

# Resources

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## FREE 1-1 VIRTUAL/PHONE COUNSELLING:

Here is the main resource for online/virtual/phone mental health support: [Wellness Together Canada](#)

<https://ca.portal.gs/> OR Call 1-866-585-0445 (offers phone or virtual 1:1 counselling)

And then for substance use counselling: [Virtual Addiction Counselling](#) – create an account and book virtual/phone/chat appointments possibly same day

<https://caccf.live.clinic/>

## VIRTUAL SUPPORT:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/virtual-supports-covid-19>

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fmanaging-stress-anxiety.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fmanaging-stress-anxiety.html)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTx1vELv7zU>

<https://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/covid-19-and-anxiety>

## HANDOUTS:

## 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise

Grounding is a technique that helps us reorient to the here-and-now, to bring us into the present. They are a useful technique if you ever feel overwhelmed, intensely anxious, or dissociated from your environment. The “54321 game” is a common sensory awareness grounding exercise that many find a helpful tool to relax or get through difficult moments.

### PROCEDURE

1. Describe 5 things you see in the room.
2. Name 4 things you can feel (“my feet on the floor” or “the air in my nose”)
3. Name 3 things you hear right now (“traffic outside”)
4. Name 2 things you can smell right now (or 2 smells you like)
5. Name 1 good things about yourself

You should feel calmer and more at ease by the end of the exercise. Repeat the 5 steps more than once if needed.

Try out the technique in different situations, you may find it works well for insomnia, anxiety, cravings when quitting smoking or for general relaxation.

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## Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.



Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.



## MINDFULNESS HANDOUT 1A

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### Mindfulness Definitions

#### WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

- **Intentionally living with awareness in the present moment.**  
(Waking up from automatic or rote behaviors to participate and be present to our own lives.)
- **Without judging or reacting to the moment.**  
(Noticing consequences, discerning helpfulness and harmfulness—but letting go of evaluating, avoiding, suppressing, or blocking the present moment.)
- **Without attachment to the moment.**  
(Attending to the experience of each new moment, rather than gripping the present by clinging to the past or grabbing for the future.)

#### WHAT ARE MINDFULNESS SKILLS?

- Mindfulness skills are the specific behaviors to practice that, when put together, make up mindfulness.

#### WHAT IS MINDFULNESS PRACTICE?

- **Mindfulness and mindfulness skills** can be practiced at any time, anywhere, while doing anything. Intentionally paying attention to the moment, without judging it or holding on to it, is all that is needed.
- **Meditation** is practicing mindfulness and mindfulness skills while sitting, standing, or lying quietly for a predetermined period of time. When meditating, we *focus* the mind (for example, we focus on body sensations, emotions, thoughts, or our breath), or we *open* the mind (paying attention to whatever comes into our awareness). There are many forms of meditation that differ mostly by whether we are opening the mind or focusing the mind—and, if focusing, depending on what is the focus of our attention.
- **Contemplative prayer** (such as Christian centering prayer, the rosary, Jewish Shema, Islamic Sufi practice, or Hindu raja yoga) is a spiritual mindfulness practice.
- **Mindfulness movement** also has many forms. Examples include yoga, martial arts (such as Qigong, tai chi, aikido, and karate), and spiritual dancing. Hiking, horseback riding, and walking can also be ways to practice mindfulness.

# mindfulness and letting go

Trying to control or avoid worries or other negative thinking by answering back, chasing, or suppressing these negative thoughts can sometimes *strengthen* this negative experience rather than diminish it. Mindfulness is one way of skilfully disengaging from or letting go of negative thinking.

This approach involves practicing how to notice when you are automatically drifting into negative thinking and then skilfully redirecting your attention back to the present, to the here and now



It may be helpful to think of this approach in terms of a radio. That is, imagine that the negative thoughts that drift into your mind as coming from a loud radio that is tuned to a station where the thoughts are very negative and seem to be shouting at you.

The skill in mindfulness is not so much about trying to turn the radio off, but changing the way you listen to the radio. In this way the volume of the radio station can be reduced, and therefore seem less disruptive and distressing.

However, the important thing to remember is this is not a quick fix, it is not easy, and requires regular practice. The thoughts may still shout at you, but you are changing the way you listen. Begin with the formal practice described in this information sheet. Just like any skill, such as learning a musical instrument, you need to practice, practice, practice! By practicing daily you may eventually become better at letting go, and be able to do things in a more informal way.



## Steps for Letting Go

To begin, it may be best to start by practicing with minor concerns before moving onto major worries or negative thoughts.



1) To begin the practice, sit down in a chair and adopt a relaxed and alert posture, then ask yourself, *what am I experiencing right now?* What thoughts are around, what feelings are around, and what body sensations?



