

Caring for yourself and your family whilst self-isolating

Living in social isolation can be challenging. It's normal to feel anxious and for relationships within the family to become strained. Here are some tips to help you keep you and your family healthy and calm during this difficult time. Don't worry about sticking to anything too vigorously, just do your best.

1. Try and create a routine

- Try and stick to parts of your normal routine as much as possible.
 - Encourage children to get up at the normal time, dressed and eating breakfast at the same time as if they were going to school.
 - This will help things feel a bit more normal and will also help everyone sleep better.
- Through the rest of the day, structure in regular activities including exercise, play, family time, quiet time, school work and chores
 - Try and have these tasks at the same time every day.
- Above all, just do your best.
 - It's likely that children will struggle to stick to new routines, so don't worry if things don't go to plan, just do what you can.
 - An example routine is at the bottom of this sheet.



2. Ensure a healthy balanced diet (as much as you can)

- Try and establish routine with food, ensuring that breakfast, lunch and dinner are at the same time every day and that each meal contains enough nutrients and vitamins. You might notice that you or your children start snacking more because of boredom, so try and have healthy snacks available like fruit and nuts.
- If you've struggled to get food at your local supermarket, just focus on the basics; frozen (or fresh if available) vegetables, canned beans, lentils and rice provide plenty of nutrition.
 - Aim for as many plant-based products as you can.
 - You can type in the ingredients you have available into [bbcgoodfood.co.uk](https://www.bbcgoodfood.co.uk) for recipe inspiration.
- If you are struggling to get any food, [daretocare.co.uk](https://www.daretocare.co.uk) delivers food packages for those who need it and [mutualaid.co.uk](https://www.mutualaid.co.uk) is delivering food items for those self-isolating.



3. Prioritise movement every day

- Try and prioritise movement every day. Being active reduces stress, increases energy levels and helps improve sleep
 - There are lots of free online classes that you can access right now on youtube – anything from high intensity workouts, to gentle yoga.
- Plan out what time in the day you're going to exercise and try and stick to it every day.
- It can be really motivating to exercise together as a family, even if you do different activities, to do it at the same time helps to make it a routine.
- Be gentle with yourself and the family and try not to set the expectation too high, even just ten minutes of movement can have a big impact on staying healthy and positive.



4. Get out in the sunlight, fresh air and nature

- Make sure you get out in the fresh air once a day for a short walk, ensuring you remain 2 metres away from other people.
- Try and encourage everyone in the household to get out every day and support them to stick to the 2-metre rule.
- If you're not feeling well and can't go out, try and make sure you place yourself near a window and expose yourself to natural light throughout the day.



5. Create space to be alone

- Self-isolating can mean lots of family time together, this can be a great opportunity to connect as a family, but it can also be difficult to get time alone or privacy.
- Try and identify a place in the home where you or other family members can go to have alone time when they need.
- If you don't have your own room, this could even be a cushion in the corner which is the delegated "quiet space".
 - Explain to the family that this space should be respected and people in the quiet space shouldn't be disturbed.



6. Stay connected

- It can be really hard to be away from friends and family members, so make sure you and your family reach out to loved ones
- As part of your daily routine, include at least one phone call with a friend or family member
- Try and facetime as a family with other family members to help connect you
- Allow for private conversations so you can share your own worries with friends and loved ones



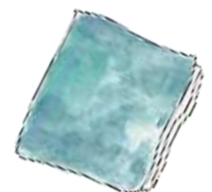
7. Create time to share worries and to reassure children

- It's important that children feel able to share their worries right now, especially anything they may have read or heard
 - Encouraging children to share their fears and anxieties can help reduce them and help them to realise that things aren't as scary as they thought
 - Support children to notice how they're feeling so that they can verbalise difficult emotions without them building up
- Reassure children that although this is a strange time, these measures are only temporary
- Remind them that they are safe and that they have everything they need
- Remind yourself that you are safe and you can access help if you need
- There are resources for dealing with anxiety below



8. Help the family keep their minds active

- One of the biggest challenges with self-isolation is boredom. Make sure you plan ahead by identifying activities that the family can do inside and that stimulate their minds.
- Make a list of activities family members currently like doing and new ones that they could try
 - Think of board games, puzzles, quizzes or try something creative such as drawing, singing, or creative writing.



