

## Practical Tips to reduce anxiety around Germs, Cancer & COVID19.

The important thing to remember is that a certain level of concern is perfectly normal right now for everyone. We can build up our emotional resilience though which will help us handle worrying thoughts and help strengthen our immune system. This is uncertain times but concerns and worries around Cancer and the virus can be helped by the following strategies so that we can still focus on the good bits in our lives. Practise the techniques regularly as they are skills & like any skill, take time to learn. We are all also unique individuals and so combining techniques might work for you or some may be more powerful for you than others.

- Be reassured by all the official advice and guidelines that have been developed by experts throughout the world. For example, it is very clear that washing our hands for 20 seconds can help protect us.
- Limit your exposure to the news on the pandemic. Select one time of day only to look at this or get a friend or family member to summarise any changes. Stick to the proper sources of advice like the Government and NHS sites. There is a lot of amazing positive stories out there about progress and recovery but tend to be buried under negative press.
- When persistent worrying thoughts keep swirling around in your mind use one of the Mind-set Shifting techniques. Don't give the thought the power. We can work on controlling these thoughts and bringing down their intensity. So, when a worrying thought about cancer, the virus or germs intrudes on your day, imagine shrinking it in your mind. See the words and make them smaller. Every time the thought comes into your mind, focus on shrinking it smaller and smaller until it's too small to see. Then breathe it out and bring a happy thought to mind. Perhaps of a happy memory, an image of a place you love or thinking about something that makes you laugh
- Try to think about the "what is" rather than the "What If's. So, if a worrying thought begins to make you feel anxious challenge it. Is it a fact? Is there evidence for it? Don't think about the "Worst case" scenario but switch it to the "Best case scenario" Don't let the fear of the future interfere with living today. Try and live in the precious moments of each day. Distraction is a powerful tool so use this time to think about activities you would like to do while shielding. Is there an online course you would like to do? Is there a craft you can learn; is there a box-set you want to watch; mindful colouring book. Play songs or music every day that you love and make you feel good. Grow something inside or outside.
- A very relaxing and soothing activity is to make a Positivity Box. Use any box or container and decorate it if you wish. Fill it with your favourite photos, pictures of the oceans or pictures off the internet of nature. Most importantly fill it with strips of paper recording happy moments in your life. Also include a good moment from each day. A wave from a neighbour, a phone call from a friend a TV programme that made you laugh, something in nature you noticed out your window or in your garden or a feel good moment as you achieved a task you had put off for a while.



- Use the **APPLE** technique:

**ACKNOWLEDGE** – Notice the anxious thought and uncertainty as it appears but don't block it.

**PAUSE**- Just Pause and take 2 deep breaths in and out.

**PULL BACK**- Tell yourself that this is just worry talking and this apparent need for certainty is not helpful to your wellbeing and is only a thought or feeling. Not a fact.

**LET GO**- Let go of the thought now. You might want to imagine in your mind a stream flowing gently down. Imagine seeing a leaf on the stream. Then imagine putting your thought on that leaf and watch it drift away down the stream until it disappears round the bend.

**EXPLORE**- Explore the present moment by noticing your breathing flowing in and out and where it creates movement in the body. Then bring your attention back to the activity you were doing before you noticed the worry.

- Most importantly practise daily at least one Stress Management Technique. It is easier to accept how things are when we have switched on our Relaxation Response in the body. The simplest technique is a Breathing Exercise of which there are many. Some of these can be explored on our website <https://www.cancersupportscotland.org/self-help-for-your-wellbeing/>

Cancer Support Scotland is also offering an online Stress Management Course that will explore all the many strategies for reducing stress and anxiety, whatever is causing your anxiety. This will help you explore which one's work best for you. To find out more call 0800 652 4651

Another website offering help and resources around anxiety and the Corona Virus is [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

