A microscopic view of coronavirus particles and sperm cells. The background is a light teal color. In the center, there is a large, detailed coronavirus particle with a dark core and many thin, radiating spikes. To the right, there are several sperm cells, each with a dark, oval head and a long, thin tail. Other smaller coronavirus particles and sperm cells are scattered throughout the background.

# CORONAVIRUS & EATING DISORDERS

Helping you navigate the challenge

PRODUCED IN COLLABORATION BY SEED AND WEDNESDAY'S CHILD



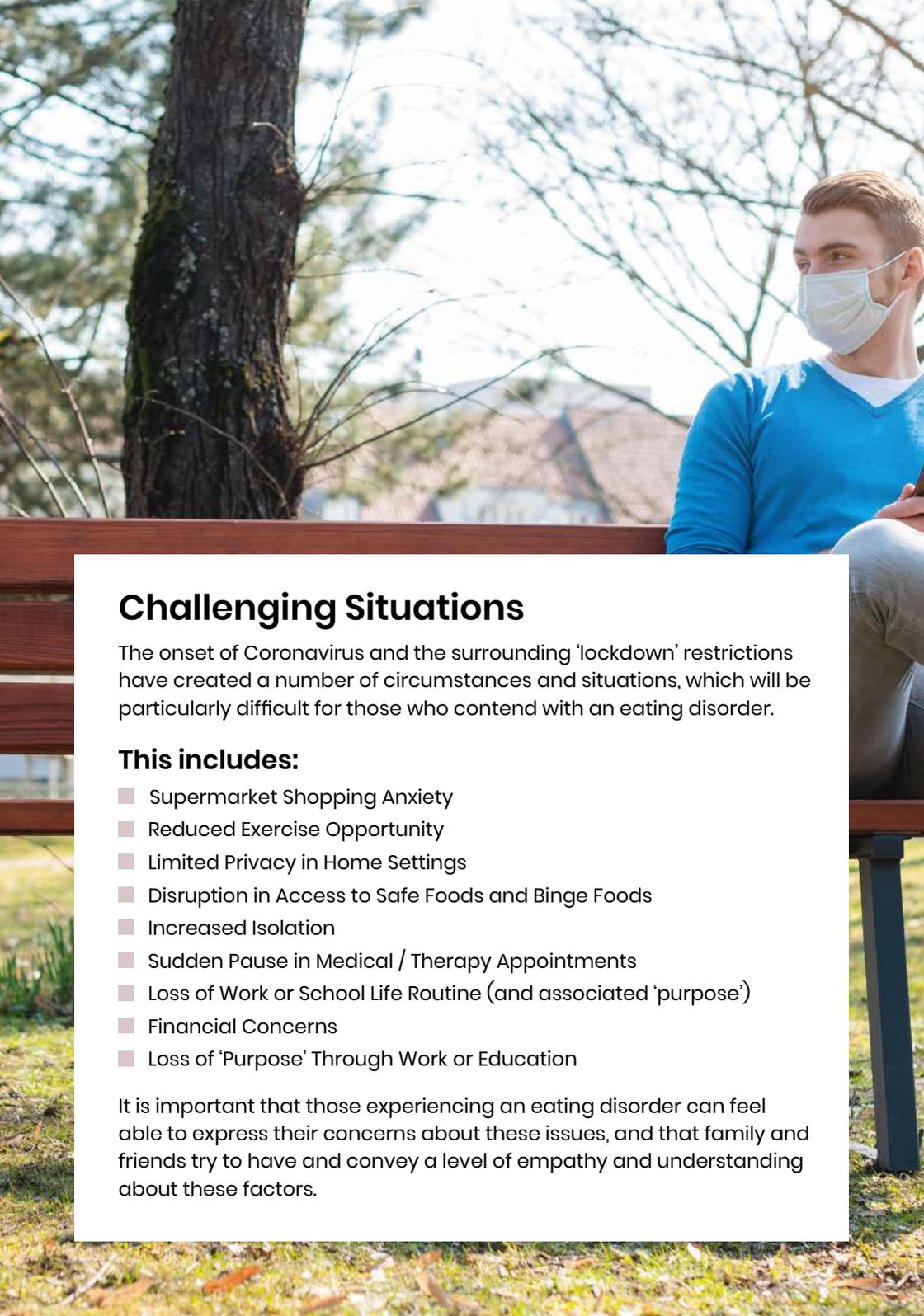
# Hello

**There's no doubting that the Coronavirus pandemic has caused all of us to experience a certain level of uncertainty and anxiety.**

It's therefore natural that anyone battling with an eating disorder, or in the midst of a recovery journey, will be finding this unprecedented period in our lives so much more challenging and unnerving.

This booklet has been devised as a collaboration between SEED Eating Disorder Support Service, and Wednesday's Child, to help sufferers and their families navigate this difficult time.





## Challenging Situations

The onset of Coronavirus and the surrounding 'lockdown' restrictions have created a number of circumstances and situations, which will be particularly difficult for those who contend with an eating disorder.

### This includes:

- Supermarket Shopping Anxiety
- Reduced Exercise Opportunity
- Limited Privacy in Home Settings
- Disruption in Access to Safe Foods and Binge Foods
- Increased Isolation
- Sudden Pause in Medical / Therapy Appointments
- Loss of Work or School Life Routine (and associated 'purpose')
- Financial Concerns
- Loss of 'Purpose' Through Work or Education

It is important that those experiencing an eating disorder can feel able to express their concerns about these issues, and that family and friends try to have and convey a level of empathy and understanding about these factors.

