



**At this difficult time, it is normal for us to worry about the impact on our health and wellbeing. The situation is changing daily and sometimes hourly so how do we stay in control and best support each other?**

In the current health climate, more and more people are being asked to work from home or indeed you and your family may have to go into isolation. Some people may find this a welcoming thought, you and your loved ones safe in your own home, but after a couple of days the novelty may have worn off. This is when you might start to get under each other's feet, feeling like there is not a moment's peace. So how do you manage without it resembling a war zone?

The Covid 19 pandemic is causing people to become anxious and the body reacts to this by seeing it as a threat and it reacts accordingly. So, if your fight or flight response has kicked in, you may deal with anxiety by shouting or not listening, becoming tearful or catastrophizing, or indeed the opposite and withdrawing. This is when your relationship is put to the test. It is normal to feel anxious in the current difficult situation, so it is important to build a tolerance to limit the arguments, or indeed to withdraw. How can we do this?

- Turn to each and have a frank and open conversation about what you need from each other.
- Come up with a way of letting the other person know that you need to have some space and discuss how you will talk through the situation once the mood has lifted.
- Recognise the emotion you are feeling. Look at it, rather than through it. Name the feeling and say to yourself that it is OK to feel this way, then carry out a breathing exercise, as this will give your brain something productive to focus on. It's important to connect with the emotion because if you are confused by it, then no doubt this is what your partner will feel as well.

- Try not to argue with each other. Using negative patterns of communication is not helpful, such as 'you won't listen' or 'you don't care'. When someone tells us who we 'are' or what we 'do' we can feel attacked. Try to use 'I feel' statements, so instead of 'you don't listen', use 'I feel like I am not being heard'. Instead of 'you don't care', try 'I feel unsupported'. By doing this you are focusing on your own feelings, and not pointing the finger of blame.
- The use of polarized language, such as 'we never' or 'it's always like this' is not helpful either. It is so tempting to catastrophize and exaggerate as a way of getting our point across but can so easily cause friction. Maybe instead of saying 'we never', say 'I am feeling....., can you remember the last time....' And instead of 'it's always like this' try 'this seems to come up quite often and I feel...'
- Try to arrange some time together to do fun things. You may not be able to go out but there is no reason why you can't enjoy time in each other's company.

**If you find that you are in an abusive relationship and the thought of being isolated with your partner is causing you to be fearful for your safety, then please contact the freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline run by Refuge on 0808 2000 247. <https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/> or <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/womens-aid-comments-on-the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-women-and-children-escaping-domestic-abuse/>**

This may be a tricky time to negotiate through but being tolerant and supporting of each other will help. Turning towards your loved ones will serve you well with whatever challenges come your way.



- Go to the same designated area to work, setting yourself boundaries around the time you will spend working before taking a break. By doing this you will be setting a routine for yourself and you will be less likely to want to stop to do domestic chores.
- Working from home may feel even more isolating should you be used to interacting with people day to day. Try to stay connected with team members, check in with each other and make the most of technology such as Zoom and Skype.
- If you find that you are stuck on a project, ask for help from colleagues. Working from home can make you feel like you need to solve the problem on your own. Asking for help is not only for work but also mental health issues – we need to continue to talk.
- If possible, be flexible. If your work doesn't have to be tied down to 9-5 then think out outside the box. Should you have children at home due to school closures, then maybe work when they are asleep. Get up early, put a couple of hours in and then work when they have gone to bed in the evening.
- Staying focused may not be easy during this outbreak. You may be tempted to keep checking the news or listening to the radio for the latest information. This will more than likely mean you lose concentration and it could even cause you to become anxious. Instead, try to set aside a time, twice a day to check the news. Maybe once in the morning and again in the evening.