Coping with Covid-19 / Coronavirus: Staff

Why is coping difficult?
We know that when humans live in situations where they are under threat it can have negative consequences on their mental health. Those under threat might have disrupted thought processes and heightened risk perception, increased emotional reactions, increased perception of their own vulnerability, increased suspicion and distrust of others, reduced perceived control of situations and reduced social interactions. After 'outbreaks' of other diseases, depression and anxiety often increases. Here are some ways in which we can all look after our wellbeing, and those around us.

How to cope
- It is normal to feel more stressed at times like these; it doesn't mean you aren't coping or you're weak. Take time to look after yourself physically and mentally. Rest, eat, hydrate, stay active with exercise and maintain contact with people you love and trust, avoiding alcohol, tobacco or drugs.
- Some people may want to avoid you because they think being in your presence might increase their risk of catching the virus. If this happens, try to stay in touch using digital methods and share your experiences with colleagues; they're probably going through the same.
- Try not to refer to people with the coronavirus as 'victims' or 'cases'; they're humans with their own identities who are a lot more than the virus that they have been unlucky enough to catch.
- Share and talk about the stories of people who have recovered or who have supported someone with the virus. Offer appreciation for and celebrate those who are caring and supporting people affected.
- If you feel worried about coronavirus or Covid-19, try not to watch, read or listen to news articles about it. If you must find out information, limit it to once a day for a short amount of time and use reliable sources of information from the NHS or the government.
- The virus is affecting everyone from all walks of life. Be empathetic to anyone affected.

Managers
- Communicate clearly and accurately in ways which everyone can understand.
- Be a role model for self-care.
- Rotate workers regularly, pair colleagues up so they have support, particularly when in the community. Check that people are having enough breaks and be compassionate to those whose families are affected; they might need more time out than others.
- Signpost colleagues to places they can get physical and mental health support.
- Ensure that colleagues are trained in basic psychological first aid.

For those looking after children

- Try to be honest, in ways they can understand about what is happening.
- Explain how to prevent infection in ways they understand, and explain why it is important.
- Help them practice handwashing if needed.
- Help children express their emotions through talking, play and art in a safe place; this will bring them relief.
- Try to keep their routine; ensure they have activities to keep them occupied.
- Try to keep children with parents or guardians if possible. If separated, make sure they maintain contact through phones or age-appropriate social media.
- Be a role model for how to cope in times of stress; they will often copy you, and if you are calm then they will reflect this.

For those looking after older adults

- Share information about what is going on and how to reduce risk of infection in ways which they can easily understand. Explain why it is important. Repeat if necessary, with patience. Use visual reminders and help them practice handwashing if needed.
- Older adults with physical or mental health conditions may become more stressed, agitated or withdrawn.
- Give emotional and practical support and consult local health services if needed.

Coping with Self-isolation

Quarantine has been shown to prompt symptoms of post-traumatic stress, anger and confusion. After coming out of quarantine people have experienced stigma, financial difficulties and boredom. Even if you're not in quarantine but are self-isolating, humans are not designed to live in social isolation. Social isolation is linked with higher rates of depression, anxiety and mental and physical health conditions.

Connect with others

Even though you're not going to see people face to face, stay connected. Speak on the 'phone, text, message, email, Skype or FaceTime. You can support each other emotionally, distract yourself from negative thoughts and emotions and make plans for when the health risks have reduced.

Be Active

It will help to stay active. If you keep your body moving it will help your body stay in good condition and will lift your mood too. It's also essential for a good night's sleep. Here are some ways to keep active:

- Dance in your room to your favourite music
- Follow a yoga session on YouTube
- Do a few sit-ups
- Walk up and down stairs

Coping with Self-isolation (continued)

Learn New Skills
You might feel bored at home without your normal routine. To lift your mood, try learning a new skill. You can find videos on YouTube for how to do different hobbies and there are apps which can help you learn a language. You might have some books which you have not yet read, or an instrument to practice playing. Learning a new skill gives us a sense of achievement and mastery which increases wellbeing.

Give to Others
This can be difficult when you're not leaving your home but there are still ways to give back to your community:
- volunteer for a charity helpline
- offer your skills to a charity you support
- join in some online fundraising
- help someone you know solve a problem
- listening to someone who is going through a difficult time on the 'phone

Giving to others has been shown to make us happier than when others give to us.

Pay attention to the present moment
This is also known as mindfulness. It involves noticing what is happening right now rather than worrying about the past or the future. One way of doing this is to go through your senses one by one asking:
- What can I see?
- What can I hear?
- What can I feel (emotionally and physically, both inside your body and outside)?
- What can I smell?
- What can I taste?"

Take time to really find a range of different sensations, and notice when they change.

Here are some more tips which help maintain our mental wellbeing:
- Keep a routine: by getting out of bed at the same time and going to bed at the same time you reduce the risk of sleep problems. Have a shower or bath just like you would normally, get dressed for the day even if people aren't going to see you. The closer to normal your routine is, the easier it is for your mind and body to adjust to the change.
- Eat regularly and drink water; even if you don't have an appetite your brain needs fuel.
- Take time away from screens. Current advice is that you should turn off your electrical devices such as phones at least an hour before bed to give your body time to become less alert.