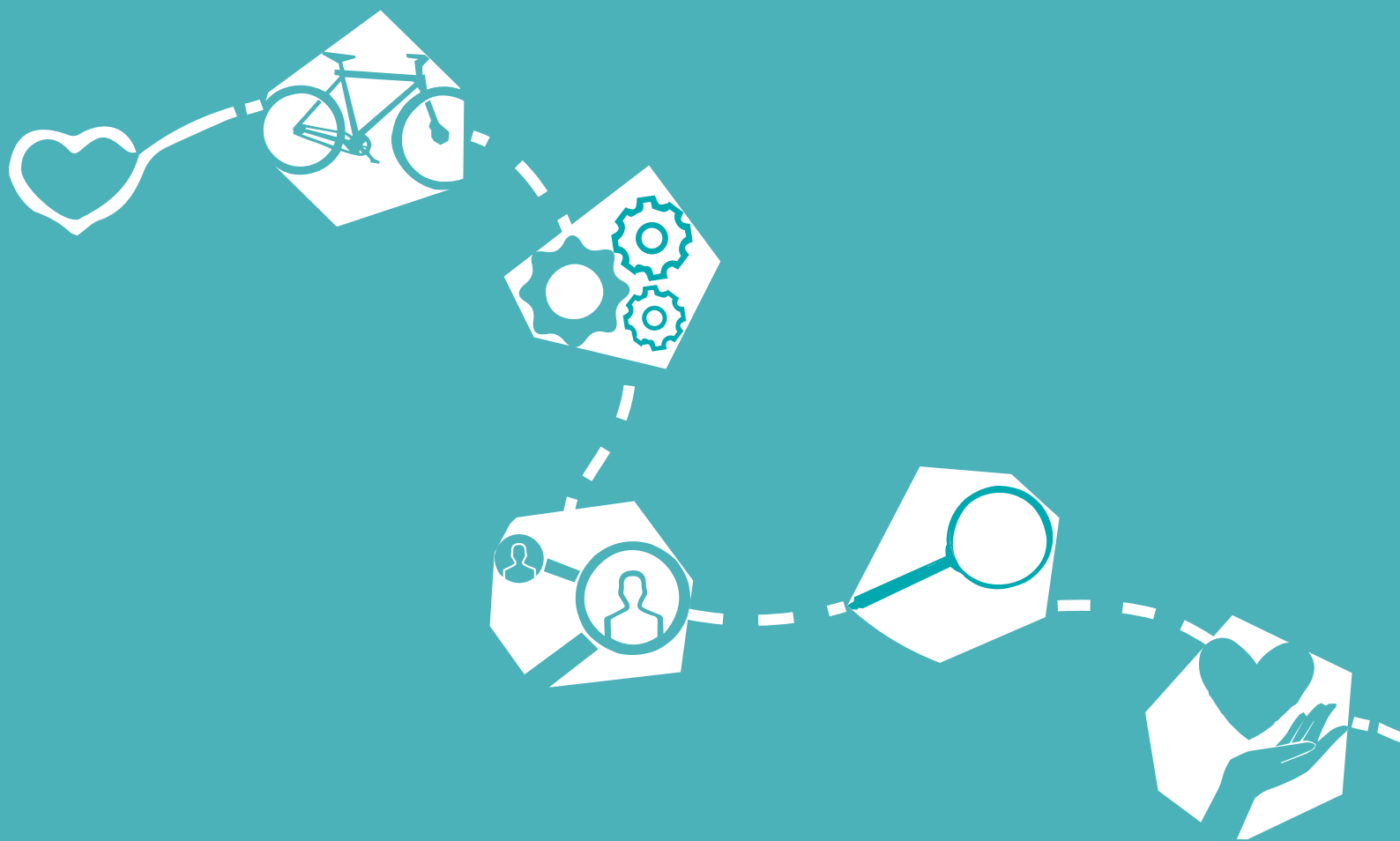


# Mental Health FAQs

in partnership with Matt Holman of  
Simpila Healthy Solutions



**BTA**

BUSINESS TRAVEL  
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## Dear Members & Partners,

In times like the ones we are living in now, it feels natural and crucial for us at the BTA, to provide you, both as individuals and as employers, with all the help and resources you need.

We will be doing our best to answer your questions and to pre-empt the ones that could arise in the days, weeks and even months to come. As such, we have curated a series of interviews with industry experts to help you with the most pressing issues and questions that you are coming to us with.

