

Care first



Tips for a prolonged lockdown

Due to the current uncertainty around lockdown restrictions being lifted (and at the time of writing this article, the Government had not yet announced the possible phased lifting of restrictions), we wanted to create an article to share some tips for adjusting to the changes to both our personal and working lives during lockdown.

Tip One - How can I stay fresh and sharp both mentally and physically?

You may not like this tip initially, but it has great benefits to our body – **cold showers!** Introducing cold showers into our lifestyle can have the following health benefits and we will discuss these further in our webinar;

Improves Lymphatic Circulation

Improves Cardiovascular Circulation

Reduces Muscle Inflammation

Boosts Happiness

Aids Weight Loss

Improves Hair and Skin

Reduces Pain and Swelling

Tip Two – Creating a Routine:

A routine is a balanced mix of activities. For many of us this means studying or work, and things like housework, hobbies, exercise or social activities. Whether you're working or studying from home, a routine provides structure and meaning and can help you to make the most of your time and avoid stress and anxiety.

Many people may be embracing the current changes to their routine, but that doesn't work for everyone. To maintain a sense of security and familiarity, it might be useful to try to make your routine as similar as possible to your usual one. Where possible, try to stick to a routine that feels safe and comfortable to you. For example; if you normally go to a fitness class at 6pm on a Wednesday, can you join an online class at that time or watch a recorded class? If you normally listen to an audiobook on your commute, you can still listen even if you're not commuting beyond your living room or home office. Still set your alarm at the normal time and use the time before your working day like you normally would do.

To help plan your routine use a whiteboard/diary/planner or perhaps a digital calendar or planner to start planning your time, like the Notes app on iPhone. Alternatively use a to-do list if you find you can't stick to a daily schedule.

Here is an example of what a routine could look like:



Tip Three – The Five Ways to Wellbeing:

It is suggested by a variety of health bodies that there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life, especially during the current situation the World finds itself in -

Connect – good relationships and connecting with others are important to achieve a good mental wellbeing. However, you may need to think creatively to maintain connections with others in line

with lockdown restrictions. Are you able to sit in your garden and talk to neighbours, connect with friends, family or colleagues through technology? Perhaps part of your daily routine is to connect with someone different every day, even if it is just a 5 minute conversation.

Be active – Being home a lot more can lead us to develop a tendency to stay indoors, or sit down for large parts of the day. Can you be strict with yourself to be active or exercise every day such as walking, running, home workouts, gardening, doing odd jobs round the house like painting and de-cluttering?

Learn – It is widely suggested that learning a new skill can improve our mental wellbeing also. This could be free online content through The Open University, or learning a new language through an app or online course.

Take notice – For many of us the lockdown restrictions have allowed us more time at home and in our local areas and communities. Paying more attention to the present moment and trying to avoid worry or thinking too far ahead can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and the World around you such as nature. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness".

Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges. This may be taking in more things on your daily walk or exercise or setting up a bird bath or feeder to see what different birds or animals visit your garden.

Give - Research also suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by creating positive feelings and a sense of reward, giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth and helping you connect with other people. It could be small acts of kindness towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community. Are you able to support a vulnerable person by doing a shop for them or cook a meal for a vulnerable neighbour?

Tip Four – Working from home tips:

Many of us may soon find out that the instruction to work from home will continue for those that can, to ensure social distancing is followed for the foreseeable future. This may now mean a long term change to our lifestyle and routine which may impact our mental and physical health in many different ways. The following tips may help to maintain good health whilst working from home:

Your workstation – if you do not have a dedicated desk at home, use a dining table, dressing table or similar to encourage sitting up properly whilst using your laptop/computer.

Chair – if you do not have a dedicated adjustable computer chair, adapt a dining room chair using cushions, rolled up towels to provide back support and the right working height.

Laptop – using just a laptop temporarily is ok in the short term, but the set up can be significantly improved by adding a keyboard and mouse. The laptop can be raised using a box or books to give a good working position.

Foot support – use a book, box or other item as a foot support.

Workstation layout – place the screen centrally to you, with desk space laid out to access mouse and keyboard and support forearms. This prevents awkward posture and twisting.

Take regular physical breaks – On top of your designated breaks during your day, try to take a few moments to stand up, walk around or stretch.

Try to avoid working on the sofa or working in a cluttered, poorly set up area. It may also be useful to inform your family/house mates of your working routine and when you are working so you can ensure you are not disturbed.

If you feel you may need some support, you can contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.

