

Help! I'm stuck at home!

As the coronavirus pandemic builds in intensity, more and more of us are likely to be spending our time confined to our home. What to do?

The practicalities of being housebound are far-reaching. We need to make arrangements for grocery shopping; for working from home, if that's practical; for childcare, if we have a family with kids; and much more.

But there's another aspect to all this: how can we cope emotionally?

It may seem a minor challenge at the moment, but after a few days or weeks in isolation, things can seem very different.

Here are some hints to help you get through this difficult period:

- Establish a routine and follow it - make your bed in the morning, go to bed on time at night.
- Segment your day - work time, meal time, me time, family time.
- If you're working from home, make sure you start and stop work at the appropriate time. And when you stop, stop.
- If you're lucky enough to have a garden or a roof terrace, set aside some time each day to spend outside. Get some fresh air and a change of perspective, even if it's raining.
- Keep as active as possible. Get in a bit of early spring cleaning!
- Make a point of keeping in touch with friends and family, by phone or via the internet.
- Share a "virtual dinner". Agree a time - and a menu! - with a friend and meet by computer to eat together and chat.
- Try cooking, making bread, making jam, beer - there are lots of fun and rewarding home-based activities.
- Relax! Find some mental relaxation techniques from the NHS on www.cntw.nhs.uk/resource-library/relaxation-techniques/

And remember to ask for help if you need it. Samaritans offer a friendly ear on the end of the phone 24 hours a day - and it's free. Just dial 116 123.