



# Lifeline

Hello again,

How are you? Like all of us, probably a bit like Tower Bridge - up and down with some panicky bits in between. As we face another 3 weeks of living in isolation there is no question that we can all have moments of feeling really low and fearful - if you are living on your own or have family far away or a parent in a Care Home, it is really really hard. Even harder if you have been coping with anxiety and depression long before we heard about Coronavirus.

With this very much in mind we hope our 2nd Newsletter will provide you with different ways to lift your spirits.

If you have ever watched Monty Don on Gardeners World you will know that he has battled with anxiety and depression for most of his life. He says there's something about getting connected to nature that instantly can lift your spirits and helps you forget the pain in both body and mind. And boy, could we do with that right now - so come and join us in the garden with our new project Plant-along!

## *PLANT-A-LONG*



Plant-a-long with us and then pass along any surplus you have to other members of our Reach Out and Help Gardening Club – even if it's just a window sill inside or a

window box outside, we'd love you to get involved!

To get you started, we will send you packets of seeds that you can plant right now in supermarket containers, egg boxes or cake tins. If you need seed compost, we can get that to you too. A good idea is to find a little patch of earth in your garden and dig until it is as smooth as custard (a kitchen sieve gets rid of the bumps), as then you can start sowing flower seeds there for the summer. Then, if you have too many plants right now (such as courgette, bean or tomato plants), let us know and we will pass them along.

We can provide you with a simple, easy to follow Guide to Planting if you need it; and in a few weeks we will have a Virtual Flower and Vegetable Show so start now! Get friends with a camera on their phone to record your triumphs and disasters and perhaps put together a Planting Diary to show us - we want to see them all!

Ring us on 01789 200131, leaving your name and number or send us an email and just let us know if you want to join Plant-a-long and leave the rest to us!

## STAYING HAPPY AND HEALTHY

A really good source of mental health online advice can be found on the NHS website:



<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/your-mind-plan-quiz/>

On this website, you answer a few questions and it comes up with a 6-step plan tailored specifically to meet your needs based on your answers. This individual support plan gives useful advice, from gentle relaxation exercises to pointing you towards the NHS website and other help sites to help you look at and manage whatever your issues, whether it be stress, anxiety, depression, loss, bereavement, financial concerns or anything else.

And

- Never forget when things get a bit much, you will always get a warm welcome and a Listening Ear on the **Samaritans Freephone number 116 123** from any phone or if you prefer
- **email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)**. They will try to reply to your email within 2 to 3 hours.

**Another source of support in these anxious times** is provided by

**The Recovery & Wellbeing Academy** who have provided a video specifically designed to give you some hints and tips to support you and your anxiety during Covid-19, in a calm and soothing way. So they suggest you find a quiet space, sit back with a nice drink, a pad of paper and pen at the ready to jot down ideas, and take this 12 minutes to immerse yourself, slow down and find some calm.

There are also some other useful 'Online workshops' available on the Recovery & Wellbeing website

You can also phone in on **0300 303 2626** or email **Recovery.Academy@covwarkpt.nhs.uk**

**Escape Arts** are also delighted to be running a weekly online chat group offering support and friendship during this difficult time. They say just 'Grab a cuppa and join our lovely Abbie MacFarlane every Monday morning at 11am, share how you are keeping during the Coronavirus shutdown in a relaxed, open and supportive environment. To sign up please email us at **info@escapearts.org.uk**

## **GETTING TO KNOW US**

We thought you might like to find out more about the great people who you can get in touch with if you need any help or advice: So to start us off here is our very own

### **Spencer Colquitt - Reach Out to Older People Adviser**

**Are you over 65? Do you live in Stratford District? If so then I'm here to try and help you with any issues you might have.**

My name is Spencer and I've been working as an outreach worker for Citizens Advice in Stratford for 10 years and I'm currently working on our Reach Out to Older People project. I normally do home visits, but what with one thing and another, I'm not able to get out to see people at the moment. However, that doesn't mean I'm not able to help you.

I can still help with all sorts of things, like checking you are getting the right benefits, helping you to complete forms, dealing with debts, making sure you are paying as little as possible for gas and electricity, as well as dealing with more urgent crises, such as urgent foodbank supply or similar.

When I'm not forced to self-isolate with my hyperactive children, I enjoy live music and motorsport (not usually at the same time!). When we are allowed out to play again, I am looking forward to getting back to Prescott Hillclimb where I am a startline marshal. This involves lining up all the fast cars before they start, and wearing bright orange overalls.

If you need any help please get in touch and I'll do my best to help.

Finally, just a Reminder if you are struggling with applying for **Universal Credit** you need to know about our **Help to Claim service** (claiming Universal Credit):

- Help to Claim phone line Monday to Friday 09:00 – 17:00 on 0800 144 8 444
- Help to Claim chat online

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/help-to-claim](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/help-to-claim)

If you want advice on anything else - Benefits, paying your bills, debt, employment or Tax Credit changes you can get **Instant Self-Help** by going online to our national website

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

OR

If you would prefer to speak to one of our advisers, you can reach us by **phone** between 10:00 – 15:00 Monday to Friday on **0300 330 1183**

**Email:** Our email form can be found here  
[www.casouthwarwickshire.org.uk/contact/email-us](http://www.casouthwarwickshire.org.uk/contact/email-us)

**Webchat:** [www.casouthwarwickshire.org.uk/contact/chat-with-us](http://www.casouthwarwickshire.org.uk/contact/chat-with-us)

When lines are busy, we still have an answerphone facility. Return calls might be made outside normal hours and from a withheld number.

Just remember -

**Whatever your problem, whoever you are, we are here to help you.**

Take care of yourselves