

Veterans First Point Lothian Resilience Guide – COVID-19

About this Guide

V1P Lothian has developed this Resilience guide to help you navigate through this very difficult time. Our world is ever-changing at the moment. It would be hard not to worry about COVID-19 and how it could affect your life, and those you love. Worry, anxiety and difficulties with our mood are common problems at the best of times, and now this might feel overwhelming. We have put together this guide to help you to manage your worry, anxiety and mood in these uncertain times and to help improve your resilience and wellbeing. It's natural to struggle when times are uncertain, so remember to offer care and compassion to yourself, and to those around you.

Wishing you well,

The whole team at V1P Lothian



Routine – structure to your day is important

Exercise – helps both our bodies and minds

Sleep – get enough, set wake up and going to bed times

Interaction - is important, perhaps by helping others

Loved ones – stay connected, find new ways

Independence – protect some time for you

Eat well – try new recipes, eat fresh and healthy

New goals – for now and the future

Compassion – be kind to yourself and others

Enjoyment – make time for pleasure



Your Battle Plan	Page
Welfare Support	4
Dealing with Uncertainty	5
Structure & Routine	7
Emotional Support & Social Connection	9
Managing Family Life	11
Exercise	13
Sleep	15
Alcohol	17
Managing Strong Emotions	18
Your First Aid Kit	20
Your Post COVID-19 Plan	22

Welfare Support



Veteran Peer Support Team



Stuck indoors? Self-isolating? Need advice or just wanting to chat?

Give your Peer Support Worker a call who will be happy to help.

V1P Lothian – 0131 220 9920 Email – enquiries@veteransfirstpoint.org.uk

COVID-19 – What does it mean for me?

Citizens Advice Bureau have compiled guidance relating to:

- **Financial support available** (e.g. If you are self-employed, if you cannot work due to COVID-19)
- **School closures**
- **Staying home and social distancing**

This page is regularly updated as government advice becomes available -

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you-s/>

Need advice – not sure who to call?

- V1P Lothian have a representative from the **Citizens Advice Bureau** available fortnightly who can advise you over the phone - simply call the V1P office on **0131 220 9920** and an appointment will be made for you
- We can also refer to the **Armed Services Advice Project** or you can call them directly on **0808 800 1007**
- Have a service pension query or unsure about Armed Forces Compensation? **Veterans UK** Representative **Mandy Fowler** is happy to help – you can either email Veterans UK directly on **Veterans-UK@mod.gov.uk** or contact your Veteran Peer Support Worker who is happy to contact Mandy for you



Can't leave the house? No problem

- **Fares for Free** are offering to take clients who can't get out, to pick up prescriptions by taking them to collect them. They can also arrange and delivery welfare packages such as shopping, toiletries etc. Contact David Gibson – **07708299399**
- **Who Dares Cares** can provide welfare care packages to Veterans who are self-isolating or are unable to get to the shops. Contact Marc Hutton or Kevin Piacentini on **07954702906** or email whodarescares@gmail.com



Dealing with Uncertainty

Dealing with difficult life situations that trigger feelings of fear and induce an urge to exert control like COVID-19 is difficult. You can't control what happens in the future. You can't control the virus itself, the economy or how your government is managing the crisis. It is difficult to control your thoughts and feelings. Fear and anxiety is a natural response. But you can control what you do - here and now. And that matters.

This is a **very helpful guide and if you are going to read anything, read this:**

<https://www.actmindfully.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FACE-COVID-eBook-by-Russ-Harris-March-2020.pdf>

In addition this exercise can help you to analyse your current situation and help you to accept the uncontrollable and invest in the controllable.



