



 **ROYAL
AIR FORCE**

**These days, it's not unusual to be
suffering from internet overload.**



You, the internet and your wellbeing.



www.getsafeonline.org

These days, we're all spending considerably more time online, whether it's doing the shopping we'd normally go out for, socialising we'd normally meet up for, classwork our children would normally go to school for or remote meetings we'd normally get together for. Many of us are also whiling away many more hours on social media and other sites for our relaxation.

The internet has really come into its own during lockdown. But for many of us, there's a downside too: the potential of mental health issues resulting from – or increased by – our increased use of it.

Experiencing the following and other commonplace issues is perfectly normal, and you're certainly not alone in doing so. Remember, it's OK not to be OK.

- Comparing yourself to others on social media sites and other forums, resulting in low self-esteem if their posts are very positive ... or apprehension if they're negative.
- The need to constantly check your social media accounts, the latest COVID-19 news updates and even weather forecast apps.
- Repetitive anxiety from endless reading about and discussing emerging from lockdown and how the 'new normal' will look.
- Viewing aspirational content and photos of, for example, holiday destinations (including the one you'd booked), or body image (when you may have put on a few kilos during lockdown).
- Sleeping difficulties caused by late-night use of your phone and its apps, for whatever purpose.
- Increased feelings of loneliness from the reality that encounters with loved ones and friends are always only virtual, and not in person.
- Video call overload, with one meeting after another on weekdays – with accompanying frustrations over anything from poor bandwidth to how you look on screen. As if that isn't enough, you then have to deal with invitations for virtual social chats too.
- Stress resulting from supporting others online and either being affected by their problems or feeling inadequate because you can't be there for them, face-to-face.
- Getting into habits like online gambling to pass the time and attempt to 'improve' your life.
- As a parent, grandparent or guardian, stress when it's difficult or impossible for you to help with online home schooling.
- Withdrawal caused by excessive hours spent online.

Have a digital detox.

We've put together some tips to help you reduce the actual and potential mental health issues associated with being online during these difficult times. They're easy to follow and really could help you get back on top of your online life.



- Take some time to consider the online activities that cause negative thoughts, and those that make you feel good. Write down and refer back to things that trigger negative thoughts. Change your online habits accordingly.
- Set yourself realistic targets about the amount of time you spend online.
- Think about your own mental health alongside worrying about that of others. If you're ill, you won't be there to support others at all.
- Don't overpromise participation in either work or social virtual calls. Don't be afraid to say 'no'. At work, talk to your line manager if you're feeling overloaded.
- Search for online content about wellbeing and mindfulness, with the help of recommendations and positive reviews. Follow the advice. Also consider using online self-help courses, such as those offered by the NHS. Some therapists are also offering sessions online.
- Similarly, consider seeking professional help for actual or potential addictive or obsessive behaviours including gambling, excessive gaming or even overspending online.
- Remember that not everything you read online (or offline) is factual, including on social media platforms and sensational news sites. Stop using sites or apps that spread fake news, and block people and organisations that persist in misinformation, whatever their motives.
- Talk to a friend, colleague or family member about your feelings. They may have some suggestions, but even if not, it can be good to get things off your chest. Remember that you can also get help from the RAF Personal Support and Social Work Service.

Get Safe Online

Get Safe Online is the UK's leading source of information and advice on online safety and security, for the public and small businesses. It is a not-for-profit, public/private sector partnership backed by a number of government departments, law enforcement agencies and leading organisations in internet security, banking and retail.



For more information and expert, easy-to-follow, impartial advice on safeguarding yourself, your family, finances, devices and workplace, visit www.getsafeonline.org



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