

# Coronavirus COVID-19

Special Edition

# TÜSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

Spring 2020

## Health and Wellbeing Bulletin

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Health, Wellbeing and EAP

# Tusla COVID-19 Health and Wellbeing Information Point

1

## Clinical Information

Please [click here](#) to be directed to the latest Clinical Information about COVID-19 from the HSE

2

## Your Mental Health

A guide 'Managing anxiety around COVID-19' is available [here](#). Our EAP information line remains in place 24/7. Call 1800 817 435 to speak to someone in confidence. Telephone and video counselling will be offered in place of a face to face session

3

## Volunteer to Help

We all need to play our part to #flattenthecurve whilst maintaining services to children and families. Find out about voluntary redeployment [here](#).

4

## Occupational Health

Our occupational health service remains in place and now offers telephone and video consultations to staff who have been referred to the service. [Click here](#) for referral pathway information.

5

## Resources

[Click here](#) for posters, signage and leaflets, including COVID-19 posters that have been translated into various languages

6

## HR/Work Practice

We ask all staff to keep up to date with the latest organisational policies and guidelines regarding COVID-19 by visiting the information page on the Tusla website - [available here](#)





## How to work from home effectively.

With social distancing in place many of us find ourselves in the unfamiliar situation of remote work. Whether you are new to working from home, or just want to optimise your day, here are our top tips:

### Create a morning routine

Without the structure of your regular workday, which may involve commuting to the office or pre-work workout, it's easy to let your morning routine slip. But getting your day off to a good start can set the tone for your whole day. Commit to getting up at your regular time, maybe try a remote workout class, meditation or just go for a walk. Take time for your breakfast. Prepare as if you are going to the office so when you are due to start your workday you arrive fresh and awake and feeling good.

### Take breaks

When working from home you can feel a pressure to be 'always on'. Similarly, without the disruptions of a busy office, you can become engrossed in a task and lose track of time. While this happens to everyone from time to time, it's important to schedule in your breaks, shift your focus a little, get some air, move, and come back to your task refreshed.

Remote work can also make you feel isolated, with little in the way of social interactions outside of meetings. Make time to socialise with your colleagues, organise a video coffee break and catch up. These are trying times and it's good to be there for your team, as well as enjoy the support they offer you. We humans are social creatures and maintaining connection will help you thrive.

### Keep regular hours

Set boundaries around your working day, similarly to starting your workday at a specific time, you should ensure that you finish at a specific time also. This can be difficult especially when you are dealing with different time zones. When you work remotely you lose the physical separation of your work and home environments, therefore it is important to be mindful of maintaining a healthy work life balance. If you struggle to switch off in the evenings create a routine, sign up for an online class, commit to cooking dinner, or turn on your favourite podcast. Mark the end of your workday with something you enjoy. Finally go to bed on time! Don't use no commute as an excuse to stay up late.

### Create a dedicated office space

Where possible have a dedicated area where you work, ideally separated from areas you like to relax like your sitting room or bedroom. Though not everyone has access to a spare room, when choosing where to set up your remote office be mindful of ergonomics and distractions. Find the most comfortable chair you can with back support, use a monitor at eye level if possible, invest in a headset or at least earphones for long phone calls. When you are comfortable you have better focus.

Be sure to communicate with those sharing your living space that you are remote working. Whether using a 'Do Not Disturb' sign if you know you're on an important call or sharing childcare with your partner and scheduling important work meetings around this. Plan in advance to minimise interruptions where possible.

### Overcommunicate

Without the physical connection of a shared office space it's important to double down on keeping everyone in the loop. The easiest way to do this is to overcommunicate. Schedule video conference calls regularly to stay updated on what's happening. Ask for feedback on ideas or completed projects. Keep people updated on what you are doing by email, slack, call or whatever modality works for your team. When you are on a conference call, speak up, even if it's just to say hello, let people know that you are there.

Remember that these times are stressful for most of us, and when we are feeling vulnerable it is easy to focus on negatives, or to feel criticized. It can be easy to misinterpret tone via email or text chat. Remember this if you are worried that a colleague seems short with you and when you are writing messages or actions to people try to do so with a positive tone. Don't be afraid to pick up the phone if you are not clear on something, usually the quickest way to resolve a problem is to talk it out. If you are in a management role, make it clear how and when your team can contact you and check in with them regularly.

