



# How to manage anxiety around spiralling energy costs

Aside from financial stress due to the cost of living being a common concern right now, one of the stressors many of us seem to be facing this winter is managing our anxiety due to the soaring costs of energy.

We saw a small silver lining on 1st October when the government announced that average energy bills would be capped at £2,500. However even though energy prices are being capped at £2,500 a year for a household with typical usage on their supplier's standard variable rate, people may well pay more or less than this, depending on how much energy they use. As a result of this, many households may well be tempted to switch suppliers to look for a cheaper deal. Unfortunately, though, no fixed deals are being offered for less than the energy price cap at the moment, so switching won't help right now. All these elements, and indeed the unknown of how much the bills might go up over the winter, can cause heightened anxiety.

## 5 Top Tips



Whilst we can't control the energy prices, we can help with some ways to manage increased anxiety. Here are five ways to help you keep your cool at home as the energy prices soar:

**Limit your news and social media use.** The news is full of depressing stories about people struggling and watching this everyday can genuinely impact how you feel and behave. Whilst it is of course important to stay up to date on what is going on in the world, aim to limit your usage and only take away what is actually useful to you. Your anxiety may well spiral out of control if you see others having to choose between feeding their family and paying their energy bills, so pick your content wisely. Instead of watching TV or endlessly scrolling Instagram, go for a walk, read a book or do some yoga at home to switch off.

**Create a stress bucket.** A nice way to think about or stress is in the form of a 'stress bucket'. We all have a stress bucket that is being dripped into with the many stressors around us. The key is to have an outlet for our stress. If we don't, our bucket will overflow, resulting in burnout, anxiety and overwhelm. You can put holes in your bucket by looking after yourself, practicing self-care, spending time with friends and family and focusing on the tips above. Remember you're only human and there is only so much room in your stress bucket.

**Talk to your energy company:** If you're struggling to pay your energy bills, you should contact your supplier directly and see if they can help you. You may be able to negotiate a payment plan if your energy bills are becoming too much. The energy regulator Ofgem also provides information about support you can get if you have a low income, or you are over 67 years old. Visit the Ofgem site to see if you can get help from government schemes like the Warm Home Discount, the Cold Weather Payment and the Winter Fuel Payment, or from grants and charities. The key point here is don't be proud; reach out to them to see what they say and never feel embarrassed about asking for help.

**Boost your self-esteem.** Rightly or wrongly, experiencing financial problems and worrying about increases in your outgoings, can cause you to feel like a failure and can really impact your self-esteem.

But there are plenty of other, more rewarding ways to improve your sense of self-worth. Even when you're struggling yourself, helping others by volunteering can increase your confidence and ease stress, anger, and anxiety. You could also spend some time in nature, learn a new skill, or spend time with loved ones.

**Seek professional advice.** Depending on where you live, there are several organisations that offer free counselling on dealing with financial problems and this will include helping you with increasing monthly spends due to energy price rises. Whether or not you have a friend or loved one to talk to for emotional support, getting practical advice from an expert is always a good idea. Remember, reaching out is not a sign of weakness and it doesn't mean that you've somehow failed as a provider, parent, or spouse, it just means that you're wise enough to recognise your financial situation needs addressing. To get help with your debts you might wish to contact PayPlan or try doing a money makeover with MoneySavingExpert.

**Certainly, we are all facing some uncertain times right now, but for those struggling with increased anxiety due to the energy crisis, we want to highlight that there is support available to you. Remember reaching out for help is a positive first step to managing your mental health.**

If you're looking for some simple ways to reduce your energy spend, don't forget to.....

- Turn off standby appliances.
- Turn down your thermostat.
- Wash clothes at 30.
- Wear clothes more than once.
- Use a washing up bowl in the sink.
- Shorten your showers.
- Draught proof your house.
- Turn off the lights.
- Fit energy efficient bulbs.
- Pick your times wisely.

Most people use the most energy between 6pm - 9pm with a peak in energy at 8pm.