

Recovery
College
Cornwall



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Coming Out of Lockdown



“Today is a new day. Today is a day for you to begin creating a joyous, fulfilling life. Today is the day to begin to release all your limitations. Today is the day for you to learn the secrets of life. You can do it. You can change your life for the better. You already have the tools within you to do so. These tools are your thoughts and your beliefs.” – Louise Hay



Coming Out of Lockdown – A Guide.

We have all been through quite an experience in the last few months, with many of us experiencing isolation alone and away from the usual support networks we depend upon for our sense of well-being. Whilst we are all looking forward to things going back to some sort of normality, it is worth remembering and acknowledging that this is also a time when we may feel more anxious. We may feel unsure about what we can and can't do, and how the virus may still affect us after all this time.

The main thing to remember, and to keep hold of, is that it is perfectly okay to feel anxiety in the face of uncertainty. It is perfectly okay to feel anxiety about meeting with groups of people after weeks of being alone, or in small family groups. When we are feeling anxiety and stress about the ending of lockdown it is also really important that we continue to practice self-care and compassion towards ourselves, and recognise that we are all entering into more uncharted territory and it OK to have concerns around that – that is our brain working hard to keep us safe. This is our guide to support for ourselves and others as we come out of lockdown.

Below are excerpts from articles about coming out of lockdown, accompanied by Recovery College Techniques that may help in times of stress and anxiety

Unavoidable contact:

As more people begin to hit the streets, the idea of people getting a little too close to us may be a concern. However, Dr William Bird, GP at the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading advises that, whilst we need to adhere to the advice about staying two metres apart from those outside of our household, a short brush past should not cause undue concern.

"Brushing past someone shouldn't have any effect at all. You have to maintain about a minute or two with someone before you start to get the amount of virus that's needed to transmit," agrees Doctor William.

People who are sneezing and coughing could cause more of a problem. "If you are sneezing and coughing, you will be shedding lots of virus," says William. If you are experiencing symptoms of coronavirus - a fever or a new, continuous cough - the advice remains to stay at home and self-isolate for at least seven days.

Some people are electing to wear masks, particularly if they are required to work in close proximity with others, or are going to be in a confined space, such as on a train or tube.

"Face coverings really protect others rather than yourself - unless you are wearing a tight, surgical mask, which is needed in the NHS," explains Bird. However, England has now followed Scotland and Northern Ireland in recommending face coverings (rather than surgical or other commercial masks) on public transport and in indoor shops where social distancing is not possible.

Taken from: <https://patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-get-over-a-fear-of-leaving-lockdown>



So, how do I deal with these feeling and fears?

“We may start to contemplate excessively. ‘Will I be safe? What happens if I lose my job? What if I can’t see my family and friends?’ We may find ourselves avoiding attempts to reintegrate back into the new normal by avoiding going out, not taking opportunities to meet others, avoiding work and preventing ourselves from adapting to new normalities.”

There are things you can do to manage the feelings around ‘less lockdown’, experts agree. Try not to go for a huge change, advises and make time for calming breathing techniques or meditation, in the run up to leaving the house.