- You could try and learn a new skill as a family, such as a new language, cooking, baking or gardening.

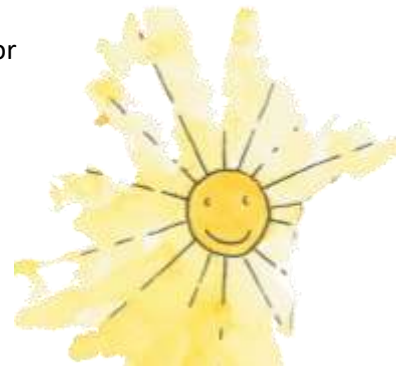
9. Prioritise things the family enjoys

- It's important to make time for things that the family enjoy or that makes people laugh. It can all feel very serious, but creating moments for laughter and happiness is vital
 - If the family has a favourite tv show, game or meal, try and make time for this at least once a week as something to look forward to
- Support family members to continue their individual hobbies, interests and things that make them feel good



10. Encourage self-compassion

- This is a difficult time for everyone and it's normal to feel worried, frustrated or upset. Try and focus on all the positive ways that you and your family are managing to adapt and what you are achieving in the face of these challenges
- As a family, share three things you've achieved every day. It can be as simple as "cleaning my room" or "completing 30 minutes of exercise"
- As a family, share three things you are grateful for every day.
 - It's natural for human beings to notice more of the negative, difficult experiences. Sharing what we're grateful for helps us to notice the positive things that are happening too



11. Make time for relaxation

- Especially in busy households, make sure there is time every day for something relaxing and quiet
- Mindfulness is a great way of helping people to feel calm and relaxed and can be done together as a family
 - You can use the headspace app for free or access free resources through the NHS website
- Think about calming music, candles, baths or reading as activities that might help family members feel relaxed

12. Be careful with news and information

- Try to limit the time you spend watching, reading or listening to coverage of the outbreak as this can cause anxiety
 - Try setting a specific time to read or listen to updates
 - Limit yourself to checking a couple of times a day
 - Be aware of how long you're spending on social media and try and set limits
- Use trustworthy sources – such as GOV.UK or the NHS website – and fact-check information from the news, social media or other people.



Resources for managing anxiety

1. Useful websites

- www.youngminds.org.uk
- www.mind.org.uk
- www.nhs.uk

2. Helplines

- YoungMinds Crisis Messenger
 - Provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis
 - If you need urgent help text YM to 85258
- Childline
 - Comforts, advises and protects children 24 hours a day and offers free confidential counselling.
 - Phone 0800 1111 (24 hours)
- The Mix
 - Information, support and listening for people under 25.
 - Phone 0808 808 4994 (24 hours)
- Samaritans
 - 24 hour confidential listening and support for anyone who needs it. (Adults included.)
 - jo@samaritans.org
 - Phone 116 123 (24 hours)

3. Apps

- Headspace
- Catch it
- Calm Harm
- Chill Panda
- Calm

4. Online counselling

- Kooth
- Qwell
- Big White Wall

An example daily routine

Before 9:00am	Get dressed, have breakfast
9:00 – 10:00	Morning walk
10:00 – 11:00	School work
11:00 – 12:00	Exercise
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch
1:00 – 1:30	Chores
1:00 – 2:30	Quiet time
2:30 – 4:00	School work
4:00 – 5:00	Creativity/family games
5:00 – 6:00	Call family/friends
6:00 – 7:00	Dinner
7:00 – 9:00	TV/family games
9:00	Bedtime