Allow yourself to just acknowledge, observe and describe these experiences to yourself, without trying to change them or answer the thoughts back. Spend 30 seconds to 1 minute just doing this.

2) Now bringing your focus of awareness to your breath, focusing on the sensations of your breath as it moves back and forth in your belly. Binding your awareness to the back and forth movements of the sensations in your belly from moment to moment, and letting all thoughts go. Maybe say to yourself 'relax' or 'let go' on each outward breath. Spend about 30 seconds to 1 minute doing this.

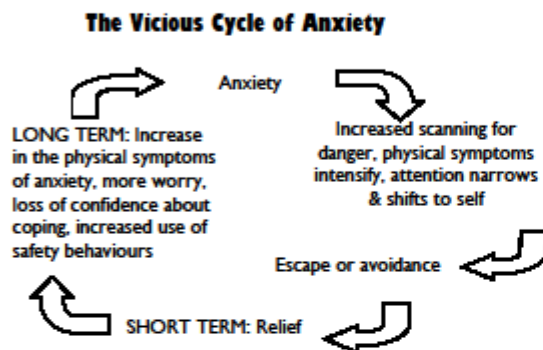
3) Now expanding your awareness to sensing your whole body breathing, being aware of sensations throughout your body. If there are any strong feelings around, maybe saying to yourself "whatever it is, it is OK, just let me feel it." Allowing yourself to breathe with these feelings, and if your mind wanders to bothersome thoughts just acknowledge and let go of these - focussing back on sensing your breath. Continue doing this for about 1 minute.

**TIP:** You can try increasing the time of steps 2 & 3 as you start to get more familiar with this skill.

# the vicious cycle of anxiety

The symptoms of anxiety can have a significant impact on how a person behaves and goes about their daily life. For example, anxious people might try to avoid feeling anxious and escape from distressing experiences.

The essence of anxiety is worrying about some potential threat. It is trying to cope with a future event that you think will be negative. You do this by paying more attention to possible signs of potential threat, and looking internally to see whether you will be able to cope with that threat. When you notice your anxious symptoms, you think that you can't cope with the situation, and therefore become more anxious.



## How Avoidance Contributes to Anxiety

As your anxiety increases, you try to reduce the anxiety and prevent what you think might happen by avoiding the situation. If you cannot avoid the situation, then you use subtle avoidance to reduce the anxiety.

For example, you may use certain rituals, like standing close to a door to make a quick escape. In some way, you might feel less anxious when you engage in avoidance behaviours. You may take tranquillisers to deal with distressing situations.

However, when you have to deal with the situation the next time, you are less confident that you can cope with it because you avoided it the last time or become dependent on safety behaviours. So you feel more anxious.

As a result, you avoid the situation or engage in subtle avoidance. And so it continues. This cycle can go on until you feel very anxious and avoid going into different types of situations.

## Safety Behaviours and Anxiety

If you feel anxious, or anticipate feeling anxious, it makes sense that you will do things to reduce your anxiety. In addition to avoidance and subtle avoidance, many people use "safety behaviours" to help cope with anxiety. These may include relying on medication, always having an exit plan for potentially-anxious situations, or making sure you have someone else with you. These safety behaviours also play a part in the vicious cycle of anxiety. When you become dependent on them, it can be more distressing if one day they are not available to you.

## Reversing the Vicious Cycle of Anxiety

Vicious cycles play an important role in maintaining anxiety. However, like the vicious cycle of depression, you can turn around this cycle to create a positive cycle that will help you overcome anxiety. One important step in this cycle is gradually confronting feared situations. This will lead to an improved sense of confidence, which will help reduce your anxiety and allow you to go into situations that are important to you.

Some people might encourage you to tackle your biggest fear first – to "jump in the deep end" and get it over and done with. However, many people prefer to take it "step-by-step". We call this "graded exposure". You start with situations that are easier for you to handle, then work your way up to more challenging tasks. This allows you to build your confidence slowly, to use other skills you have learned, to get used to the situations, and to challenge your fears about each situational exposure exercise. By doing this in a structured and repeated way, you have a good chance of reducing your anxiety about those situations.



