

Mental Well Being Resource Support Pack



This pack contains a range of different resources and information that we hope you will find helpful.

Contents

Looking after your mental health during the Coronavirus outbreak	3
Telephone Helplines	5
Relaxed breathing	7
Progressive Muscle Relaxation	9
Mindful Attention	10
Grounding	12
Safe Space Imagery Exercise	13
Soothing Rhythm Breathing Exercise	14
Self-care Ideas	15
Online Recovery Resources	17

Looking after your mental health during the Coronavirus outbreak

Infectious disease outbreaks, like the current Coronavirus (Covid 19), can be scary and can affect our mental health. While it is important to stay informed, there are also many things we can do to support and manage our wellbeing during such times.

Here are some tips we hope will help you, your friends and your family to look after your mental health at a time when there is much discussion of potential threats to our physical health.

Try to avoid speculation and look up reputable sources on the outbreak

Rumour and speculation can fuel anxiety. Having access to good quality information can help you feel more in control.

You can get up-to-date information and advice on the virus here:

Gov.uk - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

Health Protection Scotland - <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/>

Try to stay connected

At times of stress, we work better in company and with support. Try and keep in touch with your friends and family or contact a helpline for emotional support.

Try to stick to your daily routine

It is a good idea to stick to your daily routine. You may also like to focus on the things you can do if you feel able to:

- Try to get up and dressed as you normally would
- Schedule some of our self-care activities into your day
- Keep active! Exercise can help with our mood, help manage stress and boost our self-esteem. Planning some form of exercise each day will also help keep routine.
- Exercise in your home / garden
- Follow an exercise video on Youtube
- Housework
- Go for a walk or jog if your are able
- Stay in touch with friends on social media but try not to sensationalise things. If you are sharing content, use this from trusted sources, and remember that your friends might be worried too.

Try to anticipate distress

It is normal to feel vulnerable and overwhelmed as we read news about the outbreak, especially if you have experienced trauma or a mental health problem in the past, or if you have a long-term physical health condition that makes you more vulnerable to the effects of the coronavirus.

It's important to acknowledge these feelings and remind each other to look after our physical and mental health. We should also be aware of and avoid increasing habits that may not be helpful in the long term, like smoking and drinking.

Try and reassure people you know who may be worried and check in with people who you know are living alone.

Try to manage how you follow the outbreak in the media

There is extensive news coverage about the outbreak. If you find that the news is causing you huge stress, it's important to find a balance. It's best that you don't avoid all news and that you keep informing and educating yourself, but limit your news intake if it is bothering you.

How should people deal with being in self-isolation or in quarantine?

If there's a chance you could have coronavirus, you may be asked to stay away from other people (self-isolate). For people that are in self-isolation or are in quarantine, this may seem like a daunting prospect. It will help to try and see it as a different period of time in your life, and not necessarily a bad one, even if you didn't choose it. It will mean a different rhythm of life, a chance to be in touch with others in different ways than usual. Be in touch with other people regularly on social media, email or on the phone, as they are still good ways of being close to the people who matter to you.

Create a daily routine that prioritises looking after yourself. You could try reading more or watching movies, having an exercise routine, trying new relaxation techniques, or finding new knowledge on the internet. Try and rest and view this as a new if unusual experience, that might have its benefits.

Make sure your wider health needs are being looked after such as having enough prescription medicines available to you.



Information in this handout was adapted from the Mental Health Foundation:
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak> [accessed 17/03/2020]

Telephone Helplines

Below are a list of useful helplines, however if you need urgent help please contact your GP, NHS 24 on 111 or the Emergency Services on 999.

Breathing Space

Sometimes our thoughts and feelings can overwhelm us. It helps to get some Breathing Space. Pick up the phone - we're here to listen. So don't let problems get out of hand, phone Breathing Space, where experienced advisors will listen and offer information and advice.

Opening times: **Weekdays:** Monday-Thursday 6pm to 2am **Weekend:** Friday 6pm-Monday

6am Tel: 0800 83 85 87

BSL option available on website: www.breathingspace.scot

Respect Men's Advice Line

Our friendly Men's Advice Line advisors are specially trained to offer you emotional support if you are experiencing domestic abuse, as well as the practical advice and information that you need right now.

