

# **World Mental Health Day Member Pack**

**10th October 2020**

# Introduction

Dear Students for Global Health Members,

On 10th of October 2020 we celebrated *World Mental Health Day*, taking time to think about the mental health of students and actions we can do to improve the mental health of everyone.

COVID-19 has affected everyone's mental health, and also highlighted our anxieties about the world that we live in, which seems to be increasing in inequalities.

At such a time, we wanted to provide you with a compilation of resources you can use for yourself personally and also share with others. We released this when the pandemic first started and once again we see its need. We hope you find it useful.

Wishing you good health,

SfGH National Committee 2020/21

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# Links for Mental Health guidance & support

## Tea & Empathy and other online forums!

Mind Helpline provide a Mon-Fri, 9am to 6pm information & signposting service where you can ask about mental health problems, where to get help near you, treatment options and advocacy services - at 0300 123 3393

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably) offers their services to anyone 5pm-Midnight 365 days a year through a web chat or a helpline at 0800 58 58 58

## Mental Health Foundation

provide an array of information and advice to help advocate mental health issues

Saneline work with anyone affected by mental illness. They provide a free text-based support service called Textcare and an online supportive forum community where anyone can share their experiences of mental health

Help Guide - a useful website that provides useful information and advice on general wellbeing and how to maintain your mental health -

## The Samaritans 24-hr, 365 day helpline at 116 123

Anxiety UK is a charity that offers support for those with conditions with anxiety, and offer a helpline at 03444 775 774 Monday-Friday, 9.30am-5.30pm

Papyrus focus on prevention of young suicide; they provide an array of information, guidance, news, and a helpline at 0800 068 41 41

Men's Health Forum provides 24/7 stress support for men by text, chat, or email.  
OCD UK is a charity run by people with OCD, for people with OCD. Includes facts, news, and treatments. Their support line can be called at 0333 212 7890, Monday-Friday, 9am to 5pm

# Links for general information on COVID-19

[NHS](#)

[London School of  
Hygiene and  
Tropical Medicine](#)

[WHO](#)

[The  
Lancet](#)

[Public  
Health  
England](#)

# Mental Health Crisis

## **If you need urgent help you can do the following.**

- Get in touch with your crisis contact. You might have been given a crisis contact by a mental health professional. Or your care plan might say who to contact in a crisis.
- Contact your local NHS urgent mental health helpline. Most areas will have one. In some areas this service is called the Single Point of Access team. You can find details of your local NHS urgent mental health helpline here or you can call NHS 111 to ask them for details.
- Contact your local NHS crisis team. The crisis team supports people who are in a mental health crisis and need urgent help. You might need a medical or social care professional to refer you to the team. But you can ask the team about this if you aren't sure. Sometimes you can refer yourself. You can find details of your local team by searching online. If you search 'Crisis team X', where X is your area, you should find your local team. Or you can ask your GP or call NHS 111.
- Ask your GP for an emergency appointment. GPs usually keep some appointments free for urgent cases. Your GP can make a referral to the local crisis team if necessary.
- You can call the emergency services on 999. They may then get in touch with mental health services such as the crisis team or take you to hospital if they think it's necessary.
- You can contact NHS 111. The phone line is for when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. You can call 111 if you don't know who to call or you don't have a GP to call. Or if you need health information or reassurance about what to do next.

# How to spot the signs of common mental health issues?

The development of most mental health issues and illnesses often can't be recognised within a short time span, rather people usually slowly find themselves drawn into small behavioural changes, changes in thinking patterns and the feeling of something not quite being right. Learning about developing symptoms, or early warning signs, and taking action can help. Early intervention can help reduce the severity of an illness. It may even be possible to delay or prevent a major mental illness altogether. See below to identify for some of these symptoms. One or two of these symptoms alone can't predict a mental illness but may indicate a need for further evaluation. If a person is experiencing several at one time and the symptoms are causing serious problems in the ability to study, work or relate to others, he/she should be seen by a physician or mental health professional. People with suicidal thoughts or intent, or thoughts of harming others, need immediate attention.

