

Providing wellbeing support during the COVID-19 outbreak





Dramatic changes to everyday routines and lifestyles like we're currently experiencing with the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak, can have a huge impact on both our physical and mental health.

The impact this could have on our health can cause us to experience low moods, panic and fear. Self-isolation may leave us feeling lonely, frustrated and bored. While the sense of not knowing what's going to happen next can be scary, worrying and stressful.

To help you and your team navigate through these difficult times, Connect2Care's mental health expert, Lindsey Appleby-Flynn, has produced a short [webinar](#) to help you support your employees' wellbeing. Lindsey has a wealth of experience supporting individuals through mental health crises. She's our First Aid for Mental Health Instructor and trained in applied suicide intervention.

This guide contains a summary of the main points and practical ideas raised in this [webinar](#).



Holding difficult conversations about mental health

We're all currently going through very challenging times due to the impact COVID-19 is having on everyone's life. It's important that you remember to check in with your colleagues or people close to you to see how they're coping.

Check if someone really is 'fine'

If someone says they're coping with the current crisis just fine, it's worth making sure that really is the case, but they don't want to appear a burden to others, so they say they are fine, rather than saying how they are really feeling.

When someone says this, try asking, "No, how are you really doing?". This shows that you're really interested in what they have to say, and more importantly it shows that you care about how they're feeling. This should encourage them to open up a little more, allowing you to determine whether or not they're in need of extra emotional support.

Helping someone in severe mental distress

There may be times where someone close to you is in severe mental distress and having thoughts about harming themselves or even thoughts of suicide. It can be easy to panic and not know what to say if someone expresses these types of feelings to you.

However, offering a listening ear, being empathetic and trying to understand is the best way you can be there for them. It can help to reflect what they have just said back to them. This shows them that you're actively listening to their problems, brings you onto the same wavelength, and gives you the opportunity to make sure you're understanding them correctly.

If you believe someone is in danger of taking their own life, and are in immediate danger, you should call 999. If the risk is severe, but not imminent, you should call 101.

Where to turn for support during COVID-19

It can be difficult to know where to turn to for help and support if you, or someone you know, is struggling during the COVID-19 outbreak. There can be a lot of conflicting advice out there, which can make things seem all the more overwhelming.

Connect2Care's signposting sheet

We've created a comprehensive [signposting sheet](#) which will help point you in the right direction if you need support during this unprecedented time.

Areas of support include Coronavirus-related issues, help for the elderly, financial worries, and an all-encompassing selection of mental health concerns.

Practical support for panic attacks

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing anxiety or a panic attack, there are a few ways you can help. The following techniques encourage your breathing to slow down which helps to calm and relieve anxiety.

Square breathing

To practice square breathing, follow these four steps:

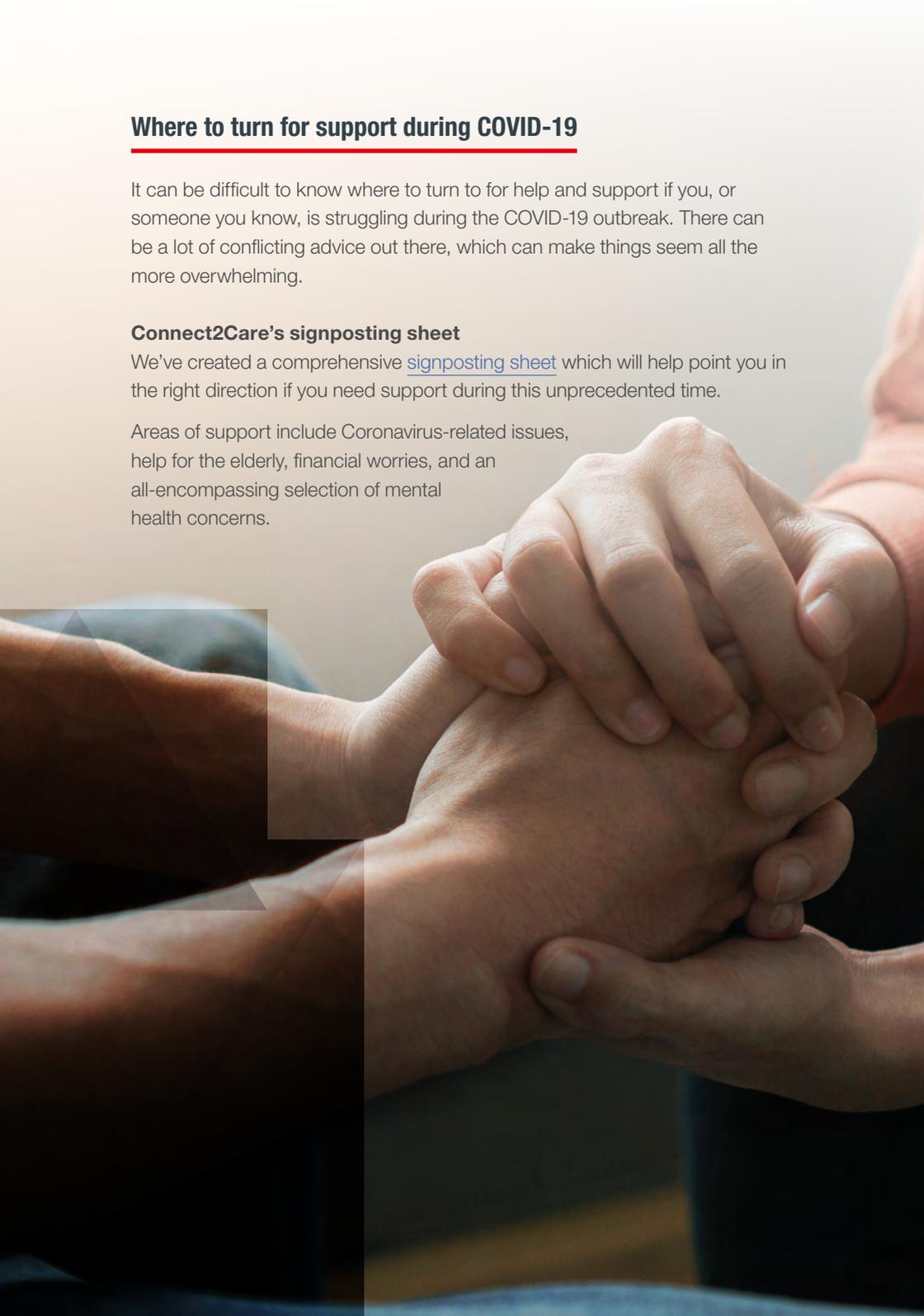
1. Visualising a square, take a deep breath in through the nose for 3-5 seconds, as you mentally follow the line along the top of the square.
2. Breathe out through the mouth, following down the side of the square.
3. Take another deep breath in through the nose, following along the bottom of the square.
4. And lastly, breathe out through the mouth, following up the final side of your visual square.

Grounding exercise

If someone is having a panic attack, encourage them to follow the grounding exercise.

Ask them to look at their surroundings and discover:

- Five things they can see
- Four things they can touch
- Three things they can hear
- Two things they can smell
- And, one thing they can taste.



Further information and support

We all react differently to these kinds of situations, and some will weather the storm better than others. During times like these, it's important that we remember to check in on our colleagues and those closest to us.

Please remember to watch our [video](#) and read our [signposting sheet](#). Both of these resources contain further advice and guidance on helping you, or someone else, with their mental health during this time of crisis.



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