

## Coping with anxiety during Covid-19:

### 1. Breathing exercises

- a. Advanced Inhale-Exhale Hold
  - i. Inhale for 5 seconds
  - ii. hold for 7 seconds
  - iii. exhale slowly for 9 seconds
  - iv. Repeat this cycle 10 times
- b. Box breath: inhale for 4, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4 and repeat
- c. Ratio breathing: inhale for 3, exhale for 6, inhale for 4, exhale for 8, inhale for 5, exhale for 10

### 2. Grounding exercises

- a. Drop the Anchor:
  - i. Plant your feet into the floor.
  - ii. Push them down—notice the floor beneath you, supporting you.
  - iii. Notice the muscle tension in your legs as you push your feet down.
  - iv. Notice your entire body—and the feeling of gravity flowing down through your head, spine, and legs into your feet.
  - v. Now look around and notice what you can see and hear around you. Notice where you are and what you're doing.
- b. Self Compassion Break:
  - i. Put both hands on your heart, pause, and feel their warmth. You can also put your hands on any other place on your body that feels soothing and comforting, such as your belly or your face.
  - ii. Breathe deeply in and out.
  - iii. Speak these words to yourself (out loud or silently) in a warm and caring tone:

This is a moment of suffering  
Suffering is part of life  
May I be kind to myself  
May I give myself the compassion I need
  - iv. The first phrase, "This is a moment of suffering" is designed to bring mindfulness to the fact that you're in pain. Other possible wordings for this phrase are "I'm having a really tough time right now," or "This hurts," and so forth
  - v. The second phrase, "Suffering is part of life" is designed to remind you that imperfection is part of the shared human experience. Other possible wordings are "Everyone feels this way sometimes," "This is part of being human," and so on.
  - vi. The third phrase, "May I be kind to myself in this moment" is designed to help bring a sense of caring concern to your present moment experience.

Other possible wordings are “May I love and support myself right now” or “May I accept myself as I am,” and so on.

- vii. The final phrase, “May I give myself the compassion I need,” firmly sets your intention to be self-compassionate. You might use other words such as “May I remember that I am worthy of compassion,” or “May I give myself the same compassion I would give to a good friend,” and so on.
  - viii. Find the four phrases that seem most comfortable for you, and memorize them. Then, the next time you judge yourself or have a difficult experience you can use these phrases as a way of reminding yourself to be self-compassionate. It’s a handy tool to help soothe and calm troubled states of mind.
- c. The GLAD Technique
- i. G – Gratitude: Name one thing you’re thankful for today. This can be basic (food, water, sunlight, roof over your head, a healthy body, etc) or appreciating significant (important) things in your life (like caring friends, staff you connect with and feel supported by, a mentor or teacher, an experience, etc).
  - ii. L – Learned: Name one thing you learned today.
  - iii. A – Accomplishment: Name an accomplishment.
  - iv. D – Delight: Name one thing that made you laugh, smile, or brought you joy today.
- d. BE-THIS Grounding Technique
- i. B – Breathe: concentrate on your breathing. Take a deep breath in and let it out slowly. Repeat this deep breath a couple of times, focusing on the breath.
  - ii. E – Emotion: let yourself experience, or feel, your emotions and feelings with a sense of acceptance. Do not push them away or hold on to them, just simply label the emotion. Do not judge the emotion of good or bad, just describe what it is (“feeling of anger,” “feeling of sadness,” “tightness in my stomach,” etc). Notice if your feelings change at all.
  - iii. T – Touch: Hold your hands a couple of inches apart in front of your chest, as though you are going to press them together. Take three deep breaths and imagine sending positive energy in the space between your hands. Now press your palms together. Take your hands to your eyes and imagine that positive energy, now on your hands, transferring to your eyes. Move your hands along your forehead, neck, temples, shoulders, heart, and stomach. Imagine the energy in your hands is relaxing and soothing you. Now release your hands and shake out any remaining tension.
  - iv. H – Hear: Tune into the sounds of the room around you, noticing your sense of hearing expand to even the noises you are making with your breath or any movement you are making. Just notice each sound moment-to-moment without judgment.

- v. I – Intentional Stretching: Notice where your body feels tense and stretch that muscle or part. You might stretch your neck by rolling your head around from right to left in a relaxing circular movement, or raise your arms above your head as you inhale, and lower them while you exhale. Move and stretch gently and notice if you feel differently during or after the stretching.
- vi. S – Sight/Smell: Look around the room and notice the details, what different shapes, sizes, and colors of objects do you see? What different scents are in the room?
- vii. Once you complete “BE-THIS” re-rate your level of emotional intensity, or how big or small your feeling is.

