



Looking after your mental and physical health during the COVID-19 pandemic

morson.com | [@MorsonGroup](https://twitter.com/MorsonGroup)

Looking after your mental and physical health during the COVID-19 pandemic

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is an exceptional event posing a threat to worker health and safety and a risk to business operations.

As a new virus, it is unclear how long the threat will last so we must plan for ongoing disruption to how we work and interact with each other on a day to day basis.

Employee health, safety and well-being is paramount and we wish to be proactive in protecting our people, minimising the risk and ensuring you have the means to stay fit and well during this uncertain period. Many of us now find we are working from home on a permanent basis and for an indefinite period of time.

This document has been produced to help support our home working communities and includes lots of information about adopting to new ways of working, reducing the effects of isolation, how to safeguard our mental health, supporting others and what to do if you become unwell.



Mental wellbeing

Curbing anxiety resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak

Experiencing anxiety now and then is a normal part of life. It is not unusual to temporarily feel anxious when facing stressful situations, uncertainty, or extreme challenges. The emotions of anxiety and fear in confronting a real threat are part of our survival instinct.

The information which we have highlighted below is to help you if;

- you're feeling anxious or worried about Coronavirus
- you're asked to work from home or limit your time spent in public places
- you have to self-isolate and avoid contact with other people

Feeling worried?

Being concerned about the news is understandable, but for many people it can make existing mental health problems worse. It's understandable that many individuals with pre-existing anxiety or OCD are facing challenges at the moment. There is a lot of misinformation swirling around but it is better to stay informed by sticking to trusted sources of information such as government and NHS websites.

One helpful tip is to limit the amount of time you spend reading or watching things which aren't making you feel better. It may be best to decide on a specific time to check in with the news or look at social media coverage. You can also mute key words which might be triggering on Twitter and unfollow or mute/hide accounts on WhatsApp or Facebook, if you find them too overwhelming.

It is likely we will see increasing numbers of people self-isolating and working from home in the weeks to come so now might be a good time to make sure your contact phone numbers and email addresses of the people you care about or need to stay in touch with are up to date.

It can also be helpful to agree regular check-in times with family or friends and if you are self-isolating, strike a balance between having a routine and making sure each day has some variety. Self-isolating doesn't mean staying indoors the whole time and getting a daily dose of fresh air can lift your mood and help you feel connected with the world around you.



With ongoing uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus pandemic it is important to have down time. The UK's mental health charity Mind, recommend continuing to access nature and sunlight wherever possible. Getting some exercise, eating well and staying hydrated are important factors to support your daily wellbeing. For more specific advice and information on keeping well, go to their dedicated pages; <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing>

Remember that there are support systems here at Morson to help you if you are feeling overwhelmed. Our Mental Health First Aiders are available to talk to over the phone, via email, or in person; a full list of our MHFAs can be found on the next page.



Welcome to the **Employee Assistance Programme** – your personal support service.

You can also access the Employee Assistance Programme, through which you can speak confidentially to a trained counsellor 24/7. Click here to access the brochure for further details.



Mental wellbeing Isolation and loneliness

As the UK position moves towards the majority of people homeworking wherever possible, it is important to combat the effects of social isolation and to find creative ways of staying connected with others. Even for those who are used to homeworking the current restrictions may mean that many of us may soon be accompanied by partners and possibly children. It is important to appreciate that each person in the household may still need some space and privacy and may not be used to being restricted to their homes for long periods of time. Try and allow space for each person to work, rest and to take breaks. Stick to routine mealtimes when you would normally come together.



