

COPING GUIDE

First Steps ED - Guide to coping with Covid-19



What's this booklet all about?

We have put this booklet together for anyone struggling with an eating disorder or for the family members and friends of those struggling.

If you are feeling anxious, worried or stressed about the current situation that is a completely normal response and it's okay to feel that way. It is completely okay not to be okay, this is a worrying time for everyone, especially if you are living with an eating disorder.

But you are not alone; the whole world is experiencing this new challenge together. There are things you and people around you can do to lessen the worry and anxiety.

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Overthinking

You might find yourself overthinking every little thing. Here's some things you might want to try that could help with overthinking:



- Try writing down a list of your worrying thoughts, those that you can do something about that's great. Those that you cannot do anything about and are out of your control, try to let go of, overthinking it and get worked up about it will not change the fact that we cannot control it and will add to your anxiety. Try using the worry tree on the next page.

- Talk to someone and get your worries out, but put a limit on how long for. For example, you could schedule a 10-minute daily worry chat with a friend or family member (this doesn't need to be face to face, you can call, skype or facetime). After this try to talk about other things – it helps to get our worries out but talking about it all day may add to your anxiety.



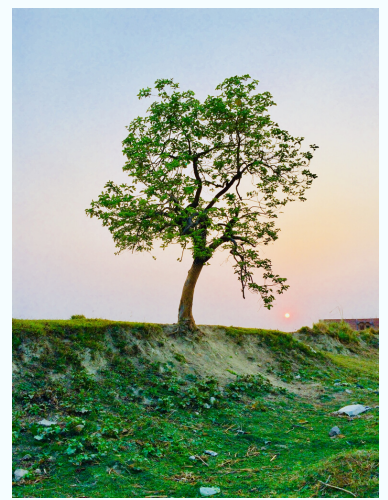
- Limit your news and social media intake – there will be a lot of scaremongering around which only adds to our anxiety. Only watch the news when you need to and limit how much you watch.

AMY OUR CLINICAL OFFICER SAYS:



‘It's okay to be worried about everything that is going on, focus on the things that can help you feel better in the moment and keep in contact with those who support you, we are all in this together’

The worry tree



Notice the worry



Ask: What am I worrying about?



Ask: Is this worry eating disorder related?

YES



Will dealing with this worry increase eating disorder behaviours?

NO



YES



Let someone know about the worry and use positive coping techniques



Let the worry go



Change focus of attention



NO



Let the worry go



Change focus of attention



NO



Ask: Is this worry in my control?

YES



When can you deal with this worry?



Later



Schedule it



Now



Do it



Let the worry go



Change focus of attention



AMY OUR CLINICAL OFFICER SAYS:

'It's okay to be worried about everything that is going on, focus on the things that can help you feel better in the moment and keep in contact with those who support you by phone or all in person together'



Eating disorder related worries

What if I get the urge to binge eat on stockpiled food?

This is a valid worry to have and there will be lots of others who feel the same, so you are not on your own.

If you live with others and feel able to talk to them, try to explain this worry. It might help to make a weekly meal plan after the food shop so that you know what you will be having for each meal. You can also use distractions to prevent binge eating; can you make yourself a list of jobs that you are going to do each day around the house?

If you are with someone else in the house, they can help to distract you, if you are on your own there are still plenty of things you can do, for example cleaning, colouring, knitting.

If you do binge eat, it's okay, try not to be too hard on yourself, focus on one day at a time.



'I can't do my usual amount of exercise'

If exercise is something that either helps your mental health or if it is something that you obsess about and get worried about not doing enough of, you are probably very worried about the thought of doing less exercise. Giving yourself permission to rest is important if you are having to self-isolate. Remind yourself that your body still needs food to function even when you are resting or doing nothing.

Think of all the reasons for recovery from your eating disorder, the goals that you have in your life and why it is important to allow yourself to rest. Also remind yourself that this won't last forever.

I can't get my 'safe foods' from the shop

Try to get the foods that are most like your safe foods where possible. You may need to write a list for a friend or family member to buy your food for you if you do have to self-isolate, try to write this when feeling most calm and do it with someone where possible. It will be stressful having someone else do your shopping, try to get someone that you trust and speak through your anxieties with them. You could write a list of alternative foods that you would be willing to try. Talk to your loved ones about what support would help you during meal or snack times, could they facetime you or call you when you're eating if you live on your own?

Use distraction techniques before and after mealtimes.

Remind yourself of the reasons why you don't want to slip backwards, what are your motivations for recovery?

Once you have tried a new food a few times it will become easier and then you will have more variety in the food you eat, that's an amazing achievement!

ChatED

Remember that a First Steps ED staff member is online Monday to Friday on ChatED so you are welcome to log onto there and talk to a staff member about any worries you have.

To access:

- log on to facebook
- Search First Steps Chat ED
- Chat on messenger within the specified times

ChatED times:

Monday 12-1pm

Tuesday 12-1pm

Wednesday 3-4pm

Thursday 12-1pm

Friday 1-2pm

HOLLY OUR SERVICE COORDINATOR AND SPECIALIST SUPPORT WORKER SAYS:



"Try to follow the '5:5 rule' - if you aren't going to remember why you are worrying about this specific meal or challenge in 5 years then try not to worry about it now for longer than 5 minutes. Helps put things in to perspective a little bit"



Relaxation Mindfulness techniques

Here are some mindfulness exercises you can try at home, if you don't find mindfulness helpful that's okay, but it's something to try if you want to.

