

# How Magna Employees Overcame COVID-19 Pandemic Challenges

Over the past 19 months, the COVID-19 pandemic has made life’s challenges more common and frequent, which has taken a toll on the mental health of everyone. In this edition, we acknowledge the impact this pandemic has had on our mental health, highlight three Magna employees who have overcome challenges in their lives, and share information and techniques that will hopefully help you improve your mental health when needed!

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### Jade Rogers

Jade Rogers is a 30-year-old mother of 3, who has worked at Norplas Industries for 11 years. During the pandemic lockdowns, she had to adjust to being home full-time with her kids while temporarily off work. During this time, she lost her grandmother, with whom she was very close. Jade was afraid to visit her sick grandmother out of fear that she may unknowingly infect her with COVID-19, which meant they lost a lot of precious time together.

To help her overcome these challenges, she began working out at the gym to help reduce her stress. She also shared this advice for anyone dealing with stress, anxiety, or low mood: “Communication is key. Keeping all your emotions bottled up could cause more harm than good. Find a trustworthy family member or friend that you can be open with and make it a point to check-in with them weekly to get things off your chest and get a little advice.” Now, with daily workouts and a strong support system, Jade is “extremely happy” with her life!



### Jon-Paul Shepherd

Jon-Paul Shepherd is a 47-year-old who has worked for CCUK for the past 5 years. He was diagnosed with depression and anxiety 20 years ago. There were times when Jon-Paul was too anxious to leave the house for fear of having a panic attack. It took him 5 years before he found the courage to re-gain control of his mental health. He trained to become a Health and Safety professional while working in a warehouse. He then hosted training sessions to help others, which built his self-confidence.

During the pandemic, he got divorced, sold his home, and ended up moving to a completely new area, all while working to set-up the COVID-19 safety protocols at CCUK! Jon-Paul suggests, “Take care of yourself to feel better. Talk about your stress, anxiety, and low mood to anyone who will listen. When you’re suffering, it’s easy to think it’s only you who feels this way, but when you open up to other people, you realize that other people also struggle with their mental health.” Now more than ever it’s important to recognize and seek support when you are facing mental health challenges by reaching out to someone you trust or a healthcare professional.



### Sérgio Valente do Amaral

Sérgio Valente do Amaral has been a Quality Technician at Ibitiré for 6 years. On March 7, 2021, he tested positive for COVID-19. This occurred just two weeks before the birth of his daughter Malu. Two days later, his oxygen levels dropped and 30–50% of his lungs had been infected by the COVID-19 virus. On March 12, Sérgio woke up with a fever and shortness of breath and was rushed to the hospital. His oxygen levels continued to drop, and he was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit where he was intubated for five days. The uncertainty of his condition made the family very anxious. They turned to prayer, to help them cope during this stressful time. Thankfully their prayers were answered, and on March 19th, Sérgio’s oxygen levels improved. On March 21, he regained consciousness and was told his wife had given birth, so he face-timed his family to see Malu for the first time! The family credits consistent prayers for helping Sérgio finally regain his health! The Amaral family thanks everyone including the Magna family for supporting them through this tough time.



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# STRESS?

*Stress is our body’s response to a change, and it can differ between each experience from person to person.*

Stress is a normal feeling, and in some ways, it can be helpful. For example, a stressful situation can help us become more focused and keep us motivated to accomplish a task. When stress becomes too much to handle, we might go into a fight/flight/freeze reaction, as we feel threatened. The fight/flight/freeze response is our body’s natural way of dealing with dangerous or stressful situations. Whenever we encounter a threat, our body knows exactly what to do—we will either fight it, run away, or stay in place. When you hear the words “watch out!” your body may move instantly and save you from whatever threat was coming your way. Think about a time when you walked by a growling dog; you may have frozen in place to brace yourself as protection. Although stress can be helpful in these types of situations, it can also impact our behaviour, thoughts, emotions, and physical health in a harmful way if not managed properly long-term.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Common stress-related signs and symptoms affecting our mental and physical health include:

PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Headaches
- Muscle pain
- Increased blood pressure
- Fatigue

- Change in sex drive
- Sleep problems
- Muscle tension

THOUGHTS / EMOTIONS

- Anxiety
- Restlessness
- Lack of motivation or focus
- Feeling overwhelmed

- Irritability or anger
- Sadness or depression
- Having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind

BEHAVIOURS

- Overeating or undereating
- Angry outbursts
- Drug or alcohol misuse

- Tobacco use
- Social withdrawal
- Exercising less often

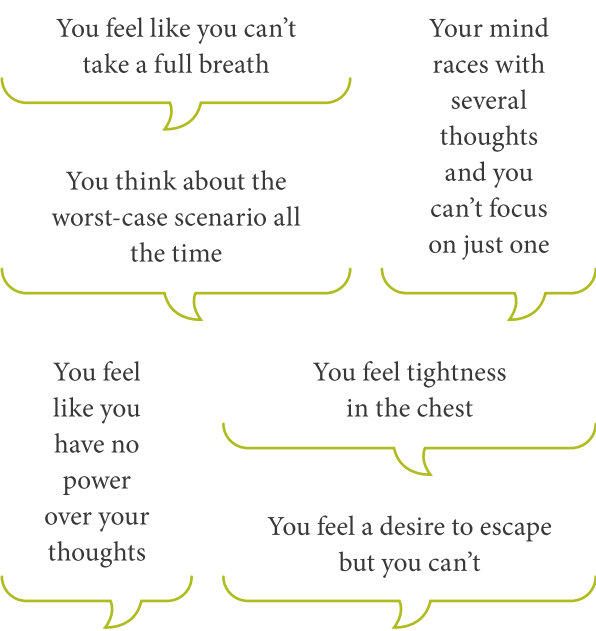


# ANXIETY?

*Anxiety is the body’s natural way of dealing with stress.*

If you do not know what it feels like to be anxious, think about how you felt before a big job interview, or the first time you met your partner’s parents. You may have felt restless or nervous. You may have also experienced your palms sweating, heart racing, or found yourself in a bit of a panic. This feeling is usually short-term and tends to go away after the event is over (i.e., after a job interview). However, if you feel anxious for a long period of time, then you may want to consider seeking a healthcare professional to help you manage your anxiety.

## WHAT DO PEOPLE WITH ANXIETY SAY IT FEELS LIKE?



## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Common signs and symptoms of General Anxiety include:

- Increased heart rate
- Restlessness
- Fatigue

- Irritability
- Sweating
- Nausea

For many people, anxiety levels have increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To help reduce anxiety, you must understand why you feel that way in the first place. Whatever your reason may be, you are not alone. In fact, most people experience some level of anxiety on a daily basis and 1 in 5 people have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder. We all experience anxiety at different times in our lives, so we should try not to blame ourselves for feeling the way we do. There are several techniques and practices used to manage anxiety — find one that works best for you!

# Tips for REDUCING stress and anxiety:

## 1 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Go for a walk around your neighborhood or to the nearest park. As you walk, take time to experience the sights, smells, and sounds around you. Being active helps reduce the body’s reaction to stress as it helps release endorphins (feel-good chemicals in the body) and can improve mood.



## 2 SET REALISTIC GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

This allows you to identify goals that are within your control and gives you an opportunity to learn to work on accepting things that are outside of your control. It is important to set realistic goals that will motivate you, rather than unrealistic goals that may cause additional stress.



## 3 CALL SOMEONE

Whether it is your friend or a therapist, talk to someone about how you are feeling. It may help you organize your thoughts and lower your worries.



## 4 JOURNAL YOUR THOUGHTS

Using a pen and paper, write down everything you are feeling in the moment. Then read what you wrote and reflect on it. Keeping a journal can help you identify what is causing your anxiety, which can help you find ways to cope with it.



## 5 GET 7-8 HOURS OF SLEEP EACH NIGHT

When you are tired you may be easily agitated and less patient which can increase both stress and anxiety. Sleep is the only chance for our body and mind to recover from the day and prepare for the next. Practicing proper sleep habits can improve your quality of sleep and mental health.





# Ask a THERAPIST

The clinical team from Magna’s Employee and Family Assistance Program provider, Homewood Health, answered some common questions about mental health.

Q

Is it normal to feel anxious right now, and how do I know when I worry too much?

A

Anxiety is very common, especially during this pandemic. This is an all-encompassing situation full of uncertainty, and something we have never been through before, so every reaction is likely a “normal” reaction to an “abnormal” situation. With that said, when anxiety and worry interfere with your daily functioning, your health, your work or important relationships, it is a good time to reach out for help. If you are not sure where to start, you may want to consider calling your Employee and Family Assistance Program to access coaching or counseling to help with stress and anxiety.

Q

I am concerned for my 9-year-old. She has been fearful of returning to school. How can I help her?

A

It’s a sign of maturity and strength that your 9-year-old child is able to verbalize fears. Most school-age children will share their emotions through behaviors, such as acting up at the breakfast table or fighting with a sibling. Say something like “thank you for sharing your feelings with me, I am always here to listen.” Try to refrain from saying “everything will be ok,” or “don’t worry.” Next, you can brainstorm things she can do. Help her by sharing a time where you have seen her face fears. You can share what coping strategies you have used for stress. Also, reassure her that, as her parent, it is your job to keep her safe and you wouldn’t send her to school if you didn’t think it was the best decision.

