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THE CIRCUS OF LIFE

CORONAVIRUS EDITION



The most useful guide to living with Coronavirus ever written
by Rachel Munns

News of Coronavirus has been around for a few months now but it's only in the last couple of weeks that it has really started to hit us hard here in the UK.

The speed of change has been head-spinning causing confusion and anxiety.

Many people are taking it seriously – many are not – and this is causing conflict and distress. And, for some of us, it is affecting our family and our friends directly causing worry and grief.

These are strange times for sure and, with no end in sight, it is inevitable that in addition to the current physical health risks there is also a heightened risk to our mental health.

So, we have put together this guide for all of our valued clients to help support you during these uncertain times.

THE CIRCUS OF LIFE

As you know, we believe that life is like a circus and we are all its performers. To perform well in life we need to juggle many demands, find balance at work and at home, work as a team, find our focus and, of course, clown around a little. Never have these skills been more important than now.

So, here are our top tips for staying in mentally good shape throughout this temporary new 'normal'.

SLEEP

Good sleep patterns are SO important for our health and yet, they are often the first thing to be disturbed when we are feeling low, angry, stressed, worried, anxious and any number of other emotions. There are a number of things we can do to help:

Screen Time

When we spend more time at home it is very tempting to use our screens more than ever – and some screen time is good. It provides entertainment, a distraction and a degree of relaxation. However, the World Health Organisation recommends no more than 2 hours of discretionary (not work use) screen time per day. Beyond this, the type of light that screens emit has been scientifically proven to disrupt our brain's ability to produce melatonin (the body's natural sleep chemical). So, instead of helping us to relax, too much screen time can have the opposite effect.

Limit the amount of news that you watch. By all means stay informed but too much information can lead to worry and anxiety. Try not to watch the news before bedtime.

One really positive way to use screens is for comedy. Laughter provides huge benefits for both our physical and mental health so, the more fun we have, the healthier we will be.

Meditation & Relaxation

Meditate before bedtime. Meditation is very simple to do and there are a huge number of free apps available to use. Contrary to popular belief, meditation does not need to involve sitting cross legged and chanting. You can meditate anywhere – sitting, standing or lying down and you can do it in any number of ways – listening to an app, practising mindful walking or eating, yoga, tai chi, listening to music and so the list goes on.

One study that compared a group of people who meditated and another group who didn't showed that the meditators fell asleep faster and stayed asleep for longer. Being skilled in meditation helps you to control your thoughts and avoid the 'mind-racing' that is often linked to insomnia.

To go to sleep with a relaxed mind try to spend an hour before bedtime away from screens. Do something relaxing like having a bath, reading a nice book, listening to some music etc.

Environment

- Keep your room well ventilated. It should be too cool to sit in a t-shirt outside of the duvet.
- Buy the best quality mattress that you can afford
- Do not use a night light!
- Avoid drinking caffeine, sugar and alcohol
- Keep a positivity journal

Keep a notebook by your bed. If you wake in the night, write down your thoughts. This will allow you to relax and go back to sleep.



EXERCISE AND DIET

When we are stressed our body releases a number of chemicals including adrenaline and cortisol (the human stress hormone). Over time, these chemicals can accumulate and begin to affect our physical and our mental health. To combat this build up one of the most effective things we can do is to exercise.

The recommended amount of exercise is five times a week for twenty minutes at a time. It doesn't have to be high energy, but it does need to raise our heartbeat and make us slightly out of breath.

We can't go to the gym right now but, actually, exercising outside has far more benefits so go for a brisk walk, jump on a bike or, if you have young kids, run around with them in the garden. They will LOVE this attention from you and you will all feel the physical and emotional benefits

It's also important to look after our diet as this feeds our body AND our mind. Make sure you have a balanced food diet including lots of fruit and vegetables. Try to restrict your intake of high fat or high sugar food.

Pay attention to what you drink. Things like tea, coffee, Coke and energy drinks contain caffeine. Studies have found that too much of any stimulant (such as caffeine or sugar) is detrimental for our health.

Alcohol can also be very dangerous for mental wellbeing. In times of stress it is common for people to increase their alcohol intake because it makes us feel relaxed, happy and uninhibited. BUT, and it is a big but, alcohol is actually a depressant. It will increase any feelings of sadness or anxiety and it will lead to poor sleep patterns which then leads to other wellbeing issues.



SOCIALISING

Human beings are pack animals. We do not do well in isolation. It is understandable then that this new, imposed isolation could be extremely difficult for some of us. But there are so many things we can do to create safe contact opportunities...

Walking

Go for a walk in the park. You will pass others and, whilst you can't sit next to them, you can still smile, wave and feel a degree of human contact.

Technology

What a wonderful thing in times like these. You can, of course, keep in touch by phone but there are a plethora of ways to see your loved ones too using apps like Skype, Facetime and Zoom among many others.

Social media can be a good thing too IF it is used sensibly. If you have people who are catastrophising online then block them for now but pay attention to all the fun things that are being posted and feel all the love that is being spread. It is truly heart-warming.

