**Establishing your New Normal**

**Norms and why they matter**

Norms set the pattern for our days. They take care of the basics so our conscious minds can focus on our purpose.

Adapting to Coronavirus – as with any change in life – will cause us to re-examine our norms. This may cause us to feel confused or tired. But it may also elicit emotions such as fear, anger or even a sense of loss. This is natural - but it’s important to recognise it and act to work through it.

**Changed routines**

The first changes you are likely to notice are to your daily routines. It’s important to get this foundation right, in particular:

* **Sleep and waking** - to establish regular patterns of going to bed and getting up and make sure you get enough sleep each day rather than catching up at the weekend or on rest days;
* **Diet -** to maintain a healthy diet, recognising this may mean different things to different people and that availability of some products may be limited at times; and
* **Exercise –** tomake time for exercise, particularly if you are spending more time at home.

**New or different responsibilities**

Our lives are all different but most people have a mix of responsibilities along the lines below. At least some of these are likely to change as we adapt to Coronavirus:

* **Caring for others** – Caring responsibilities may change as a result school closures or shielding vulnerable individuals. They may change because the people you care for need more emotional support or because you take on additional caring responsibilities on a voluntary basis.
* **Work** – Your job role may change if you need to cover for absent colleagues or because demand for services, or priorities, have changed.
* **Self-care** – This is your responsibility for your own wellbeing and the fun and enjoyment in your routine. Your needs in these areas may change because of social distancing, or changes in income or household costs, or changes in the behaviour in those around you.

It’s important to keep your different responsibilities in balance. Focusing too much on one, or compensating for a lack in one by investing too much in the others, can impact on your wellbeing adversely. If you feel your responsibilities are getting out of balance, things you can do are:

* **Talk to a friend, a trusted colleague, Trade Union representative or your manager** – Sometimes simply expressing your feelings is enough.
* **Try a new approach** – Under pressure we can to revert to what we know where it might be better to try something new. Technology can help caring for others and enable you to pursue hobbies and interest in different ways. Similarly, teams can work together to find different ways of doing things.
* **Get help** – The guides and our [Employee Assistance Programme](https://intranet.justice.gov.uk/guidance/hr/support-and-wellbeing/employee-assistance-programme/) \*offer help and advice on a wide range of issues, including access to counselling and signposting to organisations that can help.

**Pressure on shared facilities or resources**

As routines and responsibilities change it’s likely that access to some resources may become constrained. This could be something very practical like a table to work from at home but it might also be new pressures on your time. Practical steps you can take in this type of situation can help to:

* **Make a schedule** – agree who will have first call on what at what time, for example who will use the table at what times of day.
* **Needs vs wants** - Distinguish between basic needs and “nice to haves” and make sure everyone has at least their basic needs met.
* **Deescalate** - If conflict does arise – you can deescalate it by focusing on the facts, asserting your basic needs and avoiding making assumptions about other people’s motives.

**Relationships**

We are social beings and most of us take strength and comfort from our relationships. As we rely less on face to face contact, and make more use of technology, it can be easier for misunderstandings to creep in or for people to feel undervalued.

Measures you can take to manage this are:

* **Check in** – take time to ask how someone is feeling rather than going straight to the task in hand.
* **Avoid assumptions** – focus on what has happened and how that makes you feel and avoid making assumptions about other people’s motives.
* **Be assertive, not aggressive or passive** - assertive people state their opinions, while still being respectful of others; aggressive people attack or ignore others' opinions in favour of their own; passive people don't state their opinions at all.

**Kindness**

Most of all: be kind to yourself and those around you. Recognise that people are not always at the best now and avoid rushing to judgement. Demonstrate our Humanity value.

**\*Please see the staff support guide contact your Wellbeing lead for details of the Employee Assist Programme**