# Six ways to be well during the Coronavirus

Many people are feeling anxious and overwhelmed at this challenging time. It's more important than ever to think of ways of protecting our mental health and wellbeing. Here are some ideas.

## Belong

At a time of physical distancing and self-isolation, you may not be able to see people. It's still important to stay connected - find ways to stay in touch and talk about how you're feeling. Phone, text, video call, send a letter, wave to a neighbour.

## Nurture

If you're feeling greater stress than normal, find ways to cope that will nurture your mind and your body. Work out a routine, eat as well as you can, relax, sleep well and drink sensibly. Try to think positive thoughts about what you CAN do.

## Be Active

Keeping active is important for your mental health. Get outside if you can. When you are indoors, try to move, stretch or dance to your favourite song. Doing the vacuum cleaning and gentle seated exercise counts!

## Be Kind

We're all in this together, even if we are more distant than normal. Helping someone who needs it can make you feel good. Accept offers of help as the person giving it will feel good too! Remember to be kind to yourself and make time for self-care.

## Enjoy and Learn

Learning something new could help take your mind off your worries, help you to stay calm and give you hope for the future. Keep mentally active by reading, singing, being creative, playing an instrument, listening to Podcasts, doing an online course, puzzle or playing games.

## Be Aware

Be aware of how the world around you affects how you are feeling. Choose to slow down and take time to pause. Learn some calming breathing techniques, mindfulness or meditation to help you through times of heightened worry, stress and anxiety.

For more information and ideas about how to look after your mental wellbeing visit our website www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/wellbeingpoint

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## Belong

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### Keep in touch

The psychological impact of being isolated can be substantial and in some cases can last beyond the isolated period. Enhanced communication in these circumstances is protective - it matters more than ever to be socially connected. Talk to other people that you trust about your experience and how you are feeling. Find ways to keep in touch that are safe. Family, friends, faith organisations and community groups can all be a source of support both during, and after, a period of isolation.

### Communities Pulling Together

Several communities in the Scottish Borders have introduced initiatives to support their neighbours during the coronavirus outbreak. The groups are continuing to develop and are a good first point of contact for anyone seeking support in our towns and villages.

Link News, working in partnership with Borders Care Voice, Berwickshire Council for Voluntary Services (Bavs) and other third sector organisations, are gathering this community information on their website at www.linknews.org.uk or e-mail hello@linknews.org.uk

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## Nurture

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### Self-care at a time of anxiety, worry and stress

A period of self-isolation can be anxiety provoking. It is unusual. Like all unusual events, stress, boredom and worries about health, family or work can be heightened. If you have had previous mental health issues then you may be worried that they may return or worsen.

These reactions are normal in times of distress. They reflect the ordinary anxieties and reactions of anybody who finds themselves in an abnormal situation. Adjustment is a gradual process, and everyone reacts differently. If you are staying at home, try to maintain a healthy lifestyle and routine:

- Eat regularly and healthily
- Drink plenty of water
- Rest, relax and try to get sufficient sleep (your normal amount)
- Keep yourself safe - don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions
- Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you spend watching or listening to media coverage that may be upsetting.

Visit this **NHS** website for advice, tips and tools to help you make the best choices about your health and wellbeing. https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/

The **Mental Health Foundation** also has tips about things we can do to support and manage our mental wellbeing during the coronavirus: https://mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus

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## Be Active

*Keeping active is important for your mental health. Get outside if you can. When you are indoors, try to move, stretch or dance to your favourite song. Doing the vacuum cleaning and gentle seated exercise counts!*

### Keep moving

Exercising can help you to cope with stress and anxiety. It can also help you to sleep better.

Just because everyday routines are forced to change, that doesn't mean you should stop moving. It's really  important to use movement and activity as a way of breaking up your day, if you feel well enough. Exercise indoors, play active games, dance, go into the garden if you've got one. Find a physical activity that you can do, one that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

There are many fitness websites and online apps that you can use to help find a routine. YouTube has many free exercise videos such as Cosmic Kids Yoga or Paths for All Strength and Balance exercises.

To stay fit and healthy you should be aiming to do 20 - 30 minutes of moderate physical activity a day.

