



# 5 Steps to manage your mental health during this time



This has definitely been a different kind of week, as we adjust to all the changes asked of us, so that we can help keep vulnerable loved ones safe. Having to change so much so suddenly may induce lots of different feelings in us: anxiety, fear, sadness, anger, loneliness or helplessness. These are all normal feelings, and it is normal to experience them in these very uncertain times. We can, however, be proactive about our physical and mental health, and we can actively try to look after our wellbeing during this stressful time, by taking these five simple steps:

## 1. **Routine**

Whether we are self-isolating or engaging in social distancing, our usual everyday routines that give us connection, purpose and satisfaction have been interrupted. When this happens it can be very important to establish a new routine for ourselves. We know the negative impact that interrupted/poor sleep can have on mood. Keeping to regular eating and sleeping routines now, at the beginning of this change in how we are living, can prevent us from experiencing difficulties in these areas in the future.

## 2. **Snack on exercise or go to the virtual gallery**

If you are only able to exercise indoors there are a lot of free exercise tutorials on YouTube, regardless of fitness level or ability. Otherwise you can snack on exercise [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=26&v=XFmzNirSB4&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=26&v=XFmzNirSB4&feature=emb_title), or go on virtual tours of art museums and galleries from your couch <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en>, read the latest from short story writers <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/short-story>, read an e-book [www.librariesireland.ie](http://www.librariesireland.ie), learn a new language or revisit an already-learned language <https://www.duolingo.com>, learn how to cook <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com>, or listen to inspiring and informative talks <https://www.ted.com/talks>

### 3. Stay connected

Whether we are self-isolating or keeping our social distance, we can still remain connected; we just may have to do it differently. It is important to talk and connect to friends, family and colleagues during this time. In fact, we are hardwired to want to connect to others when we are stressed. When we are connecting with others, we make sure to create a space for everyday chat and conversation. Staying connected is different to 'staying on'. We should actively consider how much social media we are using and be aware that constant exposure to news about the pandemic impacts negatively on our mood. We should decide to keep updated from reliable sources <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>, check for updates once a day, and moderate our use of social media to reduce exposure to constant anxiety triggers. This may mean we will have to 'un-follow'!

### 4. Manage Stress

It is a stressful time, we need to try and become aware of when we are becoming stressed, and ask ourselves, 'what tells me I am becoming stressed?' Taking a moment out of a situation can help us to manage when we feel stressed or overwhelmed. To help us do this, we can learn relaxation-breathing techniques which help to reduce the physical stress response while also allowing us to focus on just one thing for 5 minutes, in the process, calming our minds: <http://www.beaumont.ie/index.jsp?p=105&n=528>

### 5. Remember we are powerful

When something so enormous is happening, we can often feel overwhelmed and powerless. **WE ARE POWERFUL:** Each of us is making these changes to how we socialise and live, in order to show others whom we may never meet or know that they are valued, that we care, and that, we, as a community will do our best in our everyday actions to keep them safe from harm. In deciding to do these everyday actions, we are powerful.