Our first set of FAQs focuses on Mental Health, and has been produced in partnership with the CEO of Simpila Healthy Solutions, Matt Holman. We know many of you are confronting completely new working environments with the additional concerns of coronavirus, caring for family and potentially providing home schooling for your children. This can of course take an adverse toll on the mental health of individuals and teams. It can also mean that physical well-being takes a back-seat. This guide gives some simple tips, links to other resources and aims to get us all talking about our mental health.

I have enjoyed talking to Matt Holman and benefitting from his expertise. He has over 25 years' experience working for global corporate businesses in a wide range of senior and executive leadership roles across the world. Matt is a qualified accountant, mental health first aid instructor, mental health trainer and

consultant, Samaritan listening volunteer, husband, father of two daughters and chief dog walker! In October 2019 Matt delivered a TedX talk on [#24HourHumans](#), which I strongly encourage you to watch as it can help all of us get a new perspective on time management at the very moment when time is at its most precious.

I would like to thank Matt, and the other experts you will hear from in the coming weeks, for taking part in this project. It is heart-warming to see how our industry can pull together in challenging times and provide the help that is needed on so many levels.

With this initiative, we are looking to lead the way in reaching out and supporting our community. It will really work if you take part as well and let us know about any initiatives we can promote on social media, or the top takeaways you are getting from these guides.

Once again, I want to reaffirm that the BTA is here to support you more than ever.

Thank you and keep an eye out for the next [#BTAFAQs](#)

Best wishes,

Digital signature

Clive Wratten  
CEO, The BTA

# Mental Health: Overview for Today

## Coronavirus and Mental Health

We are constantly told we are living in unprecedented times, we are bombarded by news of the spread of coronavirus and we have reached a point where most of us are working from home.

For many, this is the first time we have worked from home for a meaningful period of time.

This understandably is having a huge impact on the mental health of our nation, and we need to talk about it as well as develop coping strategies.

In simple terms, today, we are looking at satisfying basic human needs, those of: physiological (e.g. water, food, warmth and rest) alongside security and safety. In the short-term, it is almost impossible for many of us to think beyond that.

So, in the following pages, we will look at how to create a sense of security, routine and some satisfaction in the weeks and months ahead.

### Five Ways to Well-Being

In 2008, The Five Ways to Wellbeing framework was created by the New Economics Foundation as a set of evidence-based public mental health messages aimed at improving the mental health and wellbeing of the global population.

Underpinning the accepted thinking about mental and physical well-being, there are five key pillars that we need to work into our everyday routine. These remain the same whether we are working from home or still operating out of an office.

If you can break your daily routine down to include some time devoted to each pillar, then, stress and anxiety will become more manageable. That is not to say that they will magically disappear, but, by identifying where each of the pillars fit in your routine, you are acknowledging the elements needed to balance work, life and their competing demands.

For some, this will need to factor in a family and the same five pillars can be rolled-out across a family calendar to identify areas for growth and repair. Working together can potentially make this seem simpler and more manageable.



## The Five Ways to Well-Being

The five pillars are a useful planning tool for managers, when looking at the requirements for the week (or month) ahead.

It is easy to focus on the immediate tasks that need accomplishing, but a healthy and engaged workforce will see our industry come out of this current situation in a stronger position to help others and get back on our feet as quickly as possible.



# The Five Ways to Well-Being

## Managing these when working from home

We encourage you to consider whether your work plan allows for each of the five pillars in daily, weekly and monthly activity.

Is there more that could be done to bring your team together and keep their mental health at the forefront of planning?

### Matt's Top Tips:

**Connect:** Make the most of video calls, apart from business meetings, have weekly social calls either as a team or as a company. Create a safe space for people to hangout and chat, either by peer group or team. Reach out to those you have not spoken to for a while and have a chat.

**Be Active:** There are lots of free home exercise modules available online. Designate time for teams to exercise or encourage conversation around how to keep active, some companies are promoting fitness together routines through their conference facilities.

**Keep Learning:** If we are all looking at the bottom line, it is easy to shelve training or conversation about career development. However, it's a great time to invest in the skills that you've always wanted to take up. Managers can encourage employees to

find free online courses that can help the business in the long term. Outside of work, this is the time to make small skills upgrade. But be mindful not to set too many large goals as you will feel anxious about achieving them.

**Give:** Whether it's time to listen to your peers, give back to neighbours or help out family and friends (within Public Health England guidelines). Taking some time to do something for other people (on/offline) gives a release of serotonin that has a huge impact on our ability to stay positive in difficult times like these.

