

What to do if you're anxious about coronavirus

If the current news on coronavirus (COVID-19) is making you feel anxious, concerned or stressed, here are some things you can do.

Talk to someone about how you're feeling

While it is normal to feel worried, if you are starting to feel overwhelmed, it's important to acknowledge your feelings and speak to someone you trust, whether that's a friend, a family member, a teacher or a helpline.

Arm yourself with the facts

There is a lot of information about the virus out there and false reports can fuel anxiety. Stay on top of what's happening by using the **government website**; it is the most up-to-date and reliable source of information. The **NHS coronavirus page** can also be useful if you are worried about symptoms or family members.

You might see stories or posts on social media that makes you feel anxious. It can be very hard to know whether social media posts are true, so try not to rely on updates from there.

Know what you can do

If you are feeling scared or panicked by coronavirus, remind yourself that there are practical things you can do.

There is lots of advice about this on the **NHS website**.

You might feel anxious about this advice because it might trigger compulsive thoughts and unhelpful behaviors to do with washing and hygiene. If this happens to you, please talk to someone you trust about it. You could ask them to help you and let people around you know what you find helpful and what you don't.

It can also help to have a few gentle and regular reminders up your sleeve if you start to feel anxious about washing or hygiene. Remember this advice is about caring for yourself and others, but there is a limit to what you can do – so whatever happens, try to be kind to yourself.

Don't overexpose yourself to the news

Staying informed can make you feel in control, but the constant news reports could also become overwhelming. Try to get your information from reputable websites (like those we've mentioned above).

If you do want to read or watch the news, try to limit the amount of time you spend and stick to regular intervals in the days. If you are finding it hard not to think about the news, try to plan some activities that you enjoy and which will take your mind off things, whether that's texting or facetimeing a friend, watching a film, reading a book or going for a walk (if lock down rules permit).

Do take a break from social media if you feel like the updates are getting too much. Remember you are in control of what you see on your feed. Take breaks when you do feel like things are getting too much or mute and unfollow accounts that make you feel more worried.

Plan your time

It's likely that you've been asked by your school, college or workplace to stay at home for a period. If you are living at home, talk to your family about this and share your feelings with them, if you can. We understand that this could be quite a daunting prospect but try to think of this as a chance to live in a different way for a while. Think about what you might want to do during this time, how you will stay connected and how you would prioritize your wellbeing. Planning might help reduce any anxiety or troubling thoughts. With so much uncertainty in the news, creating a routine you stick to can really help maintain a sense of structure and normality. Try to find time in your routine for activities that help you feel calm.

Find things that help you feel calm

Like at any other time, it's important that you are not only looking after your physical health, but your mental health too. Think about some activities that can help when you are feeling overwhelmed, like breathing techniques, writing down how you feel, playing music or talking to a friend.

Often things that distract you will help ease feelings of anxiety but try to avoid turning to stimulants like cigarettes or alcohol which can leave you feeling worse.

Dealing with self-isolation

The Government is now advising everybody to 'self-isolate' where possible. Self-isolation means staying away from other people to prevent the potential spread of illness. The Government have **guidelines on their website** on how to do this. Wherever you are when self-isolating, think about who you can keep in contact with and how you can use apps such as WhatsApp and Zoom to talk to someone face to face. It's important that you talk to people you trust during this time and continue to stay connected. They might be in the same situation and can help you navigate anything you are going through.

If you are on any medication, please do continue taking it, unless advised otherwise by your doctor. If you are worried about getting your prescription, call the pharmacy where you collect your medication, or your GP. They can arrange getting your prescription delivered or picked up by someone else.

Maintain your routine as much as possible by getting up in the morning and going to bed at the same time. Eating regular meals and staying hydrated will help also, as well as taking breaks throughout the day to talk to someone or do something that you enjoy. If it's possible, try activities in your home that get you moving, like yoga or dancing.

It's important during this time that you keep checking in with and acknowledging how you are feeling. We know that things might continue to feel overwhelming or scary. It's good for you to talk about this where possible – know that you can say "I feel anxious about..." whenever you need to, and as regularly as you need to.

You may find that you need extra support, so think about who you can turn to. It could be someone you know, or a helpline that you can talk to about how you might be feeling.

Source: YoungMinds April 2020

The link to the YoungMinds website is here if you would like further information on any of the above – there are some very helpful resources aimed at young people.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/#talk-to-someone-about-how-you%E2%80%99re-feeling>