



SUPPORTING THE HEALTH AND
WELLBEING OF THE ARMED
FORCES COMMUNITY AND
CIVILIAN FAMILIES IN
CORNWALL



How to manage feelings of anxiety as lockdown eases

Recently research into people's concerns about the easing of lockdown and its effect on mental health highlighted some common themes. Below we have provided some helpful advice and information on those themes.

You might be worried about your mental health at the moment. If you're with a mental health team, you can talk to your usual contact there. If you're not, you can get an appointment with your GP and discuss your feelings with them.

Our list of topics below covers the main areas of psychological concern and we hope it includes one that will help you.

1. ANXIETY - Lots of people are feeling more anxious at the moment about going out of the house and meeting people more often. It's understandable if you're feeling this way. There are some things that you can do that you might find helpful:

- Think about what places you need to go to and what people you need to see, and which ones you don't. Just because lockdown has eased, you don't have to go places or see people if you don't want or need to. You can do what you're comfortable with. You could maybe ask other people you know what kinds of places they've been to and who they've seen. It might help you to think about what you're comfortable with.
- You might have to go to some places, like the shops, which are busier than before. You can think about when the quieter times are, like early in the morning or later in the day. You can find out what measures the place has made to keep people safe. You can search their website or give them a call.

2. CONFUSION - It can be difficult to keep up with the rules regarding social distancing, wearing masks etc when they change however the government will continue to change the rules as the pandemic changes. So, you can find the best way for you to keep up with the rules.

You can do the following things:

- You can check what the current rules are on the government .gov.uk website
- You can ask someone you trust and who understands the rules to go through them with you.

- You can write down in your own words what you are and aren't allowed to do. You could use bullet points or use pictures if you want to.
- You can keep up to date with changes in the media. The BBC publishes a brief 'Coronavirus: Morning update' on their website, with a summary of important developments.

3. FEAR - Even though lockdown has eased for now, there is still a risk that you can get coronavirus. But the risk has significantly decreased overall, which is why lockdown has eased. Some people who get coronavirus die, but most don't. The risk to you of infection depends on your individual circumstances. Things like your health, your age, where you live, your contact with others and safety measures all play a part.

Although lockdown has eased for now, things aren't back to 'normal' the way they were before the coronavirus pandemic. So, it is understandable if you are still anxious about the virus.

You can do the following things:

- You can read the government guidance on 'Staying safe outside your home'.
- You can research the risk where you live. You can put your postcode into the BBC coronavirus infection rate calculator to find out figures on current infection rates in your area.

There are practical things you can do to manage your anxiety, including:

- You can get **help and treatment from the NHS** if you need it.
- **Practicing mindfulness** can improve your mental health by paying more attention to the present moment.
- **Keeping physically active** can help to reduce stress and anxiety. It can increase the levels of serotonin and endorphins which are your body's natural 'happy' chemicals.
- **Breathing techniques** can help to slow your breathing, which can calm your thoughts and reduce anxiety.

4. STILL SHIELDING -You might still be shielding as you have been advised to do so because of your personal circumstances. Or you might have made your own decision to continue to shield. You might need mental health support and treatment from the NHS.

You can do the following things:

- You can still get a GP appointment if you need it. GPs should still be offering phone appointments if you need one. Mental health services should also be offering phone appointments if you need one.
- If you are with an NHS mental health team you should have a care plan. The plan might not meet your needs anymore if you are shielding. You can ask them to work with you to update your plan. If you don't have a care plan, you can ask for one to be drawn up.
- Your mental illness might mean that in law you are considered to have a disability. If you do, you are protected by the Equality Act. Services, including the NHS and social services, must reasonably adjust what they normally do to meet your needs. So, let's say you normally have face-to-face help from a support worker in your mental health team. You can request that they adjust this, so you meet by video call, or phone call. If the adjustment you ask for is reasonable, they usually must do it.

5. WORKING FROM HOME - Most people are now allowed to go back to their workplaces. But if you can do your job from home, the government say you can still do that if it's possible.

You can do the following things:

- You can check on the government website to see if you should go back into work.
- You can discuss your situation with your employers. If it's not possible to work from home full-time, maybe you can do it part-time. Or maybe they can agree a change of role with you, where you can work from home full-time. You can discuss any reasonable adjustments you need.
- If you must go back into work, you can ask your employers about what safety arrangements are in place. Employers must make sure workplaces are Covid 19 compliant.

6. UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE - The uncertainty of what will happen with the coronavirus situation is causing a lot of anxiety for many people. Not knowing what will happen in the future can be difficult. But there are things you can do to help manage how you are feeling.

You can do the following things:

- You can think about what things you can and can't control. You can even write these things down. So, you can't control when an effective vaccine will be developed. But you can control what you're doing to stay safe or to help your wellbeing. You can

make a list or plan of what you can control and how you'll do this. A lot of people find this reduces their anxiety and gives them a better feeling of control over their situation.

- It helps some people to try to focus on the present moment or on the short term. Many find mindfulness is useful to develop the ability to be in the present moment. You can focus on the short term by making a list of goals for the day or the week. This can also help to give you a sense of achievement when you've completed a goal.



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