**Take Notice:** It's all too easy to get wrapped up in our immediate surroundings and forget that other people are struggling. It's important to make a conscious effort to "take notice" of the efforts of others. Whether it's thanking a loved one for completing a simple household chore that they would not normally do or praising a colleague for meeting a deadline in difficult times.

Taking notice of the accomplishments of those around you, eases the anxiety of the given day and creates a virtuous circle where people pass that praise back to your own activities. For managers, this is especially crucial in keeping teams motivated and engaged, especially taking into account different personality types and work loads.



## Mental Health for Everyone

### How is WFH different to WFO health and rhythm wise?

Working in an office creates a distinct sense of boundaries and is a socially accepted norm. Family and friends recognise that you might not respond instantly to a phone call or message and that you won't be home between certain hours.

This all changes with working from home. The normal boundaries for friends, family and inside your own head are gone. It's important to create new boundaries and to take into account those of others in your household.

Working from home allows you to create your own rhythm, acknowledge when you work best, when you need to eat and when you should focus on smaller tasks. Break down the day into units that give you a sense of progress. And above all, turn off, switch off and ensure there's work/life balance. This balance doesn't happen overnight, it will require monitoring and adaptation. It's important to listen to your mind and body to find what works for you and your household.

### What are the top tips to ensure good mental health whilst WFH?

I genuinely believe that the Five pillars outlined above help with mental health whilst working from home. But, I would also add that it is essential to keep talking.

Whether it's to family, friends or colleagues, it's important to let people know how you are feeling. If you don't feel like you can, don't worry, there are other third-party organisations that can help such as the Samaritans (see back for other resources).

It has never been more important to talk. Everyone will experience this differently, but, that means we can help each other.

On a more basic level, keeping hydrated, creating a clear gap between finishing work and going to sleep will all help with your mental health on an ongoing basis.



## Mental Health for Everyone

### **People talk about creating a clear schedule when working from home, how can you ensure you stick to it when nobody is enforcing it?**

This is where time management and clear priorities come in. You know your deadlines, what is important and where other people are relying on you to deliver. It's up to you to get there.

Regular team check-ins will help maintain accountability and add structure to daily work. Everyone has a part to play in navigating these waters, discussing its pitfalls and adapting to changing procedures till the right ones are in place. It's a time for everyone to come together and work with kindness.

### **How can you fight the anxiety of COVID-19?**

I would say, don't check social media and news websites as soon as you are up. Take some time to ease into the day, find something positive or uplifting before getting the latest headlines. Then only check sporadically, keep abreast of the news agenda but not every detail. Take time in the evenings to switch-off before sleeping to help keep anxiety out of your nightly routine. Additionally try not to get drawn into open debate about what is

happening. Unfortunately a lot of anxiety is caused by misunderstanding and misinterpretation of information. This is then shared as a thought and can create an alternative version of the reality. If someone shares a comment or opinion ask yourself if they are qualified to make a judgement on that.

### **What is self-care?**

Self-care has become a very fashionable phrase and in some ways this is a good thing, however, it's also ambiguous in its true meaning. For me, it's about taking responsibility for looking after ourselves rather than always looking to others (personally or professionally) to make things happen or to fix things.

In popular culture, it is mostly associated with tangible acts such as a beauty routine or a physical 'treat yourself' moment. Although I enjoy that aspect of self-care as well. I think it's about finding your path and helping yourself to achieve your goals in all aspects of life.





## Mental Health for Managers

### How can companies support their employees while WFH?

Talking to lots of companies, it's clear that the ones who have transitioned to as much working from home as possible have created the following:

**Working from home guidelines** e.g. what's expected, core hours, remote platforms to use and numbers to contact if any concern. Alongside this, they have regular virtual catch-ups and a way for employees just to chat throughout the week.

**Some form of Line Management or Employee Mentoring** will help give everyone a person in whom they can confide and discuss pressures and anxieties through this period. Managers then need to know they can talk to people more senior than them without betraying confidence or creating problems.

Managers will need to be open and giving of themselves to enable their team to come to them in times of difficulty. Above all, everyone needs to remember: never assume someone is ok just because they seem to be.

People are very good at keeping up appearances to please management when they may be suffering quietly. Frequent and regular touchpoints will allow for greater communication and sharing of information.

The managers of the future will be leaders, showing the key skills of empathy and compassion. Now is the time to use these skills to support others.

