure you check that the source is trusted and reliable.

Finally, if you’re sharing other information on social media or with friends/family, think about the impact it may have on others. If in doubt, follow the three rules:

* *is it true (e.g. do you know the reputable source), is it kind, is it useful?*

**2. …but consider limiting your intake**

The media can be all-consuming and many of us may find ourselves constantly refreshing, reading and re-reading content. This can increase the focus and anxiety around the virus and uncertainty. Follow these top tips to limit your intake:

• Don’t be afraid to mute or unfollow people that are posting unhelpful information or that you find increases your anxiety

• Turn off notifications for media outlets and engage on a more planned basis

• If you feel you’re becoming consumed, try and practice some mindfulness. The app Headspace is a good place to start.

**3. Fill your news feeds with positive news.**

As the WHO have recognised, the kindness and compassion being shown by many in this crisis is fantastic. Many outlets are sharing positive stories and messages, including:

- [The Happy News](https://thehappynewspaper.com/)paper (Instagram, facebook, twitter)

- [Action for happiness](https://www.actionforhappiness.org/) (facebook, instagram, twitter)

- Headspace (twitter, instagram, facebook)

Let us know what other accounts you know about and we will keep this list updated.

**Social Wellbeing**

• **Plan Ahead.** Life may get a bit chaotic at times so it’s good to have a plan.

* + Is there someone else that can help with childcare (assuming all parties are symptom free and not high risk)?
  + How are you going to work best from home?
  + Do you have a way to get food/supplies delivered if you are in isolation?

Spending a reasonable amount of plan planning for yourself and your loved ones is sensible. Focus on what you can control, rather than what you can’t.

• **Check on each other.** Even more than usual. Ask twice and know where to signpost people to if they are feeling overwhelmed. There is a list of places you can signpost people to at the end of the document, along with a list of wellbeing ambassadors you can also contact.

• **Stay connected.** Keep in touch digitally with friends, family, colleagues – video chat, whatsapp groups, online messaging. It could be an opportunity to do things differently (watch a film at the same time, have a virtual pub visit or cook a meal together) or get back in touch with people you have been meaning to.

**Physical Wellbeing**

During the periods of isolation and assuming you are well, keeping active will also help the mind as well as the body.

• **Try to keep active.** Build physical activity into your daily routine if possible. This doesn’t require a treadmill, instead focus on basic activities such as cleaning the house, walking up and down the stairs, joining an online fitness/workout class.

There are also a huge collection of home workouts and seated exercises that you can do. At the minimum, make sure you get up every 30-40 minutes and go for a walk around your house or garden if you have one.

* **Follow on-line classes.** 
  + If you are a member of a gym, ask what they are doing to keep physical activity going, for example: Freedom Leisure based in Woking and Guildford are offering access to Les Mills online content.
  + The Body Coach is also doing a regular 9am online video on YouTube for school children, which you can join in with.
  + Some gym instructors are setting up Zoom sessions for you to follow, again from your home.

**Financial Wellbeing:**

*Consider your finances where necessary.*There appears to be some support from the government, with more planned for the coming months, but that may still take some planning.

* Advice from Money Saving Expert is updated regularly and pulls together different options that may be available for support. <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2020/03/uk-coronavirus-help-and-your-rights/>
* There are a number of benefits being offered to NHS staff at present, however, this is dependent on stores and businesses remaining open. Companies offering discounts are on our ASPH Facebook page and also our Staff Benefits App.
* There are also a number of local businesses that are offering ASPH staff support such as taxi services, Takeaway meals and food / shopping support.
* Keep up to date with the national media on supermarket opening times for NHS staff.

**Cultural Wellbeing**

At times like these we all pull together and typically we are a caring bunch of people in the NHS. You will be working flat out to look after patients at the moment, but remember your colleagues as well. This is the time to remember kindness and respect to your fellow colleagues, whatever their role.