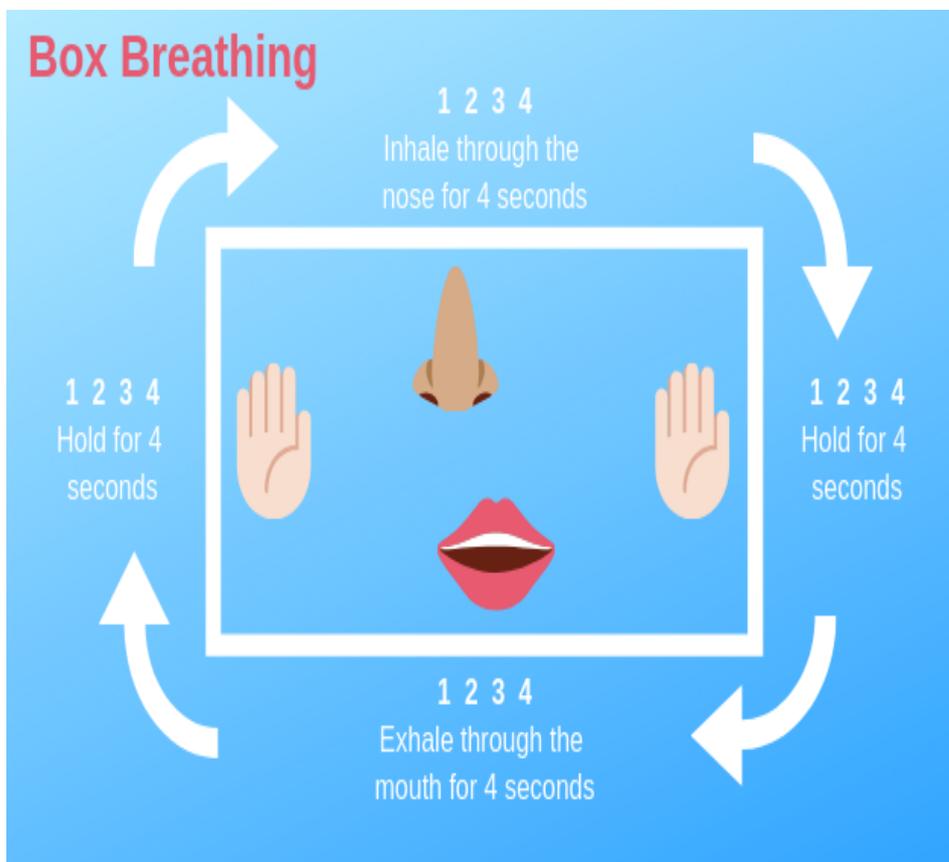
“Take small steps to begin with. You need time to prepare yourself to go out. Practise calming techniques, such as creative visualisations, to remind your brain this is a normal thing to do.

Breathing Techniques:

How to Practice Box Breathing

(a technique shared by a Recovery College student May 2020)

- Let out all the air in your lungs to the count of four
- Keep your lungs empty for a count of four
- Inhale for a count of four
- Keep your lungs full for a count of four
- Repeat



Guided Meditation Links:

