

# Reducing anxiety as we transition back into good spaces with our family and community

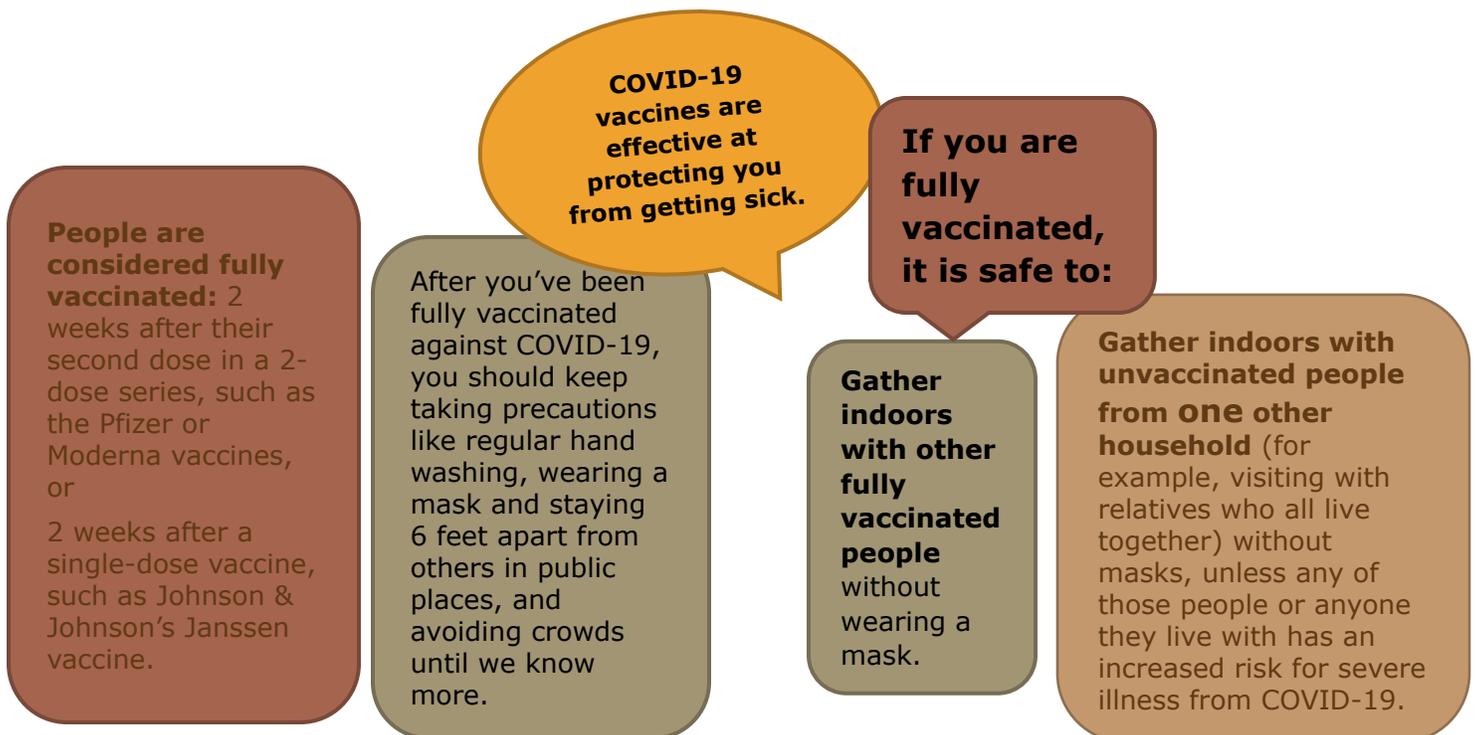
With vaccines becoming available to more and more people, we are experiencing yet another transition as we slowly and steadily return to activities as we knew them before the pandemic, such as work, school and visiting with family and friends. Although we know COVID-19 will not disappear overnight, many people are having feelings in response to new opportunities to venture out into the world that were not safe to do for a long time.

Some of us have gotten used to staying within our small bubble. Now we feel some anxiety when we are out in public, taking care of business or being social with family and friends. Each of us has to make our own personal choices around COVID safety in terms of being vaccinated or not vaccinated, interacting with others that are or are not vaccinated and what we feel are the risks even if vaccinated. Each of us has to assess our own sense of safety and wellbeing and make decisions accordingly.

It may help to remember that everyone is coping with the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic and many people are experiencing anxiety and other difficult feelings. Our experience of living during a global pandemic, especially if we know or lost someone who became ill with COVID-19, can cause ongoing anxiety about getting sick, even as vaccines make life safer. As we move toward reopening and start to do the things we had stopped doing due to COVID-19, it is normal to feel nervous about things changing again. If you find that these many changes are impacting your emotional wellbeing, you are not alone.

If you are struggling to manage on your own, reach out to a mental health professional. Contact SCIHP Behavioral Health at (707) 521-4550.

To learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine, call SCIHP Medical at (707) 521-4500.



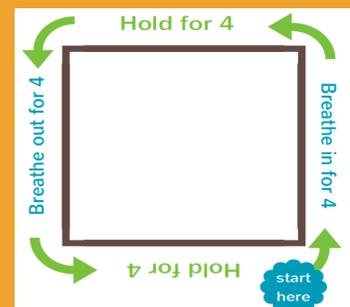
# Tips for Reducing Anxiety

We are all are experiencing some level of anxiety as our community begins to rejoin areas of life we have been missing due to COVID-19. Below are some tips to manage the increased worry and take care of ourselves as we move through this challenging time.

- Use prayer and positive thoughts to encourage relaxation, calm and **a sense of connection with others and your higher power**. Repeating a positive statement to yourself that is uplifting. **You are not alone**.
- Check in with yourself. **Notice how you feel in your body. Is there an uncomfortable shift in your chest or stomach or breathing pattern. Notice those feelings in your body so that you can tend to them.**
- **Walk in nature.** Connecting with our natural world can put things in perspective and bring us to a prayerful and sacred place inside ourselves.
- **Write about it.** Take the time to get thoughts and feelings out on paper. Identify the source of the worry and take the time to brainstorm options for resolving or managing the experience.
- **Establish a routine.** Bring more structure to your day with regular times for meals, exercise, wake up and bedtime. Continue to engage in activities that bring you joy, including new hobbies you may have started due to staying at home, such as cooking or drawing.
- Take it slow. **Try one new thing each day** (or each week) and **reflect on your own comfort level**. Entering back into our roles slowly will help us feel less stress and anxiety.

## Try Square Breathing to Cope with Anxiety

- Slowly inhale through your nose, counting to 4
- Hold at the top of the breath for a count of 4
- Gently exhale out of your mouth for a count of 4
- Pause and count to 4 at the bottom of the breath



- **Talk with family** about how you are feeling now about COVID risk and some of the changes you might want to make together or separately. Be patient with yourselves and each other. Be clear with your needs and boundaries when you feel comfortable.