Opening times: Monday: 9am – 8pm, Tuesday: 9am – 5pm, Wednesday: 9am – 8pm, Thursday: 9am– 5pm, Friday: 9am – 5pm

Tel: 0808 8010327

Email: info@mensadviceline.org.uk

Online chat available: <https://mensadviceline.org.uk/>

Samaritans

Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. We're here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. If you need someone to talk to, we listen. We won't judge or tell you what to do. Opening times: 24/7

Tel: 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Scottish Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline

Opening times: 24/7

Tel: 0800 027 1234

Email: helpline@sdafmh.org.uk

Online chat available: www.sdafmh.org.uk

The Survivors Trust

Our services work with victims and survivors of all ages, male and female, of all forms of sexual violence, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, including support for partners and family members.

Opening times: Mon - Thursday 10am-6pm, Friday 10am-2pm

Tel: 08088 010 818

Shout

Shout is a 24/7 UK crisis text service available for times when people feel they need immediate support.

If you're experiencing a personal crisis, are unable to cope and need support, **text Shout to 85258**. We can help with urgent issues such as:

- Suicidal thoughts
- Abuse or assault
- Self-harm
- Bullying
- Relationship challenges

Opening times: 24/7

If you need urgent help or are in imminent danger, call 999.

Relaxed breathing

Before you start

You can relax almost anywhere, provided that you can sit or lie comfortably without being disturbed.

Obviously don't attempt these relaxation exercises while driving or when engaged in any activity where your full attention is required.

If you have a respiratory problem, or any medical condition that makes you concerned about the suitability of breathing exercises for you, then please consult your doctor before you try.

Introduction

We are about to practice a relaxed breathing exercise.

Our breathing is closely linked to our emotional states. When we are anxious we breathe quickly, when we are frightened we might hold our breath, but when we're relaxed our breathing becomes slower and deeper.

Breathing is one of the few bodily processes that can be voluntary or involuntary. Breathing can happen automatically without us thinking about it, or we can control it on purpose.

Deliberately slowing and deepening our breathing has the effect of signalling to the brain that everything is well and that there is nothing to worry about. There is no need to panic or to be anxious. Slowing and deepening our breathing in this way triggers the body's 'relaxation response' and makes us feel more grounded.

Practice

You can relax your breathing almost anywhere you go. To begin with, though, you will find it easier if you try this exercise while lying down or sitting comfortably, with your head well supported.

So for this relaxation session make sure you are lying down comfortably on a firm bed, a couch, on the floor, or sitting well-supported in a comfortable chair.

Support your head and neck with a pillow or cushion if that is comfortable.

Loosen any tight clothing, remove your shoes, and make sure that you won't be disturbed for at least 10 minutes. Make sure your arms and legs are evenly spaced.

I'll give you a few moments to settle down and make yourself comfortable.

Gently close your eyes and focus your attention on your breathing. Don't try to change it in any way. Just observe it for a while. Notice how quickly or slowly you are breathing. Whether it is even or uneven. Whether your out-breaths are the same length as your in-breaths. Become aware of whether you are breathing high up in your chest, or lower down in your abdomen.

We're going to deliberately slow and deepen your breathing. To start with, begin to breathe in and out through your nose.

Rest one hand on your chest, and the other hand on your abdomen just below your rib cage. As you breathe in just allow the abdomen to rise, and as you breathe out allow the abdomen

to flatten. Try to breathe in such a way that the hand on your chest stays still, so that only the hand on your abdomen gently moves up and down.

Now begin to slow the rhythm of your breathing. It can be helpful to count along silently as we breathe. So we're going to breathe in for a count of four, and then breathe out for a count of four. Now I'll begin to count:

Breathing in ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... And breathing out ... 2 ... 3 ... 4

Breathing in ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... And breathing out ... 2 ... 3 ... 4

Breathing in ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... And breathing out ... 2 ... 3 ... 4

Breathing in ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... And breathing out ... 2 ... 3 ... 4

Carry on breathing at that pace for a while. Pay particular attention to your out-breath. Make sure that it is slow, steady, and not rushed in any way. A calm out-breath signals to the brain that everything is well, and that there is nothing to worry about. It triggers our relaxation response, which allows us to let go of tension.

Breathing in ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... And breathing out ... 2 ... 3 ... 4

Breathing in ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... And breathing out ... 2 ... 3 ... 4

Breathing in ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... And breathing out ... 2 ... 3 ... 4

Breathing in ... 2 ... 3 ... 4 ... And breathing out ... 2 ... 3 ... 4

And you can carry on gently breathing in and out in this steady rhythm for a while longer. If you need to you can adjust the timing of your breaths, finding a rhythm that is comfortable for you.

Breathing calmly and steadily. Noticing how tension seems to float away with each out-breath. Becoming more and more relaxed as you breathe peacefully.

Now for a few moments just enjoy the contented feeling of inner peace, calmness, and security.

