

# *Healthwatch Islington: Looking after our Wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic*

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(<https://www.candi.nhs.uk/traumatic-stress-clinic>)

# *Aims of today*

- Making sense of the crisis and how it makes us all feel
- What are some common ways it has impacted upon us (Threats and Losses)
- Coping with bereavement
- How can we promote our wellbeing and resilience

# Context

- We are at a time of crisis... We feel under threat....
- We feel overwhelmed...
- Lack of precedent, knowledge, lack of understanding; no clear plan; no sense of control....
- Bombardment and saturation with news, frightening images, statistics .... Its hard to process... we can't get thoughts and images out of our minds....
- No clear sense of when it might actually end

Completely understandable that we feel the way you do

# Common Experiences

## Threats:

- *Will I or my loved ones get ill and/die?*
- Is my job safe?
- What is going to happen financially? How will we get by?
- When will I get to see my loved ones?
- How can I help my children with home schooling and do my job?
- When will this end?
- Feeling threatened due to family conflict/relationship difficulties?
- Feeling threatened as remembering past traumatic events/difficult experiences?

## Losses:

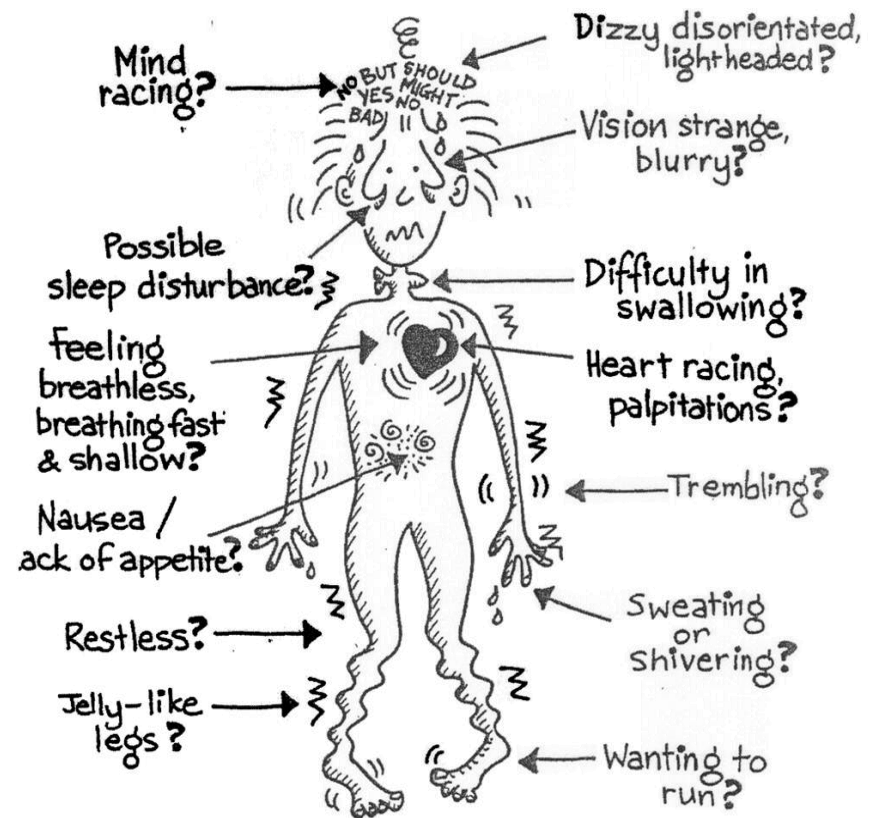
- Isolation
- Missing things: loved ones, family, friends, social contact, work.
- Cancelled plans: holidays, events...
- Health (post-Covid or missed treatment/surgery)
- Bereavement



