



Anxiety Management

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Long Covid: Psychological Effects

Psychological symptoms can result from a combination of the effects of the immune disturbance caused by the virus, the brain toxicity of the virus and psychological trauma associated with the virus

Dealing with the physical symptoms of Long Covid, particularly fatigue and breathlessness, and the associated inability to resume normal roles and routines can be very stressful, isolating and traumatic. When we don't recover within an expected time frame, this can lead to frustration, confusion and fear which can then lead to anxiety and depression.







- 57% said that Long Covid had negatively affected their wellbeing (ONS, 2021)
- 25% were likely to have some form of anxiety (ONS, 2021)
- 30% reported experiencing moderate to severe depressive symptoms (ONS, 2021)
- 11.5% experienced symptoms of PTSD (Sindhu et al, 2021)
- Psychological symptoms were more prevalent in those experiencing continued multiple physical symptoms (Sindhu et al, 2021)

Psychological effects can include:

- Stress from enduring a potential fatal disease
- Fear of illness / health anxieties
- Stigma of having the illness
- Traumatic memories of severe illness or time in hospital (PTSD)
- Social isolation
- Persisting symptoms and inability to resume normal life/employment
- Uncertainty about the future
- Reduced wellbeing and quality of life
- Exacerbation or relapse of previous anxiety or depression
- Psychological effects of pandemic (isolation, change in routine and lifestyle, health worries)





What is Anxiety?

- A feeling of unease, worry or fear
- An automatic response to danger, fear or threat
- The body's built-in alarm system
- Essential to protect you



Everyone feels it at some point in their life!

1/10 people will see their GP for anxiety!





NICE Guidelines for Anxiety

The *National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)* provides information and guidance for both professionals and the general public on managing anxiety (Generalised Anxiety Disorder type).

STEP 1: Identify, Educate and Self-Manage - Identifying and communicating Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) to an individual in a timely manner in order for them to understand it and start effective treatment. Provide education/self-management strategies.

STEP 2: Low-Intensity Psychological Interventions which is for those who have not improved after education and active monitoring of GAD symptoms. This can be implemented through non-facilitated self-help, guided self-help or psycho-educational groups.

STEP 3: High-Intensity Psychological Interventions. For individuals who have marked functional impairment or those who have not improved after step 2. You can be offered either high-intensity psychological intervention such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) or drug treatment.

STEP 4: Referral to Community Mental Health. This is a referral stage for those who have significant functional impairment or severe anxiety which is also paired with the risk of causing harm to themselves, substance abuse, personality disorder, complex physical health problems, or self-neglect.





What causes Anxiety?

- The body's natural adrenaline response to danger or fear
- Over-activity in the areas of the brain involved with emotions and behaviour
- An imbalance of Serotonin and Noradrenaline which help to control and regulate mood
- Disordered thinking
- Life Stressors, Trauma, Abuse, Bereavement
- Health Issues pain/chronic conditions
- Upcoming events tests/exams





When the body is 'stressed' the brain sends out a distress signal



This activates: 1: the sympathetic nervous system 2: the fight/flight response (production of Adrenaline and Cortisol)



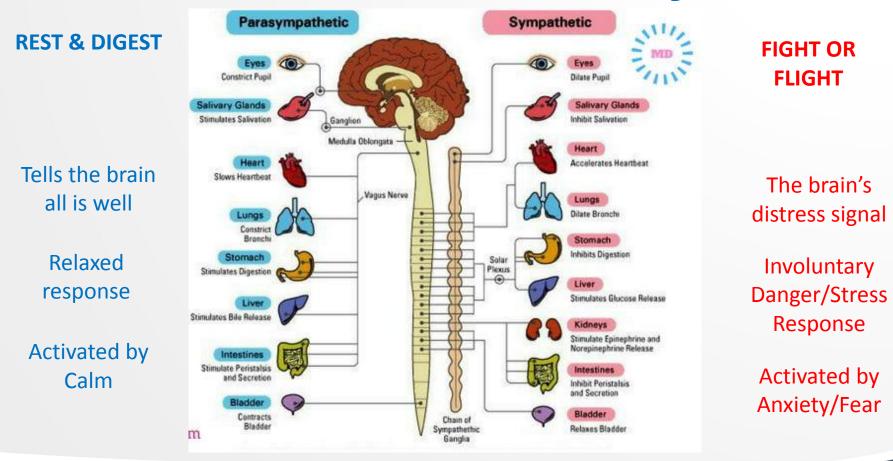


NHS Group

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Controls autonomic functions of the body – breathing, heart, digestion A key player in the production and regulation of stress in the body

