

# Coping with the uncertainty of Coronavirus



We are experiencing very uncertain times, because of Coronavirus or COVID-19



We know that uncertainty is a major cause of anxiety for autistic people



**Understand**

This page helps you

- to understand the feelings and behaviours from uncertainty
- gives some tips for managing them



## What is uncertainty?

- Not knowing the outcome of an event
- Being unsure
- Unpredictability



## Why is uncertainty a problem?



Uncertainty can feel stressful and upsetting.

Autistic people may find uncertainty difficult.



It might cause anxiety.



## Some people might react to uncertainty by

- trying to avoid uncertain situations
- trying to prepare as much as possible for an uncertain situation.

This can make people think too much about **everything**

This can cause **more** stress, worry and anxiety.



If there is a situation that has **not** been prepared for, it can be very difficult to manage

- finding out lots of information about the situation

This can make the person feel very overwhelmed, anxious, and worried.



There are lots of ways to help people to manage uncertainty better.

This can help to reduce anxiety.



When we try to manage our difficulties with uncertainty we are trying to **feel safe**



**Struggling with uncertainty can effect**

- thoughts
- feelings
- behaviours



We then might experience uncomfortable Feelings in the body



When we understand how uncertainty affects us, we can start to find ways to manage it better



## Ways anxiety might impact you

- Thoughts & images
- Behaviours
- Emotions or feelings
- Physical sensations

It might be helpful to add your own experiences to these words



## Find out which strategies do not help

It is important to find out what does not help us.

These things might not be helpful over a long time.

## These might be things like

- Finding out more information about the situation
- Looking for uncertainty
- Seeking reassurance from others
- Avoiding situations
- Avoiding making mistakes
- Making impulsive decisions
- Thinking too much about information





## Understanding control and uncertainty

Uncertainty can be distressing because we can't control it



There are going to be situations that we are not able to sort out or will be uncertain.



Sometimes we feel better when we can control things



When things are taken from our control it can feel too much and make us feel distressed.



## Sitting with a feeling of Uncertainty

When we are not in control of a situation

It can **help** to learn how to “**sit**” with the feelings of uncertainty.



This might sound strange or it might sound scary. Especially if uncertainty makes you feel uneasy or distressed.



When we can manage feelings of uncertainty helps us to cope better when things become uncertain



“**Sitting**” with the feeling of uncertainty is

- Thinking about how we feel on the inside
- Thinking about how we feel on the outside







Use this time to **“get used”** to how the uncertainty makes you feel.

At first, this might feel uncomfortable and anxious



When you see that these feelings are because of the uncertainty, this may help you to feel less distressed.



This is because you **KNOW** what those feelings are.



## Tips to Remember

Here is an acronym '**STOPP**'

This will help you remember how to manage feelings and anxiety from uncertainty.



## **STOPP**

**S**top



**T**ake a breath



**O**bserve



**P**ull back



**P**ractice what works – proceed



## Mindfulness

### Mindfulness can help when

- Things feel uncertain
- We are unable to control something
- Things change

Mindfulness can help us find ways to cope when we are feeling distressed by uncertainty.



### Important

Due to sensory difficulties, mindfulness activities that **use** the senses should be used with caution.



Mindfulness helps us to focus on what is happening right now (present moment).



Thoughts might come in to our heads



It is okay to notice these thoughts



Notice those thoughts

Then **go back to** thinking about your breathing



Or task you are doing

**in that moment**



Mindfulness that lots can take practice.

If you like it, give it time, it can really help to manage the distress of uncertainty.



**Some people also like**

**-Mindfulness Audio recordings**

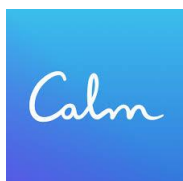
There are lots online



**There are also apps to download such as**



- **Headspace**



- **Calm**



- **Insight Timer**



- **Buddhify.**



Walk



## Relaxation

Relaxation can be very helpful to use when you are **sitting** with uncertainty.

It can help to find some relaxation activities to use when you are trying to accept uncertainty.

## Relaxation techniques

- Do some exercise (e.g. go for a walk, cycle, do some yoga)
- Read a book
- Watch your favourite TV show/film
- Listen to some music
- Do something creative (e.g. draw, paint)



- Talk to a friend or family member
- Have a bath
- Cook

## Useful resources

### Mindfulness techniques:

- <http://psychologytools.com/technique-mindfulness.html>
- <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk//mindfulness.htm>

### Relaxation techniques:

- <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk//relax.htm>
- <http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/relaxation.asp>
- <https://www.anxietybc.com/sites/default/files/MuscleRelaxation.pdf>

## Coping with Uncertainty in Uncertain Times

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