

## Tips for Coping with Anxiety

It can be difficult to function if you are anxious and fearful. The good news is that there are practical and simple ways to manage and reduce anxiety. These tips are designed to help you cope.

### Find ways to relax

Various relaxation exercises can help you cope with anxiety. These include:

#### Deep breathing

Inhale slowly to a count of four, filling your diaphragm. Hold your breath for four counts. Then slowly exhale to four counts. Repeat as you feel yourself relax

#### Progressive muscle relaxation

Breathe in as above, clench the muscles in your feet and relax them as you breathe out. Repeat this as you move up through the muscles in your body.

#### Visualisation

Close your eyes and imagine a favourite place of safety and calm or recall some happy memories. Use the positive feelings to help you feel more relaxed.

### Look for constructive distractions at work and home.

Your mind can be your enemy when you are anxious or fearful.

At work it may be helpful to focus on the task in hand. Take a break or change tasks if you can.

At home look for fun, healthy ways to distract yourself. Try to make sure that they're positive as well. Choose television programmes that are fun and informative rather than dramas that can increase your anxiety. Get involved in activities that require your full concentration

## **Practice good self care**

Sleep, exercise and a healthy diet are among the ways of reducing anxiety and they help you feel better physically and mentally.

### **Sleep**

Not getting enough sleep can trigger anxiety.

### **Exercise.**

Exercise helps burn away some of the stress and tension that leads to fear and anxiety. It also helps improve mood and your ability to think clearly and rationally. A 30 – 60 minute walk each day can help. Create an activity schedule for your week.

### **Healthy Diet**

Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables. Try and limit processed food and sugary drinks.

### **Avoid or limit Caffeine**

Caffeine is a stimulant which can make anxiety worse.

### **Avoid mind-altering substances**

While alcohol might help to reduce anxiety in the short term, it can often do just the opposite in the long term. Drugs are an ineffective and dangerous coping mechanism

### **Keep up your social connections.**

Your social connections are vital to managing stress and anxiety. They can foster a sense of normality. Talk to your loved ones, have lunch or a catch up with a friend.

### **Have a plan.**

Develop a safety plan for you and your family in case there is another earthquake. Knowing what to do in advance can lessen your anxiety.

### **Accept rather than fight the anxiety**

If you accept that you are anxious, it is easier to deal with it than to try and fight against it. Fighting it causes more stress, which causes more anxiety. If you can accept that you are anxious or fearful you'll be better able to address it. A surfing analogy might help. Think of anxiety like a wave. Allow it come, and then ride it to the shore where it stops.

Remind yourself of the strategies you have developed to deal with anxiety

### **Seek help from the Employee Assistance Programme**

If you have intense feelings of anxiety or hopelessness or are having trouble performing your job or other daily activities call **0800 787 2867** for assistance in contacting a counsellor who can help you develop your coping strategies.