



East London NHS Foundation Trust

Tower Hamlets Talking Therapies,
71 Johnson Street
London
E1 0AQ

Telephone: 0208 536 2161

Website: <http://www.eastlondon.nhs.uk>

20th March 2020

To whom it may concern,

We're writing with information that might be helpful during this time of reduced social contact and uncertainties surrounding COVID-19.

As you may be aware, the government is now advising to avoid all but essential social contact. This means that it is likely you will probably be spending a lot of time at home.

MIND has a useful resource which offers some helpful ideas about how to maintain your well-being over the coming weeks. Below are some of the suggestions that can be found on their website:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ResponseCoronavirusENG6.2.2020-.pdf>

Staying Well

Reducing feelings of loneliness

- Arrange phone calls or send instant messages or texts.
- Make plans to video chat with people or groups you'd normally see in person.
- If you're worried that you might run out of stuff to talk about, make a plan with someone to watch a show or read a book separately so that you can discuss it when you contact each other.
- Think of other ways to keep in contact with people if meeting in person is not possible. For example, you could send an email or write a letter to friends you've not seen for a while.
- You could join a peer support community. Mind runs an online peer support community called Elefriends, where you can share your experiences and hear from others.

- If you're going online more than usual or seeking peer support on the internet, it's important to look after your online wellbeing. See our pages about online mental health for more information.
- Think about things you can do to connect with people. For example, putting extra pictures up of the people you care about might be a nice reminder of the people in your life.
- Listen to a chatty radio station or podcast if your home feels too quiet.

Routine

- Plan how you'll spend your time. It might help to write this down on paper and put it on the wall.
- Try to follow your ordinary routine as much as possible. Get up at the same time as normal, follow your usual morning routines, and go to bed at your usual time. Set alarms to remind you of your new schedule if that helps.
- If you aren't happy with your usual routine, this might be a chance to do things differently. For example, you could go to bed earlier, spend more time cooking or do other things you don't usually have time for.
- Think about how you'll spend time by yourself at home. For example, plan activities to do on different days or habits you want to start or keep up.

If you live with other people, it may help to do the following:

- Agree on a household routine. Try to give everyone you live with a say in this agreement.
- Try to respect each other's privacy and give each other space. For example, some people might want to discuss everything they're doing while others won't.

How to spend your time

- Try having a clear out. You could sort through your possessions and put them away tidily, or have a spring clean. You could set any old possessions aside to donate to a cause you care about, or use online selling sites to pass on things you don't want to keep. If you do sell anything online, you might want to delay your delivery dates until you can leave the house to send your parcels.
- You could also have a digital clear out. Delete any old files and apps you don't use, upgrade your software, update all your passwords or clear out your inboxes.
- Do any admin tasks that you haven't got around to, for example changing your energy provider.
- Keep your brain occupied and challenged. Set aside time in your routine for this. Read books, magazines and articles. Listen to podcasts, watch films and do puzzles.
- Some libraries have apps you can use to borrow Ebooks, audiobooks or magazines from home for free, if you're a library member.
- FutureLearn and OpenLearn have free online courses you could try.
- There are lots of apps that can help you learn things, such as a foreign language or other new skills e.g. Duolingo
- Start an arts or crafts project, or simply try your hand at drawing, painting, collage, sewing, craft kits or upcycling. There are plenty of Youtube videos and websites that could offer inspiration.

- Other activities might include; DIY, mindfulness, playing musical instruments, singing or listening to music, writing, yoga, meditation.

Keeping Active

Exercising at home can be simple and there are options for most ages and abilities, such as:

- Cleaning your home
- Dancing to music
- Going up and down stairs
- Seated exercises
- Online exercise workouts that you can follow

Here are some more resources which may be of use during the COVID-19 crisis; the following services and organisations are still offering support and advice, however, most of it will be over the telephone.

Crisis services;

- The Mental Health Crisis Line which is open 24 hours. Please call them if you feel you are at a point of crisis with your mental health, or if you know someone who requires support; 020 7771 5888
- The Samaritans are open 24 hours to support people who are feeling suicidal; 116 123
- Here is a list of food banks which are local to Tower Hamlets:
 - <https://www.firstlovefoundation.org.uk/foodbank/>
 - <http://www.bowfoodbank.org/>

Useful contacts;

- Mind provides information relating to mental health; <https://www.mithn.org.uk/> and <https://www.mithn.org.uk/news/covid-19-virus-update/>
- For anyone living with cancer, Maggie's have an online community and a telephone support line; <https://www.maggies.org/> and 0300 123 1801
- Opening Doors London have a new telephone befriending service designed for LGBT+ people aged over 50; <https://www.openingdoorslondon.org.uk/>

- London Black Women's Project support women and children who are victims of domestic violence; <http://www.lbwp.online/>

Self-help;

- Use this link to find self-help leaflets surrounding mental health; <https://web.nrw.nhs.uk/selfhelp/>
- Here is the link to Mind's guide on 'managing our mental health & staying well during a virus outbreak;' <https://www.mind.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ResponseCoronavirusENG6.2.2020-.pdf>
- 'Headspace' is an app which you can download on to your phone, where you can practice mindfulness and meditation - it is currently free to use; <https://www.headspace.com/>
- Access to online self-help for mental health problems; <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk//index.html>

Online support;

- Tower Hamlets Council has a dedicated page for COVID-19 support which can be found at: https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/health_social_care/health_and_medical_advice/Coronavirus/Community_support.aspx
- Nextdoor is an online forum which people can sign up to, it is divided by local areas and can be used to offer help or request support; <https://nextdoor.co.uk/>

Meaningful activities for social distancing;

- The Open University provide online courses, some of which are free; <http://www.open.ac.uk/> and <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses>
- Udemy provide online courses, you have to pay, but prices are reduced at the moment; <https://www.udemy.com/>
- Netflix have created Netflix Party which lets you watch your favourite shows with friends through Chrome browsers; <https://www.netflixparty.com/>
- Search and follow 'bread ahead' on Instagram, where you can watch their live daily baking sessions and get involved

- Use this webpage to find 12 museums which offer virtual tours that you can experience at home on your computer; <https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>
- If you want to try some yoga, you can find many videos on YouTube, or one suggestion is 'yoga with Adriene'; <https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene>
- Karen Abend has daily online sketchbook workshops which you can subscribe to; <https://www.karenabend.com/sketchbook-revival-2020/>
- Chatterpack is an online resource website offering lots of virtual experiences from music, to culture and literature; <https://chatterpack.net/>

Support for Older People;

- Reengage offer telephone calls to older people to promote social interaction; <https://www.reengage.org.uk/> and 0800 71543 and 202 7240 0630
- Age UK have specific advice and support local to Newham; <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/eastlondon/> and <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/wp-assets/globalassets/east-london/coronavirus-help-pack.pdf> and 0208 981 7124
- The British Red Cross can offer advice and support; <https://www.redcross.org.uk/>
- Find advice on this website which aims to reduce social isolation; <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/blog/coronavirus-and-social-isolation/>
- This organisation provides advice if you or someone you know is being abused; <https://www.elderabuse.org.uk/> and 080 8808 8141
- Dementia UK are providing telephone advice and support; <https://www.dementiauk.org/> and 0800 888 6678
- The Silver Line provide information, friendship and advice to older people 24/7; <https://www.thesilverline.org.uk/> and 0800 470 8090

I hope you find some of these suggestions useful or helpful.

With kind regards,

Tower Hamlets Talking Therapies