The Autonomic Nervous System







Polyvagal Theory

When our environment feels safe and calm our body state is regulated efficiently (parasympathetic state)

When our mind detects danger or threat (real or perceived) this puts the body into 'flight or flight' mode (stress response)

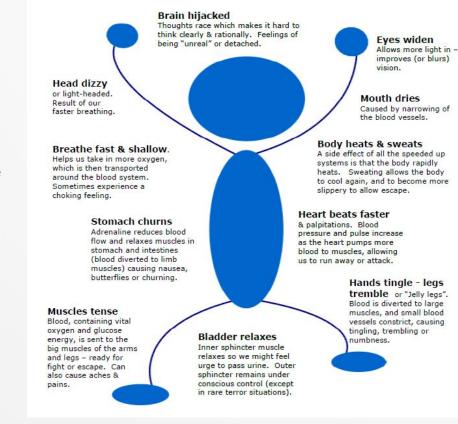
When you experience trauma or PTSD, this can lead to a continued and exaggerated stress response (sympathetic state)



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Fight or Flight Response

- A natural bodily response to danger, fear or stress, like an automatic alarm system which prepares your body for action so it can respond quickly if necessary
- Energy (Adrenaline) is rushed from the adrenal glands into the bloodstream and large muscle groups to enable us to either flee or fight.
- Cortisol (Stress Hormone), is released into the bloodstream which increases sugars (glucose) to enhance brain activity.
- This response causes rapid heart rate, increased BP, dizziness, shallow breathing, sweating, hypervigilance. They also curb bodily functions that are non-essential or harmful in a fight/flight situation
- Helpful in truly threatening situations but a hindrance if activated falsely
- Can take 20-60 minutes for body to return to normal



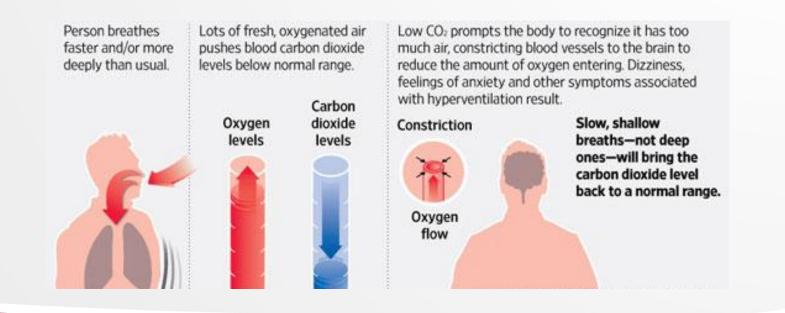




Why is my breathing affected?

When we anticipate stress we tend to hold our breath.

Extra oxygen is sought by the body in order to supply muscles with maximum energy in order to 'fight' which causes over-breathing (or hyperventilation)







Typical Symptoms

Physical

- Feeling of "doom" Butterflies/churning/feeling sick
- Fast, thumping heart
- Palpitations
- Rapid breathing (hyperventilation)
- Ringing in the ears
- Dry mouth / tight throat
- · Weakness in legs/feels like jelly
- Headache/dizziness/blurred vision
- Tense muscles
- Pins & needles
- Trembling/Shaking





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Psychological

- Fear
- Panic or Terror
- Distress
- Uncertainty
- Embarrassment
- Irritability
- Anger
- Excitement
- Distress
- Loss of control

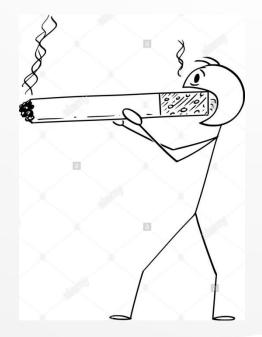


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Behavioural

- Agitation or Restlessness
- Pacing
- Verbal / Physical Aggression
- Safety behaviours avoiding people, places or situations
- Staying in or needing someone with you in certain situations
- Paranoia / jumping to negative conclusions
- Fear of losing control
- Disturbed sleep / insomnia
- Noise intolerance
- Difficulty concentrating
- Using unhelpful coping strategies smoking, drinking drugs, biting nails