### 3. Practice Mindfulness

#### a. Butterfly Body Scan

- i. Sometimes we need to use calming techniques when we feel overwhelmed, sad, or are trying to overcome urges to use destructive coping mechanisms. With help from an imaginary butterfly, we move our attention from one part of our body to another to relax. Let's practice:
  1. First, sit or lie down comfortably with your eyes closed if that is comfortable for you. Breathe naturally, noticing how it feels to breathe in and out.
  2. Now imagine a butterfly that is light as a feather. It can be any color you'd like. Take a moment and picture the butterfly in your mind. Imagine your butterfly is hovering nearby. We're going to pretend that the magic butterfly rests on different parts of our body, and when it lands, that part of our body feels relaxed and pleasant.
  3. Let's start with our forehead, imagine your forehead relaxes when the butterfly rests on it. Now imagine the butterfly moves from your forehead to your shoulders. Your shoulders feel relaxed when the butterfly lands on it. Imagine it is resting on your hands and they release tension. Now it's floating to your stomach, imagine your whole body relaxing. Imagine it floats down to your legs, resting on your knee. Your leg feels relaxed.
  4. Finally, it floats to your feet and rests on them for a second. Your feet feel completely relaxed.

Now that your whole body is relaxed sit here and rest for a moment, feeling the rhythm of your breath.

When you're ready, sit up slowly and reach your hands to the sky. Take a deep breath in and lower your arms as you breathe out.
- ii. Download a mindfulness app and use guided meditations
  1. Insight Timer: <https://insighttimer.com/>
  2. Liberate (for POC): <https://liberatemeditation.com/>
  3. Calm: <https://www.calm.com/>

4. Headspace: <https://www.headspace.com/>
    - iii. Do a body scan guided meditation:  
<https://www.mindful.org/beginners-body-scan-meditation/>
    - iv. Do a guided meditation about letting go:  
<https://www.meditation-magic.com/blog/let-go-your-stress-in-5-minutes-or-less-the-balloon-meditation>
  4. Practice Containment when flooded or experiencing big emotions:
    - a. Container Exercise:
      1. I want you to bring some sort of secure container to your mind's eye, perhaps in this room, or in another secure place. This container will be strong enough to hold all this disturbing stuff – the memories, images, thoughts, physical sensations, sounds, smells, emotions.
      2. What would this container have to be like in order to securely hold your distress? (e.g. a safe, office drawer, shipping container, crate,)
      3. Can you describe it? What is it? What color is it? How big is it? What does it look like? What is it made of? What makes it safe and secure?
      4. Now imagine taking the distressing images and putting them inside or sending them to the container, then shut the door or lid. Anything else that needs to go in there? Now shut the door securely.
      5. How do we make the door more secure? Can you do that now?
      6. Check to see if it is secure now. Is there anything else you need to do to make it more secure?
      7. How does it feel now? Think about whether you'd like to leave the container in the room where you are or if there's another more secure place you'd like to leave it.
      8. During the week, if anything disturbing comes up, just imagine sending it to your container and putting it all in there.
  5. Distract yourself for contained periods of time:
    - a. Watch one episode of a show
    - b. Watch a movie
    - c. Create art
    - d. Try out a new recipe
    - e. Journal
    - f. Craft
    - g. Listen to an Audiobook or podcast to block out intrusive thoughts
    - h. Color in a Mindfulness coloring book or on a coloring page
    - i. Take a virtual tour of a museum:  
<https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-vi>

[rtual-tours?fbclid=IwAR3sZ0fe5zYMLLrSS6v7u--qx2B313SpT4eX-q96DQIHD9W4R3eDH3Wynpk](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFKE7WVJfvaHW5q283SxchA)

