

SURVIVING OR THRIVING?

NJC Newsletter

Mental health wellbeing during COVID-19




Mental Health Awareness Week

18th - 24th May 2020



Mental Health
Foundation

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

A photograph of a hospital hallway with light blue walls and a white ceiling. Two healthcare workers in blue scrubs are pushing a gurney down the hallway. A digital display on the ceiling shows '3 12'. A sign on the wall to the left says '№3'.

Infectious disease outbreaks, like the current Coronavirus (COVID-19), can be scary and can affect our mental health. While it is important to stay informed there are also many things we can do to support and manage our wellbeing during such times.

NJC has created this newsletter with the aim to:

- Provide reputable COVID-19 information to help reduce anxiety to those feeling overwhelmed with the extensive media coverage.
- Provide tips on how to improve our mental health and wellbeing during the outbreak.
- Raise discussion on the potential threat the outbreak has not only on our physical health but also our mental health.
- Destigmatise mental health disorders and raise the importance of positive wellbeing at work.

Let's Talk



Mental Health...

What does mental health mean?

A person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being.

7 signs of a mental health issue

- Change in feelings
- Difficulty interacting
- Loss of interest
- Change in sleeping habits
- Low energy
- Uncontrollable emotions
- Appetite or weight change

Are you worried about mental health?

If you're having mental health problems, **you're not alone**. 2 out of 3 people will experience mental health problems at some point in their lives. If you need urgent help please contact:

- NJC EAP: 03334000545
- Samaritans: 116 123
- MIND: 03001233393
- Text Shout 85258
- Your GP

Why could you be feeling this way?

There are all sorts of reasons why you may be finding it hard to cope:

- Relationships and/ or family problems
- Loneliness or isolation
- Bereavement
- Financial worries
- Job related stress
- Depression or thoughts of suicide
- Heavy use of or dependency on alcohol or drugs
- Illness
- The COVID-19 pandemic





Preventing Infection

Rumour and speculation can fuel anxiety and having access to good quality information about the virus can help you feel more in control, such as government websites. Public Health England (PHE) states the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus. Face masks for the general public are not recommended to protect from infection, as there is no evidence of benefit from their use outside healthcare environments. The following precautions will help prevent people from catching and spreading COVID-19:



Stay at home if you are unwell or have been asked to work at home by your employer. Common symptoms are a new continuous cough or a high temperature.



Do not touch your eyes, mouth or nose if your hands are not clean.



Try to avoid people who are unwell, for most it will be a mild infection. Apply social distancing.



Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds regularly. Remember to clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze. Put your tissues in the bin straight away.



Understanding Stress

During COVID-19 pandemic

It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis. Everyone will be dealing with the crisis differently and will be in different circumstances.

Some employers have furloughed employees. They may feel uncertain and worried about their job.

The majority of employees, where possible, will be working at home. This might be leaving employees feeling isolated and disconnected.

It may not be possible for some employees to work from home and it may be essential for them to go to work. Employees may feel fearful of becoming infected.

Some individuals have different personal circumstances, some may have gardens and outdoor space, whereas others may not. Some may have companionship in their household, where as others may be alone.

Everyone will be feeling impacted by the pandemic, even employers as they deal with uncertain conditions that the country has not faced before which involves making tough decisions.

The next page provides coping strategies and practical advice to stay mentally and physically safe during this current outbreak.

Stay at home

See all COVID-19 Wellbeing tips below for those at home or currently working .



Our mental wellbeing is important as it is a vital part of our life and can impact our thoughts, behaviours and emotions. When our mental health is affected, it can lead to errors and accidents, ill-health and injury, and reduced productivity. It can be a root cause of major accidents at work.

Exercise



Exercise keeps stress levels low and allows our immune system to fight back. The current Government guidance is that we can leave the house **once a day** for a form of exercise.

Consider exercising in your garden or your local park, as long as you stay 2 meters away from others that do not live in your household. The fresh air alone will improve your wellbeing, even if it is a simple walk!

Otherwise try watching exercise videos on YouTube to complete workouts at home.

Diet



Eating healthy foods and eating regular meals can impact your wellbeing.

Fruit and vegetables are good snacks as their sugar is converted into energy relatively slowly and they also provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Choose foods that are easy to digest i.e. pasta, rice, bread, salad, fruit, vegetables and milk products.

Avoid drinking too much alcohol and eating too much fatty or sugary foods as they provide a short-term energy boost followed by a dip in energy levels.

Stay at home

See all COVID-19 Wellbeing tips below for those at home or currently working



Activities



Spend time doing things that you enjoy or learn a new skill to reduce low mood. You could try meditation which helps clear your mind, or a new cooking recipe, baking, gardening, painting, knitting, DIY or many other activities. If you are not a hobby person then spend time with the persons in your household if they are well. Challenge them to a quiz or binge watch your favourite TV series.

