

Looking After Our Wellbeing:

A grab pack for adults working remotely during the Covid 19 response

Psychology and Wellbeing Service

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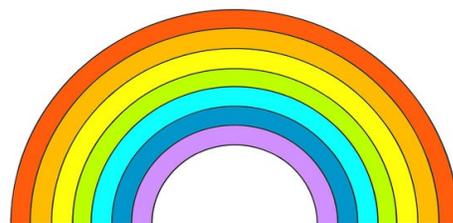
There is a lot of uncertainty around the current **COVID-19** outbreak, particularly given that the situation is constantly developing and our knowledge about the virus is evolving daily.

Understandably, this can cause feelings of worry and anxiety for everyone. It is therefore important to not only consider your physical health during such challenging times, but also to pay attention to your mental health. It is normal to feel worried, stressed and/or anxious when you are faced with uncertain situations, and the sooner you acknowledge and learn to take care of your mental health and general wellbeing, the healthier and better equipped you will be to cope with the situation we are all facing.

Whilst we all react differently to stressful situations, it is important to remember that how you feel is a **NORMAL** reaction to an **ABNORMAL** event so, whether you are experiencing a little bit of worry, feeling anxious, becoming unsettled by the constant change, loving your new ability to work from home, or enjoying spending more time with family, it's important to take a moment to pause, think and plan what you're doing to look after you, your loved ones and the community around you whilst we are all together in this unique situation.

The media gives us all a lot of information that can help us stay safe and follow the virus guidelines but remember to stick to official sources for the facts. Gov.je also acts as a source of Jersey specific guidance with lots of our most frequently asked questions available for us to review. We've also included more grab packs, just like this one, for you to download if you want to read more on related topics.

This grab pack offers some handy tips to support you if you are an adult working at home and physically distancing, thinking about how you can look after your own mental health and wellbeing.



During this unique time we are all considering the changes we need to make to keep ourselves and our families safe. Check out our range of wellbeing grab packs online, offering helpful tips on a range of subjects including the importance of sleep, parenting children with ADHD, study skills, wellbeing for children and many more.

In this grab pack:

- Looking after your mental health whilst working from home
- Managers working from home
- How to look after you ... fitting your oxygen mask

Looking after your mental health whilst working from home

Our working lives have been changing for a while now – COVID-19 has led to a massive change, more uncertainty, and new challenges for many of us. It is more important than ever that we practise self-care in these challenging times.

Tips for home and remote working

Working from home or remotely can feel challenging and isolating, especially if you don't prioritise the time to take a moment and think about how you can navigate the demands you'll encounter positively, with your own wellbeing in mind. It's all too easy to let your focus slip and work all day long with no breaks or structure in place, or to sometimes think there's no rush and the pace at which you're working becomes so relaxed you suddenly realise you haven't met your deadlines. We run a greater risk of being constantly attached to our technology, checking emails and answering calls at all hours with no tech free time. The reality of our current situation is that many of us might also be working different hours because our job falls into the essential category or because we have other demands placed upon us that means the regular 9 to 5 just isn't feasible any longer. Whilst we are all doing our part to support our community through this response, we also have an obligation to ourselves to take a moment to put some new guidelines in place at home and, in doing so, maximise our opportunities to get through this period with our wellbeing intact and our professional contributions remaining meaningful.

Helpful Websites

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>



Routines

A structured day can be a good way to address this:

- Designate a place to work that is as free of distractions as you can make it.
- Set a routine for working at home - it's important to get up and get started, to take regular breaks including a lunch break, and to finish working and turn off at an appropriate time. If you are sharing child-care too then work out agreed working times with your partner in advance so everyone feels they are achieving something, even if it's just a few tasks.
- If you are home-schooling or looking after children whilst trying to work, have a conversation with work about those realities. Try and set up a routine whereby you have distinct times for working and for helping with school time. Dividing your attention may leave both things suffering and being there for children, offering undivided attention at these uncertain times, is very important.
- It might sound basic but an important part of the routine is getting washed and dressed and not staying in your PJ's all day, as this can affect your motivation.
- Try and set clear tasks for the day - three major decisions or activities is a good day's work - but keep an eye on ongoing tasks too. You won't always get as much done at home.
- Have a proper lunch break. Stop, make something nice to eat, and eat away from your work area. Try and get outside and get some natural light if you can do so safely, and try some exercise, again within guidelines on social contact. This helps your mental health and your motivation to work from home.
- Use your electronic diary to clearly say to others when you are working and when you are available to speak.