**It situations of threat, our minds and bodies are programmed to protect us.....**

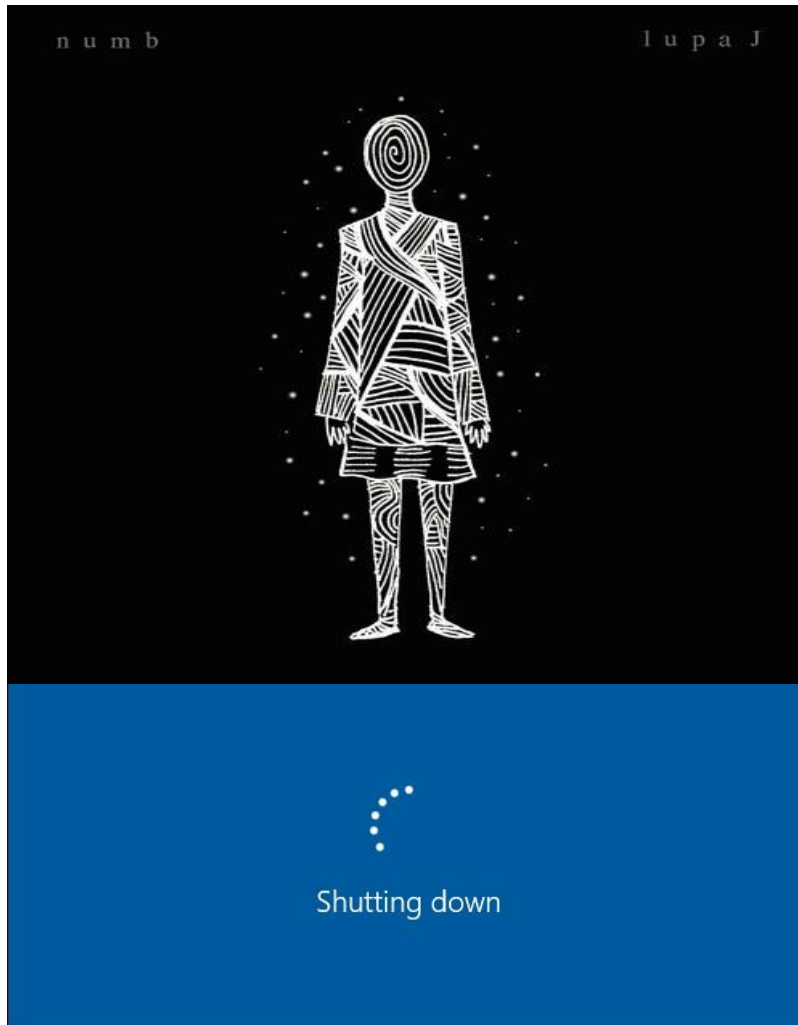
# Our 'Alarm System'

- Something very bad is happening.... is going to happen...
- Racing mind
- Excessive focus on perceived threat
- Can't focus on anything else....
- Can't concentrate....
- Feel panicked ...
- Can't sleep...
- Feel sick ....





# *It can feel unsustainable ...*



*Until we are triggered again....*





# *And we start to feel threat and worry again...*

Worry can be very important and helpful:

- If it makes you pay attention to something.
- If it is turned into a 'plan of action'
- If it helps you to be better prepared.

Worry is helpful for things you can control.

BUT:

- When worry occurs without opportunity for action or control, then it can become rumination.

- It can spoil any possible enjoyment, waste time, paralyse you and prevent you from moving forward or taking any positive action.

# ***This can lead to low mood.....***

## **Emotions or feelings**

Feeling sad, guilty, or despairing

Loneliness, even in company

Feeling angry and irritable

Shame

Not feeling anything

## **Physical or bodily signs**

Tiredness

Restlessness

Poor sleep

Feeling worse at a particular time of day – usually mornings

Changes in weight and appetite

Loss of interest in sex

## **Thoughts**

Self-criticism

Losing confidence

Expecting the worst

Feeling worthless

## **Behaviour**

Avoiding people

Not doing everyday tasks

Or things you used to enjoy

Crying episodes

Not upholding responsibilities at home/work

# ***Bereavement during Covid***

- Death may have been sudden →shocking and more difficult to accept
- Unable to say goodbye to your loved one in the usual way.
- May have worries/anger about care received
- May imagine loved one feeling alone and frightened
- May have guilt/anger about how Covid contracted
- Can't do usual rituals
- Isolated from your support network

