

Coronavirus – Managing Anxiety

What's a “Normal” Response?

We are facing a threat to our mortality, the news is saturated with stories about coronavirus-related deaths. We do not know what the outcome will be, how many people will die.

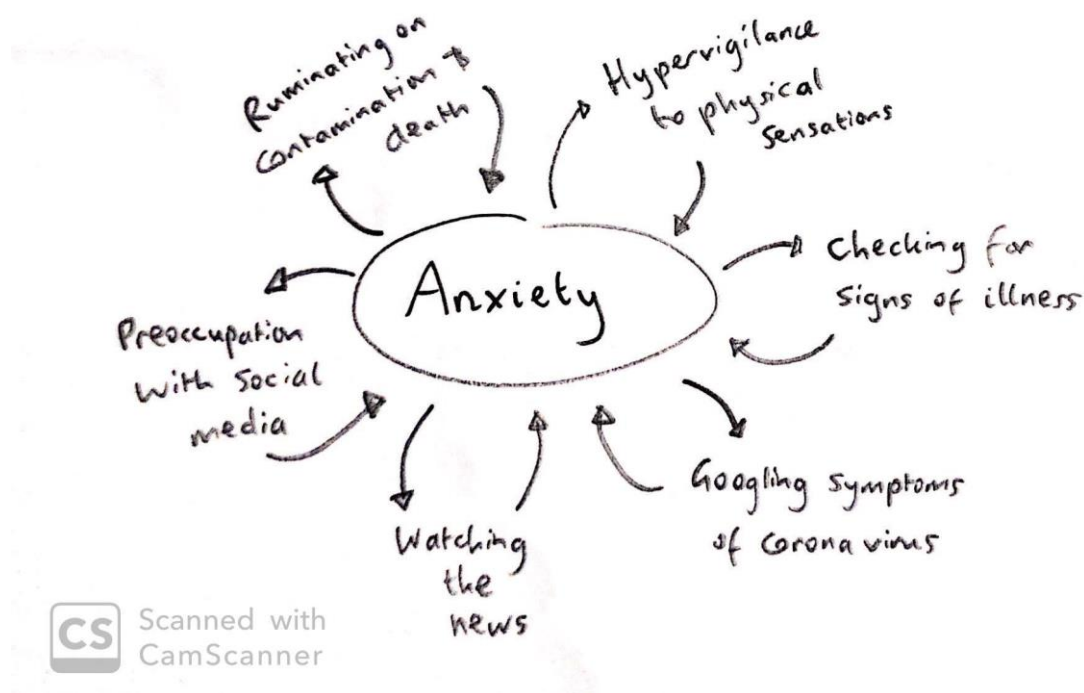
Fear is a normal response to threat, ultimately designed to keep us safe. But when faced with this level of uncertainty about what the future will hold, it can easily spiral out of control, especially if you already experience high levels of anxiety.

Fear commonly involves a ‘*Fight, flight, freeze*’ response – it is normal to experience feelings of anxiety and panic, for your heart to be racing, your breathing more rapid/shallow, to experience fatigue, concentration and sleep difficulties. You might find yourself preoccupied and overwhelmed with thoughts of contamination and death

What Keeps My Anxiety Going?

The “vicious flower” model is often used to understand how anxiety is maintained and spirals with anxiety disorders such as health anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorder.

It helps us understand that what we attend to and what we do can have a considerable impact on our anxiety levels. For example:





What Help?

Might

- Practical guidance, such as taking steps towards better hygiene and avoiding potential contamination might be helpful if rooted in FACTS. So be selective about what you read.
- Don't spend too much time fixated on negative news stories and social media posts.
- Anxiety and fear often make us want to hide away but we become stronger when we connect with other people and maintain a sense of community. Connect, reach out, find ways to stay in contact with other people.
- If you're at home (with or without family), maintain or establish daily routines. It can be tempting to sit in front of the television all day and fixate on all of the awful things happening across the world but this will not help.
- Find ways to exercise (online videos/classes) and eat healthily. Think of activities that you enjoy. Be creative.
- Get some fresh air and time outside if possible. Look at the sky, listen to the birds, connect with nature.
- Talk to other people as much as possible. Share your fears and anxieties. Combat feelings of loneliness by talking to other people – in person, on the telephone, online.
- If you feel overwhelmed with anxiety then find ways to calm down – a bath, breathing exercises, meditation, some relaxing music. Utilise the strategies and strengths you have already.
- Be KIND to yourself. It is understandable you feel anxious, lonely, depressed. This is a really uncertain and difficult time.
- Remember that this period is finite, it will pass and “normal” life will resume again.

Useful Reading

World Health Organisation – Guidance on the Coronavirus:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

World Health Organisation - Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19

Outbreak: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_10

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Manage Anxiety and Stress:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/managing-stress-anxiety.html>

A Resource on Talking to Children about the Coronavirus:

<https://twitter.com/thelovelymaeve/status/1238399538878087169/photo/2>

Organisations for General Support and Guidance

MIND <http://www.mind.org.uk>

The Samaritans <http://www.samaritans.org>