Stay connected



It is good to stay aware of what is going on in the news, however extensive news coverage can cause anyone to feel anxious or distressed. If the news or social media causes you to feel worried, try to limit your news intake. In times of stress we work better in company and with support, try to keep in touch with friends and family by phone, social media, video call apps. If you are struggling with your mental health you can contact a helpline for emotional support.

Routine



Plan your day! Regular routines are essential for our identity, self-confidence and purpose. Try to start your day at roughly the same time you usually would and aim to set aside time each day for movement, relaxation, connection and reflection. Create to do lists to help you stay organised and focused. Try to separate the weekend from the week, save films or your favourite meal for Fridays and Saturdays or find new things to look forward to.

Anxiety Techniques



Anxiety UK suggests practicing the 'APPLE' technique to deal with worries and anxiety.

ACKNOWLEDGE

Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind.

PAUSE

Try not to react as you normally do. Try not to 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 statement or facts.

LET GO

Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You do not 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 present 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.



Domestic Abuse



Measures to stay at home to tackle COVID-19 can cause anxiety for those who are experiencing, or feel at risk of domestic abuse.



There is never an excuse for domestic abuse, no matter what the circumstances are.

For anyone who feels they are at risk of abuse, it's important to remember that there is help and support available to you including police response, online support, helplines, refuges and other services. You are not alone.

The household isolation instruction as a result of COVID-19 does NOT apply if you need to leave your home to escape domestic abuse.

What is domestic abuse?

- Coercive control and 'gaslighting'
- Economic abuse
- Online abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse

What signs to look for?

- Being withdrawn
- Having bruises
- Controlling finances
- Not being allowed to leave the house
- Monitoring technology use such as social media platforms

Where to get help?

Remember, domestic abuse is not always physical violence. If you believe you are being abused, or worried you may commit domestic abuse, or if you suspect that your neighbours or those in your community are victims of domestic abuse, the government encourages you to report it to the police. Go to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) > COVID and domestic abuse > support for victims of domestic abuse guidance for contact numbers.

Acts of Kindness



Kindness is this year's Mental Health Awareness Week theme. One thing that we have seen all over the world is kindness. People are coming together to sing on balconies in Italy, others are setting up groups to offer support to the elderly or vulnerable. The added benefit of helping others is that it is good for our own mental health as it can help reduce stress and improve our emotional wellbeing.

The Mental Health Foundation has created 'random acts of kindness' that anyone can get involved with, please visit their website for further details.

Some examples are:

- Call a friend that you haven't spoken to for a while
- Tell a family member how much you love and appreciate them
- Make a cup of tea for someone you live with or help with a household chore
- Arrange to watch a film at the same time as a friend and video call
- Tell someone you know that you are proud of them or thankful for them
- Send a motivational text to someone who is struggling
- Send someone you know an inspirational quote or a joke to cheer them up
- Call someone who you know is experiencing loneliness or self-isolation
- Donate to a charity, a foodbank or organise a charity event from home
- Call a colleague and ask how they're finding the change in routine
- Give praise to your colleague for something they've done well
- Offer to share a skill via video call - you could teach guitar, dance etc.
- Offer support to vulnerable neighbours
- Support our unsung heroes
- Be kind to yourself



Employee Assistance Programme

What is it?

An employee assistance helpline that provides **free** confidential counselling and legal information service that operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to NJC employees.

How can professional counsellors help you?

The counsellor can help with a wide range of problems at any time of the day or night. The counsellor will ensure that you have the time to talk through your concerns and feelings, helping you to clarify the practical and emotional issues and providing information when appropriate.

You can also receive guidance about issues concerning the law which may be causing you distress, personal matters such as:

- Domestic problems
- Personal injury claims
- Motor related disputes
- Property worries
- Consumer rights
- Employment matters

Employees are also entitled to 6 free face to face counselling sessions per topic.

NJC and you...

NJC cares about your wellbeing, the EAP has been implemented to support our employees through difficult times. Please call NJC Employee Assistance Programme (EAP): **0333 400 0545**. Quote: Not Just Cleaning, or go to njc.hapi.benefits.com



NJC recognises the importance of raising mental health awareness and the positive impact that can have for individuals. NJC strives to beat stigmatisation and to have a healthy workforce, especially during the unprecedented times which we currently face during COVID-19.

NJC is extremely proud of all of our employees who are dealing with changes to their lifestyles. It is commendable how adaptable our employees have been during the outbreak. NJC is committed to following government advice and guidelines to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees and our customers.

NJC beams with pride for our team members carrying out decontamination and disinfection cleans. Ensuring the safety and hygiene of buildings for our customers and their employees is essential and everyone's commitment is inspiring.



From NJC to ALL the 'unsung heroes' out there, thank you!