# ***What you might be feeling***



# ***What can help?***

- Expressing your feelings (talking, drawing, writing?)
- Looking after yourself
- Making opportunities to remember
- Spending time outside in nature and with pets
- Developing 'rituals'
- Support and comfort from people with lived experience
- Participating in activities you used to enjoy
- Developing an emotional first aid kit/soothing box



# ***What might not help?***

- Avoiding talking about what has happened
- Taking risks with your own health and wellbeing:  
“What is the point.....”.
- Using alcohol and drugs to try to blot out the pain.
- Not seeking help: “People will think I am weak; I don’t want to bother anyone”.
- Hurrying to make big decisions.

# *Anchor in the storm*



Your partner in  
care & improvement



# FACE COVID

- F = Focus on what's in your control
- A = Acknowledge your thoughts & feelings
- C = Come back into your body (physically ground yourself)
- E = Engage in what you're doing
  
- C = Committed action (What can I do right now, for me, others, community)
- O = Opening up: making room for difficult feelings and being kind to yourself.
- V = Values (what do you stand for; how do you want to treat yourself and others)
- I = Identify resources for help, support and advice, social/professional
- D = Disinfect & distance

# A = Acknowledge your thoughts & feelings

## STOP TECHNIQUE

Notice what's happening for you. Are you reacting to a threat/stressor?

STOP intentionally pause

Take a breath – slow deep belly breath

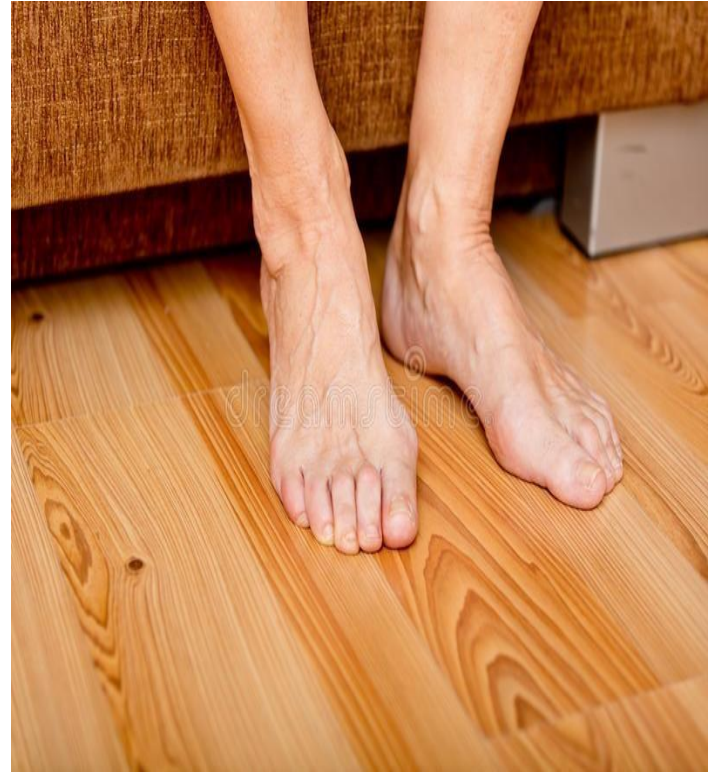
Observe – what is happening to you right now? Thoughts, feelings, urges? Notice kindly and without judgement

Proceed - decide what you need to do now; notice if space for awareness helps you feel more in control of your response



# C=Come back into your body:

- Slowly push your feet hard into the floor.
- Slowly straighten up your back and spine
- Sit upright and forward in your chair.
- Slowly press your fingertips together
- Stretch your arms or neck
- Shrug your shoulders.
- Notice your breath where you feel it most
- Take some slow breaths



