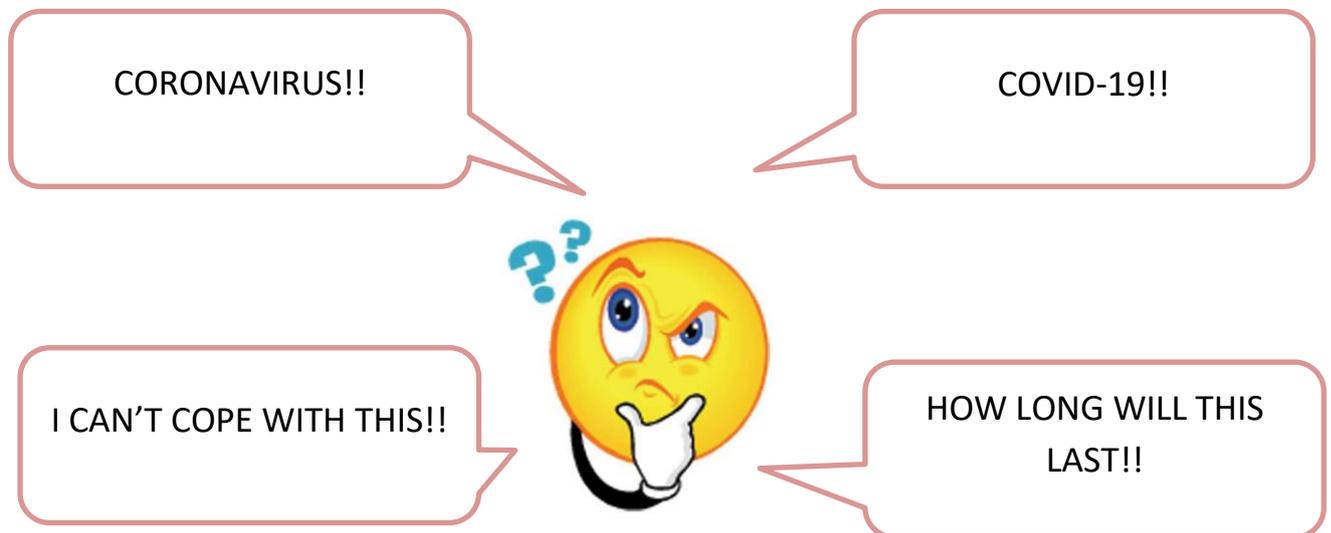


Mindfulness and COVID-19

At the moment we understand that COVID-19 (Coronavirus) is something that everybody is thinking about, especially because of how much it is in the news. It is important to follow the government's direction to try and keep yourselves and everyone else as safe as possible.

But what happens when we spend all of our time thinking about COVID-19 and other anxieties?



Spending a large amount of your day thinking about COVID-19 and other anxieties is making us feel even more anxious and down compared to how we felt when we woke up and the more we think about it the worse we feel.

What is Mindfulness and how can it help?

Sometimes when we are doing a familiar task that we have done several times e.g. cleaning, driving, washing dishes, our mind is often not concentrating on what we are doing but instead thinking about something else e.g. worrying, thinking about negative thoughts or thinking about many things at once. This is because once we have done a task several times your brain stores a memory of how to do the task and then each time you do the task your brain brings this memory to the front of your mind. ***Ask yourself how often do you concentrate on the dishes when you are washing them or is it more automatic?***

How can I mindfully wash the dishes???

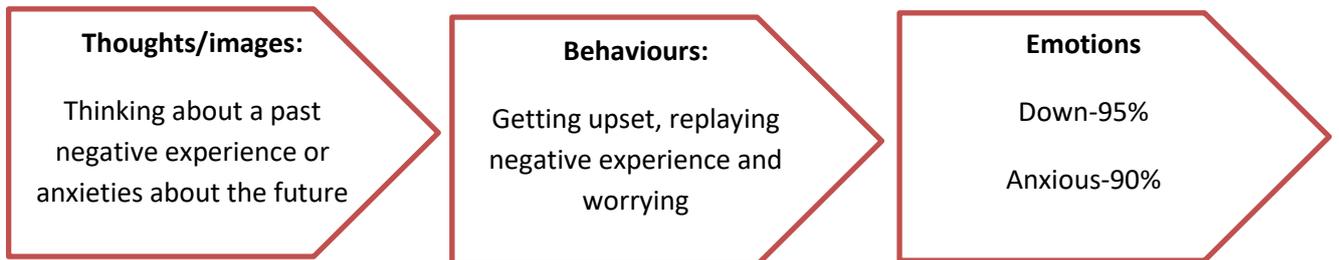
Feel the warmth of the water, what do the bubbles feel like, what does the texture of each dish feel like



