



Coronavirus (COVID-19) Stress & Anxiety

As you will have noticed, we are almost saturated with daily news and information on COVID-19 which may potentially be causing some of us to worry a bit more than usual. So I think it's time to be mindful of some of the challenges our residents and staff may be facing, particularly those living with a pre-existing anxiety condition or panic disorder.

For those living with any type of anxiety disorder, such as claustrophobia or agoraphobia, some of the management or containment strategies that are being heavily suggested i.e. a period of 12 week isolation for the most vulnerable or even just words like 'quarantine' and 'self-isolation' can trigger anxiety or panic attacks. If we have loved ones that are deemed more at risk, it will also naturally raise fears and anxiety as we have very little control of what may happen to them in such uncertain times.

Furthermore, people living with health anxiety or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) may be really struggling with the constant coverage and heightened focus on infection and contamination which could negatively impact their wellbeing.

Stress and anxiety indicators during an infectious disease outbreak can include but is not limited to the following:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones,
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns,
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating,
- Worsening of chronic health problems,
- Physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate, stomach upset, low energy, or other uncomfortable sensations,
- Frustration, irritability, or anger,
- Feeling helpless; or
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Taking care of yourself, your family and colleagues can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your teams, services and community stronger.

Tips to reduce stress & anxiety

CONTROL how often you check the news and only use reputable sources, hearing about the pandemic can be upsetting. Focus on things you can control such as your thoughts and behaviours.

THINK rationally, let wisdom and logic guide you and keep the big picture in mind, humankind will survive this.

SLEEP well! Ensure you're getting 6-8 hours of sleep a night.

HEALTH is important. Up your vitamin C intake – citrus fruits are the best way to boost your immune system.

EXERCISE a little. Take a walk around the gardens; fresh air and sunlight are great for your immune system and can increase your mood and decrease your anxiety levels. Meditating for as little 3 minutes a day can also have positive effects on your health.

HOBBIES are a great distraction. Adult colouring, puzzles or just catching up on that great TV show you've been promising yourself you'd watch are great stress relievers.

SOCIALISE even if we are being encouraged to embrace social isolation, you don't have to cut yourself off from everyone. Use alternative methods to socialize and check in with friends via FaceTime or give them a call.

CONNECT with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

We are all in this together and a little compassion, kindness, empathy and understanding can go a long way!

Additional support and information can be found at:

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/about-anxiety/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/generalised-anxiety-disorder/self-help/>

Anxiety Support Line: 03444 775 774