

Information to help with stress and anxiety

(Kind thanks goes to Claire Radford for assisting in compiling this advice sheet)

During isolation we may all experience higher levels of stress, remember small amounts of this is good for us but if it is affecting our lives and making us unhappy there are some things that we can do to try and reduce this. Here are some suggestions to help, choose as many that work for you, there is no right or wrong way to deal with things.

Write things down

Keep a journal of positive and negative thoughts. See how you are improving. See any patterns, if hormones or other people's reactions are affecting you. Just getting your thoughts down on paper can be therapeutic.

Being positive

Don't sit and say "I can't", say "I can". Don't say "but" don't let your mind run away with itself, don't give it air time. You have achieved things in the past and you will achieve things in the future, you have got through tough times in the past and you can get through this!

Organise things in your life,

Make lists of things that need to be done and prioritise. Write down things you need to do then try and forget them until you can sort them. I.e. before bed put them on paper and imagine them locked away in a box until morning when you can deal with them. Create yourself a schedule to follow each day, having a routine will help give you direction and purpose.

Do something you enjoy.

Have breaks, nobody can be relaxed and stress-free if all they do is work.

Read, do some mindful colouring, make contact with friends, cook, get some fresh air in the garden, have chocolate. Whatever you enjoy. **Be kind to yourself. YOU ARE WORTH IT.**

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a powerful way to handle stress, and live life more fully. Mindfulness is all about living fully in the present moment, without judgment, and with an attitude of kindness and curiosity. It's about breathing, noticing what's happening right here and now, sending a gentle smile to whatever you're experiencing in this moment (whether it's easy or difficult), and then letting it go. You can be mindful anytime, anywhere, no matter what you're doing. It sounds simple, but it's not always easy to do, especially when you are stressed!

There are many good books, look up on Amazon, such as; Ruby Wax has an interesting couple.

Breathing

Deep Breathing

When we are stressed or anxious, our breathing becomes more rapid. Often breathing also gets shallow, which causes a feeling of being unable to catch your breath. Other times, breathing is too fast and deep, which causes a lightheaded feeling and numbness or tingling of the extremities. Deep breathing not only helps to cure anxiety and stress, it also triggers relaxation. Here is a way to slow down your breathing while keeping it deep and exhaling fully.

Inhale slowly to the count of four (count slowly; to the pace of one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand...). Pause to the count of three. Exhale slowly to the count of five.

The breathing process goes like this: Inhale... two, three, four...pause...two, three....exhale...two, three, four five....Inhale... two, three, four...pause...two, three....exhale...two, three, four five....Repeat for a minute or two.

Meditation

Meditation is a way of stilling the mind; it goes deeper than relaxation, to bring you to inner peace and stillness. Apart from making you more relaxed it slows your breathing and can lower your blood pressure and can boost your immune system so helping you to fight illnesses.

There are many apps, web sites and things on you tube you can listen too. There are also books specifically for teenagers. Look on Amazon.

Exercise

Any exercise is good as it releases endorphins that make you feel good; it distracts you, makes you feel less sluggish and hopefully helps you sleep well. Doing this during isolation can be tricky but there are lots of apps and youtube channels with workouts that you complete in your front living rooms. Try Joe Wicks PE lesson as an example.

Relaxation

Consciously Relax Key Muscles

When experiencing the physical symptoms of stress or anxiety, the body tenses up in anticipation of the physical need to fight or flee. By relaxing certain key muscles, you can reverse this physical tensing process. Relieving muscle tension can decrease headaches, muscle aches, and other stress and anxiety symptoms, and can also initiate the relaxation response for all the benefits listed in the relaxation response description.

First, lower your shoulders. When tense, the shoulders are often raised up toward the ears - so do the opposite and lower them. Ease them back slightly. Next, relax your jaw by dropping the lower jaw slightly. Make sure your teeth aren't touching. Finally, release any fists from clenching. Deliberately open your hands.

Shake it Out

During the stress response, blood flows to the major muscles to allow them to act - but blood flow to the hands and feet can be decreased (the cause of cold hands and feet when stressed). The act of shaking a body part increases circulation (improves blood flow), and encourages tense muscles to release their hold. Hold your arm away from your body, make your hand and wrist limp, and shake your hand back and forth and all around. Do this for a few seconds. Now stop. See how much more relaxed that hand feels? To induce the relaxation response, shake your hands. You can even shake your whole arms, and shake your feet and legs if you want.

Yawn and Stretch

Have you ever noticed that dogs yawn when they're nervous? There is a good reason - yawning triggers relaxation. Dogs yawn to help calm themselves down in stressful situations. A yawn forces you to take a deep breath, slow down the breathing, and to exhale fully. This counteracts the fast shallow breathing experienced as a symptom of stress and anxiety. Stretching is effective in lengthening the muscles - the opposite of short, tensed muscles. Try it! Open your mouth wide, yawn loudly with a big sigh, and stretch your arms above your head and out to the sides. Make sure to stretch out the back and shoulder muscles - key places where tension can build up.

Book suggestions;

- The anxiety Survival guide for teens Jenifer and Doug Shannon
- Starving the anxiety Gremlin Kate Collins-Donnelly
- Don't Worry be happy- Poppy O'Neil

Apps,web sites and support lines.

App/Website	What does it offer
Headpace	Guided meditation session
Present mind	Mindfulness app
Sleepio	App to aid sleep
Grief encounter	Bereavement support
Base 51	Online and face to face counselling support
Childline	Online and telephone support for young people in distress
Harmless	Online support for young people experiencing self harm
Papyrus	Suicide prevention charity
Kooth	Online counselling and emotional wellbeing support accessible through your mobile, tablet or desktop
Young Minds	General guidance and information regarding mental health
Samaritans	Online and phone support for people in distress
Beat	Support for young people experiencing an eating disorder

General things to look up that may support your mental health:

- White noise or calming sounds apps to help with sleep_
- Mind Apples –activities you can do to look after your mental health
- Eating healthy and the link to positive mood
- Getting in tune with your creative side, mindful colouring is a great way to start this.