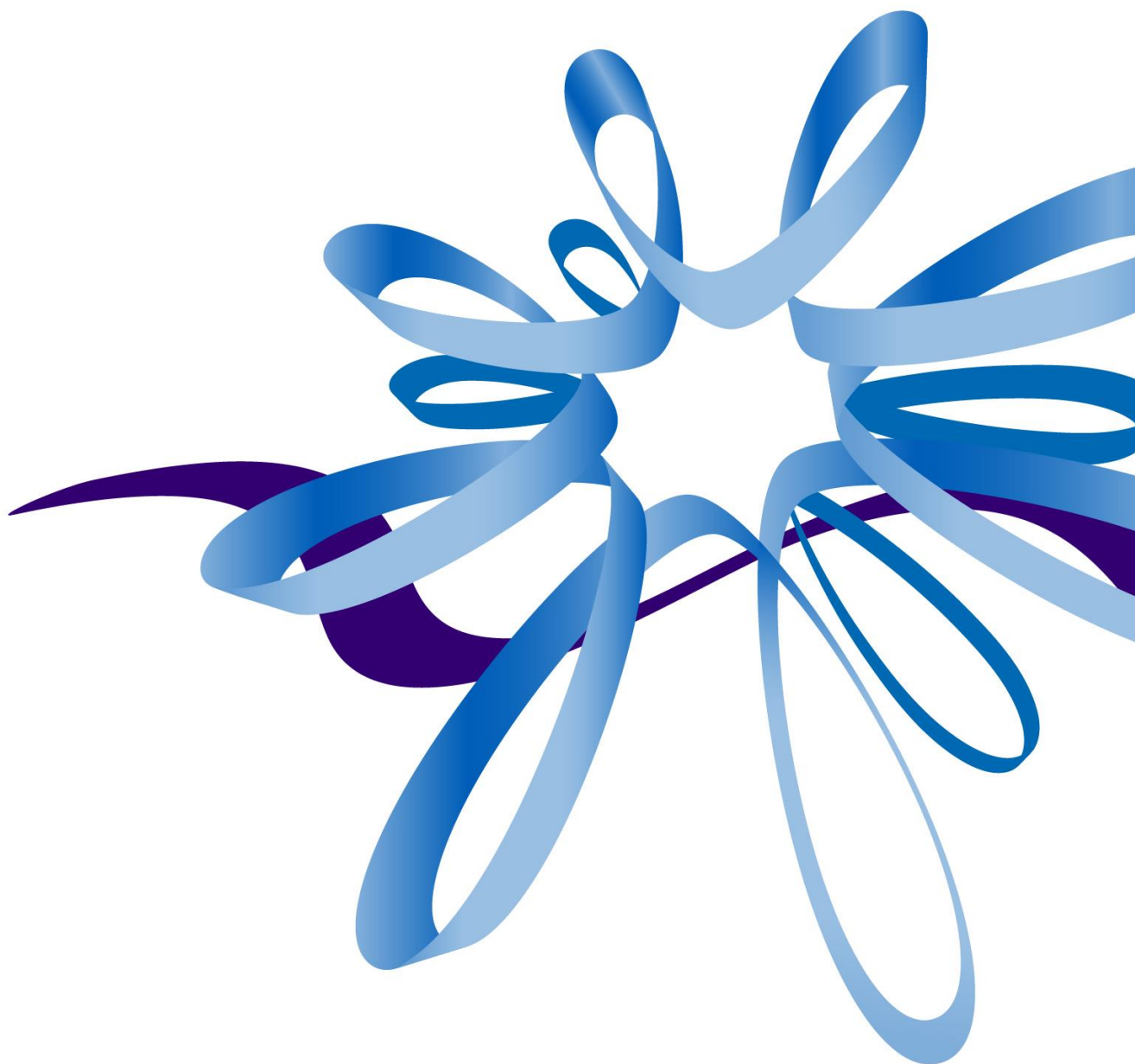


NHS Graduate Management Training Scheme (GMTS)

## **GMTS and Mental Wellbeing**

Looking After Your Emotional Health During the  
Covid-19 Pandemic





# Mental Wellbeing

## Looking After Your Emotional Health During the Covid-19 Pandemic

### How Are You Feeling?

This global event is unprecedented and presents challenges to us all as NHS employees and as human beings. We are all likely to experience a wide range of emotions as a natural response to this event.

We recognise this will be an anxious time for many and for those working from home this could increase feelings of social isolation. We ask that colleagues connect virtually to one another and provide understanding and support for those who are struggling with the uncertainty that COVID-19 brings.

We hope this guide will provide some helpful and practical tips and sources of support to help you maintain good mental health during the coming months.

### The Basics

**Sleep, food, hydration, exercise – make sure you get enough of all four.**

This might seem like stating the obvious, but they are easy to neglect when under pressure.