- j. Take a Free Yoga class:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFKE7WVJfvaHW5q283SxchA>
  - k. Watch a Met Opera performance:  
[https://operawire.com/metropolitan-opera-to-offer-up-nightly-met-opera-streams/?fbclid=IwAR0q0VffYnpANV56MGU890wDmBBjxK\\_syNUf8K1iBrmjMprjR6iftWnQltM](https://operawire.com/metropolitan-opera-to-offer-up-nightly-met-opera-streams/?fbclid=IwAR0q0VffYnpANV56MGU890wDmBBjxK_syNUf8K1iBrmjMprjR6iftWnQltM)
  - l. Watch a Berlin Philharmonic performance:  
[https://www.digitalconcerthall.com/en/home?fbclid=IwAR3CHuD\\_MP96oR1BtGeLBO8QC4Uj1wWv2Uz0D-JvfLJcYzkKDZGx-c5DxQY](https://www.digitalconcerthall.com/en/home?fbclid=IwAR3CHuD_MP96oR1BtGeLBO8QC4Uj1wWv2Uz0D-JvfLJcYzkKDZGx-c5DxQY)
  - m. Take a virtual field trip:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SvldgTx9djKO6SjyvPDsoGlkgE3iExmi3qh2KRRku\\_w/preview?fbclid=IwAR2Z1P7OKGSh8DwOjRVrs6-dYXAVBans5yHqS3erx3HjvffjMvRwl\\_Wbx8Y&pru=AAABcQmKvp8\\*tE2nCsUXm6lcw-bQ\\_sAn6w](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1SvldgTx9djKO6SjyvPDsoGlkgE3iExmi3qh2KRRku_w/preview?fbclid=IwAR2Z1P7OKGSh8DwOjRVrs6-dYXAVBans5yHqS3erx3HjvffjMvRwl_Wbx8Y&pru=AAABcQmKvp8*tE2nCsUXm6lcw-bQ_sAn6w)
  - n. Watch a live stream from the Monterey Bay Aquarium:  
[https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams/?fbclid=IwAR2WMM4dOm3JPRwardnDNTkR\\_CGdKD8EaXpRqWo-1bmmMnduwWQ6AvSzt\\_8](https://www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams/?fbclid=IwAR2WMM4dOm3JPRwardnDNTkR_CGdKD8EaXpRqWo-1bmmMnduwWQ6AvSzt_8)
  - o. Take a free online course:  
<https://www.freecodecamp.org/news/ivy-league-free-online-courses-a0d7ae675869/?fbclid=IwAR3Z1v0ifQypjeoZZAG8-vmS8830Ao5YIJWOcQ8xGGdiR6tCCSj0zCoXE5U>
  - p. Take an online streaming yoga class:  
<https://www.roomtobreathechicago.com/online-in-real-time>
6. Setting limits on how often you check news/social media
    - a. Create specific times to read news or look at social media to avoid flooding of information
  7. Add structure to the day where possible
  8. Engage in joyful movement (not punishing exercise)
  9. Be aware of what you do have control over and be present with that experience
  10. Draw abstractly about what you're feeling
  11. Play instrumental music so you feel like you're in a movie
  12. Listen to sad music and let yourself cry
  13. Listen to happy music and dance or move in a way that feels good
  14. Stretch
  15. If you have a tendency to self harm: hold ice or peel a frozen orange, aggressively scribble on paper, or tear up paper
  16. Take a bath with candles and a movie or a book
  17. Get out in Nature when possible:
    - a. Go for a walk in an isolated place
    - b. Step outside on your balcony or courtyard for a moment
    - c. Walk a pet if you have one
  18. Practice Radical Acceptance:

- a. "I can't change what has already happened"
  - b. "There's no point in fighting the past"
  - c. "I can survive the present even if I don't like what's happening"
19. Practice Challenging your Thoughts:
- a. "Do I believe this thought?"
  - b. "Where does this thought come from?"
  - c. "Is this my thought or someone else's?"
  - d. "What can I learn from this thought?" or "What is this thought trying to tell me?"
  - e. "Am I ready to heal or release this thought or does it still serve me?"
20. Practice Reframing:
- a. Think of this time as a way to reconnect with yourself rather than usual overextending
21. Help others from afar:
- a. Donate to a local organization providing food to children/families in need
  - b. Donate skills organizations or friends may need
22. Connect with others via virtual platforms (FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, Google HangOut)
- a. Have a dance party (you can use headphones to play music you like for yourself or play over a speaker for everyone)
  - b. Get a group together to discuss feelings of isolation, uncertainty, and boredom
  - c. Check in on family members and friends to feel connected even if you're practicing physical distancing
23. Read articles about coping with anxiety and uncertainty during Covid-19
- a. <https://blogs.psychcentral.com/healing-together/2020/03/the-corona-virus-copping-with-fear-and-uncertainty/>
  - b. <https://afsp.org/taking-care-of-your-mental-health-in-the-face-of-uncertainty/?fbclid=IwAR2tHyPTUYBykxakYAiPwetZ9dFrgibRB1pKnBQrDkvF3sggPF3p2MoVW10>
  - c. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/02/28/809580453/just-for-kids-a-comic-exploring-the-new-coronavirus>
24. Normalize your anxiety
- i. Recognize that it is a completely normal reaction to feel anxiety right now
  - ii. Remind yourself that you are not alone
  - iii. Remind others' they are not alone
  - iv. Connect with others' in community feeling similarly via virtual platforms and organize
    1. Write to your representatives
    2. Call your representatives