

How do we meet emotional needs while self-isolating or working from home?

Mental and physical health depends upon meeting emotional needs in healthy ways. This keeps stress levels low and allows our immune system to fight back and work to promote recovery from illness. Meeting emotional needs if we are socially isolated is challenging, and even more so if we are concerned about virus infection. What can we do to give ourselves the best chance of meeting needs to stay well? Let's think through the emotional needs we are all familiar with.

Security & Control

Taking active steps to control risk of infection clearly supports us to meet emotional needs for security and control. However, given that the future is unpredictable - and even experts have limited information about the virus - we need to take steps to keep ourselves calm in uncertain circumstances. It is natural for our imaginations to seek to solve problems, but with limited information, this can lead to trying to fill in the gaps with unhelpful worrying.

- Remind yourself of the steps you are taking, keeping a list if it's helpful. For example, washing your hands before and after and eating; cleaning your door handles regularly; and keeping surfaces clean
- Remind yourself as often as you need to that you have done all that you can with the information that you have
- If you are spending more time at home, create routines to give yourself structure, both if you are working from home, but if not, activities which you enjoy
- Spend some time remembering times when you have had to be cheerful and optimistic in the face of adversity



Community, Attention and Emotional Connection

How do we stay connected to the wider community and give ourselves opportunity to share attention and emotional connection?

- Contact people you know who may be self-isolating by phone, messaging apps or email. Ask them how they are and if they would like to talk either over the phone or with video calling
- Seek to set up groups with your friends so you can share conversation and positive support. If there are activities you can be both be doing together perhaps share them over video calls



Privacy – time alone to calm down and reflect

It may seem that the need for privacy would be easy to meet while staying at home. However, if you live in a busy household with children and other relatives this could be difficult. An even bigger challenge to the need for privacy is the risk of spending too much time reading or watching coronavirus articles and videos online or on screens.

What can do to meet the need for privacy at home?

- Agree a space with your family, which people can use to spend alone time free from distractions
- Limit online and screen time to specific times of the day
- Only visit sites which are reliable sources of expert government advice. Avoid media outlets and second-hand sources of information which sensationalise. Anything which drives up worry compromises the immune system
- Spend some time thinking about alternative activities which can keep you occupied – especially activities which you feel confident doing which give you a sense of being in control



Achievement and Meaning & Purpose

We meet our need for achievement through being stretched to learn and overcome challenges. Learning also contributes to meeting the need for meaning & purpose, along with the sense that we are needed by others and that we are contributed to a larger cause than ourselves. Meaning & purpose significantly contribute to resilience when we are faced with difficult situations.

What steps can we take to meet these needs when we are self-isolating?

- If you are working from home, break the day up with rewarding goals which can be achieved in short spaces of time
- Time alone might provide you with opportunities to learn which have otherwise been hard to find. Are there activities, hobbies and interests you can spend time doing? Are there books you haven't had a chance to read? Are there free online courses you can take?
- Are there people you can support over the phone or on video call to reduce the effects of isolation?
- Challenges which we share with others can give us a sense of being connected to a bigger cause than ourselves alone. By following agreed expert guidance and supporting each other through a difficult time, we can find a huge sense of shared meaning and purpose which

