

## SELF – CARE TIPS

In a crisis, we often forget to eat, have to be reminded to get some sleep, and often revert to old (unhealthy) habits, such as smoking. We also sometimes experience old physical ailments flaring up (e.g. headaches, backaches). If you're experiencing any of these symptoms, you need to know that **YOU'RE NOT ALONE.**

Each person must take the primary responsibility for his or her own self-care. At a time like this, eating a balanced meal or getting your three-times-a-week workout may be the last thing on your mind. But that's precisely why it's important to take care of yourself physically.

Emotional distress can make you especially vulnerable to physical illness, so good health habits are especially crucial now. This is not the time to make big changes in your lifestyle, such as quitting smoking or starting a new diet. Instead, think in terms of maintenance. Reinforce the good habits you have, and try to minimise the bad ones.

**Pay special attention to the following areas in your life:**

### SLEEP

Is always important—but especially now, when you're probably not getting enough of it. A good night's rest enables the body and mind to refresh and renew itself. Nightmares are a common reaction after a crisis, and this can certainly disrupt your sleep. Make sure you allow enough time each night for a full night's sleep. If you have serious difficulty sleeping, and the difficulty lasts for more than a week or so, consult with your GP.

### AVOID ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

Alcohol and other drugs may be tempting—but they can cause far more problems than they solve. People under extreme stress may tend to "self-medicate" with alcohol, coffee, and other drugs (prescription and non-prescription). When you're in pain, it's hard to tell how much is too much, so perhaps the best idea is to try to avoid mood altering substances as much as possible. Instead of a drink, try taking a walk; instead of taking pills, try talking to your spouse or friend.

### REGULAR EXERCISE

Gentle exercise like brisk walking is not only good for the body, but can have a calming effect on your mind as well. Getting regular exercise can improve sleep and self-confidence. The more you move the better your mood. Choose enjoyable activities or go down to your local GAA club. There is nothing better than going for a kick/puck around with your teammates to clear the head.

## HEALTHY EATING

Poor eating habits can compromise performance, energy and stress tolerance. Some substances intensify stress reactions. Try to eat regular meals and limit or avoid refined sugars, fats and excessive salt. It's important to try and have a balanced healthy diet as healthy food can boost your mood.

## POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE

Stress is completely normal at a time like this. Stress is a challenge to be controlled and overcome. Acknowledge that you're going to feel a lot of unpleasant emotions—sad, angry, out of control, impatient, etc. Learn a couple of relaxation techniques (see below) and use them frequently. Try to cut down on responsibilities in other areas of your life until you've had some time to recover from the crisis. Be flexible and do one thing at a time. Also important to reduce mobile and social media use. Take time to do things that are important to you and work for you to switch off.



## RELAXATION TIPS

- Not the same as rest.
- Deliberate, purposeful quieting of the mind and body.
- Body chemicals produced by relaxation neutralise stress chemicals.
- Important to reduce the use of your phone to help switch off.



## DEEP BREATHING (MINDFUL MINUTE)

This effective relaxation technique can be performed virtually anywhere and at any time. Here are some simple steps.

Start with 3 very deep breaths as follows:

- Bring in the very deepest breath possible. Hold it for 1 or 2 seconds and release it over 8 seconds.
- Inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth.
- Pause for 5-10 seconds between each deep breath, breathing normally while resting.
- Relax the body as much as possible as you take the very deep breaths.

## PROCEED TO 3 DEEP BREATHS.

- These are smaller in volume (about one-half of a very deep breath).
  - Inhale through nose and hold for 10 seconds.
  - Continue to relax the body.
  - Exhale forcefully through the mouth.
  - Rest and breathe normally between breaths.

## Finish with 3 normal sized, full breaths.

- Inhale through the nose. Hold for 10 – 15 seconds. Exhale forcefully through the mouth.

## POSITIVE THINKING

Positive thinking is giving you the go-ahead to succeed. The main idea is to develop an attitude of challenge, commitment, and control. Creating a positive mind-set can take practice, but some of the following 'self care tips outlined above' can help you on your way. Self-talk means telling yourself what you can and can't do. Positive self-talk is saying "I can" and setting your mind to meet the challenge at hand.

## WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER HELP?

If you feel you need further help as a consequence of being involved in a critical incident, you are advised to contact your family G.P

**Samaritans** - 24hr support line for anyone who needs to talk to someone about anything. Official mental health partner and support service for the GAA. Helpline **116 123**. Go to [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) to access your local support branch.

### FOR REPUBLIC OF IRELAND CONTACT:

Visit [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie) for a 'one stop' list of contacts and resources for both national and local support groups.

**Aware Ireland** – Is a non-directive listening service for people affected by depression, either personally or as family and friends. The Helpline **1890 303 302** is open seven days a week from 10am-10pm. [www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie)

**Pieta House** - provides free counselling, therapy and support to individuals, couples, families and children who have been bereaved by suicide. You can contact them any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on their freecall suicide helpline **1800 247 247**. [www.pieta.ie](http://www.pieta.ie)

**Reach Out** – An Online service to help young people aged 16-25 [ie.reachout.com](http://ie.reachout.com). <https://ie.reachout.com>

### FOR NORTHERN IRELAND CONTACT:

Visit [www.mindingyourhead.info](http://www.mindingyourhead.info) for a 'one stop' list of contacts and resources for both national and local support groups.

**LIFELINE** - crisis response helpline service operating 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing distress or despair. Lifeline is here to help. Tel: 0808 808 8000. [www.lifelinehelpline.info](http://www.lifelinehelpline.info)

# Self Care Tips