### Self-care

Finally, and most importantly, look after yourself. By creating structure in your day, you become more inclined towards making healthy decisions. Remember without a commute it's really important to add back in the movement you lost in your day, and the separation this creates between the start and end of your workday. By scheduling your breaks, you are less likely to mindlessly snack, and more likely to prepare a healthy lunch for example. Make sure you are hydrating (with water- not just coffee!) If you are working in an area that you relax in the evening, clear away your work setup at the end of the day. Yes, it's a little more work in the morning to get setup, but it will allow you to wind down.

Lastly social distancing is hard for all of us, make time to connect with colleagues, family and friends. Remember we're all in this together.

Remember to view Tusla's remote working guidance [here](#).



With so much going on at the moment it is easy to forget the simple and worthwhile pastimes that work, and instead get caught up in the not so helpful, and at times harmful distractors. One of the more recent unhelpful distractors related to the COVID-19 outbreak is the overuse of social media and the spreading of fake news via social media.

## **FAKE NEWS, IS A FORM OF NEWS CONSISTING OF DELIBERATE DISINFORMATION OR HOAXES SPREAD VIA TRADITIONAL NEWS MEDIA OR ONLINE SOCIAL MEDIA.**

There is no doubt that all of us are closely watching the news and various other sources to gain insight and information into what is happening, on a daily basis throughout the world. While this is a natural response to a challenging and often upsetting situation, some of the information we are coming in contact with is not beneficial and can harm us psychologically.

When we feel threatened, it is an automatic reaction to try and gain some control over what can seem like an uncontrollable situation. Empowering ourselves by being informed is one way of doing this. We like it when we feel in control and we believe that knowledge will make us feel better and often it does provide some immediate relief. However, it does have some pitfalls after a while - especially if we are overly relying on this strategy for relief - this is of course where the old saying 'paralysis by analysis' comes from.

The other major pitfall is when we are relying on information that has not been checked and has no grounding in fact. Sadly, relying on social media and other untrustworthy news sources is happening more and more and we need to be weary of doing this.

It has generally been acknowledged for some time that over doing social media is harmful, however when we are continually engaging in social media that is of an upsetting nature – there is no question that it is harmful. Continual exposure to traumatic or distressing material eventually leads to a psychological and emotional build-up of unnecessary stress chemicals that have an adverse effect on our body. The constant shots of adrenaline brought about by reading or seeing unpleasant images overtime affects our sleep and is harmful to our overall wellbeing. It puts us into high alert, as if we are under threat and being attacked.

Adding to this there is a large amount of fake news trending and going viral through social media apps. This fake news is unchecked and ungrounded and can cause our emotions to rollercoaster – up one minute with good news and down the next with upsetting news. It is also interfering with the real news and how many countries are responding to COVID-19 in a clear and structured way. Some of the fake news is also causing people to react in dramatic ways by bulk buying certain products and inadvertently causing a temporary shortage of products in stores, preventing them getting into the hands of people who really need them – such as the oldest, the youngest and the most vulnerable members our communities. Thankfully the solution is simple!

## **TAKE ACTION NOW TO IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH IN A FEW MAIN WAYS:**

- Limit your social media coverage of COVID 19
- Decide each day how much you will look at news or social media
- Hold yourself to this time limit
- Only look at news from credible sources
- Do not forward on social media generated information
- Delete the thread if you receive unfounded news

Remember that governments all over the world are working hard to bring this pandemic to an end and that they have the most educated people and most advanced resources available to them. It is within their interest to share credible information, founded in fact in order to help improve the situation. Our best control strategy right now is to control ourselves and our responses to this situation by focusing each day on what will help, and understanding and not doing, what will hinder this recovery.



Finding it hard to keep the kids entertained all day?

Try a little help from some famous friends...

## P.E with Joe Wicks

30 minutes | 9am daily

Free workout aimed at kids LIVE on my YouTube channel. With the schools closed and with us all spending more time at home, it's more important than ever that we keep moving and stay healthy and positive. Exercise is an amazing tool to help us feel happier, more energised, and more optimistic. The workouts will be fun and suitable for all ages and even adults can get involved. You don't need any equipment, just tune in to my YouTube channel at 9am each morning for a 30-minute, fun workout.

[CHECK IT OUT](#)

## Cook with Jamie

Easy recipes to try in your own time

Whether you're stuck at home or just looking for something to keep little hands busy, cooking with kids is a great family activity. Here are a list of recipes that cover breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks, and they're all perfect for small sous-chefs (with a bit of help, of course).

