Managing Anxiety

The COVID-19 outbreak is a traumatic time for many of us as our health and wellbeing feels under threat. The outbreak has been very unpredictable and we were not expecting it, it is something outside of our normal human experience.

Here are some simple strategies to help you reduce anxiety at home and in the workplace during COVID-19.

Control

Times like this can give us a sense of helplessness. Many people spend a high percentage of their time focusing on things they can't control, which wastes energy and reinforces the feeling of helplessness. Energy is like money – we can invest it wisely, or we can waste it. The trick is to spend more considered time focusing on what we can control followed by what we can influence.

Mindset

The way we think and the messages we tell ourselves fuel our emotions and these emotions then impact our behaviour. If we **think** "This situation is a nightmare – I'm so stressed..." this may cause us to **feel** overwhelmed, sad, angry and frustrated – resentful towards others who seem to have it easy. The things we may **do** are then impacted - no eye contact, negative body language and expression, short temper, snappy, inappropriate responses.

Be kind to yourself

Making our wellbeing a priority is something that we ALL must do to get through. We can all make conscious choices. Choose to be kind to yourself first and foremost. If you are not good, then how are you able to support others. Ensure your daily routine has 'you time' and use that time as best you can.

Sleep

Sleep is the foundation of good mental health so make it a priority. It is essential that you keep a routine as your body works better when it has a structured sleep pattern. Lack of sleep will lower your immune system and make us less able to cope, therefore increasing anxiety levels. We need to do all we can at this time to ensure we strengthen our immune system.

SOS

Emotions will be high during this time, tempers may flair – using steps such as the example below can help:

Stand back: Stop and take a moment before reacting.
Observe: Breathe, gather your thoughts and take control.
Steer: Use the control to make a conscious choice about your response.

Presence

Bring presence to what you do, this means focus on one thing at one time and enjoy the moment (remember we only get this moment once). Multi-tasking can be anxiety inducing. There may be a lot going on for you just now so it is more important than ever to do this which will help you feel in control. Plan each day and try to keep to that plan!

Breathing

Pressure can overwhelm us – when this happens our physical responses go into overdrive and we can feel like we are struggling to breathe and struggling to calm or soothe ourselves.

Three deep breaths will calm down all of your responses and help clear your thoughts.

Ask for help

Speak to your colleagues, family, friends or look to support networks such as an Employee Assistance Programme. This should prevent anxiety from building up. If you do start to feel anxious about work, then reach out and take the opportunity to discuss things with your line manager or colleagues. Nobody knows what you're thinking, so communication is essential.