



Getting through this together

We hope you will find the following hints and tips useful for any period of stress in your life but especially during these strange times of increased isolation from each other

When the current lockdown situation eases and we are offered more freedom, some people may experience a new wave of anxiety. It raises questions about how we are going to live, move around and re-engage with the world. It may take time to re-build confidence and find stability in the 'new normal'.



Post lockdown anxiety

✓ Deal with each worry individually

By breaking your thoughts down into specific areas, you are less likely to feel overwhelmed.

✓ Think about what you can and can't control

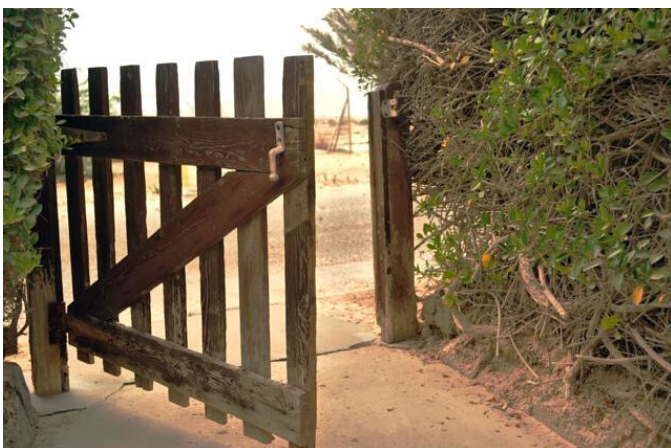
You may find that the 'can' list is longer than the 'can't' list. For example, if you are worried about going shopping, try to find a shop where you will feel more relaxed, where the aisles are wider, with fewer people. If you need to travel on public transport think of travelling at a quiet time.

✓ Use strategies to create calm

While you are outside, if you begin to feel anxious, consider using your phone for a chat or to listen to music or a podcast. When at home have a resource for 'calming things' for example, your favourite music, a scented candle, a magazine or book to re-direct your focus or photographs which make you smile.

✓ Pick out the positives

Look for the little things which make each day worthwhile: being able to get dressed up to go out again, meeting up with a friend or family member to have a socially distanced' walk or visit to the park. Enjoy the freedom of being outside and enjoying nature. The things that once seemed unremarkable will have a new significance – hold onto this special feeling.



✓ Remember – you have coped with change before

You have already, successfully made changes in your life. Over the years you will have adapted to many new situations and this is no different. With time you will once again become comfortable in the world as it is and be able to move forward positively.

✓ Take one small step at a time

It is important to recognize that your anxieties are completely understandable and that you won't be alone in feeling them. Don't pressurize yourself; take one small step at a time to help you overcome your worry. Each small success will help you to rebuild your confidence.

If you feel that you can't do this alone

Each one of us benefits from the help of others at some point in our life.

There are many free, local and national organisations waiting for your call, who can provide you with that extra reassurance you may need at this time. Please don't be afraid to reach out.

Age UK Wakefield District
01977 552114

Samaritans
116 123

Silverline
0800 470 80 90

24 hour Mental Health Support Line
0800 183 0558

The APPLE Technique

If you find yourself becoming anxious at any time, try this simple and calming, mental exercise. It can be done in any situation, even in the company of others.

Try to practice it often to get the full benefit.

Acknowledge: Notice the worry as it comes to mind.

Pause: Try not to react as you normally do; don't react at all. Pause...breathe.

Pull back: Tell yourself this is just the worry talking. It is only a thought or a feeling. Don't believe everything you think. Thoughts are not facts.

Let go: Release the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond. Try to imagine the thought floating away in a bubble or a cloud.

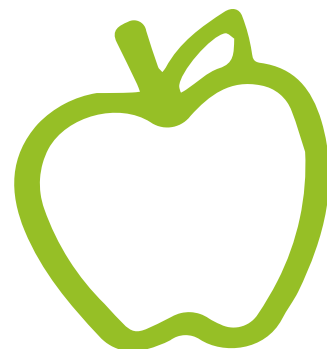
Explore: Explore the present moment, because right now all is well. Notice your breath and the sensations of your breathing. Notice the ground beneath your feet. Look around and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch and what you can smell. *Right now.* When you are feeling calmer, shift your focus of attention towards something else: what you need to do now, what you were doing before the worry, or do something different, but mindfully, with your full attention.

Manage your anxiety each day.

- Continue to access nature and sunlight whenever possible
- Exercise, eat well and stay hydrated
- Agree regular check in times with others to feel connected
- Strike a balance between having a routine and making sure each day has variety
- Have breaks from the news and mute things that are heightening your anxiety
- Stick to trusted sources of information such as the NHS or government

Check out the NHS Every Mind Matters website, here you can build your own mind plan to help you cope with stress during the Covid-19 situation.

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



Sleep

Try to go to sleep and get up at the same time every day. This helps set your body's internal clock and optimize the quality of your sleep. Choose a bedtime when you normally feel tired, so that you don't toss and turn.

Avoid sleeping in—even on weekends. If schedules differ, jetlag-like symptoms can arise. If you need to make up for a late night, a short daytime nap shouldn't disturb your natural sleep-wake rhythm.

Expose yourself to bright sunlight in the morning.

The closer to the time you get up, the better. Have your coffee outside or eat breakfast by a sunny window. The light on your face will help you wake.

Spend more time outside during daylight. Take your breaks outside in sunlight, exercise outside, or walk your dog during the day instead of at night.

Avoid bright screens within 1-2 hours of your bedtime.

The blue light emitted by your phone, tablet, computer, or TV is especially disruptive

When it's time to sleep.

Make sure the room is dark. Use heavy curtains or shades to block light from windows or try a sleep mask.

Exercise during the day.

People who exercise regularly sleep better at night.

Limit caffeine and nicotine.

Caffeine can cause sleep problems up to ten to twelve hours after drinking it!

Avoid big meals at night.

Make dinnertime earlier in the evening, and avoid heavy, rich foods within two hours of bed.

Avoid drinking too many liquids in the evening. Drinking lots of fluids can mean bathroom trips throughout the night.

Relaxation methods

Deep breathing. Close your eyes and take deep, slow breaths, making each breath even deeper than the last.

Progressive muscle relaxation. Starting with your toes, tense all the muscles as tightly as you can, then completely relax.

Visualizing a peaceful place. Close your eyes and imagine a place that's calming and peaceful.

Bedtime rituals for better sleep.

- Read using a soft light.
- Take a warm bath.
- Listen to soft music.

Ways to go back to sleep

Stay out of your head

Try not to stress over your inability to fall asleep again. Focus on physical sensations and breathing exercises.

Relaxation is your goal, not sleep.

If you find it hard to fall back asleep, a relaxation technique can still help rejuvenate your body.

Postpone worrying.

If you wake feeling anxious, make a brief note and postpone worrying about it until the next day.