# Suggested Tactics and Coping Mechanisms

Planning and preparation are key to helping us all through this complex and uncertain period.

As much as possible, we should be seeking to minimise the way in which certain events and incidents cause our eating disorder thoughts to be worsened, and at the same time, to talk as honestly and openly as we can with others about our distress and concern.

## Going Shopping

- Prepare a list, but have alternatives written down too, just in case your preferred item isn't available
- Have a friend or family member available for you to call if you begin to feel anxious while shopping
- If you feel you simply cannot face the shopping in person, consider online supermarket options, delivery services from smaller suppliers in your local area, or ask someone close to kindly deliver items to your door



## Exercise

- Remember the government has imposed the restriction for a reason and it is helping us all to be safe and well
- Remember the restrictions are only temporary
- Consider how you can swap your previous exercise rituals for more 'kind' and 'gentle' movement in your home. Find a meditation or yoga video online which you could attempt instead

## Home Life and Time With Family

- Be as honest as you can with family or flatmates and partners about how fearful you are about the change in circumstances
- Plan meals together in advance
- See this as an opportunity to really embrace recovery-focused changes in behaviours
- Explore new distraction techniques which can be used at or after mealtimes (like crafts or games)
- Try hard not to isolate yourself from others, and to use this time to stay connected, even if it's via technology if you're not living with someone
- Maintain good routines around sleep and meals. Stick as close as you can to this structure
- Introduce an element of self-care practice into each day – from meditation, a relaxing bath, or time listening to music you enjoy

## Mental, Physical and Spiritual Health

- Remember that any health concerns you have are genuinely valid and will still be a priority for healthcare professionals
- Take advantage of your new daily schedule to build in mindfulness and to encourage a state of calm
- Stay conscious of your unhelpful behaviours around excess exercise or other binge and purge activities, and instead, build in distractions to prevent these escalating
- Keep in touch with, or engage with, therapists or befrienders who you feel will help your journey, by utilising online technologies or the phone
- Limit use of social media, and whenever you engage, ensure you are only consuming material which is positive and helpful to your recovery mission
- Embrace new hobbies or projects to keep you feeling productive and focused. This could be learning to sew, creating a moodboard, or finally filling a photo album with all your favourite pictures from your childhood.



## **Special Guidance for Parents/ Loved Ones**

As a carer to someone with an eating disorder, you're no doubt used to life sometimes feeling challenging and unpredictable.

With the pandemic now being felt across the country, it's natural your worries for your child might also increase, as you worry about their health and vulnerability.

Do remember that it's vital you maintain your own physical and mental health as best you can, in order that you can be supportive to your son or daughter.

While it is true that many services might be operating in a limited capacity, do not hesitate to reach out for the support you need, or to gain comfort and reassurance from friends or family via online or telephone conversations.

Patience and persistence will be key at this time, but we very much hope this period could also enable you and your family to see some subtle but significant changes in entrenched behaviours and routines.

# Preventing and Responding to Coronavirus Diagnosis

This advice is intended to aid your approach if you should be unfortunate enough to succumb to symptoms you suspect to be that of Coronavirus.

**It does NOT however, replace full and appropriate healthcare advice:**

- Wash your hands regularly with hot soapy water for at least 20 seconds
- Limit time away from the home to only journeys required for urgent shopping, daily exercise, and medical supplies or appointments
- Maintain social distancing of 2metres at all times
- Prepare as if you knew you were due to get something like a heavy flu: Consider a supply of tissues, paracetamol, honey and lemon, and Vicks Vaporub or similar decongestant.
- You should not need to go to hospital unless you are having trouble breathing or your fever is very high (over 39°C) and unmanaged with the likes of paracetamol. Instead, rest and stay hydrated.
- If you are worried or feel your symptoms are getting worse, ring 111 and they will advise if you need to go to hospital.
- If you have a pre-existing lung condition (COPD, emphysema, lung cancer) or are on immunosuppressants, you are on the most vulnerable list and should be remaining at home at all times.
- Stay calm as far as you can, and be sure to gain further support or advice should you need to. Remember to tell any medic about your eating disorder and any additional medicines you are currently taking.



**“Your wellbeing and mental health is so very important right now. We all have to remember the importance of looking after our minds. It is vital we do. Remember kindness, compassion and empathy. And more than ever, remember laughter.”**

**Gemma Oaten, Seed Eating Disorder Support Service**

## **Want someone to talk to? Keen to join an online group?**

**Wednesday's Child and SEED Eating Disorder Service are both keen to help you throughout this unprecedented time.**



EATING DISORDER SUPPORT SERVICE

**Advice line: 01482 718130**

**Email: [hello@seedeatingdisorders.co.uk](mailto:hello@seedeatingdisorders.co.uk)**

**[www.seedeatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.seedeatingdisorders.org.uk)**



*Wednesday's Child*

**Call: 07974 359001 or 0800 844 5211**

**Email: [hello@wednesdayschild.co.uk](mailto:hello@wednesdayschild.co.uk)**

**[www.wednesdayschild.co.uk](http://www.wednesdayschild.co.uk)**