

Tips to look after your Mental Health from Home

During this time of 'difference' we need ways of managing when away from the places, people and things we know and engage in on a daily basis.

Routine is important because it helps us to feel in control. We usually have two routines, the day to day work routine and the weekend routine. Now, because of the isolation we are all experiencing, we have to find new routines to help us manage this time of 'difference'.

It is important to those of us working from home to establish a working routine, and that is sometimes challenging because your household is still having to function around you. There may be distractions of the dog barking, the cat yowling or the children racing around in the background. All this is normal given our current circumstances, but we may not be able to manage our mental health in the way we would usually, so here are some useful tips to help -

- If you are working, get into a routine as you would at work. Take and build in regular breaks.
- Make sure you are hydrated and eat at regular times.
- With intrinsic links between our mental and physical health it is important to build in exercise to our routine where possible. There are some excellent online exercise classes; the BBC for example are doing great kids keeping fit classes online whilst the Schools are closed, so perhaps take time to do these exercises with the little ones.
- It is important that we are still able to stay connected to friends, family, colleagues and loved ones during isolation, try not to rely heavily on social media or instant messaging, instead pick up the phone or consider setting up regular video chats so that you still feel connected to people.
- If you are home schooling the children, find a corner of a room where they can be set up. It will then become routine for them to go to that place. Build in breaks for them also so that they are able to let off steam.
- If you are working, perhaps build in a mindfulness session during your lunch break.
- Think about joining a group activity via the internet, for example, setting up a book club with friends, or, if you like to sing, there is the Gareth Malone Great British Home Choir that rehearses each evening at 5.30pm. 15,000 have signed up so far and it's a great thing to do at the end of a working day.
- Try learning new skills such a yoga, painting, playing a musical instrument or even learning another language. Anything to keep the mind active. You can of course always just sit back and watch a good film!
- Make that one outside exercise a day really count. Plan a walk in a quiet place. Walk briskly and be aware of the things around you. Try a nature walk with the children giving them things to look out for such as butterflies, different types of 'bugs' and plants. This can then be used for project work in their next home schooling lesson.
- It is important that you still talk about the things that are causing you to feel anxious or worry during this time. Care first is a free and confidential service with Counsellors available 24/7 to provide you with support.

The key is to stay active and interested in what you are doing and where you are now. Think of this as quality time with the family. Despite the major adjustments, this will be a very different and hopefully enjoyable experience to have this time away from the day to day bustle and stress of "outside" life.