



# OUR IRREVERSIBLE JOURNEY > > >

Here we find ourselves galloping through Stress Awareness month and inching ever closer to the end of the Covid restrictions here in the UK. Mental Health Foundation have reported that 74% of UK adults felt so stressed at some point in the last year often feeling overwhelmed or unable to cope. This year the focus for Stress Awareness Month is about regaining connectivity, certainty and control.

I'm sure, like me, you will be looking forward to being able to reconnect with your family and friends. Perhaps even plan a holiday or a break away from the walls we have been living inside for so long. Or even more simply a quiet pint or twain your favourite local. And while I am certainly excited about being able to do all of these things the truth is I also feel a little bit nervous.

It seems the things we took for granted in our 'normal' pre-virus lives don't feel too normal right now.

Across our industry there is talk about restarting face to face meetings, lifting some of the more basic procedures that we have been so rigorously following in the last year and the reorganisation of some events where greater numbers of people will be present. One thing is for sure, we are on our way back to normality and we can be certain that most, if not all of us will have increased anxiety as we navigate our way through this reportedly irreversible phase.

So remember the first time you step on to a train, walk in to your local restaurant or visit the more vulnerable of those in your family, at work or with friends it is likely that feeling anxious will possibly be our normal for a while.

One year ago I wrote an article for the NFDC titled 'Keeping calm among the chaos'. In that we shared a technique researched and published by the Institute of Heartmath that helps us to switch off the physical stress reaction. In moments of overwhelm and anxiety it reduces the intensity of our feelings and helps us to establish a calm but alert state. We revisit that technique here:

- 1 FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION ON YOUR CHEST.
- 2 IMAGINE YOUR BREATH IS FLOWING IN AND OUT OF YOUR CHEST, BREATHING A LITTLE SLOWER AND DEEPER THAN USUAL.
- 3 INHALE FOR 5 SECONDS... EXHALE FOR 5 SECONDS...
- 4 REPEAT.

For the last 2 years your NFDC has been committed to helping everyone to have better mental health and remove the stigma attached to mental illness. We are in this together and I wanted to draw your attention once more to the Mental Health and Wellbeing hub NFDC has created for you. There you will find all the tools you need to continue on our awareness and mental ill health prevention journey.

## It's OK not to be OK

We are all fighting a battle others know nothing about, so be kind – always.

