

ANXIETY

Anxiety is a natural human response and can be experienced through thoughts, feelings and physical sensations. Most of us experience stress and anxiety at some point in our lives when we are coping with events at work and home or when we are experiencing new situations or changes.

IMPACTS OF ANXIETY

Anxiety can affect your mental and physical state in different ways. Some common symptoms may include feeling lightheaded or dizzy, restless and uneasy, churning stomach, faster breathing, thumping or irregular heartbeat, sweating or hot flushes, nausea, headaches, high blood pressure, difficulty sleeping or even panic attacks.

Usually, these feelings are temporary and subside once the stressful event in our lives has passed. However, for some, anxiety can persist and develop into something which negatively impacts their everyday life.

For example, it may be a problem if:

- Your feelings of anxiety are very strong or last for a long time.
- Your fears or worries are out of proportion to the situation.
- You avoid situations that might cause you to feel anxious.
- Your concerns feel distressing or are hard to control.
- You regularly experience [symptoms of anxiety](#), which could include [panic attacks](#).
- You find it hard to go about your everyday life or do things you enjoy.

The mental health charity, Mind offers advice on [how to manage stress](#) and what to do if you are feeling anxious or experiencing [panic attacks](#).



ANXIETY AND THE PANDEMIC

The Coronavirus pandemic has impacted most of us in some way and may have created additional levels of anxiety. These could be caused by:

- Fear of catching or spreading coronavirus.
- Feeling lonely or isolated.
- Loss of confidence.
- Anxiety about going out and socializing with people.

Everyone has had different experiences of the pandemic; some have struggled without their usual social lives and connection to others, while others will have enjoyed the break from socialising and now fear the idea of 'getting back out into the world.' Regardless of your experience, you may have felt the impact of these changes on your confidence and overall wellbeing.



MANAGING ANXIETY



CREATE A ROUTINE

Implementing a structure to your day can give you a sense of control and improve focus and productivity. Routines can be more than just work and responsibilities as it's important to schedule time for self-care and doing things you enjoy.

You may try and avoid doing things that cause you anxiety, but this can maintain and even increase anxiety over time. If you can gradually face those situations in small doses, it will help to build your confidence and improve your wellbeing.



FOCUS ON THE POSITIVES

You may find that you have mixed feelings about the prospect of adapting to normal life after such an uncertain time during the pandemic. There will be some things you are looking forward to and others that cause anxiety. Try to focus on the things you feel optimistic about, and don't be disheartened if you encounter setbacks.



SET MANAGEABLE TARGETS

You may find it useful to list the things that cause you to worry or create anxiety. You can then challenge yourself to tackle these to help give you a sense of achievement. Try to start with the issues you find less daunting, for example, going for a walk or having a coffee with a friend and building up as your confidence increase.



CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Stay in touch with the people you are close to and talk about how you're feeling. Letting them know that you feel sad, anxious, or overwhelmed by everything can really help. It can help you make sense of your thoughts and feelings, and it may be a relief to have an outlet. Online groups also offer the chance to get support from people who have had similar experiences.



LIMIT NEWS INTAKE

You want to avoid being inundated in uncertain times. Consuming news frequently from various sources can contribute to anxiety. Choose one to two times a day to read the news and pick your news sources carefully.



KEEP A JOURNAL

Identify things that can trigger your anxiety and plan what you will do when this happens, such as writing down your thoughts in a journal/notebook. Use a journal to keep track of anxious thoughts and negative thinking patterns and try to turn these into positive coping statements.



SPENDING TIME IN NATURE

If you can venture outdoors, connecting with nature can have enormous benefits for your mental health. If you are unable to travel far, you can also find benefits from caring for your garden or houseplants.



RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Practice deep breathing exercises to help you feel less anxious. Mindfulness or meditation can also help you to get control of your anxiety. The NHS has several [relaxation exercises online that can ease your body and mind](#).

NEED HELP?

If you feel your anxiety has increased and you feel it is unmanageable, you may need to seek professional help. Seeing a therapist who offers Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), or other supportive therapies may help. To get treatment on the NHS, the first step is normally to visit your GP who will do an assessment. If you live in England, you can self refer to NHS psychological therapies by visiting: [NHS IAPT service](#).

There are also lots of charities and specialist organisations who can offer support.

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

[Mind](#) provide help and advice on how to manage [stress](#) and [anxiety](#). They run [helplines](#) available to contact and Local Minds provide mental health services in local communities across England and Wales. You can find out if there is a Local Mind where you live [here](#).

[Side by Side](#) is Mind's supportive online community where you can feel at home talking about your mental health and connecting with others who understand what you are going through.

[British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy \(BACP\)](#) is the professional body for talking therapy and counselling. It provides information and a list of accredited therapists.

[Anxiety UK](#) is a national organisation offering help and advice to people experiencing anxiety, stress, anxiety-based depression or phobias.

[NHS psychological therapies service \(IAPT\)](#) is accessible to those who are 18+ and live in England. A GP can refer you, or you can refer yourself directly without a referral. Services include talking therapies, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), counselling, other therapies, and guided self-help.

[Cruse Bereavement Support](#) provides helplines run by trained bereavement volunteers, who offer emotional support to anyone affected by grief.

[NHS coronavirus support](#) provide coronavirus advice includes guidance on staying at home, checking symptoms and supporting others. You can also seek guidance on getting help at home by visiting the [NHS Health at home](#) website.



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EVERY FAMILY**



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