Mindfulness focuses on you being in the “here and now” rather than your mind running away with thinking about the past or the future. ***If you are washing the dishes, mindfulness involves you focusing on that task and what you feel when you are washing the dishes rather than thinking or worrying about other things.*** Mindfulness does not aim to get rid of the negative emotions or thoughts that may be going through your mind. Mindfulness is a technique/skill that can help you to reduce the intensity of negative emotions or thoughts you are experiencing by allowing your brain to refocus its attention on what is going on around you, in the “here and now”.

How mindfulness works:

Not practicing mindfulness:



Practicing mindfulness:



Regularly practicing mindfulness reduces the impact and intensity of negative emotions.

Mindfulness Exercises

Focusing on your senses:

1. Focus on one item you see in front of you e.g. inside the house; item, furniture, fixture, outside; trees, houses, the road, pavement. **Focus on what colours, shapes, pattern or detail you see, does light reflect off the item.**
2. Focus on one sound you can hear. **Is the sound loud or quiet, is it a pleasant sound, is the sound continuous or does it come and go, is the sound louder at certain points and quieter at certain points.**
3. Focus on one smell. **Is it strong or weak, is it pleasant, is it continuously there or does it come and go.**
4. Focus on one thing you can feel e.g. an item, piece of clothing, your clothes against your skin. **What is the texture like; soft, hard, bumpy, smooth, rough, curved, pointy.**
5. Focus on one thing you can taste. **It is sweet, bitter, crunchy or soft. What is the texture like; smooth, rough, bumpy.**

You can start with one step if you prefer a shorter activity or focus on a particular sense if you prefer.



Mindful breathing:

- Get into a comfortable posture by either sitting down or lying down. **You may close your eyes.**
- Bring your attention to your stomach, pay attention to how it rises and expands as you breathe in and how it falls with the out breath. **You may put your hands on your stomach to feel the belly more.**
- Keep your awareness on your breathing, focusing on how it feels to breathe in and out, following the breath. **You may count how long the in-breath and out-breath take.**

- If you notice your mind wanders tell yourself its ok and bring in back to the breath.
Your mind might wonder many times, each time it does bring it back to the breath.

You can practice this activity as many times during the day as you wish, it helps you to become aware of the breath without having to do anything.

Mindful activity:

How many times have we taken part in an activity that is routine therefore rather than focusing on the activity we end up being in our head. ***Activities like washing the dishes, cleaning, cooking, driving, walking, and gardening.*** Because we are so much in our heads we start thinking about what we have done in the day, worrying about the future or thinking about the past.

Instead let us be mindful:

- ✓ If you are washing the dishes focus on ***the temperature of the water, how the dishes feel, the texture of washing up liquid and the sponge.***
- ✓ If you are cleaning focus on ***what the surfaces look like, what you see on the surfaces, what the cloth you are using feels like.***
- ✓ If you are driving listen to ***the radio, sing along with a song.***
- ✓ If you are walking focus on ***how your legs and other muscles feel as you are walking, can you feel the stretch in certain muscles, what can you see as you are walking (what colours doors do houses have, can you see trees or shops).***
- ✓ If you are in the garden focus on ***what is around you, what colour leaves do trees have, what tone of green is the grass, can you hear any sounds (birds singing, the wind, distant conversations), what does the sun or wind feel like against your skin.***

Whilst practicing being mindful your mind will drift and that is natural, all you can do is recognise it is drifting and practice:



References

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/mindfulness.htm> (Getselfhelp)

<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/~media/CCI/Mental%20Health%20Professionals/Generalised%20Anxiety/Generalised%20Anxiety%20-%20Information%20Sheets/Generalised%20Anxiety%20Information%20Sheet%20-%2002%20-%20What%20is%20Mindfulness.pdf> (CCI-Centre for Clinical Interventions)