

Thriving

IN THE PANDEMIC



A GUIDE TO NAVIGATING THE TWIST AND TURNS OF COVID-19


CLARITY
Happiness Within Your Reach

ILLUSTRATED BY



ABOUT US

Clarity Singapore is a Catholic mental health charity that provides services to persons with mental health conditions – helping them to live meaningful lives through support, therapy, acceptance and recovery. We work with individuals between the ages 15-65 that are at risk of or struggling with mental health conditions arising from anxiety and depression, including trauma, pre and post-natal depression, stress, bereavement and loss, relationship and other emotional issues.

Hello There!

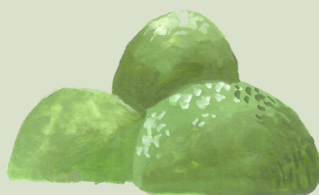
We hope you all are doing well and staying healthy during this time. For many of us, COVID-19 has changed our way of living. Even after a year and a half of living through this pandemic, we may still find ourselves struggling at times to adapt to the changes and challenges COVID-19 has brought.

This 'Thriving in the Pandemic' guide features a number of techniques and strategies that we feel can be helpful to everyone as we continue to live in unprecedented times. From learning to regulate your thoughts and emotions to figuring out how to better communicate with your family, each strategy is easy to follow and can be added to your daily routine.

Continue to take care and stay safe!

From,

Clarity Singapore



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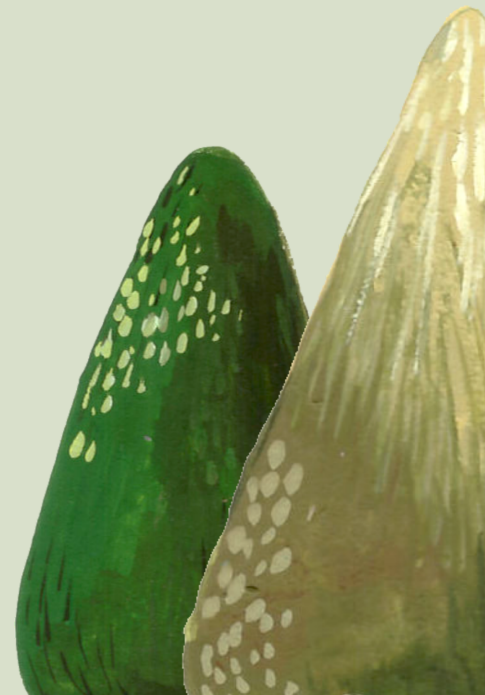
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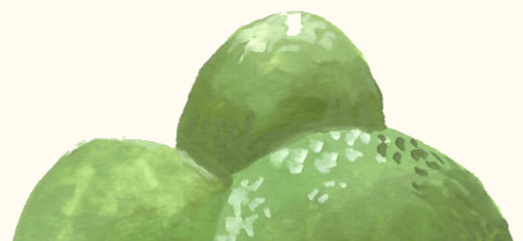
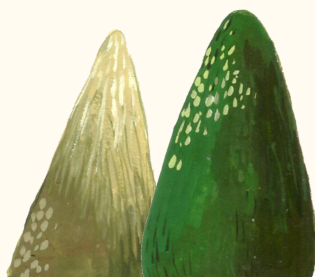
REGULATING YOUR THOUGHTS



The Worry Tree

The worry tree can help you manage your worries by asking yourself the following questions:

1. Notice the worry that is occurring - What are you worrying about?
2. Identify if what you are worried about is a **real event** (i.e. problems that are currently happening) or a **hypothetical event** (e.g. what ifs)
3. If you are worried about a real event and it is possible to take action, ask yourself if action can be done immediately or it can only take place sometime in the future.
 - If you are able to take action on that worry, you should work on it and solve it. This will help to alleviate some of the anxiety you are feeling.
 - If you are only able to take action on it sometime in the future, make specific plans on how you will handle the event and then set aside the worry and place your attention elsewhere.
4. If you have identified that you are worried about a hypothetical event and it is not possible to take action, the worry should be set aside and you should place your attention elsewhere.



