**How Can Principles From Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) Help During the COVID-19 Pandemic?**

It’s true that it’s a very difficult time, and it’s also true that there are principles from cognitive behavioural therapy that can help.

Cognitive behavioural therapy is underpinned by the idea that our thoughts, feelings, what we do and how our body feels are all interconnected. Our 1 minute animation explains this [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRijYOJp5e0).

There’s lots of well-researched principles of CBT which we know are helpful with managing anxiety and low mood. Some of these principles are just as helpful for coping with difficult situations in the absence of a diagnosed mental health problem. In this tricky time, making some choices about how we think and behave can help us to keep calm and prevent our mood from plummeting.

**Tips from CBT to help manage anxiety related to coronavirus**

* It’s normal to feel all sorts of feelings in response to the pandemic, including fear, sadness, anger, to feel ‘cut off’, or to feel a mix of these things.
* Our body’s ‘fight or flight’ response is a physical reaction that can be very physical, including feeling short of breath, having a racing heart, or feeling hot.
* There is a huge amount of information about coronavirus, some of it from more reputable sources than others. Continually checking the news can make us feel more anxious. Consider limiting how often you look and making sure you get the news from reliable sources.
* Avoid checking repeatedly for symptoms of illness – it can accidentally make you feel worse.
* Keep breathing – taking a moment to breathe slowly and ground yourself into your seat and feet can be helpful.
* Stay connected with people – we can’t spend time physically but we can call, write, email and stay in touch with loved ones.
* Seek help if you need it, especially if you have a pre-existing anxiety condition. Lots of therapists are offering remote consultations now. Check the CBT register for a BABCP accredited therapist.

You can read more about CBT tips to manage anxiety [in this article](https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-how-to-stop-the-anxiety-spiralling-out-of-control-133166) by accredited member Dr Jo Daniels or listen to this podcast with Dr Jo Daniels and BABCP Senior Clinical Advisor Dr Lucy Maddox.

**Tips from CBT to help managing mood when staying indoors.**

Tips from behavioural activation, an evidence-based treatment for depression, can help us keep our mood lifted while we have to stay at home.

* Research shows that we feel better when we do activities that are a mix of:
  + things we enjoy,
  + things we feel a sense of achievement about,
  + things we help us feel connected to others.
* Plan ahead to make sure you have a mix of these things in your day
* Try to stick to a regular routine of getting up and going to bed, so you don’t make it harder to sleep at night.
* Try to do some exercise each day, the endorphins it releases make us feel happier, and it’s good at getting rid of adrenaline which can make us feel anxious.
* Check in with your values – what is most important to you in your life? How can you build elements of this into your day? E.g. if you value creativity, what can you do that is creative? It doesn’t have to be a big thing.
* Thinking of others and helping where we can is also something which boosts mood.
* Review your week at the end of it and see which days you felt happier and what you were doing on those days. What would you like to do more of or less of next week?

You can read more about how principles from behavioural activation for depression might help in this tricky time by reading this article from Dr Andrew Beck, BABCP President Elect and Dr Lucy Maddox, BABCP Senior Clinical Advisor

How can CBT for Depression help with Self Isolation and Physical Distancing?

<https://babcp.com/files/Accreditation/Ideas-from-depression-treatment.docx>