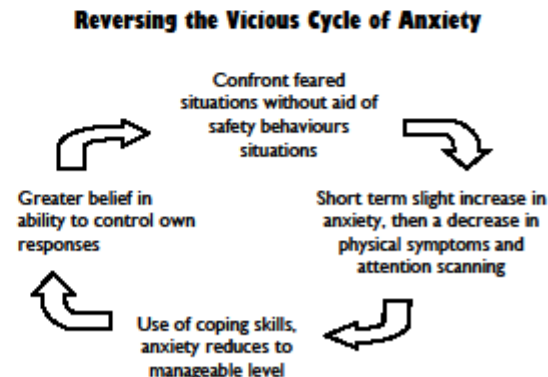
## Coping Skills: Breathing & Thinking Better

When you are gradually confronting feared situations, there will be a short term increase in anxiety. This is normal—everyone feels anxious about doing things they fear. The important thing to remember is that you can learn other skills as alternatives to avoidance and safety behaviours. There are other information sheets available which explain these coping skills in more detail, but here they are briefly:

**Breathing:** Anxiety is often associated with fast, shallow breathing, which contributes to the physical sensation of anxiety. By slowing down your breathing and using calming and relaxation techniques, you can reduce your anxiety.

**Thinking:** There are many types of negative thoughts which are associated with anxiety, such as "I will not be able to cope" or "I must avoid this situation." Learning to challenge these thoughts with more balanced ones can help to reduce the experience of anxiety.

When the anxiety cycle is broken, it will look like this:



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# How we Cope with Uncertainty – we will get through this

- Where are you today – in/above or below your window of tolerance?
- What can you do to broaden your window right now?



## ZONE OF HYPERAROUSAL

- Feeling overwhelmed, anxious or angry
- Body wants to fight or flee

## THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE



Optimal Arousal Zone

- Feeling just right and can manage life
- Calm but not tired
- Alert but not anxious



## ZONE OF HYPOAROUSAL

- Feeling zoned out, spacey or numb
- Body wants to shut down and/or freeze

Adapted from - Siegel, D. (2009). Mindsight - The New Science of Personal Transformation. NSW, Australia: Scribe Publications.

# calming technique

Everyone knows that breathing is an essential part of life, but did you know that breathing plays an essential role in anxiety? This information sheet will briefly discuss the role of breathing in anxiety and guide you through a simple calming technique that uses breathing patterns to help you relax.

Breathing is a powerful determinant of physical state. When our breathing rate becomes elevated, a number of physiological changes begin to occur. Perhaps you've noticed this yourself when you've had a fright: you might suddenly gasp, feel a little breathless and a little light-headed, as well as feeling some tingling sensations around your body. Believe it or not, the way we breathe is a major factor in producing these and other sensations that are noticeable when we are anxious.

## Anxious breathing

You might already know that we breathe in oxygen – which is used by the body – and we breathe out carbon dioxide. In order for the body to run efficiently, there needs to be a balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide, and this balance is maintained through how fast and how deeply we breathe. Of course, the body needs different amounts of oxygen depending on our level of activity. When we exercise, there is an increase in both oxygen and carbon dioxide; in relaxation there is a decrease in both oxygen and carbon dioxide. In both cases the balance is maintained.

When we are anxious though, this balance is disrupted. Essentially, we take in more oxygen than the body needs – in other words we overbreathe, or *hyperventilate*. When this imbalance is detected, the body responds with a number of chemical changes that produce symptoms such as dizziness, light-headedness, confusion, breathlessness, blurred vision, increase in heart rate to pump more blood around, numbness and tingling in the extremities, cold clammy hands and muscle stiffness.

The normal rate of breathing is 10-12 breaths per minute – what's your breathing rate?

## The Calming Technique

While overbreathing and hyperventilation are not specifically dangerous (it's even used in medical testing!), continued overbreathing can leave you feeling exhausted or "on edge" so that you're more likely to respond to stressful situations with intense anxiety and panic.



Gaining control over your breathing involves both slowing your rate of breathing and changing your breathing style. Use the calming technique by following these steps and you'll be on your way to developing a better breathing habit.

- 1 Ensure that you are sitting on a comfortable chair or laying on a bed
- 2 Take a breath in for 4 seconds (through the nose if possible)
- 3 Hold the breath for 2 seconds
- 4 Release the breath taking 6 seconds (through the nose if possible), then pause slightly before breathing in again.
- 5 Practise, practise, practise!

## Breathing tips

- When you first begin changing your breathing, it may be difficult to slow your breathing down to this rate. You may wish to try using a 3-in, 1-hold, 4-out breathing rate to start off with.
- When you are doing your breathing exercises, make sure that you are using a stomach breathing style rather than a chest breathing style. You can check this by placing one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest. The hand on your stomach should rise when you breathe in.
- Try to practise at least once or twice a day at a time when you can relax, relatively free from distraction. This will help to develop a more relaxed breathing habit. The key to progress really is practise, so try to set aside some time each day.

*By using the calming technique, you can slow your breathing down and reduce your general level anxiety. With enough practice, it can even help to reduce your anxiety when you are in an anxious situation.*