Circle 1. Things under your control



Circle 2. Things not under your control



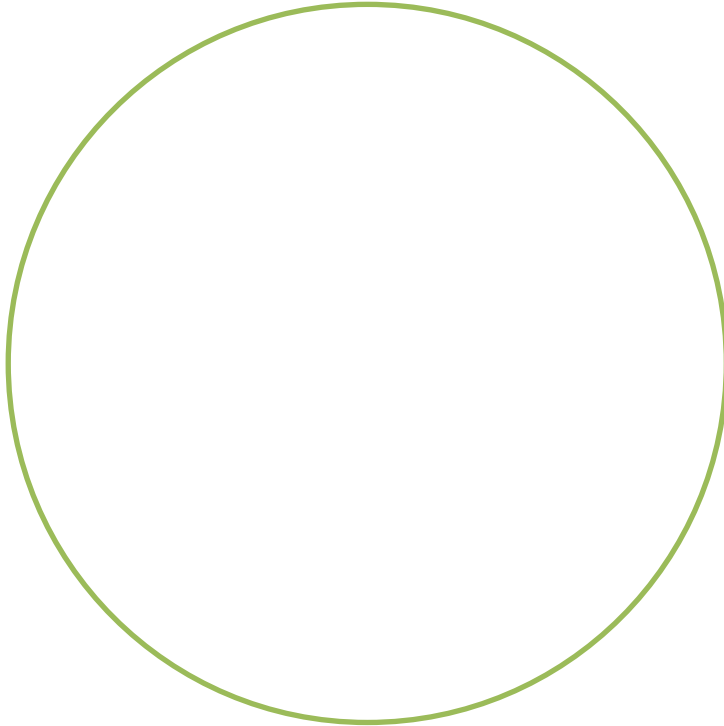
Some ideas of what you can control:

1. Washing your hands
2. Avoid watching, reading or listening to news reports that cause you to feel anxious or distressed, perhaps decide which update you are going to watch, read or listen too and switch off.
3. Being supportive to others. Assisting others in their time of need can benefit the person receiving support as well as the helper.
4. Taking regular exercise
5. Eating well
6. Sleeping enough

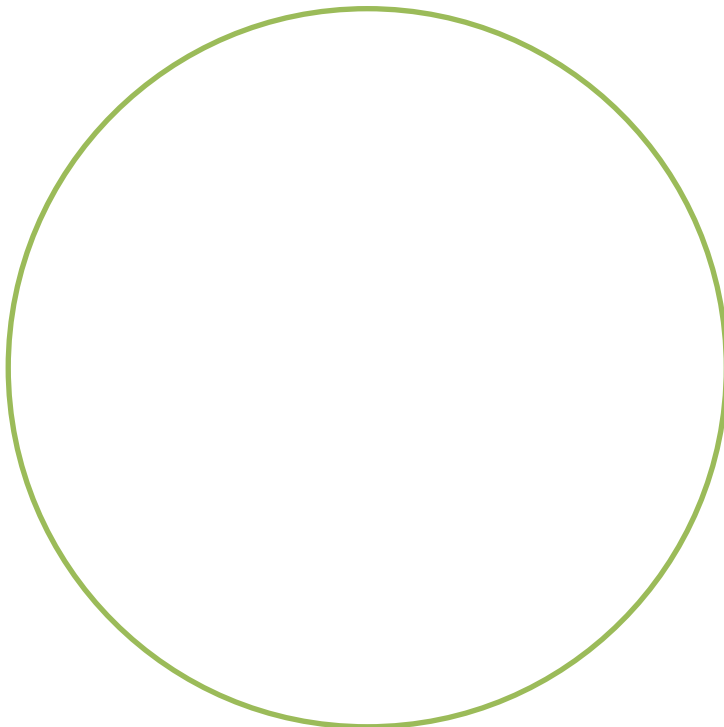
Dealing with Uncertainty

Worksheet

Control Exercise:



Circle 1. Things under my control



Circle 2. Things not under my control

Structure & Routine

Maintain familiar routines in daily life as much as possible:

- Try to get up at the same time as you would have, if you have family, do the same with them and try to **keep to the same routine**, same for going to bed.
- Try to still get **washed and dressed** as you would have, even though you might not be going anywhere this can help our mood.
- If you **work**, and are now doing that from home, try to **start and finish as you would have**, take adequate breaks, move rooms. If possible have the room you are working in separate and set up ready.
- If possible, get out for a **walk, run or cycle** following the government advice and plan when you are going to do this. As well as the exercise, getting fresh air and being outside can really help our mental health.
- It can help to **write out a schedule/plan for the day or week**. For you and perhaps the people you live with, we have attached an activity schedule that might help you plan your days/week.
- Think about **small goals** that are realistic and achievable at the moment, perhaps things that you have wanted to do and not had the chance to do, for example, online courses, redecorating a room, working on your garden, couch to 5k.
- As part of your routine, it might be helpful to make a **small slot of time available for catching up on the latest news**, but other than this time, keep away from it, as watching or listening to it a lot will increase anxiety and lower your mood – perhaps agree this time with the rest of your family.
- Whether you are currently working or not, there are many opportunities for **volunteering** at the moment, please see these links:

