

Surviving Well in Difficult Times

These are tricky times for everyone. You may well feel that life was hard enough already, even before Covid-19, and that this has just made it harder. Being cooped up at home, without our usual distractions, is not easy. So try and be kind to yourself. You don't have to get everything right; you just have to muddle through with everyone else. Do something just for you every day. Be kind to others. We are all in the same boat with Covid-19. Doing a small kindness for others every day will help them and you. Find out what you could do, by asking. Have a go at some of our ideas for surviving well. Just pick one. Small steps are the way ahead...

ROUTINE

Creating a new routine will give you a sense of order and normality. Have a go at this, 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. Getting up at regular times, showering, and getting dressed can help you feel better.



If you're not familiar with why U.S. Navy Admiral William McRaven believes that 'making your bed' can help you change the world, watch [this inspiring speech](#). If you make your bed every morning, you will have accomplished the first task of the day,' he said. 'It will give you a small sense of pride, and it will encourage you to do another task, and another, and another. And by the end of the day that one task completed will have turned into many tasks completed.'

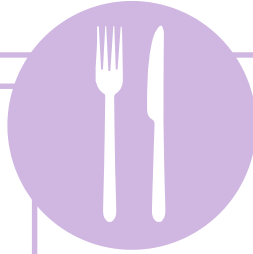


Routine can also be maintained through our sleeping habits. Go to bed at sensible times. Health professionals say that during self-isolation we should continue to wake up, get dressed and try to do something productive with the day.

Remember that we are experiencing a trauma right now. This isn't normal and is a challenging time for everyone. It is important to be kind to others, but most importantly ourselves. So, if a strict routine every single day doesn't work, just try and set some sort of structure that works for you. It's okay to not be on it all the time. Cut yourself some slack.

EATING WELL

It is important to try to eat well. If food is already an issue this can be doubly hard. Try to plan your meals, and give yourself permission to be flexible if you don't have all the foods you would normally have. Everyone is having to make compromises and you are not alone.



When going food shopping, prepare a list in advance. Have alternatives in mind in case your 'safe food option' is not in stock at the supermarket.

Try and set meal times each day and stick to them. Also set snack times (this can help avoid snacking throughout the day). Try to eat at least three meals each day (and snacks) and drink plenty of water. Keeping well hydrated is also really important. Try not to skip meals. Try to limit how many high-caffeine drinks you have, and avoid too much alcohol.

If you are now living 24/7 with a partner, your family, or roommate, this may increase anxiety around food. What was once secret is now more difficult to hide and to control. Use this support to your advantage. Ask for help. Be honest when you are struggling – don't hide. Challenge your feelings, thinking and behaviour.

If you are on your own and isolation is making it worse, get in touch with friends or family. You could join them for virtual mealtimes and eat together. Maybe schedule calls immediately after eating and intentionally seek out virtual company for these particularly vulnerable moments.

It's okay for things to be challenging right now, it's okay if your eating patterns are irregular, it's okay if you're snacking more, moving less. That doesn't mean your struggle is invalid, as eating disorders don't take days off. But things won't be this way forever. This is an unique and difficult situation and what matters most is taking care of yourself and being well enough to look out for others.

The UK is not going to run out of food so you don't have to deliberately eat less to ration food or use this as an excuse to do so – eat an amount you know to be healthy for your body.

Look after yourself. Our bodies deserve to be nourished, loved and cared for just like we do.



If you've bought lots of food and you may be tempted to binge, perhaps keep it somewhere more difficult to get to such as a shed, or the attic. Try to avoid buying lots of binge foods (you can still have treats - buy single or small ones). The key to manage binge eating is not to diet, restrict or allow yourself to go hungry. Permit yourself to eat all foods in moderation.

KEEP IT BALANCED

Being isolated and not being able to do your usual exercise routine can be challenging. It is important to have balance, to keep active but also to give yourself permission to rest.

Many people with and without eating disorders are talking openly about fears of weight gain. This can be hugely triggering if you have issues with food. It's a reality that your exercise patterns and regular routine are going to change for a while. Accepting this can be really helpful. If you've been compulsively over-exercising, this could be a time to gently address this and begin to accept a new level of activity.

Don't forget to also keep your mind active – crosswords, sudoku, reading or doing something creative - something that you really enjoy and can focus on.



Keeping active doesn't just mean doing sport, running or going to the gym. Walking, gardening or housework can also keep you active.

We all need food, regardless of our activity level. Food should never be seen as a 'reward', but is vital for our bodies to function. Exercise is to keep our bodies and minds healthy and strong. But please reduce exercise if it's due to guilt or purely to burn calories.

STAY CONNECTED

Agree regular check-in times and feel connected to those around you. Love to grab coffee with a friend? Still do it - each in your own homes, but making a call to chat whilst you drink it!



Stay connected with loved ones through WhatsApp, Skype and FaceTime.

Talking about your feelings isn't a sign of weakness; it's really important for all of us. Talk about your feelings to family and friends. They may be struggling in different ways to you – you can support each other.



Remember, over the coming weeks you may have to be alone, but you don't have to be lonely. Face to face contact is going to be very limited - but we are blessed to be facing this crisis in the 21st century where most of us have some access to phones and social media for other forms of connection. Make sure you have the right phone numbers and email addresses of the people you care about.

