

Life after lockdown: Managing anxiety

Information for patients



It's okay to not be okay

- It is okay to feel worried when change happens. We were told that being home was the best way to stay safe, so now we need to leave that safety it can make us feel worried, scared or anxious.
- When you feel threatened by something your body can go into 'fight or flight' mode to protect ourselves. This is a normal response where you feel a strong emotion. It evolved from our caveman days to help us respond with an appropriate reaction to either run away, fight or freeze. This is a completely normal response to a scary situation.
- This reaction in your body can increase your heart rate as blood is sent to your muscles, which tense up ready for action. You might start sweating and your mouth might dry out. Digestion can slow or stop, which might make you feel sick. You might not think as much about your decisions and react with instincts.
- With everything changing in our lives it can feel threatening. If your 'fight or flight' mode is on for too long it can be really tiring, as your body is using a lot of energy. It can be difficult to sleep, and it can also affect your immune system, which makes it harder to fight off illnesses.
- Managing anxiety will keep your body healthy and make this next period of change a little easier to get through.

Self-care



It is really important to make sure you include time for yourself when things are stressful. Think about an activity that is just for you and gives you a break in the day. It could be having a coffee before everyone in the house wakes up and listening to the birds outside.

You could take a mindful walk on your own. Or just making sure you have time before bed to read a book

Support and connections

Talking about how you are feeling with someone can be really helpful. They might not have the answers but it can feel good just to get these thoughts and feelings out in the open and off your chest.

It might be useful to plan a phone/video call with friends or family to help get through these tricky times.

You won't be alone with feeling anxious or unsure about these changes and it can be comforting knowing this.



Ask for support. It's not a sign of weakness, but a strength.

Looking after yourself

Remember to eat healthy, regular meals. When things are uncertain your routines and eating patterns can be overlooked. Sugar and caffeine can give you sugar highs, but also lows which have an impact on your mood. It can also increase your heart rate which might make you feel more anxious. You don't have to entirely remove these foods, but trying to eat a balanced diet, with regular meals, will help you manage your anxiety.

Exercise in any form like a gentle walk, some yoga or dancing can help release tension and help your muscles relax and feel less tense. It can also help with your breathing which is great for relaxation. Exercise is proven to help boost your mood so try a little bit when you can. There are different kinds of exercise you can do at home at the end of this sheet.



Be kind to yourself and others

It can be easy to focus on the things you can't control in the world. While we are managing a new set of guidelines it can be frustrating seeing people not following them. Remember, everyone is trying their best and can't be perfect every day. Things are changing very quickly and it can be hard to get used to new rules.

Limit the time you spend watching or reading the news. The news often focuses only on the negative. It is important to only listen to official guidelines and take advice from the people you trust, like your healthcare team.

Try mindfulness

If your head is too busy thinking about the future, or the past, mindfulness can be helpful bring you back into the here and now. Anxiety and worry are very good at getting our full attention. Mindfulness is a simple concept of paying attention to our thoughts and things we might not normally notice or take for granted. How easy is it to drive somewhere and not remember the journey? Or brush your teeth and think about your to-do list?

Mindfulness skills are really simple, but it might take some practice to get used to it as our brains are normally so busy. You can practice at any point in the day; when you are cooking, washing up or walking. Whilst you are out for a walk notice the sensations of your body, your breathing, what we can hear and see. It is all about noticing and paying attention to the here and now. At the end of this sheet there are some resources explaining more about mindfulness, practices, apps and websites.

Try some breathing and relaxation techniques

- Take a five-second breath in through the nose, hold that breath for **five** seconds, and then breathe out for **five** seconds.

Do **five** times.

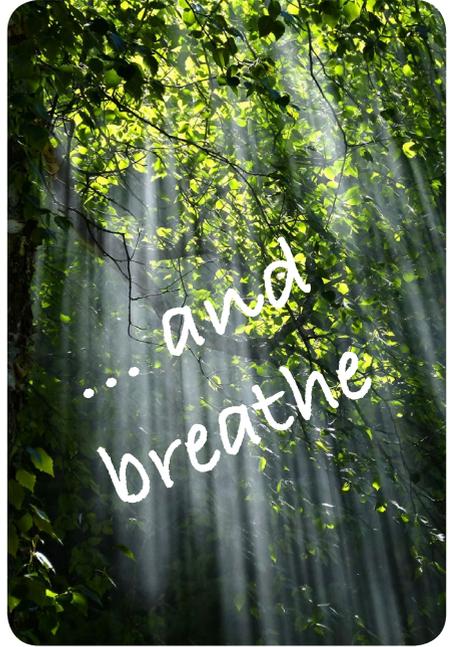
- Try the **STAR** technique.

Smile,

Take

A (breath)

Relax... breathing out for longer than in.



Ground yourself

- Take a moment to think about where you are, notice all your senses.
- You may notice five things of what you can see, hear, taste, smell and touch.
- Take a breath and really experience where you are and how you are feeling.
- It's easy to get into a negative way of thinking and when this happens and don't get annoyed with yourself, accept it's natural under the circumstances.

Resources

NHS Mindfulness Guide

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/

NHS Every Mind Matters Sleep Guide

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/sleep/

Sport England has a wide selection of online exercise platforms including working out with the kids, exercises for older adults and those with long term health conditions.

www.sportengland.org/jointhemovement#get_active_at_home

A guide to living with worries and anxious thoughts in this uncertain time www.psychologytools.com/articles/free-guide-to-living-with-worry-and-anxiety-amidst-global-uncertainty

Mindwell provides information on looking after your mental health and support www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/

Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service provides psychological therapies for common mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, for those aged 17 and over who are registered with a Leeds GP www.leedsmentalwellbeingservice.co.uk

Support

Samaritans - Telephone: **116 123** (free, anytime)

Crisis Text Line - Text SHOUT to **85258**

Silverline - Aimed at people over 55. Their helpline is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Telephone: **0800 470 8090**

CALM (for men) - Telephone **0800 58 58 58** 5pm- midnight daily

The Mix - Aimed at people under 25. Telephone **0808 808 4994** from 4pm and 11pm every day of the year.

They also run a crisis text service, text **THEMIX** to **85258**