Alex McQuade	<u>alex.mcquade@morson.com</u>
Anita Maylott	<u>anita.maylott@morson.com</u>
Becki Ross	<u>becki.ross@morson.com</u>
Calliann Creacal	<u>calliann.creacal@vital.uk.com</u>
Charlotte Mainwaring	<u>charlotte.mainwaring@morson.com</u>
Daniel Kirkby	<u>daniel.kirkby@morson.com</u>
Davy Jones	<u>davy.jones@morson-projects.co.uk</u>
Elena Derry	<u>elena.derry@morson-projects.co.uk</u>
Gareth Morris	<u>gareth.morris@morson.com</u>
Garry Milner	<u>garry@thebridgeit.com</u>
Gemma Mason	<u>gemma.mason@morson.com</u>
Heather Deering	<u>heather.deering@morson.com</u>
Ian Ross	<u>ian.ross@morson.com</u>
Jane Hepburn	<u>jane.hepburn@vital.uk.com</u>
Jen Petruccio	<u>jen.petruccio@morson.com</u>
Joanne Gresty	<u>joanne.gresty@morson.com</u>
Katie Winstanley	<u>katie.winstanley@morson.com</u>
Kelly Doolan	<u>kelly.doolan@morson.com</u>
Leonie Kellar	<u>leonie.kellar@morson.com</u>
Mark Barrett	<u>mark.barrett@vital.uk.com</u>
Melissa Herrick	<u>melissa.herrick@morson.com</u>
Michaela Elliott	<u>michaela.elliott@morson.com</u>
Mike Connolly	<u>mike.connolly@vital.uk.com</u>
Sam Clinch	<u>samantha.clinch@morson.com</u>
Sarah Shaw	<u>sarah.shaw@anderselite.com</u>
Becky Hicks	<u>becky.hicks@waldeckconsulting.com</u>
Chloe Drake	<u>chloe.drake@morson.com</u>
Grzegorz Rzoska	<u>grzegorz.rzoska@morson.com</u>
Jamie Nicholson	<u>jamie.nicholson@vital.uk.com</u>
John Dunnett	<u>john.l.dunnett@dounreay.com</u>
Stephen McKay	<u>stephen.mckay@vital.uk.com</u>
Sue Eyre	<u>sue.eyre@waldeckconsulting.com</u>
Tim Leach	<u>tim.leach@waldeckconsulting.com</u>
Anita Bromley	<u>anita.bromley@anderselite.com</u>
Danielle Winter	<u>danielle.winter@morson.com</u>
James Grant	<u>james.grant@anderselite.com</u>
Jayne Davies	<u>jayne.davies@morson.com</u>
Matthew Roberts	<u>matthew.roberts@anderselite.com</u>
Nichola Adamson	<u>nichola.adamson@morson.com</u>
Sam King	<u>samantha.king@morson.com</u>
Sarah Chapman	<u>sarah.chapman@morson.com</u>
Sue Winter	<u>susan.winter@morson.com</u>
Taylor Bowden	<u>taylor.bowden@morson.com</u>
Debbie Price	<u>debbie.price@morson.com</u>
Demari Waugh	<u>demari.waugh@morson.com</u>
Graham Timbers	<u>graham.timbers@morson.com</u>
Jack Brennan	<u>jack.brennan@anderselite.com</u>
Jay Dassrath	<u>jay.dassrath@morson.com</u>
Karolina Pozdilkova	<u>karolina.pozdilkova@morson.com</u>
Matthew Clift	<u>matthew.clift@anderselite.com</u>
Russell Kimble	<u>russell.kimble@morson.com</u>
Sue Watts	<u>susan.watts@morson.com</u>
Tammy Williams	<u>tammy.williams@morson.com</u>



Mental wellbeing

Supporting others during the COVID-19 outbreak

Giving is one of the 5 ways to wellbeing and is the act of freely parting with something and offering it to someone or something beyond ourselves - a stranger, friend, family member, a charitable organisation, our local community or our wider-community. It can involve parting with material things like money and gifts, or immaterial things like our time. Giving to others can be hugely rewarding and can bring huge benefits to our personal wellbeing. During the COVID-19 pandemic there will never be a more important time to give to others who may find themselves in vulnerable or at risk groups. Find out more about how you can help others here; <https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS>

You may also wish to consider those living closer to home such as elderly friends or neighbours who may rely on routine visits from family members or those working in social care for their day to day interaction. These are people who might already experience isolation and loneliness and might be even more affected by the restrictive measures currently in place.

You may already have seen online community support groups springing up in your local area. If not, and you want to support those who will struggle for household supplies during this period, search online or on social media channels and you will probably find a community group seeking support with deliveries, collecting supplies from shops and generally making food or toiletry donations. If you can not find a community group of this nature you could always consider setting up an online community forum to get the ball rolling.