- **Sleep or appetite changes** — Dramatic sleep and appetite changes or decline in personal care
- **Mood changes** — Rapid or dramatic shifts in emotions or depressed feelings
- **Withdrawal** — Recent social withdrawal and loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- **Drop in functioning** — An unusual drop in functioning, at school, work or social activities, such as quitting sports, failing in school or difficulty performing familiar tasks
- **Problems thinking** — Problems with concentration, memory or logical thought and speech that are hard to explain
- **Increased sensitivity** — Heightened sensitivity to sights, sounds, smells or touch; avoidance of over-stimulating situations
- **Apathy** — Loss of initiative or desire to participate in any activity
- **Feeling disconnected** — A vague feeling of being disconnected from oneself or one's surroundings; a sense of unreality
- **Illogical thinking** — Unusual or exaggerated beliefs about personal powers to understand meanings or influence events; illogical or "magical" thinking typical of childhood in an adult
- **Nervousness** — Fear or suspiciousness of others or a strong nervous feeling
- **Unusual behavior** — Odd, uncharacteristic, peculiar behavior

# Self-isolation

Self-isolation and social distancing can impact our mental health, especially in these uncertain and challenging times. With that in mind, we translated the Portuguese Order of Psychologists' helpful tips!

## HELPFUL TIPS FOR THOSE IN SELF-ISOLATION

*I'm self-isolating:  
what now?*

CREATED BY THE ORDER OF PORTUGUESE PSYCHOLOGISTS  
TRANSLATED BY STUDENTS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH UK

## *Keep yourself up-to-date*

Consult the information released by official organisations once or twice a day but limit your exposure to news that can increase your anxiety and worry

CREATED BY THE ORDER OF PORTUGUESE  
PSYCHOLOGISTS  
TRANSLATED BY STUDENTS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH UK

## *Keep in touch with loved ones*

Just because you need to physically distance yourself during social isolation, doesn't mean you have to stop communicating with people.

Ringling, emailing, texting and videocalling those you love is a great way of combating some of the anxiety, loneliness and boredom you might be feeling

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## *Relax*

Keep yourself busy with activities and tasks you enjoy and calm you, like reading books, and watching films and TV shows.

Take this opportunity to do things you don't usually have time for

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## Keep up your routine

Get up at your normal time, get dressed and make your meals at usual times. If possible, work from home

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## Stay active

"Healthy body, healthy mind": perform simple physical activities like dancing, yoga or core strengthening exercises on your floor at home

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## Keep a positive mindset

Trust in your own ability to handle adversity and use coping strategies that usually work for you in tough times.

Talk to friends, family or health professionals about your experiences and keep yourself in good spirits. Self-isolation won't last forever

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## Maintain a balanced diet

This is one of the most important aspects to keep up your physical and mental health, to feel good and stay energised.

Fruits and vegetables are rich in fibre, vitamins and minerals, and antioxidants that play a key role in keeping you healthy. Try to stick to your five-a-day

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## Ask for help

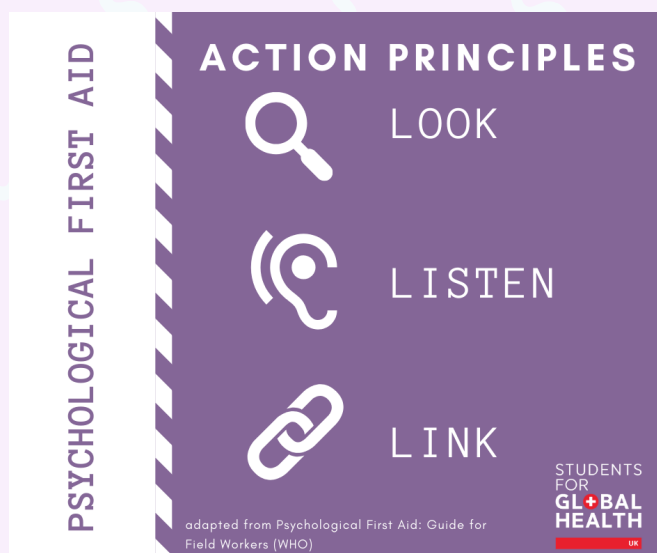
If you feel you need some help, ask for it. Have someone to help you with medicines, shopping, personal hygiene products or means of communication - whatever you need to feel safe and comfortable

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# Psychological first aid

We've adapted the WHO Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers so you can provide psychological first aid to your loved ones or others who may need extra help.

