

## Support during Covid-19

### How can I cope with my anxiety during this time?

It is completely normal to be feeling anxious or on edge particularly when we are hearing everything that is going on in the media.

Our brain is always assessing our environment for our safety and/or danger. We have a part of our brain called the amygdala and this it is like an alarm in your brain, it is always checking to see if you are safe. If you get worried, stressed or scared then it turns on the alarm and it gets hard to think clearly. If we believe we are in danger we will focus on the danger and our body will prepare to take action. This is our fight, flight, freeze response.

Given the uncertainty at this time we are unable to use our fight, flight freeze in an effective way. This is because the danger never seems to pass and we are experiencing constant levels of heightened anxiety, which means we are frequently getting ready to take action but have no way of dealing with the additional energy. This can mean we could feel more anxious, agitated and frustrated.

This leads to a panic response from people of all different ages. This can cause people to isolate further, start fights and disagreements and make bad decisions, these things can end up causing further anxiety.

### What can anxiety look like?

New and unfamiliar situations and challenging times can lead to us all experiencing an element of anxiety. Here are some things you may notice happening at this time when we can feel a bit anxious:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Restlessness</li> <li>▪ Tiredness/ Fatigue</li> <li>▪ Defiance</li> <li>▪ Reassurance seeking</li> <li>▪ Trouble concentrating</li> <li>▪ Irritability</li> <li>▪ Refusal to be without a parent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Muscle tension</li> <li>▪ Trouble sleeping</li> <li>▪ Avoidance of completing tasks</li> <li>▪ Visible distress</li> <li>▪ Headaches</li> <li>▪ Feeling sick</li> <li>▪ Needing to go to the toilet more often</li> </ul>
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Intense anxiety can cause physical symptoms in people of all ages; like a racing heart, sweating, shaking, shortness of breath, feeling choked, chest pain, nausea, dizziness, numbness or tingling, feeling detached (depersonalisation or derealisation). **They are all normal so don't panic!**

We can get through these unpleasant feelings and return to feeling calm by different breathing techniques like Balloon Breathing and Box Breathing (please see next page).

The goal of breathing exercises is to get yourself from “flight, fight or freeze” mode back to your typical rest mode. Deep breathing helps get more oxygen into your bloodstream which has a physical effect on your body to help you calm down and lower stress.

### What breathing exercises will help ease the physical reactions to anxiety?

For all of these breathing exercises, find a space Sit comfortably in a chair or maybe on the end of your bed, with your feet on the floor and hands in your lap. Do this at a time when you will have no distractions and little noise. Give yourself the time to really focus on breathing to feel calmer.

1. **Balloon Breathing:** Picture a balloon in your stomach when inhaling and push your stomach out. By doing this the breathing system is able to cope better with anxiety. When we are anxious, we breathe from the chest which creates more shallow and rapid causing hyperventilation, a faint feeling and sometimes holding the breath.
2. **Colour Breathing:** Pick a colour that represents calm, happiness or joy. Breathe in and imagine this calm, happy, positive colour. When you breathe out, imagine a colour that represents stress or anxiety and imagine this leaving your body. You can close your eyes for this exercise, focus on filling your body with the calming colour through your breath.
3. **Calm Breathing:** take a long, slow breath in through your nose, filling your lungs. Hold your breath to the count of "three." Exhale slowly, through your nose with your lips remaining together. This is thought to be the most calming way to calm the body, you can close your eyes if you feel comfortable
4. **Box Breathing:** this involves exhaling to a count of four, holding your lungs empty for a four-count, inhaling at the same pace, and holding air in your lungs for a count of four before exhaling. Repeat this sequence for 4 minutes.



*If you find it difficult to do these breathing exercises alone, there are videos that will guide you through them on YouTube.*

## What else can I do?

**Engage with people** we care about in a **safe way** (it help to calm the stress) e.g. on the phone, Facebook video chat or FaceTime. You can set up group calls and stay in contact with people who can support you. Isolation does not mean being alone, it just means for now we need to find different ways to communicate.

**Limit the time watching or reading about the media** as there is a lot of false information going around at the moment. Still **stay informed** but during a particular time so we are able to calm down and relax afterwards. The most useful thing to pay attention to is the daily press conference, this is based on our governments decisions and how we move forward and will give the most clarity at an uncertain time.

**Use social media positively.** There are several musicians playing live Instagram gigs for you to watch and stories of kindness in this uncertain time that can help boost optimism and hope.