Tips on staying connected

Phone calls: Make business calls first thing in the morning so you're immediately hooked into life outside the house. It can also help you plan priorities for the day.

Skype/Microsoft Teams calls: Use it to catch up with your colleagues and contacts. Make use of webex and face to face conferencing where possible. If you need support on how to use MS Teams contact one of the digital ambassadors or IT services for help and guidance notes.

Social media: Facebook Workplace, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, are brilliant ways to connect with like-minded people however do use it in a disciplined way. Log off when you need to concentrate or switch off from media hype which can be counter-productive.

Webinars or online events: Offer great opportunities for networking and training. Utilise online networking not with the thought of getting more business, but as a way to meet people and develop your support network.

Virtual Huddles: Advice is changing almost on a day to day basis and we are now being discouraged from unnecessary social interaction. This can be difficult, especially for those who may live alone or those who will have limited support to their usual home/family network due to the risk of cross-infection. However, opportunities to come together could be via a 'virtual huddle', allowing time for a chat and a brew. You may even consider arranging a virtual 'walking' huddle. No one says you have to be indoors all of the time, even if you are self-isolating and some fresh air and exercise can really help clear your mind and set you up for the rest of the day. Creative ways to support each other might be to share team insights, team-training, sharing expertise or even utilising some time to access online courses.



Physical wellbeing

Eating well during the COVID-19 pandemic

A word on 'boosting' your immune system...

There is no such thing as “boosting” your immune system through the foods that you eat; no specific food, nutrient, or supplement will prevent you from catching COVID-19. The European Food Safety Authority have not authorised any claim for a food or food component in the UK to be labelled as protecting against infection.

Following good hygiene practices and social distancing advice are the best way of avoiding infection.

You can support immune function by eating a variety of foods within a healthy balanced diet, as this will ensure you're getting all of the nutrients your body needs to stay healthy. You can read all about what a healthy, balanced diet looks like in the Morson Group Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Statement [here](#)

- Most of us are experiencing big changes to our routines. Try and retain a sense of normality and eat according to your normal meal pattern. If you do get sick, try to eat regularly even if you're not hungry, and make sure you are drinking enough water. You can monitor your hydration by paying attention to your thirst levels, urine colour (should be no darker than a pale yellow), and other symptoms of dehydration like dry lips, fatigue, and headaches.
- Minimise trips to the shop by planning ahead. Think about what you want to make for breakfast, lunch, and dinner over the upcoming week, write a list of everything you need, and shop accordingly. N.B. If you need to self-isolate, you should be having your food delivered or purchased by somebody else.
- Be thoughtful about how you can make best use of the food that you buy. Use up your fresh and perishable ingredients first so they don't go to waste. You might batch cook some meals to be frozen and eaten at a later date. Do some research into what keeps the longest, and make sure you're storing fruits and veggies in the appropriate places – if you're not sure, check whether something should be stored in the fridge or at an ambient temperature.
- Despite the UK Government repeating multiple times that the food supply chain is robust enough to support increased demand during this time, panic buying has created some shortages. This might mean getting imaginative with recipes and ingredients. If you are missing one specific ingredient, try Googling 'alternative to [whatever it is you're missing]' – you will be surprised as to how easily substitutes can be made without compromising taste. If you're stuck for ideas as to what to cook, there are millions of recipes available online. Again, if there's a particular food you need to base a meal around, the internet can help you get creative.
- You may want to consider taking a vitamin D supplement. Unlike all other vitamins and minerals, we get most of our vitamin D from sunshine, rather than food, and even a healthy, well-balanced diet is unlikely to provide you with as much vitamin D as you need. As many of us may be going outside less frequently, you may want to consider taking a daily vitamin D supplement. This should contain at least 10µg (micrograms).
- Comfort eating is a common reaction to stress and negative emotions. This isn't something you should feel bad about, but try to be aware if this is a habit of yours. Try to practice eating mindfully – in response to your body's signals rather than your emotions – and have healthy snacks on hand.
- Make sure you're paying particular attention to food hygiene and safety practices. If you order takeaway, take the food home right away and eat it while it is hot. Store leftovers safely, ensure they're wrapped up tightly or stored in Tupperware, and reheat thoroughly before eating.



