

Sustaining your wellbeing during self-isolation and shielding

COVID-19 is a unique situation which is affecting all of us. You are probably finding that there are times when you feel anxious, stressed, sad, angry or even numb. As well as times when you're feeling strong, resilient and hopeful. These reactions are perfectly normal in a very abnormal situation. For most people, symptoms pass in the weeks following a return to normal activities.

If you are in self-isolation or shielding, these reactions may feel more intense. Everyone is different and you may have some good days and some bad days. These emotions are not a reflection of your ability to do your job or that you are weak.

Looking after yourself

There is a lot you can do to maintain and improve your wellbeing if you start to feel a bit low. It may be that you can recall healthy things you have done in the past that helped you through difficult times. In addition, this resource has been designed to help you through self-isolation or shielding. Choose the suggestions that appeal to you.

Be kind to yourself

- **Be kind to yourself** - understand that things might feel difficult for a while. Use the time to look after yourself in ways you wouldn't usually due to the busy lives we normally lead.
- **Try to maintain a daily routine** - e.g [sleeping well](#), daily exercise, rest and relaxation (why not try meditation apps like, [Headspace](#), for free) and eating regularly and healthily.
- **Instead of dwelling on what might happen, focus on the here and now** - think about ways you can improve what is important in your life and make positive plans and goals for what you want to do when self-isolation/shielding is over.
- **Limit the time you watch the news** – this includes looking on social media or online for information about the virus. Instead look for positive messages and ways communities are supporting each other.
- **Here are some reflective questions you can use daily:**
 - What am I grateful for today?
 - Who am I checking in on and connecting with today?
 - What expectations of 'normal' am I letting go of today?
 - How am I moving my body today?
 - What beauty am I either creating, cultivating or inviting in today?
- **Try new things** – examples might be reading, TED talks, learn a new language, participate in online learning and remember the projects you have put off. Aim to come out of self-isolation with a sense of achievement, no matter how small.

Connect with others

- If you can, spend (virtual) time with those you love and focus on how you can make the time feel positive together. Take the time to reflect on what you value most and help each other through difficult days.
- You can try using digital technology (e.g. Skype, WhatsApp, FaceTime, Zoom) to increase social connection. Set up a supportive local group on social media, keep messages positive and help each other develop a strong sense of community.
- Think about ways you can help others. This can be an encouraging message or a call to someone else in isolation or doing something practical at home for someone you love.

Seek help

- Difficult feelings and thoughts may last for a time and these are normal reactions to this stressful event and will get better for most people.
- If you need to, make contact with local services and use professional support you already have. Isolation does not mean you cannot be in contact with your health or support network.
- Family, friends, faith organisations and community groups can all be a source of support both during, and after, a period of isolation.
- Talk to others about your experience and how you are feeling. Others are probably feeling the way you are. Journaling can sometimes help
- Look through the wellbeing resources on GTi at [gti/wellbeing-support](#) (also accessible [outside of the Trust](#)) or the [NHS national wellbeing website](#).
- **Email us for psychological support** at COVID-19staffwellbeing@gstt.nhs.uk or EvelinaStaffSupportPsychology@gstt.nhs.uk
- **Employee Assistance Programme (Care First)** - for free and confidential access to counselling and expert help, call 0800 174 319
- **Spiritual care team** - email chaplains@gstt.nhs.uk. In emergencies, call 020 7188 1187
- **National NHS staff support line** - call 0300 131 7000 (7am-11pm) for free wellbeing support. Or text FRONTLINE to 85258 (24/7)
- **Occupational health** - call 020 7188 4152 or email OHAdministrator@gstt.nhs.uk open Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm

If you can work from home

- There is working from home guidance and top tips on [GTi](#), which is also accessible [outside of the Trust](#). This includes help accessing email, using Skype, and using your home device for remote working.
- Take a look at our [top tips for working from home](#)

Respiratory advice if you have had COVID-19

General advice

- Avoid holding your breathe during activities e.g. climbing stairs or bending.
- Try to 'blow as you go' - this means breathing out on effort e.g. when bending, lifting, reaching or standing up from a chair.
- Try to avoid rushing.
- Try matching the rhythm of your breathing to your steps e.g. take a breath in and out on each step when climbing the stairs.

If you are experiencing breathlessness, our advice and exercises may help. The information [available here](#) is designed to help you manage your stable, long-term breathlessness.

If you feel your breathing is getting worse or you are experiencing breathlessness as a new feeling, it is important to seek medical advice.