

A GUIDE TO COPING WITH THE STRESSES OF COVID-19

IN THIS
TOGETHER
EVEN IF WE'RE WORKING
ALONE

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FOREWORD



As part of the fabric of so many communities across the UK, we at NFU Mutual are acutely aware of the terrible impact that Coronavirus is having on a local basis. Many of our customers have been significantly affected by this outbreak and a lot of them are key workers, responsible for helping to feed and support the nation in extremely difficult circumstances.

We are seeing a huge disruption to every aspect of people's lives, with everyone having to adapt to new ways

of living and working as well as dealing with enormous uncertainties. These are difficult and worrying times – stress and isolation are very real – and it's important to know how we can all help ourselves, extend help to others, and get support from those wonderful charities and organisations up and down the country that can provide professional support, day or night.

With the support of the Farm Safety Foundation, NFU Mutual brings you this booklet of practical advice on how to take care of your personal welfare. I hope you will find it useful, not only for yourself but also for someone you may know and who you can help as a result of reading it.

With our best wishes.

Lindsay Sinclair
Group Chief Executive

HOW NFU MUTUAL IS SUPPORTING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Supporting our communities has always been at the heart of our approach at NFU Mutual. So it's at times like this, that we believe businesses like ours, have an important role to play.

Twenty years ago, as part of our commitment to agriculture and the countryside, we set up the NFU Mutual Charitable Trust. Since then, our donations have enabled charities such as the Farm Safety Foundation, The Prince's Countryside Fund, Rural Support in Northern Ireland and Farming Help in England, Scotland and Wales, to provide important support services - and we're so grateful for their presence.

We understand how isolation is affecting people and families, particularly due to coronavirus. Our members have told us that loneliness, the strain of juggling home and work, financial pressures, lack of broadband and access to general amenities, is impacting every inch of their lives and leading to feelings of heightened anxiety and fear. So we've tried to identify the best way to help. While our roots are in the British countryside, we want to make sure that our support during this challenging time, extends to our broader communities.

We've given an additional £750,000 donation to the Charitable Trust this year, which will enable funds of up to £1m to be made available. This will help build on and add to, existing charitable relationships, to support national organisations delivering vital services, reaching the vulnerable and providing practical and emotional help.

As a result of COVID-19, we know that there are extra demands on charities such as funding gaps due to the cancellation of fundraising events - which is why we want to help them take care of the 'now,' as well as the future financial health of their organisation. Some of these funds will enable charities to 'stay open' so they can continue to deliver. Other donations will be used to support frontline services such as telephone and email helplines and advice and signposting, to enable our communities to stay strong and resilient, from the Highlands and Islands to towns and remote villages.

We know that our communities, who are rallying together, also need these services more than ever and we're right by their side.

THE NEW NORMAL

The world as we knew it a few weeks ago - remember handshakes? - is now upside down.

Fear of the virus leaves us conscious of every sniffle and cough.

We are facing economic stress - jobs, hours of working, the prospect of small businesses closing. We are also bracing ourselves for weeks or months of no contact with friends and family or conversely, of having too much contact with them!

Things may feel overwhelming right now and NFU Mutual's 850,000 members are facing new challenges to their ways of living and working in an already testing year of floods and Brexit.

NFU Mutual, as Lindsay pointed out, is working hard to protect your interests, your wellbeing and your future.

One of the ways they are working is through us, the Farm Safety Foundation, a small independent charity founded and funded by NFU Mutual in 2014 to preserve and protect the physical and mental wellbeing of the farming community. Through award-winning campaigns and mental wellbeing training sessions, the Farm Safety Foundation, or Yellow

Wellies, as some may know us, have plenty experience in this area so we have compiled this little book of ways to care for your mental wellbeing, suggestions of where to learn more and a few small tweaks to your daily routine that may help.

