

Home help packs



For children and parents

Anxiety

Anxiety can effect any kind of person at any stage of their life, whether they are bubbly and outgoing, or shy and quiet. It can affect young people and children, all the way through to adults and elderly people. And it is more common than you think! In fact, it is estimated that 1 in every 5 people experience anxiety at some time in their life. So remember, ***you are not alone***.

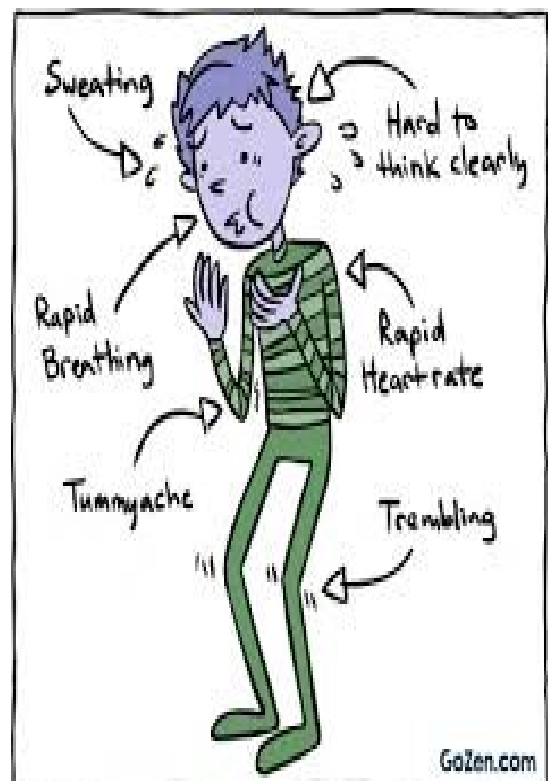
When we were all cavemen we didn't have access to medicine, machinery, hospitals, schools and books... in order to survive we needed to hunt and be quick enough to run from, or fight, threats such as sabre toothed tigers!



We evolved to be able to identify and respond to danger to help us survive. Whilst we no longer have a need to watch out for gigantic fanged beasts our brains still have a very active fight or flight response. This means that we might have the same response to new, and different, dangers (besides getting eaten) or ***potential dangers***.

In order for us to protect ourselves from possible risks or dangers, our bodies and minds will do several things—some of which are:

- Our heart might start beating faster and harder than usual
- We might start to feel breathless due to breathing more quickly and shallowly
- We might start feeling like we are going to faint
- We might feel dizzy
- Sweating
- Our muscles might get very tense and tight
- We might really need to run away, or fight somebody/something
- We might become more aware of the what/who is around us to look for danger

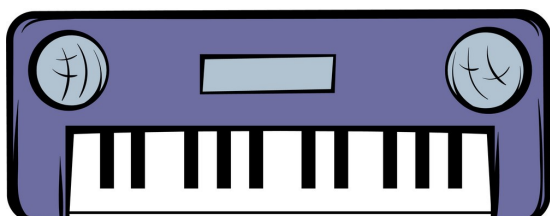


How to manage anxiety

It is okay to be anxious, and to be feeling anxious more often because of the Coronavirus.

Right now, a lot of the news and conversations happening at home are about the Coronavirus, so our fight and flight response is not getting a chance to rest and help our bodies get back to normal. To manage this, there are some things we can do to help ourselves and our family members:

- Don't keep it to yourself or think that it's just you feeling this way: **you are not alone.**
- Think about the things that you can change, and accept those that you cannot.
- Use helpful techniques to focus on what is happening here and now, rather than all of the worries and concerns that are much bigger than you or me.
- Do more of the things you love or try something new:



Breathing Space

At times, it might feel like terms such as 'social distancing', 'self isolation', 'lockdown' and quarantine are all too scary to deal with. Family members might all seem scared and anxious at different times, but when things all feel a little bit too much it might be helpful for a parent to guide this **3 minute breathing space** to help us come back to the here and now:

The first and most important thing is to stop what you are doing, and be still, with your eyes closed (or half-closed) allowing yourself to feel everything that is happening in your body.

