

# St Francis Hospice Dublin

## Occupational Therapy

### Managing anxiety at home during COVID-19



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The Occupational Therapy Team in St Francis Hospice has put together some information, which may be useful to assist with managing anxiety during this worrying time. It is important to remember that anxiety is a natural reaction to this worrying and uncertain time we are now faced with.

There are many ways to cope with worry and anxiety including listening to relaxing music, engaging in meaningful occupation, completing moderate activities, or completing mindfulness and meditation practice.

When we become anxious it impacts on our body, mind and behavior. It can affect your routine and prevent you from engaging in activities you value. It can also affect our minds and can result in negative thoughts.

We can learn ways to use the mind to relax the body, reduce stress and improve your confidence to engage in activities that are important to us.

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### Five principles for self-care



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### Strategies to help manage anxiety

1. **Establish a daily routine.** Routines provide structure and purpose. **Balance your weekly routine** so you have a good mix of work (activities that have to be done), rest and leisure.
2. **Think about which regular activities are most important to you.** What are the important elements to these? Can you adapt them to carry out in the home? For example, instead of a class, following an online strength and balance routine.
3. **Set daily goals** to provide purpose and a sense of achievement. This might include working through that list of the things you keep meaning to do but never get round to? **Write a list of activities you want to achieve each evening for the following day. Tick them off as you go along to build your sense of achievement.**
4. **Identify the triggers that make you feel low** and look for ways to reduce or manage them. **Limit your exposure to the news on radio, television and social media. Structure check in times such as lunchtime or nightly news bulletin or have a day off altogether.**

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5. **Talk with family, friends and neighbours** to help them understand how you feel and how they can help. Can they talk you through using apps on your mobile phone, for instance?
6. **Take care of yourself.** Eat and drink healthily with plenty of fruit, vegetables and water to support your immune function and energy levels.
7. **Avoid staying still for too long.** Exercise and regular movement will maintain fitness and strength. If you are working from home, take breaks and eat away from your “desk.”
8. **Have a good sleep routine.** If you are struggling, try avoiding tea and coffee in the late afternoon and evening, take a bath, using blackout curtains, listen to gentle music.
9. **Keep in touch.** Arrange to speak to someone most days on the phone, through social media or over the garden fence. ALONE have people to speak to. **There are lots of community groups in your local area with volunteers to support with getting essential groceries or medications.**

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When you find yourself starting to feel anxious, it is important to realise there are techniques which you can try to use to stop it in that moment...