**Build a new routine.** We are all used to routine and this helps to keep us mentally well. If you are now working from home, in self-isolation or home-schooling, try and create a routine or plan each day as it comes. Allow yourself rest breaks, keep a lunch break, and be more flexible in putting in activities like watching the tv and doing household activities.

**Keep active!** Avoid sitting down for long periods of time any form of physical movement will help. Simple actions like walking around the house or garden will help use some energy and prevent feelings of restlessness. Fresh air and natural light is a great way to boost mood. **Joe Wick's is holding live P.E classes Monday-Friday at 9am on his YouTube channel.** There are also lots of videos on YouTube for Yoga.

Try **grounding exercises** when you are feeling panicked or anxious, such as focusing on the five senses; list 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can feel, 2 things you can taste or smell and 1 big breath. This should bring us back to reality and let us focus on something more enjoyable and relaxing.

**Mindfulness** on a morning or evening can help us to relax and feel less anxious, some useful apps are: Smiling mind, Worry time, Clear Fear, Calm and Headspace

**Remember: We will get through this!**

**Things you can do whilst you are at home (feel free to tick them off as you go):**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plan your week with little things you want to accomplish</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Set specific times for school work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Get up and dressed like any normal day</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clear out your wardrobe (could do it Marie Kondo style)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Self-care: Shower, skin care</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Read a book</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Watch Netflix (but not all day)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bake</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Dance</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Home work-out</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make a travel bucket list</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Learn a language</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Call your grandparents</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Learn a new skill (YouTube could be a great resource for this)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Classic board games: monopoly, charades, connect 4</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Draw or Paint</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create a scrap book</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Change the bedding</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tidy your room</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Organise school work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Paint names</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Play on X-box/Play station (again not all day)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Go for a walk</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have a warm drink</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Start a jigsaw puzzle</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> FaceTime a friend</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wash the pots</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have a bath</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Eat tea/ dinner with family</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sing in the shower</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Watch a movie with your sibling or on your own</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social media detox for a few hours</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Give someone a compliment</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Watch the sun set or sun rise</li> </ul>
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**What other things can you think of? You can write them below!**

## Helpful and important contact details for further support:

<p><b>Young Minds</b></p>	<p><a href="https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/depression/">https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/depression/</a></p> <p>Useful website with lots of information for young people.</p> <p>Provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis - all texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors and texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus</p>	<p>Text: text YM to 85258.</p>
<p><b>The Mix</b></p>	<p><a href="http://www.themix.org.uk">www.themix.org.uk</a> You can talk to The Mix for free on the phone, by email or on their webchat</p>	<p>Freephone: 0808 808 4994 (1pm - 11pm daily)</p>
<p><b>SHOUT</b> Shout is a 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need help.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.giveusashout.org/">https://www.giveusashout.org/</a></p>	<p>Text: Shout to 85258</p>
<p><b>Childline</b> Anyone under 19 in the UK with any issue they're going through. Trained counsellors.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.childline.org.uk/">https://www.childline.org.uk/</a> Download the Childline App – Pin locked, 1-2-1 chats, tips and advice.</p>	<p>Tel: 0800 1111 – FREE doesn't show up on phone bills.</p>
<p><b>Prevention of Young Suicide (Papyrus)</b></p>	<p><a href="https://papyrus-uk.org/">https://papyrus-uk.org/</a> Email: <a href="mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org">pat@papyrus-uk.org</a></p>	<p>0800 068 41 41 – Call 07786209 697 - Text</p>
<p><b>The Calm Zone</b></p>	<p><a href="https://www.thecalmzone.net/">https://www.thecalmzone.net/</a></p>	<p>5pm – midnight 365 days a year 0800 58 58 58</p>
<p><b>Thirteen (website)</b> Information website</p>	<p><a href="http://thirteen.me.uk/">http://thirteen.me.uk/</a></p>	<p>Advice and Support on an array of potential issues</p>
<p><b>YoungMinds'</b> Support for parents on their child's mental health</p>	<p><a href="http://www.youngminds.org.uk">www.youngminds.org.uk</a></p>	<p>Free helpline for advice on: 0808 802 5544</p>
<p><b>NHS</b> Advice number for medical issues.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care/nhs-111/">https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care/nhs-111/</a> If you have difficulties communicating or hearing you can: - Call 18001 111 on a text phone</p>	<p>For urgent medical problems but unsure what to do? Call 111 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.</p>
<p><b>999</b> <b>ONLY call 999 if your life is in imminent danger.</b></p>	<p>If your life is in imminent danger</p>	<p>Call 999 and select the appropriate service</p>