

It's OK ... NOT TO BE OKAY ... Let's Talk COVID-19



On Wednesday 11 March, WHO (World Health Organisation) declared Covid-19 had become a pandemic and recent government advice has led to a huge impact on businesses and personal lives.

Businesses are now operating their continuity plans and employees are being told to work from home where possible.

For Animal Technologists this is not an option.

As Animal Technologists, our main aim is the health and welfare of animals, priding ourselves on providing the highest possible standards. Tirelessly, we work 365 days a year including some very long shifts.

Schedule 1 euthanasia of animals, is the least favourite part of the role of an Animal Tech. This is a necessity that we conduct but it can have a detrimental impact on our own health and wellbeing. Animal Techs offset this by having an understanding of the human and veterinary health benefits of using animals for research, which can sometimes relieve this slightly.

The one thing that is crucial to remember during these difficult times is, we believe in the necessity of research, specifically animal research, for the benefit of human society, that is why we are Animal Techs and importantly at times like this, we rely on animals the most!

At present, animals are playing a vital role in developing a vaccine against this horrible virus. YOUR input to achieve this is invaluable, and the IAT is here to support you!

As a professional body, the IAT is looking at ways to develop and support the Mental Health of Animal Technologists and this is one of the times that this support is absolutely essential! We need your input to ensure we have the right support networks and processes in place.

We intend to circulate a survey shortly concerning Mental Health whilst carrying out your role and the pressures you are experiencing.

We will then develop a strategy based on responses. We need to ensure that the correct support is in place as an industry.

In the meanwhile, during this unprecedented and uncertain time, please be aware that **you are not alone in what you are experiencing**. Our industry is large and there will be other people experiencing the same feelings of frustration, anxiety and personal isolation you may currently be feeling.

It is important to stay connected and positive during this period.

Here are a few suggestions to manage this time:

- stay connected (social media, skype, calls, etc)
- manage how you follow and monitor the outbreak via the media (i.e. take a health balance)
- during staff communal times communicate with colleagues
- volunteer, the benefits of helping others are full of wellbeing feelings
- join 'Isolation' app groups
- inside – get those household chores done (that have been stacking up) – but not all in one day! (i.e. clean out your wardrobe, decorate a room, wash the windows ...)
- outside – tidy the garden, take plenty of exercise (much longer walks with your dog)
- pamper yourself (indulge a little)
- play games
- call friends
- cook more from scratch, learn to bake, bake more, lots of cakes!

Basically give your mind a 'rest' from the stresses and concentrate on something else.

Remember you are not alone and in this extraordinary time it is quite common to have feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. If you need further support, there are lots of systems in place to help you. You can talk to your line manager, colleagues, mental health first aiders in your establishment, Occupational Health, and friends and family.

There are organisations with online access set up to support Mental Health:

Mind.org.uk, nhs/mental health advice among other charities and counselling services, so please do not feel alone during this time of uncertainty and unpredictability.