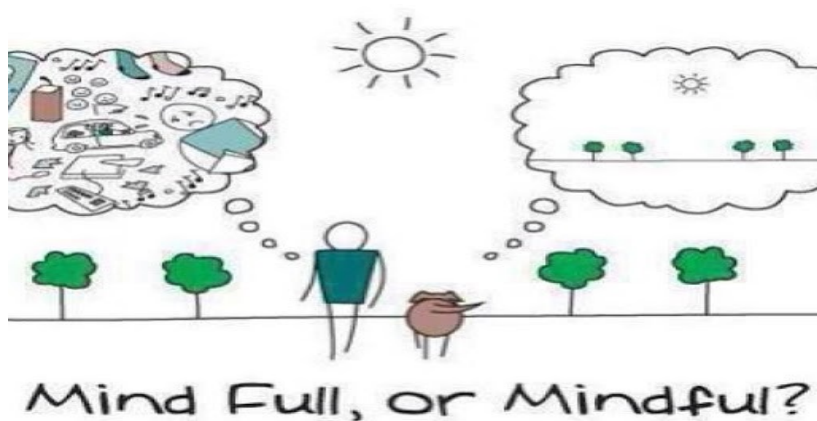
Sit quietly and comfortably, or stand, lie down, or whatever else feels most comfortable for you right now.

Ask yourself "how does my body feel at this moment?" and slowly become more aware of the different things you might be feeling in your tummy, fingers and toes, shoulders and back....

Concentrate on the feeling of your body breathing, feel how gently your body moves when you breathe. Notice any areas where your body feels tight, or tense. When you breathe out, tell those parts of your body to relax.

Become aware of what you are feeling in your mind, and what thoughts are passing through your mind. Try not to get distracted by thoughts you might have about the past, or the future. Notice what you are feeling right now and concentrate on this while you breathe.

In a moment, the breathing space will end. But you can do this as many times a day as you like to let go of worrying thoughts. When you are ready, wiggle your fingers and toes, and open your eyes feeling more relaxed.



Mindfulness

Being present
without judgement
in every moment

Grounding

During this time, it is normal to have lots of worries and concerns. It is important to have the skills to move your focus away from those concerns so that your day to day life is as normal as possible! To do this, we can use *grounding skills* to help us.

Try the options below, by yourself or with a family member. It can be fun to try out all of the different options and find out which is the most helpful for you and your anxiety!

Find an object that could become your 'grounding object'. When you become very worried, take out your grounding object and give it all of your attention. Pay attention to how it looks, how it feels, maybe it moves and you can move it around in different ways. Return to paying 100% attention to it whenever you need to.

SIX WAYS TO PRACTICE GROUNDING

with anxiety + intense emotions

 <p>body</p> <p>lay on the ground, press your toes into the floor, squeeze playdough</p>	 <p>5 senses</p> <p>wear your favorite sweatshirt, use essential oils, make a cup of tea</p>	 <p>self-soothe</p> <p>take a shower or bath, find a grounding object, light a candle</p>
 <p>observe</p> <p>describe an object in detail: color, texture, shadow, light, shapes</p>	 <p>breathe</p> <p>practice 4-7-8 breathing: inhale to 4, hold for 7, exhale to 8</p>	 <p>distract</p> <p>find all the square or green objects in the room, count by 7s, say the date</p>

THE GROWLERY



GROUNDING WITH YOUR FIVE SENSES

<p>What are</p> <p>5</p> <p>THINGS YOU CAN SEE</p>	 <p>SUN PICTURE ON THE WALL PEOPLE WALKING</p>
<p>4</p> <p>THINGS YOU CAN FEEL</p>	 <p>WIND BLOWING FEET ON THE FLOOR PENCIL IN HAND</p>
<p>3</p> <p>THINGS YOU CAN HEAR</p>	 <p>BIRDS CHIRPING CLOCK TICKING CAR HORNS</p>
<p>2</p> <p>THINGS YOU CAN SMELL</p>	 <p>FOOD FROM THE CAFETERIA LAUNDRY DETERGENT ON CLOTHES FRESH CUT GRASS</p>
<p>1</p> <p>THING YOU CAN TASTE</p>	 <p>MINT Breakfast TOOTHPASTE</p>

- **Count** steps as you walk
- Make a **hot drink** and hold the mug, experiencing the heat, steam, smell and taste
- Ask yourself **questions**: Where am I right now; what am I doing; what day is it; what month is it; what season is it; how old am I?
- Focus on **breathing** – count breaths in and out to 10 then restart.
- Play a **categories** game: name TV shows, movies, colours etc.
- Drink a **cold** glass of water
- Stretch
- Say **kind words** to yourself
- Listen to **calming music**

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



One of the body's reactions to fear and anxiety is that our muscles become very tight—like we are preparing for something. If our muscles stay tense for a long period of time they can become sore, and we can become more tired because our bodies are working so hard. Do you 'tense up' when feeling anxious? To help with this, we can practice muscle relaxation exercises. Try this progressive muscle relaxation exercise with a family member or carer who can help guide you:

Begin by finding a comfortable position either sitting or lying down in a safe place. Allow your attention to focus only on your body.

