



Health Matters Well-Being Toolkit: Managing Anxiety

Stay calm and take control of your anxiety with evidence-based methods.

ANXIETY

Anxiety is a normal reaction to potential danger when the body's fight-or-flight response is triggered. You may feel threatened, under pressure, or be experiencing a challenging situation. It can help you to stay alert and focused, prompt you to action, and motivate you to act. However, when anxiety feels constant or overwhelming, it can be problematic. There is no right or wrong emotional response to the many stressors we have all been faced with this year. It can be challenging to avoid feeling fear and uncertainty when many things are outside of your control. This toolkit offers a few tips for responding to feelings of fear and anxiety when they arise.

SEEK SUPPORT

Your mental and emotional well-being are just as important as your physical well-being. If you are feeling routinely panicked and unable to find a feeling of calm, you may feel relief by talking to a professional. Benefits eligible employees and their dependents can seek free, short-term counseling through the [Employee Assistance Program](#). The [Idaho COVID Help Now Line](#) is also available to offer support for anyone challenged by the stress associated with the current pandemic. *Call or text (986) 867-1073 or call toll free (866) 947-5186 to speak to a representative.*

*Call or text (986) 867-1073 or call toll free (866) 947-5186 to
speak to a COVID Help Now Line representative.*

CALMING STRATEGIES

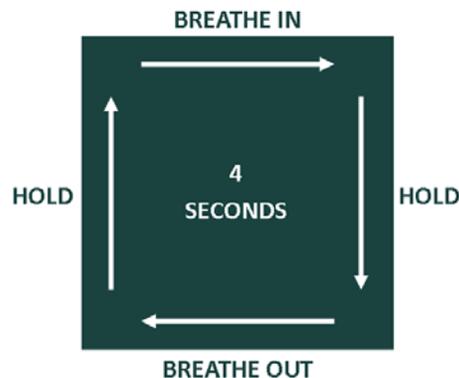
Try are some simple calming strategies to respond to feelings of anxiety and fear.

- **Mindfulness:** Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to the present moment. It is normal for thoughts to be all over the place during periods of uncertainty. As often as possible, create time to do just one thing. For example, close out your email when working on projects so you can focus without distraction. Or try to take a few minutes each day to be silent and let your mind, body, and soul rest.
- **Stretching:** Anxiety can cause your entire body to feel rigid and tense. Stretching for just a few minutes can make your body feel more relaxed by releasing tension.
- **5-4-3-2-1:** Take a moment to notice five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, one thing you can taste. This practice can bring you back into the present moment and bring awareness to your body. This practice is helpful when you find yourself processing all the potential outcomes and current unknowns or feel your thoughts spiraling.
- **Gratitude:** Pause and give energy to being thankful. What are you grateful for? Gratitude is a powerful tool and is a very helpful response to feelings of scarcity and comparison. Practicing gratitude regularly can create new connections in your brain and has been shown to lead to higher levels of happiness.

JUST BREATH

Deep breathing calms nerves and relieves anxiety by helping to regulate the autonomic nervous system. It sends a signal to your brain to calm down and release physical tension. One easy anxiety-lowering breathing technique that can be done almost anytime or anywhere is called box breathing.

Try box breathing by exhaling to a count of four, holding your lungs empty for a four-count, inhaling to a count of four, and holding air in your lungs for a count of four before exhaling and beginning the pattern again. Repeat the entire cycle four times. Do box breathing several times a day as needed to calm your nerves and relieve stress.



RESOURCES

- <https://ioem.idaho.gov/covidhelpnow/>
- <https://ogi.idaho.gov/counseling/>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/anxiety>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/box-breathing#tips-for-beginners>
- <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/anxiety-disorders-and-anxiety-attacks.htm>
- [WELCOA COVID-19 Employee Education Packet](#)