

action
mental
health



ANXIETY

**SELF-CARE GUIDE ON POST
PANDEMIC ANXIETY**

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK 2023

15-22 May 2023

Understanding Change, Transition, Grief & Loss

At some point in our lives, we all face different types of changes that can lead to feelings of loss and grief. It could be as simple as switching jobs or as profound as losing a loved one. Change can be a challenging journey, but it doesn't always have to be walked alone.

We can support one another, as we learn valuable personal lessons through our own lived experiences, we can share our personal stories and offer each other valuable insights as well as practical tips to help navigate through these changes.

- **Change** is the disruption caused by alterations to the equilibrium of life
- **Transition** is the process of adjusting to those changes, and re-establishing equilibrium
- **Loss** is the separation from people, places and things that occurs when change takes place
- **Grief** is the painful cluster of emotions we feel during times of loss

During 2020 the majority of the world was impacted by an unprecedented period of transition, change, loss and grief as we all experienced a global pandemic in the form of COVID -19. For most of us this was sudden, unexpected and traumatic. We all did what we needed to do to work through the challenges, disruption and for some the devastation this caused. We considered ourselves, our families, communities and the world in which we live. It affected every aspect of our lives.

So much of our experience was out of our control. We were distanced physically from family and friends, we missed special occasions and couldn't conduct events following our cultural norms. It turned our lives upside down! We lived with the anxiety this created within us, held worries, fears for ourselves, our loved ones and we faced the uncertainty of how we could as a world find resolution.

We stood in awe at the resilience, creativity, determination and brilliance of mankind and were stunned by the selfishness, corruption and stupidity of the same.

From clapping outside our houses in support of our NHS staff, to checking in with elderly relatives over the garden fence, to endless movie nights and board games with our children to keep them entertained we cared for one another.

As we resurfaced from this time we returned to school, universities and work, reintegrated into our communities and began to rebuild our lives hoping that we would hold on to the positive gained out of the negative experience and that this would continue in some form: the new found IT skills as we mastered Zoom, the friendly conversations with our neighbours whilst walking the dog and our new appreciation of nature.



For some their lives changed forever having lost a loved one, their job, livelihood, career or health. Whatever the experience I think it would be difficult for any of us to deny times of anxiety and low mood.

For so many people young and old that anxiety has continued or even increased as we have come through the pandemic. This can be difficult to understand having survived what could be seen as a life threatening experience why now when it is no longer a threat do I still feel anxious? This is the nature of trauma, it shakes the core of self and causes us to seek safety and develop ways of coping in the present.

The symptoms of trauma can be described as a normal response to an abnormal experience which we process after the event.

Maybe you were experiencing anxiety before the pandemic and this has been exasperated, maybe you were not what you would consider to be an anxious person but now would see yourself as this and this has come as a shock or surprise.

This anxiety may manifest in health anxiety, school anxiety or social anxiety.

As we try to understand and integrate our experience of the last 3 years and whilst we travel on our learning journey maybe this short self-care guide will help you.

Understanding yourself

- Recognise the enormity of what you went through, it was unprecedented.
- Your personal journey was unique and individual to you.
- We are all different, our personal experience was different to that of others and therefore how we dealt with it in the past and deal with it now in the present will be different to how others deal with it.
- You will have been changed by the experience. We were all affected and impacted in some way.
- Whatever your experience a good place to start is where you are at now ... how are you?
- Whatever you are thinking or feeling is okay. It is your reality and so be true to yourself.
- Try to own your thoughts and feelings.

Understanding anxiety

- Learn about anxiety from reputable sources.
- Remember it is natural and normal to feel anxious at times we all do but give yourself permission discover more about yourself.
- Try to understand what anxiety looks like for you, how do I experience it in my body, what triggers it, what helps me manage it.
- Talk to friends and family they may already know that you are struggling and are waiting to help and they may have some insights about what they see in you.
- Enlist their help and support but be mindful that you are your own expert and you know yourself better than anyone else.



Understanding how you can help yourself

- Be kind to yourself, show yourself the tender loving care you show to others.
- Do those things that you know lift your mood, comfort and soothe you.
- Draw on old hobbies, interests and perhaps introduce some new ones.
- Spend time with people who feel safe.
- Take life at your own pace.
- Don't expect too much of yourself, healing and recovery takes time.
- Try not to compare yourself to others, you are not them and they are not you.
- It wasn't the life you expected during those pandemic years but try not to think of it as lost time and try not to put pressure on yourself to catch up on those years, there is no need.
- Don't hold the expectations of others, it takes as long as it takes to feel better!
- Talking can really help, talk to those you trust.
- If your anxiety is getting you down, impacting your life negatively and you feel that you are not coping or managing life as you would want or need to seek professional help.

Understanding who else can help you

- Visit your GP tell them how you are feeling they may be able to help you with advice, medication and a referral on to an organisation for support.
- Helplines – Samaritans, Lifeline, Papyrus
- Action Mental Health offer a range of services visit our website
- AMH – New Life Counselling offer a range of therapeutic services for all ages depending on need. Play therapy to our younger clients 5yrs and above, creative therapy (art and music) and talking therapy to all ages, family therapy and group work.
- Please contact us for any further information.
- We're listening and support is always available.