<https://www.readyscotland.org/coronavirus/volunteering/>

<https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-volunteers/volunteer/ways-to-volunteer-during-covid-19/>

Try to think about different activities within your home that you might gain both pleasure and or sense of achievement, for example:

- ✓ Reading
- ✓ Listening to podcasts
- ✓ Listening/dancing to music
- ✓ Watching a movie
- ✓ Spring cleaning
- ✓ An online exercise workout
- ✓ Yoga
- ✓ Mindfulness
- ✓ Cooking
- ✓ Baking



- ✓ Drawing/painting/colouring
- ✓ Video chats with family and friends
- ✓ Having a date night with your partner
- ✓ Gardening
- ✓ Crafts
- ✓ Knitting/sewing
- ✓ Playing with your kids
- ✓ Learning to do something new – an online course
- ✓ Learn a language

Some podcast recommendations ...



- Documents stories from the military community to help support and guide those suffering from mental and physical illness and injury.



- Discussions of a variety of topics by the world's leading thinkers and creators.

Structure & Routine

Worksheet

Activity Schedule:

Record what you did.

How much was each activity an achievement – an experience of **mastery**? How much did you enjoy it – how **pleasurable** was it? Rate each out of 10.

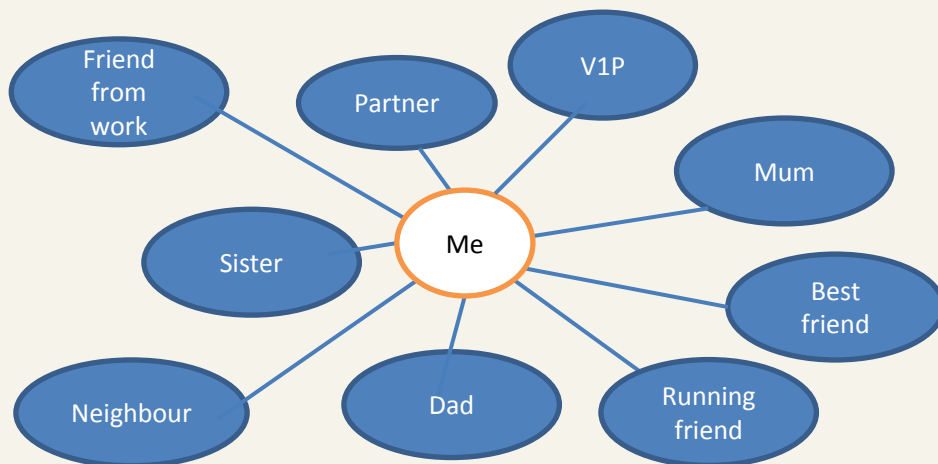
SUN																
SAT																
FRI																
THU																
WED																
TUE																
MON																
Time	6 - 7	7 - 8	8 - 9	9 - 10	10 - 11	11 - 12	12 - 1	1 - 2	2 - 3	3 - 4	4 - 5	5 - 6	6 - 7	7 - 8	8 - 9	9 - 10

Emotional Support & Social Connection

Staying connected with others and maintaining your social networks is important at any time but particularly now. This can be done via email, text, phone, video and social media. There have been lots of lovely examples of people connecting in different ways. For example, sitting either side of a window/glass and having a chat over the phone or through the glass, group video calls.

Connecting with and helping vulnerable or unwell people locally, in your community would be helpful to them and you. For example, delivering food packages, or set up a chat group for your street so that neighbours can be in touch and help each other

Exercise: Try drawing a network of people in your life like below:



This can be helpful to think about and identify people that you could connect with in some way. As human beings we all need connection in some form. Given the current situation and social isolation and distancing, it is even more important to reach out to people.