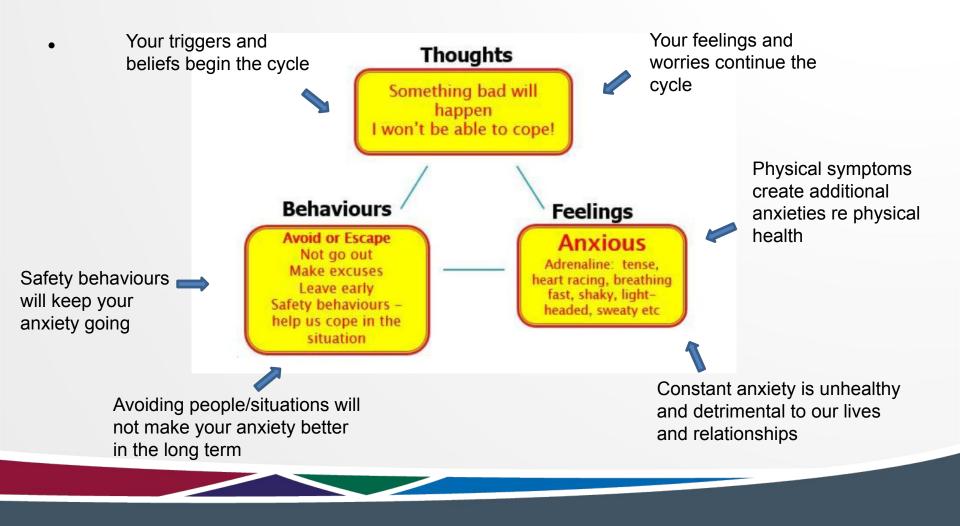








Anxiety Cycle









- An extreme form of fear... in an ordinary situation
- The longer you are anxious, the more hypervigilant you become
- The body's normal fear reaction becomes oversensitive and is then triggered in 'normal situations
- Anytime you feel slightly worried this will trigger the body's normal fear reaction

REMEMBER - panic attacks are not dangerous

RECOGNISE – your symptoms

UNDERSTAND – what causes it and what keeps it going.

ACCEPT – the feelings are not harmful and do not indicate anything is seriously wrong

LEARN – techniques and coping strategies

Once you understand what is going on, half the battle is won!





Identify your Triggers

- Look for patterns
- When do you usually get anxious?
- What are you thinking?
- What makes you anxious places/people/certain times of day?
- What are your triggers sounds/smells/reminders?

Which factors keep your anxiety going?

What are your safety behaviours?

Are you interpreting events with a negative bias?





Cognitive Distortions

Habitual, disordered thinking Unhelpful thoughts and beliefs Interpreting events in a negative way



Cognitive distortions can be corrected over time





Identify your Thoughts & Feelings

Don't believe everything you think!

- Is the threat real or perceived? Is it fact or opinion?
- Are the physical feelings anxiety-related? (fight or flight/adrenaline response)
- How likely is what you are thinking going to happen?
- Are you exaggerating or misreading the 'threat'? Are you thinking rationally?
- What would a trusted friend say to me right now?
- What advice would I give to a friend?
- Are you feelings making the situation worse than it is?
- Is there a more helpful way of looking at the situation?

You CAN cope with these feelings You have got through this before IT WILL PASS.





Break the Cycle!

- Don't avoid situations
- Re-frame the situation
- Take things slowly and gradually
- Shift to an external, rather than internal, focus
- Think of the longer term, bigger picture
- What has happened before? What can you change?
- What helps?



Stop! Take a Breath Observe Pull back / gain Perspective Practice what works







Thought Diary

Situation – what happened?	Emotions – how did I feel?	Physical Sensations – what did I notice in my body?	Unhelpful Thoughts or Images – what went through my mind?	More Realistic Thoughts – STOPP. What advice would I give to someone else?	What could I do next time? – what would be more effective. What works?

