

Taking care of our Physical, Emotional & Mental Wellbeing

Improving Resilience and withstanding Social Isolation

18.05.20

COVID-19 is a major global public health emergency and is having a big impact on our lives. To help us through these difficult times, it is important that we take care of everyone in our community and look after our own physical and mental wellbeing.

Cocooners are still being advised to stay at home as much as possible, except to leave home for exercise or a drive up to 5 kilometers. They are allowed meet people in groups of up to 4 outdoors but must adhere to social distancing, avoid all social contact and wash hands before and after leaving your home.

Introduction

Wellbeing is feeling good about yourself, the world around you and functioning well in everyday life, most of the time. Being resilient and coping with the normal stresses of life is also an important attribute of wellbeing. **Wellbeing is much broader than simply how happy you are. It also includes how satisfied you are with your life, your sense of purpose, and how in control you feel.** (Mental Health Ireland)

Taking back control over your life is a very positive first step in improving your wellbeing. Draw up your own plan. Set up your own new daily routine. Set a time to get up, a time for your meals, be sure to do some exercise.

What Government wellbeing initiatives have been introduced?

National and local Government as well as our voluntary and community sectors have been working together on a wide range of wellbeing initiatives to **help in 3 ways**.

1. **Look after your Mental Wellbeing** – day to day coping advice from [Healthy Ireland](#) with lots of creative things to do like gardening and cooking
2. **Stay Active** – [In home exercise ideas](#) from sporting organisations and athletes, healthy eating advice. Set your own target to physical activity tailored to your ability and build it up gradually. Keeping active is not just about fitness, physical activity has been proven to help you mental wellbeing. You are allowed exercise within 5 kilometres of your home, so try get in a walk and some fresh air each day.
3. **Stay Connected** – [On line Libraries](#), [virtual cultural tours](#), [online galleries](#) and book clubs, tips on helping in your community along with online workshops for learners of all ages to help us stay connected, more information can be found by contacting your local [Community Call Forum](#). There are many supports out there to get older people online and connected; including [Age Action Getting Started KIT](#), [COVID19 Tech](#)

1. Will COVID19 affect my loved ones' mental health and/or increase their anxiety during this time? How can I support them?

Higher levels of anxiety are a normal response in the current situation. You can support your loved one by encouraging the following:

- **Connect** – with the people around you and those at a distance; with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day. If they live within 5 kilometres, you can visit them- but you must remain outdoors.
- **Ways to connect** – Phone a friend, video call, skype / zoom calls. Reach out to a friendly call service such as ALONE Support and Telephone Befriending. If you do not have a phone speak to us and we can access on through our ALONE's Vodafone Referral project
- **The Old Ways** – write a letter; talk to neighbours over the garden wall.

2. How can I take exercise if I am Cocooning?

Most shops, neighbours and ALONE volunteers are delivering to homes. Encourage a balanced and regular diet with the inclusion of a variety of fruits and veg.

- **Be Active** – [Exercising](#) makes you feel good. When we feel 'stuck' in ourselves emotionally, physical movement can help shift this feeling. Discover a physical activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness. (See ALONE's Physical Activity Booklet).
- **Ways to be Active** – [Dance](#). Use some of the many online programmes, or let us do a simple exercise movements with you on the phone
- **The Old Ways** - Step outside, breathe and stretch. 'Potter' in the Garden

3. I am feeling frustrated and bored as my days are long with nothing to do.

Plan out your day with regular meals, exercise and learning, involve family, friends and neighbours.

- **Keep Learning** – [New things](#), they will make you more confident as well as being fun.
- **Ways to Keep Learning** – Try something new. Sign up for that [course on line](#). Take on a different responsibility. Learn to play an instrument or Download recipes and cook new dishes or your favourite food.
- **The Old Ways** - Rediscover an old interest Read a book, Libraries will post out Books now. Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Fix a bike. Puzzles. Play chess or drafts over the phone with friends or family. Write down family stories from your past.

4. I'm feeling stressed, how can I get my life back in control?

Over the past few weeks your routine may have been affected by the impact of COVID-19. Having a routine is important, it gives us a sense of stability and structure to our day, which can also help reduce our levels of stress.