Try these free home work out videos from the **NHS Fitness Studio** - you can pick from 24 instructor-led videos that cover aerobics exercise, strength and resistance, pilates and yoga. https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/

Making small changes to how active you are can make a big difference to your wellbeing. Visit NHS Borders **'Small Changes Big Difference'** web page for tips on being more physically active and more: http://www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/small-changes-big-difference/

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## Be Kind

*We're all in this together, even if we are more distant than normal. Helping someone who needs it can make you feel good. Accept offers of help as the person giving it will feel good too! Remember to be kind to yourself and make time for self-care.*

**Use this 'Coping Calendar' from Action for Happiness to help you find ways of being kind to yourself and others.**

## COPING CALENDAR: KEEP CALM. STAY WISE. BE KIND

30 actions to look after ourselves and each other as we face this global crisis together. Please use & share 🙏

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** Make a plan to help you keep calm and stay in contact | **2** Enjoy washing your hands. Remember all they do for you! | **3** Write down ten things you feel grateful for in life and why | **4** Stay hydrated, eat healthy food and boost your immune system | **5** Get active. Even if you're stuck indoors, move & stretch | **6** Contact a neighbour or friend and offer to help them | **7** Share what you are feeling and be willing to ask for help |
| **8** Take five minutes to sit still and breathe. Repeat regularly | **9** Call a loved one to catch up and really listen to them | **10** Get good sleep. No screens before bed or when waking up | **11** Notice five things that are beautiful in the world around you | **12** Immerse yourself in a new book, TV show or podcast | **13** Respond positively to everyone you interact with | **14** Play a game that you enjoyed when you were younger |
| **15** Make some progress on a project that matters to you | **16** Rediscover your favourite music that really lifts your spirits | **17** Learn something new or do something creative | **18** Find a fun way to do an extra 15 minutes of physical activity | **19** Do three acts of kindness to help others, however small | **20** Make time for self-care. Do something kind for yourself | **21** Send a letter or message to someone you can't be with |
| **22** Find positive stories in the news and share these with others | **23** Have a tech-free day. Stop scrolling and turn off the news | **24** Put your worries into perspective and try to let them go | **25** Look for the good in others and notice their strengths | **26** Take a small step towards an important goal | **27** Thank three people you're grateful to and tell them why | **28** Make a plan to meet up with others again later in the year |
| **29** Connect with nature. Breathe and notice life continuing | **30** Remember that all feelings and situations pass in time | | | | | |

> *Everything can be taken from us but one thing: the freedom to choose our attitude in any given set of circumstances* ~ Viktor Frankl

## ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

www.actionforhappiness.org

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## Enjoy and Learn

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### Keep Learning

It can be hard to feel motivated at times of increased stress and worry but if you find you have extra time then learning something new and keeping mentally active could help to protect your mental health.

**Live Borders** has a good electronic library that provides free access for all library members to a range of eAudiobooks, eBooks, eMagazines and eResources. If you are not a library member it is easy to register online. Visit this webpage for more info: https://www.liveborders.org.uk/culture/libraries/elibrary/

If you are interested in some more formal learning, **The Open University's** *OpenLearn* courses are free to study. OpenLearn offers nearly 1000 free courses across eight different subject areas, from History and the Arts to Money and Business. The courses are available to start right away at https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue

For a fantastic list of 'free, online, boredom-busting resources' visit **ChatterPack** - a website run voluntarily by an NHS employee. Hundreds of links to learning opportunities, whatever your interest! https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/list-of-online-resources-for-anyone-who-is-isolated-at-home

Only you can decide what you like doing. Try different things until you find what you enjoy.

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# Be Aware

*Be aware of how the world around you affects how you are feeling. Choose to slow down and take time to pause. Learn some calming breathing techniques, mindfulness or meditation to help you through times of heightened worry, stress and anxiety.*

## Take time to pause and calm yourself

Taking slow, regular breaths can help you to control anxious thoughts and feelings, and make you feel calmer. This breathing exercise is from the **NHS** https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/ways-relieve-stress/

1. Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it.

2. Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.

3. Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from 1 to 5.

4. Then, without pausing or holding your breath, let it flow out gently, counting from 1 to 5 again.

5. Keep doing this for 3 to 5 minutes.

A free introduction to mindfulness can be found at https://www.bemindfulonline.com/

Meditation could be helpful to relieve anxiety and stress. If you would like to learn how to meditate, **Headspace** offers a free two week trial that includes guided meditations for all levels. Visit https://www.headspace.com/

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# *Crisis? Ask for help*

## Emotional support helplines

For emotional support in and out of normal working hours:

**Samaritans** (24 hours)
**Tel: 116 123**

**Breathing Space (NHS 24)**
Mon - Thurs: 6pm - 2am
Fri 6pm - Mon 6am
**Tel: 0800 83 85 87**

**Borderline 0800 027 4466**
Freephone helpline for adults in the Scottish Borders who are experiencing emotional distress.
7pm - 10pm every day

**TEXT Shout to 85258**
24 hour crisis textline
www.giveusashout.org

Many people are feeling anxious and overwhelmed at this challenging time.

It's more important than ever to think of ways of protecting our mental health and wellbeing, and to look out for those around us.

**#YourPart**

Scottish Borders COUNCIL

NHS Borders

Email: health.improvement@borders.scot.nhs.uk
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to look after your mental wellbeing visit our website
www.nhsborders.scot.nhs.uk/wellbeingpoint