



## Coronavirus

In such a short period of time the coronavirus outbreak has become all-consuming, with unprecedented upheaval. We recognise and understand the feelings of anxiety, distress and concern that many may now be experiencing. A large part of anxiety comes from a sense of what we think we should be able to control but cannot. As we cope through this very difficult time together there are many ways to keep a sense of control and protect our mental well-being:

When things feel uncertain or when we generally do not feel safe, it is normal to feel stressed. Our body's acute stress response, also known as our fight-or-flight response, is designed to keep us safe by heightening our response to perceived danger. Part of that response is the release of stress hormones which increases our heart rate, blood pressure and overall alertness.

Being exposed to large volumes of negative information can reinforce this threat signal, heightening feelings of anxiety and prolonging the stress response. While it is important to stay informed and natural to seek updates, constant monitoring of news around the coronavirus can intensify feelings of worry and distress. Try to avoid excessive media coverage. A lot of it is repeat information. Placing boundaries on how much news you read, watch or listen to will allow you to focus on your life and actions that you have control over.

Where possible, focus on the facts in the story rather than superfluous images. When we see armed guards in empty streets, we again experience heightened feelings of anxiety. These images do not have a lot of value as they convey very little meaningful or useful information. Also, the language used in reports matters as it too can trigger more anxious feelings. It is important to see through this alarmist language.

According to the World Health Organisation, there is a lot of misinformation being published around the coronavirus and some of it quite dangerous. Virus have always led to the spread of rumours, igniting needless panic. This is now turbo charged by social media, a polarisation vehicle where the loudest voices win. To avoid the fear and panic that misinformation may cause, read accurate, measured information only from official sources such as the HSE, Public Health England, the World Health Organisation etc.

Maintain a calm and practical approach. Experts around the world are working hard to contain the virus, treat those affected and develop a vaccine as quickly as possible. Widespread panic can complicate efforts to manage the coronavirus effectively. Do your best to stay calm and follow official advice, particularly around social distancing and observing good hygiene habits.



Staying in touch with family and friends and talking through your concerns and feelings may alleviate your feelings of anxiety and bring a sense of comfort. Also, assisting others who maybe feeling alone or concerned can benefit both the person receiving support as well as the giver.

Although the idea of self-isolation or quarantine may seem daunting, there are a number of ways to support your mental health during this period.

- Keep in mind that this is only temporary and that there are still many ways to digitally connect with people
- Remind yourself that your effort is helping others in the community avoid contracting the virus
- Try to maintain physical activity, eat healthy foods and keep regular sleep routines
- Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing
- For those working from home, try if possible to establish a dedicated work space, maintain a healthy balance by allocating specific work hours, and take regular breaks