### How can companies value work when teams are WFH?

A lot of employees depend on praise to know they have done well and are a valued member of a team. It can feel like this can only be done face-to-face, but, it can be an important part of the working from home culture. Whether it's setting up a quick call with someone who has done particularly well, sending around a team shout-out email or sending something through the post to say well done. Praise is a great way for boosting the team, keeping engaged and releasing serotonin.



## Mental Health for Managers

### **What can we as a manager/ employer do if we're worried about an employee's mental health while working from home?**

I think most employers/managers will come across this. It's important to ensure that employees can talk to a peer or superior without fear of it impacting their job, and that managers know when to escalate a problem both internally and to professional third-party support.

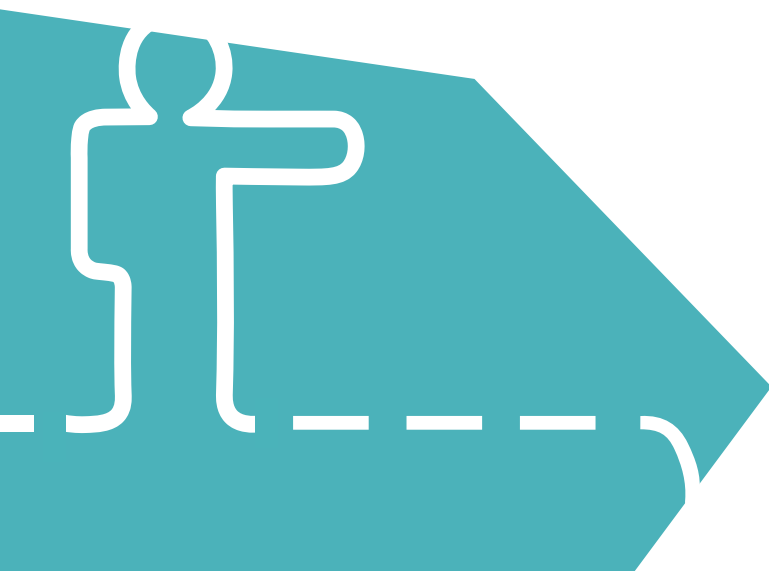
It's important to remember not to pressure people into talking unless they are feeling comfortable. Sometimes, it is enough to have offered support. Keep lines of communication open and check-in often.

Many organisations today have Mental Health First Aiders in place to support conversations around mental health. If necessary a manager should liaise with these individuals to seek support and guidance for appropriate conversations.

### **How can companies maintain/ create a corporate/company's culture when their whole team is WFH?**

Creating time for people to talk about things other than work will be essential for the well-being of your workforce. Whether it's a Virtual Lunch or an after-work activity that people can join if they want or carrying-on office traditions in a virtual manner, these go a long way in maintaining morale and equilibrium.

Some companies, are taking this further and blending the online and the offline by sending items through the post to teams as a treat. We need to replicate the community feel of a physical workplace in the virtual/ remote environment.



## Mental Health for Employees

### How can people find their role/ place in a team when working from home?

It's important that once you are set-up from home, you consider your needs outside of just the technology and meeting deadlines. Particularly, how do you want to communicate with your colleagues? This will be different for everyone, but a clear and concise discussion early on will pay dividends.

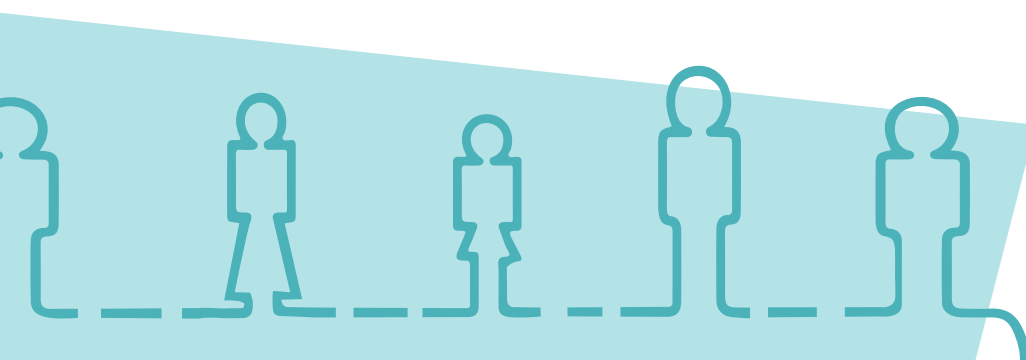
Some ideas I've seen work are: a round-up email at the end of the day, alternative morning catch-ups with teams, social chats with peers and weekly check-ins with managers. That's not to say that these are the only touch points. Pick up the phone or schedule a chat if you are feeling uncertain or anxious.