If you begin to notice your mind wandering, bring it back to the muscle you are working on. Take a deep breath through your belly, hold for a few seconds, and breathe out slowly. As you breathe notice your stomach rising and your lungs filling with air. As you exhale, imagine the tightness in your body being released and flowing out of your body. And again inhale.....and exhale.

Feel your body already relaxing. As you go through each step, remember to keep breathing . Now let's begin.

Tighten the muscles in your forehead by raising your eyebrows as high as you can. Hold for about five seconds. And abruptly release feeling that tension fall away. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Now smile widely, feeling your mouth and cheeks tense. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Feel the softness in your face. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Next, tighten your eye muscles by squinting your eyelids tightly shut. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Gently pull your head back as if to look at the ceiling. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release, feeling the tension melting away. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Now feel the weight of your relaxed head and neck sink. Breathe in...and out. In...and out. Let go of all the stress. In...and out. Now, tightly, but without hurting yourself, clench your fists and hold this until I say stop. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Now, flex your biceps. Feel how tight they get. Picture that muscle tightening. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. Breathe in...and out. Now tighten the backs of your arms by extending your arms out and locking your elbows. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Now lift only your shoulders up as if they could touch your ears. Hold for about 5 seconds, and quickly release, feeling how heavy they are. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Tense the top of your back by pulling your shoulders back trying to make your shoulder blades touch. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Turn over

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Tighten your chest by taking a deep breath in, hold for about 5 seconds, and exhale, blowing out all the tightness. Now tighten the muscles in your stomach by sucking in. Hold for about 5 seconds, and release. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Gently pull in your lower back. Hold for about 5 seconds, relax. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Feel the limpness in your body letting go of the tension and stress, hold for about 5 seconds, and relax. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Tighten your thighs by pressing your knees together, as if you were holding a penny between them. Hold for about 5 seconds...and release. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*







Now flex your feet, pulling your toes towards you and feeling the tension in your calves. Hold for about 5 seconds, and relax, feel the weight of your legs sinking down. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Curl your toes under tensing your feet. Hold for about 5 seconds, release. *((Pause for about 10 seconds.))*

Now imagine a wave of relaxation slowly spreading through your body beginning at your head and going all the way down to your feet. Feel the weight of your relaxed body. Breathe in...and out...in...out....in...out.

This exercise is great for releasing anxiety and tension, and is also helpful to relax the body before sleep each night! Try this activity as part of your night-time routine to get a better, more restful sleep each night!

Remember—practice makes perfect! This might not feel like it's working straight away, but if you make it part of your routine you will start seeing results and feel overall more relaxed.

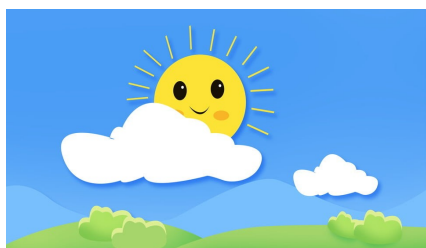
PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION	
	Take 3 Deep Breaths
	Squeeze your foot for 5 seconds, Relax
	Squeeze your leg for 5 seconds, Relax
	Squeeze your stomach for 5 seconds, Relax
	Shrug your shoulders for 5 seconds, Relax
	Squeeze your arm & hand for 5 seconds, Relax
	Squeeze your whole body for 5 seconds, Relax
	Take 3 Deep Breaths

Routine

Routine is really important to all of us when running a normal day to day life. For many of us that means going to school, doing homework, seeing friends and family, night-time routines....

With all the current changes happening to our daily lives at the moment, it is easy to lose this—and it might be impossible to keep to the routine that we're used to! However, this is a chance to get creative and make a **new 'normal'** ! This will help us take control of our days and limit how much time we spend thinking about, and worrying about, the Coronavirus!

Look at this and think about how you can make your own routine for you and your family:



What time will you get up in the morning? Set an alarm and get up at the same time each day to keep a normal sleep schedule! This will give you more energy to make the most of your day!

Start your day well by attending to your hygiene, getting dressed, and having a good breakfast like you would if you were going out!

Exercise is really important and helpful for our mental health. It sends lots of endorphins into our bodies—hormones that make us feel happy and relaxed, whilst the exercise will make us feel strong and fit! Do PE with Joe in the mornings and get the whole family involved. Perhaps later in the day you can also get some fresh air by going for a walk with members of your household.



After starting the day well, it's time to focus our minds on schoolwork from home. How will you make the most of your learning day? Remember to take breaks and lunch at the same times you would at school, and you might need to teach your family members some of the things they've forgotten over the years!

