

# KEEPING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH IN CHECK



**Alexander Stafford MP**

**A FREE information  
booklet from your local  
Member of Parliament**

The mental health of my constituents in Rother Valley, and of everyone, is a matter of great concern to me. Just as we must look after and nurture our physical health, so must we do so with our mental health. Now, during these unprecedented and difficult times, it is more important than ever before that we look after our mental health and that of those around us.

Lockdown has been the greatest national challenge since the War and affects everybody, young and old, healthy and vulnerable. It is a direct affront to our freedoms and our way of life. Many people are experiencing feelings of

anxiety related to their health, to being confined to the house, or to the future. Others are stressed about losing their jobs, trying to retain their employment, or financial concerns. We have lost our routines, our pastimes, and our social lives, and some are suffering from isolation and loneliness. Others will not be used to spending so much time with their household and are feeling trapped, in many cases with restless children to educate and entertain. Health appointments and other vital services have been altered or curtailed, and we are worrying about family and friends. These are only some of the issues we are facing.

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However, as an area and as a nation, we know that these measures are not only necessary, but critical. Without them, our fantastic NHS will be overwhelmed and people close to us will die.

That is why we have pulled together as one and hunkered down. As a direct result of our sacrifice, we have seen cases drop. We have coronavirus on the run and will not stop until we have defeated it. Lockdown is only temporary and Rother Valley shall soon emerge with a renewed sense of purpose and optimism.

I recognise that continuing the fight is a difficult task. I hope that this short guide proves helpful in its tips and information on looking after your mental health and in a small way makes this period more manageable.

You can find the latest guidance and information from the Government by visiting [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus), but please do not hesitate to get in touch with me for any reason by emailing me at [alexander.stafford.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:alexander.stafford.mp@parliament.uk). You can follow my work championing Rother Valley on [alexanderstafford.org.uk](https://alexanderstafford.org.uk), on Facebook [AlexStafford4RotherValley](https://www.facebook.com/AlexStafford4RotherValley), and on Twitter [@Alex\\_Stafford](https://twitter.com/Alex_Stafford).

**Please stay healthy, and stay safe.**



**Alexander Stafford MP**



# LOOKING AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH WHEN YOU'RE AT HOME

**It's really important to make sure that you have a structure to your day when you're at home, so here's a 6-point plan for your day:**

## 1. Plan

Make sure you don't stay in your pyjamas all day – keep a regular routine that will keep your confidence up. And try to start your day at the same time that you usually would, because your body will stay in its natural rhythm.

## 2. Move

Keeping active and exercising where you are able to is key to reducing stress, increasing energy levels and helps your sleep pattern. And if you're stuck for motivation, there are plenty of exercise routines on YouTube that you could look at!

## 3. Relax

The NHS website has plenty of relaxation techniques that you could look at. They'll help relieve stress and will help give you a sense of well-being.

## 4. Connect

Find creative ways to keep in touch with your friends, colleagues and family. Just because you can't visit other households, it doesn't mean that you can't speak to those closest to you over the phone, social media or video calling. Have an online coffee break with your colleague or an after work call with your friends or family.

## 5. Reflect

At the end of the day, think about what went well and what you could improve on. What were you grateful for during the day? How can you make tomorrow better? Think about writing down your thoughts so you can go back to them at a later date.

## 6. Sleep

In these difficult times, you might have trouble getting a good night's sleep. To improve your sleep, try and stick to your usual bedtime and get up in the morning when you usually would. And try to avoid using your phone, tablet, computer or TV before bedtime.



# STICK TO THE FACTS

**It's really easy to become overwhelmed by all of the news surrounding Coronavirus.**

So make sure that you can find a credible source that you can trust – such as [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) or the NHS website. And fact-check information that you get from social media and other people. The Government has set up a Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp, which covers the most common questions about the coronavirus.

You should also think about how inaccurate information could affect your friends and family too.

It's really important to think about limiting the amount of time that you spend watching, reading or listening to the news surrounding coronavirus.

Some people have found it easier to limit themselves to checking the news twice a day. It can be very distressing having large numbers of breaking-news alerts on your phone during the day.



# MENTAL HEALTH ADVICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The vast majority of people across the UK have not experienced the kind of social distancing measures that have been put in place in our lifetimes.

So it's okay to feel a little unsettled or worried. Despite this, it's still important to make sure that you look after your own mental health if you are over 55 and living alone or shielding.

**1. Keep up a routine**, which will be helpful to give your day a sense of order and will help you stay in control.

**2. Limit your intake of news**, so that you aren't overwhelmed with the coverage of the coronavirus. Hearing about Covid-19 all the time can be stressful and worrying.

**3. Keep yourself entertained** by watching more films, television or listening to the radio.

**4. Stay in touch with your friends and family** by planning when you will call or video-call them. This also helps you look forward to something later on in the week.

**5. Try and stay as active as possible** by moving around your house or flat and trying to do some light exercise.



# HELPING OTHERS WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Each year, around 1 in 4 people experience mental health problems. Most of us know a family member, colleague or friend who has struggled with their mental health.

According to the **Every Mind Matters** campaign, there are a number of things you can do to help

- **Express concern** by letting someone know you're worried. It's a good way to start a conversation about how they are feeling, and it also shows the person that you care and that you have time for them.
- **Reassure them**, because the first time someone mentions their worries is a huge step. Let them know that you're there for them if and when they need to talk.
- **Be patient** as you won't always know the full story. Just being there for someone can be a huge help if they want to open up to you at a later date.
- **Look after yourself** when looking after others. It can be upsetting to hear someone you care about in distress. Make sure that you take time to yourself so that you can relax and do things that you enjoy, whilst taking into account the Government guidelines on social distancing.
- **Offer some practical help** like an act of kindness. Offer to do some shopping for them or try and find some practical information if they are not in a position to do it themselves.



# USEFUL CONTACTS AND WEBSITES

## **Samaritans**

Call: 116 123 Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

Calls to 116 123 are free and will not appear on itemised phone bills

## **NHS 111 online:**

[111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk)

## **NHS Every Mind Matters Campaign**

[nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters](https://nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters)

## **Mental Health Foundation**

[mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus](https://mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus)

## **Mind – The Mental Health Charity**

[mind.org.uk/coronavirus-we-are-here-for-you](https://mind.org.uk/coronavirus-we-are-here-for-you)

Call: 0300 123 3393 (open 9am–6pm, Mon–Fri)

## **gov.uk/coronavirus**

[gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support](https://gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support)





**I hope that you found this  
guide useful, but if you have  
any other questions, please  
don't hesitate to get in touch.**

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