What are you worried about?

Is this a current event or hypothetical event?
(Can I do something about this?)

Hypothetical event
(No)

Current event (Yes)

When can I action on
it?

Let go of the worry

Now

Later

Change the focus of
your attention

Do it

Come up with
an action plan

Let go of the
worry

Let go of the
worry

Change the focus
of your attention

Change the focus
of your attention



Thought Challenging

From the daily news updates about rising case numbers, new clusters being formed and having to juggle work and other responsibilities, it is easy for us to be bombarded by negative thoughts. In these moments, we might try to tell ourselves to shake it off and look on the bright side of things. However, there is only so much positive thinking we can do. After a while, it gets a little old...and frustrating... and unrealistic.

Give thought challenging a go instead!

Commonly used in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), this simple and effective technique will help you consider the situation from multiple angles, and allow you to weigh the whole picture while using actual evidence from your life. It helps us to be more objective, as well as enables us to identify unhelpful thought patterns that are usually related to anxiety. When we change our perspectives, we can change our emotions too.

Take some time to reflect on how your past week or month has been. If something has been bothering you, follow these guided questions to help you break down your thoughts.

What situation/event are you currently thinking or worried about?

E.g. I constantly think about COVID-19 and how it is affecting my job.

What are some automatic thoughts you have about the situation/event you are thinking about?

E.g. The number of COVID-19 cases keep rising. If the number of cases increase, things are going to become a lot worse if work from home continues. I might even lose my job.



Here are some questions to get you started on broadening the way you think. Focus on ONE worry at a time.

Evidence finding

Is this fact or opinion?

What assumptions am I making?

Is there any evidence for and against my thoughts?

Putting it into perspective

What is the worst that can happen and what can I do to cope with it?

Is there anything good that might come out of this?

Consider alternative explanations

Are there other ways to look at this situation?

What would my friend say about this situation?

How would I advise someone else having this thought?

Goal-directed thinking

What are the effects of me thinking this way?

What thoughts will be more helpful for me to feel better / achieve my goals?

Is there something I can learn from this situation to help me do better next time?

After asking yourself these questions, try summarising the new perspective that you have gained on your situation.

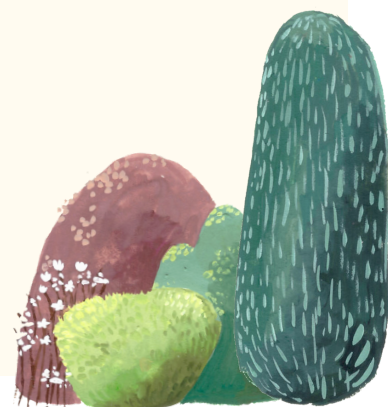
What are some alternative thoughts you have about the situation/event you are thinking about?

E.g **Evidence finding:** Are the number of cases always going to keep rising? Aren't there periods of time where there was a decreasing amount of cases?

Putting it into perspective: Working from home might not be as bad – it allows me to spend more time with my family.

Consider alternative explanations: If I were advising myself, I would say: "Just take it one step at a time. Things might change so it would not be very helpful to worry so much about the future".

Goal-directed thinking: Maybe, I can take the time being at home to learn a new skill or to upgrade myself.



REGULATING YOUR EMOTIONS

Mindfulness is a powerful tool that creates distance between an action and your reaction. These practices help by grounding you in the present and bringing awareness to both your own, and others' emotions. Here's an activity you can follow to aid you in managing your emotions effectively through mindful thought and action.

The Rain Practice

RAIN is specifically tailored to ease emotional confusion and suffering. When a negative or thorny feeling comes up, we pause, remember the four steps, and begin to pay attention in a new way.

R**ecognize.** It is impossible to deal with an emotion unless we acknowledge that we're experiencing it. We have to be honest with ourselves and try to identify our feelings even though our first thought might be to ignore it. An example could be a conversation you had with a co-worker that left you feeling queasy or agitated. Instead of brushing the incident off, you might look closer and realise what you felt was anger.