Physical wellbeing

Keeping yourself and others well

How to avoid catching and spreading coronavirus (social distancing). Everyone should do what they can to stop coronavirus spreading. It is particularly important for people who:

- Are aged 70 or over
- Have a long-term health condition
- Are pregnant
- Have a weakened immune system

DO

- Wash your hands with soap and water often – do this for at least 20 seconds
- Always wash your hands when you get home
- Use hand sanitiser gel if soap and water are not available
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- Put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- Avoid close contact with people who have symptoms of coronavirus
- Only travel on public transport if you need to
- Avoid social activities, such as going to pubs, restaurants, theatres and cinemas
- Avoid events with large groups of people
- Use phone, online services, or apps to contact your GP surgery or other NHS services

DO NOT

- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- Do not have visitors to your home, including friends and family



Physical wellbeing

Action to take if you feel unwell

Stay at home if you have either:

- A high temperature – you feel hot to touch on your chest or back.
- A new, continuous cough – this means you've started coughing repeatedly

Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital

- You do not need to contact 111 to tell them you're staying at home. Testing for coronavirus is not needed if you're staying at home.

How long to stay at home

- If you have symptoms, stay at home for 7 days
- If you live with other people, they should stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person got symptoms
- If you live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them to stay for 14 days
- If you have to stay at home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible

Use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service if:

- You feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home
- Your condition gets worse
- Your symptoms do not get better after 7 days

Use the 111 coronavirus service, only call 111 if you cannot get help online.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>



Physical wellbeing

Keeping yourself fit and healthy

In order to ensure we're all keeping fit and healthy throughout this challenging period, Barrie & Maria, our usual Morfit trainers have prepared some online classes.

Barrie has put together a couple of short workout videos, including one for kids for anyone working at home whilst looking after their children. Barrie will be updating these with new ones every week.

- <https://youtu.be/G30hhU388Mc>
- <https://youtu.be/dv6rXtTHYbY>
- <https://youtu.be/5zeFklgpsAO>

In addition to Barrie's home workouts for children, The Body Coach (aka Joe Wicks) is also offering free online classes for kids. You can find them over on his YouTube channel @ The Body Coach TV.

Working from home comes with its various challenges and it's therefore more important than ever that we keep ourselves moving and stretch as much as possible. Therefore, Maria, our Morfit yoga instructor has also put together some free online yoga classes for us to use which you can find by following the link below.

- <http://www.mariayoga.co.uk/online-classes/>



Mental wellbeing

Helping your brain wind down

As well as physical exercise, during this time it is also imperative that we take extra care of our mental health. In addition to yoga, there are many resources out there to help ease your anxiety.

We're all having to deal with things on the fly, think about how we're going to work things out. There are people working round the clock at the moment to try and get their organisations in the best possible shape whilst simultaneously worrying about their home lives.

A solution that requires as little as 10-15 minutes and helps you really switch off and quieten down your mind so that you can get some proper rest is meditation.