- Consider keeping a journal - incorporating gratitude practice - ask "What was I grateful for today?" - and learning - ask "What was I challenged by today?" - in a week or so you will start to get insights into things you can improve in this working pattern.
- Ensure regular supervision happens to support you in this new and unusual way of working for many. It can help you feel connected and proper supervision can be a supportive place to explore what's gone well and what was unrealistic to expect from yourself in the first place.
- Consider building in times to call colleagues and team mates where you can see them. We tend to miss face to face contact and you might be surprised just how much your mood lifts by reverting back to good old eye to eye conversation.
- When you are done for the day, pack away your work things or leave your work area. Putting your out of office message on can help with closure and focusing on other things at home that is not work related.



Managers working from home...

Remember your insight into your team is just as important as your strategic thinking and specialist skill set. Whilst life at home has changed, so too has the work place. The incidental supervision and check-ins as you walk through the office have been temporarily paused with remote working, and conference calling taking their place.

Your systems need to adapt to nurture the human element within your team, to recognise what it now takes to promote effective communication and to keep everyone's wellbeing positively charged.

- Have a plan – let your staff know that you are thinking and looking ahead, that you are staying well informed so that you can respond to their questions the best you can.
- Be clear that the knowledge we have is changing daily and this may impact on processes and targets so we all need to be flexible moving forward and not get too frustrated by change.
- Worry and fear can grow in the absence of information, so try to keep communication lines open – even if the situation remains unchanged.
- Empathise – Recognise that it's ok to be anxious and experience the stress in this situation but these are normal, often healthy reactions, given the abnormal nature of this event.
- Reassure as best you can and be a positive force in their working day e.g. positive encouragement, sharing good news stories, morning check-ins with humour etc.
- Understand and recognise when stress has become too overwhelming for particular individuals and communicate the various support options available to them. Also remember that this applies to you as a manager!

How to look after you: ... fitting your oxygen mask

For anyone that's flown before, you'll remember the advice they give on aeroplanes when they tell you to put on your own oxygen mask before helping others if the aeroplane ever encounters problems. This is one of those times when this guidance absolutely applies, no aeroplane required!

The Mental Health Foundation outlines 10 ways in which to look after your mental health and the trick is to think about which ways appeal to you, your personality and your lifestyle. These include keeping active, eating well, drinking sensibly, keeping in touch, caring for others, accepting who you are, doing something you're good at, taking a break, asking for help and sharing your feelings.

Time is precious but try to give some thought to the little things like taking breaks and eating properly and think about planning your days or weeks to include something from each of the following ('5 ways to wellbeing', developed by NEF):

BE ACTIVE

Try to make sure that you and your family get regular exercise every day. YouTube has lots of exercise videos for kids and adults. Get children involved in planning their own 'indoor PE'.

If current government advice permits, try to get outside once a day either into your garden if you have one or in a place where there are few people. If you can't go out, open the windows for some fresh air and take some time to look at the world outside.

TAKE NOTICE

Take a break from the news and social media and concentrate on what's happening in the here and now in your family. Notice and appreciate the small things.

Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing.

There's lots of good mindfulness apps to try, but if that's not for you, just getting into something you enjoy e.g. cooking, drawing etc. and really focussing on it can be just as good.

CONNECT

Social connection is one of the most important ways that we can look after our mental wellbeing. Social distancing is going to make that trickier, but we're lucky enough to have technology to help us out. Think physical distancing, but social connections.

Social media is great, but if you can, try to have phone calls or even video calls. Arrange to FaceTime/Skype a friend for coffee, phone relatives more often than usual.

Whilst it can be helpful to share worries, try to find other things to talk about too.

GIVE

Research tells us that giving back to our community helps people to feel valuable and makes us happier. We might not be able to contribute to our community in our usual way, but many people will still be able to find ways to give back.

Lots of community groups are setting up schemes that aim to help vulnerable people at this difficult time. If you want to get involved, check out local social media for ideas.

Many of us will not be in a position to offer practical support. We can still offer mutual support to friends and family by checking in with them regularly.

KEEP LEARNING

Learning a new skill or honing an existing one gives us a sense of purpose and achievement.

Whilst we're busy learning, we're less likely to experience anxious thoughts and worries.

Social-distancing will bring new challenges, but it will give many of us the time to start a new hobby or learn about an area that we've always been interested in.