

**Coping with lockdown—
Tools and tips to help you
through these tough times**



Anxiety UK Self-Care tips

1. Becoming comfortable with sitting with our emotions. The gremlins in our head like us to believe that we aren't going to be able to cope with emotions when they are negative/strong emotions. The fact is, we CAN cope with such emotions and that it has been proven that if we sit with such emotions (or indeed, any emotion) for 15 minutes, after this time, the strong feeling of that emotion will have passed. So we can allow ourselves to have a 15 minute block of emotion and not seek to push that emotion away.

2. Triangular breathing – so this is a time-served, breathing technique, based on the out breath being much longer and in doing so, stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system to turn on the rest, repair and digest part of our nervous systems. The method we suggest you use is: in for 4 seconds (through the nose) – hold for 7 seconds, and out for 8 seconds (through the mouth). The amount of seconds can be changed for comfort reasons so long as the out breath is longer than the in breath.

3. Permission slips – (this comes from the work of Brene Brown- <https://brenebrown.com>). This is where you literally say: “I give myself permission to....” So it could be: ‘to enjoy my first cup of coffee in the morning without interruption’ or ‘not to complete everything on my to-do list tonight’. Allow yourself to be human not to get everything right.

4. Self-compassion break (CFT based strategy from the work of Kristin Neff). This is a 3-step process:

- a. Recognising when you are having a hard time about something that you are having a moment of suffering – acknowledge that you are feeling distressed about something/finding something difficult.
- b. Recognise that suffering is part of the human condition and something that you are not on your own in feeling – i.e. others will be feeling like this too.
- c. Put your hand on your heart/give yourself a hug and say: I'm doing my best/everything will be OK.

Science has shown that this simple technique, just like the triangular breathing technique, switches your nervous system into parasympathetic mode

5. Gratitude – research has shown then when you list 5 things that you are grateful for, you cannot be worry at the same time – our minds apparently don't have the capability to do both at the same time. So literally listing 5 things you are grateful for. Things like: having a nice garden, being able to be at home, family, children, having a job that gives me a purpose in life.

6. Connection – human beings need to have 3 types of connection in their lives as follows:

- a. Connection to self (so having meaningful values in your life that you can live your life in accordance with; having a purpose in life).
- b. Connection to nature (self-explanatory but getting outside and valuing nature as I think some of us have been doing when we've been on our walks lately).
- c. Connection to community (by this, we mean connection to those friends and people we have in our life who when the chips are down, have our back – our so-called 'tribe').

THE APPLE TECHNIQUE

We also recommend using the APPLE technique to help you manage your anxiety, which is a technique we discovered on www.getselfhelp.co.uk



The five phases of the **APPLE** technique are -

- **Acknowledge** – Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind.
- **Pause** – Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Just pause and breathe.
- **Pull back** – Tell yourself this is just the worry talking, and this apparent need for certainty is not helpful and not necessary. It is only a thought or feeling. Don't believe everything you think. Thoughts are not statements or facts.
- **Let go** – Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond to them. You might imagine them floating away in a bubble or cloud.
- **Explore** – Explore the present moment, because right now, in this moment, all is well. Notice your breathing and the sensations of your breathing. Notice the ground beneath you. Look around and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch, what you can smell. Right now. Then shift your focus of attention to something else – on what you need to do, on what you were doing before you noticed the worry, or do something else – mindfully with your full attention.

Exercise - Get walking!

There's a reason the government are encouraging us to get an hour of exercise everyday, because it is good for our mental health as much as it is our physical health! There's also no need to worry about being superfit, just simply walking is a great cardio exercise.

The recommended amount is about 150 minutes a week, this can help to maintain a healthy lifestyle and encourages your brain to release endorphins. Walking has lots of benefits such as helping you to sleep better, improve your mood, reduce calories and keep your heart healthy. And best of all, it's free!

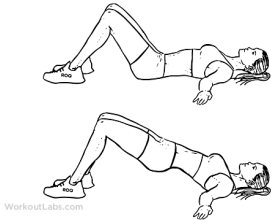

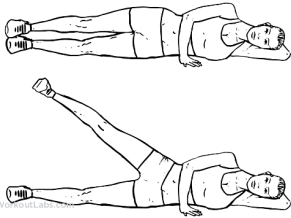
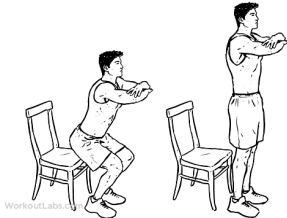

