



# Coping with Social Distancing

APRIL 2020

support your wellbeing

To prevent the spread of infection the government has advised - where possible - that people should work from home. Schools and educational establishments have been closed and people have been advised to leave home only for essential purposes (e.g. *key worker roles, food shopping and exercise*).

When encountering others in the community people have also been advised to remain at least two metres apart practising what has become known as '**social distancing**'. Being separated from friends and family (and for some being in prolonged and close proximity to others) for a long period of time is a sudden and dramatic change in lifestyle. Whilst some people may be coping well with this situation there are many who may be becoming increasingly bored, experiencing periods of low mood, being less tolerant and lacking in motivation. It is clear at present for everyone that there will be some good days and some which are far from ideal.



## Here are some useful tips for managing with social distancing :

- Establish a daily routine to further increase your sense of personal control.
- Find something to look forward to each day within your new routine (e.g. *Monday night is game night, Tuesday is movie night etc.*)
- Share positive experiences, celebrate where you are sensing progress and maintain a focus on small achievements (e.g. *finally clearing out the junk drawer*) with the people you are living with or those you are connected to through social media.
- Focus on the things you can actually take control of (e.g. *following the advice provided on how to reduce the risk to you and your family*).
- Focus on the collective benefits of social distancing (i.e. *by following expert advice we are reducing the risk of spreading Covid-19 and protecting those who are most vulnerable in our communities*).
- Engage in some hobbies and activities that can be done away from computer screens (e.g. *listening to music or reading books, playing card games, baking, learning an instrument, taking an online course*). Focus on the positive - this might be an opportunity to learn or develop new skills and increase your levels of motivation and sense of purpose.
- Use social media to stay connected to friends and family. Agree a convenient time to make contact. It can also be helpful to agree the content of what you might discuss (i.e. *it can be unhelpful to focus too much on ongoing news reports and hearsay*).
- Encourage your child to stay connected to friends. If they are older the use of video chat and social media (with appropriate supervision and guidance) can also be useful. For younger children encourage them to 'leave messages' for their friends (e.g. *the teddy bears and rainbows in windows*).
- Instead of cancelling social activities (e.g. *book clubs, social gatherings*) try to re-arrange them using social media.
- Keeping a diary or journal can be a helpful way to express feelings at this time. You can do this on paper or by video recording. This can help people to process their experience and create a sense of order in what feels like a chaotic time.
- Living with others at this time can be challenging. Identify areas of personal space (where someone might go during times of building frustration). Talk openly, honestly and calmly about areas of tension to avoid further arguments. Establishing ground rules for this time may also help.

### Astronauts have also provided some really helpful advice on social isolation:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/03/stuck-in-cramped-space-due-to-coronavirus-astronaut-advice/>

*Make sure you keep to a normal routine of getting up at a set time, getting washed and dressed. This helps you to feel more positive - even if other people are not seeing you.*

Video messaging is also a good motivation for keeping to these routines .