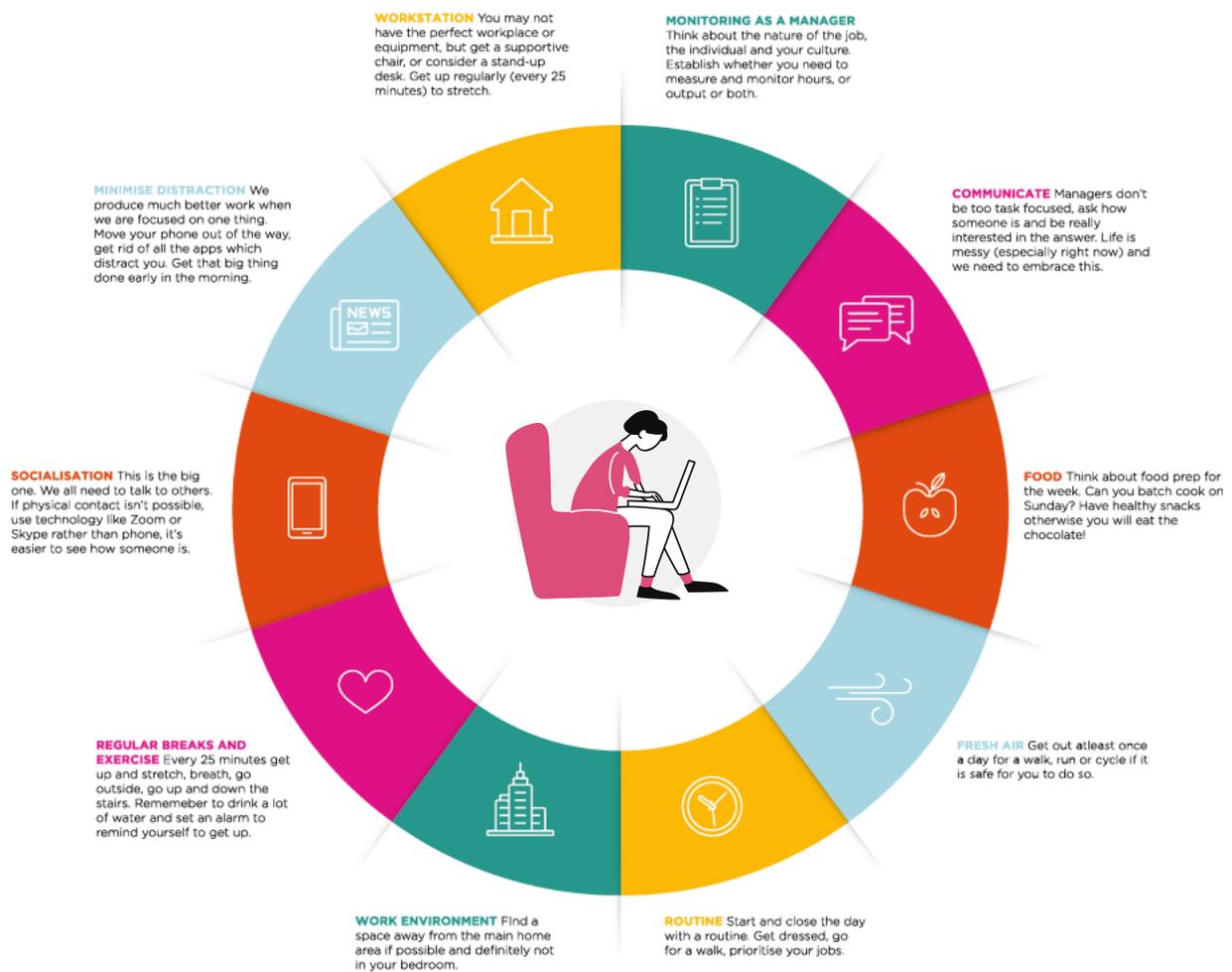
There's a free App called Insight Timer, with lots of meditations available. Some teachers on it that get highly recommended are Tara Brach, Sarah Blondin and Kate James.

Other apps which could be helpful to anyone suffering from anxiety during this time are **Headspace** and **CALM**. And whilst you have to pay for some of the more intense courses on these apps, there are still plenty of free 5-10 minute meditation sessions which you can take part in.

An NHS-approved app, Thrive is used for the prevention, early detection and self-management of common mental health issues. Users can access exercises and activities proven to treat and prevent stress and anxiety – including calm breathing, deep muscle relaxation, meditation, thought training, and self-suggestion, plus other interactive features. Based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), users can complete a daily mood meter to monitor their mood and symptoms and this is used to recommend exercises. Using clinical scales, the app will identify users scoring positively for anxiety or depression and direct them to support modules that use the latest computerised CBT methods to help manage specific stressors and retrain unhelpful thoughts. To download and install:

- a. Go to the your app store, search "Thrive: Mental Wellbeing" and install the app
- b. Open the app and select 'Sign Up'
- c. Enter your email address, select a password and enter the access code AVIVAIYP1116
- d. You will receive a verification email with a link to verify your account.
- e. Once verified, go into the app and 'Log in' with your email and password.

Top tips to help you when working from home





Should you feel that you need emotional or physical advice and support during this time, please contact Morson Health, Wellbeing and Engagement Partner Heather Deering;

heather.deering@morson.com

www.morson.com