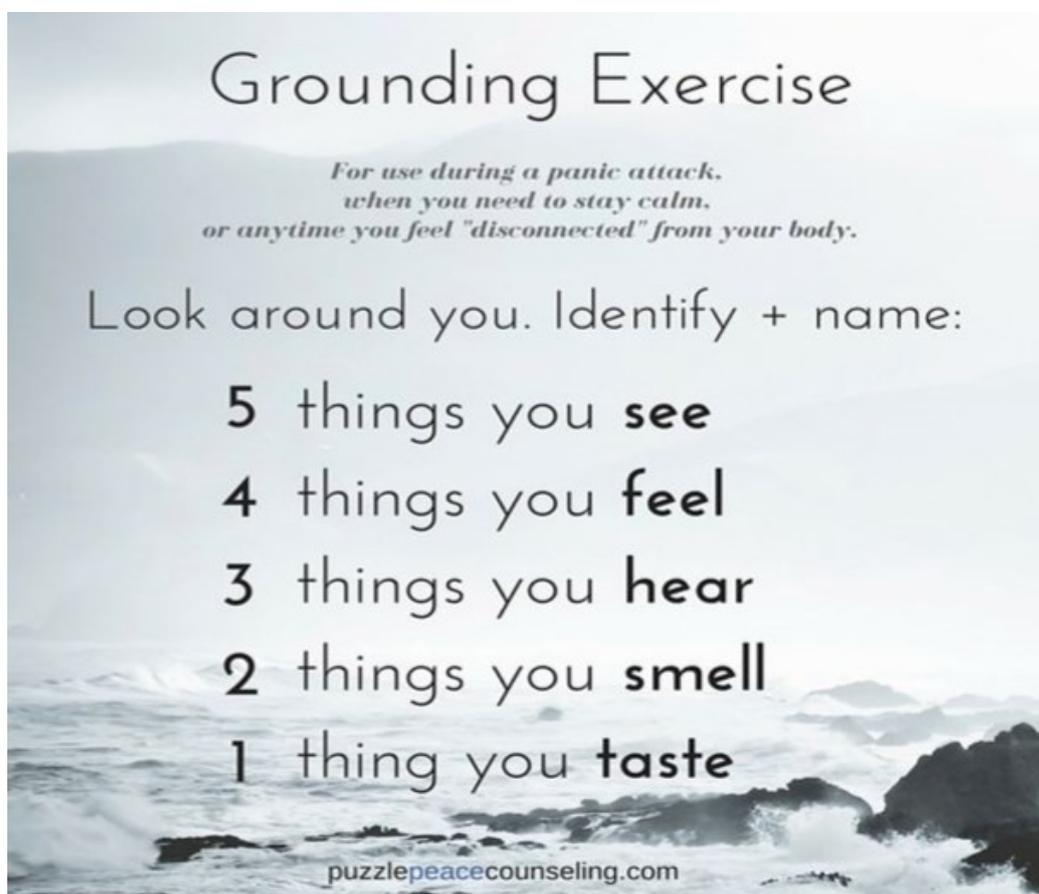
- Goodful – Joh Davis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inpok4MKVLM>
- POSITIVE MIND in 5 Minutes Meditation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RxXiFgkxGc>
- Breath Ted Talk by Stacey Schuerman: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hFcQpNr_KA4

Mindfulness Techniques:

“Your brain will naturally go into fight or flight mode if it thinks this is something to be afraid of, but if you visualise a positive outcome beforehand and do some deep breathing for three minutes, you can take control of the brain’s automatic protective response.”

“If you are highly anxious, it’s best to practise these visualisations in the days running up to going out. At least twice a day. Remember caffeine can make these symptoms worse, so cut back on tea, coffee and (I’m afraid) chocolate, if you’re struggling with anxiety.”

Huxley says one way to manage the shift to the ‘new new normal’, is to manage your expectations. “Make small adjustments first,” he advises. “Expecting to return to life as it was may not be possible. It might be helpful to think of incremental small changes over the period of time.”



Small Steps to Change:

Think about planning to achieve a goal around coming out of lockdown. Remember to think about what is your priority; what is the element that you are most concerned about? Break it down into steps by thinking about the first thing you will need to do.

Remember to set yourself up for success – by using SMART goals you are supporting yourself to make lasting and meaningful changes

Specific....

Measurable....

Achievable....

Realistic....

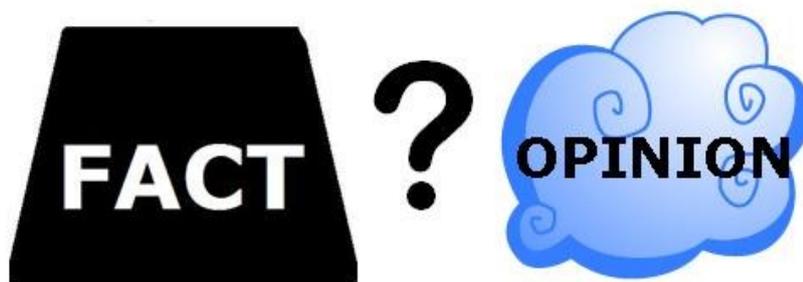
Timely....

