



PART I

HANDLING
ANXIETY

during
COVID-19



A NEW NORMAL

The **coronavirus** pandemic has turned **2020** upside down, impacting most people across the globe. The unknown factors of this disease have altered almost every facet of life causing uncertainty around health safety, income, school, childcare and more. Undoubtedly, all of this unknown can cause anxiety in the most calm person and especially those who are already living with an anxiety disorder.

This article is the **first in a 3-part series** on learning ways to manage your anxiety. In this first part, we'll cover the signs and forms of anxiety along with some actionable steps you can take to ease your **COVID stress**.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ANXIETY

It's normal to feel stress and anxiety in daily life and now with a pandemic, there are extra stressors at play.

If you've found it difficult to navigate our "new normal" – you aren't alone. The first step is acknowledging that your feelings are normal.

IDENTIFYING YOUR FEELINGS

While one of the best things that you can do is acknowledge your emotional state, ruminating, discounting, or comparing your feelings of anxiety to others are not.

However, recognizing and understanding the stressors of your anxiety is a great way to find coping mechanisms that work for your unique situation. Anxiety typically triggers a fight-or-flight response in individuals, with symptoms that can range from minor to extreme including:

- Fatigue, even nausea
- Excessive worry & fear
- Insomnia
- Social Anxiety
- Heart palpitations
- Trembling
- Lack of concentration
- Hypervigilance around health
- Change in eating habits
- Irritability & anger spurts

FROM THE EXPERTS

Lacie Barber, an occupational health psychologist at San Diego State University says, "Sometimes fixing the problem is good, sometimes being proactive is good, sometimes managing your emotions with self-care is good, and in some cases even avoidance can be fine," she says.

"But doing the same thing regardless of the situation is not going to work. In uncontrollable situations, focusing on what you can control, like your reactions, will be best."

ANXIETY ACTION PLAN

Now that we've acknowledged your anxiety, accepted that it's normal AND reviewed the typical physical sensations of feeling anxiety, it's time to put your "anti-anxiety-plan" in place. Here are 8 tactics you can take to reduce stress & ease anxiety.

TALK ABOUT IT

Talking to someone you trust about your anxiety can provide some relief. Sometimes just having someone listen to your concerns can help in itself.

But, some times that's not as easy as it sounds. Whether it's social anxiety, being in a COVID high-risk group, lack of insurance or other reasons, there is help out there.

Remember, sometimes talking to a 3rd-party -- someone that's not a friend or a family member can be refreshing. After all, the feelings of stress & anxiety are often connected to those closet to us.

Below are some helpful resources to keep you engaged with others. Also, check out our full list at the end of this article.

FRIENDS & FAMILY

If you already have supportive friends and family, opening up to them can be a great place to start.

It can be a huge relief to open up to the people closest to you, since you no longer have to hide what you're feeling. You can also open up to coaches, teachers, or religious leaders—anyone in your personal life that you're close to.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Support groups are made up of people who have experienced similar things. They can meet in person or online.

They talk about their daily lives, struggles, and strategies they've used to cope and thrive. It can be nice to feel like you belong in a community, and to hear about other people experiencing the same things you have.

PROFESSIONALS

Professionals you can open up to about your mental health include doctors, therapists, or peer supporters.

If you already see a doctor, that can be a great place to start—and they can help you find a therapist or any other specialists you may need to see. If you're in school, a school counselor can help you with this.

HELP LINES

Hotlines, warmlines, online support, or text lines can help, too. These are typically run by trained volunteers or employees whose job it is to listen to those who reach out.

Talking to a stranger can help you feel safer about what you're sharing, and strangers may be able to offer more objective feedback than the people involved in our lives.

**See the last page for a full list of resources, if you are viewing this on your device or computer, just click on the resource link. You matter! Don't be afraid to ask for help!*

TAKE A NEWS BREAK

Take a break from the news. Turn off the television and put your phone away! Dwelling on these situations will not alter their course.

This type of behavior will only lead to more anger, anxiety and fear. The emotional response to crisis situations is complex, but trying to control uncontrollable circumstances will always lead to anxiety.

TRY BREATH WORK

The average individual is overstimulated every single day. Stress hormones flood our bodies, our heart rate rises and we clench our jaw, tense our shoulder muscles and exacerbate that by staring down at our phones, hunched over.

Our breathing changes too. Pay attention to how much YOU even clench your teeth when scrolling through the news on your phone!

Reduce Anxiety With This Technique

Rechaka, which means "exhale" in Sanskrit, is one of the key techniques used in SOMA Breath. It offers a multitude of health benefits, like relieving symptoms of depression and anxiety, improving stress reduction. *Here's how it's done - give it a try!*

1

Sit in a comfortable position with your back straight.

2

Inhale through your nose.

3

Purse your lips & gently breathe the air out of the mouth very slowly as though you are breathing out through a straw. At the same time, deeply relax all of the muscles in your body.

