

BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOUR... ...ON THE PHONE

The current coronavirus crisis is an anxious and worrying time for all of us. But for those on their own, possibly self-isolating, the anxiety can become all consuming.

That's where a friendly chat on the phone can be such a tonic. A good neighbour is there to offer a listening ear, providing support and encouragement when needed.

And you don't need any special qualifications to be a good neighbour on the phone.

So let's get started...watch this short [video](#) – it's only two minutes' long – and then follow our four top tips for good connections:

1 Take your time

Make sure you're prepared and have time to make the call. Trying to squeeze it in between other commitments isn't fair on you or the person you're calling. Think about how much time you have and stick to it. Remove distractions so you can focus and try to ensure that you are not interrupted.

2 Actively listen

There are three types of listening. Marginal listening happens when you're preoccupied with your own thoughts, and not really listening to what the other person is saying. Evaluative listening is when you're concentrating on your response – a bit like a GP trying to work out a diagnosis from what's being said to them. Active listening is when you concentrate on what the person is saying and responding to their perspective. In our busy lives, we've neglected the art of active listening but it's worth rediscovering!

3 Go with the flow

Think about some questions in advance to help the conversation along but essentially let the person you're calling talk about their interests, thoughts and feelings. Use 'open' questions which get people talking: "Tell me about..." or "How is everything going?". And don't worry about silences – they are ok, don't feel as though you have to fill all the silent 'spaces'.

4 Know your limits

There should be absolutely no issues with any calls that you make, and you'll develop long lasting connections. But there may be an odd call where you get a gut feeling that something may not be quite right. It could be that the person's mental health is clearly more severe than 'usual' anxiety; or they hint at the possibility of a family member stealing their money. Whilst it's great that they feel able to tell you, this is the time when you should seek expert advice and over the page, you'll find some key contacts.

Above all, enjoy your new connections and be a good neighbour!

Key contacts for expert advice/reference:

	call this number or give your neighbour the number:
Concerned about the safety of a child	01628 683100 (out of hours 01344 786543)
Concerned about the safety of an adult	01628 683744 (out of hours 01344 786543)
Looking for general advice	03444 111 444 – Citizens Advice Bureau
Concerned about possible domestic abuse	0808 2000 247 – national helpline
Mental health issues	116 123 – Samaritans helpline
Non-emergency police matter	101
Non-urgent health advice	NHS 111

If it is a real emergency, call 999

Quick tips

Treat other people's information the same way as you would want yours treated. Keep data secure. Don't leave any personal information on answer machine or share information with anyone who doesn't need to know it.

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Make sure the call time is appropriate, ask are they okay to talk now or would they like a call back and agree a time for this.

Interrupt but give them clarification that you are listening.

With-holding your phone number. To withhold your number on individual calls just dial 141 before the telephone number you want to call.

Equality is key. Respect, appreciation and acceptance. Your relationship can focus on the "being there for" and not "doing for".