

**Dream big.**  
**Because**  
**you can.**

**Reducing Panic  
and Anxiety**

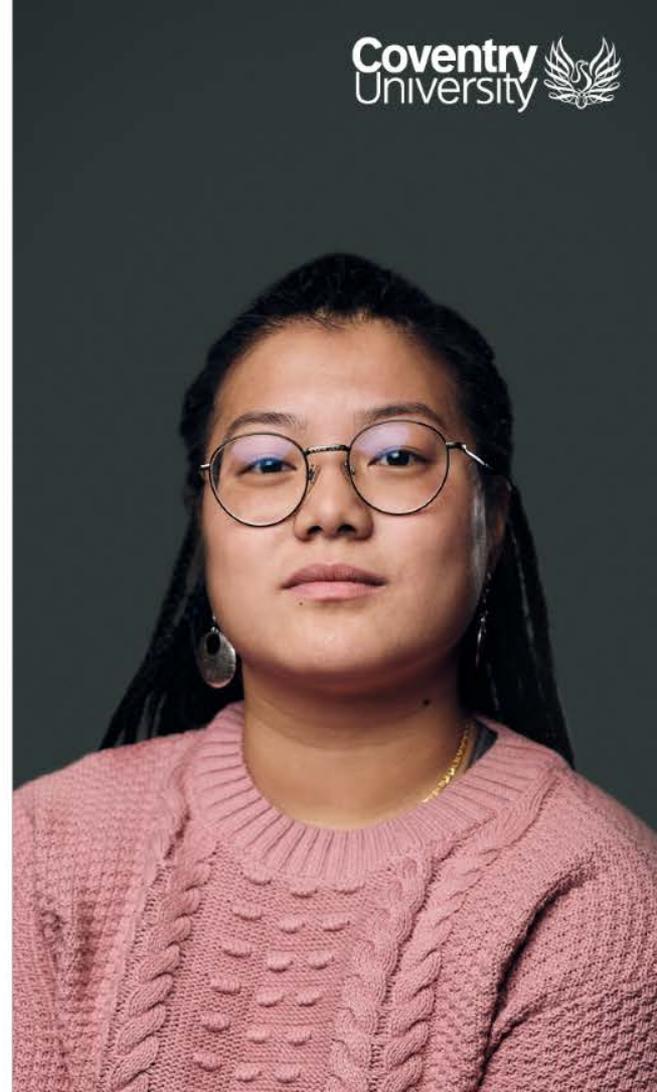


In these uncertain and unsettling times that we find ourselves in, it is a normal response to feel anxious. Coronavirus has caused a pandemic, something none of us have ever experienced in our lifetime. Every aspect of our lives are being impacted.

If you have struggled with anxiety in the past then you may be experiencing an increase in your anxiety.

**This information sheet will cover:**

- What is anxiety?
- Self-care of our mind
- Some techniques that may support you when you feel anxious
- Counselling
- How to access counselling
- Resources



## What is anxiety?

Anxiety is the body's natural way of dealing with what we think is a danger or a threat. When your body thinks it is in danger, you may start to feel changes happening in your body. You might feel that your muscles in your body are tense, you are breathing faster, your heart is racing and you begin to sweat. These are all ways that anxiety affects your body. Feeling anxious is a normal part of life and everyone feels anxious from time to time. It is when anxiety starts to interfere with your life that it may become problematic.

## Self-care of our mind

There are practical steps that we all can you can take when it comes to self-care.

It is important that you find something that is realistic and that supports you to feel some ease. We are all unique and different so do be mindful that what works for one person might not for you.



**Exercise is important** as it releases hormones that can give a sense of wellbeing.

Choose exercise that you enjoy, that is realistic and achievable. Such as a daily walk, jog, cycle and may be an exercise videos that you can find online.

Yoga offers stretching, flexibility and is designed to encourage relaxation, reduce stress and relieve anxiety.

**Another self-care method is meditation** it can reduce stress and that in turn can reduce anxiety. Meditation might not be for you: this is about figuring out what works for you and what doesn't. There are various meditation videos on line, find one that suits you.

**Keeping in contact** with friends and family can also be away to reduce stress and anxiety, perhaps structure the calls with an activity, a game or shared quiz

Perhaps you might explore taking up a new hobby or activity that gives you enjoyment.



**Structuring your day may help.** If you are working from home and/or are home schooling, that may provide you with some structure. If you are not, perhaps consider structuring your day in a way that suits you. Give your day purpose, perhaps set yourself an achievable task each day.

On the days where you feel that you have not 'achieved' anything then be kind to yourself, acknowledging that you are doing your best under very difficult circumstances.

**Some techniques that may support you when you feel anxious.** It might be hard to learn a new skill when you are anxious. It is best to practice these exercise when you do not feel anxious.

