**Information on what to do if you're feeling low or struggling to cope.**

**It's okay. It's common to feel this way.**

You’re not alone in feeling like this. Many people struggle to cope at one point or another and going through a range of emotions during this time is common.

You can [contact Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/) any time you like or you might also want to speak to someone else you trust like a family member, your GP or arrange to see a counsellor.

**You are never alone**

When people are going through a tough time they often experience negative thoughts about themselves and feel they have no-one to turn to.

Even if you don’t have family or friends close by, you are never alone.[Samaritans volunteers are here for you](https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/) every day of the year, round the clock.

**These feelings may not last forever**

Everyone feels low at some point in their lives and if you’re struggling to cope it may be difficult to see beyond your current situation. Talking about how you’re feeling can help put things into perspective and help you to feel more positive about the future.

**Identify trigger situations**

There are all sorts of reasons why you may be finding it hard to cope. Often it’s due to a combination of things.

Perhaps you're going through:

* relationship and family problems
* loss, including loss of a friend or a family member through bereavement
* financial worries
* job-related stress
* college or study-related stress
* worry about current events, such as the Coronavirus outbreak
* loneliness and isolation, or struggling with self-isolation
* depression
* painful and/or disabling physical illness
* heavy use of or dependency on alcohol or other drugs
* thoughts of suicide.

**There are lots of things you can do to help yourself**

* Make time for yourself, relax and do things you enjoy
* Eat healthily; get plenty of sleep and exercise
* Spend time with people you love
* Talk about your problems with people you trust
* Be proud of what you’re good at, as well as aware of what you struggle with
* Pay attention to what you’re feeling.

If you’ve stopped doing things you usually love, you’re tearful, not eating or sleeping properly, drifting from people close to you, taking alcohol or drugs to cope or self-harming, then [talk to us](https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/), or someone you trust.

**Relaxation exercises**

**Controlled breathing**

It might sound simple, but controlled breathing can be a useful tool for feeling calmer quickly and reducing feelings of stress and anxiety. This technique is easy to memorise and can be practised almost anywhere. **Practise this for as long as you need to feel the benefits.**

To practise this technique, all you need to do is this:

* Breathe in for four seconds
* Hold your breath for four seconds
* Breathe out for four seconds
* Wait four seconds before repeating

Keep repeating this until you start to feel calmer. Look for both mental and physical signs, like your thoughts and your heartbeat slowing down.

You may already know what triggers your negative thoughts and feelings. If you do, try using this breathing technique if you know you will encounter a certain trigger, or immediately after.

**Muscle relaxation**

Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing and releasing pairs of muscles in sequence. It can help if you imagine tension leaving your body as you release your muscles.

You’ll need a quiet, private space for this to work well. Find somewhere to sit, with your feet planted shoulder width apart, flat on the ground. You might like to read through the steps of this simple technique first, then practise without any guidance, and you may want to use the breathing exercise above before you use this one.

We’ll start with the muscles in your head. Tense your forehead muscles by raising your eyebrows and holding for up to 10 seconds. Then release, imagining tension leaving your body.

Repeat this, working down through pairs of muscles throughout your body. Try to tense them for up to 10 seconds before releasing.

When you’ve finished, don’t get up straight away. Stay where you are for a minute or so, then, when you do get up, do so slowly. You can practise this technique whenever you notice yourself becoming stressed or anxious.

<https://www.samaritans.org/>