Remember that you can use this simple method at any time throughout the day, whenever you need to relax, simply by slowing and deepening your breathing.

And now to end, gradually return your attention to your surroundings. Pay attention to any noises inside the room, and outside the room. Gently open your eyes before getting up in your own time. Feeling peaceful, relaxed, and ready to face the world with confidence, and renewed energy.

Online Guided Breathing Exercise available at the following site:

<http://wellbeing-glasgow.org.uk/audio-resources/> [last accessed 17/03/2020]

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

1. Begin by getting yourself as physically comfortable as you can and practising controlled breathing.
2. When you are ready, tense the muscles you are focusing on. Make sure you can feel the tension, but not so much as you feel pain. Keep the muscle tense for approximately 5 seconds.
3. Relax the muscles and keep it relaxed for approximately 10 seconds. It may be helpful to say something like “relax” as you relax the muscle.
4. When you have finished the relaxation exercise with all muscle groups, remain seated for a few moments until you feel more alert.

Muscle Groups: *Practice PMR on the following groups of muscles*

- Right hand and arm: clench your fist then bring your forearm to your shoulder to make a muscle.
- Left hand and arm: clench your fist then bring your forearm to your shoulder to make a muscle.
- Right Foot: curl in your toes
- Left foot: curl in your toes
- Right lower and upper legs: Pull your toes towards you to stretch your calf muscle. Then tighten your right thigh.
- Left lower and upper legs: Pull your toes towards you to stretch your calf muscle. Then tighten your right thigh.
- Stomach and chest: Breathe in deeply, filling your chest and lungs up with air.
- Back muscles: Pull your shoulders back a little and squeeze your shoulder blades together.
- Neck and shoulders: Shrug your shoulders up towards your ears. Push your head back slightly. Look up towards the ceiling and to the floor.
- Face and head: Frown your forehead, as though you were angry. Raise your forehead as though you were surprised. Smile widely. Open your mouth widely, as though you were yawning.

When you are finished the exercise, allow yourself to sit for a few minutes until you feel more alert.

Youtube video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNdEb8VeBF4>

Mindful Attention

People often have busy minds. They typically spend either a lot of time in the past (on memories), ruminating unhelpfully about things they think they did wrong, or worrying about things that might go wrong in the future. It is usually the case that none of these places are calm.

Mindful attention is an exercise in which you can train yourself to bring your attention back to the present moment. Practising a mindful attention exercise gives you power because the more readily you are able to recognise that your mind has wandered, the more likely you are to be able to do something about it.

Every time you notice that your mind has wandered you are having a powerful moment because in that moment you have a choice about what you do with your mind – do you continue to dwell on a memory or a worry? Or do you distract yourself and do something more productive instead?

The opposite of mindfulness is 'mindlessness'. Mindlessness is not a powerful position because you are at the mercy of wherever your mind chooses to wander – whether that is pain in the past or anxiety about the future.

This mindfulness exercise is a 'brain training' exercise. Neuroscientific research on mindfulness has shown that regular practice can lead to desirable changes in brain activity – even to changes in the structure of the brain.

Practice

This mindful attention exercise is deceptively simple. Your only job is to pay attention to your breathing – just to notice yourself breathing in and out – nothing else! The catch is that it is inevitable that your attention will wander. Your attention might get captured by thoughts, memories, images, worries, sounds, feelings, or other sensations. When you notice that your mind has wandered your first job is to congratulate yourself for noticing, and then to bring your attention back to the present moment – back to your breath. If your attention wanders once you are to bring it back once. If it wanders 100 times then bring it back 100 times. The point is not to have a mind that doesn't wander (that's not how human minds work) but is to become practised at noticing when it has wandered. In that moment you have a powerful choice about what to do with your attention.

First, find a place to sit comfortably where you will not be disturbed for five minutes. If you can, try to sit upright. This is not a relaxation exercise, but is instead designed to help you to train your attention. Our intention for these five minutes is to become mindfully aware of our breathing. Close your eyes if you are comfortable doing so, otherwise choose a spot to focus on.

To begin, focus your attention on your breath ... don't try to control it in any way ... just notice ...

It is often helpful to choose a location to focus on ... whether that's your chest rising and falling with your breath ... or noticing the sensation of the air flowing in and out of your nose ... just pick a location and try to keep your attention focused on that spot for the rest of the exercise.

Just paying attention to your breathing ... noticing whether it is fast or slow ... whether you are breathing high up in the chest or low down ... whether your breathing is jerky or whether you are breathing in a steady rhythm ... just noticing ...