[CHECK IT OUT](#)

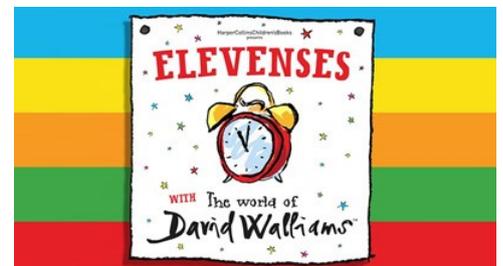


## Story Time with David Walliams

Daily free audio story from *The World's Worst Children 2*

Comedian-turned-author David Walliams will release a new audio story every day for the next 30 days for free.

[CHECK IT OUT](#)



## Maths with Carol Vorderman

Make Maths Fun.

Let Carol teach your child Maths during this difficult period. Maths classes will be made free for 4-12 year olds and classes are matched to the national curriculum.

[CHECK IT OUT](#)



## Music with Myleene Klass

YouTube Classes.

Curriculum based and most importantly, fun. There's no need for instruments or to feel intimidated. Any age, any ability welcome. Music helps to look after our children's minds and souls, especially at a time when they need it most plus, we may even find the next Elton or mini Mozart!

[CHECK IT OUT](#)



# Health Benefits Portal



Health, Wellbeing and EAP

## Get cracking with a wellness POWR plan this Easter.



POWR (Positive Occupational Wellness Resource) plans are available now on the Health Benefits Portal.

Also, egg-cellent offers on Easter treats and activities.



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Many of the articles featured in this special edition can be found on the Health Benefits Portal, this amazing resource is here to empower you to take steps to improve your own mental and physical health with tools such as guided meditation, breathing exercises, daily personal goal setting, mood trackers and more. There are literally 100's of plans that you can tailor to suit you.

[Click here](#)



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*Jason Brennan, Psychotherapist, leadership and mental skills coach on the importance of staying connected when distancing.*

The COVID-19 self-isolation strategy has created some challenging interpersonal dynamics, only being able to be social with a distancing of 6 feet. We as humans are pack animals and as such are designed to be social, because of this many of us, especially children will be finding distancing somewhat difficult.

Sunday 22nd March was the celebration of Mother's Day and earlier in the month we had St Patricks Day, both of which are usually a time when we gather together and celebrate in big numbers, which is quite the opposite of keeping our distance. Celebrations throughout the year are designed to bring people together, to build on a common bond, and to celebrate a sense of togetherness that is reflected in the various rituals and reasons for getting together.

While COVID-19 runs its course, we will face into many more occasions of celebration such as birthdays, anniversaries and yearly events which will challenge our creativity to be closer without getting close.

Nowadays most of us are familiar with the various apps that allow us to communicate with others remotely. Connecting and having group chats are excellent supports to take advantage of, but we also need to be conscious of what we can do at other times to feel closer. This is something to think about and plan ahead for, as the longer we stay isolated, the more isolated we may feel. Social distancing unfortunately affects one of our basic needs and basic hungers – our hunger for recognition which involves our drive, yearning and desire for intimacy and closeness.

- **Have a group social call a few times a week.** For example, a virtual coffee morning or after work virtual social drink with friends or colleagues.
- **Plan some virtual challenges** like group workplace challenges or charity supported events.
- **Write to others** near and far, sometimes it is easier to say how we feel in a letter.
- **Make something personal** to give to someone, that can be dropped off or handed to them when social isolation has passed.
- **Keep a journal** of what life is like each day, to stay connected with yourself
- **Think of who is closest to you** and what makes them close, write out what you appreciate about them.
- **Share some of these insights** from your journal with those you are close to, help them understand what it's like for you, highs and lows.
- **Go through old photos** to bring back memories, share some of these memories with these people over text or social media.
- **Be playful.** Set up some online or old school board games to play together through a video conference call.
- **Celebrate creatively.** Prepare for occasions in advance and be creative, front foot it with some options like a virtual dinner party, fancy dress disco or virtual Karaoke .
- **Build community** by dropping off a note to the houses closest to you, suggesting to set up a what's app group to stay in touch and share ideas and swapping mobile numbers.  
Remember to stay in touch with others and avoid talking about COVID-19 where possible and instead focus on subjects that makes you and the other person feel good.



