

Managing Anxiety During COVID-19

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Feelings of anxiety can increase and become unmanageable as we worry about the health and safety of ourselves and our loved ones. Uncontrollable worry and preemptive fear can exacerbate (or make worse) existing daily stress, which significantly affects day-to-day life.

Managing symptoms of anxiety

- **Identify and write down your thoughts.** Writing down your thoughts and worries on a piece of paper can help you to distance yourself from your worries and can also help you to organise your thoughts.
- **Try to shift your focus.** Focus on your senses to try to move your attention away from your worries. Notice the details of what you can see, touch, smell, hear, or taste, as this can help you to ground yourself into the present moment and help you to gain some clarity in your thinking.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation practice.** Practising muscle contraction and relaxation is a technique that can help you to physically relax tense muscles and in return, reduce feelings of anxiety. Learn more about [relaxation practices here](#).
- **Breathing and mindfulness exercise.** There are many available resources online that can guide you to learn breathing exercises and mindfulness. Apps such as Headspace and Newlife.330, can help with managing anxiety. Learn more about [What can I do to relax?](#)
- **Take a break and switch off from social media and the news.**
- When we are feeling anxious, we tend to focus on the negatives, which only makes us feel more anxious. **Try to focus on the facts and what you can do** to keep you and your loved ones safe and well.



Managing overwhelming emotions



- **It is okay to not be okay**, and it is normal to feel overwhelmed during these difficult times. Remind yourself that your feelings and emotions are valid.
- **Create a calming environment**, e.g. you could listen to music that calms you
- **Practice breathing exercises**, slowly breathe in and breathe out through your nostrils, and take notice of how the air enters and exits your lungs. **Here** is a useful video from Calm on breathing exercises.
- **Write down your emotions and thoughts on a piece of paper**, or keep a mood diary as a way of acknowledging them but also gaining distance from them.

Managing a panic or anxiety attack

- Find a quiet place, try to slow your breathing by taking long, deep breaths until you start to feel calmer. Remind yourself that the panic sensations will pass.
- **Try to note down details of your panic attacks to help you to identify possible triggers.** Possible things to record can include: when, where, duration and what has helped in the past to calm you down.
- Remember that symptoms of panic are the physiological symptoms of anxiety (i.e. excess adrenaline) in the body, and can often be misinterpreted for more catastrophic health-related problems. **They will pass.**
- Even though it can be difficult, it's important to try to not let panic attacks get in the way of your usual activities. Avoiding certain situations or places because you're worried about having a panic attack can actually increase anxiety in the long-term.

How can friends and family help?



- Learn more about [anxiety](#).
- **Try to empathise with them.** try to understand their feelings, be kind and non-judgemental about how they feel and act, validate their feelings and let them know it is okay to not be okay.
- **Ask them what you can do to help.** If appropriate, offer practical help, such as doing chores or looking after their dependents, to reduce their stress.

What if I want to harm myself or feel suicidal?

If you feel unable to stop yourself from acting on suicidal thoughts, it is important that you seek immediate support. You might find the following services helpful. For additional services, please visit our '[Find help now](#)' webpage:

- The Samaritans Hong Kong 24hr Hotline: 2896 0000
 - The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong 24hr Hotline (Cantonese): 2389 2222
 - The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong Hotline (English): 2389 2223
 - Suicide Prevention Services 24hr Hotline: 2382 0000
 - Suicide Prevention Services (Elderly) 24hr Hotline: 2382 0881
 - Caritas Family Crisis Support Centre 24hr Hotline: 18288
 - Baptist Oi Kwan Social Service (Adult) 24hr Hotline w social worker: 2535 4135
- **Get through the next 5 minutes by distracting yourself:** Focusing on your senses (what you can see, touch, smell or hear) can help you to ground your thoughts.
 - **Remove anything you use to harm yourself.**
 - **Identify what you have done in the past that has helped you to cope** (i.e. going for a walk, reminding myself of alternative ways of looking at things), or a safe place you can access.
 - **Talk to someone about how you're feeling.**
 - It can be helpful to work with a mental health professional to develop a safety plan that you can use at times of distress.
 - If you are unable to keep yourself safe, or you have harmed yourself right now, please call 999 or go to the Accident & Emergency of your local hospital authority.

ABOUT MIND HK

Mind HK, established as "Mind Mental Health Hong Kong Limited," is a **registered S88 charity (91/16471)** committed to **improving awareness and understanding of mental health in Hong Kong**. We collaborate with other local and international mental health charities and provide online support and training programmes, based on global best practice, to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem and equip them with the resources they need. Through collaborative research, Mind HK is leading the way in understanding mental health problems in the city and providing its population with the right support and resources.

Useful Resources

If you are in an emergency or crisis situation, please contact 999, or go to your nearest A&E.

For more information on COVID-19 in Hong Kong, please visit the government website here:

Bahasa Indonesia:

www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102790.html

Tagalog:

www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102791.html

Other reliable resources on the COVID-19 pandemic:

www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019

Tips on managing mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic for domestic workers:

mind.org.hk/mental-health-a-to-z/covid-19/covid-19-and-mental-health-resources-for-domestic-workers

A list of other local organisation [here](#).



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