

WELLBEING

# World Mental Health Day

10<sup>th</sup> October 2020



According to [research](#) from Rethink Mental Illness, a staggering 80% of people living with mental illness say that COVID-19 has made their mental health worse.

Observed on the 10th October every year, World Mental Health Day aims to help raise mental health awareness and calls for us all to "make a contribution to ensure that people dealing with mental health problems can live better lives with dignity."

### Mental health & COVID-19

2020. To say that this year has been a "tough year" would be an understatement. Among the many concerning events across the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic has made an unprecedented impact on our lives and continues to affect our mental and physical wellbeing on a daily basis.

We've spent months away from our friends and loved ones, seen workplaces, shops, and restaurants close for a considerable time as well as schools and nurseries. And at the time of writing, it looks like the feared "second wave" of cases is looming large.

Simply put, this year has taken its toll on our mental health. According to mental health charity [Mind](#), more than half of adults (60%) and over two thirds of young people (68%) have said their mental health has gotten worse during lockdown.

### Mental Health for All. Greater Investment – Greater Access

The theme for this year's World Mental Health Day is 'Mental Health for All'. In response to the pandemic, the campaign aims to act as a call to action in highlighting the need for greater investment in mental health support.

The campaign reinforces the fact that mental health is a human right and support should be available for all those who require it.

The need for mental health support was highlighted in [Mind's](#) research, with 30% of adults claiming that difficulties getting help for their mental health made their mental health worse.

### Pandemic mental health top tips

While this year has undoubtedly been a trying time for us all, there are still many ways you can give your mental health a much-needed boost. Here, we have listed several top tips on overcoming the doom and gloom of 2020:

**Keep in touch:** Maintaining a robust support network is vital in taking care of your mental health. However, for many individuals, close contact with friends and loved ones hasn't been possible for many months.

Thanks to the wonders of technology, there are multiple ways to keep in contact with others virtually. Keep a regular date in your diary and check in on those closest to you - it'll do you all the world of good.

**Open up:** If you feel worried, scared or helpless, talk to someone. Whether over the phone, video call, text or at a safe distance, sharing your concerns with someone you trust will help you through those emotions.

**Exercise:** Our physical wellbeing has a significant impact on our mental health. It can boost your self-esteem; help you maintain a healthy weight and improve your sleep.

**Do your research:** When researching the latest information and guidance, ensure that you are reading reputable sources. Reading rumours and speculative articles can cause anxiety while accessing good quality information will help you feel more in control.

While we are certainly living in challenging times, there are still numerous ways for us to keep on top of our wellbeing, such as the suggestions within this guidance. Use World Mental Health Day as an opportunity to focus on your wellbeing, develop your most meaningful relationships and look after those closest to you.

If you need to access our services to discuss any wellbeing concerns you may have, our [confidential helpline](#) is available 24/7, 365.

Alternatively, you can access the [My Healthy Advantage](#) app ([iOS](#) & [Android](#)) to view a variety of wellbeing resources including articles, videos, mini health checks and 4-week programmes, all aimed at improving your physical and mental wellbeing.

TOPICAL

# Work Life Week

12th – 16<sup>th</sup> October 2020



Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, roughly 1.7 million people in the UK worked from home. It is now estimated that 20 million people have switched to remote working.

Celebrated from the 12th October, Work Life Week is an annual wellbeing event that encourages employers and employees to have conversations about wellbeing at work and raise awareness of healthy work-life balance.

Without question, this year's event will be unlike any before. With many of the UK and Ireland's workforce working from home in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for a healthy work-life balance has never been stronger.

## What is work-life balance?

In short, work-life balance is a term used to summarise how an individual balances the demands of their career and home life. If the scales tip too much in favour of work, this can be considered as a poor or unhealthy work-life balance and in serious cases, can result in the individual developing mental health issues.

## Signs of a poor work-life balance

With millions of employees adapting to

remote working for the first time, many have discovered that the boundaries between work and home life can easily become blurred. To make a healthy balance between work and personal life, it's important for you to be aware of what signs to look out for in yourself and others.

**Lack of sleep:** A stressed and over-worked mind can find it difficult to shut-off at night. This can result in exhaustion, heightened anxiety and risk of becoming burnt out.