In terms of workplace wellbeing, the COVID-19 situation presents a few different things to think about, and this little book can help with some of them. That said, sometimes too much information can be as bad as too little, so we are focusing on a few elements such as stress, what is it and why does it matter? Top tips for working at home, building your resilience, triggers and signs of mental ill health, talking and seeking support.

So, whether you're a farmer, an employer, a concerned friend, neighbour or work colleague, there's lots you can do right now to improve life for yourself and others around you who are suddenly working and living remotely.

Remember, we are all in this together, even if we are on our own.

Stephanie Berkeley
Manager, Farm Safety Foundation

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY MENTAL WELLBEING?

Being locked in all day and night, and not going to work or out to do everyday activities, is a big change to our lifestyles and could potentially have an effect on your mental health.

Mental health issues are a normal part of life but stigma and discrimination are the two biggest obstacles to people talking about mental health in all walks of life. It takes great courage to talk about an intimate experience. There is always the risk of oversharing or making others feel uncomfortable. This is especially true when talking about mental health.

This long-standing stigma means that many have a limited understanding of mental health. People still think that it's shameful if they have mental ill health. They think it shows personal weakness, that they have failed. This self-inflicted stigma can make it difficult for people to speak about even their own mental health problems.

If there is one thing we have learned over the past few years of delivering our campaigns, that is that mental

health issues do not discriminate; they can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, geography, income, social status, sexual orientation or other aspect of cultural identity.

You might feel very happy to tell your workmates about a football, netball or running injury you've had, but when it comes to changes in your mental health, people can keep this to themselves through fear of being treated differently or judged.

More than ever, it is important to be aware of the world around you, even if that world extends to four walls and few people!

One of the key ways to do this is to ensure everyone can talk about mental health but it is also essential to know how to provide support. This might include knowing how to spot the warning signs and being confident to signpost your family, friends and coworkers to the support available.

We are in this together, even if we are working on our own!

WHAT IS STRESS AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

There is a clear difference between pressure which can create a 'buzz' and be motivating, and stress, which occurs when this pressure becomes excessive.

The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.'

Right now, how this pandemic is spreading is causing stress, anxiety and fear, which can be accelerated when working from home and isolated from colleagues, friends and family.

So how can we best reduce or manage stress and anxiety during this time?

It's important to be kind to yourself. This is an anxious and stressful time for everyone, and it's okay if you feel more anxious than usual, and it's okay to take time for yourself to manage your mental health.

While anxiety is a normal and expected reaction to what is happening in the world, too much anxiety can start to cause harm. Feeling stressed and fearful every day takes a toll on your health and well-being very quickly.



Anxiety can also cause the opposite reaction: denial or refusing to believe that the situation is serious. Denial is unhelpful and dangerous. When people deny the severity of a situation in order to avoid anxiety, they might do nothing, they might even ignore the recommendations from government.

A better place is somewhere in the middle. Coronavirus and the COVID-19 illness are serious and we should be concerned about the situation. However, you can use that concern to take positive and protective actions – things like practicing good hygiene, respect the lockdown and plan how self-isolation and working from home will work for you.

FILL YOUR BOOT...

If you, or someone you work or live with, is feeling overwhelmed by the stresses of what's happening right now, try using this tool to identify the things that are concerning, worrying or causing you or them to feel down or apprehensive.

Using the space inside, literally fill the boot with all the worrying thoughts you have inside your head. No matter how big or small, try to include everything from your work, home life and the world at large that is causing you stress right now.

Once you feel that you've included everything, leave it and take a break.

After a short time, come back, take a look at the list and start to separate what you've written into things you can personally control and things that you have no control or influence over...



NOW ASK YOURSELF...

1. What can I control?

2. What is out of my control so I need to accept?

3. What needs my attention right now?

4. Who can help me? Who can I talk to?

Please Note - For more information, please see Support Section

5. How do I deal with things in a negative way?

(keeping it to myself, self-medicating with drugs or alcohol, not getting enough sleep)

6. How do I deal with things in a positive way?

(asking for help, making time for positive experiences, getting enough rest)

WORKING AT HOME

WORKING AT HOME USED TO SEEM LIKE THE DREAM WAY TO GET YOUR WORK DONE.