		SMART questions	SMART answers
S	Specific	<i>What is the goal?</i>	
M	Measurable	<i>How will I know I have achieved the goal?</i>	
A	Achievable	<i>Is the goal attainable?</i>	
R	Realistic	<i>Is this goal realistic for me to achieve in the time frame?</i>	
T	Timely	<i>What is my dead line to achieve the goal?</i>	



Visualisation Techniques:

Picture and describe – Really focusing on a positive image and feeling can often help us to overcome anxiety about a situation. Picture yourself engaging in an activity, such as meeting up with friends – going into town to go shopping, or something else that you have not done for some time and have feelings of anxiety around. Visualise how it will feel, what the buildings will be like, the feel of the pavement under your feet. Think about being out in the open air, feeling the wind on your cheek and the noise of traffic and people talking. Remember that this is positive, things are returning to how they should be and you feel good about this. Describe to yourself the details of the things around you, notice the bricks and the road signs using the detail to build a positive image and feeling before you go out – reassured that everything is ok.



Fact or Opinion:

Fact or Opinion – Focusing on the facts can help to highlight when our thinking may be unhelpful. Asking "is this Fact or Opinion?" can help to pull back and defuse unhelpful thinking, especially when fearful of coming out of lockdown.

Identify the fact from opinion in the statements below:

Dogs make better pets than cats	Fact/Opinion	It won't be safe anywhere	Fact/Opinion
I ate breakfast today	Fact/Opinion	I feel emotional today	Fact/Opinion
I am going to fail at that	Fact/Opinion	No one will like me	Fact/Opinion
Everyone will be infected	Fact/Opinion	I like helping others	Fact/Opinion

Depression affects people in different ways [Fact/Opinion](#)

Useful link to a 5 minute video on Fact or opinion

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=42&v=lkNs08T8fcA&feature=emb_title

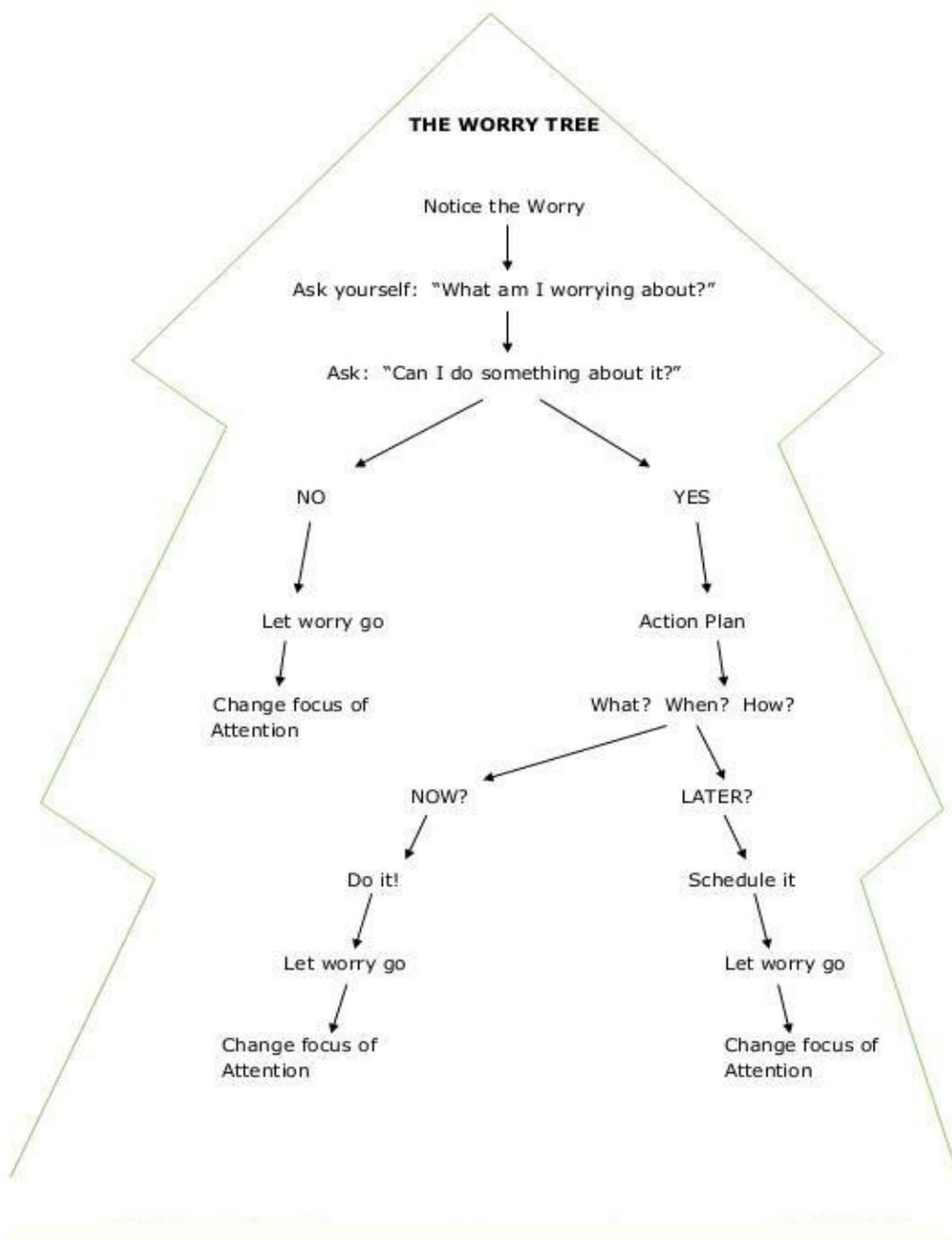
Adapted from: <https://theguideliverpool.com/some-tips-on-how-to-deal-with-coming-out-of-lockdown-anxiety/>



