

COPING WITH ANXIETY AS COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS EASE

While the easing of public health restrictions in South Australia on November 23rd is a big milestone and something to celebrate, it's also a huge shift in what we have become used to. Many people are surprised to find they have mixed feelings as we await lockdowns and restrictions to lift. If you're feeling anxious or worried during this time, you're not alone.

Even if you are not typically an anxious person, it's common to feel some anxiety during periods of change or uncertainty. Worrying about physical safety, catching or spreading COVID-19 or what could happen in our workplaces is normal. It's important to try to get the risks into perspective managing what is in your control and noticing when anxiety is taking control of your thoughts.

Recognising anxiety in yourself or others

You or someone you know may experience periods of:

- Feeling stressed or overwhelmed
- Anxiety, worry, or fear
- Sadness, tearfulness, and/or loss of interest in usual enjoyable activities
- Physical symptoms, such as increased heart rate, stomach upset, low energy or other uncomfortable sensations.
- Frustration, irritability, or anger
- Feeling helpless
- Difficulty concentrating or sleeping
- Increasing use of tobacco, alcohol or other drugs
- Worsening of current health issues not related to COVID-19
- Isolating or withdrawing from others, and/or fear of going to public spaces
- Wanting to be alone most of the time
- Blaming other people for everything
- Having difficulty communicating or listening
- Having difficulty giving or accepting help



When constant repetitive thoughts and feelings take over, we can feel overwhelmed, lose sleep, feel exhausted, and start to avoid social situations. If you notice these signs and symptoms in yourself or someone else, it's important to act and seek help early. Avoidance can make symptoms worse. Starting a conversation with someone that you're worried about can help them open up, share their worries with you, and seek further support if needed.

Adjusting to changes and times of uncertainty

- **Acknowledge your feelings** – In situations like this that are uncertain and evolving, it's understandable to feel stressed, anxious, or upset, among other emotional reactions. Allow yourself time to notice and express what you're feeling. This could be by writing them down in a journal, talking to others, doing something creative, or practising meditation.
- **Focus on what you can control** – We often feel anxious when events feel out of our control, and when we think we don't have the capacity, skills or ability to cope. Anxiety tricks us into thinking about the worst-case scenarios in vivid and frightening detail. Instead of worrying, try your best to focus on what's under your control for example, exercise, get sufficient sleep and follow health advice and regulations.
- **Discuss adjustments at work** – Talk to your manager or employer about how you're coping and discuss opportunities for reasonable adjustment to help you work more effectively. This may include the ability to work from home, flexible working hours, or accessing EAP support.
- **Cut down or stop the behaviours that are fuelling your anxiety** – There are certain actions, when performed frequently, that can fuel anxiety further such as constantly reading the news and checking social media, or excessive alcohol consumption. Being aware of these behaviours, understanding how they're making you feel, and replacing them with more helpful coping strategies can alleviate disproportionate feelings of anxiety.

- **Use evidence-based mental health and wellbeing tools** – The Black Dog Institute has a range of free digital tools and apps that are backed by research and demonstrated to be effective in preventing symptoms of mental health conditions.
- **Seek accurate information** – Finding credible sources you can trust is important to avoid the fear and panic that can be caused by misinformation.
- **Follow protection and prevention recommendations provided by qualified health professionals** – SA Health has information about COVID-19 and how to protect yourself including sanitary precautions, social distancing advice and what to do if you are isolate at home.

For more support

Call your health-care provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row. For more information in South Australia, contact the Coronavirus Health Information line on 1800 020 080 or go to sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019

Know when to get help

You may experience serious distress when you hear about an infectious disease outbreak, even if you are at little or no risk of getting sick. If you or someone you know shows signs of distress for several days or weeks, get help by accessing support resources. Contact 000 right away if you or someone you know states they are going to hurt or kill him- or herself or someone else, or talks or writes about death, dying, or suicide.

The Human Psychology team want to help in any way we can. For our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) organisations, you can access face-to-face or tele-health sessions by calling 1300 277 924.

Mental health emergencies

Mental Health Emergency Triage Service

13 14 65

24 hours a day (7 days)

sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID19MentalHealthSupport



Mental health support

SA COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line

1800 632 753
8am – 8pm (7 days)

Parents Helpline

1300 364 100
24 hours a day (7 days)

Kids Helpline

1800 55 1800
24 hours a day (7 days)

sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID19MentalHealthSupport



Mental health support

Support for carers – Uniting Care Wesley Bowden

(08) 8245 7196
9am – 5pm (Mon – Fri)

Lived experience telephone support service (LETSS)

1800 013 755
5pm – 11.30pm (7 days)

Affordable SA
(for financial counselling and support)

1800 025 539
9.30am – 8pm (Mon – Thurs) & 9.30am – 4.30pm (Fri)

sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID19MentalHealthSupport



Mental health support

Regional Access

1300 032 186
24 hours a day (7 days)

Thirrili
(for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities)

1800 841 313
9am – 5pm (Mon – Fri)

ASKPEACE
(for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities)

(08) 8245 8110
9am – 5pm (Mon – Fri)

sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID19MentalHealthSupport