As you continue to focus your attention on your breathing you might notice that your mind has wandered ... and that's ok ... Buddhist meditation trainers often refer to the human mind as the 'monkey mind' because it is easily distracted ... if you notice that your mind has wandered then firstly congratulate yourself for noticing ... and then gently return your attention to your breath ...

Just noticing the rise and fall of your breath ... being aware of your body breathing ... in the present moment ...

And again ... if you notice that your mind has wandered ... just congratulate yourself for noticing ... and gently bring your attention back to your breath ...

Paying attention to your breath ... right now in the present moment ... noticing the sensation of your breath ... as you continue to breathe ...

And now begin to gently return your attention to the world around you ...

noticing the sounds around you ... noticing your surroundings ... and bringing your full awareness to your present situation.

Mindfulness audio resources are available: <https://www.mindful.org/audio-resources-for-mindfulness-meditation/> [last accessed 17/03/2020].

Grounding

Grounding is a technique to help manage feelings of numbness or anxiety by connecting to the present moment through your body and its senses. It works by helping you to reconnect to what is happening in the here-and-now.

Grounding – Instructions

At the heart of all grounding techniques is the use of your body's senses to connect with the present moment. As long as you are doing this there really isn't a right or wrong to do it. For example, some people like to use special objects for grounding, with some people creating a "grounding box" for these. Other people like to use their senses to notice 3 things they can see, two they can hear, and one they can touch wherever they are. Others like to use their body itself to feel grounded. There are pros and cons to all of these, but it's best to find what works for you personally. Below are some examples of how to use these different senses for grounding.

SIGHT: focus on the objects around you and describe them in a curious, factual, detailed way. Notice the textures, colours, shapes, light and shadow. Notice symmetry, patterns or angles in what you can see.

SOUND: focus on the sounds around you. Notice what you can hear nearby or far away. Notice the pitch, tone and volume of the different sounds. Notice the duration of the sounds and how frequent they are.

TASTE: If you have something to hand that you can eat, focus on the different tastes, textures and sensations. You might want to carry something small (e.g. mints, raisins) around with you to begin with, so you can use this whenever you need to.

SMELL: Notice any scents. If you have a favourite perfume/aftershave, lip balm or scent, try to carry it around with you so you can use it as required. If it's pleasant, try to focus on these pleasant sensations.

TOUCH: focus on the physical surfaces or objects around you. Even something as everyday as a chair can be explored for some time in a curious and non-judgemental way, using the sense of touch. Run your hands under a cold tap, or hold an ice cube or a fluffy, cuddly toy.
Carry a grounding object that you can touch, see and/or smell.

BODY AWARENESS: Use your body to connect with the present moment. Push your feet into the floor to feel a solid, present connection with the ground below. Tense your muscles and notice the sensation. Try to connect with your breath, or any other part of your body. Notice any sensations in your body in a curious and open way. Explore the boundaries of your body by touching your skin and by noticing where it meets your clothes or the environment around you. Walk for a bit, noticing all the time what this feels like.

You may wish to couple your chosen grounding strategy with a brief safety statement: something to remember you are safe in the here-and-now. For example "It is March 2020 and I am safe here in my living room".

Safe Space Imagery Exercise



- *All visualisations can be strengthened by making sure you engage all your senses in building the picture in your mind - it's more than just "seeing"!*
- *If you notice any negative links or images entering your positive imagery, then get rid of that image and try to think of something else. Avoid using your home (or bed) as a 'safe place'. You can create a new 'safe place' in your imagination.*
- *Start by getting comfortable in a quiet place where you won't be disturbed, and take a couple of minutes to focus on your breathing, close your eyes, become aware of any tension in your body, and let that tension go with each out-breath.*

Now begin...

- *Imagine a place where you can feel calm, peaceful and safe. It may be a place you've been to before, somewhere you've dreamed about going to, somewhere you've seen a picture of, or just a peaceful place you can create in your mind.*
- *Look around you in that safe place, notice the colours and shapes. What else do you notice?*
- *Now notice the sounds that are around you, or perhaps the silence. Sounds far away and those nearer to you. Those that are more noticeable, and those that are more subtle.*
- *Think about any smells you notice there.*
- *Then focus on any skin sensations - the earth beneath you or whatever is supporting you in that place, the temperature, any movement of air, anything else you can touch.*
- *Notice the pleasant physical sensations in your body whilst you enjoy this safe place.*
- *Now whilst you're in your peaceful and safe place, you might choose to give it a name, whether one word or a phrase that you can use to bring that image back, anytime you need to.*
- *You can choose to stay there for a while, just enjoying the peacefulness and calmness. You can leave whenever you want to, just by opening your eyes and being aware of where you are now, and bringing yourself back to alertness in the 'here and now'.*

Soothing Rhythm Breathing Exercise

To practice the soothing rhythm breathing exercise, first make sure that you are sitting comfortably with both feet flat on the floor, about shoulder's width apart. Rest your hands on top of your legs and close your eyes or look down at the floor. Let yourself have a gentle facial expression, like a small smile.

