

A background image of a woman with long brown hair and glasses, wearing a white t-shirt, relaxing with her eyes closed and hands behind her head under bright sunlight. A teal semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# Coping with Stress, Fear & Anxiety

## Factsheet

# Coping with Stress, Fear & Anxiety

## *Fears can really take their toll...*

Having fears about COVID-19 can really take its toll emotionally and during this time, it's perfectly normal to feel anxious; especially if you already live with an anxiety disorder.

Feelings of anxiety can affect you both physically and mentally and these symptoms vary from person to person.

## *Mentally*

You may feel restless and constantly 'on edge', a sense of dread, irritable or have difficulties concentrating and start to withdraw from contact with others.

## *Physically*

You may feel tired, dizzy, suffer with headaches, feel sick or have stomach-ache. Feeling anxious may also impact on your sleep.

It may not always be clear what is causing you to feel anxious, but you're not alone and powerless - these top tips can help you get through this stressful time.



# Coping with Stress, Fear & Anxiety

## *Understand your anxiety and manage your fears*

We're in the middle of a worldwide pandemic, wondering 'What is going to happen next?'

For many people, this level of uncertainty is one of the hardest things to manage and it's very easy to allow those thoughts and emotions to spiral into an overwhelming sense of panic and dread.



### **Keep informed**

It's vital to stay informed, so you can do your part to help stop the spread of the virus and keep up to date with current guidance, but it's important to not feed your fears with misinformation and heightened coverage.

#### **Stick to sources you trust**

Public Health England, Local Government and the NHS.



### **If you are starting to feel overwhelmed**

Break away and take time out from the media. If you want to avoid it all together, ask someone you trust to keep you informed with any major updates.

#### **Limit how often you check for updates**

Adjust how often you check, to how you're feeling.





# Coping with Stress, Fear & Anxiety



## *Stay focused on the things you can control*

It's hard right now to accept there are many things that are out of our control and it's easy to respond by searching the internet for answers. This strategy will not help and end up leaving you overwhelmed, anxious and drained.

Try and shift your focus to the things **you can control**, such as your personal risk, getting plenty of sleep, eating well and exercising.

## *Stay connected*

Humans are social animals and we're hardwired to stay connected with each other. However, the best thing we can all do is practice social distancing to make a positive difference, but this in turn can impact your mental health with feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Keep up regular phone, chat or skype calls with your friends and family as a priority.

If you are able to, use video to connect with others face-to-face. It's a 'vitamin' for your mental health. Social media is a great way to feel connected to our friends, family and contacts, it also provides us with a greater sense to the world and reminds us we are not alone; although be mindful of how it makes you feel.

Enjoy others company, laugh together, share stories and focus on other things going on in your lives and don't allow the coronavirus to dominate every conversation.

# Coping with Stress, Fear & Anxiety

## *Take care of your body and practice self-care*



**Be kind to yourself**, you're not alone in how you feel.



**Try to maintain a routine** as best you can to help keep a sense of normality.



**Practice relaxation techniques.** When we feel stressed it throws our nervous system off balance; practice meditation, deep breathing and yoga which can all help put back in the balance.



**If you can socially distance yourself** from others safely, get out in nature. Sunshine and fresh air will do you good.



**Staying active** will help relieve stress and anxiety and manage your mood. There are many things you can do to exercise, even using your own bodyweight.



**Make time to do activities** you enjoy, watch a movie, read a book or do a creative activity.

There are many techniques you can use to cope with feelings of anxiety. You will have good days and bad days and learning to cope takes practice. At some point you will find the right coping technique for you and your worries and anxieties will become less frequent.



When you feel overwhelmed, stop and focus on your breathing with this calming breathing technique. It only takes a few minutes and can be done anywhere.

- 01** Make yourself comfortable, sitting, standing or lying down.
- 02** Let your breath flow deep down into your belly, without feeling uncomfortable.
- 03** Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- 04** Breathe in gently and regularly. You may find it helpful to count steadily from 1 to 5.
- 05** Then, without pausing or holding your breath, let it flow out gently, counting from 1 to 5 again.

**KEEP DOING THIS FOR 3 TO 5 MINUTES.**

# Coping with Stress, Fear & Anxiety



## *Help others*

It's easy to get caught up in your own fears and concerns at times like this but helping others will make you feel happier and healthier. Helping others cannot only make a difference to your community but support your own mental health and wellbeing.

Reach out to others in need, especially the elderly or disabled.

Donate to food banks and help vulnerable families and adults in need.

Be a calming influence and help those around you who are panicking and try to support them to gain a sense of perspective on the situation. In these anxious times, being positive and uplifting can help you to feel better about your own situation.

Talking about your feelings, emotions and personal life is not always easy, but talking about how you feel will help keep you in good mental health. Talk to someone you trust.

## *Getting help*

If you feel your anxiety or levels of stress are affecting your daily life and causing you more distress, try speaking with your GP or contact GroceryAid ([www.grocery.org.uk](http://www.grocery.org.uk)) for further support and guidance.



Talk to GroceryAid – call their freephone helpline on 08088 021 122 or visit [www.groceryaid.org.uk](http://www.groceryaid.org.uk)

Other websites that can help:

Anxiety UK  
Rethink  
MIND  
NHS - Self-help therapies

greencore  
group

