

Staying well in the days of COVID 19

Currently it's more important than ever to try and stay well both physically and mentally.

The obvious stressor is the extra workload presented by the huge numbers of patients seeking help. Tiredness alone is draining but living with uncertainty is more so, as we are given ever changing instructions on how to manage possible cases, concerns about whether the equipment we have been given is in date for assessing possibly infected patients and on day of writing (23/3/20) we cannot test patients in primary care. As ever the news articles on line are focussed on secondary care forgetting that most cases are presenting to primary care.

Those of us who have to self-isolate on grounds of possibly being infected, by age or morbidity are denied our usual social contacts and practical problems arise, for example, obtaining food in what to date have been crowded supermarkets and dealing with everyone else's feelings about what is going on right now.

Advice for the BOB GP mentoring team and those they are meeting

The reasons that prompted you to seek mentoring are likely to still be there so please consider continuing your meetings with your mentor but do it 'virtually' either on the telephone or via video conferencing.

If you are now feeling low or anxious for the first time please contact us. Seeking help early will help you combat these negative feelings before they have a huge impact on the way you function in the coming months. The mentoring team have many resources to draw on to help you deal now with how you feel and strengthen you for the future. Just talking (remotely) to another GP will help how you feel. Staying connected is essential.

Advice for everyone

Take a factual approach to these problems. If you are worried about coping at work make sure your workplace has seen and actioned the NHSE guidance as it emerges
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>.

If you need to self-isolate do not hesitate to do so.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people>

If you are worried you will be infected with COVID 19 take simple measures and follow the free podcasts on NB Medical on COVID 19 <https://www.nbmedical.com/NBPodcasts>

Advice from an American psychologist the Dr Harriet Lerner writing in the NY times
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/smarter-living/coronavirus-anxiety-tips.html> “My advice for coping is the same for all the scary events and possibilities that life brings: Go for the facts — even difficult ones — because anxiety escalates and fantasies flourish in the absence of information.”

Find ways to deal with your own fears. Adopting a CBT approach is very helpful if your fears about COVID 19 are stopping you from living normally or sleeping. Red Whale have produced a pearl [https://www.gp-update.co.uk/SM4/Mutable/Uploads/pdf_file/PEARL-Emotional-and-Psychological-wellbeing\[2\]-EDITED.pdf](https://www.gp-update.co.uk/SM4/Mutable/Uploads/pdf_file/PEARL-Emotional-and-Psychological-wellbeing[2]-EDITED.pdf)

Detailed information on the current Covid 19 situation including helpful links to further information can be accessed at <https://teamnet.clarity.co.uk/Topics/ViewItem/e60274c3-d1ac-483f-8804-ab81012c005c>

Look after yourself whether you are at work or self-isolated

- Eat at your normal times and avoid snacking just because food may be more available at home. Don't forget to have regular drinks (don't wait to be thirsty take at least 1.5L per day).
- If you are at home choose a suitable, designated place to work if possible, not your bedroom. Start and end the day with your normal routine. Get dressed, prioritise jobs, check in with colleagues just as you would at work. Take short, frequent breaks, get up every 25 minutes and move around. Set a reminder or an alarm.
- Take walks, being socially distanced but get some sunshine.
- Stay connected with your colleagues and friends by phone calls, Facetime or however you like to communicate. Do ask your friends to help you practically if you need it. GPs are good at giving help but usually do not ask for it for themselves.
- Take a CBT approach if feeling very anxious or another approach if that works better for you, many of us now use mindfulness regularly, make it part of your routine.
- Ask for help if you feel at all burnt-out, anxious or low. All the resources are on the website <https://www.gpmentoring.co.uk/> or contact us through the website so we can get one of the team to respond to you personally within a couple of days.

Please remember that support is available for you as and when required and is completely confidential