

## Coping with the COVID-19 pandemic

You are doing really important and difficult work during an extremely challenging situation. Everyone is different and everyone will experience different emotions at different times. There may be times when you feel you are coping well and times you feel that you are coping less well. There are things that you can do to help you take care of yourself.

### Self-Care Tips

#### First step: Awareness

- Be aware of your responses to stress. Actively check yourself. Ask yourself every day: “Am I OK?”; “What do I need and who can I speak to?” Acknowledge it is OK not to be OK.

#### At work: Maintain connection and support

- Work together with a colleague, if you can.
- Try to take breaks. Use them to connect/share with colleagues/family, when possible.

(maintaining strong social connections, in general, as well as support from colleagues/ immediate line managers are considered protective for wellbeing).

#### At home: Connect and keep balance

- Try to switch off from work. Do things that help you keep your mind off work and coronavirus. Exercise. Connect with friends and family.
- Sleep is essential for wellbeing. Try to maintain a sleep hygiene routine. For further information: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/10-tips-to-beat-insomnia/>

### Remember:

1. **Looking after yourself** is being responsible, not a luxury. You cannot look after others properly, if you don't take care of yourself.
2. Try to focus on **things you can control**. Acknowledge the small wins. Some distressing situations might be difficult to change in the short term. However, by activating/reinforcing positive resources in your life, you can cope better. Sharing as well as receiving support can help you feel calmer. You can also think about what helped you in the past to deal with difficult situations and use these strategies again.
3. You can get **support**. If you feel distressed, talk to a friend/family/colleague, call a helpline or seek advice from a mental health professional. Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed. **Asking for help when distressed is not a sign of weakness** – it is being responsible and self-caring.
4. Make sure you know how to **access support**. Below are some resources and support information you might find useful.

## 1. The NHS has introduced the following to support staff during the pandemic:

### 1.1. Support line/text:

Staff helpline operated by the Samaritans: **0300 131 7000** (7 am to 11 pm, 7 days/week). You can call for support, signposting and confidential listening. Alternatively, text **FRONTLINE to 85258** for 24/7 support via text.

### 1.2. Wellbeing Apps:

NHS staff have free access to the following apps (until the end of December 2020):

- **Silvercloud** (help with mental health, wellbeing)
- **Unmind** (help with general wellbeing, stress, coping, nutrition)
- **Headspace** (resilience and mindfulness tools)
- **Daylight** (help with worry and anxiety)
- **Sleepio** (for sleep improvement)

For more information about the helpline/accessing the apps, visit <https://people.nhs.uk/help/>

## 2. British Medical Association Wellbeing Support Services

Counselling and peer support services: **0330 123 1245** (24/7; open to all doctors and medical students – including non-members). Further details regarding the helpline and other wellbeing support services are available at:

<https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/your-wellbeing>

## 3. British Association of Dermatologists

Up-to-date information regarding COVID-19 and available resources: <https://www.bad.org.uk/>

## If you are dealing with a mental health crisis or emergency:

- Contact NHS 111 if you require urgent care, but it is not life-threatening.
- Contact your GP and ask for an emergency appointment.
- Contact 999 or go to A&E directly if you need immediate help and are worried about your safety or you may be close to acting on suicidal thoughts or have seriously harmed yourself.
- If you are under the care of a mental health team and have a specific care plan that states who to contact when you need urgent care, follow this plan.

## References:

1. COVID trauma working group guidance, [www.traumagroup.org](http://www.traumagroup.org), 28/03/2020
2. Psychological First Aid, NHS Scotland
3. Dr Julie Highfield, Intensive Care Society poster "Am I OK?"
4. The psychological needs of healthcare staff as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, British Psychological Society Covid19 Staff Wellbeing Group
5. Greenberg, Neil et al. "Managing mental health challenges faced by healthcare workers during covid-19 pandemic." BMJ 368 (2020).