# E = Engage in what you're doing



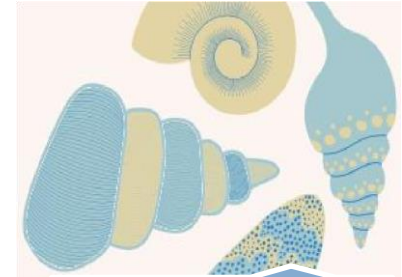
Refocus your  
attention



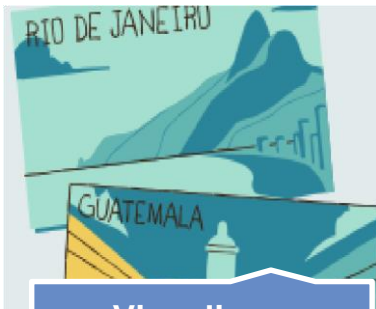
Count backwards



Sensory grounding  
(e.g. smell)



Find a grounding  
object



Visualise a  
grounding image

*I am safe in the present  
moment. I know I have  
survived because I am  
bigger and older than in my  
trauma memory. I have my  
own family now, and I am*

Develop a  
grounding phrase



Connect to the  
present



Slow down your  
breathing





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# ***Self-compassion***

- **Be kind to yourself**
- **I'm doing the best I can, in this moment, with what I know now'**
- **Is there another way of looking at this?**
- **What would I say to a friend?**
- **What would a friend say to me?**



# ***What NHS services are available?***

- GP's – good first contact
- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) Services (<https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search> )
- Crisis Teams or 111 for out of hours urgent help
- A&E or 999 in an emergency
- Samaritans – 116 123
- [www.good-thinking.uk](http://www.good-thinking.uk)

# Bereavement resources

[Support after sudden bereavement during the COVID-19 pandemic - Thrive LDN : Thrive LDN](#)

CRUSE Bereavement Care | [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk) | 0844 477 9400

The Compassionate Friends UK | [www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk) | 0845 123 2304

Winston's Wish | [www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org) | 08452 030405 The WAY Foundation | [www.widowedandyoung.org.uk](http://www.widowedandyoung.org.uk) | 0300 012 4929

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide | <https://uksobs.org> | 0844 561

[www.ataloss.org](http://www.ataloss.org) (Resources and organisations in your area)  
<https://listeningplace.org.uk>

# Resources for young people and their parents

- Young Minds Beyond Tomorrow:  
<https://youngminds.org.uk/getinvolved/campaign-with-us/beyond-tomorrow/>
- Every Mind Matters: [https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mindmatters/?WT.tsrc=Search&WT.mc\\_id=Brand&gclid=CjwKCAiAu8SABhAxEiwAsodSZE3Q\\_Mg3qaLkLI47\\_hJFM8bTIBnhdHM3L09QjKsUMALMrgOCD85hRoC--sQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mindmatters/?WT.tsrc=Search&WT.mc_id=Brand&gclid=CjwKCAiAu8SABhAxEiwAsodSZE3Q_Mg3qaLkLI47_hJFM8bTIBnhdHM3L09QjKsUMALMrgOCD85hRoC--sQAvD_BwE)
- [Supporting young people into training, learning, and work during Covid-19.pdf \(bps.org.uk\)](#)
- [Managing Uncertainty in children and young people - advice for parents during Covid-19.pdf \(bps.org.uk\)](#)
- [Advice for parents and carers - Thrive LDN : Thrive LDN](#)

- [Advice for keyworker parents - helping your child adapt.pdf](#)  
[\(bps.org.uk\)](#)



# General Wellbeing Resources

- [FACE COVID eBook - by Russ Harris.pdf \(google.com\)](#)
- [Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Mind](#)
- [Rethink](#)
- [Citizens Advice Bureau](#)
- Psychology Tools: [Free Guide To Living With Worry And Anxiety Amidst Global Uncertainty - Psychology Tools](#)
- [Traumatic Stress Clinic | Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust \(candi.nhs.uk\)](#) (Website and YouTube Channel)
- [Coronavirus Public Resources | BPS](#)
- Thrive: [Home - Thrive LDN : Thrive LDN](#)

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Camden and Islington  
NHS Foundation Trust

*Any questions?*

Thank you for listening.

