

Maintaining good well-being whilst in social isolation



BIRMINGHAM

Education
Partnership

A guide for staff





Hello!

Staff well-being has always been a priority, but never more so than now whilst we are in the midst of uncertainty and a different way of working.

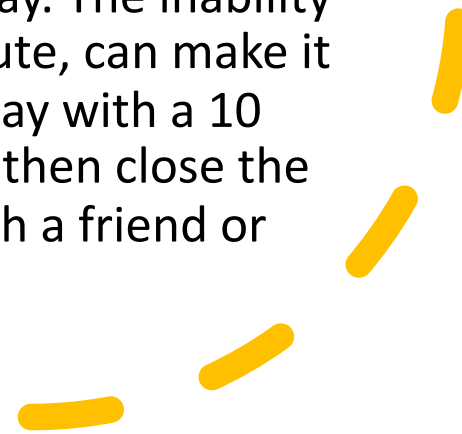
The following guide will give you some insightful ideas to action right away, including maintaining a good routine, dealing with isolation and getting a good night's sleep. It is up to you to decide what helps you. If it works, keep doing it. If it doesn't, stop and try something else.

The following slides are well researched ideas that work...so give something a go!

Plan your well-being

It is important to be reasonable with yourself about what is achievable working remotely. You could be in the situation where you are home-schooling your own children or looking after someone who is vulnerable. So it is crucial to:

- Establish a routine and a way of working that also includes time for you – this is **essential** in the current climate
- Chunk your working time down into bite sized segments so that you can give work your focus and then provide teaching time if you are managing your own children or responsibilities too
- It's also important to bookend your day and provide clear boundaries to help you get in the right mindset for work as well as demarcating the end of the working day. The inability to switch off after work, as there is no commute, can make it difficult to switch off. For example start the day with a 10 minute coffee or exercise in the morning and then close the day with some meditation or a social chat with a friend or colleague



Working space

Make sure, where possible, that you allocate a space in the house just for work.

If you don't have a home office, do as much as you can to create an ad hoc, bespoke space exclusively for work. Not having a well-equipped home office space when we begin remote working can cause a temporary decrease in productivity.

So find somewhere you can either physically close the door or physically put away your computer and materials.



Get out and get physical!

When our brains are perceiving uncertainty or distress we can enter “survival mode”. This means our heart rate may increase, our breathing is different, our bodies feel tense. Sometimes being in survival mode also impacts the parts of the brain that control our attention, our concentration even our speech. To help reduce that distress, we must release it in a bodily way through moving our bodies. [source: www.welldoing.org]

If you are well and able to, plan in some time outside everyday, even it is as simple as a walk in your local area.

If you need to remain inside, create a workout space you can use. Access YouTube to join in with live or pre-prepared workouts. But keep moving and motivated to maintain your physical well-being. Plan this into your daily routine.

Here are some home work out ideas:

<https://www.verywellfit.com/best-ways-to-exercise-at-home-1231142>

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minute-workouts/>



Healthy Eating

Eating a balanced diet can help keep our bodies and minds healthy.

Try to avoid drinking too many fizzy drinks or eating too much sugar as this can cause your blood sugar to spike and then crash. You may feel good for a short while but then you will feel rubbish.

Keep hydrating and drinking water throughout the day

Here are some healthy eating, affordable recipes you could try:

<https://www.goodtoknow.co.uk/food/recipe-collections/cheap-family-meals-33813>

<https://www.jamieoliver.com/recipes/category/course/cheap-cheerful/>



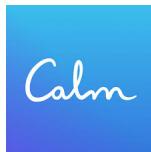
Good Quality Sleep

If your mind feels full up or your emotions are overwhelming, you will find it hard to enjoy a good night's sleep.

There are lots of free, meditation and soothing sound videos available. There are some paid for apps like Headspace or Calm or you could find a podcast which is funny or humorous to listen to in bed.

If you are still finding it hard to sleep, take a pad and pen and write down a to do list to look at in the morning.

Reduce the amount of alcohol, rich food or caffeine during the evening and try to go to bed and wake at a similar time each day.



Managing anxiety

Worry isn't just in our heads. When it becomes excessive we feel it as anxiety in our bodies too. Anxiety can be reduced when we can create a sense of control. Here are some things to help with the feeling of anxiety and developing a sense of control:

- turn off notifications for news and social media, so you only look at it when you choose to
- follow government guidelines on prevention and reducing the risks to you and your family
- choose what you focus on, if possible see the isolation as an opportunity for starting a new interest or doing things you would not normally have time to do
- remember that the overwhelming thoughts and feelings will pass and try is possible to think of the bigger picture, and that the situation is temporary
- stay connected to others and ensure that you have daily check-ins with family and friends and even organise a weekly quiz or activity.

It is unreasonable to assume that you will never need help at any point during this uncertain time. Ask for help and reach out to others, whether that is a family member, friend or a national helpline





I am...

Dealing with the feeling of isolation and our sense of identity

Our workplaces are often crucial to our identities – many of us identify who we are by the work that we do. So when we are not in that same place every day then we may feel we have lost our connection with our 'tribe', some of our sense of control, our routines, the day to day helping out of others.

A sense of belonging – to your school communities – and a sense of identity work together to bolster us at this time as do reaching in to relationships, creating your own sense of routine at home and knowing what will work for yourself and what is inside or outside your control. [source: MonicaHKang]

We are inherently social beings and thrive on human connection, so it makes sense that we would be feeling lonely during a period of social distancing. Don't be hard on yourself for the feelings that come up – all feelings are valid. Just remember that our feelings do not dictate reality (e.g., feeling lonely doesn't mean you are in this alone).

Useful Organisations



Charity providing support if you have been diagnosed with an anxiety condition.

Phone: 03444 775 774 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 10pm;
Saturday to Sunday, 10am to 8pm)

Website: www.anxietyuk.org.uk



Working with the Voluntary & Community Sector and NHS Providers have put in place offers of support for adults and also Key Workers led by Mind and Living Well Consortium

- 0121 262 3555
- Open: 9am-11pm

For key workers there is a dedicated support line provided by Living well Consortium

- Open: 9am-11pm
- 0121 633 1217