

## Managing Anxiety during the Covid-19 Lockdown

Everyone is prone to anxiety especially after a traumatic experience or an event that could potentially affect your health or be a threat to you and your loved ones.

This unprecedented pandemic that has no boundaries, appears to have taken us all off guard, feeling unprepared for a rapidly evolving situation in our lives and the associated sense of loss of control. The enormity of Covid-19 can be difficult to come to terms with as it has had such far-reaching consequences on our lives.

As a GP, a great number of patients have contacted me worried as they have experienced difficulty meeting life's most basic needs such as buying food for their family, obtaining medication, or taking on extra responsibility for elderly relatives.

Some patients have had to postpone weddings, cancel holidays, and even start to think about closing down businesses that they have poured their personal savings and lifelong dreams into. This in turn has generated a maelstrom of emotions -worry, fear, frustration, low mood and disappointment.

Now we face social isolation, and with the lockdown, the abrupt cessation of our usual go-to activities that help us to switch off and unwind. Activities such as the gym, cinema, clubs and societies that helped us to connect to others has been abruptly ended and left us wondering "for how long?"

Others have found that some strong positives have come out of the situation, with people finding ways to be more resourceful, baking their own bread, sewing, making their own face masks, and changing their lifestyles to include more exercise.

I hope that this report helps us to realise that we are not alone with our fears, and that making some small changes during this lockdown can help minimise the anxiety we feel day to day.



## THE COVID-19 SURVEY

This survey was designed by The Sloan Clinics and completed by friends, relatives, clients, and patients. It looks at the effects of the Pandemic on the lives of those who took part. It was designed to try to gain a better insight into how we are all feeling, and to try to find strategies that could help others cope better with their anxiety during the lockdown.

### What the survey focused on

How anxious are you about Coronavirus?

What are you most anxious about?

What activities help you manage your anxiety?

What advice do you have to others about the “do’s and don’ts” to help them through this challenging time?

## Survey Results

- 60 people responded to the survey.
- Over 80% of people felt they were suffering with anxiety during this lockdown.
- 71% of people who completed the survey are worried that they will contract Coronavirus, and a great number of them are worried about their children being infected with the virus.
- 70% of people are worried about their finances during this lockdown, seven respondents are extremely worried.
- The survey signalled that the hardest day to day aspect of the lockdown is boredom and feeling lonely.
- Sleep pattern and sleep problems were the most commonly cited issue during the lockdown, followed by feeling more emotional, crying more and feeling more agitated / short tempered.

## Coping strategies

- Over 70% of people are exercising more than before the lockdown.
- 33% of participants are drinking more alcohol than before the lockdown.
- Other common coping strategies are cooking, reading and internet research.

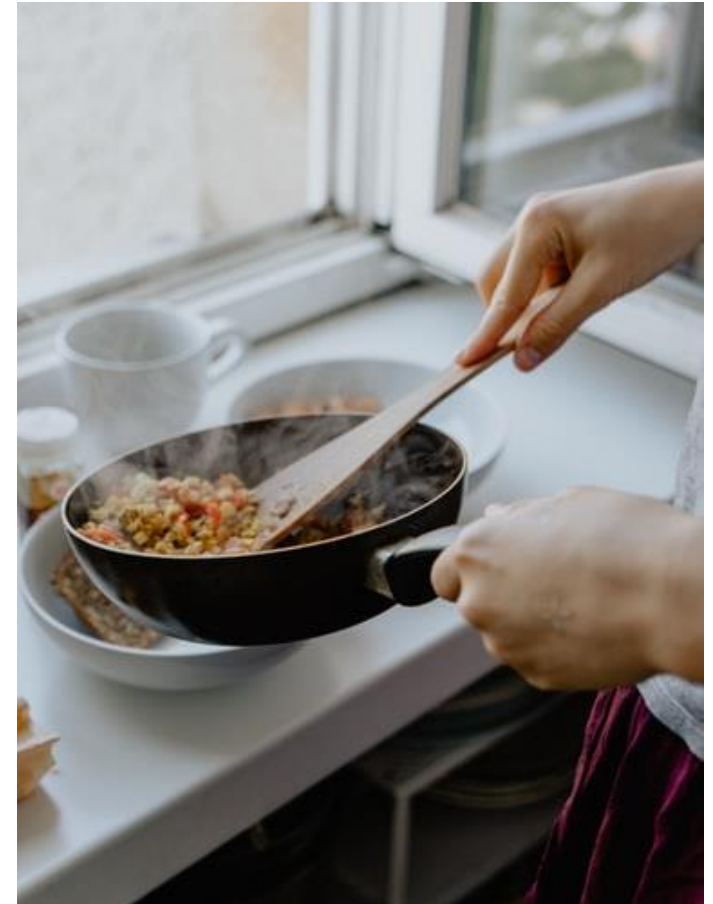
### What are the most worrying aspects about the pandemic?

In this cohort, the thing that worries people the most is that their children may catch the Coronavirus. This is an interesting result as we know that older people are more likely to become unwell with Coronavirus and children on the whole are less affected.

