Managing Anxiety Around COVID-19

Anxiety is something we all experience at times. It is a feeling that occurs when we are faced with a situation that we perceive as threatening. Anxiety triggers our 'fight or flight' response which results in a number of changes in our body that help to keep us safe. However, in the absence of real danger, we can sometimes experience symptoms of anxiety that can be unhelpful. Some people find these symptoms to be uncomfortable or distressing, therefore it can be useful to develop ways of managing this anxiety response. A new situation which is not uncommon for people to feel worried about is COVID-19. This poster includes some suggestions on coping with anxiety around COVID-19 which may be helpful.

Be kind to yourself

When we are feeling anxious, it may be difficult to focus on positive experiences. On your good days, try recording what went well and reward yourself for small achievements. Prioritising time for self-care and doing your favourite activities can be a good way to destress. Some people find mindfulness enables them to focus on the present moment.

Support

Talking to friends and family about our worries might help us to feel less distressed and can assist others to understand how we are feeling. You can self-refer to Occupational Health to find out what support options are available to you. Your manager or HR can also refer you for advice on any adjustments to your work that may be beneficial.

Controlling Our Breathing

Anxiety can cause our breathing rates to increase. Gaining control over our breathing and slowing it down can sometimes help. To do this, try taking a deep breath in through your nose and hold for a few seconds. Gently breathe out through your mouth. Try doing this for 3-5 minutes.

Challenge negative thoughts

It can be helpful to notice any negative thoughts that come to mind and to challenge these with alternatives. When experiencing physical symptoms of anxiety, you could try thinking: "My body is responding to my anxiety, and I accept that this is how I feel at the moment, but it won't last forever".

Designated worry time

Writing our worries down and coming back to them at a specific 'worry time' can allow us to get on with our day. 'Worry time' offers a designated space to deal with things that may be troubling us. Recording what happened leading up to having worrying thoughts can help to identify any triggers.

Healthy habits

It is important to adopt healthy habits such as regularly exercising, eating balanced meals, maintaining a good sleep routine, and reducing alcohol consumption. Each of these can promote aspects of psychological well-being, and can contribute to reducing feelings of anxiety.