

# Managing anxiety during coronavirus

## Helping colleagues deal with worrying thoughts

While most people won't experience severe symptoms from causes by the coronavirus infection, for many it remains a very anxious time. On top of that, working from home can also increase feelings of social isolation.

You may be finding things difficult at the moment given the uncertainty and the developing situation. It's important to remember that you're not alone and that most people's lives are being affected.

Many of us are experiencing heightened feelings of anxiety which can affect thoughts, behaviours, and emotions, as well as causing physical symptoms.

There are a number of things we can do to help decrease our anxieties and improve the way that we are feeling.

### Stay in control

When we're anxious the simple things we do to promote good wellbeing often get overlooked, so it's important that we all look out for each other and remind one another the importance of looking after our minds and bodies.

**Connect:** Stay connected with colleagues and check in with each other. Remind yourself and others of the importance of taking regular rests and a lunch break. Why not try a virtual coffee break? Reach out to groups in your community to make connections and ask for help if you need it. Use your workplace's employee assistance programme or mental health first aiders, if they have them. Be kind to yourself and each other because situations like this have the opportunity to bring out our best and worst days.

**Social media:** Consider how using social media is making you feel and find your own balance. While it's a great way to stay connected with friends and family, it also has the ability to escalate our anxieties.

**News:** Set specific and time-framed periods to look or listen to the news. While it's important to stay well informed, extensive news coverage can trigger anxiety and stress so it's good to find a balance. Rumour and speculation can fuel anxiety so having access to good

quality information can help you feel more in control. You can get up-to-date information and advice at:

- [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Health Protection Scotland](https://www.healthprotection.scot.nhs.uk)
- [Public Health Wales](https://www.wales.nhs.uk)

**Routine:** Where possible try to keep your usual routine and participate in your usual activities, even if you have to be a bit creative by using online tools to chat with friends or creating a space to workout at home. Take it one day at a time.

**Sleep:** During periods of anxiety sleep can be difficult. [The Sleep Geek](#) has delivered a seminar to our colleagues and has lots of useful resources online.

### Coping with worrying thoughts

Worrying thoughts are normal in a situation like this and we can't suppress them. But we can avoid going down the rabbit hole by noticing them and using strategies such as:

- **Distraction** – when you are finding it difficult to stop worrying. Activities such as exercise, being creative, self-care and connecting with others are all great ways of distracting ourselves and our thoughts.
- **Mindfulness** – use mindfulness techniques or access support from online mindfulness programmes.
- **Share** – the thoughts to normalise them: connect and talk to others about your thoughts and feelings. This in itself may help.
- **Write a list** – Create a list of the things you are worrying about. If you can find practical solutions and do them so you can tick them off your list, it may reduce your worries and give you a greater sense of control.
- **Gratitude** – Completing a gratitude journal where you identify three things each day that you are grateful for. Gratitude is a great antidote for anxiety as it is (almost) impossible to feel both anxious and grateful at the same time.