Begin to focus on your breathing. Allow the air of each breath to come down into your diaphragm and feel it move in and out as you breathe. Play with the speed of your breath until you find a comfortable, soothing rhythm of breath.

You will likely find that your soothing rhythm is about three seconds in-breath, a slight pause, and three seconds out-breath. Continue focusing just on your breathing, through your nose, and in your peaceful rhythm.

Next comes a grounding moment. Turn your attention to your body, sensing the weight of your body resting on the chair and the floor underneath you. Let yourself feel held and supported by the chair.

Remember that it is okay for your mind to wander – just notice where it wanders, and gently guide it back to awareness of your body. Feel the air flowing in and out of your nostrils, and simply allow yourself to “be.”

If you find yourself stuck on noticing your breathing, let yourself focus on an object instead. You can hold something like a smooth stone or a softball, something that feels good to hold. Focus on the object as well as your breathing, and note the way it feels to hold the object.

When you're ready, slowly open your eyes and bring yourself back to the present moment. A small stretch and a deep breath can help you ready yourself for the rest of your day.

Youtube video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4X36wp6QJs>

Self-care Ideas

Everybody is different and what works for one person might not work for another. Here are some tips provided by people managing stress compiled by the Mental Health Foundation. Why not give some a try?

- Setting aside 10 minutes a day to relax and collect my thoughts
- Listen to relaxing music
- Watching funny movies
- Soaking in the bath with lavender oil
- Meditating
- Talking to someone
- Praying
- Reading a book
- Do something good for someone else
- Writing a letter to someone
- Painting or drawing
- Write a list of things to do and cross them off as you do them
- Unplug the phone and get some time to yourself
- Dancing around in your room to your favourite music
- A hot cup of something wonderful, a journal and a pen
- Eat a healthy meal
- Getting closer with nature e.g observing the sunrise or sunset
- Watch your favourite programme on TV
- Give yourself 'me time' just a few minutes to think about pleasant things
- Thinking of the work you HAVE achieved in a day, rather than what you haven't done
- Cheer up someone who is feeling down
- Spend some time doing something you enjoy
- Play games on the computer
- Find a quiet place and try to visualise a happy memory
- Do something creative
- Play a musical instrument
- Play with your pet
- Get some fresh air (even open windows in your home if you are self isolating)
- Be gentle to yourself
- Laugh!
- Write short stories
- Call a loved one
- Chat to your friends on Skype or Facebook
- Write poetry

- Tidy a room or cupboard
- Breathe deeply for two minutes, and focus on your breaths
- Write a list of the reasons you have to be happy with life
- Take a minute to stretch your body
- Use a relaxing room fragrance or scented candle to create a sense of sanctuary
- Looking at photos of happy memories
- Have a cup of tea
- Listen to the birds singing



Online Recovery Resources

Below are a range of online support services that you may want to explore.

Alcoholics Anonymous online intergroups:

<https://www.aaintergroup.org/downloads/index.php>

The Beacons

The Beacons believe wholeheartedly that recovery is possible for anyone; our vibrant community of people with lived experience, support each other and reach out to those who need help. By investing in people with lived experience, we will demonstrate to the wider community the different side to addiction; a side which sees people rebuild their lives afresh with new friends, stronger family links and better prospects. Offering online activities and telephone support.

www.thebeacons.org.uk

Cocaine Anonymous online services: <https://www.ca-online.org/>

Narcotics Anonymous online meetings: <https://online.ukna.org/>

Recoverist Network

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/267095750579359/>

<https://recoverist.net/>

SMART Recovery Meetings: <https://www.smartrecovery.org/community/calendar.php>

We Are With You (formerly Addiction) online services

<https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/help-and-advice/about-our-online-chat/#open-webchat>

Our team is online to offer you free, confidential advice with drugs or alcohol. Whether you need advice for yourself or to support a friend or relative, we're here for everyone. We'll work with you on your own goals, whether that's reducing your drug or alcohol use, stopping completely or just staying safe and healthy.

Who is online chat for?

Our online chat is for people who:

- need some support with drugs or alcohol
- need advice about someone else's drug or alcohol use
- are over 13 (if you're 13 or under you can contact [Childline](#) for help and support)