Q

Watching the news or reading about what is happening in the world stresses me out, but I need to have information about the pandemic to keep my family safe. What can I do to manage my stress?

A

You are right that too much pandemic news and information can affect our mental health. Try to limit the time you spend on media, especially social media. Make sure you monitor only trusted sources for your pandemic information, such as healthcare organizations. You may want to choose one time a day you will check in to see if there is new information you need to know and stop watching news programs. To manage stress, ensure you are getting exercise, eating well, and sleeping enough. If you are struggling with very high stress levels, don’t hesitate to reach out to your Employee and Family Assistance Program.

Q

What I struggle with lately is lack of motivation. I can’t seem to care about anything, and I wonder if this is related to the pandemic or not.

A

We are hearing similar experiences from around the world – using terms such as pandemic burnout, or COVID fatigue. Good self-care can help improve how you are feeling. Also, push yourself to do things that you used to enjoy. At times when you do feel the slightest bit more motivated, ask yourself what helped you feel that way. Is it because you are helping someone else? Is it because you are spending time with loved ones? We are always available at your Employee and Family Assistance Program if you need some help managing through this tough time. Our services are free and confidential.

# Try the 5,4,3,2,1 MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUE!

The next time you are feeling anxious and worried, try this simple exercise to help you re-focus on the present moment, rather than your stressful thoughts:

NAME:

5

## THINGS YOU CAN SEE:

Look around you, what do you see? A plant, your shoes, your laptop...



4

## THINGS YOU CAN FEEL:

Can you feel your feet sinking into the ground, or the way your clothes feel on your skin?



3

## THINGS YOU CAN HEAR:

Do you hear the ventilation system? People talking from a distance?



2

## THINGS YOU CAN SMELL:

Do you smell coffee? Someone’s lunch?



1

## THING YOU CAN TASTE:

Do you taste mint gum? The aftertaste of coffee?



## DID YOU know?

Only 1/3 of people suffering from anxiety disorders get proper treatment and counselling.

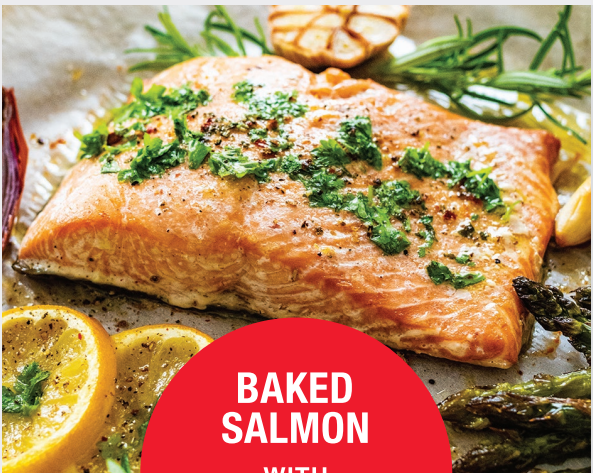
Anxiety is a highly treatable disorder. Some common treatments include counselling or medication. However, not enough people seek treatment for their anxiety. There are many reasons for this, such as fear, stigma, not knowing where to get help, or a lack of financial resources. Reducing the fear and stigma around anxiety by providing accessible resources and education is important for more people to get help.

# QUIET THE MIND *with* MEDITATION

Meditation is a simple practice that anyone can use to help calm the mind, reduce stress, increase focus, and promote happiness. It is also beneficial to meditate before bed to clear your mind before sleep. There are many ways to meditate, but one simple, common technique is called mindfulness meditation.

This technique teaches you to focus on your breathing when the mind begins to wander. This will help you live in the 'now' and truly see the beauty of the present, rather than dwell on the past or worry about the future. To try this technique, begin by sitting in a comfortable position. Your eyes can be closed or open, depending on what you prefer. Allow your body to relax as you slowly breathe in and out, focusing on each breath. When your mind starts to wander, remind yourself to focus on your breath again. If it helps keep other thoughts away, try counting in your head with each breath in and out. Practicing mindfulness meditation for just ten to twelve minutes at a time is effective, however it is important to practice it regularly to get all of its benefits.





