

Minding your Mental Health during Covid-19

The unprecedented spread of COVID-19 presents a challenging and concerning time for IFUT members and all in our community.

The constant stream of social media updates and news reports about COVID-19 may cause you to feel anxious, stressed, irritable, or helpless. These are normal and understandable feelings to have.

To support you, your family, and friends, we have put together this article with useful information and resources.

Keep up a healthy routine to your best ability during this time which may include:

Get Regular Exercise

Exercise helps reduce stress and boosts your energy levels. The chemical changes it causes in the brain helps to reduce stress. Physical exercise can also help with your sleep quality.

Keep Regular Sleep Routines

The negative impact of sleep disruption on mood is well-established. Without the structure of having to get to the workplace, and different methods of working, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy sleep habits like going to bed later and getting up later. Changes to your sleep cycle now could go on to impact your mood in the weeks and months ahead.

Maintain a Healthy, Balanced, Diet

While we are out of our normal routines, we need to remember the importance of a healthy, balanced, diet on both our physical and mental health.

Time for Self-care

Remember the advice of every flight attendant in the case of an emergency landing. Passengers are advised to put on their own oxygen mask first before attempting to help others. We each have a responsibility, particularly in times like this, to practise self-care. This may mean taking time to engage in things that you enjoy or find relaxing. Think of small changes which you can easily make.

Take Time Away from Social Media and the News

While staying digitally active, it is also important to carefully choose your news and media sources, particularly if some of the information you are receiving is leaving you feeling anxious or overwhelmed. Choose one or two well-informed sources such as the HSE and WHO and limit yourself to set times during the day to check for news updates.

Stay Connected

While maintaining a social distance, people should guard against becoming socially isolated. Look out for other people who may be feeling alone or concerned. While you may not be able to make physical contact with a person who is feeling isolated or alone, it's really important to still reach

out to someone who might be isolated or vulnerable at this time, or be an identified at-risk group.

Advances in mobile technology in particular mean that we can stay connected through calls, text, WhatsApp, e-mail, etc. Use this time to get in contact with people. Contribute to a sense of togetherness that is going to be pivotal in all of our ability to cope both now and in the weeks ahead.

You can find reliable information and updates on COVID-19 here:

- The [World Health Organisation](#) (WHO) Mental Health considerations
- [WHO - Coping with Stress](#)
- [HSE - Minding your Mental Health](#)
- [Department of Health](#) latest updates
- [HSE](#) up-to-date, evidence-based advice on practical and necessary steps
- [Health Protection Surveillance Centre](#)

Other sources which may be of help to you or members of your community:

[Mental Health Ireland](#) has listed a number of resources for those feeling anxious, isolated or concerned about their mental health.

[Alone](#) have launched a COVID-19 support line for older people, working in collaboration with the Department of Health and the HSE. Phone 0818 222 024 from 8am – 8pm, 7 days a week.

One Family has a helpline for people parenting alone, sharing parenting, separating, or experiencing a crisis pregnancy. Call 1890 66 2212 or 01 662 9212 or e-mail support@onefamily.ie.

Care Alliance Ireland have set up an online family carer support group on Facebook. Please note you will need a Facebook account to access this private group. [Join the support group here.](#)

Family Carers Ireland offers a confidential, friendly and supportive Careline. Freephone 1800 24 07 24, Mon-Fri 9am – 8pm, Saturday 10am – 12 noon.