



Managing Your Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal reaction to uncertainty and things that may harm us. During this pandemic, it's OK to take time for yourself to manage your mental and emotional health. While anxiety is normal and an expected reaction, too much of it can take a toll on your health very quickly. Taking action can help you get back in control and reduce stress. Try one or more of these exercises the next time you feel like you're out of control:

- 1. Deep Breathing.** Drawing slow, deep breaths from the diaphragm promotes a more efficient exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide than chest or shoulder breathing. Inhale slowly through your nose to the count of 5, then exhale through your mouth slowly to the count of 5. Repeat this 5 times. Your cells will appreciate the additional oxygen and relaxation you will experience.
- 2. Yoga and stretching.** Yoga and stretching can relieve tension, make your body more flexible and produce an overall calming effect.
- 3. Meditation, prayer and imaging techniques.** To help you achieve quick relaxation, find a comfortable and quiet environment where you can close your eyes and free your mind from your concerns for a few minutes each day. Try concentrating on an image that symbolizes your stress, such as a giant ball that slowly begins to shrink, or let your mind go blank. If you are religious, turning your concerns to a higher power through prayer is an effective way for many people to reduce stress, worry and anxiety.
- 4. Progressive muscle relaxation techniques.** These techniques involve systematically visualizing, tensing and relaxing each major muscle group. Make a fist and hold it tight for at least 5 seconds. Feel the tension in your hand and arm. Then relax your hand and visualize the tension escaping your body. Do the same with your other hand, your neck, your face, your limbs, etc.
- 5. Head and neck massage.** Starting at your temples and forehead, use your fingers to massage your head, neck, eyelids, forehead, temples and scalp.