

A series of reflections on how to cope with anxiety and loneliness in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, including simple Christian meditation techniques and five tips, are published today by the Church of England.

A number of actions that could help people feeling isolated or worried, as well as those who grieve, are put forward in a new guide ***Supporting Good Mental Health*** and written by Durham University academic Revd Professor Chris Cook with Ruth Rice Director of the Christian mental health charity Renew Wellbeing.

DAY THIRTEEN

Love

He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."

MATTHEW 22:37-39

What does love look like? Some people find it hard to say "I love you" but it can also be too easy to say the words without really knowing what they mean. Perhaps they just mean a nice warm feeling inside? Real love - for God or others - is visible in what we do and how we live. How is your love visible to others?

Faith is good for mental health. It brings lots of things that research has shown to be important - relationships,

social networks, and lifestyle amongst others - but faith is not primarily about what I can get out of it. The really important reasons for believing are summed up by Jesus in just two commandments - loving God, and loving those around us. These are not so much commandments (things we must do, because we are told to) as principles for getting to the heart of what really matters most. They are the basis of human flourishing - in body, mind and spirit. Love is good for mental wellbeing. God is love.

A "Have a Go" habit: Learning and giving

- The [5 steps to mental wellbeing](#) have a lot to do with love: Connect, Be Active, Keep learning, Give to others, Be mindful. Which of these do you need to take a look at?
- Take some time today to learn more about someone you love: whether it is God or a neighbour, or perhaps the work of a charity expressing love in practical ways.
- [Psalm 107:8](#) "thank the Lord for his steadfast love". Can you give thanks today for God's love and then pass it on in giving to others? Love looks like something... maybe like giving a kind word or two, or an offering of help?"

www.churchofengland.org/faiith-action/mental-health-resources

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Written by **Prof**
by "have a go" ha

The effects of mental health problems on out of ten people with mental health problems are affected by stigma and discrimination. Times we are living in with coronavirus. This booklet were updated and new resources. They seek to provide hope, reassurance. If you want to speak to someone, please visit the Health Foundation website, which has lots of resources and contacts. Visit www.mentalhealth.org.uk

The booklet gives advice ranging from putting aside time to rest and eating and sleeping well, to using the phone and the internet to reach those who may be struggling on their own. Making a list of all the good things – and people – that you miss when you are on your own and thanking God for them, can be a way of helping cope with loneliness, the guide says.

Simple prayers can be said repeatedly as a mean of helping to deal with stress, the booklet says, and lighting a candle, where safe, can be a helpful form of prayer for some people. Quotations from the Bible can be a useful aide to meditation and calming fears, including writing down and repeating short passages, it suggests.

A phrase such as Psalm 18:1 ‘The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer’ could be chosen for each week and used as background for a mobile phone as a ‘go to’ thought when someone is anxious.

It also suggests repeating a simple phrase from the Psalms such as Psalm 4:8 ‘I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety,’ to help calm the mind before sleeping.

The Rt Rev James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle and the Church of England’s lead bishop on health and social care, said: “I welcome publication of these further resources and reflections around mental health, which build on resources already made available by the Church of England nationally.

“For some time now the issues of loneliness and isolation have been identified as major problems within our society. The coronavirus pandemic will only create further challenges in this respect. So it is vital that we do all we can as a church to protect people’s mental wellbeing.

“The reflections are beautifully presented and scripturally based, with the ‘Have A Go’ sections intentionally focussing on how people should be kind to themselves. That is so important at this time. My prayer is that as many people as possible are able to draw upon these new resources over the coming weeks and months.”

In addition, the Church has published five tips for tackling loneliness and isolation:

1. Pray. Light a candle, if safe, and pray for hope, faith and strength to keep loving and caring for each other during this time of struggle.
2. Talk about how you feel. This may be difficult if you are self-isolating, but do use the telephone, internet, and social media. If you need to contact a counsellor this can be arranged by your GP, or via local agencies, or privately. **Samaritans are there** 24 hours a day, every day, and it’s free to call them on 116 123.
3. Focus on the things that you can change, not on the things you can’t.
4. Look after yourself - physically, emotionally, spiritually. Plan in things that you enjoy at regular intervals during the day – a TV programme, a

phone call, a book, a favourite dish, a game.

5. Look after others. Even if only in small ways, but do what you can: a smile, a kind word, writing a letter or an email.

Supporting good mental health

[Read the 13 daily reflections](#)

Dealing with loneliness and isolation

[Read the five tops](#)

Notes to editors

- *Supporting Good Mental Health* is written by Professor Christopher Cook, Director for the Centre for Spirituality, Theology and Health at Durham University, and a former Professor of Psychiatry, accompanied by 'Have a Go' habits developed by Ruth Rice. More can be found out about [Renew Wellbeing on their website](#).
- If you need to speak to someone please visit [the Mental Health Foundation website](#), which has helpful resources and contacts.
- Read the [NHS mental wellbeing guidance whilst staying at home](#).

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