

This fact sheet helps you to know what you can do to maintain and improve your mood.

Useful facts

Everyone copes and responds differently when times are tough. So be gentle with yourself and those around you. Just because others seem to cope, there is no right or wrong way to manage or be in any situation.

Many things can impact on our lives: local or family situations, national and international events, the coronavirus crisis, financial pressures and wider political unrest. Don't expect to feel okay all the time or to be perfect at everything. You are doing the best you can.

What can I do to self care and help myself?

Get financial and employment help: Financial and employment concerns can have a major impact on your mood and morale. If you experience problems, don't ignore them. Instead, talk to people and get all the help you can, for example talk to those responsible for your mortgage or rent, utility companies and any other loan companies that you owe money.

The Citizens Advice agency has lots of advice and resources to help, including advice on the cost of living crisis. See the link at the end of the fact sheet.

If you have not already done so, you might want to talk with your employer and, to understand your sick pay and benefits' rights, see Government backed Moneyhelper. <https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en>

Plan practical things: Structure and plan your day. Get into a routine, even doing small things like keeping on top of household chores 1 – 2 jobs a day can help you feel better and more in control.

Having a 'to do list' can help in identifying the sort of things you want to do but also help in planning how to achieve them.

Have a plan and set boundaries with yourself.

Stay connected with others: Stay in touch with family, friends and work colleagues.

Talk about your worries: Speak with others about how you are feeling. If you find this hard, check out the sources for additional information at the end of this fact sheet. You will find useful pointers to assist you.

Look after your body: Look after your physical health by eating healthily, drinking enough water, and moving your body. Move your body regularly and choose activities that you enjoy and that suit your level of fitness and mobility; join others for sports, or try yoga, pilates, cycling, running or go for a brisk walk.

Stay on top of difficult feelings: Many people will feel anxious and worried as a result of different things. There are a number of steps that you can take to help reduce feelings of worry, stress and anxiety.

Do not stay glued to the news: Limit the time you spend watching or reading the news (perhaps to once a day) so you're not constantly exposed to upsetting stories. Don't have the radio on all the time, constant news on things outside your control can be challenging and upsetting.

Limit the time you spend on the internet or tracking social media: Spending a significant amount of time on social media can increase anxiety and decrease self-esteem. Set boundaries and limit the time you spend on social media, this can help you focus on other things.

Try to find things to do that you enjoy: Have something to look forward to, meet a friend, go for a walk, try to avoid staying in all the time.

Take time to relax: This can help with difficult emotions and worries; it can help improve wellbeing.

Get a good sleep: New routines and situations can cause sleep problems, and sleep is important for wellbeing. Avoid looking at screens as well as coffee, tea, energy drinks and alcohol before bedtime. Create an environment that promotes sleep. Keep your bedroom dark, quiet and tidy at night. Temperatures between 18C and 24C tend to promote good sleep. Remove electronic gadgets and use an alarm clock instead of your smartphone.

What can I do to self care and help myself? Continued

Take notice: Be interested and take a fresh look at the world around you. There can be beauty in the most unusual or mundane things. Try to enjoy the moment, whatever you're doing. Reflect on your experiences, so you become more aware of what matters to you.

Connect with nature: Where possible, try to connect with the outdoors, even if it's simply by watching through a window, looking at trees or watching birds flying past.

Keep learning: Learning new skills can help, learning to cook, using online apps and tools for exercise or a new language. Setting yourself goals can help you become more confident and happier without putting pressure on yourself. Focus on succeeding with small challenges, which can feel great while you work through them and when you see the result.

Give to others: Supporting others can have a big impact on people's lives and improve your own wellbeing too. Consider joining community groups this can help increase understanding and accepting of other people's worries, concerns and behaviours.

Alcohol: Avoid drinking too much alcohol. Having no alcohol days and staying within the recommended limits often improves sleep, helps you feel better in the mornings and prevents you feeling tired during the day (to learn more visit the NHS website The risks of drinking too much– see the link below).

The above section has been aligned to NHS 'Every Mind Matters – Mental wellbeing while staying at home'. More information is available on the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>

When to seek medical help

Contact your surgery for help and advice if:

- ◆ you have had a low mood for more than 2 weeks
- ◆ in the last month you have been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless
- ◆ you are struggling to cope with a low mood
- ◆ in the last month you have been bothered by having little interest or pleasure in doing things
- ◆ things you're trying yourself are not helping
- ◆ you would prefer to get a referral from a GP

Where can I find out more?

These Self Care Forum Fact Sheets might be helpful:

POWER of Self Care (wellbeing) - <https://www.selfcareforum.org/fact-sheets/>

Long COVID and Post COVID Syndrome - <https://www.selfcareforum.org/fact-sheets/>

For sources, additional information and advice on maintaining your mental and physical wellbeing, visit:

NHS website: Top tips to improve your mental wellbeing. <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/top-tips-to-improve-your-mental-wellbeing/>

NHS website: Five steps to mental wellbeing. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

Mind: Five ways to wellbeing. <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

NHS website: The risks of drinking too much. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/the-risks-of-drinking-too-much/>

Citizens Advice website: Cost of living. <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/get-help-with-the-cost-of-living/>

Moneyhelpers: <https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en>