

## **Covid-19 Mental Health Considerations – Briefing**

World Health Organisation released a 'Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak<sup>1</sup>' briefing on 12th March.

It covers advice for a range of groups. This summarises the most relevant general population advice and provides some useful links and resources on pages 2 and 3.

The guidance also has sections with specific advice for:

**Health care workers**

**Team leaders or managers in health facility**

**Caretakers of children**

**Older adults, providers & people with underlying health conditions**

**People in isolation**

### **General population**

Avoid watching, reading or listening to news that cause you to feel anxious or distressed; seek information mainly to take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself and loved ones. Seek information updates at specific times during the day once or twice. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports about an outbreak can cause anyone to feel worried.

Assisting others in their time of need can benefit the person receiving support as well as the helper. For example, check-in by phone on neighbours and people in your community who may need some extra assistance.

Find opportunities to amplify positive and hopeful stories and positive images of local people who have experienced COVID-19. For example, stories of people who have recovered or who have supported a loved one and are willing to share their experience.

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organisation (2020) Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak. [shorturl.at/AOYZ7](https://shorturl.at/AOYZ7)

## Resources:

**MIND** have a range of tools available here:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse3b791>

Relaxation. <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/relaxation-tips/> Try one of these 8 techniques:

*Take a break – even if only for a few minutes*

*Active relaxation – go for a walk / do some light exercise*

*Focus on your breathing – breathe in your nose and out your mouth*

*Get creative – drawing / painting can help you to feel calm*

*Spend time in nature – take a walk paying attention to nature around you*

*Listen to music – listening to a song can take away worrying thoughts*

*Do a tech check – check use of technology and take a break if too much*

*Picture yourself somewhere else – using your imagination to think of you somewhere serene for a moment can transport you to somewhere calm*

**Anxiety UK:** <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/blog/covid-19-and-anxiety-part2/>

Anxiety UK offer a friendly helpline for individuals struggling with anxiety and can offer an understanding and empathic ear to anyone who needs that additional bit of support (**03444 775 774**). If you don't want to talk over the phone you can also reach out via our live chat support service ([anxietyuk.org.uk](https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)), via text (**07537 416905**) or by email: [support@anxietyuk.org.uk](mailto:support@anxietyuk.org.uk)

Additionally, throughout the coming weeks, Anxiety UK will be hosting a range of support webinars for the general public on issues such as 'how to be kind & compassionate to yourself', 'dealing with COVID-19 negative thoughts when you already have anxiety' to name but a few and which are aimed at giving that extra bit of help to those that are struggling with anxiety during this difficult time.

## **Breathing Exercise**

**This calming breathing technique for stress, anxiety and panic takes just a few minutes and can be done anywhere.**

You will get the most benefit if you do it regularly, as part of your daily routine.

You can do it standing up, sitting in a chair that supports your back, or lying on a bed or yoga mat on the floor.

Make yourself as comfortable as you can. If you can, loosen any clothes that restrict your breathing.

If you're lying down, place your arms a little bit away from your sides, with the palms up. Let your legs be straight, or bend your knees so your feet are flat on the floor.

If you're sitting, place your arms on the chair arms.

If you're sitting or standing, place both feet flat on the ground. Whatever position you're in, place your feet roughly hip-width apart.

- **Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it.**
- **Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.**
- **Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from 1 to 5. You may not be able to reach 5 at first.**
- **Then, without pausing or holding your breath, let it flow out gently, counting from 1 to 5 again, if you find this helpful.**
- **Keep doing this for 3 to 5 minutes.**

Source: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/ways-relieve-stress/>