4

As you exhale, imagine a wave of relaxation following down your body from the top of your head to the soles of your feet.

5

Repeat the process for 5 minutes.

6

Once you have exhaled, hold your breath for a beat before inhaling & repeating.



GET PHYSICAL

Anxiety disorders, which affects 40 million adults, are the most common psychiatric illnesses in the U.S.

The benefits of exercise may well extend beyond stress relief to improving anxiety and related disorders.

Psychologists studying how exercise relieves anxiety and depression suggest that a 10-minute walk may be just as good as a 45-minute workout.

Some studies show that exercise can work quickly to elevate depressed mood in many people.

A brisk walk or other simple activity can deliver several hours of relief, similar to taking an aspirin for a headache.

The key with exercise is to make it easy - you don't need a gym membership or expensive home equipment. Below are some ideas to get you active!

HOME WORKOUTS

CIRCUIT EXERCISES

- 1st, choose 3-4 cardio exercises like jumping jacks, jogging in place, step-ups, mountain climbers, burpees, or jumping rope.
- 2nd, choose three strength training exercises like pushups, planks, abdominal crunches, tricep dips, wall sits, lunges, and squats.
- 3rd, you'll pick 5 exercises from your cardio & strength lists. Set a timer for 15 minutes and do as many reps as possible of your exercise circuit for the time limit you set. Start with 1 round of circuit repetitions & then work up to several in a 45-60 minute block.

YOGA

Since the 1970s, meditation and other stress-reduction techniques have been studied as possible treatments for depression and anxiety.

One such practice, yoga, has received less attention in the medical literature, though it has become increasingly popular in recent decades. One national survey estimated, for example, that about 7.5% of U.S. adults had tried yoga at least once, and that nearly 4% practiced yoga in the previous year.

Again start slow to avoid burnout. Try these 4 easy yoga poses. For some of the best [FREE YouTube videos](#), search "[Yoga with Adrienne](#)"



EAT TO THRIVE

It's normal to feel stress and anxiety in daily life and now with a pandemic, there are extra stressors at play.

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GET ENOUGH SLEEP

While one of the best things that you can do is acknowledge your emotional state, ruminating, discounting, or comparing your feelings of anxiety to others are not.

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CONCLUSION

When things are bad, there is a legitimate reason to feel bad. But if you don't deal with it, you're going to lose more than just a job - you'll lose relationships, your self confidence, you could even lose technical abilities if you stay dormant in your profession.

Often your ability to work through anxiety -- get past it -- varies depending on the type of crisis you faced. The more severe, the longer it's going to take to get over it.

The key to easing your anxiety is taking action - even tiny steps matter!

The next piece of the equation is consistency. This means taking the techniques described & scheduling those activities into your weekly schedule. Start with 10 minute blocks of activity. Have a goal to incorporate 5-6, 10-minute activity into your week.

Again, this process doesn't have to take over your life and create MORE anxiety. Start slow, but be consistent. Most of all, don't be afraid to reach out for help. Self-care is even more important as we progress through the COVID pandemic.

RESOURCES

ONLINE - SELF-GUIDED HELP

THIS WAY UP WEBSITE – This Way Up is run by clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, researchers, and web technicians based at the Clinical Research Unit for Anxiety and Depression (CRUfAD) – a joint facility of St Vincent’s Hospital and the University of New South Wales.

[Free COVID workbook resource | Calming Emotions](#)

Click this link or enter the below link in your browser

<https://bit.ly/calming-emotions-RLC>

[Free COVID workbook resource | Getting Through](#)

Click this link or enter the below link in your browser

<https://bit.ly/get-thru-RLC>

YOGA

[Yoga with Adrienne](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJJWArRfKa0>

[Yoga Journal](#)

<https://www.yogajournal.com/poses/yoga-by-benefit/anxiety>

[Healthline Website](#)

<https://www.healthline.com/health/anxiety/yoga-for-anxiety>

TALK THERAPY

[Medical News Today](#)

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/online-therapist-for-free>

[ADAA Website](#)

<https://adaa.org/finding-help/treatment/low-cost-treatment>

[Real Life Counseling](#)

<https://reallifecounseling.us/>

[Vibrant Website](#)

<https://www.vibrant.org/>

EXERCISE

[Very Well Mind](#)

<https://www.verywellmind.com/physical-exercise-for-panic-disorder-and-anxiety-2584094>

[ADAA Website](#)

<https://adaa.org/living-with-anxiety/managing-anxiety/exercise-stress-and-anxiety>

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Above all, remember that you aren't alone no matter how anxious the pandemic has you feeling.

If you are in the Portland/Vancouver area, we are accepting new patients for counseling.

Contact Us:

(360)-619-2226

<https://reallifecounseling.us/request-an-appointment/>

*If you are feeling suicidal, there is help! Call
the national suicide prevention lifeline at:
800-273-8255*