



EMPLOYEE SERIES

Tips for coping with anxiety around the easing of restrictions around COVID

There may be much anxiety around re-entry into the world, as governments around Australia make cautious moves towards lifting COVID-19 restrictions.

These tips and suggestions may help you to manage the uncertainties as they arise.



Recognising the signs and symptoms in yourself and others could be helpful:

- Emotionally – such as feeling tense, on edge, panicky, irritability
- Physically – such as stomach aches and pains, nauseous, light headedness, sweating, grinding of teeth, shallow or fast breathing
- Mentally – such as ruminating thoughts, obsessive compulsions, critical thoughts, self blaming thoughts, inability to concentrate

Adjusting to changes and times of uncertainty:



Take it slowly. You don't have to rush out straight away once restrictions ease. Slowly build your confidence and take time to adjust. Simple things like going to public events, catching public transport or spending time with friends might feel strange as you move back into your post-lockdown life. Make plans that you feel comfortable with and express your feelings with friends, family, and colleagues.



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, follow health advice and regulations, look for new work or up-skilling opportunities.



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 additional training and 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. There are a range of free digital tools and apps available that are backed by research and demonstrated to be effective in preventing symptoms of mental health conditions.

- 'HeadGear', a 30-day mental fitness challenge with daily activities to help reduce and manage stress, improve sleep, connect better with others, and deal with difficult situations. (Free; [iOS](#) and [Android](#))
- CBT Thought Diary - This is a great app for gradually changing your approach to anxiety-inducing situations and your thinking patterns for future situations. (Free; [iOS](#) and [Android](#))
- Self Help Anxiety management (SAM) – you can build your own 24-hour anxiety toolkit with this App and it allows you to track anxious thoughts and behavior over time, and also learn 25 different self-help techniques. (Free; [iOS](#))
- Happify – This APP offers various engaging games, activity suggestions, gratitude prompts and more to train your brain as if it were a muscle, to overcome negative thoughts. The best part? Its free! (Free; [iOS](#) and [Android](#))



Seek professional advice – It's ok to ask for help. If you're feeling overwhelmed by anxiety, seek professional support. Contact Access Wellbeing Services to schedule a face to face, telephone or video counselling appointment using your allocation of EAP sessions, or alternatively, you can access mental health support from:

- **Black Dog Institute** on 02 9382 4530
- **Lifeline** on 131114
- **Beyond Blue** on 1300 22 436



When you feel overwhelmed take a few slow, deep breaths to help you calm down. Be assured that for most people, the anxiety will be temporary, and will reduce over time.

References: *The Black Dog Institute, 2022.* <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/news/coping-with-anxiety-about-covid-19-restrictions-easing/>

If you would like to book an appointment and /or speak with one of our Counsellors, it's as easy as calling 1300 66 77 00 or New Zealand 0800 327 669 or visit our website www.accesswellbeingservices.com.au