**Short temper:** If the pressures of work become unmanaged, they may affect a person's home life as well. Stressed individuals can become impatient and snap at their loved ones or colleagues.

**Physical wellbeing:** Increased stress can lead to frequent headaches, aches and pains. Exercise routines can often become neglected, as work commitments are prioritised instead.

**Social connection:** Relationships are important in maintaining our mental health. An individual with a poor work-life balance may miss social engagements in favour of work commitments.

## Tips for better work-life balance during COVID-19

**Routine:** If you are working from home, sticking to regular routine can help you keep in control of your day. This can include a consistent time for your morning alarm, lunch break and exercise routine.

**Be organised:** The pandemic has affected numerous areas of our lives,

focus your attention on your weekly work schedule and make any necessary adjustments. For example, if you use public transport, factor in any potential delays e.g. reduced services, or any changes to your childcare responsibilities e.g. nursery operating times.

**Fresh air:** At the end of your working day, go for a short walk outside. Getting some fresh air will help you finish the day on a positive note and transition from work to personal time.

**Social time:** Whether you work from home or at the workplace, prioritising your relationships is vital. Arrange a call with a friend or loved one in the week. This will help you set a deadline to finish any outstanding work and help your mind switch from work to home mode.

The pandemic has likely shifted many of our work-life balances slightly. This Work Life Week, take a moment to review your balance, and look to make improvements where necessary.

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LEGAL

# Equality and diversity



The term equality is ensuring that everyone is treated fairly and presented with the same opportunities as others, without discriminating individuals because they have protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010).

The term diversity is the differences between individuals and groups of people, and it is important to recognise that everyone is unique in their own way.

### Current Legislation

The Equality Act (2010) protects all individuals from discrimination in the workplace, schools and general society. The Act protects 9 characteristics including age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion/belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership and pregnancy/maternity rights.

These characteristics are not limited to those that are listed and can include any belief that an individual may have so long as it is a philosophical belief. This Act applies to England, Scotland and Wales and has incorporated over 100 pieces of anti-discrimination laws.

The Northern Ireland Executive works with the Equality Commission to create legislation in Ireland to protect against discrimination. You can visit their [website](#) for more information about current legislation in Ireland.

### Equality and Diversity in society

Treating someone differently or choosing to belittle someone because of their characteristic could be considered a hate incident or hate

crime. This occurs when criminal offences are committed against an individual because they have a protected characteristic. Hate crimes and hate incidents can be physical, verbal, online or non-verbal e.g. an offensive gesture.

These incidents can be reported to the police as they are considered a criminal offence. Non-emergencies should be reported using the contact number 101. The emergency number 999 should only be used in the following circumstances:

- A serious offence is or has been committed
- You or someone else is in immediate danger or harm
- Property is in immediate danger of being damaged
- A serious disruption to the public is likely

The police in England and Wales reported 103,379 hate crimes between 2018/19 which is a 10% increase on the year before.

### Equality and diversity in education

All children should be given an equal opportunity to learn and develop their own skills and knowledge. The school has a duty of care which is governed by the Department of Education to ensure that all children feel safe and are presented with equal opportunities for support. All schools are therefore required to implement and enforce anti-bullying policies to ensure that any concerns are managed efficiently and appropriately.

If you feel that your child is being bullied or discriminated by another child or an employee within the school. You can choose to do one of the following:

- Speak to the person directly to attempt to redress the concern
- Raise a complaint with the school

Further information about schools responsibilities in England, Wales and

Scotland can be sourced through the government [website](#).

The main legislation relating to schools in Northern Ireland is Special Education Needs & Disability (NI) Order 2005 which aims to ensure children are treated equally in schools. More information can be sourced through [The Equality Commission](#).

### Equality and diversity in the workplace

All organisations must adhere to the Equality Act (2010) ensuring that their own policies align with this legislation. It is best practice to have a clear policy in place which prevents discrimination as this will set clear expectations and inform employees of the support available. Choosing to make equality part of the company culture can benefit businesses and help them to develop successful cultures. Employing a diverse workforce will promote this and bring with it a range of new ideas and skills. Furthermore, having a diverse workforce can create a better understanding of one another's background or culture which will promote respect.

If you feel you have been subject to discrimination, you can:

- Raise this informally with your manager
- Raise a formal grievance

More information about creating an inclusive workplace can be found on ACAS' website.

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