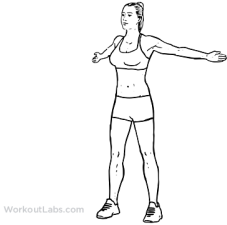
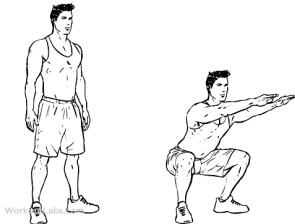

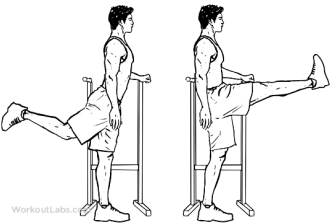
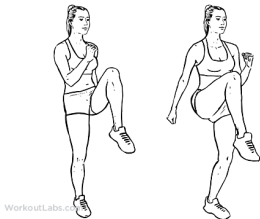
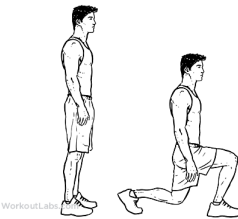
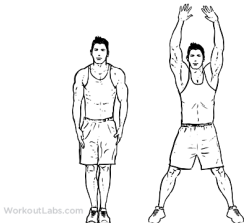
Introducing walking into your daily routine will slowly help your body adapt without the intensity of overdoing it straight away. Why not starting with shorter walks and building up to 30.

A brisk 10 minute walk has lots of health benefits. If you travel to work by public transport, try walking instead. Or when you do your weekly shop, plan out a longer route. You could make a day of it, plan to do a long walk alone or with friends. Why not set a walking playlist or line up a few podcasts to listen to?

Remember to pack water and healthy snacks for your travels! Try and challenge yourself to walk each day to improve your mood during lockdown.



Exercise at home!

<p><u>In Bed</u> Do these before you get up or before you go to sleep</p>	<p>Glute Bridges 5-10</p> 	<p>Cobra stretches Hold for 10-30 secs</p> 	<p>Side-to-side legs 5-10 each side</p> 
	<p>Repeat each exercise 3 times, with a break in-between at your own pace. Remember not to push yourself too much.</p>		
<p><u>Sat Down</u> Do these on a chair, at your desk or sofa at home</p>	<p>Get ups 5-10</p> 	<p>Neck stretch Hold for 10-30 secs each side</p> 	<p>Open arms Hold for 10-30 secs</p> 
	<p>Repeat each exercise 3 times, with a break in-between at your own pace. Remember not to push yourself too much.</p>		
<p><u>Stood Up</u> Do these for a bit more activity on your feet</p>	<p>Squats 5-10</p> 	<p>Reach up & touch toes 5-10</p> 	<p>Leg swings 5-10</p> 
	<p>Repeat each exercise 3 times, with a break in-between at your own pace. Remember not to push yourself too much.</p>		
<p><u>Get Moving</u> Do these for getting your heart rate up if you can't manage to get out for a walk</p>	<p>Jog on the spot 30 secs</p> 	<p>Lunges 5-10</p> 	<p>Star jumps 5-10</p> 
	<p>Repeat each exercise 3 times, with a break in-between at your own pace. Remember not to push yourself too much.</p>		

Tips to sleeping well



If you are experiencing anxiety or stress, your body needs sleep more than ever but it can be difficult to establish a good sleeping routine, particularly during lockdown. Nevertheless, having a good sleeping pattern is essential and can reduce your anxiety. Below are a couple helpful tips on how to tackle sleep anxiety and create a better routine for avoiding late nights.

Eating and drinking well: Avoid drinks that contain caffeine as these possess stimulant properties that will prevent you falling asleep. However, having a herbal tea like chamomile tea or tea with valerian root can be helpful for sleep. It is also best to avoid alcohol as it interrupts the quality of the sleep. Do not forget to drink plenty of water throughout the day and eat right. A healthy, balanced diet can help you sleep well but timing of when you eat is also an important factor to take into consideration.

Activity and exercise: Activities that involve physical and/or mental stimulation help improve sleep quality (for example, regular exercise or reading). Moderate exercise can lead to feelings of tranquillity, personal satisfaction and well-being that can help with sleep but be careful not to exercise too strenuously close to bedtime as this will mean it is harder to get to sleep due to circulating increased adrenaline levels. Many people find that practising yoga is a great way to reduce stress and sleep better.

Regular routine: Get into a regular bedtime routine. Go to bed and get up at the same time each day (set the alarm and get up, even if you did not fall asleep until late). Don't try to catch up sleep by having naps. If you really need one it should not last more than 20 mins.