The 3 main action principles are look, listen and link - let's go through them one by one.



**Look:** think about whether you need to be abiding by social distancing (keep >2m apart), whether they have other pressing needs (rapidly deteriorating physical health/medical emergency, for example) and whether their mental health needs surpass your capabilities to help - do you need to contact the Samaritans or a professional? Is it an emergency (in which case ring 999)? Are you somewhere quiet and appropriate to chat?

# Psychological first aid

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

 **LISTEN**

- 1) approach people who may need support
- 2) ask about their needs and concerns
- 3) listen to them and help them feel calm

STUDENTS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH UK  
adapted from Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers (WHO)

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

 **LINK**

- 1) help them address basic needs and access services
- 2) give information
- 3) connect them with loved ones and social support

STUDENTS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH UK  
adapted from Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers (WHO)

**Listen:** offer a safe space for them to discuss what they feel, and focus on making them feel heard; be mindful of your body language; respect their cultural background and acknowledge this may differ to yours acknowledge their strengths and what they've done so far to help themselves, as well as their feelings and any losses or important events, such as loss of work or death of a loved one. Be mindful not to pressure them to tell their story, give your opinions of their situation or say things like "You shouldn't feel that way" or "You should feel lucky you survived".

**Link:** address the needs you've elicited, providing factual information if you have it and being honest about what you don't know. You can find things out for them or put them in touch with those who can help resolve their concerns. Try not to feel you have to try to solve all the their problems for them and take away their strength and sense of being able to care for themselves.

# Psychological first aid

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

## ✘ DON'T

don't use too much jargon

don't feel you have to try to solve all the person's problems for them

don't take away their strength and sense of being able to care for themselves

adapted from Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers (WHO)

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

## ✔ DO

find a quiet place to chat

be mindful of your body language

provide factual information if you have it

be honest about what you do and don't know

adapted from Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers (WHO)

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

## ✘ DON'T

don't pressure them to tell their story

don't give your opinions of their situation

don't say things like "You shouldn't feel that way" or "You should feel lucky you survived"

adapted from Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers (WHO)

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

## ✔ DO

acknowledge their strengths and how they have helped themselves

respect their cultural background and acknowledge this may differ to yours

adapted from Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers (WHO)

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

## ✘ DON'T

don't tell them someone else's story

don't talk about your own troubles

don't give false promises

don't interrupt or rush them

adapted from Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers (WHO)

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

## ✔ DO

respect their privacy and confidentiality

be patient and calm

acknowledge their feelings, and any losses or important events, such as loss of work or death of a loved one

adapted from Psychological First Aid: Guide for Field Workers (WHO)

# COVID-19 Mutual Aid Groups

During this time of such uncertainty, show love to those around you, by volunteering to help the most vulnerable. Informal, local mutual aid groups have sprung up all over the UK. From helping with grocery shopping, to running errands, to simply being a friendly voice- the groups provide support to those self-isolating, in particular the elderly, and people with a disability or long-term health conditions.

Want your branch to get involved? Then start now! Have a look [here](#) for a list of local groups and how to get involved. Don't see a group for your community? Then set one up! COVID-19 Mutual Aid welcomes setting up new groups all the time. Together, let's help those who need us most. Together, let's spread kindness and love.

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FOR  
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HEALTH**  
UK

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FOR  
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at a time of such uncertainty,

spread **love** to those around you,

by volunteering to help the most vulnerable.