### The other common concerns were.....

Family and friends becoming unwell and contracting the virus themselves, followed by food shortages, finances and being stuck inside.

Generally speaking, the respondents in the survey were not too concerned about being isolated or indoors.



## Additional comments made about what they are worried about

- Becoming a police state and Boris having too much unchecked power.
- Running out of food and people not keeping their distance
- Long term impact on country
- Other people not adhering to the lockdown/isolation rules and the Government not being strong enough to enforce necessary measures to stop spread of disease too little too late
- Can't keep things clean always
- Partner is a key worker. It puts him more at risk as well as us
- The UKs economy
- The effect on the global economy
- Not being able to support family and friends



## Comments / other

- Finances
- Being isolated from my family and grandchildren
- Sterilising everything
- No work
- Being stuck with bad thoughts
- Managing a full time job from home plus kids, cooking, chores, shopping etc
- Working from home
- Working while taking care of everything and everyone in my house. Not being able to do both right.
- Lots of things to fill my time but not able to get items to complete projects

- Missing my friends
- Living around each other constantly and child welfare in the long term
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Worrying about the vulnerable children I work with

### Further interesting data

Exercise, cooking and reading are the most commonly adopted activities since the lockdown. Most of us are suffering with greater anxiety since the lockdown, and poor sleep. Which we know go hand in hand.

## Some really good suggestions

The do's and don'ts to help people manage their anxiety during this pandemic.

### Don'ts

- Don't drink Alcohol during the lockdown- alcohol consumption reduces sleep quality and makes you feel more anxious. One person highlights alcohol as being "*dangerous, pointless and expensive.*"
- Avoid following people who post content on social media that upsets you or makes you feel anxious- unfollow people or groups that make you feel negative
- Don't watch the news on a continuous loop- only watch it once per day to keep updated
- Don't put too much pressure on yourself to do too much, enjoy some time to relax



- Don't go out unless it is essential (one person recommends PPE when you do go out). Staying at home mitigates your risk of catching the virus and spreading it to others
- Don't worry about the things you cannot change, this will make you more anxious
- Don't trust all news from internet sources- there is a lot of fake news out there
- Don't sleep during the day, it makes your sleep quality worsen at night
- Don't just sit and drink alcohol.

## Do's

- Stick to the social isolation rules that keep you and everyone else safe- this will reduce your anxiety about you or your nearest and dearest catching the virus.
- Work on positive mindset. Name three things you are grateful for each day e.g. instead of saying we are stuck at home, say we are safe at home.
- Remind yourself regularly that this is only temporary, and life will be back to normal again soon. Use the time to reflect on the positive changes you could make to it going forward.
- Get up at a regular time each day, get dressed and keep to a schedule and routine
- Try to structure your day- task focused in morning and relaxation in the afternoon
- Gardening
- Decorating
- Staying in touch with friends and family on Zoom / skype
- Online pub quiz
- Book food delivery as early as possible, and share delivery slots with others in your family or friendship group
- PE classes online



- Find an online exercise guru or online yoga, pilates, meditation, whatever suits you.
- Relaxing videos on YouTube - Wowart shows someone painting amazing oil paintings to very relaxing music
- Open university free courses
- Play games, enjoy your outdoor space in the garden
- Spend at least 30 minutes in the sunshine relaxing each day
- Have a jigsaw on the go to de-stress
- Play a musical instrument – there are free online music lessons
- Decorating and catching up with the jobs you never have time for
- Sewing masks for local NHS.
- Cooking and sitting down to eat with family
- Neighbourhood shout out and waves everyday to check on your neighbours.

## Conclusion

This is clearly a difficult time for everyone. If you are feeling overwhelmed, try not to put any further pressure on yourself. Instead find ways to let off steam- make positive lifestyle changes that will help you to de-stress, and improve your quality of sleep. Avoid alcohol!

Don't feel guilty if your children are not doing all the homework they should be, they will catch up!

Putting more pressure on yourself to do a huge overhaul on the house or garden could worsen your anxiety.



Try doing things that relax you, slow down if you are feeling worried. Find ways to put energy into yourself. Make your one walk a day count, be in the moment, focus on your breathing, enjoy nature and all the signs of spring!

I particularly like the comment in the survey about positive mindset and trying to achieve this and make it part of our daily routine.

Instead of thinking “*we are stuck at home*”, think to ourselves: “*we are safe at home.*”

Equally important is talk to people if you are feeling lonely, anxious or worried.

As we know, nothing in life is permanent, this lockdown will come to an end.

I really like the suggestion that we can use this time to reflect on the positive changes we can make when this is all over and life is back to normal.

*Stay Strong, Stay United, Stay at Home*



For full survey results please follow the link:

<https://surveyhero.com/results/225509/0d6fcbd59c53e05d5cfb19a20a69255d>

Images by: Anh Nguyen | Anthony Tran | CDC | Fabian Moller | Rachael Crowe | Kevin McCutcheon