

# COMING OUT OF THE PANDEMIC:

## MANAGING ANXIETY DURING TIMES OF CHANGE



For more than a year, we have developed new norms – how we work, how we socialize, how to physically distance and how and when to wear a mask. The pandemic has kept our brains on high alert, as we continuously evaluate situations and potential dangers. As we enter a time with less physical distancing and more face to face interaction, changes to social norms happen faster than we can keep track. For many, change can create feelings of uncertainty and worry.

### FOCUS ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

- Be patient with yourself and keep stretching your wings to do the things that you need to do.
- Determine your comfort level – everyone is entitled to handle reentry the way they choose.
- Educate yourself and follow advice that makes sense to you. Trust your instincts.
- Respect others: You don't have to share personal information and you shouldn't pressure others to do so.
- Continue activities that have become important to you over the past year.

### MAKING DECISIONS

- Avoiding decisions reinforces anxiety. Make a decision to reassure your brain that you're safe.
- Embrace uncertainty. You are allowed to change your mind.
- Don't rush: Think about what you have missed the most and make plans to gradually reintroduce these activities.
- Accept your feelings. It's okay to feel the way you do. Ignoring them may make them worse.

### FINDING YOUR VOICE

- Practice socializing. Choose 1 or 2 close family or friends to meet with at the beginning of your re-entry.
- Visualize future outings. Practice your responses to boundaries from the safety of your home.
- Communicate your boundaries ahead of time. It's okay to share these without guilt.
- Practice gratitude. Saying aloud the things (and people) you're grateful for can offer a different perspective.

As you find a new balance, if you are experiencing one or more of the Five Signs of Emotional Suffering more often than normal, talk with someone you trust about your feelings and what you are going through. Don't wait to reach out for help.

You don't have to be in crisis to get support.