### How do you deal with stress when working from home?

I think that the majority of ways that people deal with stress in an office situation can still be used when working from home. Firstly, it's important to try and minimise stress. So, schedule regular breaks, keep hydrated and don't drink too much caffeine just because it's there!

If the stress is due to a deadline or your workload, talk to your managers or try to break down the task into smaller components and see if there are others who can help you.

Stress can sometimes take you by surprise. Normally I would recommend going for a walk, and this is still my recommendation, although this time, it might be into the next room, or go out to your garden (if you have one) to get some air or to your kitchen to get a fresh glass of water. Take some time to watch the world go round. Then come back to the problem at hand.



## Mental Health for Employees

### How do you separate work from life when both are in the same place at the moment?

Even in more regular times, it can be difficult to switch off at the end of the day or shift when you're working from home. It's essential that you are strict with yourself and your colleagues about when you are no longer working. This will take a lot of self-discipline especially at the moment when it is tempting to be "always-on."

Creating clear boundaries will safeguard your mental and physical wellbeing in the long run. This might be taking your daily exercise towards the end of the day. Alternatively, tune into a particular radio or television show to create a natural stop. Find what works for you and introduce this during your working week until it becomes a habit.

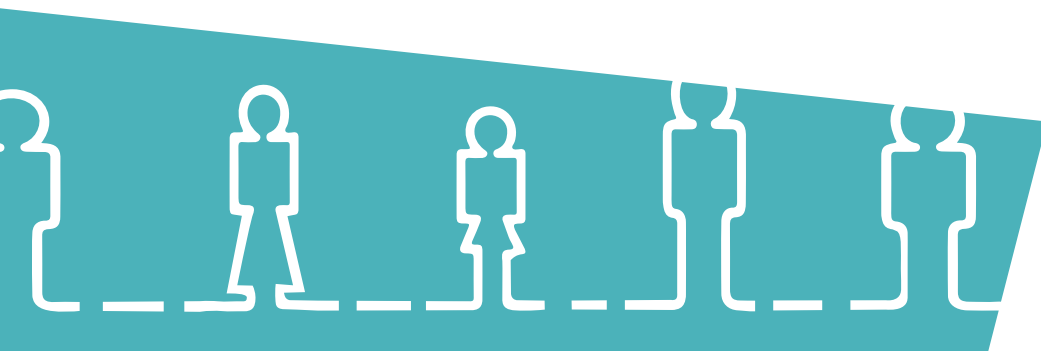
Also accept that these are not normal work conditions, and we need to allow for changes to the way that we all perform during these challenging times.

### How can you ensure you don't become completely isolated during the coronavirus crisis?

It's important to take advantage of the opportunities that you have to socialise or communicate with colleagues during this time. This isn't just for your career, but, also for your mental health. We all need some degree of interaction with others.

If the regular schedule isn't giving you enough, don't be afraid to suggest virtual activities or meetings that you would like to take part in. It's more than likely there are others amongst your colleagues who are also looking for diversion.

Outside of work, try and keep up with friends in as similar way as you would have done before this began. It's as important not to overload yourself with social interactions as it is to not cut yourself off from everyone entirely. Balance is crucial throughout the coronavirus lockdown, and remember, it is normal to have moments of feeling low as it is to feel happy too.



## Summary

### From Matt Holman

The business travel sector is one of the most supportive and collegiate that I have ever had the pleasure to work in.

That is crucial in the coming weeks. I have already enjoyed seeing companies come together and help each other find solutions to working problems and share suggestions for virtual social activities.

Please do reach out via the [@theBTAorg](#) social channels to let us know how you are looking after your mental health during this time. We will share the best tips and tricks with the community.

I am currently working on a series of mental health workshops that I will make available to the travel industry in the weeks ahead.

Most importantly, keep talking and supporting each other. There are external resources available should you feel that it is too much for your friends and family. You are never alone and mental health has never been more recognised than it is today.

Stay safe and well all.

