

Mental Health Awareness Week #KindnessMatters

Managing relationships and domestic abuse guidance

We want this Mental Health Awareness week to highlight some important topics which may be impacting colleagues and their loved ones at this time.

Coronavirus has led to big changes in the way we live our everyday lives and relationships at home are hugely important for getting us through this period. Self-isolation, social distancing, key worker status, financial difficulties and other everyday concerns can place relationships under added pressure.

Relationships aren't built on the expectations we currently find ourselves in. The key thing to remember is that for now, as we start to move out of a full lockdown, a new 'normal' must be developed. Here are some tips:

Maintain your relationship with your partner and avoid fall-outs

- There are many different ways of coping in stressful situations and your way isn't the only way, try to put yourself in your partners shoes and treat each other with kindness.
- If you're getting frustrated with others in the house, it might be an idea to share how you're feeling by getting in touch with a trusted friend. If someone upsets you, try counting to ten and taking some deep breaths. It maybe you no longer feel the need to 'react'.
- Avoid arguments and confrontation - weigh up if they are worth it at this time. Any children in the house will learn from how you deal with conflict. Keep this in mind when you are all under one roof together.
- You both have skills and strengths to bring to this temporary situation - they may surprise you by how well they are handling things. Let them know how much you appreciate this.
- Routines and roles may change - try to make it work for you by checking in regularly about how this is working.
- Try to put big and difficult conversations on hold while you deal with the current situation – this is especially true if one of you is ill or thinks they may have symptoms.
- If you've been arguing with your partner over a particular issue, consider calling a truce during this period to make living under one roof more bearable.
- You may have elderly parents or other family members with health problems and you may have particular worries about these people. Try to understand if your partner needs to prioritise these people at the moment.
- You can leave your house to exercise so try a short walk/run or walking the dog, to give yourself some space and help reduce any tensions. Do continue to follow government guidance and practice social distancing.
- If you were having relationship problems already, understand that being together in the same house may bring these to the surface. You may want to consider relationship counselling (available via the First Class Support helpline - details below) to help you work through things.

Understand that with the best will in the world, friction between people is quite likely in these circumstances. It's how you deal with the situation that counts. If you're being abused or think you could be, make sure you get access to support to stay safe.

Employees experiencing domestic abuse are encouraged to report this to their manager, a union representative or a colleague. The aim will not be to counsel the employee but to offer support and the relevant information through signposting them to the specialist organisations.

It is important for managers to know how to act if an employee informs them that they are experiencing domestic abuse, and to be aware of some of the effects an employee may experience. The Royal Mail Group [Domestic Abuse Guide for employees](#) is available and outlines signs to look out for; the approach to take when a person is affected by domestic abuse; and signposting to further help and support.

First Class Support is the confidential and independent helpline provided free for employees and available 24 hours a day. Call **0800 6888 777** or visit www.rmgfirstclasssupport.co.uk.

The **National Domestic Abuse helpline** is available for all women, concerned friends and professionals. Call **0808 2000 247** freephone 24 hours a day or visit www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk.

Refuge: www.refuge.org.uk

Women's Aid: www.womensaid.org.uk

Broken Rainbow: 08452 604460 or www.broken-rainbow.org.uk for survivors of Domestic abuse in LGBT relationships.

Men's Advice Line: 0808 801 0327 for men experiencing domestic abuse.

Respect: www.respect.uk.net for perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Rowland Hill Fund: 0345 600 4586 www.rowlandhillfund.org offering financial aid to colleagues, pensioners and their families in times of need.

Stepchange: Offering expert, tailored advice and practical solutions to problem debt, contact the UK's leading debt charity on 0800 138 1111 or visit www.stepchange.org.

Look out for an article in the next Courier and signposting support is available on the Feeling First Class Mental Health intranet page and on the Health and Wellbeing Ambassador portal to assist with signposting employees to support.