

FURTHER SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY: STAYING SAFE AND SANE IN THE SHUTDOWN

We are now a month into the lockdown and we wanted give you a few more ideas which we hope will be useful to Survivors in particular at this tough and isolating period. Some are serious, others not so much but we hope these will feel helpful and supportive at this challenging time.

Be Boundaried!!

At this time of extreme restriction - often physical restriction it is important for us to retain good boundaries. This can be very difficult if we are in a small space with a lot of people but it is not impossible. However this is not the only boundary we need to look out for. Some people are making connection with old friends ,partners and family during this crisis. This can be positive but we also need to be wise. Not everyone changes just because of a health emergency. If we are being contacted by people who are unhealthy and have not treated us well in the past we may need to keep very firm boundaries around ourselves for our own protection and mental and emotional health. This could involve putting the phone or tablet down and blocking the number. Also, pick up the phone of a loved one when they do contact you – we can be apart that doesn't mean we need to be alone.

In Domestic Danger?

If you are in danger where you are living you CAN leave your home. You can call 999 and then press 55 to contact the police. Women can call The Freephone National Domestic Abuse Helpline, run by Refuge on 0808 2000 247 for free at any time, day or night. The staff will offer confidential, non-judgemental information and support. Men can call Men's Life Advice on 0808 8010 327 (Monday and Wednesday, 9am to 8pm, and Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 9am to 5pm) for non-judgemental information and support. You may need to keep these numbers at hand hidden under a safe code.

Flashback Fear:

This is a time when many people are experiencing huge amounts of stress, anxiety and feeling out of control. For Survivors of past sexual abuse this out of control feeling may bring back unwanted memories and even flashbacks from our past when we were too trapped in a different way and may not have any choices about how we can live our lives or even expression of feelings around the abuse. These feelings and thoughts remain locked inside until a 'trigger' from the present releases the past memory. The trigger at this moment could be being confined during this crisis or some other part of the shutdown which can bring back disturbing memories from the past. One of the ways out of this is by doing some “Grounding”.....here are some ideas:

Getting Grounded:

Breath Deep: Be aware of your breathing. When we are fearful we can start to breath very quickly. Take a few minutes to just breath in and out slowly – count if that helps. e.g. For example breath four counts in and six counts out. Stephen Porges Polyvagal Theory tells us that by taking longer to exhale you'll aid your body's parasympathetic response (the part of your autonomic system that encourages you to rest and relax). If breathing in feels too intense concentrate on the “out” breath.

Into Today: Use your senses to bring you into the present:

Look: Look at something on the wall or look at some calming pictures on your phone – focus on your palm if focusing feels overwhelming.

Listen: Switch on your phone or listen to the radio music or voice. Hearing a voice can change perspective.

Feel: Touch your arms, hands, furniture – reminding you of where you are now. Notice if you are hot or cold.

Taste: Suck a sweet or perhaps eat some chocolate in moderation



Smell: Try sniffing perfume or an aromatic scent – if nothing to hand try an orange or lemon or banana or coffee or candles.

Remind Yourself: This is just a memory – it is not actually happening. Focus on who you are now. If it helps talk to the frightened “child” part of you and assure him or her that you (your healthy adult self) can take care of themselves now.

Codeword Counselling:

If you are having support from a counsellor or mental health professional on line or by phone and you are sharing with others you could be worried about them walking in. One way out of this is for you and your counsellor to have a codeword that you both understand e.g. “Jennifer Aniston” so that when you say this the conversation will stop or change direction until you have some privacy.

Soothe But Don’t Solve:

We all have questions about how things are going to work out in our new world in almost every area - financially, workwise, relationships. The reality is that we may not have all the answers but we can soothe the feelings. Maybe write down some of your anxious thoughts and talk about them with a friend, or turn to some healthy ways to soothe yourself e.g. hot drink, listening to music, watching a favourite film, move your body.

Keep A Routine:

It is important to keep a healthy eating, sleeping and some kind of exercise pattern. We may be in lockdown but your day is still valuable.

Space To Dream:

During the lockdown many of us are experiencing something we are unfamiliar with and that is time. Don’t make this a pressure – but if you would like to give yourself actual time to delve into your dreams — and how you are going to get there. Give yourself permission and allow your mind to wander. Find a space where you feel safe and comfortable and indulge your inner dreamer. Ask yourself what can I do? Check out some free on line courses.

Make A Menu Of Mates:

Feeling a bit lonely? Create a list of people you can call or text and perhaps a list of their availability times - so you know that if you call at 10 am or 10 pm they won’t be wrestling in a zoom meeting with their boss or tucking into bed with a hot chocolate.

Hit Play:

Give yourself something enjoyable to look forward to either:

In the short term: For the next few weeks that could be a chat and a coffee with a friend remotely

In the long term: Plan something for when the lockdown eases. For some people it may be planning a party, for others it could be a trip to the beach, the shops - whatever makes you happy.

This Isn’t It.....

Remember we don’t know exactly when this will end but it will come to an end.

This is not your whole life. Life may be on pause right now but it is not cancelled.

Henry Cloud: “Your life is a bigger and longer story than this moment”

Source: Henry Cloud: Light Workers Coping With COVID 19 Crisis You Tube

If you are feeling desperate and need to talk then please do contact the Samaritans - they are there for 24 hours a day and their number is 116 123 or e-mail them at jo@samaritans.org.

Into The Light provide counselling, support and resources for Survivors of sexual abuse and those that support them. For more information about our services: see www.intothelight.org.uk