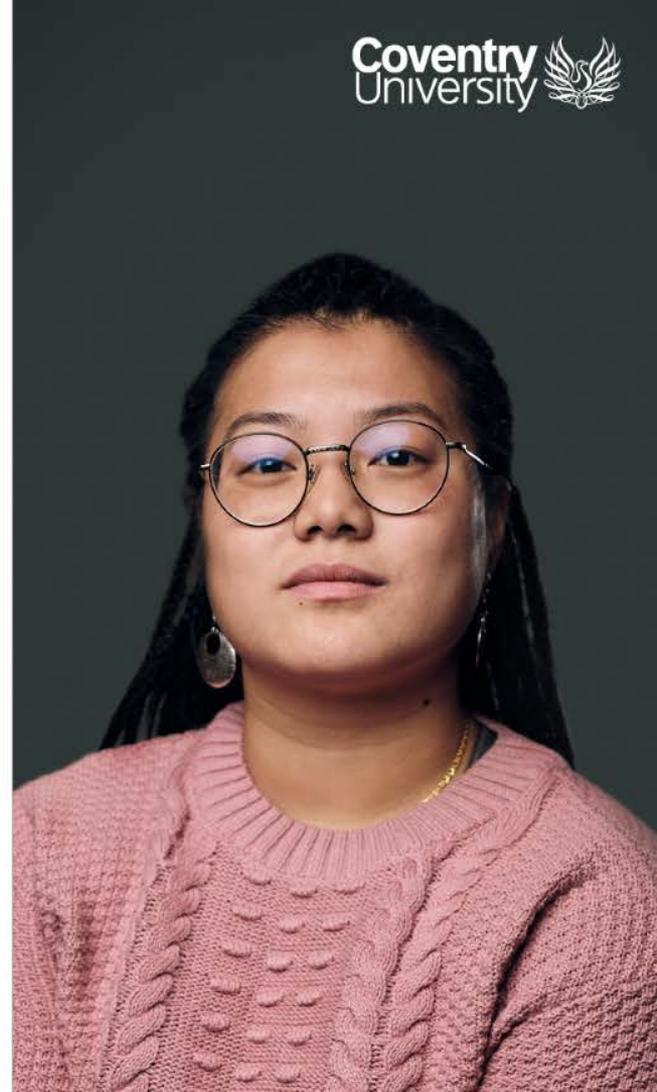
**Relaxing your breathing.** Some people find that their breathing becomes difficulty when they feel anxious. Breathing techniques can help overcome feeling breathless and can begin to reduce anxiety.



Here are some techniques that may support you to slow your breathing down:

- **Breathing into your abdomen** by putting one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach. As you breathe in and out through your nose, the hand on the stomach should move, while the one on your chest should keep still as possible.
- **Counting while you breathe**, for example by counting one or two breathing out and three four for breathing in. You can try to vary the lengths to see what works best for you.
- **Saying 're – lax' in your mind when you breathe**, breath in through your nose when saying 're' and out through your mouth when you say 'lax'

**Learning to relax your body.** When people start to feel anxious their body often starts to tense and their breathing quickens. Learning to controlled breathing and muscle relaxation techniques can often be really effective ways to decrease anxiety.



Relaxation involves sitting quietly and breathing slowly while relaxing the muscles in the body and clearing the mind of all thoughts.

- Lie or sit in a comfortable position, make sure your clothes are not too tight
- Try to breathe deeply and slowly
- Start from your toes, tighten the muscles as hard as you can and hold for the count of ten
- Relax and enjoy the sensation of release from tension
- Repeat tightening muscles and letting go moving through your body (legs, stomach, chest, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, face)
- You may find listening to relaxing music will help

**Using imagery.** Some people find it useful to think about a time when they felt relaxed and calm. For example, it could be a favourite walk or place you have visited, a beach or wood. If you creates a picture of this in your head and remember all the feelings you had in your body, the smells, the sounds, may be the warmth of the sun or the wind on your face anything to remind you of a time when you felt calm and more relaxed.



**Accepting** the anxiety can often reduce our anxiety. Fighting the anxiety may increase your anxiety, using self-talk can support your acceptance.

**Self-talk.** What we say to ourselves when we experience anxiety can often make us feel more anxious. The use of self-talk, calming phrases, can often help. Phrases such as:  
“I am anxious right now and this will pass”  
“This feeling will pass.”  
“I am safe right now.”

### **Five Senses Exercise**

This is a quick exercise on practicing mindfulness, supporting you to be in the moment that may reduce anxiety and increase calmness. This exercise is called “five senses” and all that is needed is to notice something you are experiencing with each of the **five senses**.

#### **Notice five things that you can see.**

- Take a moment to look round and describe 5 things that you can see



### **Notice four things that you can feel.**

- Notice four things that you are currently feeling, like the feeling of the breeze on your skin.

### **Notice three things you can hear.**

- Take a moment to listen, and notice three things that you hear around you.

### **Notice two things you can smell.**

- Bring your awareness to smells that you may not usually notice, they may be pleasant or unpleasant.

### **Notice one thing you can taste.**

- Focus on one thing that you can taste, in this moment. You can take a sip of a drink, eat something, or be aware of the taste in your mouth.

**Panic attack** is an exaggeration of your body's normal response to fear, stress or excitement. Your body believes that there is a threat and your body is flooded by adrenalin. To reduce your panic, try and sit with your feet on the ground and ensure that your back is well supported, then use the techniques of breathing, relaxation and self-talk.



## Counselling

Counselling isn't a self-care tool that suits everyone. To embark on a course of counselling is courageous. Counselling can be a very rewarding process to go through. It can offer transformation, gaining deeper insight to yourself and any anxiety that you may experience. Ultimately it can give you greater sense of wellbeing and bring ease within yourself.

### How to access counselling

Most employees offer free short term counselling provided by an outside agency. Counselling currently is offered on line, with secure video calls.

If you are able to pay for counselling then the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) offer a list of qualified counsellors in your area.

<https://www.bacp.co.uk/profile/d7eb5f77-4f90-e711-80e8-3863bb351d40/therapist?location=SCARBOROUGH>



## Resources

There are plenty of on line resources that can offer you information about managing anxiety. Here are a few that may be of interest:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>  
<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

I would like to wish you well in finding ease and wellbeing through these unprecedented times

Warmly  
Christine McGarvey, MBACP (Accred), Counselling Tutor  
CUS.