Until you had to do it.

This is a whole new world for many of us who are used to the office environment and the company of work colleagues.

7 hours a day, 5 days a week is a long time to spend in a little room in your house alone so it is important that you figure out when to work, where to work, and how to create boundaries between your work life and personal life.

What about office equipment, IT, relationships with colleagues and motivation?

For those of us that are not used to it, working at home for the foreseeable future means grappling with these issues and others.

It does have many benefits, but it takes dedication and smart strategies to pull it off successfully and seamlessly.



TOP TIP 1 MAKE YOUR BED

Making your bed is a simple act with powerful consequences.

To rise in the morning and complete the first task of the day will give you motivation to do more; to accomplish more.

The bed also represents you. Few things in your home are more personal. Making your bed is a reflection of your discipline, your pride and your personal habits.

If you can't get up in the morning and make your bed, what else are you incapable of doing?

TOP TIP 2 GET DRESSED / MAKEUP / SHAVE

Working in your pyjamas sounds cool, but you will feel a bit lazy and too relaxed.

Take a shower, brush your hair, even put on makeup if that's what you'd usually do. You don't need to go all out as you would for the office, but waking up and taking care of your appearance

can go a long way toward helping you feel like you're taking care of yourself and can bring a sense of normality in a very chaotic time.

You may be using video calls for your face-to-face meetings so it's a good way for you to maintain an air of professionalism (even if you're wearing trackie bottoms).

TOP TIP 3 CREATE A WORKSPACE

Another of the challenges of working from home is keeping your work and home lives separate. If you're used to going into an office each day, the separation between work and home is physical, and you want to try to recreate that as much as possible with a designated physical workspace at home.

Entering your workspace will help you turn "on" at the beginning of the day and get down to work. On the other side, leaving your workspace will also help you turn "off" at the end of the day and fully disengage. You can't do this if your work is spread out all over the house.

TOP TIP 4 WORK YOUR REGULAR HOURS

Set a schedule, and stick to it...

Just as you designate and separate your physical workspace, you should be clear about when you're working and when you're not. You'll get your best work done and be most ready to transition back to the office if you stick with your regular hours.

If you live with other people, this separation is even more critical. Communicate with your family/flatmates to establish boundaries so you can cut down on distractions during the workday and then disconnect and give the people you care about your full attention. Having a separate time and space to work will allow you to be more present in your home life.

TOP TIP 5 SET SOME GROUND RULES

Set ground rules with the others who may also be home.

If you have children, they need clear rules about what they can and cannot do while you are working.

Make sure everyone understands that just because you're at home and can spend more time with the children and pets, you still have a job to do and the best way they can help you is by leaving you alone.

TOP TIP 6 STAY CONNECTED

If you don't usually work from home, chances are there will be some bumps in the road as you learn to work fully remotely. You will have probably noticed that stress levels can rise due to the lack of typical mental breaks you get in an office.

Walking to the kitchen to make a cup of coffee and stopping for a chat with one of your coworkers, or walking to a meeting room and getting the tech set up. All of these are in fact giving our brains a chance to recharge. The office banter may be wiped out when you work from home, but the mental breaks are still so important to keep your stress levels to a minimum, so try to replicate these mini-breaks at home.

Staying connected with people is something each and every one of us has to do while we navigate this new era of working.

Try to call or FaceTime someone rather than email them. It will help you with work relationships and also make you and the person you are talking to feel less isolated.

Why not schedule a morning video call with your team. It means you can still make time for that what did you do/watch last night? smalltalk, or you could choose an 11 o'clock latte or have virtual lunch together – whatever suits you as long as you do check-in throughout the day.