### Pacing and Stamina

Getting through this is going to be more of a marathon than a sprint. Try to maintain focus and mindfulness; pace yourself and maintain stamina by making sure you don't neglect the basics above.

### Maintaining the Balance

We will all need some contrast and relief from the challenges at work and at home. Keep some time for pleasant activities and contact with those you care about, even if you can only do this online. For example, if you find yourself struggling to do this, then connect with someone and **message each other '3 Good Things'** you notice every day.



Try to **focus on the positives** of the situation like the amazing work being done by the NHS and other organisations.

**Develop your sense of purpose** – whatever role we play, whether close to the point of care for Covid-19 patients or in support services keeping the rest of the system going, we all are important to the health of the population.

**Keep a journal** of what you do and what happens around you, as this can help you manage your emotions and will provide an immense amount of learning from this unique situation.

## Dealing with Difficult Events

Some of us may experience or be witness to very difficult events. Our emotional response will inevitably be intense at these times. Talk it through with people you trust. Remember to maintain the basics of sleep, food, hydration and exercise. Look out for each other too and offer support to those who need it.

## Feeling Overwhelmed

Sometimes you may feel overwhelmed by the scale or intensity of the pandemic. If this happens try to take some time out, connect with what you know restores your balance and perspective. Seek help if the feeling of overwhelm persists.

Breathing exercises can help when we feel very anxious or panicky:  
<https://www.nwbh.nhs.uk/healthandwellbeing/Pages/Breathing-Techniques-.aspx>

## Pre-existing Mental Health Problems

If you already have a pre-existing mental health problem, you may find you need to focus on actively maintaining your wellbeing. Think back to the things that have helped before and do more of them. You may also need alternatives if your usual coping strategies are hindered by the constraints of the pandemic. If you feel you are relapsing significantly then access the Employee Assistance Programme (details below) or consult your GP or speak to your Trainee Support Manager about a referral to Occupational Health.

## Managing Expectations

All services are under increased pressure because of the impact of the pandemic, so be realistic in your expectations of response times and availability.



## Working from Home and Coping with Isolation

Working from home for sustained periods can leave us feeling disconnected from colleagues and teams, especially if we're in isolation or socially distancing at the same time. So, connect with colleagues online to discuss work and check in with each other. Connect with friends and family online too. For example, you could play games, send each other music tracks that sum up the day you've had, or even try having conversation using only gifs!

## Stepped Care Model and Employee Support

### Step 0 - maintaining good psychological health and resilience

**Five Ways to Wellbeing** - an evidence-based approach derived from extensive research into what common factors exist between people who maintained good health and resilience:

**Connect** – keep in touch with other people

**Be Active** – take regular exercise

**Take Notice** – look around, listen and enjoy the world about you

**Learn** – maintain interests and develop yourself

**Give** – help others

[Click HERE for more details on the MIND website:](https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/) or <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

### Step 1 – self-help

Suitable for times when stress is unpleasant and beginning to interfere with ability to live life to the full, e.g., taking part in leisure or hobbies etc.

#### Evidence-based Self Help Guides

These free-to-use guides are widely used and highly recommended.

#### Northumberland, Tyne and Wear Self Help Guides

<https://web.ntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp/> Also available as an app.



## Step 2 – GP or Occupational Health

When stress has resulted in a common mental health problem such as depression or anxiety which is severe enough to interfere with activities of daily living such as caring for family, doing your work and domestic chores.

Our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provides confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Details of how you can access this service are on Geni in the Scheme Support and Wraparound folder.

You can also download [Health-E app](#).

## Further Guidance from Organisations

World Health Organisation

[https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/en/](https://www.who.int/mental_health/en/)

NHS Employers

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing/mental-wellbeing>

Mental Health Foundation

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

MIND

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

Rethink

<https://www.rethink.org/news-and-stories/blogs/2020/03/managing-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US) (includes guidance for parents and responders)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>



## Mental Wellbeing in the Media

BBC

[www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/health-51873799](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/health-51873799)

Psychiatric Times

<https://www.psychiatrictimes.com/psychiatrists-beware-impact-coronavirus-pandemics-mental-health>

Psychology Today

[www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/healthy-prescriptions/202003/combating-the-coronavirus-mental-health-pandemic%3famp](http://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/healthy-prescriptions/202003/combating-the-coronavirus-mental-health-pandemic%3famp)

The Independent

[www.independent.co.uk/life-style/coronavirus-wellbeing-live-pandemic-update-social-distancing-loneliness-self-isolation-a9402366.html%3famp](http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/coronavirus-wellbeing-live-pandemic-update-social-distancing-loneliness-self-isolation-a9402366.html%3famp)

**For further support, guidance and information on wellbeing, please contact your Trainee Support Manager (TSM).**