

## ADVICE FOR SELF-CARE DURING THE CORONAVIRUS SITUATION



In these uncertain times as Coronavirus continues to dominate our news, it is easy to become anxious and stressed. Worry about if/how the virus may continue to spread, self-isolation and concerns for our 'normal' lives are all natural and understandable thoughts and feelings. We have regular updates from the NHS and Government about how to look after our physical health, but of equal importance is how we look after our emotional and mental health during this time, learning new skills and coping strategies we can continue using long after the virus has disappeared.

**Here are a few suggestions which can make a difference, which with practice can impact positively on all our lives:**

### **1** *Practice hobbies*

If you are self-isolating at home, (or required to do so due to Government requirements), look for those things at home you have wanted to do for a while, but didn't have the time. Complete that DIY project, re-read your favourite book, pick up that knitting again, catch up on your favourite TV shows, listen to your favourite music, spend time in the garden planting flowers, and if you don't have one grow seeds in pots on your windowsills- nature is a wonderful way to distract in difficult times. Experiment with your cooking, encouraging your children to make fun meals, play board games, reconnect with family in the confines of your home. If you live alone (or even if you don't), catch up with friends regularly using video links, having 'bake-off' challenges and book club meetings.



### **2** *Introduce formal relaxation to your day*

There are many different types and resources to choose from, so choose one that suits you. Relaxation can be as simple as taking 5 minutes through your day to concentrate on your own breathing, and no special equipment is needed. Books, websites and mobile 'phone Apps are all great places to start.



Here are a few we recommend:

**Insight Timer:** <https://insighttimer.com/> - free mobile 'phone app, which has relaxation practices for beginners including learn to meditate, coping with anxiety, managing stress, improving sleep, mindfulness and work and much more.

**Yoga Nidra network:** <https://www.yoganidranetwork.org/> - described as 'a balm for troubled times', it facilitates deep relaxation and acceptance of things which we cannot change.

**Tai Chi:** <https://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/services/pain-service/reconnect2life/improving-health-and-fitness/tai-chi/> - something new to try which is beneficial to both mind and body. It uses slow, graceful movements with breathing techniques that research shows assists with stress reduction, relaxation, enhanced emotional wellbeing and positive mental state, improved immune function and improved quality of life. It can be done standing or sitting, can be done almost anywhere, and needs no special equipment.

**Anxieties.com:** <https://www.anxieties.com/57/panic-step4> - help and guidance about the benefits of deep breathing and awareness of the breath. Start to notice your breath, becoming aware of the chest and abdomen gently rising with the 'in' breath, and falling with the 'out' breath. Take time to notice the pause between breaths. Take time to notice the feel of the air on the back of the throat and in the nostrils - it will feel cool on the 'in' breath and warm on the 'out' breath.

**Mindfulness:** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/> - this relaxation method allows us to focus on the sensations around us, paying attention to these rather than negative thoughts and feelings. There are many books, websites and Apps dedicated to this, so there will be something for everyone.



### 3 *Consider your sleeping patterns*

Try to maintain your normal sleep pattern by going to bed at a reasonable time as if you were going out to work, rather than staying up into the early hours. Both our physical and mental health are affected by irregular, poor sleep, reducing our energy levels and lowering our immune systems. If anxiety is preventing you from sleeping, try doing relaxation before bed and during the early hours if you wake up. This will help to soothe the nervous system, slow breathing rate, relax muscles and encourage calm thoughts.

### 4 *Remember self-compassion*

We are living through a difficult time, but as much as possible embrace the opportunity to slow down, without the usual demands, time pressures and responsibilities of regular life. Let relaxation and self-compassion become regular features of your day, because they are skills which you can continue to use in life.

