



Meeting emotional needs while combating Covid-19

Our mental – and physical – health depends upon meeting our 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 our 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 and Control

Taking active steps to control risk of infection clearly supports us in meeting our emotional needs for security and control. However, given that the future is unpredictable – and even experts have limited information about the virus – we also 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 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. Whether you are working from home or not, build in activities you enjoy.
- Spend some time remembering times when you have had to be cheerful and optimistic in the face of adversity.
- When it comes to news and information, only visit websites which offer reliable sources of information. 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 you feel confident doing which give you a sense of being in control.

Intimacy and Attention

There are ways we can continue to meet our need to give and receive attention.

Contact people you know, who may also 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 conversations and positive support. If there are activities you can 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 you do to meet the need for privacy at home?

Agree a space with your family, which people can use to spend time alone in, free from distractions.

Limit online and screen time to specific times of the day.

Achievement, Status, Meaning and Purpose

We meet our need for achievement through being stretched to learn and overcome challenges. Learning also contributes to meeting the need for meaning and purpose, along with the sense that we are needed by others and that we are contributing to a larger cause. Meaning and purpose significantly contribute to our 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 online courses you can take?

Are there people you can support over the phone or on video call to help reduce the effects isolation is having on them?

Community

How do we stay connected to the wider community?

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 supports our immune system and our mental health and wellbeing.

A big thank you to Suffolk Mind – who use the [Human Givens](#) approach in everything they do – for letting us reproduce this edited version of their original blog piece.