A way of understanding and changing your negative thought patterns

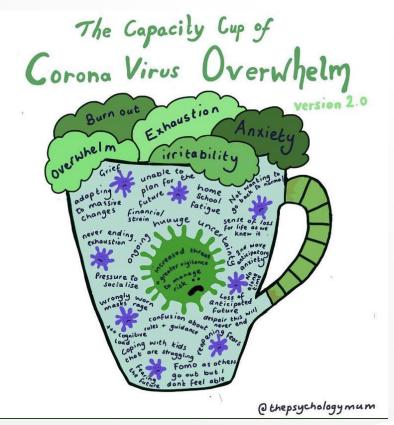


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COVID related Anxiety

It is easy to catastrophize in times of uncertainty It is easy for the 'what ifs' to spiral

- Stay informed don't obsessively check the news or social media and stay away if you feel overwhelmed. Stick to trustworthy sources only
- Follow guidelines repreventing the spread of the virus
- Focus on the things within your control concrete things
- Stay connected Talk to someone, particularly if you are physically isolated
- **Re-frame** negative thoughts don't let Covid dominate your thoughts or conversations
- Take care of yourself
- Maintain a routine and structure your day
- Make time for enjoyment, exercise and relaxation
- Get outdoors get a daily dose of sunlight!







BREAK!!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cd5nBMsfZo







Treatments for Anxiety

Medications (via GP)

- SSRIs Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (Sertraline/Citalopram/Paroxetine)
- SNRIs Serotonin and Noradrenaline Reuptake Inhibitors (Venlafaxine/Duloxetine)
- Anti-Convulsants Beneficial in treating anxiety (Pregabalin)
- Benzodiazipines Sedatives for short-term use (*Diazepam*)

Therapies

- Counselling / Talking Therapies
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Applied Relaxation Therapy
- E-therapy





Alternative Therapies

Self Help

- Self-help books/books on prescription (reading-well.org.uk)
- Self-help courses
- Self-help worksheets (getselfhelp.co.uk)
- Peer support groups

Complementary Therapies

- Aromatherapy
- Massage
- Reflexology
- Hypnotherapy
- Rescue/Flower Remedies
- Herbal Treatments







Apps (via NHS Apps Library) https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/

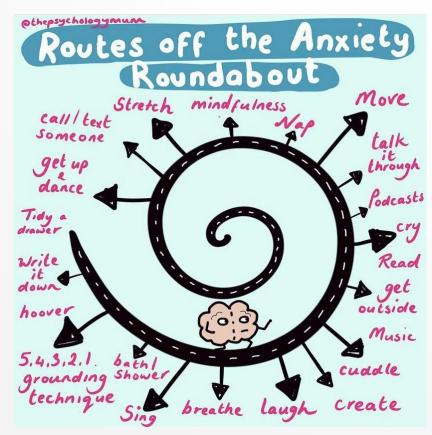
- Catch It
- Chill Panda
- Cove
- distrACT
- eQuoo
- Feeling Good: positive mindset
- My Possible Self
- Stress and Anxiety Companion
- Thrive
- WorryTree
- Calm
- Headspace





Coping Strategies & Techniques

- Connection/Talking
- Sleep Hygiene
- Grounding
- Distraction Techniques (rubber band)
- Mindfulness
- Deep Breathing
- Relaxation / Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Meditation / Visualisation / Guided Imagery
- Journalling / Thought Diary / Gratitude Diary
- Positive Affirmations
- Tapping/Emotional Freedom Technique (psychological acupressure)
- Autogenic Training







Activities

- Sleep/naps
- Seeing Friends/Family
- Being outdoors / in nature
- Gym
- Swimming
- Walking / Running
- Yoga / Pilates / Tai Chi
- Music / Playlists / Podcasts
- Creative Arts
- Hobbies / Interests / Volunteering
- Pet Therapy





Looking after YOU!

Dopamine (Rewards/Pleasure)

Self care activities Hearing your favourite song Creating art Eating delicious foods

Oxytocin (Calming)

Play with a pet/baby/children Hug Give a compliment Social bonding

Serotonin (mood stabiliser/support) Meditation/yoga/prayer

Sunshine Healthy diet Self-esteem exercises

Endorphins (positive feelings)

Laughing Exercise Rollercoaster Random act of kindness





Sleep



Sleep has powerful psychological benefits

Reduced sleep can increase anxiety levels by 30%

During the deepest level of sleep, HR, BP, Anxiety and Stress are reduced and this is where connections in the brain become re-organised.