Spend some time doing the things you enjoy—or try something new and maybe learn a new skill, or get a new hobby! Perhaps you could help cook a meal with your family members, or learn to paint things to display at home.. There are lots of options out there! Perhaps you could use some time in the evening to watch the news with family, but try to limit this to a scheduled time in the day.

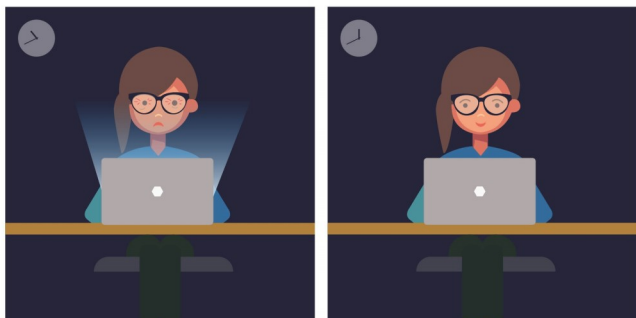


Choose a time to begin your night-time routine and think about what this includes. Perhaps putting away forms of technology (tablets, phone, video games) an hour before bed; a bit of night-time reading; washing your face and brushing your teeth; progressive muscle relaxation exercise... and then getting a good night's sleep ready for the next day!

Sleep hygiene

When we're anxious, it can be really difficult to get a good night's sleep! Worries and concerns about the Coronavirus, as well as staying at home when we might usually be out and doing more during the day, could keep us awake for longer at night.

That makes it difficult to be well rested and get up in the morning, and can have a big impact on our mood! So, it is important to make sure we have good sleep hygiene to reduce the impact of anxiety on sleep.



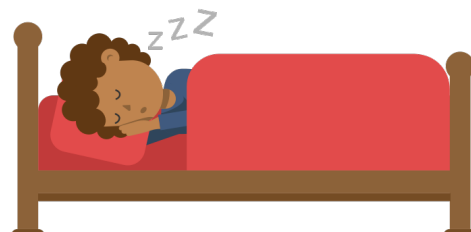
Try not to use anything with blue screens for at least an hour before bed—the blue lights will make our eyes think that it's daytime and our bodies will want to stay awake for longer. Perhaps instead you could read a book or colour a picture...



Large meals before bed keep our tummies full and our bodies awake! Try to have a big meal for lunch and a smaller tea, a few hours before bedtime



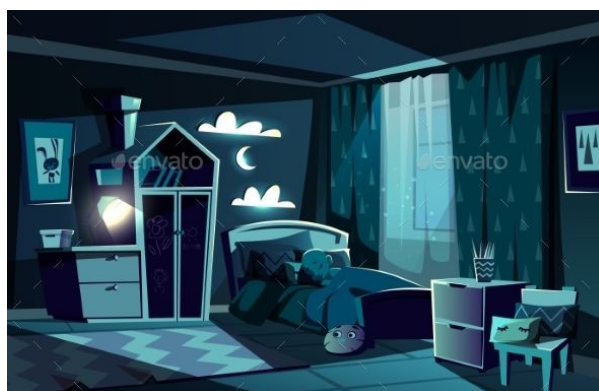
As we know, routine is really important—especially for good sleep! Have a good night-time routine that includes a chance to relax (use the breathing space or progressive muscle relaxation to help) and go to bed feeling ready to rest



Only use your bed for sleeping. This way your mind won't be tricked into thinking that when you're in/on your bed you want to be awake!



Keep the same wake up time and bed time 7 days a week—this will keep your body happy and it will know when it's time to rest!



A cosy bedroom that isn't too light at bedtime can be really helpful in drifting off to sleep quickly. Perhaps part of the bedtime routine can be to tidy up any toys and clothes, and close the curtains



Resources

Remember that you are not alone.

If things continue to feel difficult, and worrying, there are lots of other resources you can use. Discuss this with your family members and use the resources below if you need:

Childmind has a number of links and resources on their website for anxious children and parents related to Coronavirus:

<https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>

Youngmind has information on the Coronavirus and how to explain this to young people and children

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/blog/how-to-talk-to-children-about-covid-19/>

Mind is a mental health charity which has a wide range of information which can be helpful for children and parents

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Anxiety UK has a lot of information and resources which could be helpful for the whole family!

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/get-help/anxiety-information/young-people-and-anxiety/resources/>

Mindfulness apps can be really helpful for guided meditations, everyday practices and skills that help manage anxiety, concerns and low mood. Download today and try with family members or on your own.

