

Focus on ACE – Coping Strategies

Focus on what's in your control



Fear and anxiety are inevitable: they are normal, natural responses to challenging situations that feel uncertain and worrying.



You can't control what happens in the future. You can't control Coronavirus itself, or the world economy, or how your government manages the situation. We have far more control over our behaviour. So, our number one aim is to take control of our behaviour.



When a big storm blows up, the boats in the harbour drop anchor. If they don't, they'll be swept out to sea. Dropping anchor doesn't make the storm go away, but it can hold a boat steady in the harbour until the storm passes in its own good time.



Similarly, we may experience 'emotional storms'. These can include unhelpful thoughts spinning inside our head and uncomfortable or painful feelings whirling around our body. If we're swept away by that storm inside us, the first practical step is to 'drop anchor' using the simple ACE guide.

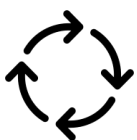
A =
Acknowledge
your thoughts
and feelings



C =
Come back
into your
body



E =
Engage in
what you're
doing



You can run through this ACE guide slowly and peacefully 3 or 4 times.



A = Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings

Silently and kindly acknowledge your thoughts, feelings, emotions memories, sensations, urges.

Take the stance of a curious scientist, observing what's going on in your inner world.

For example, "I am thinking that something bad is going to happen, which is making me feel scared and my tummy feels full of butterflies".



C = Come back into your body

You could try some or all of the following, or find your own methods:

- Slowly push your feet onto the floor
- Slowly straighten up your back and spine; if you're sitting, sit upright and forward in your chair
- Slowly press your fingertips together
- Slowly stretch your arms or neck, shrugging your shoulders
- Slowly breathe in 1-2-3-4 and out 1-2-3-4



E = Engage in what you're doing

Get a sense of where you are and refocus your attention on the activity you are doing:

- Look around the room and notice 5 things you can see
- Notice 3 or 4 things you can hear
- Notice what you can smell or taste or sense in your nose and mouth



Try to have a go at this ACE guide slowly 3 or 4 times.