Understanding Anxiety:

Often anxiety is accompanied by large amounts of worrying. Sometimes we can sort the worry out and other times we can't. Is there something that has been on your mind for a while? Are you struggling to put a worry to bed and not let it affect your day to day living? The Worry Tree below is a useful technique that can be used to help you establish whether this is something you can fix or whether this is a worry that you need to find a way of letting go.

"If the problem can be solved why worry? If the problem cannot be solved worrying will do you no good." Śāntideva



Remember that your toolkit for change is something that you can use any-time and anywhere. The techniques and strategies that you have explored through your Recovery College journey are there to support you during the next phase.

Self-Care:

Building self-care into your daily routine, and designating time to spend on practising the techniques will help to build self-esteem and resilience to face coming out of lock down.

Connecting:

Connecting with others and sharing your fears and thought can help alleviate the anxiety and stress – you may find that you are not alone, and that they too share your concerns. Remember that connecting with others helps to build self-esteem; helps you feel heard and have your thoughts and feelings validated, making you feel, rightly, that you matter. You in turn validate the person you are connecting with; you hear them and they also feel, rightly, that they matter and will increase their sense of self-worth

Pausing to Reframe:

Remember to pause, take a breath and step back from the issue – can you view this from a different perspective? It is always a good idea to pause. Give yourself the space and the time you need to assess the issue and to contemplate what your next steps might be; what techniques you may use and to plan how you move forward. Remember, it is your **right** to take the time you need to make the decision that is right for you.

Seeking help

While many of us will be able to overcome our initial anxiety, for others it may be more of a struggle. If you feel that your anxiety is beginning to have a negative effect on your daily life, it's important to seek help. "If you are not sure if you should seek help then take it as a sign that you should. Anxiety left unchecked can grow and become gnarlier, and tougher to overcome after long periods of time," advises Tiwari.

If your anxiety becomes overwhelming, speak with your GP, or contact [Therapists for Covid](#) where you will be able to access support free of charge.

Taken from: <https://patient.info/news-and-features/how-to-get-over-a-fear-of-leaving-lockdown>



Focusing on the Positive.

Sometimes we find it hard to recognise the small things that happen day to day that bring us a smile or a sense of joy. In this current climate it can feel difficult to find the moments of joy when we appear to be surrounded by uncertainty and fear. Using a daily gratitude diary can help you to focus on the moments that matter, and away from the things that you cannot control; to notice the positives, which in turn can help us feel more positive.

