

# MANAGING HEALTH RELATED ANXIETY

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**“Is it Corona Virus or Just a Cold?” ...” More Deaths from Corona!”. With headlines like these it’s no wonder the Covid-19 pandemic has us stressing about our health.**

For humans, some level of anxiety is useful and actually motivates us into action. However, anxiety becomes unhelpful when it **interferes with our ability to function normally** and **reduces our wellbeing**. For example, rather than focussing on work you get distracted with the repetitive thought “oh no, my throat hurts” and google your symptoms (again!). Or instead of washing your hands once and enjoying Netflix, you wash repeatedly all evening, unable to settle. You may also find yourself catastrophizing, assuming that any slight symptom must be Corona. In these situations, your anxiety is like “a bully”, directing you into behaviours and thinking styles which aren’t productive and instead lead you to feeling increasingly helpless.

If anxiety about your health is impacting you in this way, here are **5 Simple Steps** to help you regain control:

1. **Mindfulness:** Take a break from the “mind drama” by bringing your attention to the present. Place your attention on your nose and take slow deep breaths, feeling your belly expand as you inhale. Simply notice the flow of air into your body. If you notice thoughts appearing, let them drift off like a cloud, redirecting your attention back the tip of your nose. Notice the sense of calm that a few minutes of mindfulness can bring.
2. **Focus on what you can control** – No one can predict the future, but we can all follow sensible health guidelines. So ensure you’re up to date with authorised medical advice (**[click here for Australian Government Department of Health website](#)**). Writing down a personal health plan

can also be helpful (e.g sleeping eight hours a night, eating well, washing your hands, staying in). Also have medical contact details ready in case you need an appointment. With things you can’t control, notice when your mind wanders there and instead remind yourself of your personal health plan (as above).

3. **Limit your Exposure to Online Information.** You know what to do - create boundaries and enjoy some down time. Constantly seeking information about your health might give you momentary relief but only serves to trigger worry thoughts, confuse and reinforce your anxiety long term.
4. **Keep it in Perspective** – One way is to ask yourself these questions:
  - a. What is the worst case scenario? (you or a loved one contracts the virus and becomes very ill)
  - b. The best case scenario? (all remain healthy)
  - c. The most likely scenario? (someone gets sick, but most cases are mild and most people recover)Our minds love to jump to the worst outcome, so catch yourself out and go back to the facts. Also remind yourself of the preparedness and expertise of our medical system if assistance is indeed needed.
5. **Keep Connected** – Right now it’s important to seek support from friends and loved ones. Schedule regular video calls and phone chats. Try to have fun and distract yourself with your friends as well as express your feelings. Also enjoy the sense of contribution you will feel by being a source of support to others.

Finally let’s remind ourselves that this difficult period will eventually end. If you need additional strategies and assistance to help get you through, **DWW is here: 1300 135 600.**