

# Staff Wellbeing Guide



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During this Coronavirus pandemic, colleagues are dealing with stress, change and uncertainty to a level many of us have not experienced before.

We are also working in different ways, seeing less of friends and family. Our lifestyles have been altered in ways we couldn't have imagined before.

This wellbeing pack provides a resource of support and tips to help you deal with your own mental and physical wellbeing, and to help colleagues, team members, friends and family.

Whenever we go through difficult times, others around us can be there to support us. Be there for others when you can, and ask for support when you need it yourself.

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# WELLBEING AT A GLANCE

## Keep a check on your own mental health and wellbeing

Consider limiting the time you spend watching, reading or listening to coverage of the pandemic, including on social media. You could choose to switch off news alerts on your phone and not open news apps as often to create head space for other things.

Move about regularly and keep as fit as you can. This also supports mental health.

## Get information

Get your information from trusted sources such as the Trust's Covid website. You could also fact check media sources using known and official websites such as GOV.UK or the NHS website.

## Focus

Focus on the things you have direct control over: keeping safe in your workplace, social distancing as much as possible, calling and messaging a friend or someone in the family, eating well, drinking enough water to stay hydrated.

## Relax

Relax with music, reading or whatever you normally enjoy indoors. Or try to learn something new like cooking, online puzzles, home exercise. Learning new things can help to keep us healthy.

## Connect

Do you have friends or family members you could message, or could you create a new contact through established online methods? Talking to others can help you develop a balanced view of what is going on and make you both feel better. If you can embrace virtual communication it can help you to feel more connected to your loved ones and friends.

## Acts of kindness

Try to be understanding of other people's concerns at this time. Being kind and offering support can benefit you as well as those you help.

## Physical and mental health are connected

Please remember to follow GOV.UK advice and to social distance / isolate or shield as needed. This will help us all to get through this together and protect the most vulnerable. Wash your hands regularly and for at least 20 seconds.

Too much alcohol is damaging for health so whilst the temptation might be high to aid coping, it will significantly affect sleep and your mental health. Lung health is extremely important and every day that you do not smoke your lungs will start to work better – think again about quitting.



# COPING WITH FEELING OVERWHELMED

Living through a global pandemic is unprecedented in our generation and we may all feel overwhelmed, stressed or sad at points.

Working in different ways can be challenging, as can isolating yourself at home with only minimal social interaction.

Here are some simple steps you can take:

## Feeling overwhelmed by the news or social media

- Reduce watching, reading or listening to news if it makes you feel anxious or distressed.
- Get facts and updates about coronavirus only from trusted sources such as NHS.UK or GOV.UK, or reliable news sources such as the BBC. Try to ignore rumours, stories on social media which could be made up, or fake news.
- Use the information about Coronavirus mainly to take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself and loved ones.
- Get information updates at specific times during the day, once or twice to avoid feeling worried.
- Social media will help you stay in touch, but if other people are sharing their stories or worries this could make you feel anxious. Think about connecting with particular people or groups rather than scrolling through timelines or newsfeeds.

## Supporting yourself and others

- Take one day at a time.
- You cannot help others if you are distressed or overwhelmed. Take all the steps you need to, to look after yourself first – some time on your own in a different room, listening to music on headphones, doing some breathing exercises.

- Work together: Protect yourself and be supportive to others. For example, check-in by phone on neighbours or people in your community who may need some extra assistance.
- Look after others in your household or network, and make sure they are looking after you too.
- Make plans to video chat with people or groups that you would usually see in person. A phone call or text message is also valuable.
- Look out for the positives. There are many heartening stories out there about people helping each other and appreciating what they have. Notice how people are coming together to support their communities through these challenges. Think about things that you are grateful for amidst all the chaos.

### **Remember to breathe...**

It sounds obvious but we need to remember to breathe during difficult times, especially when we have to stay inside most of the time.

If you can, get some fresh air outside every day. This can improve your mood, reduce feelings of stress or anger, clear the head, give you a bit of space, and make you feel more relaxed.

If you can't go outside, open the window and get some fresh air that way.