Perhaps there are friends or family that you have been meaning to contact for a while but have not had the time. Or it may be that it has been hard to meet face to face, the current situation may allow a way to connect in a gradual way as there is no pressure to meet face to face at the moment. Have a think about what might be practical and realistic for you and give it a go.

Online Support



Timebank's **Shoulder to Shoulder** project links veterans and family members living in Scotland to an online mentor for support. You will be provided with a pre-set tablet which will allow you to link in with your mentor on a weekly basis.

If you would like support from an online mentor, please call or text

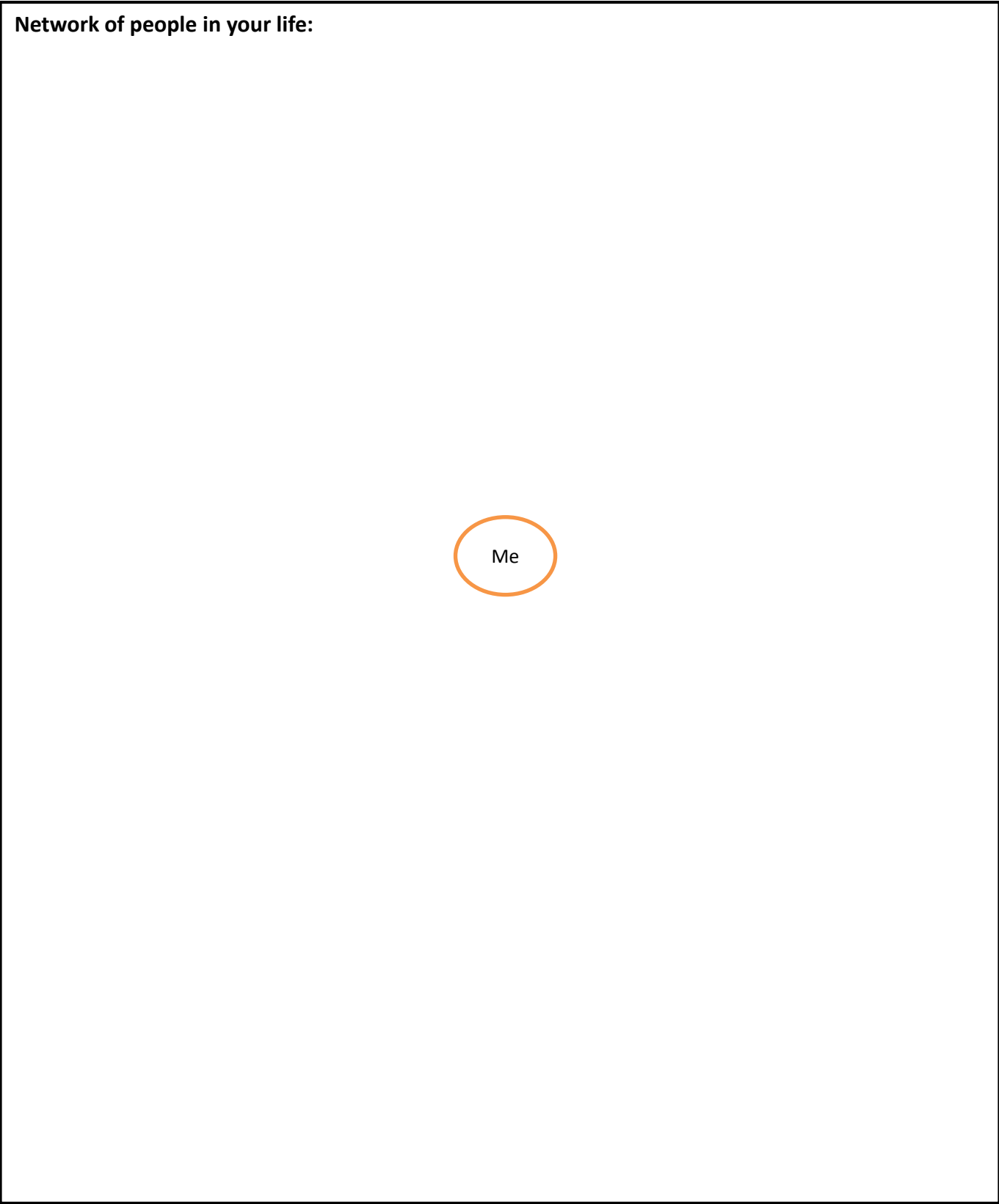
Ali on **07437 437 867** or email **ali@timebank.org.uk**



Emotional Support & Social Connection

Worksheet

Network of people in your life:



Me

Managing Family Life

There will be a number of difficulties that families will be trying to contend with at the moment. We have mentioned that keeping routine and structure is important for us as adults but this is equally as important for children.

