

Managing Self Care during Covid 19 Outbreak

During this time of significant societal stress and uncertainty, it is more important than ever for us to look after our own psychological and physical wellbeing. This is likely to be “a marathon rather than a sprint” so it is important to pace yourself. Here are some tips and resources that you might find useful:

1. The constant stream of news and information from social media can be overwhelming. Try to avoid constantly checking or reading updates – seek information at specific times of the day from reliable sources. The [HSE](#) and [Department of Health](#) regularly update the information on their websites.
2. Remember that you may be an important source of information about the outbreak for your family and friends. Only share accurate and concise facts. Avoid the use of dramatic language.
3. Look after your basic needs. Ensure that you get adequate levels of sleep and exercise. Take regular breaks during your shift and ensure that you stay well hydrated. Eat sufficient and healthy food and avoid unhealthy coping strategies in the form of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. [RCEM's Wellness Compendium](#) is free to download and has chapters dedicated to these and many more related topics.
4. Feeling stressed is normal in the current situation. This does not mean that you are weak or you cannot do your job. The [WHO](#) has produced excellent advice for members of the general population as well as healthcare workers about managing your mental health at this time. Taking the time to manage your stress and mental health is as important as managing your physical health. Various mindfulness techniques such as meditation, breathing exercises and guided imagery reduce stress.
5. You may not be able to see members of your family or friends, either as a result of Government recommendations or as a precaution for health reasons. Stay connected with your loved ones through digital methods. Turn to your colleagues for social support – they may be having similar experiences.
6. Civility between healthcare workers has never been so important. Almost all excellence in healthcare is dependent on teams, and civility is a key ingredient of great teams. Play your part – be kind to your colleagues and be aware that they may be feeling stressed or overwhelmed. Have a zero tolerance approach to incivility. Take some time to read and learn more about the evidence base behind the [Civility Saves Lives](#) campaign.
7. It's ok not to be ok! If you feel that you would like more psychological support, [The Employee Assistance and Counselling Service](#) (EACS) – formally known as EAP – provide free and confidential counseling service to all HSE employees.

Remember what Nelson Mandela said: *“It always seems impossible until it's done”*.

Never be afraid to call for help, and good luck!

Dr Una Kennedy

20th March 2020