



Managing stress, anxiety, depression, and sleep problems

Being unwell with Long COVID symptoms can be a stressful experience. Understandably, this can have an impact on your mood. It's not unusual to experience feelings of stress, anxiety (worry, fear) or depression (low mood, sadness). You may notice difficult thoughts or feelings related to your survival, particularly if you are very unwell. Your mood may be further affected by frustrations about not yet being able to return to your daily activities or work in the way you would like to.

Relaxation

Relaxation helps save the limited energy you have while recovering from illness. It can help control your anxiety and improve your mood. Below is an example of a relaxation technique.

Grounding technique

Take slow gentle breaths and ask yourself:



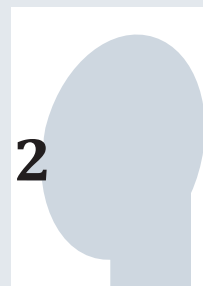
What are five things I can see?



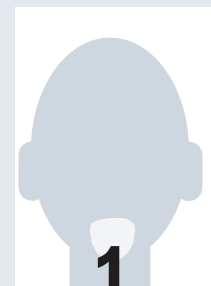
What are four things I can feel?



What are three things I can hear?



What are two things I can smell?



What is one thing I can taste?

Think of the answers slowly to yourself, one sense at a time, and spend at least 10 seconds focusing on each one.

Worrying and thinking about your symptoms can often make them worse. For example, if you focus on headaches, you're likely to get more headaches.

Also, it's important to know that symptoms are often linked: an increase in one symptom leads to an increase in another symptom. If you're fatigued, your concentration will be affected, which in turn will affect your memory, which can then increase your anxiety and, consequently, your fatigue. As you can see, this can become a cycle. An improvement in one area therefore should lead to an improvement in another.

These are some simple things you can do to help:

— Get enough quality sleep:

- have a regular routine of sleeping and waking time, using alarms if needed to remind you
- you or your family/carers can try to ensure that your environment is free from things that might disturb you, such as too much light or noise
- try to stop using electronic devices like phones and tablets an hour before bedtime
- it would also help to minimize your intake of nicotine (such as from smoking), caffeine and alcohol
- try relaxation techniques to get to sleep

— **Alternative relaxation techniques:** examples of relaxation techniques include meditation, mindfulness, guided imagery or visualization, baths, aromatherapy, Tai Chi, yoga and music.

— **Staying socially connected** is important for your mental well-being. Talking with others can help to reduce your stress and support you.

— **Healthy eating and gradually resuming your daily activities or hobbies** to the best of your ability will improve your mood.



NEED SUPPORT NOW?

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available 24/7.

Call or text **988** or chat [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org)