Volunteering

If you are able to, volunteer to help those who have to self-isolate. Helping others increases our feelings of wellbeing and connection.

FOCUS ON THE POSITIVES

Your brain will automatically seek more of what you are focussing on. It is particularly important in times like this that we seek out the positives (which is why you should limit your exposure to the news and to negatives or scaremongering on social media). If you worry about things going wrong then they probably will. Instead, choose to see all the positives around you – even if you have to look a little harder right now.

Attitude of Gratitude

Every morning, when you wake up, spend a few minutes thinking of all the things you are grateful for. Think about why you are grateful for them and how they make you feel. Focussing on the things you feel grateful for makes you feel more content, it promotes physical health and improves sleep. Being grateful also strengthens relationships and makes you feel more relaxed.



Positivity Diary

This, to, is a fantastic little tool for supporting positive mental health. This time, wait until just before you go to sleep and then reflect back on your day. Look for at least three positives (no matter how small – a kind smile, a lovely gesture, a success at work or at home, lovely weather) and write them down. When life feels overwhelmingly difficult you can look back through your positivity diary and it will help you to retain perspective.

Positive Thoughts

Every day on our Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/resilientmeuk/> - page we publish a positive thought. Starting each day with a positive mental attitude has an instant effect on how the rest of the day will feel to you.

It's OK to Not be OK (Sometimes)

Don't get me wrong, it's ok to not be ok sometimes. Allow yourself time to process your concerns. Discuss any worries you have with a friend or family member.

If your finances are becoming a concern then discuss it with a specialist and look for verified sources of information and guidance – not just anyone on social media. [Moneysavingexpert.com](https://www.moneysavingexpert.com) is a good source of financial advice.

If, however, it feels as though things are really getting on top of you then please reach out. There are a huge number of helplines available in the UK. You can find a comprehensive directory on our website at <https://www.resilientme.co.uk/resources/4594612103>

We can't ignore what is happening but we can choose to deal with it in a constructive way.

FIT YOUR OWN MASK FIRST

Whenever you fly the safety announcement states that “in the event of a loss of pressure, masks like these will fall from the panel above, please fit your own mask first”. The reason for this is simple – if you pass out whilst trying to help someone else first you will be of no use to them and no use to yourself.

The same analogy works in life too. It is vital that you take some time out to care for yourself first. This is NOT selfish. It is important because it makes you feel more valued, more relaxed and more energised.

Enjoy a relaxing bath, go for a nice walk, eat some chocolate (though not too much!), listen to music, dance, paint, draw, do whatever makes you happy.

Even better – if you find that you have a lot more time on your hands now – try something new.

Focus some of your energy on making yourself feel good. Everyone around you will benefit when you are feeling more positive.

LEARNING NEW DISCIPLINES

(Working From Home)

For many of us, life has changed overnight. Our kids are no longer at school and many adults are now working from home. This can be hugely positive but it can also be disorientating and disconcerting if you are not used to it. Here are our top tips for working at home...

- Maintain a normal routine. Get up at the same time each day and go to bed at the same time. Avoid the temptation to work in your dressing gown and prepare for the day as if you were going into the office.
- Before you begin working each day, make a To-do List. This gives you control over your day, allows you to prioritise important tasks. It is also good for your wellbeing as crossing completed tasks off your list gives a great sense of satisfaction.
- Make sure you have regular, short breaks. If you are juggling children and work then create a schedule for everyone to follow. Take breaks and lunch together. Use the weekend to plan activities for the week ahead.
- Create a quiet, dedicated workspace. This situation is likely to continue for some time so it is better, psychologically, to have a proper workspace – not just the kitchen table. Try to minimise any distractions such as TV in the background.
- Maintain regular contact with your colleagues. Your employer may make some specific software available for you to do this but, if not, you can simply use Skype or Zoom or Microsoft Teams etc. It is easy to feel isolated at home but regular contact will minimise this.



- Make sure that you know what is expected of you and that you do not allow yourself to become overloaded. You may not always be able to achieve as much at home as you did at the office – particularly if you have young children at home now. However, the opposite can also be true – without the constant interruptions we have in the office, homeworking can often mean we are more productive. Either way, you and your company, will need to be realistic about what is possible so talk to your boss and keep the lines of communication open at all times.
- If you are a manager, make sure that your team are aware of any existing benefits you have in place to manage wellbeing. Also ensure that any relevant policies are readily accessible and make the right equipment available to take home.

It is vitally important that you keep the lines of communication open and transparent – and not just one-to-one. Find ways to keep the team connected – at a social level as well as a work one.

THE SHOW MUST GO ON!

In the world of the circus, no matter the situation, the show must go on. This is when we pull together, this is when we support and encourage each other, this is when we work as a team to make a success of this new show.

You are NOT alone.

Please follow the government advice and stay safe at all times. We are here to listen and support so, please do feel free to contact us if you think we can help in any way.



www.resilientme.co.uk