Get as much natural light as possible. Spend time in your garden if you have one, on the balcony, or simply open your front or back door and sit with a cuppa.



## Five minutes breathing exercise for stress

This calming breathing technique for stress, anxiety and panic takes just a few minutes and can be done anywhere.

You can do it standing up, sitting in a chair that supports your back, or lying on a bed or yoga mat on the floor.

- Make yourself as comfortable as you can. If you can, loosen any clothes that restrict your breathing.
- If you're lying down, place your arms a little bit away from your sides, with the palms up.
- Let your legs be straight, or bend your knees so your feet are flat on the floor.
- If you're sitting, place your arms on the chair arms.
- If you're sitting or standing, place both feet flat on the ground. Whatever position you're in, place your feet roughly hip-width apart.
- Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it.
- Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from 1 to 5. You may not be able to reach 5 at first.
- Then, without pausing or holding your breath, let it flow out gently, counting from 1 to 5 again, if you find this helpful.
- Keep doing this for 3 to 5 minutes.



## KEEP ON MOVING – TAKING EXERCISE

Whatever our usual habits, when spending our rest time at home, we will probably move a lot less than we normally do.

Maybe you are used to going to the gym and are missing your regular routine. Perhaps you're not able to do your usual sports with others, or outdoor exercise like the park run.

Or perhaps you're not usually keen on getting too active, but while at home you're noticing that you're moving less than usual.

During this period of staying at home we need to make the extra effort to get active, for our long term health, and also to feel better each day.

Try the following ideas:

- Build physical activity into your day.
- Free yoga sessions are available for NHS staff at: [www.slowe.yoga/nhs-breathe](http://www.slowe.yoga/nhs-breathe).
- If you are working at your desk, get up every 40 minutes or so and walk around the house, or do a few stretches or deep breathing exercises. See Breathing exercises for stress ([www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/ways-relieve-stress/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/ways-relieve-stress/)) or Flexibility exercises ([www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/flexibility-exercises/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/flexibility-exercises/)).
- Also try to do at least three lots of 10-15 minutes exercise spread across the day. Sport England ([www.sportengland.org/stayinworkout](http://www.sportengland.org/stayinworkout)) have produced some great advice and links to keep you active during the day.
- Try a 10 minute online exercise routine; 10-minute home cardio workout ([www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minute-home-cardio-workout/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minute-home-cardio-workout/)), Sitting Exercises ([www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/)),

Team GB Workout at home videos ([www.bbc.co.uk/sport/av/get-inspired/45245003](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/av/get-inspired/45245003)).

At the time of writing, the government agrees that most people should try to take exercise outside once every day. If you are not self-isolating and can get out, make the most of the opportunity to go for a walk, run or cycle.

Here are some online exercise and fitness links. Lots of gyms and sport instructors are also providing online classes – Google your favourite fitness activities to see what’s available, or search on YouTube, Facebook or Instagram.

- How to stay active while you’re at home ([www.sportengland.org/stayinworkout](http://www.sportengland.org/stayinworkout)) – Sport England - #StayInWorkOut support
- Team GB Workout at home videos ([www.bbc.co.uk/sport/av/get-inspired/45245003](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/av/get-inspired/45245003)) – BBC Sport
- NHS 10-minute home cardio workout ([www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minute-home-cardio-workout/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minute-home-cardio-workout/))
- NHS Sitting Exercises ([www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/))
- NHS Breathing exercise for stress ([www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/ways-relieve-stress/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/ways-relieve-stress/))
- NHS Flexibility exercises ([www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/flexibility-exercises/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/flexibility-exercises/))



## FAMILY AND HOME LIFE

Many of us are spending a lot more time at home than we are used to.

- Agree on a household routine. Try to give everyone who you live with a say in this.
- Try to respect each other's privacy and give each other space. Some people will want company and noise, others will prefer quiet and time alone. Try and meet everyone's needs but understand some compromise will be needed.
- Make a plan of how you will spend your time. Include the other people in your household, no matter what their age, so everyone contributes. Write it on a piece of paper and put it up on the wall or fridge.