- Keep your child's getting up and going to bed time the same during the week as much as possible. They will know what to expect and when, which in these uncertain times is vital. In addition when they have snacks, breakfast, lunch and dinner etc.
- Children's behaviour may change and become difficult with the loss of school, seeing their friends and being at home more and feeling generally quite unsettled. They may also be picking up on our own stress and anxiety. In the below link there are some really helpful resources to help explain COVID -19 in a child friendly way and tools/ideas that might help.
- Reassure your child that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn to cope from you.
- Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- Try to get out for family walks, bike rides following government advice – fresh air and exercise can help the whole family.
- Snuggling up on the couch for a family movie, playing board games, playing with their toys together can help the whole families wellbeing.
- Schooling from home is going to be hard for both us and our children. There is so much information that might feel overwhelming, do what you can.
- The most important thing is spending time with them, comforting them, keeping them active and loving them.
- As mentioned routine is very important to children and can help with problematic behaviour, therefore working out a plan for the day for your child in regards to their school work and other activities might help – see the next page for an example Home School Plan.

Useful Resources

- A useful website has been created for young people, carers and professionals to pool together lots of helpful resources from across the internet that are available to help support mental health and wellbeing – www.camhs-resources.co.uk/
- A helpful resource for you and your children is: www.readingforce.org.uk – Whether your family is at home together or apart, reading the same book, talking about it and sharing your thoughts, and making a scrapbook is fun for everyone. Reading Force is free for all Forces families, Reserves, Cadets, and Ex-Forces families.



Managing Family Life

Worksheet

Example Home School Plan

Home School Plan (this will differ depending on child / age)	
9:00 am	Joe Wicks school workout (YouTube)
9:30 – 10:00 am	Soft Start – Play Time
10:00 – 10:40 am	Reading / Sounds
10:40 – 11:00 am	Snack Time
11:00 – 11:30 am	Writing
11:30 – 12:15 pm	Kids Yoga (Cosmic Kids – YouTube)
12:15 – 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 – 1:30 pm	Maths
1:30 – 2:15 pm	Arts & Crafts
2:15 – 2:30 pm	Snack
2:30 – 3:15 pm	Singing / Music / Dancing

Exercise

Although it may seem hard to engage in physical activity whilst social distancing, regular exercise can be extremely beneficial in promoting positive physical and mental health. Taking part in regular exercise can help boost your mood, self-esteem and help with sleep.

The current UK government guidelines specify that you can go outside to exercise once per day whilst social distancing (keeping a distance of 2 meters from others).



Some suggestions for outdoor exercise:

- Walking – you could try this while listening to music or a podcast, or talking to a friend on the phone
- Jogging or Running – (for example the NHS Couch to 5k running plan - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/couch-to-5k-week-by-week/>)
- Cycling
- Gardening – make the most of any sunshine whilst getting your physical activity in

If you are self-isolating, there are still plenty of ways to stay physically active in your own home.



Some suggestions for keeping physically active indoors:

- Give your house a spring clean
- Turn your house into a gym and follow a home exercise programme (for example those available on the NHS website)
- Make an effort to break up long periods of sitting by standing and walking around for 1 – 2 minutes – even just to the kitchen to make a cup of tea!
- Who needs a personal trainer? Try something different by following an online instructor-led fitness video, whether it's strength training or yoga (for example those available on the NHS website)

Exercise Worksheet

Jot down any enjoyable ways you can stay active:

Sleep

When we are worried, we are sometimes left feeling unable to relax and have difficulty sleeping but studies have shown that sleep is important for maintaining our physical and mental health. We can optimise sleep by ensuring we have healthy sleep habits, a comfortable sleep environment and a good night time routine.