A**cknowledge.** You accept the emotions and you give yourself permission to feel them. Instead of dismissing feelings like anger and self-judgment as bad and wrong, allow yourself to sit with your emotions. Do not fixate on it or try to suppress it. Instead, create space for your emotions to simply be.

I**nvestigate.** Explore your emotions with a sense of openness and curiosity. This feels quite different from when we are fueled by obsessiveness or a desire for answers or blame. Move towards your feelings, explore how the feeling manifests itself in our bodies and also look at what the feeling contains. Questioning helps us focus less on labelling, and more on gaining insight.

N**on-identify.** Make a conscious effort to avoid being defined by a particular feeling, even as you engage with it. You may feel angry with a particular person, in a particular conversation, about a particular situation, but that doesn't mean you're an angry person, or that you'll always be angry. This opens the door to self-compassion, as well as sets the foundation for a compassionate relationship with others.

The Physiological Sigh

Physiological sighs are a natural pattern of breathing that we engage in throughout the day and especially during deep sleep. It has been shown by research to reduce stress, anxiety and muscle tension. It can be done in stressful situations and it does not require one to step away from the stress-inducing activity. **Research shows that it takes only about 3 physiological sighs for the body to reap the benefits.**

Whenever you are feeling anxious or worried about the ever-changing pandemic, give this breathing technique a try!

Here's how to do it:

1st Inhale



2nd Inhale



Long Exhale

Breathe in normally

Breathe in again. This 2nd breath should be a lot shorter than the 1st inhale. At the end of this shorter 2nd breath, it should feel like you have taken a deep breath.

Exhale slowly and for a longer duration than your 2 inhales combined

The total number of seconds that one is inhaling or exhaling is not as important as the ratio. The key thing is to exhale for a longer duration than you inhale.

You can inhale and exhale either through your nose or your mouth, but studies have shown that it is better to inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth.



Click on the links to learn more about this pattern of breathing and how to do it!

<https://youtu.be/rBdhqBGqiMc>

<https://youtu.be/aRBKlJlmxys>

DEALING WITH LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

Loneliness is a feeling we might have all felt especially over the past year or so. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, a lot of us might not have been able to see our family or friends. Here are some things to keep in mind to help cope with isolation.

Accept the reality of the situation

By acknowledging you are living in a time of uncertainty and challenges brought by the pandemic, you can reduce stress levels and work on finding the best way to move forward.

Sharing your feelings

Telling someone you trust that you are lonely can be comforting and help you feel less isolated. However, do not compare your feelings with others.

Focus on the opportunities isolation provides instead of the things you feel you are losing out on

Take advantage of this time you have to embrace solitude and work on yourself and goals you may have put off.

Practice self-care

When dealing with loneliness, you should remember to continue taking care of your physical and mental health. This can come in the form of trying a new hobby or setting a time to exercise or destress. Find things that can make you feel good!

Consider doing random acts of kindness

Everyone is going through the same thing. You can help someone feel better by taking some time out of your day to volunteer.



5 THINGS TO TRY IF YOU'RE BORED AT HOME

Stuck at home and running out of ideas to keep yourself busy? Here is a curated list of activities for you to have a go at. Tried and tested by the Programmes Team at Clarity!

1. Become a plant parent.

Gardening seems to be a favourite hobby and a way to de-stress among the programmes team. During her free time, Rebecca, our Intervention Programmes Manager has been doing simple home gardening such as growing her own herbs. If you are just starting out, Ryna, our Associate Psychologist, recommends getting a snake plant because it is easier to care for.

2. Listen to podcasts.

Podcasts are easily accessible and a great way to learn about new topics. For those who are interested in Psychology, Clement, our Associate Psychologist recommends 'The Psychology Podcast with Scott Barry Kaufman', a series where you get to hear professionals speak about their field of expertise.

3. Go out for a run.

With many of us still working from home, Sarah, our Programme and Communications Executive says it is good to get out and get fresh air once in a while. Plus it allows you to be outside without a mask!