Disagreements and negotiations are part of family life, but if conflicts are causing more serious upset, support is available.

The charity Relate has advice online, including How to reduce family arguments ([www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/help-family-life-and-parenting/family-common-problems/how-reduce-family-arguments](http://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/help-family-life-and-parenting/family-common-problems/how-reduce-family-arguments)) and a whole page of links relating Advice and information during the coronavirus outbreak ([www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/covid-19-advice-and-information](http://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/covid-19-advice-and-information)).

### Domestic violence or abuse

If you, or someone you know needs help due to being in an abusive situation with a partner or family member, specialist support is available and will be able to provide advice, and support you with safety planning.

Abuse comes in many forms including economic, physical, sexual, threatening, controlling, coercive, emotional and psychological.

Refuge is the national domestic abuse helpline. It is available 24 hours a day, Freephone, call 0808 2000 247 or online visit: [www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk).

Advice can be provided anonymously if preferred. If you need an urgent response dial 999 to contact the Police.

National guidance on this issue during the coronavirus outbreak can be found here: Coronavirus (COVID-19): support for victims of domestic abuse ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-and-domestic-abuse/coronavirus-covid-19-support-for-victims-of-domestic-abuse)).



## TIME ALONE

If you live alone, make sure you know who your support networks are and how to reach them.

While you may normally feel confident and happy living alone, social isolation has very real consequences.

Schedule video calls with loved ones to keep in touch.

Set hobby, DIY or other personal goals to keep yourself motivated.

Keep checking in with a family member, colleague or friend who lives near enough to bring you supplies if you fall ill or need to go into self-isolation.

The charity Mind runs an online peer support community called Elefriends ([www.elefriends.org.uk](http://www.elefriends.org.uk)), where you can share your experiences and hear from others.

If you think your mental health might be affected by seeing less of friends, take action and talk to someone about it to get support.

### Be a friend

Whether you are in a family or couple, live with others in a shared house, or live on your own, there will be times when being isolated from others outside the home gets to you.

Likewise, there will be other people you can support.

If you think someone might be struggling for whatever reason, just get in touch. Most people will appreciate the effort and it could be the lifeline someone is waiting for.

### People of all faiths and of none

Many of our colleagues have a faith or spirituality in their life, and may be finding support and hope through faith during this time.

Many of our faith organisations are finding ways to support people without attending the usual services and gatherings. Look on your faith organisation's website to find out.



# WORKING FROM HOME - A GOOD ROUTINE

We know some staff members may need to stay home and stay safe – but we also need to stay sane!

Here are some tips to help you structure your day.

## 1) Start the day well

- Set your alarm and get up at the time you usually get up on a working day.
- Follow your normal morning routine to stay motivated and able to work successfully.
- Try wherever possible to keep working hours the same as you would whilst in the office.
- Make a cup of tea, coffee, or get a glass of water before you settle down to work.
- Create a dedicated comfortable workspace, with your IT equipment set up properly.
- Do not work from your bed, no matter how tempting!

## 2) Keep moving during the day.

In a normal working day we are getting up to go to meetings or speak with colleagues. At lunch we might pop out for a sandwich. But at home we might move less, so build some activity into your day.

Moving, stretching or doing some breathing exercises will help to alleviate stress and also keep you calm and focussed on your tasks. It can also help with your posture and general wellbeing.

- Get up every 40 minutes and do a few stretches or perhaps some deep breathing exercises. See the 'Keep on moving – taking exercise' page.

- Try a 10 minute online exercise routine during your lunch break to help maintain or improve your fitness level. See the 'Keep on moving – taking exercise' page.
- If you are not self-isolating and can get out, you could build your daily outdoor exercise into your routine to start, end or break up your working day. Make that time for yourself – you will feel better for it.

### **3) Be productive**

- Speak to your manager and ask what they expect of you over the coming weeks. Explain what you need from them and answer their questions so that you both have a clear understanding of what you can and will achieve.
- If you are working overtime hours unavoidably because of this crisis response, make sure you are recording your extra hours in a way agreed with your manager, and do everything you can to look after yourself and avoid burn-out.
- Make a 'to do' list. This will help you to get everything done and will also boost your morale when ticking items that are completed off the list.
- Do not try to do too much at once.
- Focus on one task at a time.

