

What if....

A practical guide to possible problems

A “What if” board is a strategy for making plans to combat potential difficult situations. It helps us to identify what our worries are and make plans to manage them.

It’s a simple but effective strategy for managing big changes or common problems.

During the current Covid-19 pandemic people are facing unprecedented changes to their daily lives, and are coping with anxieties related to health, finances and worries about family members.

To support you we have compiled responses to some potential “What ifs” in the hope that they may provide you with some support and guidance at this difficult time.

What if....

I feel really anxious (or all this anxiety has made my tics worse)?

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. Everyone has feelings of anxiety, but it becomes an issue when this feeling begins to interfere with everyday life. Anxiety is a common response to feeling a lack of control. At the moment there are a large number of unknowns about work, school, and the future. If you are feeling anxious at this time it’s important to remember that you are not alone, many people are feeling anxious at the moment.

One of the best ways to manage anxiety at this time is to use perspective taking strategies. These are commonly used in CBT therapy and help us to place our anxiety in context in order to rationalise it.

You can find a video guide to tics and anxiety at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvvQ9dYLEAw>

Creating your own What if board, or using a reframing strategy may help you.

You could also consider using an app such as Sam App to help you track your anxiety. This will mean you can use strategies to lower your anxiety at peak times, or consider key triggers that you may be able to limit or avoid, such as limiting how often you check the news.

It is normal to feel anxiety at times of change. If your anxiety feels overwhelming, you can usually access professional support via your GP. NHS guidance related to anxiety can be found here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/anxiety>

a specific page has been set up for support related to Covid-19 anxiety, you can find it here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-anxiety-tips/>

There are also a number of charities and organisations who may be able to support you if you require urgent help, these include:

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

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>

<https://www.porchlight.org.uk/>

What if....

My tic is a cough or I have suggestible tics?

Coughs are a common form of tic. Ordinarily cough tics are unlikely to attract unwanted attention, however, currently many people are being hyper vigilant about others coughing.

You may find it useful to be prepared for anyone that questions your cough.

Scripting is a common strategy for managing difficult conversations, it is a sentence we learn in case a problem happens. it helps us feel prepared and reduces our anxiety.

A stress script can help us to say something positive, instead of getting angry and upsetting someone.

Here are two examples:

SCRIPT 1

Person: "Did you just cough!?"

You: "Yes, I have Tourette's, my tic is often a cough. This is normal for me, and nothing you need to worry about."

SCRIPT 2

Person: "You should be at home; you have a cough"

You: "Thank you for your concern, but I normally have a cough, it is not contagious or a symptom of Coronavirus. It is safe for me to be here."

You may also find that scripting works for suggestible tics

You do not have to explain your tics to anyone if you do not wish to. However, you may find that at this time that having a script prepared eases your worry.

If you experience suggestible tics, and coughing tics; Tourette's Action have produced cards for when you need to make those essential trips in public, to help explain your symptoms should you feel you need that extra support. These can be found by following this link: <https://www.tourettes-action.org.uk/index.php?p=145>

What if..... I can't sleep?

It is common to have difficulties with sleep in response to change and anxiety. Your daily life and routine may be very different at this time. Tourette's Action has published a guide to sleep on its website which may be of use to you.

Further advice and support relating to sleep can be found at:

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

What if..... I can't go out to exercise? (and exercise helps me manage my tics)

There are lots of forms of exercise that can be done indoors. Many fitness companies have offered free workout videos or free trials of their products during the pandemic to support people who cannot go out. You might like to try some of these options:

PE with Joe: <https://www.thebodycoach.com/blog/pe-with-joe-1254.html>

Jump start Johnny: <https://www.jumpstartjonny.co.uk/home>

Cosmic kids yoga: <https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga>

Find something that you enjoy. Try and keep yourself to a routine, such as doing some exercise before you begin work for the day, or at the end of your work tasks.

Remember to listen to your body, don't overwork it just because you are bored.

What if.....

I'm working from home and I'm really distracted?

Whether you are 5 or 50 working from home can be a real challenge. There is lots of free advice about working from home online at the moment as many people have found themselves in the same position.

The most important thing is to create a routine for yourself. This will include setting yourself a bedtime and getting up at a regular time.

A task board is a good strategy to help you manage your time. Essentially you outline the tasks you want to achieve and how long you will spend of each one. It is a good idea to build in break times and chunk your time into manageable sections. An example might look like this:

| My Taskboard  | Time limit | DONE? |
|---|------------|-------|
| Activity 1 1 | 40 mins | |
| Activity 2 2 | 20 mins | |
| Movement Break  | 10 mins | |
| Activity 3 3 | 30 mins | |
| Movement Break  | 10 mins | |
| Activity 4 4 | 30 mins | |
| Lunch Time  | 45 mins | |

You might also find the Pomodoro technique useful.

(You will need a timer to do this technique, you can use a kitchen timer, your phone or a stopwatch)

[Pomodoro Technique \(as developed by Francesco Cirillo\)](#)

1. Decide on the task to be done
2. Set the timer to 25 minutes
3. Work on the task until the timer rings
4. Take a short 5 minute break

REPEAT steps 1-4, 4 times and then

5. Take a 15 - 30 minute break.
6. Start again at step 1

The time spent on step 2 can be adapted for younger children or very tired adults.

Working for short periods with regular breaks keeps us productive. Consistency is key to making any of these strategies work.