Sleep deprivation can cause:

- Reduced activity in the pre-frontal cortex (the area which keeps anxiety in check)
- Overdrive of the limbic system (the emotional centres of the brain)









Grounding

The 3, 2, 1 Technique If you notice anxiety increasing, find a comfy chair, sit with your feet flat on the floor and back straight

Look around and name 3 things you can see and 3 things you can hear, 3 things you can feel

Then do 2, then 1



Grounding techniques can help to bring you into the here and now, away from anxious thoughts

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HOLD

Deep Breathing EATHEOUT Drag your finger along the top on the square breathing in for 4 seconds. As you drag your finger down the right side, Block one nostril and breathe in hold your breath for 4 seconds. 4 SECONDS for 5 seconds. SECONDS Block the other nostril and As you drag your finger across the bottom side breathe out for 5 seconds. of the square, breathe out for 4 seconds. · Hold your breath as you drag your finger up the left side of the square. **REPEAT 3 TIMES** 11111 BREATHER BREATHE OUT BREATHE OUT 4 SECONDS Nicole Batiste

Deep breathing techniques can help to slow down and regulate your breathing







Relaxation Try this...



These techniques can help to bring your body and muscles into a relaxed state and reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety

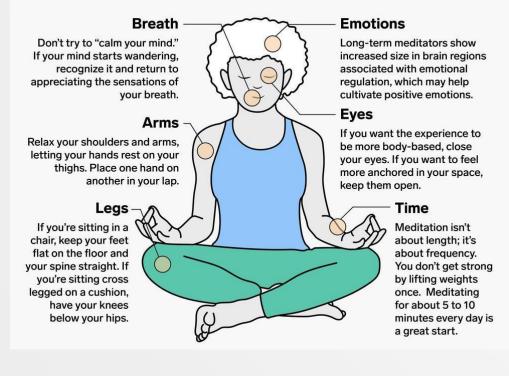


Have a go...



Meditation

6 tips to help you start meditating



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MR57rug8NsM

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqGTphrGHi4

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-L2ZKYMsag

These techniques can help to bring your body and muscles into a relaxed state and reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety

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Have a go...



Mindfulness



Mindfulness can teach you to become more aware of what is happening in the present moment



Have a go...



Journalling



Journalling can serve as an escape or emotional release from negative thoughts and feelings







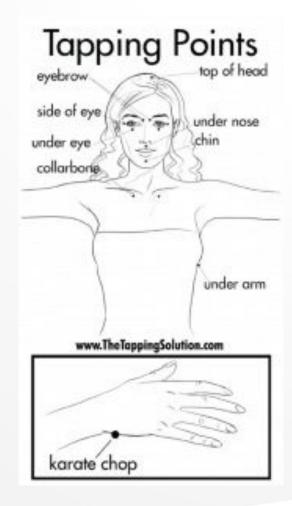
Tapping

Tap the 'Karate Chop Point' (centre of fleshy part of outer hand) 5 times using 2 fingertips whilst repeating a positive mantra such as "*I am safe in this present moment*")

Tap each of the following areas (meridian points) 5 times whilst 'venting'. State why you are anxious/worried and release all of your frustration, anger and annoyance

- Top, centre of head
- Beginning of eyebrow
- Side of eye
- Under eye
- Under nose
- Under mouth (mid-chin)
- Mid collarbone
- Underarm

Then repeat the above 2-3 times, changing your mantras to positive affirmations (tap in the positive)





Have a go...



Vagus Nerve Stimulation

- The autonomic nervous system plays a key role in the production of anxiety symptoms in the body
- The vagus nerve (the "chill out button") connects the brain and body and can be stimulated to calm your nervous system and trigger a relaxation response in the body

Singing, Humming, Om-ing, Chanting Loud Gargling with Water Cold Exposure (cold washcloth to face) Meditation / Deep Breathing Valsaver Maneouvre Exercise Positive Social Connection & Laughter Massage Exposing yourself to pleasurable things (nature, sunset, pets, babies, photographs) Healthy Diet with Probiotics

Anxiety and the Vagus Nerve

How The Vagus Nerve Affects Organ Systems

Heart Decreases heart rate, vascular tone.