# HelpGuide's ADVICE

## On mental health issues and it's intersection with COVID-19 (depression and anxiety focused)

### CHANGE FOCUS

**Distract yourself.** When you're depressed, out of work, and isolated from your social network, the negative thoughts running over and over in your head can seem never ending. But you can break the cycle by focusing on something that adds meaning and purpose to your life. Perhaps there's something you've always wanted to learn, like a new language or a musical instrument? Or perhaps you've always wanted to write a novel, take up cooking, or grow your own vegetables? Focusing on a project or goal, even a small one, can give you a welcome break from negative thoughts and worries—and add a sense of meaning to your days.

**Find simple sources of joy.** While you can't force yourself to have fun, you can push yourself to do things that will boost your mood throughout the day. Try listening to uplifting music (even getting up and dancing around if you can) or finding a reason to laugh by watching funny videos on YouTube or episodes of your favorite sitcom. Spending time in nature—whether it's walking in the park, paddling on the beach, or going for a hike—can ease stress and put a smile on your face, even if you're alone. Or try playing with your kids or a pet—they'll benefit as much as you will.

**Limit your consumption of news.** Yes, you want to stay informed, but overconsuming sensationalistic news or unreliable social media coverage will only fuel your negativity and fear. Limit how often you check news or social media and confine yourself to reputable sources.

**Maintain a routine.** Sleeping too much or too little, skipping meals or exercise, and neglecting your personal care only feeds into your depression. Establishing and maintaining a daily routine, on the other hand, adds structure to your day, even if you're alone and out of work. Try to include set times for exercising, spending time outside, and communicating with friends each day.

**Express gratitude.** When you're depressed, especially at this awful time, it can seem that everything in life is bleak and hopeless. But even in the darkest days, it's usually possible to find one thing you can be grateful about—the beauty of a sunset or a phone call from a friend, for example. It sounds cheesy but acknowledging your gratitude can provide a respite from negative thinking and really boost your mood

# HelpGuide's ADVICE

## On mental health issues and it's intersection with COVID-19 (depression and anxiety focused)

### CONNECT WITH OTHERS

**Move beyond small talk.** To really establish a connection that will ease your loneliness and depression, you need to take a risk and open up. Sticking to small talk and limiting yourself to a surface connection with others can actually make you feel even lonelier.

**Share about yourself.** Open up about what you're going through, the feelings you're experiencing. It won't make you a burden to the other person. Rather, your friend or loved one will most likely be flattered that you trust them enough to confide in them, and it will only deepen the bond between you.

**Nothing needs to get "fixed".** Depression relief comes from making a connection and being heard by someone. The person you talk to doesn't need to come up with solutions, they just listen to you without judging or criticizing. And the same is true when you're listening to them.

### HELP OTHERS (IN TURN MAKING YOU FEEL BETTER)

**Follow guidelines for preventing the spread of the virus.** Even if you're not in a high-risk group, staying at home, washing your hands frequently, and avoiding contact with others can help save the lives of the most vulnerable in your community and prevent overburdening the healthcare system.

**Reach out to others in need.** If you know people in your community who are isolated—particularly the elderly or disabled—you can still offer support. Perhaps an older neighbor needs help with groceries or fulfilling a prescription? You can always leave packages on their doorstep to avoid direct contact. Or maybe they just need to hear a friendly, reassuring voice over the phone. Many local social media groups can help put you in touch with vulnerable people in your area.

**Donate to food banks.** Hoarding has reduced supplies to food banks in many areas, while unemployment and economic difficulties have greatly increased demand. You can help older adults, low-income families, and others in need by donating food or cash.

**Be a calming influence.** If friends or loved ones are panicking, try to help them gain some perspective on the situation. Instead of scaremongering or giving credence to false rumors, refer them to reputable news sources. Being a positive, uplifting influence in these anxious times can help you feel better about your own situation too.