Habits

- **Regular Sleeping Pattern.** It is important to establish a fixed sleep schedule, by waking up and falling asleep at the same time. This allows our bodies to know when it is time to wind down and help to improve sleep quality.
- **Avoid Napping.** When we are at home lying on the sofa, it may be tempting to take a nap but this can often make it more difficult to fall asleep at night.
- **Exercise regularly, but not before bed.** Regular exercise, particularly in the afternoon, can help to improve sleep quality. However, exercising just before bedtime will have a stimulating effect and make falling sleeping more difficult.
- **Avoid caffeine and heavy, spicy or sugary food 4-6 hours before bedtime.** Both caffeine and certain foods have been found to affect your ability to fall asleep. Be mindful that this will include coffee, tea, fizzy drinks and chocolate.
- **Avoid alcohol 4-6 hours before bedtime.** Although it may seem like alcohol can help with falling asleep, it can interfere with sleep quality. While alcohol will make you feel tired at first, a stimulant effect can occur when the blood alcohol levels in your body fall.

Environment

- **Comfortable bedding.** Uncomfortable bedding can prevent a good nights sleep and make sleeping seem unappealing.
- **Temperature.** Although it may vary with personal preference, studies have shown that a cool (but not cold) bedroom is the most conducive to sleep.
- **Quiet and dark room.** Eliminating as much light and noise in your bedroom will provide an optimal environment for sleep.
- **Reserve the bed for sleep and sex.** It is important when spending more time at home not to let your bedroom become a workroom or living room.

Night-time Routine

- **Light snack.** Warm milk and foods high in the amino acid tryptophan, such as bananas, have been found to improve sleep.
- **Relaxation.** Breathing techniques and yoga can help to relieve anxiety and reduce muscle tension, making it easier to fall asleep.
- **Worry period.** It's important not to take your worries with you when you go to bed. Assigning a specific time for worrying in the day can help to contain worrying and improve sleep.
- **Screen time.** Watching TV or being on an electronic device at night time has been found to negatively affect sleep. Try to give yourself a tech-free hour before bed to prepare yourself for sleep.
- **Waking up during the night.** If you find yourself waking up in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep within 15-20 minutes, we recommend leaving the bedroom and doing a quiet activity, such as reading but not anything too challenging like housework.

Sleep Worksheet

Sleep Diary:

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
What time did you wake up?							
Did you take any naps and for how long?							
Any medications taken – amount and time?							
Any caffeinated drinks?							
Any exercise – when and for how long?							
Any alcohol?							
What did you do before bed?							
What time did you go to bed?							
What time did you fall asleep at?							
How many times did you wake up?							
How long were you awake for during the night?							
Total Sleep time?							
Sleep Quality (1-10) Where 1 is the poorest it could be.							

Alcohol

Spending more time at home and feeling stressed or worried may mean that you are tempted to drink more alcohol than usual. However, drinking can make you feel worse and there is a strong link between heavy drinking and depression. Alcohol can also impact your sleep by disrupting sleep patterns. Being aware of your alcohol intake and cutting down or stopping drinking can help improve your mood as well as your physical health.

What are the recommended alcohol limits?

- Men and women are advised not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis
- This is equivalent to 6 pints of average-strength beer or 10 small glasses of low-strength wine per week
- If you regularly drink the equivalent of 6 pints of beer in a week, try to spread your drinking over 3 or more days

How can I access help or support?

You can still get help and support with cutting down or abstaining from alcohol during this time.

Below are some ways you can access support remotely:

SMART Recovery offer online courses to equip you with the skills to change your behaviour and daily online meetings, open to anyone at any stage of their recovery journey

- Free “Introduction to SMART” and “Getting SMART” courses can be accessed at <https://training.smartrecovery.org.uk/login/>
- Daily online meetings can be found at <https://smartrecovery.org.uk/online-meetings/>



Call **Drinkline**, the national alcohol helpline. This is a free, confidential helpline that you can call if you are worried about your own or someone else’s drinking.

- **0300 123 1110** (weekdays 9am to 8pm, weekends 11am to 4pm)



Visit the **Edinburgh Alcohol & Drug Partnership website** or download the **ARC-Edinburgh Addiction Recovery Companion App** to track progress, boost motivation and receive up to date information on all recovery options in Edinburgh

- <https://www.edinburghadp.co.uk/>
- <https://arcapp.co.uk/>



Managing Strong Emotions

It's normal that you may be feeling higher levels of stress and anxiety due to the large amount of changes going on in your day to day life because of COVID-19. This can feel overwhelming and cause strong emotions, such as frustration and anger. If you feel like you are experiencing more anger during this period, it is important to think about what has been triggering this and the effect it has had.