Environment: Make sure that your room is sufficiently dark, the right temperature (not too warm and not too cool) and your bed is comfortable. Avoid using your bed for anything other than sleeping and try to avoid using screens for the last hour of your day. Don't bring your phone to bed with you as that can also be a harmful distraction and prevent you from falling asleep.

Relax: Try having a warm bath before going to bed or meditate. The practice of meditation has been around for thousands of years and scientific evidence suggests that meditation can greatly reduce the stress hormone cortisol. In simple terms this means by meditating daily we can greatly improve our physical and mental wellbeing, sleep better and increase our focus.

For those who are interested in guided meditation and other mindfulness tips - lots of our members use Headspace. To read more about headspace and membership with Anxiety UK please refer to our website: <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/headspace/>

Moreover, as an Anxiety UK member you qualify for a discount of 25% across the entire snoozzy range weighed blankets that can be suitable for smaller adults. For more information, please refer to our Member's area: <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/members/members-welcome/>

Positive Affirmations

As well as seeking reassurance from others, it is useful to learn how to reassure yourself in times of anxiety. It can be tempting to surrender to these feelings to despair, but adopting and repeating positive mantras will help you reframe the way you see things.

Examples of positive affirmations:

- This is just anxiety, nothing more.
- This feeling will pass.
- I am safe.
- I am becoming calmer with each breath
- I am in control

Remember: be kind to yourself. Anxiety and panic attacks can be extremely unpleasant, but they *will* pass and you *will* get through it.

Visualisation

As well as breathing exercises, you can use visual imagery to relax yourself and unwind. It can be difficult to turn off our anxious thoughts, and having something to focus on instead can help draw you out of that cycle of worry.

To practise visualisation, find a quiet and comfortable place to begin. Start by either sitting or lying down.

Close your eyes.

Breathe slowly and deeply. Feel the tension leave your body with each breath.

Begin by imagining you're lying in a field of grass. The sky is a bright, clear blue above you and the sun warms your face. You can hear the distant sound of birds and crickets chirping all around you. A breeze ripples through the grass. You feel calm and relaxed.

Feel the weight of your body as it lies in the grass. Your legs are heavy. Your arms are warm in the sunshine. Let the tension pour out of you through your fingertips. Let your face relax, feeling all the tension leave your forehead, eyes, neck, shoulders. Listen to the rhythmic sound of the wind, and slowly breathe alongside it. You are safe here.

Once you feel relaxed, imagine that you are slowly getting to your feet. You walk through the field as the sun shines down on you. You can come back here whenever you like.

Slowly, open your eyes.

Give yourself time to be CREATIVE!

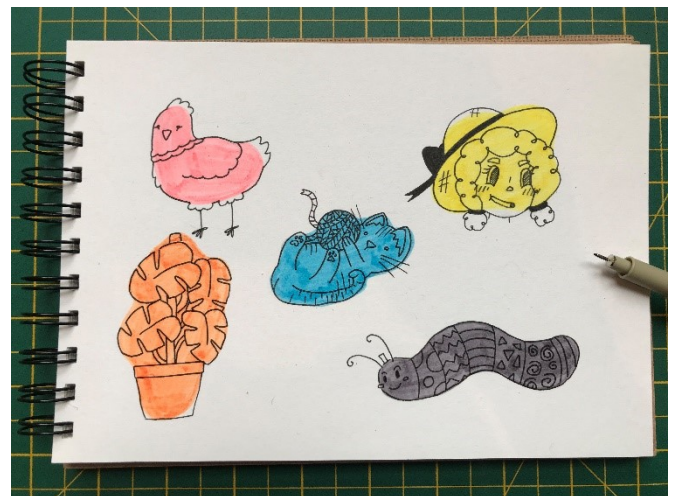
Letting your brain get creative is a great way to focus your mind and give yourself something tactile to do at the same time. You don't need special materials or gym equipment to flex this muscle!

Art

You might have a sketch pad or a colouring book lying around? Or even just some paper and a pencil? Drawing is a great way to spend some time with yourself or with loved ones. You might try a still life or a portrait? If this seems daunting, then there are plenty of arty exercises that will help you get warmed up.

E.g. Shape Sketches.

1. Grab a felt tip, highlighter, or some paint and a piece of paper and draw some random shapes.
2. Using a pen try to make the shapes into characters or objects.



Writing

If storytelling is more down your alley, then why not try writing a short story or a poem? You could work together with friends or family to write a line each and make it a collaborative effort!

E.g. Write an affirmation haiku

Haikus are 3-line poems that follow a 5 syllable/7 syllable/5 syllable structure. Why not write some affirmations in this poetic form?

I deserve kindness!
What if – it will be okay?
These feelings will pass...