

HOW TO STAY WELL DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

The Coronavirus outbreak has created a set of challenges that most of us have never had to face before. Financial and economic uncertainty, worries about our health and that of our loved ones, the curtailment of personal liberty and not being to have what we want when we want - it is natural to be anxious about the future and how we are going to cope. This may all feel difficult or stressful. For some who were already struggling before the outbreak it can seem like it is all too much. But there are a lot of things we can try to help our wellbeing. For example:

Eat well and stay hydrated. Whilst there may not be the choice on the supermarket shelves that we are used to it is still possible to cook nutritious meals. Try to plan as much as possible and shop less often.

Get outside. Currently we can leave home once per day to exercise. Now that the weather has improved, and we have more hours of daylight, get outside and top up your vitamin D levels. This will help your mood. So will being in nature. Try to do this mindfully – focus on the changing season and the new growth that is emerging. Don't forget social distancing rules. Stay at least 2 metres away from anyone else.

Keep active. Run up and down the stairs if you can. Use tins as weights to keep up muscle strength. Do exercises in your chair to keep flexible. Exercise releases endorphins which will lift your spirits as well as maintaining physical health. Get fit for free- NHS has lots of ideas for keeping well including a free download called strength and flex where you can have a coach in your own home at no cost!

Keep taking your prescribed medication. Continue accessing treatment and support if possible.

Take care of your environment. As we enter a period of enforced domesticity – embrace it! Do those jobs around the house that you never had time to do, catch up with the garden if you have one. If you can get hold of seeds and planting equipment or houseplants or living herbs, then do so.

If you have care needs or provide care or support to someone else Surrey County Council have set up a community helpline to direct residents who need support to a service that can help. Call 03002001008.

Stay connected – by phone, social media e-mail etc. Now is the time to look up old friends and keep in touch with family. Lots of clubs which have had to close are providing online meetings.

Try to keep to a routine especially if working from home. Set the alarm, get showered and dressed as if you were going to work. Stop for a coffee break and lunch. Start and finish on time. Don't look at business e-mails once you stop work. Move to a different space even if it is only a different part of the room once the working day has ended. Make your working environment as pleasant as possible preferably near a window.

Entertainment – do you have books piled up waiting for you to have time to read them? Or do you have a kindle you can download new titles to? Box sets you have been promising yourself or films you never had the chance to see when life was busier?

Relax. Practice mindfulness. Google mindfulness - get self-help for an online guide. Try the Headspace App to help with anxiety. Try something creative like painting, knitting, sewing writing etc.

Remember – this will pass. Try to stay positive and don't focus on the negative. Every day brings stories and examples of human kindness – neighbours looking out for each other, families reconnecting, communities coming together and a reappraisal of what is important in life. The way we live may never be the same again – and that could be a good thing.