Many of us are feeling anxious and uncertain right now, and we have every right to be – but being isolated at home can amplify these feelings. Never hesitate to reach out to a teammate co-worker just to ask how they're doing...

TOP TIP 7 GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK

Since you might not have an ergonomic desk and chair setup at home, plan to take more physical breaks to get up, stretch, move around. Every 25 minutes if you can.

Try to keep your normal coffee breaks and lunch time and try to avoid

distractions. Replace your walk to the cafe with a little bit of exercise.

Gyms may be closed, but there's plenty of options for working out at home, including fitness apps that offer remote classes or routines you can squeeze into your day. You can do squats anywhere. Even a 10-minute express workout counts.

TOP TIP 8 SWITCH OFF

Don't let work take over your home life - just because work is always there doesn't mean you have to be. Finish at the time you normally would. When that time comes, switch off and unplug your devices, tidy up and leave your working area as you would do at work.

Give yourself something that will signal the end of work and serve as a buffer.

Maybe take the dog for a walk - it can help decompress with something physical and fun in the fresh air or, if you usually go to the gym after work, change into your fitness gear and do 30 minutes on a turbo trainer or go for a 5K run.

BUILDING YOUR RESILIENCE

Our emotional and psychological response to any crisis is very natural and very human. It is normal to feel anxious about COVID-19 but the problem is, our responses often bring us more suffering by narrowing and cluttering our mind and keeping us from seeing clearly the best course of action.

The way to overcome this is to build our resilience through noticing our own thoughts, unhooking from the non-constructive ones, and rebalancing quickly.

This skill can be nurtured and trained through practices like Mindfulness but, in essence, here are a few effective strategies:

CALM THE MIND

When you focus on calming and clearing your mind, you can pay attention to what is really going on around you and get some perspective. Present mind thinking means you can observe and manage your thoughts and catch them when they start to run away towards doomsday scenarios.

You can hold your focus on what you choose (e.g. "Isn't it a gift to be able to work from home!") versus what distracts you with each ping of a

breaking news notification (e.g. "New dates for the 2021 Tokyo Olympics.").

This calm and present state is crucial, it helps keep the mind from wandering and it reduces the cycle of stress and worry that we can easily get stuck in. When we make a conscious effort to bring ourselves back to right now, we deepen our capacity to cope and weather all sorts of crises, whether global or personal.

CONNECT

Unfortunately, many of the circles of community that provide support in times of stress are now closed off to us as governments work to contain the spread of this virus.

Schools are shut down, events are cancelled, and businesses have enacted work-from-home policies and travel bans. The natural byproduct of this is a growing sense of isolation and separation from the people and groups who can best quell our fears and anxieties.

There is strong evidence that indicates that feeling close to, and valued by, other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world.

We know that social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health for people of all ages.

FaceTime, Messenger, WhatsApp and other video enabled options are available for you to check in with people but be conscious of those members of society who may not be as digitally connected and, if it is essential for you to check on an older or vulnerable relative or neighbour, then do so but follow the rules of social distancing, both for their safety and yours.

Social media is fantastic to help you stay in touch with people, but it might also fuel your anxiety when people are sharing news stories or posting about their worries. Consider taking a break or limiting how you use social media. You might decide to view particular groups or pages but not scroll through timelines or newsfeeds.

BE ACTIVE

Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups.

It may be harder for those over 70 or identified as being at risk of severe illness if exposed to COVID-19 to

engage in physical activity however, it doesn't need to be particularly intense for you to feel good. Slower-paced activities, such as yoga, pilates or gentle aerobics online can provide some level of exercise and there are some great options for joining an online community appropriate for all ages.

TAKE NOTICE

Like we introduced in Calm Your Mind, studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing and savouring 'the moment' can help to reaffirm your life priorities.

Heightened awareness also enhances your self-understanding and allows you to make positive choices based on your own values and motivations.

