

## Tips for looking after mental health during COVID-19 Pandemic

### **Think about access to media and social media**

Some people can be quite paralysed by this anxiety and may want to completely stop interacting with the news.

For others this can be quite difficult. They want to know what's going on. Not knowing makes it worse. Think about limiting how much time you spend on social media or reading, listening or watching the news if it is making you anxious.

### **Do something you can control**

It can help to express this anxiety in a way that you can control. That could be writing down what you feel, or keeping a journal

### **Let it go**

Once you've written it down, let it go. Be really aware of what you're thinking. Sometimes we are catastrophising; we're focusing on all these 'what ifs?' Bring things back to what you actually know.

### **Wellbeing check**

Make sure you are looking after yourself, doing what you can to help get a good night's sleep, eating well and doing exercise. This can be a workout in the living room or hula hooping in the back garden!

## Socialise

Make plans to video chat with people or groups you would normally see in person. You can also arrange phone calls or send instant messages or texts. If you are worried that you might run out of stuff to talk about, make a plan with someone to watch a show or read a book separately so that you can discuss it when you contact each other.

Use platforms such as Microsoft teams, Zoom, facetime, house party.

## Eat properly

Have a healthy balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids and avoid getting into unhealthy habits such as smoking or drinking alcohol.

## You time

Try to do things you enjoy such as reading, jigsaws, cooking, drawing

## Get outdoors

Get fresh air – open your windows, if you have a garden go in it, or sit on your step keeping at least a 2 metre distance from anyone.

## Stay in touch

Keep in contact with family and friends – use an app so you can see them, you could eat a meal together while talking to each other.

## Breathing techniques and mindfulness

Mindfulness is really helpful in working to alleviate anxiety and worry.....

-  **Mindful eating:** This involves paying attention to the taste, sight and textures of what you eat. For example, when drinking a cup of tea or coffee you could focus on how hot and liquid it feels on your tongue, how sweet it tastes or watch the steam that it gives off.
-   **Mindful moving, walking or running:** Notice the feeling of your body moving. You might notice the breeze against your skin, the feeling of your feet or hands against different textures on the ground or nearby surfaces, and the different smells that are around you.
-  **Body scan:** This is where you move your attention slowly through different parts of the body, starting from the top of your head moving all the way down to the end of your toes. You could focus on feelings of warmth, tension, tingling or relaxation of different parts of your body.
-   **Mindful colouring and drawing:** Focus on the colours and the sensation of your pencil against the paper, rather than trying to draw something in particular. You could use a mindfulness colouring book or download mindfulness colouring images.
-   **Mindful meditation:** This involves sitting quietly and focusing on your breathing, your thoughts, sensations in your body and the things you can hear around you. Try to bring you focus back to the present if your mind starts to wander. Different things work for different people, so if you don't find one exercise useful, try another. You can also try adapting them so that they suit you and are easier to fit in with your daily life.

These are some apps that you can download to help with relaxation

-  Headspace
-  Calm
-  Aura
-  Stop, breathe and think
-  Insight timer

Remember, this is an unknown situation with COVID-19. Anxiety and worry are as normal as normal can be in a situation like this, but we want to work together to support each other, ourselves and our families.