Wellbeing toolkit

Active minds
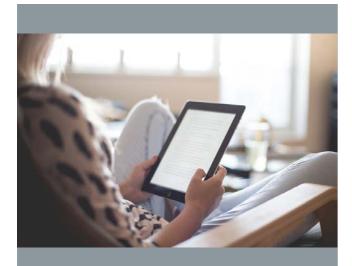
Westfield Health

Active minds

As social distancing starts to become the norm and the weeks at home add up, it can take its toll on our mental health.

With some of the measures set to be in place for the medium term, staying busy and productive is a good way to take your mind off the outbreak and enjoy your time at home.

Whether it's socialising virtually with friends, learning a new skill or finding a new favourite book, keeping active mentally and physically can help boost your mood and improve your wellbeing.

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Westfield Health

Stay connected

Humans are social creatures, so being forced to distance ourselves from our social networks can really take its toll on our mental health.

Over 8 million people in the UK live alone; even if you're isolated at home with family members who might be driving you a bit crazy, think about friends or extended family who live alone and how you can check in with them on a regular basis.

Though we live in the era of smart phones and an always-on world, social media can be a bit of a double-edged sword, causing us to compare ourselves to those around us and taking its toll on our mental health.

Scrolling through scary stories about coronavirus and not knowing which sources to trust can send our anxiety levels rocketing.

To help you stay in touch whilst you're in self-isolation and boost your social wellbeing, here are some positive, creative ways to use the technology that's at our fingertips to boost your mood and stay in touch with loved ones.

Share a meal together via video

Whether it's saying hi over a cup of coffee for breakfast or hosting an all-out virtual dinner party, video calling makes it so much more real. You can see people's reactions and feel almost like you're in the same room. Get in touch with friends and put a virtual dinner date in the diary, just as you would a face-to-face meet-up. That way, you'll have the pleasure of looking forward to it as well as enjoying a meal together.

Create a mood-boosting WhatsApp group

Faced with a very serious situation, there are some scary headlines out there. If we're not careful, we can get stuck in an anxious spiral about events that are mostly outside of our sphere of control.

Though it's important to regularly check the news for updates, balance things out by setting up a 'good news' WhatsApp group. It might be something small like a great new recipe you've just tried or an article that made you smile. It'll also make sure you have things to talk about other than the coronavirus.

Host an online games night

Missing the pub quiz? Set up your own right from your living room. You could either use a video call or there's now dedicated free quiz software out there that shows who's submitted answers and who's in the lead in real time.

Make each other laugh

Struggling for content to send to your good news WhatsApp group? Make your own! Laughter is an incredible mood booster. You could share a funny story or use social media apps like TikTok or Snapchat to make videos that'll make your friends and family laugh. Not only will you pass some time making them, you'll have fun too.

Learn together

Whether you're both brushing up your language skills on Duolingo or learning a new skill like knitting, find a friend you can learn together with. Book regular catch-ups to compare your progress and help one another. Having a regular date in the diary will help keep you on track and it's more enjoyable having someone to compare notes with and help you when you get stuck.

Virtual book group

Book clubs have been growing in popularity over the past few years; if you're missing your regular catch-ups, keep them in the diary and meet up virtually instead. If you're not yet in a book club, try searching online for local ones and get in touch to see if they're going virtual at the moment. You can also find a list of virtual book clubs at readinggroups.org.

Snail mail

Can you remember the last time you wrote someone a letter? Make a friend's day by writing to them. You could even do something creative and make them a card to go with it or help them stay busy by creating your own crossword puzzle for them to solve.

Netflix party

Missing movie nights with friends? If you have Netflix, you could host a virtual film night or just bring friends together to watch your favourite show using Netflix Party. You'll all see the film or TV show at the same time and will be able to comment using a group chat on the right of the screen.

Curate your own cookery course

In need of a new ideas thanks to a sudden lack of pasta? Sick of the cooking shows on TV? With a small group of friends, take it in turn to teach each other how to cook your favourite dish. Email out a list of ingredients in advance so people have time to find them or have them delivered, then use a group video call to walk your friends through it step by step.

Go to the virtual pub

People in Japan are reacting to social isolation by getting creative. In a trend called 'on-nomi', groups of friends are setting up virtual 'pubs' via video calling where they can catch up with each other over a beer. People are even extending it beyond their social groups, inviting anyone who might be feeling lonely to join their virtual pub.

Keep learning

Although it might be tempting to spend all your time at home catching up on the latest box set, it could be a great opportunity for personal or professional development.

Whether you're furloughed and want to learn something new or have been meaning to brush up on the latest from your industry for a while, it's a great opportunity to expand your skills.

There are lots of online resources that offer remote learning courses at a low cost, or even free. Here we've listed some of the most useful.

Reed.co.uk
Price: from free to £££

Reed.co.uk sources courses from a range of suppliers and has many professional, regulated courses available for free. They cover practical skills like bookkeeping, customer service, people management, project management and equality and diversity. If there are any qualifications you need to carry out your current and future role, this is a good place to look. You may find that many of these will incur a fee.

Skillshare
Price: free with a monthly subscription for premium content

Skillshare calls itself 'an online learning community' and has thousands of classes on topics including illustration, design, photography, video, freelancing and more. There is some content available for free, but most is only available with a premium subscription. The good news is they're currently offering a two-month free trial so you can try out some of their content for free before deciding if it's for you.

Google Digital Garage
Price: free

Google Digital Garage contains lots of online courses designed to help you grow your career or business. You can choose from individual modules or take a full course end-to-end. Most courses are free, approved by industry experts and are mainly digital marketing focused, but some cover more general topics like effective time management and increasing productivity.

Codecademy
Price: free

Programming is a hugely valuable skill in 2020 and social distancing could be the perfect time to take the plunge and start learning. Codeacademy offers learners the chance to gain a solid foundation in fundamental concepts across a range or programming languages. It uses interactive tutorials to teach practical skills and make your learning engaging and fun.

LinkedIn learning
Price: from £15 per month

Linkedin Learning claims to cover the most in-demand business, tech and creative skills with courses from experts in each discipline. They charge a monthly fee then let you watch as many courses as you like, and they're available in several languages. You can also advertise your new skills with a certificate for your Linkedin profile to show off to current and potential employers.

Udemy
Price: from £12

Udemy claims to have the world's largest selection of online courses. You can choose from over 100,000 video courses that cover every discipline you can think of, from HR and business strategy to photography and design.

Further resources - ebooks

Reading can be a great way of passing the time when you are staying at home.

From discovering new genres to working your way through the classics, there are lots of free resources online. Here's a list of five free e-book resources that you can access today.

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Wellbeing toolkit

This factsheet is part of our Wellbeing Toolkit aimed at helping teams stay well during the coronavirus outbreak.

Each week, a new pair of factsheets covering mental and physical wellbeing is released.

Take a look at westfieldhealth.com/covid-19 for access to all resources.

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