

Coping with upsetting reminders of COVID-19 and the pandemic

It is very understandable to feel upset by remembering difficult memories about COVID-19 and the pandemic. If you do, it is important to know that this is normal. If you are finding it is difficult to control how you feel or how much you think about those memories, these strategies can help you.

- Relaxing your breathing can help slow down thinking and feel less upset. You can relax by gently slowing down your breathing, and taking deep breaths, so that you are breathing out longer than you are breathing in.
- Focusing your attention on something different to the difficult thoughts can help distract you and move on from difficult thoughts. You can do some mental maths by starting from 100 and subtracting 3 until you feel more relaxed. You can also look around the room or place you are in and name each individual colour you see.
- Sit in a comfortable and quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Close your eyes, relax your breathing, and imagine a calm place that makes you feel safe and peaceful. It can be a real or imaginary place. Imagine that you are there and that you can hear, see, taste, smell, and feel what is in this calm place. Doing this for at least five minutes will be helpful. This exercise becomes easier the more you practise it. If you are finding that it is difficult to relax this way, you can add an extra strategy to help with this. Place your hands on your knees and slowly tap one knee and then the other while you imagine your calm place.
- Remind yourself that the memories are in the past. Tell yourself all the positive things in your life that are different now compared to then. Remind yourself of all the things that prove that time has passed, like your age.
- Chewing foods or sweets with strong flavours, like strong mints, can make it easier to stop thinking about upsetting memories.
- Listening to relaxing music.
- Talking to loved ones and friends about how you are feeling can help you feel less alone.

If memories of COVID-19 and the pandemic continue to bother you and are affecting your life, please discuss this with your GP.