### **4) Food and eating well**

- Make sure you eat breakfast each morning.
- Try to have a set lunchtime.
- Make sure you take a proper break – don't eat while working.
- Make sure your snacks are healthy. Don't reach for the biscuits, instead have a piece of fruit or chop some vegetables.



## 5) Stay in touch

- Stay in touch with your colleagues.
- A quick phone call is better for feeling connected than using email. But even an email can be really helpful to combat loneliness, or feeling isolated or struggling with your workload.
- Keeping connected can also help with motivation.
- Some teams have WhatsApp groups to keep the team spirit going. Your team might have other solutions to keep connected. (But please still remember social media should not be used for confidential work matters – keep it for non-work chat to keep up morale, or general work discussions that are not confidential.)

## 6) Know when to switch off

- When you've done your day's work, know when to turn the laptop off, and try not to work in the evening.
- Go to bed at your usual time, to keep in your good routine ready for the next day.

## Working from home with children

Working from home and combining this with childcare is going to be different for every family. It is not something we would normally do, and we don't have a model for how to make this work.

As parents or carers we will need to find creative solutions, and it may take a bit of trial and error before we get it right.

Children will require more or less attention depending on their age and temperament. Younger children, in general, often need more attention. It may not be easy, so use the other tips in this guide.

## Get the support you need

- If you have a partner at home and you are both working, share the load. Don't leave it to one parent to manage. You could try splitting the day in half and doing half each. You might be able to include times when you can both get on with work while children have some downtime with the TV or iPad.
- If grandparents are used to being involved in your childcare, and want to help, see if you can make this work digitally. If lesson plans are available on your child's school's website perhaps they could work through some of the content with your child over Facetime or Skype.
- If you have more children this might mean you have more demands on your time – or if you are lucky they might look after each other. Every family will be different.

## Routines – if your child needs to home school

- School age children are used to routines at school so try to recreate this at home. Lots of schools will have provided timetables. Use these or adapt to fit your day.
- It may take a couple of days to get it right so keep being kind to yourself.

## Activities

- If your children are old enough, explain to them that you are working and that you will play with/talk to them at lunchtime or when you have a break. Set them on with their schoolwork or give them household jobs to help you. Ask them to think of ways they could help or keep themselves occupied.
- If you are home schooling children make the most of opportunities to multitask. Sit together, set them on with something then get on with some work while they are absorbed.
- Don't feel pressured to do a full school day. Let them play or watch TV.

## Keeping it up

- Try to find a routine but at the same time take one day at a time so you don't feel overwhelmed.
- If you are finding it unmanageable, speak to your manager. Your manager should discuss the practicalities of your situation, including taking into account the age of your children and the level of childcare responsibility.



# TRUST SUPPORT FOR YOUR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELLBEING

As well as all the tips in this booklet, further support is available if you need it.

## Talk to your line manager

Your health is private to you and you do not have to discuss this with your manager.

However, if stress, worry or practical issues are affecting your ability to do your job, you should discuss this with your manager if at all possible.

They need to know if your work is not being done so they can decide the best way to manage this in terms of your service's duties and priorities.

They should also help get you some support or signpost you to the support you need.

Managers are expected to show compassion and understanding and provide the practical support that is needed to their teams.

If your manager has taken all the steps to support you that they can, but you still need some help, you can be referred to the Health, Work and Wellbeing Service.

## Health, Work and Wellbeing Service and the Clinical Psychology Team

The Health, Work and Wellbeing Service and the Clinical Psychology Team are working in collaboration to provide support to all staff during this difficult time.

Now more than ever, staff may require a comprehensive package of psychological and practical support.

Whilst we know you may be short of time and things are hectic at the moment, some simple strategies can be really helpful in managing your own wellbeing during this crisis.