While technology has been an absolute saviour in this time of isolation extra hours on your phone, or a less than ideal ergonomic setup can take it's toll.

Text neck is a thing! When your head is in anterior tilt all day while you stare at a screen it can lead to an achy neck, back pain and even headaches. Your head is heavy, and leaning over to look at your phone can put up to 60lb of pressure on your neck. For text neck, prevention is better than cure. It is important to set up your workspace so you are looking straight at your screen, invest in what you need to do this - it may be as simple as a pile of books and additional keyboard. Be aware of how much time you spend looking down at your phone screen and try to hold phone out straight in front of you sometimes also. Try some of these exercises to help you release tension in your neck:

## Yoga For Text Neck | Yoga With Adriene

30 minutes

Yoga for Text Neck offers an all levels feel good practice to counteract the effects of phone and computer use.

[CHECK IT OUT](#)

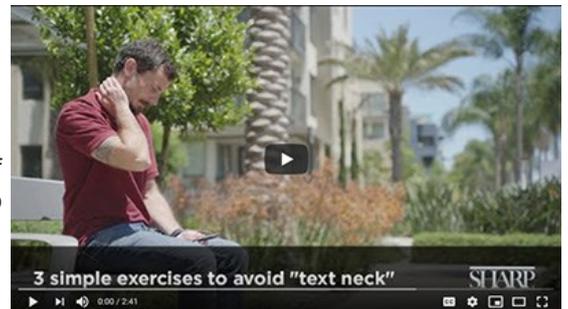


## 3 Simple Stretches to Avoid Text Neck

3 minutes

Jared Brown, a physical therapist, here he explains the importance of proper head positioning and helps demonstrate three simple exercises to strengthen the deep neck flexors.

[CHECK IT OUT](#)

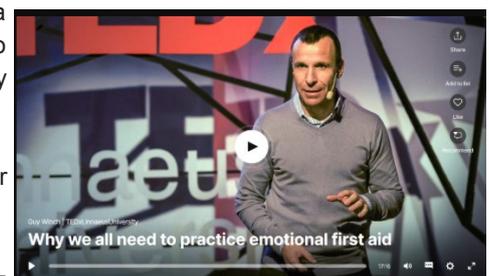


When you're in emotional pain, treat yourself with the same compassion you would expect from a truly good friend. We have to catch our unhealthy psychological habits and change them.

We'll go to the doctor when we feel ill or a nagging pain. So why don't we see a health professional when we feel emotional pain: guilt, loss, loneliness? Too many of us deal with common psychological-health issues on our own, says Guy Winch. But we don't have to.

He makes a compelling case to practice emotional hygiene — taking care of our emotions, our minds, with the same diligence we take care of our bodies.

In this short TED talk Guy Winch asks us to take our emotional health as seriously as we take our physical health — and explores how to heal from common heartaches



*Ctrl & click image to view*



Do you find it hard to deal with daily stresses?

Resilience and self-care is the ability to cope with life's challenges and to adapt to adversity.

Resilience at work is an important characteristic that employees need to have in their psychological armour to aid them deal with the stressors they may encounter as part of their job.

Our levels of resilience can change over time so it is important to be aware of those stressors which are effecting your resilience and how best to deal with them.

Resilience is something that we can learn and develop.

**Resilience and Self-Care training will resume when Covid-19 restrictions are lifted and will be available for all staff.**

You can register for Resilience and Self-Care workshops through **HSELand (ilearn@tusla)** for planned training in your region or to plan a full day workshop for your staff contact Workforce Learning and Development at [ilearn@tusla.ie](mailto:ilearn@tusla.ie) or the Health and Wellbeing Department at [EAP@Tusla.ie](mailto:EAP@Tusla.ie).

**The EAP phone line remains open to all Tusla staff 24/7 on freephone 1800 817 435.**

**Due to the on-going Covid – 19 crisis counselling sessions will be facilitated by telephone or video link**

The Health and Wellbeing department wish to acknowledge the work of our colleagues who continue to provide services to children and families in these difficult times.

As always we appreciate hearing from you and look forward to featuring your contributions in the next edition of the Health and Wellbeing Bulletin. Email us on [eap@tusla.ie](mailto:eap@tusla.ie)

As you look after your families and each other please know that we will continue to be available to support you through this time and beyond.



**Health, Wellbeing and EAP**