

# Breaks in Therapy

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There can be many reasons for therapy breaks; one of the most common reasons is because you or your therapist is going on holiday. This does not usually result in more than a 4 week break in therapy (i.e. 2 therapy sessions). In the main, this break is something that has been planned and therefore, you, as a client would normally feel prepared for.

*There are however occasions when there could be longer unplanned breaks in therapy due to work, family issues or illness or other unforeseen circumstances.*

Often when therapists and clients are aware of an upcoming break in therapy they may agree, where appropriate, an alternative medium for providing therapy sessions such as telephone or Skype. Where these mediums are deemed inappropriate they will remind you of the skills you have learnt in therapy and direct you to appropriate self help resources.



Depending at what stage you are at in your treatment you will have varying needs. You may already have a range of “tools” that you have learnt in therapy and it is important to keep using them.

Although the current break in therapy due to COVID-19 is unprecedented, breaks in therapy are not. Therapy can often feel like a stabilising force that is helping to keep your life together. We know that clients can experience a range of feelings as a result of a therapy break including abandonment, sadness, anger and anxiety. Family members may also feel anxious. Remember though that as human beings we are naturally resilient in the face of adversity and that through your therapy to date you have hopefully got some tools in your psychological toolkit.

One of the issues being widely discussed in the media is the impact of COVID-19 isolation on mental health.

Isolation may not be new to you. It may have been your psychological problems that previously led to withdrawal/ isolation from others but now we are in a situation where isolation/ social distancing is being recommended as a way of protecting us from the current pandemic.

The impact of isolation is the same either way. Research has shown that spending a lot of time on your own and being disconnected from others predicts higher amounts of depression and anxiety symptoms. It breeds worry and

rumination and leaves the un-distracted mind more vulnerable to intrusive thoughts.

Isolation will also have a significant impact on our behaviours. You may have been engaging in Behavioural Activation strategies as part of your therapy. Some of your activity goals will be about being outside, going to the gym, eating out etc. Obviously these behaviours are not permitted or encouraged at the moment by the Government. You may now need to engage in different behaviours remembering- ***the type of activation doesn't necessary matter as much as the activation itself.***

## Psychological Toolkit

Depending on your stage of therapy and your presenting problems your tool kit will have different tools.



Some useful general advice is:

- Keep taking any prescribed medication
- Engage in good self care
- Keep a routine
- Engage with others ( either in your household or with others through social media)
- Use your support systems
- Engage in interests and hobbies or find new ones

## Some useful self care links:

### EMDR techniques

If you have been doing EMDR you may have done the safe/calm place or the container exercise (see links below)

<https://www.get.gg/docs/TheContainer.pdf>

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/SafePlace.pdf>

### Helping with intrusive thoughts or flashbacks

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/flashbacks.htm>

### Help with worry

Worry may be an existing problem or a new problem in the current situation. The following links help to deal with worry and uncertainty.

<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/~media/CCI/Mental%20Health%20Professionals/Generalised%20Anxiety/Generalised%20Anxiety%20-%20Information%20Sheets/Generalised%20Anxiety%20Information%20Sheet%20-%202006%20-%20Accepting%20Uncertainty.pdf>

<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/~media/CCI/Mental%20Health%20Professionals/Generalised%20Anxiety/Generalised%20Anxiety%20-%20Information%20Sheets/Generalised%20Anxiety%20Information%20Sheet%20-%202005%20-%20Postpone%20your%20Worry.pdf>

### Relaxation and Mindfulness

<https://www.mindfulnessmuse.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Cognitive-Defusion-Exercise-1.pdf>

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/preventing-falls/fear-and-anxiety-about-falling/relaxation-techniques>

## What to do if you are feeling suicidal:

- Phone a helpline such as lifeline **0808 808 8000**
- Talk to someone you trust
- Contact your GP
- Call 999

## Tips for coping with suicidal feelings right now:

- Try not to think about the future, just focus on getting through today
- Stay away from alcohol and illegal drugs.
- Get to a safe place
- Be around other people

Whilst PRRT cannot assume responsibility for the attached linked documents in this article they are information sheets that other patients have reported to find useful. As always if it's not helpful or you find it upsetting don't do it.