My Daily Gratitude Diary

<p>Daily Gratitude List: <i>Example: Today I grateful for my home, my safe space</i></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>	<p>What have I learnt from my challenges today: <i>Example: Today I learnt that I can say no – it felt good!</i></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>
<p>Three things I noticed today: <i>Example: I noticed how the light played across the floor. It was beautiful and calming.</i></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>	<p>The best parts of my day were: <i>Example: I made a perfect cup of tea. Magic!</i></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>



Eating and drinking well

It is more important than ever that we stay healthy this means looking after our body and mind. Here are some top tips:

1. **Keep an eye on yourself** during this time so you can spot if you are getting what your body needs to stay healthy. If you think you are eating less than usual or don't have much appetite keep track of your weight or check if your clothes, jewellery or belts are looser than usual.
2. **If you have a poor appetite, have been losing weight without trying or have a low body weight** you should try to increase the amount of energy and protein you get each day. You may find it useful to:
 - Eat little and often
 - Use full-fat food and drinks (e.g. milk, yoghurts)
 - Enhance your food by adding cream, butter and cheese
 - Have extra nutritious drinks such as Horlicks, glasses of full cream milk, milk shakes and cuppa-soups
3. **Think about making meal preparation easy** for when you need something quick and simple – e.g. ready meals, snacks, finger food and meal delivery
4. **Think about how you will get your shopping** – ask a neighbour or family member to help.
5. **Enjoy your food** - why not try some new foods or go back to old favourites? Dig out some old and new recipes to try.
6. **Have plenty of variety** in your diet so you will get all the nutrients you need and maintain a healthy weight.
7. **Stay active and get fresh air** to keep up your appetite. Why not have a walk around your local area
8. **Stay well hydrated** – we need about 6-8 drinks per day to stay well hydrated. This improves concentration, energy and mood, so we can keep our minds active.
9. **Keep your kitchen cupboard and freezer stocked** with some simple, tasty foods and long-lasting foods, such as dried milk powder, tinned soup, rice pudding,

Adapted from: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/bolton/our-services/greater-manchester-nutrition-and-hydration-programme/eating-and-drinking-well-during-coronavirus/>

For further information on maintaining a healthy diet, and ideas on how to do that, follow this link:

<https://doclibrary-kccg.cornwall.nhs.uk/DocumentsLibrary/KernowCCG/WebDocuments/Internet/MedicinesOptimisation/EatingWellAndBuildingYourselfUpAfterCOVID19.pdf>



Moderate Your Media Diet

Resist the urge to repeatedly check your phone or the news for updates. Set yourself a time once or twice a day where you are able to access the relevant information. Checking too often, or gathering information for many different sources can increase your sense of worry and anxiety which in turn can affect your feelings about re-entering the world and how you interact with others.

By using official sites, such as The Health and Safety Executive, you will ensure you are getting the most up to date and relevant information. Here is the link to their site:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm>

We live in what might be called a “clickbait media culture,” where various news organisations go to extremes while vying for your attention. That often means stoking as much fear and paranoia as possible, if only to keep engagement levels high. Yes, COVID-19 is bad but so too is a prevailing sense of sustained panic and alarmism. As long as you keep pace with major announcements, current statistics, and proper protocols (self-isolation, social distancing, etc), there’s a good chance you can drastically reduce your media diet.

Adapted from: <https://manofmany.com/lifestyle/advice/how-to-overcome-social-distancing-anxiety>

And Finally.....Be Kind.

We have all been on an extraordinary journey. The last few months have impacted us all in ways that we may not have ever envisaged. It is vitally important that we all recognise and practice compassion and kindness to ourselves, and remember that there is no right or wrong way to inhabit these strange times. Your feelings are valid – take your time to feel your way out of lockdown and back into the world. Use the techniques in this document to support yourself as and when you need it, and to create a plan that suits you. We will all do this differently and that is OK.

