



Coronavirus (Covid19)



SURVIVING ISOLATION - 2

From the Metropolitan Grand Almoner's Team
and support from the members of
Florence Nightingale Lodge No 706
The Almoners Lodge

The Metropolitan Grand Almoner and his Team along with the Florence Nightingale Almoners Lodge send to all brethren their best wishes as we continue in lockdown and self-isolation. The last briefing provided advice on protecting the body and this one looks at protecting your mind as lockdown looks set to continue. However, do not forget the key advice to all remains as

**Stay at Home to protect your life,
others' lives and the NHS.**

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This briefing provides information on protecting the mind.

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We all need to keep our minds shipshape during this period, particularly those shielding due to being extremely vulnerable. Loneliness already affected many people, including some brethren, before lockdown. Enforced social isolation can only make it worse and increase the numbers feeling lonely whatever their age. That said, senior brethren over 70 are more at risk.

So what can you do if you are at home alone?

Firstly do keep in touch and ask for help if you need it.

Many lodges are running successful virtual support groups under various names and some are also able to offer direct support (but at a distance) with food and medicines. There are also many local community groups operating throughout the country aiming to help who would have already been in contact.

Why not pick up the phone whether mobile or home handset?

Texting is much used but actual calling is better. In these days of 24h e-media, do not forget the value of a good old-fashioned phone call. A regular call can make a huge difference.

The Metropolitan Grand Almoner's team and members of the Florence Nightingale Lodge (The Almoner Lodge) call each other regularly and that chat is much appreciated. I've learnt a lot about my brethren since lockdown. It keeps the freemason family going.

Why not try a new method of (virtual) social contact?

Texting is popular but can be a bit limiting so why not try talking for free to family, brethren and friends over Skype, Google Duo, Face Time, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or WhatsApp?

The technology is relatively simple and a great way to see how brethren, family, friends and grandchildren are doing. A chance to talk face to face about anything you have been doing. Guidance on set up and use can be found online but remember Face Time is limited to Apple iPhone and Mac devices and not available on android. Skype, Google Duo, Zoom, Microsoft teams and WhatsApp all works on PC, Windows 10 devices and Android devices. Download from <https://play.google.com/store/apps>. www.Zoom.us or <https://www.apple.com/ios/app-store/>. All these apps run over the internet with free calling but, to save going over your mobile data allowance, do remember to use these apps on your wifi (you should be at home anyway!).

Why not set up or join a group chat?

WhatsApp is a messaging app that allows you create shared chats with lodge brethren, family or neighbours using your mobile number. Many groups are being set around the country and you can quickly share messages on how you are getting on, how they are or ask for help. I belong to many lodges including my team and it works very well. You could ask for someone to deliver a pint of milk or some bread by your front door. It just needs someone to start it off and invite others to join. The apps needs to be downloaded from Google store, Microsoft Store and Zoom (see link above).

Are you keeping your mind active?

Everyone can use the time to keep their mind active. How, is up to you, but why not try crossword puzzles (free with other challenges in your daily paper), quizzes, Sudoku books or jigsaws? Solving puzzles gives a sense of satisfaction and achievement which refreshes our minds. Reading can take us to other places and, although libraries are closed, why not go back to some favourite books or if you have a Kindle or Pad, download some freebooks? (a large selection is free for the Lockdown period). You can also Register online with your library and download eBooks and eAudio books.

Why not start a new project?

Each day I suggest dedicating a time to a project that you have wanted to get on with for ages. Hobbies give you something to focus on other than isolation. Make a plan and start today! One of mine has been to start archiving photos of which I now realise I have thousands taken over the years and converting them to digital versions (yes I am that old that I have slides and negatives stored). The choice is up to you and it can be a large or small project, that doesn't matter but something to work on is what's important. Getting on with those DIY jobs you always meant to do is a good thing too.

Are you keeping active physically?

Self isolation can make you less active which we all need to avoid. Keeping active includes both body and mind but it needs to be realistic to suit you. Have a look at <https://weareundefeatable.co.uk/> for ideas. There are lots of activities some of which you do not have to leave the sofa for or there's marching up and down the room or stairs. Given the warmer weather the garden is a good place to "exercise" in! Exercise can boost your immune system so get some in!

Are you struggling with or stressed by the current situation?

Do not let this worry you as it's natural. Stress affects us all but can be magnified by social isolation however we are all more resilient than we think. So what can you do? Some suggestions made are:

Put it in perspective – Select one of your worries and think of it shrinking to the size of a peanut. In your mind watch that peanut roll out of the door and go away. Feel better? This can help so why not try it?

Stay calm and stay positive – Anxiety is bad news for us all and can adversely affect our immune systems, very much not wanted at this time! So, try slowing your inner thoughts by saying things in your head slowly and use breathing techniques to calm you as this can calm your body and enhance our immune system. Breathe in through your mouth for four seconds then hold for five then out for five.

Other alternatives are yoga or meditation techniques.

Get enough sleep – This is so important to maintain physical and mental health. Try calming techniques before bedtime, avoid TV or mobile phone usage and be active in the day. Having a dark bedroom can help too.

Develop healthy habits – No we're not talking about your nights on the town here brethren, but those of eating fresh fruit and vegetables which help by providing vitamins and minerals to boost your immune system. Stay well hydrated with current NHS guidance that we should drink at least six to eight glasses of fluid (1.2 litres) a day which includes water, lower-fat milks, tea and coffee and particularly so if you have a fever. Exercise as above is good but only do it if you feel well.

Try tuning out from the "bad" news – TV coverage and e-media coverage is relentless and often sad and depressing. Whilst you need to know what to do and what's happening, when at home try turning it off or watching humour or other programmes. Your mind needs a change from all the depressing statistics and the many unknowns that are circulating.

**Please distribute this widely and look after yourself and your brethren.
Your Almoner Liaison Officer is always there to assist and advise
Best wishes and stay safe, stay well and stay at home.**

Yours s & f,
Darrel

Darrel Palmer - **Metropolitan Grand Almoner**





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