Routine

- Sleep – Get up and go to bed at regular times
- Plan – Write a list of things to do for the day
- Pace – If cleaning out your clothes start with one drawer at a time
- Organise – Set a regular time to do certain things, e.g. exercise every morning.

Ways to develop a Routine

- Stay connected to your club, men's shed or active retirement group.
- Get some exercise, stretches, dance to your favourite music, go for a walk.
- Listen to music/play an instrument.
- Do some art – colouring/painting/drawing.
- Do some housework or D I Y.
- Clear out your wardrobe/cupboards/garage.

The Old Ways –

- Write a letter or card to someone.
- Organise old photographs.
- Write a story or keep a diary.
- Listen to mass on the radio or online – www.churchservices.tv/.
- Gardening – indoors or outdoors. Knit or Crochet.

5. I'm not sleeping well, what can I do?

Sleep Hygiene is essential for a good night's sleep, this involves taking care of your body, routine and your sleeping environment.

Caring for your body

- **Caffeine** – Try to avoid drinking caffeine, i.e. tea, coffee, or Coca-Cola after 5pm
- **Food** – Try to avoid eating a big or spicy meal late in the evening
- **Hunger** – Try not to go to bed hungry
- **Alcohol** – Try to avoid alcohol as it interferes with sleep
- **Exercise** – Physical exercise in the late afternoon make your body tired and aids sleep.
- **Routine** – Try to do some exercise every day.

Medication – Check your prescription as some medications can contribute to insomnia.

N.B. (If you believe your medications may be interfering with your sleep, talk to your doctor)

Bed Time Routine

- **Bedtime** –Regular bedtime routine teaches your body when it’s time to go to sleep.
- **Soothing** – Drinks such as chamomile tea or a milky drink can aid sleep
- **Bath** – Have a bath, or a routine of washing your face and brushing your teeth
- **Time** – Go to bed at same time each night
- **Relaxation** – Breathing exercise (one hand on stomach the other on your chest, deliberately slow your breathing, breathe deeply in your stomach instead of high in your chest)
- **Morning** – Try and wake up the same time every day, **even if this is tiring to begin with**

Sleep environment

- **Bedroom** – Make it a pleasant place to be, keep it clean and tidy. Try a Nightlight
- **Smell** – Introduce pleasant smells such as a drop of lavender oil onto the pillow.
- **Safe** – Make sure that your home is safe e.g. doors locked, windows closed.
- **Mattress** – If you can invest in a good medium firm mattress and comfortable pillows that will support the neck and head.
- **Digital** – Try turning off your phone/l-pads etc. at night as **the light from such devices can stimulate the brain making it difficult to sleep.**

6. What if I can't sleep?

- **Avoid** – If you cannot sleep after 30 minutes, get up and **do another activity elsewhere** such as reading or listening to music (**avoid TV as it can wake you up**).
- **Repeat** – After 15 minutes return to bed and try to sleep again. If you still can't sleep after 30 minutes get up again. Repeat this routine as many times as necessary
- **Diary** – The National Sleep Foundation suggests using a notebook to write down thoughts / worries at night in order to help clear the mind before sleep.

Advice for all Older People to prevent crime

- Keep lights on inside and out.
- Do not keep **large amounts of cash at home**.
- For up to date advice on COVID-19 visit HSE.ie - 1850241850
- Keep **valuables & keys out of sight**.
- Visit www.garda.ie for more crime prevention advice
- Be **alert to online and telephone scams**.
- Do not share personal or financial data.
- **KEEP UNEXPECTED CALLERS OUT**

- Do not open the door. **Use the door chain. Look for ID.**
- If you require assistance call your local Garda station.
- Keep a lookout for friends and neighbours while adhering to **appropriate physical distancing.**
- Use only the **services of people you know and trust**

There has been some 'scam' calls made to Older People

- If they suspect that someone is trying to commit fraud, **contact their local Garda station** (not 999/112)
- Remind them they can contact **ALONE on 0818 222 024** for support.
- Remind them **not to give their bank details or your credit/debit card** to anyone they do not trust.
- They may be **asked for the details** by text, by email, over the phone or in person, **do not reply.**