Once you understand what has triggered your strong emotional response, it can be useful to think about how to manage this in the future.

- **Communicating** what has triggered your anger can help friends and family understand and prevent the situation from happening again. It is important to be able to communicate your needs and boundaries assertively.
- **Diversions** can help to distract away from what is triggering your anger at that moment and can give you a better chance of dealing with the anger in a healthy way. Examples include: exercising, watching a movie, playing a game, practicing a hobby, calling a friend or cleaning.
- **Breathing** exercises can also provide immediate and long term relief from stress and anxiety. By using the Deep Breathing technique you can activate your body's relaxation response and relieve stress.



Deep Breathing Exercise



Inhale *Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 seconds.*

Pause *Hold the breath in your lungs for 4 seconds.*

Exhale *Breathe out slowly through your mouth for 6 seconds.*



AIMS (Anger and Irritability Management Skills) is a useful app developed by the US Department of Veteran Affairs to help manage anger, with built in breathing and muscle relaxation exercises .

Anger Log Worksheet

Example	Trigger <i>What happened before you got angry?</i>	My partner and I have been in the house all day and they have left the kitchen a mess.
	Thoughts <i>How were you feeling and what was going through your mind?</i>	I felt frustrated that my partner hasn't cleaned up their mess in the kitchen. I feel like they have had lots of time to do it.
	Response <i>How did you react?</i>	I snapped at my partner and shouted to them to clean up their mess.
	Outcome <i>How did this affect the situation?</i>	This started an argument and left both of us feeling angry and upset at each other.
	Reflection <i>Looking back, do you see anything differently?</i>	It may have been more helpful for me to communicate how I was feeling and ask my partner to clean up their mess.

	Trigger <i>What happened before you got angry?</i>	
	Thoughts <i>How were you feeling and what was going through your mind?</i>	
	Response <i>How did you react?</i>	
	Outcome <i>How did this affect the situation?</i>	
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	Response <i>How did you react?</i>	
	Outcome <i>How did this affect the situation?</i>	
	Reflection <i>Looking back, do you see anything differently?</i>	

Your First Aid Kit

During these unprecedented times we might lose sight of some of our basic needs and ways we can look after ourselves.

It might be helpful to think about this in regards to a first aid kit, and what you might have in yours?



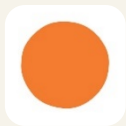
- Listening to your favourite music
- Exercise that you enjoy
- Staying connected with your friends and family
- What helpful and healthy strategies have you used in the past? – How could you continue these?
- Self – compassion
- Talk – reach out if you feel overwhelmed



*Breathing space is a free confidential phone service for anyone in Scotland feeling low, depressed or anxious operating 6pm to 2am on weekdays and 24hrs on weekends – **0800 83 85 87***

- Minimise unhealthy coping – alcohol/drugs
- Remember the basics – eat, drink, rest and sleep
- Take time out to rest and restore - this is a link to mindfulness sessions:
<https://oxfordmindfulness.org/online-sessions-podcasts/>

There are also some helpful apps that you can download for relaxation and self help:



Headspace



Calm



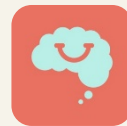
Mind Shift



Self Help
for Anxiety



Happify



Smiling
Mind



PTSD
Coach



Mood
Coach



Think about and perhaps write down the silver linings for you. There will be some positives and good news stories.

- It might be that for you anxiety has reduced, you have been trained for unprecedented, highly stressful experiences and therefore might be managing quite well
- Perhaps you are able to support others/volunteer
- Social distancing and isolation might be nice, it is quieter
- Spending more time with your family
- Outside pressures such as work have reduced

Your First Aid Kit

Worksheet

What activities could be in your first aid kit?

Are there any silver linings in the current situation that you have identified?

Your Post COVID-19 Plan

What could you work towards now for the future?

If you are coping quite well at the moment, what could you take from these current experiences to post COVID-19?