Sometimes things are thrown at you that you cannot control. The only thing you can control is how you deal with them. Do not run away. Do not let it control you. Talk to someone and do not be ashamed to ask for help. You are more than what you are going through. Remember things can and will get better.

LIMIT THE NEWS

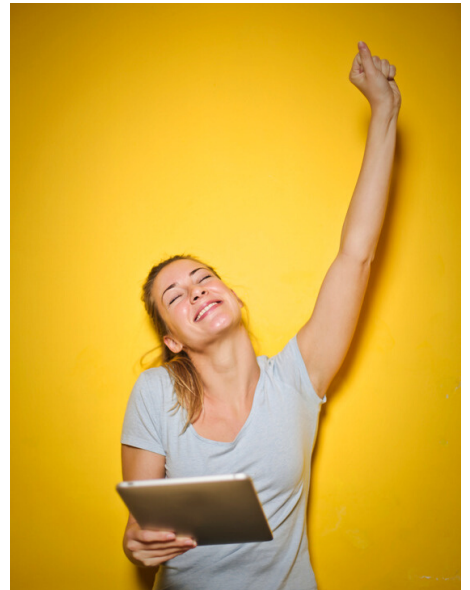
Limit the amount of time you spend reading (online or on social media) or watching things which aren't making you feel better. You could choose a specific time each day to watch or read the news.

Some 'good' news sites:

The Happy Broadcast is a website that brings good news stories from around the world. Friendly graphics and large font make it great for kids to view too.

Positive News is an online magazine about the good things that are happening.

Optimist Daily is focused on the here and now where people can get the good news of the day.



Have breaks from social media and mute things which are triggering.

There is a lot of misinformation circulating - so stay informed by sticking to trusted sources of information such as the government, NHS and the World Health Organisation websites. Focus on evidence and facts, rather than fear and rumour.



CONNECT WITH NATURE

You may be able to buy seeds, flowers or plants online for delivery, to grow and keep either outdoors or even indoors. If you order items for delivery, ask to have them left at your doorstep, to avoid face-to-face contact.

Being in nature or bringing nature into your everyday life can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. If you have a garden, make the most of it. If not there are lots of things you can do instead.



See some of the most beautiful sites and animals in the world from your own home:

Google Arts and Culture have made a huge range of sites and museums available through virtual tours online. Explore Pompeii or the Eiffel Tower.

As well as art and culture you can now access live video footage of animals and birds, zoos and seaside destinations, both around the world and within the UK (Cornwall).

www.birdsong.fm is a radio station dedicated to playing birdsong 24/7. Relax to the tranquil sounds of dawn chorus on your mobile, tablet or desktop.

Listen to natural sounds, like recordings or apps that play birdsong, ocean waves or rainfall. Get as much natural light as you can. Spend time with the windows open to let in fresh air (if it is not too cold).

Take a walk as part of your daily exercise. Even if you live within a town there will be lots of gardens with beautiful flowers and blossom trees to look at.

Arrange a comfortable space to sit, for example by a window where you can look out over a view of trees or the sky, or watch birds and other animals.

PLUG INTO YOUR SPIRITUAL SOURCE

When everything is so uncertain and full of chaos, we need to rely on the only truly dependable, unchanging source of comfort - but also of other things that are so essential to us as human beings - joy, hope, and comfort.



For Christians, the source of courage and security is God. While we are looking at God, we do not see ourselves. It is the story of many Christians already that they have found Jesus to be a faithful friend in stormy times. Jesus even promises peace beyond our own abilities, if we give our cares to him. And in days when we may not have many other people to distract ourselves from our own thoughts, this may be even more blessed than usual. Take time to read the Bible, pray. Again, connect where possible, share worship tracklists, take moments to pray and worship with others over the internet or via phone calls - whatever works for you.

CONTINUE TO ACCESS SUPPORT

Ask about having appointments by phone, text or online. For example, this could be with your counsellor, therapist or support worker.



Join an online tastelife course! Keep an eye on our website where we'll be listing those starting up.

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ASK FOR HELP



None of us are superhuman. We all sometimes get tired or overwhelmed by how we feel or when things go wrong. If things are getting too much for you and you feel you can't cope, ask for help.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Mind - [Coronavirus and your wellbeing](#)

BBC - [Coronavirus: How to protect your mental health](#)

BEAT - [Eating Disorders and Coronavirus](#)

Tastelife - tastelifeuk.org
Facebook: [tastelife UK](#)
Twitter: [@tastelifeuk](#)

AnxietyUK suggests practising the "Apple" technique to deal with anxiety and worries:

Acknowledge: Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind.

Pause: Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Pause and breathe.

Pull back: Tell yourself this is just the worry talking, and this apparent need for certainty is not helpful and not necessary. It is only a thought or feeling. Don't believe everything you think. Thoughts are not statements or facts.

Let go: Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond to them. You might imagine them floating away in a bubble or cloud.

Explore: Explore the present moment, because right now, in this moment, all is well. Notice your breathing and the sensations of your breathing. Notice the ground beneath you. Look around and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch, what you can smell. Right now. Then shift your focus of attention to something else - on what you need to do, on what you were doing before you noticed the worry, or do something else - mindfully with your full attention.