Take some time to enjoy the moment and the environment around you – Try to work less and spend more time looking out your window and reflecting. You should like the view – after all it should be one of the reasons you chose your home.

Why not get a plant for your new workspace, have a 'clear the clutter' day or take notice of how your colleagues are feeling or acting in their video calls or chats.

TRIGGERS AND SIGNS OF MENTAL ILL HEALTH

LEARN

How many times have you used 'time' as an excuse for not signing up for a new class or learning a new skill? That excuse won't cut it right now.

Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life.

The practice of setting goals, which is related to adult learning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing.

So, why not learn something new today - a musical instrument, a foreign language, a baking or cooking skill - and work on mastering it. When life

feels out of control, it is especially helpful to find something you can control plus it gives you something to think about besides COVID-19.

GIVE

At times like this we need to pull together and show compassion and kindness. Finding ways to help other people can make a huge difference in your outlook.

Maybe it's having your children write thank you notes to healthcare workers or checking in (safely) on an isolated neighbour. Not only are these good things to do but they also get you out of your own head.

One of the biggest challenges we face is the need to make conversations about mental health more common. A good starting point for this is to learn more about mental ill health.

There are different types of mental illnesses, some of which are common, such as depression and anxiety disorders, and some that are not so common such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

Mental illness, as with any health difficulty, causes disability, which can be severe. This is not always well understood, especially by people who have never experienced a mental illness.

A mental health issue is a broader term including both mental illnesses and symptoms of mental illness. However it may not be so severe to warrant the diagnosis of 'mental illness' or mental health crisis, such as suicidal thoughts which requires emergency and immediate treatment.

According to time-to-change.org.uk, there are a number of different types of mental health problems, and they each have a different impact on those who experience them, as well as their friends and families. Learning a few things about mental health problems

might help you to feel more confident about talking and listening.

ANXIETY & PANIC ATTACKS

Anxiety is a normal emotion that we all experience but becomes a mental health problem when someone finds they are feeling this way all, or most of the time. Panic attacks happen when your body experiences a rush of intense psychological (mental) and physical symptoms. You may feel an overwhelming sense of fear, apprehension, and anxiety. You may also have physical symptoms such as: nausea, sweating, trembling and a sensation that your heart is beating irregularly (palpitations).

BIPOLAR DISORDER

Bipolar disorder (or manic depression as it used to be called) is a particular type of depression where the person has extreme mood swings, experiencing extreme periods of low (depressed) and high (manic) moods. Correct diagnosis of Bipolar disorder can take a long time because the person will need to have episodes of both depression and mania. Bipolar disorder is less common than ordinary depression and requires medical treatment.



DEPRESSION

Depression is a diagnosis given to someone who is experiencing a low mood and finds it hard or impossible to have fun or enjoy their lives. This is explored in more detail in the next section.

EATING DISORDERS

An eating disorder is a diagnosis given to someone who has unhealthy thoughts, feelings and behaviour about food and their body shape. The term covers a wide range of problems with food including starving (anorexia), bingeing and purging (bulimia) and binge eating. The reasons and causes behind eating disorders are varied and complex and medical help should always be sought.

OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER

Obsessive-compulsive disorder OCD is a mental health diagnosis given to someone who experiences obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviours.

PERSONALITY DISORDERS

If someone has a personality disorder, some aspects of their personality might affect them in a way which makes it very difficult to cope with day to day life, especially when it comes to relationships. For example, they might be more or less sensitive, impulsive, prone to anger, or obsessive than others. Diagnosis of a personality disorder must be left to a psychiatrist.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

PTSD is a diagnosis given to people who develop a certain set of symptoms following a traumatic event.

Symptoms include:

- Reliving traumatic events through flashbacks, intrusive thoughts or nightmares.
- Constantly feeling on edge and alert, experiencing high anxiety or panic attacks.
- Avoiding feelings or memories of the event through keeping busy or avoiding talking about the event.
- Not being able to remember the event, through dissociation or feeling physically or emotionally numb.