4. Create personalised music playlists.

If you are just sitting around, why not take some time to organise your music based on your mood or current favourite artists. That way you will have a playlist for every occasion! Jolene, our Programme and Communications Executive, feels that music has a powerful effect on our mood and has specific playlists for when she wants to be energised and when she wants to relax.

5. Learn to sew a face mask.

Marie, our Associate Psychologist, got this idea from her family and it has now become a fun bonding activity for them. Give this a go if you would like to pick up a new skill and use different fabrics to spice up your outfits. We found this website that offers several templates with different sizes so you can make masks for your whole family!

<https://www.allfreeseewing.com/Accessories-to-Sew/Face-Mask-Template-PDFs>



IMPROVING YOUR FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Managing Conflicts at Home

More time at home means more time with the family. While this is usually a good thing, being stuck at home during this period is bound to lead us into some disagreements. While it is normal to have them, fights that are not handled correctly can lead to bigger arguments that can impact your family dynamics. Here are some small steps you can take to manage conflict.

Soften the start of your conversation. How an issue is raised is crucial to resolving conflicts. Rather than putting your family members on the defensive, a soft start will help them take on your point of view.

Complain, don't blame. Approaching someone with accusations is never conducive to solving problems. Instead, try to describe what you see in the situation, without making emotionally charged judgements. Focus on the action, not the person.

"You said you would clean your room today, but it's still a mess,"



"Hey, there are still clothes lying around on the floor in your room, I'm upset about this."



Make "I" statements, rather than "you" statements. Statements beginning with "I" seem less critical. Instead of "You're so noisy," say, "I think that we can lower our volume."

Be clear about how you feel and be open to talking about it.

If you find yourself thinking "my family members just don't understand me", you can start by being very specific with how you feel and showing openness to addressing the topic.



Be polite and appreciative. Adding phrases such as "please" and "I appreciate it when you..." helps maintain warmth, even during difficult conversations.

Find your reset button - and use it! Take a short walk, listen to your favourite songs, or rewind with a good book. Sometimes you need some time away from your family to recharge and care for your own mental health.



Having arguments doesn't mean we love our family members any less. Forgive your family members for their actions, and acknowledge any efforts they make to resolve it too. It is also important that you take responsibility for the things you've done to contribute negatively to the conflict.

Active Listening for Effective Communication

Non-verbal communication is just as important as verbal communication! Remember to practice active listening when communicating with your family members, using SOLER.

Square: Face the person squarely; this shows that you are involved.

Open: Keep an open posture: this means not crossing arms and legs. It makes others feel engaged and welcome.

Lean: Leaning forward when a person is talking to you shows that you're engaged and interested.

Eye Contact: Use good eye contact. Your gaze shows that you're listening and not distracted.

Relax: It's important to stay calm and avoid fidgeting when a person is talking to show you are focused.

By showing your interest and engagement in a conversation, you make your loved ones feel heard and cared for.

RESOURCES

Emergency Services: 999 or 995 or approach the A&E department of your nearest hospital

Non-Emergency Ambulance: 1777

SOS: 1-767

IMH Mental Health Helpline: 6389 2222

National CARE Hotline: 1800 202 6868

National Anti-Violence Helpline: 1800 777 0000

Care Corner: 1800 353 5800

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

GP Clinics

GPs can refer you to a mental health specialist in a public hospital or private practice.

Hospitals

- IMH
- SGH
- CGH
- TTSH
- KKH
- KTPH

To be a subsidised patient, you must be referred to the hospital by a GP or Polyclinic.

Polyclinics with Psychiatric Services

- Ang Mo Kio
- Hougang
- Toa Payoh
- Woodlands
- Yishun

To make an appointment:

Online: <https://www.healthhub.sg/>


Mobile App: Health Buddy (on App store and Google Play)

Call: 6643 6969



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Know someone who needs help?

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO IN 3 WAYS:

**Share our contact
details**

Call 6757 7990

Email ask@
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**Share our
registration form
for services**

Register
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