Mindful Breathing Exercise

This exercise can be done standing up or sitting down, and almost anywhere at any time. All you have to do is be still and focus on your breath for just one minute.

Start by breathing in and out slowly. One cycle should last for approximately 6 seconds. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, letting your breath flow effortlessly in and out of your body. Let go of your thoughts for a minute.

Let go of things you have to do later today or pending projects that need your attention. Simply let yourself be still for one minute.

Purposefully watch your breath, focusing your senses on its pathway as it enters your body and fills you with life, and then watch it work its way up and out of your mouth as its energy dissipates into the world.

If you are someone who thought they'd never be able to meditate, guess what? You are half way there already!

Safe space visualisation

This exercise is simple but incredibly powerful.

Imagine you are in a place where you would feel calm and relaxed it might be a beach with clear sea and white sand, a woods full of bird calls or endless fields of green. Somewhere that you would feel peaceful - this is your safe space.

Sit or lie down somewhere comfortable.
Close your eyes.
Visualise your safe space.

What colours can you see?

What sounds would you be able to hear?

What would it smell like there?

Spend a few minutes sitting with your safe space, enjoying what you envision.

Take 3 or 4 big deep breaths, open your eyes and continue with your day.



CLAIR OUR SPECIALIST SUPPORT WORKER SAYS:



'Remember to breath, embrace the moment, be creative with your thinking, work and time there is always a positive in every negative situation!
Take care and stay safe '

Something I can do everyday
that's good for my mind:

Self care
is just as important
now as it is at any other
time. Self care is about
doing things to care for
yourself, things that
make you feel good and
help your mental health.



Ensuring you make time to do this is really
important.

Self care can be something as small as taking ten
deep breaths or ensuring you're drinking enough
water . We can still practice self-care being at home.

Do I have a good bedtime
routine:
Yes No

How can I make it better?

Things that calm, comfort and
reassure me:

What might get in the way of
self care:

Negative strategies I
need to avoid:

Having a routine when in isolation

Use our daily planner on the next page to help plan some structure into your day if you're having to self-isolate or are at home when you would usually be at work, school or college. Here are some ideas of what you could include:

- Mindfulness or meditation (there are lots of videos online)
- Phoning, facetime, skype with family members or friends
- Any online appointments you might have with your NHS or First Steps ED support team
- Watching an episode of a series on TV or a film
- Blogging
- Learn a new language
- Practice or learn an instrument
- Times of meals and snacks
- Work from home
- Spend time in the garden
- Having a relaxing bath
- Pampering yourself - for example using a facemask or nice moisturiser
- Doing some artwork
- Cleaning

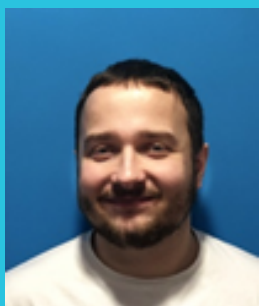


(as long as this is limited if it is something that you get obsessive about)

- Time with pets

We have left the weekend out of the planner, but feel free to plan that too if it helps!

SAM OUR SPECIALIST SUPPORT WORKER SAYS:



'It may seem difficult right now, but we believe in you, we know you can do it and together we can get through this'

Monday

Tuesday



Wake up time



**What
will I have for
breakfast and what
time?**



**Morning
plans, include a
morning snack?**



**Lunch
what will I
have, time and
who with?**



**Afternoon
plans, include
an afternoon
snack?**



**Evening meal
what will I
have, time and
who with?**



**Evening plans,
time to relax ready
for bed? Include an
evening
snack?**

Wednesday

Thursday



Wake up time



**What
will I have for
breakfast and what
time?**



**Morning
plans, include a
morning snack?**



**Lunch
what will I
have, time and
who with?**



**Afternoon
plans, include
an afternoon
snack?**



**Evening meal
what will I
have, time and
who with?**



**Evening plans,
time to relax ready
for bed? Include an
evening
snack?**

Friday



Wake up time



What
will I have for
breakfast and what
time?



Morning
plans, include a
morning snack?

Lunch
what will I
have, time and
who with?



Afternoon
plans, include
an afternoon
snack?



Evening meal
what will I
have, time and
who with?



Evening plans,
time to relax ready
for bed? Include an
evening
snack?

Something I am
proud of myself
for this week:

Something good
that happened
this week:

One thing I want
to achieve next
week:

Focusing on the good stuff



It might seem like there isn't anything good at the moment and it may be hard to recognise anything good that's happening.

Although everyday may not be a good day, there is always something good to be found in everyday. Did the sun shine though your window today? Did you get up and dressed even though you didn't leave the house? It's these little positive things that we need to focus on.

Use this space to write down one good thing that has happened each day. You might already have a notebook that you'd prefer to use. It makes something really positive to look back on!

Date:

One good thing that happened today

is:.....

.....

Date:

One good thing that happened today

is:.....

.....

Date:

One good thing that happened today

is:.....

.....

Date:

One good thing that happened today

is:.....

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Date:

One good thing that happened today

is:.....

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Date:

One good thing that happened today

is:.....

.....

Date:

One good thing that happened today

is:.....

ROSE OUR SPECIALIST SUPPORT WORKER SAYS:



'Not only are you coping with an eating disorder, but doing so whilst going through a huge amount of change, anxiety and uncertainty. You are doing amazing; this won't last forever, and hopefully you will look back and be proud of yourself.'

We hope you have found this booklet useful. Please feel free to share this with anyone you think may benefit.



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