**BAKED SALMON**  
WITH  
*Garlic & Dijon*

<b>PREP TIME</b>	<b>COOK TIME</b>	<b>TOTAL TIME</b>
5 min.	15 min.	20 min.
<b>SKILL LEVEL</b>	<b>CALORIES</b>	<b>SERVES</b>
Easy	314 kcal	4

INGREDIENTS

1½ LB.	salmon filet
2 TBSP	fresh parsley chopped
2 TBSP	light olive oil (not extra virgin)
2 TBSP	fresh lemon juice
3	garlic cloves pressed
½ TBSP	Dijon mustard
½ TSP	salt (we use sea salt)
⅛ TSP	black pepper
½	lemon, sliced into four rings

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 450°F and line a rimmed baking sheet with silpat baking mat or foil. Slice salmon into 4 portions and arrange them on a lined baking sheet, skin-side-down.
- 2 In a small bowl, combine: 2 tbsp parsley, 2–3 pressed cloves garlic, 2 tbsp oil and 2 tbsp lemon juice, ½ tbsp Dijon, ½ tsp salt, and ⅛ tsp pepper.
- 3 Generously spread the marinade over the top and sides of the salmon then top each piece with a slice of lemon.
- 4 Bake at 450°F for 12–15 min or until just cooked through and flaky. Don't over-cook.

RECIPE NOTES

Air Fryer: Place salmon pieces on the wire basket, spread marinade over the top and air fry at 450°F for 6–7 minutes or just until cooked through.

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MENTAL HEALTH TOOLS *and* RESOURCES

EMPLOYEE AND FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EFAP)

Your employee assistance program offers resources and confidential support for any work, health, or life concern. You can contact your division HR for more information.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Government of Ontario

Summary of resources

[ontario.ca/page/covid-19-support-people#section-4](https://ontario.ca/page/covid-19-support-people#section-4)

Anxiety Canada

Coping with COVID anxiety

[anxietycanada.com/covid-19](https://anxietycanada.com/covid-19)

Canada: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)

Mental health and COVID-19

[camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19](https://camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19)

Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario

Collated mental health, addictions and COVID-19 resources

[ontario.cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Resources-for-crisis-Ressources-en-cas-de-crise-FINAL.pdf](https://ontario.cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Resources-for-crisis-Ressources-en-cas-de-crise-FINAL.pdf)

USA: National Institute of Mental Health

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>

USA: National Alliance on Mental Illness

<https://nami.org/Home>

Mental Health UK

<https://mentalhealth-uk.org/>

APPS FOR MINDFULNESS

Mindshift

Build skills for managing anxiety and depression

[anxietycanada.com/resources/mindshift-cbt](https://anxietycanada.com/resources/mindshift-cbt)

My Life: Stop. Breathe. Think.

Recommends brief mindfulness activities

[my.life](https://my.life)

Insight Timer

Database of guided meditations

[insighttimer.com](https://insighttimer.com)

Colorfy

A colouring book for adults. Colouring generates mindfulness and quietness which is a great way to help lower stress and anxiety

Nature Sounds Relax and Sleep

Offers users calming audio backdrops to get better sleep

Smiling Minds

A tool developed by psychologists and educators to help bring balance to your life. This app has great meditation and mindfulness exercises that you can use from any device.

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION

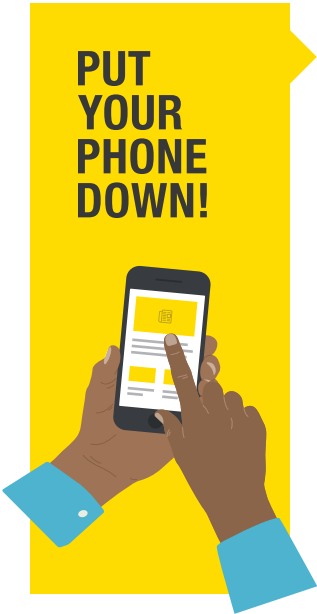
Dedicated to preventing suicide and suicidal behaviours, and provides a forum for academics, mental health professionals, crisis workers, volunteers, and suicide survivors.

<https://www.iasp.info>

THERAPY ROUTE

Therapy Route has a list of global support lines to help those dealing with mental health challenges and illness.

<https://www.therapyroute.com/article/helplines-suicide-hotlines-and-crisis-lines-from-around-the-world>



The COVID-19 pandemic had a big impact on how much we view media. So much of our information about the pandemic comes from social networks and the news. The media is useful for keeping us updated on changes to guidelines and medical advice. It is also important to help keep us connected with friends and family.

However, overuse of media during the pandemic can be harmful to our mental health by overloading us with information. Seeing too much information can be overwhelming and cause more stress, anxiety, and feelings of uncertainty. Information about the pandemic changes very fast and can quickly become outdated. There is also a risk of finding false information which can cause more unnecessary worry and fear.

One way to help during this stressful time is to step away from your social media. Remembering to limit screen time by taking breaks from watching the news or using our phones and social media can prevent us from feeling overwhelmed and help maintain good mental health.

FOR MORE  
articles, employee  
stories, quizzes, and  
recipes, please visit  
[magnawellness.ca](https://magnawellness.ca)

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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