

## **Top tips for managing anxiety**

**Don't dismiss it.** 'Don't worry', 'you'll be fine', 'calm down' – try to avoid this kind of talk.

Let those experiencing anxiety know that fight or flight aren't the only options – encourage them to accept their feelings.

**Never undervalue a good night's sleep.** Studies show that a lack of sleep directly contributes to anxiety disorders, and we also know that being anxious can affect your sleep. If [you're struggling to rest](#), try to establish a routine and get stuck in to some calming activities before bedtime (even if you don't feel very relaxed).

**Get a journal.** Journaling is a non-judgmental practice that's been proven to have many benefits for good mental health. Writing regular journal entries is helpful in processing and confronting difficult experiences, events and feelings.

**Indulge in some 'ecotherapy'.** Or, in other words, boost your mental health by heading outside. Spending time outdoors is proven to help with a variety of mood disorders, as well as lowering blood pressure and levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

**Talk to someone.** Whether it's a family member, friend, teacher or Scout leader, remember that there's nothing more therapeutic than sharing the load with an understanding confidant. [Mind](#), [Anxiety UK](#) and [No Panic](#) all operate helplines.

As always, if you think you need more support, reach out. Mind has [information about your options](#), including speaking to your GP.

Use simple self soothe strategies. (Dr. Pooky Knightsmith)

### Massage your hands

As a result of the pandemic, we have had to wash our hands more. Our hands have become dry and cracked. This hand washing can then be associated with the stress of the virus. Touch is a basic human need. After hand washing, moisturise. Focus on the massage, the feel, the scent of the cream. Massage away how you are feeling. Hand massaging is a quick and easy thing you can do to self soothe. If it helps, use imagery. Imagine your worries within you and that you are working them out through your hands and fingertips.

### Close your eyes and look inwards

Close your eyes to reduce sensory stimulus around you. Closing they eyes cuts out some of the information that is bombarding you. The simple act of closing your eyes and taking deeps breaths for just 30 seconds to start will make you feel a little calmer. This can then allow you to focus on other senses e.g. what can you hear?

### Give yourself a hug

For the huggers! When we are hugged, it sends a message to the brain that we are safe. It is a safe reaction to someone who is hurt or upset. You can give yourself that feeling by giving yourself a hug. Hold for a minimum of 10 seconds to give time to get the messages to the brain. Hug yourself really tight. You can add self-talk if you wish – 'I am safe. It is going to be OK.'

## Box breathing (4 square breathing)

It is a simple breathing technique to soothe and help you to take control.

Breathe in for the count of 4

Hold for the count of 4

Breathe out for the count of 4

Hold for the count of 4

Repeat as many times as needed.

You can talk yourself through it, you can talk it through in your head or you can talk someone else through it. Slow the breathing down to regulate anxiety and prevent hyperventilation and panic. It can also be used as a proactive measure. By doing it regularly throughout the day, you can help yourself reset and find a sense of calm.

There are other breathing techniques you can use if this one does not suit you.

## Body scan

Make yourself comfortable sitting in a chair with your back straight but not stiff. Place your feet on the ground.

Eyes can be closed or remain open with a soft gaze.

Take several long, slow deep breaths. Breathe in fully and exhale slowly. Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose or mouth. Feel your tummy expand as you inhale and relax as you exhale.

Begin to let go of noises around you. Shift your attention from outside to the inside of you. If you are distracted by sounds, acknowledge this and then bring your focus back to your breathing.

Slowly bring your attention down to your feet. Observe sensations in your feet. Wiggle your toes and notice without judgment. Allow yourself the sensation of not feeling anything if nothing is registering.

When you are ready, allow your mind to move to your ankles, calves, knees and thighs. Observe the sensations you are experiencing through your legs. If your mind begins to wander, acknowledge this and bring your focus back to your legs. If you notice any discomfort simply acknowledge it. Observe how all sensations rise, fall, shift and change. Notice the sensations are not permanent and just be in the moment.

When you are ready, move your mind to the lower back and pelvis. Slowly breathe in and out.

When you are ready, move your mind to the middle back. Feel sensations from temperature or point of contact with the furniture. With each out breath, let go of the tension you are carrying. Gently, shift your focus to the stomach and all the internal organs here. Notice any sensations but do not judge them.

When you are ready, bring your attention to the heart and chest region. Notice your heart beat. Observe how your chest rises and falls. Let go of any judgments that may arise.

When you are ready, shift the focus to your hands and fingertips. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the sensations in your hands.

Shift the focus and bring the awareness up into your arms. Observe the sensations or lack of sensations that may be occurring there. As you exhale, you may experience the arms soften and release tension.

As you breathe gently, shift the focus to the neck, throat and shoulder region. This is an area where we often experience tension. Notice the sensations – it could be tightness, rigidity or holding. Let go any thoughts of this area. Let the tension roll off your shoulders. When you are ready, move your mind to scalp, head and face. Observe all the sensations occurring there. Notice the movement of air through your nostrils. You might notice the softening of any tension you may be holding.

Now let your intention expand to feel the entire body as a whole. Bring your body awareness back through the top of your head to your toes.

As you come to the end of this practice, take a full deep breath. Exhale fully.

When you are ready, open your eyes and return your attention to the present moment.

If this does not suit you, Google 'body scan' for other examples.

### Staying mentally well

#### Find a new normal

Human beings thrive on routine. It reduces our cognitive load. Set a daily routine. Do not over structure your day as this can cause pressure. Try to get into a new rhythm around blocks of time. It will bring you a sense of comfort knowing you can control something.

#### Exercise good self-care

It is the most important thing you can do for yourself. Get good sleep. Eat as well as you can within the current limitations. Take exercise or go outside in a safe way. Be kind to yourself. Find something that you enjoy. Think about physical and emotional well-being.

## Stay connected

Actively make connections (virtually) with the people who are important to you. Have a few, deep connections. Build your sense of purpose. Sound off to a friend. Focus on solid connections.

## Take time out from corona virus worry

Give yourself a time to worry and think about what is going on in the world then set it aside. Have corona virus worry free time. Set yourself 'golden time' and turn off all notifications/news streams during this time.

## Name your worries to tame them

An effective strategy is to name your worries. 'Name it to tame it.' Once they are named, you can do something with them. Make a list of all the things that are worrying you. It is then possible to work through and take control of it. In your mind, it is chaotic but on a list it is ordered. Is there anything you can change or control? Some of the worries you will not be able to change. Accept that you cannot change some things but see if there is someone you can share them with.

## Make positive plans for the future

Big plans and little plans.

Self soothe regularly

Allow yourself to calm. Use breathing strategies. Collect your thoughts. Do not let it become overwhelming. Reset your body and mind throughout the day.

Social distancing does not mean we aren't together!

- **1. Keep active**
- **2. Immerse yourself in nature**
- **3. Focus on the present**
- **4. Laugh**
- **5. Practise kindness**
- **6. Focus on what's good**
- **7. Keep learning**
- **8. Connect**
- **9. Concentrate on strengths**