All NHS staff across the country have access to a range of support, including:

- a free wellbeing support helpline: 0300 131 7000, available from 7.00 am – 11.00 pm seven days a week, providing confidential listening from trained professionals and specialist advice, including coaching, bereavement care, mental health and financial help.
- a 24/7 text alternative to the above helpline - simply text FRONTLINE to 85258.
- online peer to peer, team and personal resilience support including through Silver Cloud, and free mindfulness apps including Unmind ([nhs.unmind.com/signup](https://nhs.unmind.com/signup)), Headspace ([www.headspace.com/nhs](https://www.headspace.com/nhs)), Sleepio ([onboarding.sleepio.com/sleepio/nhs-staff/77](https://onboarding.sleepio.com/sleepio/nhs-staff/77)) and Daylight ([onboarding.trydaylight.com/daylight/nhs-staff/100%231/1](https://onboarding.trydaylight.com/daylight/nhs-staff/100%231/1)).

This support is in addition to the Trust's Employee Assistance Programme provided by Vita, This confidential counselling service is available via telephone and you can self-refer as below:

**Tel: 0300 131 2067**

**Or visit [www.my-eap.com](https://www.my-eap.com) use access code: **STHKWELL****

## **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is a useful technique that helps us to remain present in the moment and helps to reduce stress and anxiety.

Over the page are some useful mindfulness breathing exercises:

## MINI-RELAXATION EXERCISES

### One minute exercise:

Place your hand beneath your belly button so you can feel the rise and fall of your stomach.

Breathe in

Pause for a count of 3

Breathe out

Pause for a count of 3

OR

Say.... **"I am"** as you breathe in

**"At peace"** as your breathe out

### Two minute exercise:

Count down slowly from 10 to 0.

With each number, take one complete breath, inhaling and exhaling.

For example, breathe in deeply, saying "10" to yourself, then breathe out slowly.

On your next breath in say "nine", and so on.

### Three minute exercise:

Relax your facial muscles and allow your jaw to open slightly.

Let your shoulders drop.

Let your arms fall to your sides.

Allow your hands to loosen so there are spaces between your fingers.

Uncross your legs or ankles.

Feel your thighs sink into your chair, letting your legs fall comfortably apart.

Feel your shins and calves become heavier and your feet grow roots into the floor.

Now breathe in slowly and breathe out slowly.

Counselling and Psychological support is available for all staff and can be accessed via self-referral to Health, Work & Wellbeing Service.

**Telephone number: 0151 430 1985**

**email: [well.being@sthk.nhs.uk](mailto:well.being@sthk.nhs.uk)**

Counselling appointments can be arranged by a member of the Health, Work and Wellbeing Team or through the Employee Assistance Programme (mentioned earlier).

Appointments with the Clinical Psychologist requires referral by a member of the Health, Work and Wellbeing Team.

### **Mental Health First Aiders**

There are a number of Mental Health First Aiders at the Trust who can also signpost you to any assistance that you may require. All are available to be contacted via email.

## MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS

Name	Role	Area
Sophie O'Brien	S/N	Whiston
Sandra Cole	HR Advisor	Whiston
Michaela Naylor-Eason	Pharmacy	Whiston
Jenny Hardaker	Matron	St Helens
Antonia O'Brien	Absence Support	Whiston
Janice Slater	Domestic Supervisor	Whiston
Joanne Battensby	Midwife	Whiston
Gillian Eddleston	Pharmacy	Whiston
Hilary Newman	HWWB	Whiston
Bernie Smith	NPHN HWWB	Whiston
Sue Ferguson	Senior BMS	Whiston
Monica Reeves	Surgical Care Practitioner	St Helens
Peter Jenkins	Theatres	St Helens
Cynthia Foster	Centre Manager	Whiston
Karen Short	Consultant	Whiston
Amanda Goodison	S/N	Whiston
Samantha Bennett	Advanced Physiotherapist	St Helens
Jill Cunliffe	Practice Ed Facilitator	Whiston
Laura Scregg	Absence Support	Whiston
Ste Riley	Ward Manager	Whiston
Eileen Noon	Outpatients Manager	St Helens
Amy Griffiths	S/N	St Helens
Anna Lovell	Clinical Performance	Alex park
Karen Atwood	Stroke Prevention	Whiston
Jackie Woodacre	S/N	Newton
Bernie Fenney	HWWB Coordinator	Whiston HWWB
Helen Thompson	Specialist OH Nurse HWWB	Whiston HWWB
Rebecca Oldfield	Admin Supervisor HWWB	Whiston HWWB
Janet Gregory	Technician	St Helens