Liver Regulates insulin secretion and glucos homeostasis in the liver.

Gut Increases gastric juices, gut motility, stomach acidity.

Inflammation Suppresses inflammation via the cholinergic anti-inflammatory pathway

Brain

Helps keep anxiety and depression at bay. Opposes the sympathetic response to stress.

Mouth

Taste information is sent via three cranial nerves, one of which is the vagus nerve. The vagus nerve is needed for the gag reflex, swallowing, and coughing.

Blood Vessels Decreases vascular tone, lowering blood pressure.

When stimulated, the vagus nerve sends a message to the body that it's time to relax and de-stress



Have a go...



Visualisation



Breathe slowly and deeply, in through your nose and out through your mouth. Allow your ribcage to expand fully on inhale and gradually empty on exhale. Continue slow deep breathing noticing yourself becoming more and more relaxed...... more and more calm...... relaxed and calm.

Use your five senses to enrich the following experience; allow your mind to generate a personal oasis.....

Imagine yourself on a beautiful sandy beach..... Notice the soft white sand..... Notice the shades of blue in the water..... Notice the blue sky with soft white clouds rolling slowly past..... Notice the lush tropical plants and flowers.....

Listen to the sound of the breeze blowing gently in the trees..... Notice the sound of the waves rolling slowly to the shore..... Notice the sound of the birds softly calling.....

Feel the sunshine warm on your skin..... Notice the warm sand underfoot..... and the cool breeze on your hair and face.....

Smell the fresh ocean scent..... Notice the sweet fragrance of tropical plants

Notice a pleasant taste in your mouth..... perhaps from a tall cool drink.....

Notice yourself relaxed and calm..... relaxed and calm..... relaxed and calm.....

Enjoy the feeling of relaxation..... Notice as it moves from the top of your head slowly down your face..... neck..... shoulders..... chest..... arms..... abdomen..... legs..... knees..... shins..... feet..... toes.....

Notice yourself relaxed and calm..... relaxed and calm..... relaxed and calm.....

When you are ready slowly open your eyes refreshed and awake.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GL2yEA5Q6N8

Visualisation or Guided Imagery can help to re-focus your mind on more calming and pleasant images







Physical symptoms

can be reduced by learning relaxation or controlled breathing

Relaxation relaxes the muscles and reduces sweating, breathing rate, heart rate and hormone production

Mental symptoms

can be reduced by identifying challenging or worrying thoughts and replacing them with more positive ones

Imagine yourself coping in a situation that you feel anxious about

Behavioural changes

can be altered by deliberately changing your behaviour in a step by step, gradual fashion, and making alterations to your lifestyle to avoid stress

Devise an Action Plan – what is the worst that can happen and how can you deal with it?





Links

Anxiety

https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Anxiety

Panic

https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Panic

Worry and Rumination

https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Worry-and-Rumination

Tolerating Distress

https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Tolerating-Distress

Health Anxiety

https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Health-Anxiety

An Introductory Self Help Course in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/media/ekplzpw2/selfhelpcourse.pdf

Depression

https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Depression







Healing Meditation for Long Covid Sufferers https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0ZBIQh5z98

NHS/Moodzone Podcast – Anxiety Control Training

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqcOqh9_ivl

NHS Introduction to Mindfulness https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWuPJFAx3rA

Guided Meditation – 10 Minute Meditation for Anxiety https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-6f5wQXSu8

Relaxing Music – to calm the mind https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLffJhxIXKE

Hypnosis for Anxiety https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orjbRb4EBgo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QCtzOb8_XA





Further Reading

https://www.longcovid.org/

https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/managing-the-effects/effectson-your-mind/managing-fear-and-anxiety/

https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/living-with-mental-ill ness/wellbeing-physical-health/long-covid-and-mental-health/

https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/pandemic/





Helpline Numbers

Organisation	Number		
Samaritans	116 123		
Crisis Care 24/7	0800 953 0285		
The Sanctuary	0300 003 7026		
Silverline	0800 470 8090		
Papyrus	0800 068 4141		
Shout	Text GMSalford to 85258		
Anxiety UK	0344 477 5774		
Calm	0800 58 58 58		
MIND	0300 123 3393		





THANK YOU!