My Whole Self

Supporting your mental health while working from home

My Whole Self aims to create a healthier working culture built on respect and collaboration. We're encouraging employers to create a culture where people can be themselves at work. Whether online or in person, bringing your whole self to work is a mindset that's better for mental wellbeing and better for business.

As more organisations move to online working, human connections are more important than ever. Here are some ways to support your mental health, reduce feelings of isolation, and feel connected with colleagues while working remotely.

Get into a morning routine

Waking up
Although you may have some extra time in bed without a commute, aim to wake up around the same time every day. This helps stabilise your internal clock and improve your sleep overall. You'll feel less tired, more refreshed, and find it easier to concentrate throughout the day.

Getting ready
Get ready, washed, and dressed as if you are going to the office. This will help you get into the mindset that you are at work.

Setting up your workspace
Try to set aside a work area separate from your sleeping area, as this will help to prepare you for work mode and make it easier to switch off at the end of the day. You don't need a home office to do this – a small desk set up in a corner of the living room, or a laptop at the end of the kitchen table can do the trick.

If you're working with a small space, you could try setting up temporary 'zones' by hanging blankets or screens to visually separate your work area from your living or sleeping area.

Clear your work surface of clutter and set up your equipment to avoid physical strain – do a self-check using the guidance at
nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/how-to-sit-correctly.
If you don't have a chair with back support, you could add a firm pillow.

Get moving

Including some movement into your work from home routine will help maintain your physical and mental health. You'll feel more awake and alert, and your concentration and sleep will improve.

Outdoors

If you're not self-isolating, try going for a walk down the street before you start work for the day – this can help you to feel like you have mentally 'arrived' at work. Doing the same when you finish your shift can help you to leave your work mindset behind and switch off.

Indoors

If you're indoors, look online for an activity that suits you, such as a home yoga video or a fitness class. Some gyms are now live streaming their classes, so you could even join a fitness community in your local area.

No matter what exercise you choose, try to take regular screen breaks and stretch throughout the day. Try to take a clearly defined lunch break and move away from your workspace.

Get connected

Adapt your working style

You'll need to go out of your way to keep communication open with your team. Here are some suggestions that we are trying:

- Video calls instead of emailing
- Short check-in and check-out calls between managers and their teams, at the start and end of the workday
- Optional Q&A sessions for colleagues to dial in and chat through any concerns or queries they have about working from home

Share your My Whole Selfie

Creating and sharing a My Whole Selfie is a fun way to show your authentic self to your colleagues. It can help you feel connected even if you're working remotely. Find out how at **mhfaengland.org/my-whole-self/selfie-how-to**.

Virtual social sessions

If you usually schedule time in the workday for an activity or exercising with your colleagues, continue to make time for this over webcam or phone. Here are some ideas that members of the MHFA England team enjoy:

- Turning our morning coffee break into a virtual coffee break
- Sharing photo updates of our lunchtime run
- Video calling for our afternoon craft session

Say hello

If you're working on the same document as another team member in the cloud, stop and say hello to each other.

Share your space

If you'd like to share your working space, why not give your colleagues a webcam tour? Or show off your pets at the end of a team catch up.

😊 Get support

During times of stress it helps us to stay connected. Keep in touch with friends and family where you can. Use instant messenger to communicate with your colleagues if you are feeling out of the loop or need to talk to someone.

Look after yourself and set aside time to prioritise self-care – **find some simple self-care tips here**.

For information about mental health and coronavirus visit:

- Mental Health Foundation's **tips for looking after your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak**
- Mind: **Coronavirus and your wellbeing**

If you're feeling anxious or isolated, remember that support is out there.

Talk to your Mental Health First Aider

If your company has trained Mental Health First Aiders or Champions, make a note of their contact details, and don't hesitate to get in touch with them if you need to. They can use their skills to support anyone struggling with their mental health by signposting them to the appropriate support, both in and outside of the workplace.

Speak to your HR or EAP

If your organisation has this in place, talk to your HR or contact your Employee Assistance Programme.

Mental health helplines

The Samaritans offers free, confidential support 24 hours a day on 116 123.

Find a list of national mental health services and helplines at **mentalhealth.org.uk**.