## Others sources of support are:

- See the **NHS** advice page for Dealing with a mental health crisis or emergency ([www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/dealing-with-a-mental-health-crisis-or-emergency/](http://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/dealing-with-a-mental-health-crisis-or-emergency/)).
- **Samaritans** has a free to call service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, if you want to talk to someone in confidence. Call them on 116 123. [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org).
- **Mind** supports anyone who is suffering mental distress or experiencing a mental health problem. Phone 0300 123 3393. [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk).
- **Rethink** supports those who are suffering from mental illness as well as the people who support them, such as family members and carers. They offer a wide range of services, including support groups and telephone support. Phone 0300 5000 937 Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm. [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org).
- **CALM** – Campaign Against Living Miserably is a charity that confidentially supports men of any age, who are down, in crisis, depressed or considering suicide. Freephone 0800 585 858, 5pm to midnight, every day.

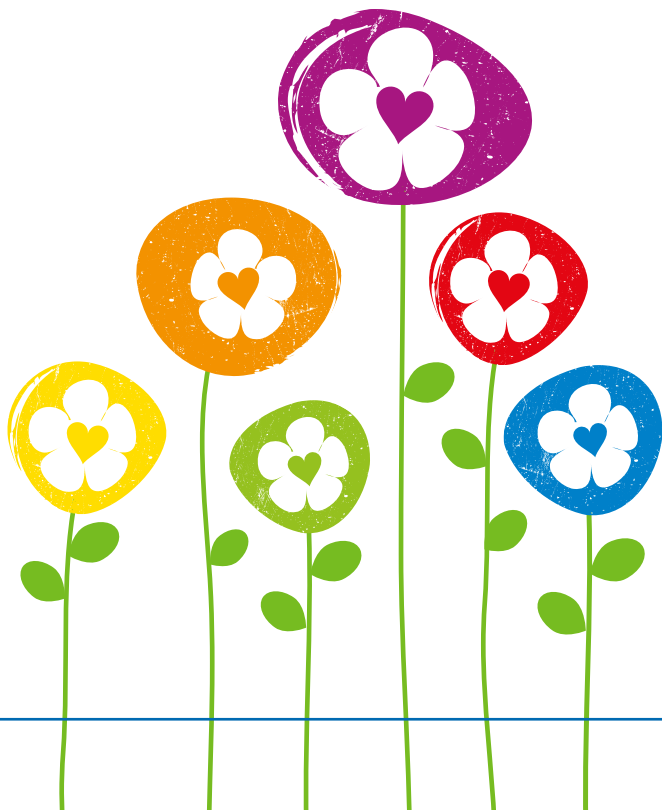
## **'FACE COVID'**

How to respond effectively to the Corona crisis by Dr Russ Harris, author of The Happiness Trap:

'FACE COVID' is a set of practical steps for responding effectively to the Corona crisis, using the principles of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). Here's a quick summary of the key steps:

- F** = Focus on what's in your control
- A** = Acknowledge your thoughts & feelings
- C** = Come back into your body
- E** = Engage in what you're doing
  
- C** = Committed action
- O** = Opening up
- V** = Values
- I** = Identify resources
- D** = Disinfect & distance.

For more information see the Trust's Covid website.



# TEAM STHK

## 1. YOU ARE NOT ALONE

We are in this together

## 2. KINDNESS WILL GET US THROUGH

A smile makes a huge difference

## 3. EMBRACE THE CHALLENGE

We are all learning new things

## 4. LOOK AFTER EACH OTHER

... and look after yourselves

## 5. YOU ARE STRONGER THAN YOU THINK

We can TOTALLY do this!

[www.sthk.nhs.uk](http://www.sthk.nhs.uk)

Version 2 – updated January 2022