PTSD can begin immediately after the traumatic event has happened, or it might begin weeks, months or years later.

PSYCHOSIS

A person experiencing psychosis perceives the world in a different way to those around them, including hallucinations, delusions or both. By definition, psychosis involves the person losing touch with commonly accepted reality, though the extent of this may vary.

SCHIZOPHRENIA

Contrary to popular belief, schizophrenia has nothing to do with 'split personality'.

It is a diagnosis given to people who experience symptoms of psychosis, alongside what are called 'negative symptoms'.

SELF-HARM

Self-harm is when someone purposely hurts themselves, usually in order to cope with intense emotional distress.



SUICIDAL FEELINGS

Suicide - when someone intentionally takes their own life - is a very complex issue and should always be treated as an emergency situation.

But what are the warning signs that someone is having suicidal thoughts?

According to www.rethink.org, warning signs can include:

- becoming anxious, irritable or confrontational.
- having mood swings.
- acting recklessly.
- sleeping too much or too little.
- preferring not to be around other people.
- having more problems with work or studies.
- saying negative things about themselves.

However some signs that an attempted suicide is likely or imminent include:

- threatening to hurt or kill themselves,
- talking or writing about death, dying or suicide, or
- actively looking for ways to end their life, such as stockpiling medication.

According to Mental Health First Aid England the steps you should take are:

- ensure your own personal safety.
- ensure the person is not left alone if the risk is high.
- seek immediate help: Emergency GP, Call 999/112 or take to A&E.
- discourage acute drug/alcohol use.
- try to limit access to any means to take life.
- encourage the person to talk – try the Samaritans on 116 123.
- consider helping create a support plan.

**REMEMBER -
CONFIDENTIALITY DOES NOT APPLY WHEN
SOMEONE IS AT RISK OF SUICIDE**

TRIGGERS

We all have mental health just as we have physical health, but it can seem more difficult to spot the signs of mental ill health.

Mental Health First Aid England have outlined some of the common triggers which might impact on someone's mental health and the signs that suggest they may need support.

People often undergo significant life changes like lockdown or self isolation without developing a mental health issue. But for some people changes in their work or personal life, like this, can prove stressful and may trigger mental ill health.

Add to this the stresses and challenges faced by everyone in daily life such as:

PHYSICAL STRESS

- Late nights, binge drinking, drug misuse, poor diet, lack of exercise and illness.

EMOTIONAL STRESS

Not spending enough time with loved ones or spending too much time with loved ones, cancellation of key life events like weddings, birthdays etc., seeing the impact of COVID-19 on family, friends or coworkers.

ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS

Poor housing, lack of outdoor space, new working environment to adjust to.

SIGNS

Many people believe that poor mental health is rare and “happens to someone else.” It isn't and it doesn't.

Although everyone's signs are individual to them, it is good to be aware of subtle or significant physical, behavioural or personality changes in those you work and live with, so you can remain alert to someone who may need your help right now or in the near future...

Recognising a mental health issue is the first step in getting the support needed to recover. One of the first signs of mental ill health may be changes in the person's behaviour.

Some of the signs to look out for include:

Physical

- Frequent headaches or stomach upsets
- Suffering from frequent minor illnesses
- Difficulty sleeping or constant tiredness
- Being run down
- Lack of care over appearance
- Sudden weight loss or gain

Emotional and behavioural

- Irritability, aggression or tearfulness
- Being withdrawn, not participating in conversations or social activities
- Increased arguments or conflict with others
- Increased consumption of caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes or sedatives
- Indecision, inability to concentrate
- Erratic or socially unacceptable behaviour
- Being louder or more exuberant than usual
- Loss of confidence
- Difficulty remembering things
- Loss of humour

At work

Look out for these signs that someone you work with, or for, may need more support:

- Increased mistakes, missing deadlines or forgetting tasks
- Taking on too much work and volunteering for every new project
- Not dialling in for team meetings
- Working too many hours: first in, last out, sending emails out of hours
- Looking unusually disheveled or unkempt in video calls
- Negative changes to ways of working

Identifying one or more of these behaviours does not mean you should make assumptions about what mental health concerns the person may have but they can be used as a way of noticing when to check in and start a conversation about how they might be coping with everything right now...