**Be kind to others.** An infectious disease is not connected to any racial or ethnic group, so speak up if you hear negative stereotypes that only promote prejudice. With the right outlook and intentions, we can all ensure that kindness and charity spread throughout our communities even faster than this virus.

# HelpGuide's ADVICE

## On mental health issues and it's intersection with COVID-19 (depression and anxiety focused)

### TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY AND SPIRIT

**Get moving.** Exercising is one of the last things you feel like doing when you're depressed—but it's also one of the most effective ways of boosting your mood. In fact, regular exercise can be just as effective as antidepressant medication in relieving depression. Even if you're still under lockdown or a stay-at-home order, there are creative ways to fit movement into your daily routine.

**Get out in nature, if possible.** Sunshine and fresh air will do you good. Even a walk around your neighborhood can make you feel better. Just be sure to avoid crowds, keep your distance from people you encounter, and obey restrictions in your area.

**Practice relaxation techniques.** Incorporating a relaxation technique such as meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, or a breathing exercise into your daily schedule can provide a welcome break from the cycle of negative thinking, as well as relieve tension and anxiety.

**Eat a mood-boosting diet.** In times of stress, we often turn to "comfort foods" packed with unhealthy fats, sugar, and refined carbs. But these foods, along with too much caffeine and alcohol, can adversely impact your mood. Instead, focus on fresh, wholesome foods whenever possible and increase your intake of mood-enhancing nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids.

**Sleep well.** Just as depression can impact your quality of sleep, poor sleep can also contribute to depression. When you're well rested, it's easier to maintain your emotional balance and have more energy and focus to tackle your other depression symptoms. Changing your daytime habits and bedtime routines can help improve how well you sleep at night.

**Use reminders to keep yourself on track.** When you're depressed, it's easy to forget the small steps that can help to lift your mood and improve your outlook. Keep reminders of the tips that work for you on your phone or on sticky notes around your home.

**Be kind to yourself.** Go easy on yourself if you're experiencing more depression or anxiety than usual. You're not alone in your struggles.



# What else?

## ISOLATION THINGS TO DO:

- Bingo
- Virtual Hangouts

Here are just a few ideas of the things you can set up for your branches to keep you all busy in the online world!

- An arts & crafts challenge
- Virtual yoga
- Book club
- Online workouts

## POSTCARDS OF KINDNESS

Postcards of Kindness by AgeUK is an initiative that asks people to write and send postcards to residents of care homes.

It promises to bring a great deal of joy and spark lively conversations among the older people who receive them. Have a look at the [facebook link here.](#)

## THE CHILDCARE COOP

Here is another way you can support healthcare professionals who require childcare!

Local coronavirus support groups are organised through things like social media and WhatsApp. They aren't face-to-face support groups where people meet. But people chat to each other and help each other through things like social media and WhatsApp. They may be able to help with things like shopping, collecting prescriptions and providing phone calls to stop you feeling isolated. You can go online and search for support groups in your local area. Or contact one of your local councillors and ask if they know of any groups. You can find [details of your local councillors](#) via the UK Government website.

# Debrief

## Tea & Talk

As a part of our campaign for World Mental Health Day, SfGH UK held a tea and talk event to see what SfGH can do to tackle mental health issues. Here is a summary of our conversation:

### What are the biggest issues for global mental health?

- COVID-19
- Chronic illness
- Job Security and finances
- Inequality
- Climate change
- Food security

### What is affecting the mental health of our members?

- COVID-19, lockdowns, not being able to socialise
- Stresses of University
- Changing structures and lives
- Activism can feel overwhelming!
- Managing extra-curriculars
- Tackling inequalities

### What can SfGH do to support the mental health of its members?

- Smart and structured advocacy
- Sign-posting resources
- Lunchtime hangout sessions and online socials could start again

### How can SfGH advocate for mental health?

- National committee sharing thoughts on mental health with members
- Training sessions to support mental health
- Global health education in schools - mental health discussions
- Integrating mental health into other campaign issues

# **World Mental Health Day Member Pack**

**Created by SfGH National Committee 2020/21**