

## **Mental Health Awareness Week 18-24 May 2020 #KindnessMatters**

Hosted by the Mental Health Foundation each year, this week is Mental Health Awareness Week and the theme is kindness. You can visit [here](#) to find out why kindness was chosen as this year's theme and access resources to help you get involved this week.

We are living through difficult times and we want everyone who works for Royal Mail to feel they can be open about their mental health and ask for support if they need it. Throughout this week we will be sharing information which can be used to help support you and your loved ones during this pandemic and beyond.

### **Being a key worker and the stress and anxiety that can be associated with that.**

Right now, more than ever, you may be feeling the pressure as a key worker. Whether you are the only person in the household working; working unfamiliar hours with new ways of working; or working from home, these are unprecedented times.

Sustained pressure can have a negative impact on both our mental and physical health through the additional stress and worry – it is therefore crucial that we do all we can to look after ourselves, our loved ones and colleagues

### **What is stress?**

Stress is our body's reaction to help us deal with pressure or threats. Some stress can be useful and keep us motivated to take action and complete tasks, too much can have a negative effect on our mental health. Signs of stress can include a racing heart, headaches, muscle tension, trouble sleeping, feeling angry, frightened, snapping at people, eating more (or less), smoking and drinking alcohol.

**Self care.** We may need to try different things until we find what works to help reduce stress and anxiety. We are all different.

**Spending time with friends and family.** Telling someone how we are feeling can help to reduce stress, but obviously, this is more difficult at the moment. Connect through WhatsApp, Skype and Facebook, or a phone call. If you, or someone you know, doesn't like using social media, instead try sending a postcard, writing a letter or email.

**Exercise** can help to relieve stress as well as helping us to stay healthy. People enjoy different things. Within government guidelines you could try cycling, walking, running, or following online classes. Doing housework or gardening is also a gentle way to exercise.

**A good nights sleep** can help with concentration levels and improve your mood. Having a regular bedtime routine and sleeping in an environment that is not too hot or cold can help, as can regular exercise (not too close to bedtime) and not using the phone or computer immediately before you go to bed.

Eating a healthy **balanced diet** is good for mental and physical health. Stay hydrated. Information on health and lifestyle advice can be found on the Feeling First Class website at [www.feelingfirstclass.co.uk](http://www.feelingfirstclass.co.uk) (use code FFC1 to register). Further advice is available at NHS.

**You are not alone - support is available.**

We understand there is an increase in concern and anxiety. If you or a member of your team would like to speak to a counsellor they can contact First Class Support available 24/7 to provide emotional (not medical) support on 0800 6888 777.

On the Health and Wellbeing Intranet pages, our [Feeling First Class – Mental Health](#) page includes stress guidance, support and training as well as signposting to internal and external mental health support services. Information is also available on [myroyalmail.com/yourmentalhealth](https://myroyalmail.com/yourmentalhealth).

A selection of chapters from 'Positive Mental Health' a book written by Dr Shaun Davis and Andrew Kinder is available [here](#) to help you manage a range of mental health problems.

[Click here](#) to see the full range of mental health support available to you.

Please visit the [Royal Mail Coronavirus Information page](#) for latest information and guidance, which is also available on [myroyalmail/coronavirus](https://myroyalmail.com/coronavirus).