Best wishes, *Matthew*

Matt Holman,  
CEO, Simpila Healthy Solutions



## External Resources

### Online exercise modules

Yoga:

Videos: Yoga with Adriene

Streamed: CorePower Yoga's Live classes – 2pm GMT and 7pm GMT,

Dance Cardio:

305 Fitness: livestreamed classes at 4pm GMT and 10pm GMT

HIIT and cardio

Barry's bootcamp: Instagram Live @barrysuk

Kids PE lessons:

Joe Wick's : The Body Coach TV

Children's yoga: Anne Monaghan ; Monday 12noon facebook live

Elderly

Move it or lose it: Support package and Facebook live

Mental health charities

Samaritans: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

Nightline: [www.nightline.ac.uk](http://www.nightline.ac.uk)

MIND: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

Mental Health Foundation UK: [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus)

### General Coronavirus links

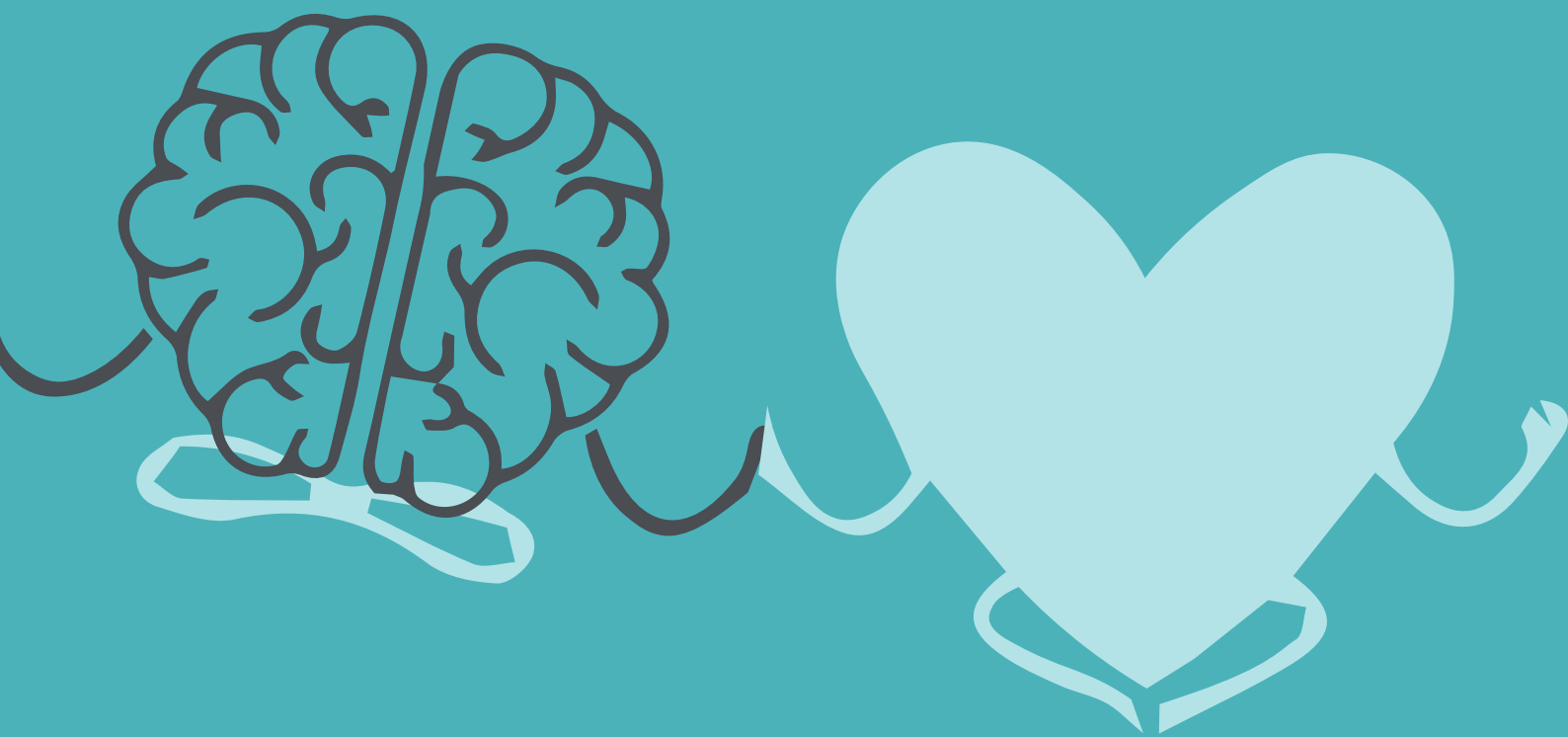
Public Health England [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england)

NHS UK: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance)

### Places that need volunteers or online help

NHS Volunteer Responder: [www.goodsamapp.org/NHS](http://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS)

Samaritans Online Chat portal: [www.samaritans.org/chatdonate/](http://www.samaritans.org/chatdonate/)



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