- Look out for the signs and symptoms of stress in yourself
- Learn to spot changes in others (health, personality, behaviour)
- Taking time to talk to others can help develop a support network that can benefit everyone.

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

The word depression is used in many different ways. Everyone can feel sad or down when bad things happen however sadness is not the same as depression.

People who are feeling a little 'down' may have a short term depressed mood but they can manage to cope and soon recover without needing treatment. The type of depression that does require treatment and that there is no quick fix for is 'clinical depression'.

Clinical depression accounts for 26% of all mental health issues and is a condition that lasts for at least two weeks and affects the individual's behaviour. It will interfere with the person's ability to work and have satisfying personal relationships.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE?

Someone who is 'clinically depressed' will experience at least two of these three symptoms most of the day, every day for more than 2 weeks:

- Continuous low mood or sadness that does not go away
- Not getting any enjoyment out of life
- Lack of energy and prolonged tiredness.

Other symptoms include:

- Loss of confidence / low self esteem
- Feeling guilt-ridden
- Suicidal thoughts or thoughts of harming yourself
- Difficulty in concentrating and making decisions
- Moving or speaking more slowly than usual and unable to settle
- Having difficulty sleeping / sleeping too much
- Loss of appetite / overeating leading to weight loss / gain

Not everyone who experiences depression has all these symptoms so the following is a good guide to severity of depression...

Mild Depression

4 of the 10 symptoms experienced over the past two weeks and has some impact on your daily life

Moderate Depression

6 of the 10 symptoms experienced over the past two weeks and has significant impact on your daily life

Severe Depression

8 of the 10 symptoms experienced over the past two weeks and make it almost impossible to get through daily life.

WHAT DOES THIS SOUND LIKE?

Someone experiencing depression will tend to have a negative view of themselves, the world and the future.

Things you may hear them say:

I'm useless
It's all my fault
I'm worthless
No-one loves me
Things are never going to get any better
I've let everyone down
Life sucks

Being aware of what to look and listen out for can allow you to address the issue at an early stage and guide yourself or the person you are concerned about, towards appropriate support.



IT'S GOOD TO TALK

You've seen the signs so what happens now?

How do you start a meaningful conversation with a friend, a family member or colleague about their mental health if you can't really do it face-to-face?

Having an informal chat and asking 'I'm finding it tough right now, are you okay?' can be the first step on that journey.

We don't often talk about our mental health so it might seem a little daunting to start a conversation about it but it's important to remember you don't have to be an expert you just need to care.

MHFA England has put together some ideas for how you can start the conversation.

CHOOSE A SETTING

This one is a tricky one as the chances are you won't be in the same building as them so why not arrange a virtual tea break. Make a hot drink or grab a glass of water and FaceTime them. It's a great way to ask someone a quick 'how are you?' and start a conversation. It can also feel less intimidating.

Give yourself plenty of time so you don't appear to be in a hurry – 10 minutes may be enough but if you need longer then go ahead.

Give them your full attention so close the door, switch your radio and phone off or onto silent.

TALKING TIPS

Keep the conversation positive and supportive, exploring the issues and how you may be able to help.

If you are having the conversation via video, remember they can see you so don't be looking out the window even if they are and keep your body language open and non-confrontational.

Be empathetic and take them seriously. They are confined, just like you, but there could be underlying issues and this recent development may have just pushed them over their mental health threshold. Whatever they are feeling is important to them so do not offer glib advice such as "pull yourself together" or "cheer up".

USEFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK

Open questions invite the person to share more so they can't answer with a 'yes' or 'no'

"How are you feeling at the moment?"

"How long have you felt like this?"

"Tell me how work is adding to this?"

"What can we do to help?"

HOW TO LISTEN

Don't wade in with your thoughts and opinions. Just let them talk and LISTEN.

Focus on their words, tone of voice and body language – all will give clues as to how they are really feeling. Don't judge. Respect the person's feelings, experiences and values although they may be different from yours.

See it from their side. Put yourself in the other person's shoes and show them that you hear and understand what they are saying and feeling.

Be genuine – show that you accept the person and their values by what you say and do.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Keep the conversation going – follow up and ask them how they are doing. Reassure them that you're only a call or Skype away, and really mean it.

Reassure them that help is available so no matter how they want that support – face-to-face, by phone or online – there are specialist organisations throughout the UK working to offer that support.

Remember, you are not an expert and may have limited knowledge so sometimes it is appropriate to encourage the person to visit their GP or seek expert help.

SEEKING SUPPORT

It is quite common to experience short-lived physical symptoms when your mood is low or anxious such as:

- faster, irregular or more noticeable heartbeat
- feeling lightheaded and dizzy
- headaches
- chest pains or loss of appetite

It can be difficult to know what is causing these symptoms, but often people who experience them due to stress, anxiety or low mood find that they get worse when they focus on them.

If you feel you need urgent help with your mental wellbeing or you're feeling at risk:

**+ Call 116 123
and speak to Samaritans**

(a full list of support groups is available overleaf.) However if you need urgent medical help

**+ Call 111
and speak to the NHS**

For advice on coronavirus (COVID-19) and any symptoms see the NHS website.

Every Mind Matters also provides simple tips and advice to start taking better care of your mental health.

If you are still struggling after several weeks and it is affecting your daily life, please contact www.111.nhs.uk.

If you have no internet access, you should call 111

In a medical emergency call 999. This is when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk. A mental health emergency should always be taken as seriously as a physical health emergency.



OTHER SOURCES INCLUDE

MIND

Tel: 0300 123 3393
Email: info@mind.org.uk
Text: 86463
www.mind.org.uk

SAMARITANS

Tel: 116 123 (24/7)
www.samaritans.org

For more guidance around how to support and respond to someone experiencing a mental health issue visit www.mhfaengland.org

RURAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Farming Help (farminghelp.org.uk) is the farming charities' umbrella organisation and comprises:

FCN (THE FARMING COMMUNITY NETWORK)

Practical Support
Tel: 03000 111 999 (7am-11pm daily)
www.fcn.org.uk

R.A.B.I. (THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION)

Welfare and Financial Help
Tel: 01865 724931 (weekdays 9am-5pm)
Helpline: 0808 281 9490
www.rabi.org.uk

THE ADDINGTON FUND

Housing Support
Tel: 01926 620135
www.addingtonfund.org.uk

FARMWELL WALES/FARMWELL CYMRU

Practical Support, Wales
www.farmwell.wales or **www.farmwell.cymru**

RSABI (THE ROYAL SCOTTISH AGRICULTURAL BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION)

Support in Scotland
Tel: 0300 111 4166 (7am-11pm daily)
www.rsabi.org.uk

RURAL SUPPORT NORTHERN IRELAND

Practical Support
Tel: 0800 138 1678 (weekdays 9am-9pm)
www.ruralsupport.org.uk

A full list of rural support groups in the UK can be found in the National Rural Support Groups directory available from The YANA Project or by download from
yellowwellies.org

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EVEN IF WE'RE WORKING
ALONE**

YELLOWWELLIES.ORG

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Due to COVID-19 (Coronavirus), some of our teams
are unable to take calls just now.

However, teams are fully operational
via web forms.

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WWW.NFUMUTUAL.CO.UK
TO GET IN TOUCH**