### THE STOP TECHNIQUE

Say stop

Let your breath go

Relax your shoulders

Breathe in, and then exhale

Relax your face and jaw

Think of a relaxing image



### THE FEATHER TECHNIQUE

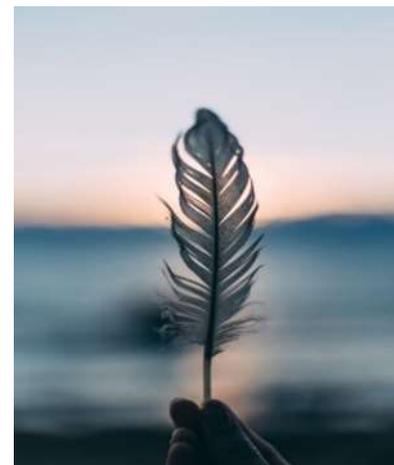
Lift index finger to eye level

Visualise a feather at the tip of this finger

Breathe in and out in a controlled manner

Imagine the feather is gently blowing on your finger as you breathe out

*Repeat this three times*



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### TRAIN YOUR BRAIN

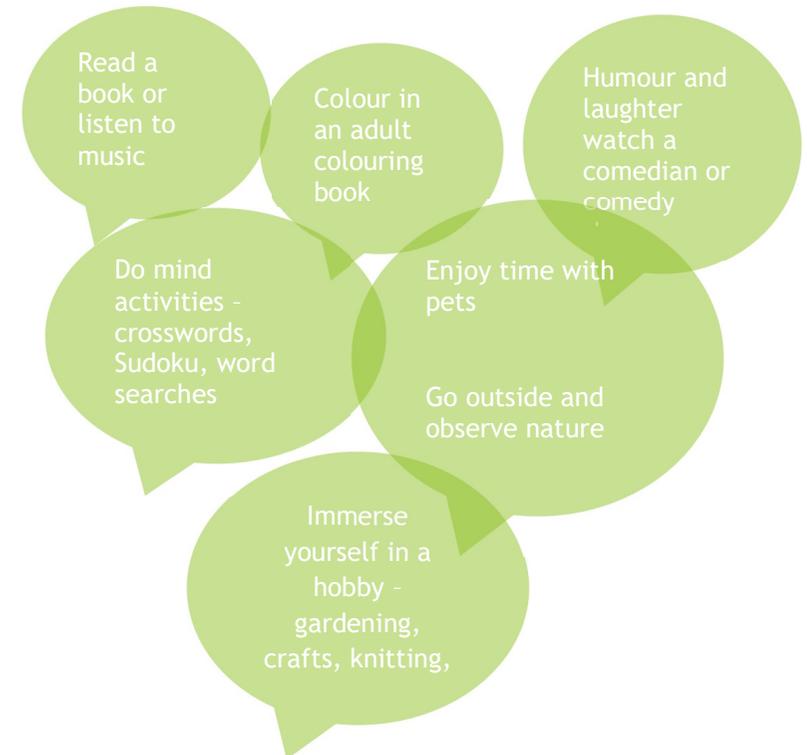
Train your brain is designed to tackle the symptoms of stress and anxiety by ensuring that all symptoms are addressed by completing the following daily



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### DISTRACTION

Engaging in tasks or activities can work well for short term management of stressful situations



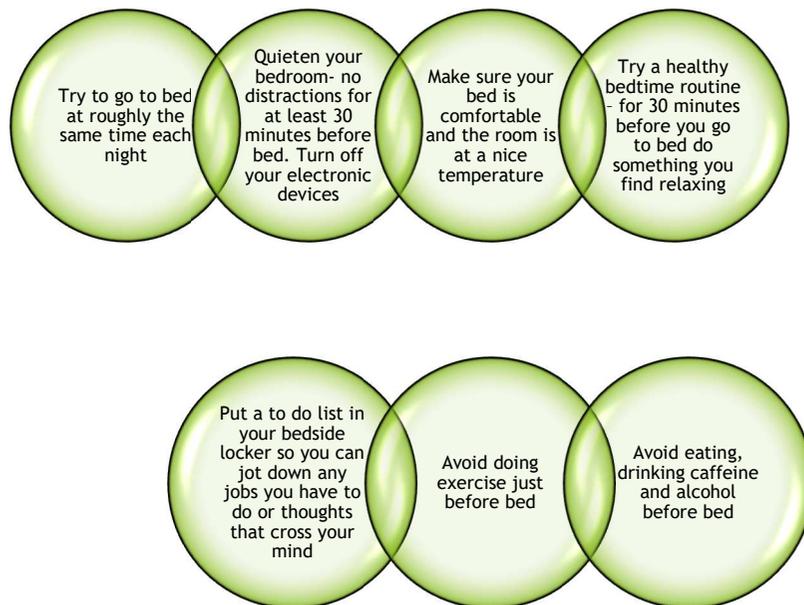
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### SLEEP

Sleep is often affected by stress and anxiety



It can sometimes be hard to tell if you are anxious because you can sleep or you can't sleep because you are anxious. By tackling the symptoms of stress you may find that your sleep also improves



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### **KEEPING A RECORD**

Why not record how tense or relaxed you feel before and after each activity or strategy in order to monitor how it is helping you? This can be used to develop your personal Stress Toolkit and figure out what works best for you.

Perhaps use the tool below and complete a before and after. Rate how tense/relaxed you feel by circling the appropriate number

When writing your comments consider changes in:

- Tension
- Thought process
- Nausea/vomiting
- Sleep patterns
- Other

**If you are feeling very tense and the strategies outlined in this leaflet are not having any effect on bringing stress levels down please telephone your occupational therapist on 01 829 4000 (Blanchardstown) or 01 832 7535 (Raheny).**

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### RECORDING THE EFFECT OF THE ANXIETY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Name of strategy:

**BEFORE**

Relaxed

Tense

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Comments:									

**AFTER**

Relaxed

Tense

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Comments:									

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