

Coronavirus and Our Mental Health Guidance for Camden and Islington Residents

In the current stressful situation, it is important that we pay attention to mental health as well as physical health. Here are some tips for people living in Camden and Islington that may help manage very understandable anxiety and worry.

Take recommended precautions

We all need to take the precautions recommended by Government and the NHS in order to reduce transmission and protect the vulnerable, even if we think we are not particularly vulnerable ourselves. There is quite a bit of fake news circulating on social media. Go to trusted sites.

BUT avoid spending most of your time searching for updates and news.

In such a situation it is tempting to keep checking your phone and searching the web/social media for news and updates. That is unnecessary and likely to generate more anxiety and worry. Instead you may want to plan to check at specific times, perhaps just once or twice a day.

Keep Active

Try to continue with your projects and routines, at a pace that works for you. If you find yourself with much more spare time than usual, think of creating some new routines or activities. Are there books you always wanted to read but haven't got around to? Films? Photos to organize? Recipes you haven't tried? Painting, drawing, etc. Choose things that are meaningful to you.

Some people may find it more difficult to get going in the morning. Keeping normal basic routines like getting up at a specific time, showering, getting dressed etc, can help.

Look after yourself

Eat healthily and regularly, consider moderating alcohol intake, get plenty of sleep, and exercise. All of these are good for the immune system and tend to help mood as well. Of course, social isolation means not going to gyms or exercising in groups but an exercise routine at home, in the garden (if you have one), or in a largely empty park is feasible. There are many home exercise videos available on You-tube. Some gyms have their own virtual instructors. In stressful times, some of us can become self-critical. You've got enough burdens without that. Be kind to yourself. If you live with others, remember they are also under stress and try not to personalize any irritating actions.

Mental health support

Our local psychology service, iCope, can provide support and practical advice on managing Covid-19 related worries. In the first instance, please access the [iCope website](#) for the latest news and advice. If needed, you can make a self-referral via the website or by call 020 3317 6670 (please note that you may need to leave a message). You will then be offered an initial 30 minute telephone appointment within two days. This structured conversation will offer practical support, signposting and access to helpful materials. iCope will be updating their website over the coming days and weeks so do check their website for the latest information on those services.

The NHS has put together a helpful list of mental health helplines that you can access [here](#).

Headspace, a popular meditation app, is offering some free access during this time. Take a look via [this link](#). Similarly, [Good Thinking](#) is a useful source of mental health and wellbeing resources that is available to all of us living in London.

Become MORE socially connected

We have to physically distance ourselves from others, but we are social beings. Compensate by reaching out to friends and colleagues using social media, phone calls, Facetime, Skype, Zoom etc. This will combat the loneliness we can feel when physically isolated. Create regular ways of linking with your work colleagues even if you are all working from home. Maybe a daily group video conference? Consider creating a WhatsApp, Slack or other social media group.

Be Kind to Others

Kindness is a double blessing. It makes the person who receives a kind act feel better and it makes you feel better for doing it.