

Face Coverings

At RSVP, we recognise that wearing a face covering may cause trauma for some survivors. We wish to remind anyone who is struggling that we're here to support you.



Face Coverings: Exemptions

At RSVP, we recognise that for some survivors, wearing a face mask simply isn't possible.

UK Government guidance states that you can be exempt from wearing a face covering...

“if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress.”

You may find it useful to make people aware of this if you decide that you are not able to wear a mask or face covering and are questioned as a result; having to explain your reason for exemption can be a terrifying & uncomfortable prospect.

For more details from the UK Government about face covering exemptions, please click [here](#).

If wearing a face covering will be severely distressing for you, we have some phrases and images on the next few pages that you can present staff with when entering shops and areas that require you to wear a face covering. These aren't official UK Government documents but they may help you feel more comfortable when speaking with staff.

Face Coverings: Exemption Cards

If wearing a face covering will be severely distressing for you, please download these images to your phone or print as cards, or use the following phrases to present to staff when entering shops and areas that require you to wear a face covering.



I suffer with trauma-related stress, so wearing a face covering causes me **severe distress**. Under Government guidelines, this makes me **exempt** from wearing one.

Please be supportive & thank you for your understanding.



I am **EXEMPT** from wearing a face covering under Government guidelines. It causes me **severe distress**.

Please be supportive & thank you for your understanding.



FACE COVERING EXEMPTION

I am exempt under Government guidelines as wearing face coverings cause me severe distress.

Please be supportive & thank you for your understanding.



In line with Government guidelines, **I AM EXEMPT FROM WEARING A FACE COVERING.**

Wearing one causes me severe distress.

Please be supportive & thank you for your understanding.

To download the UK Government's exemption cards, please click [here](#).



Face Coverings: things that can help

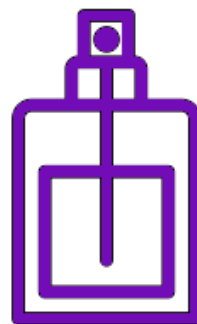
Here are some ways in which wearing a face mask may be possible & made a little easier:



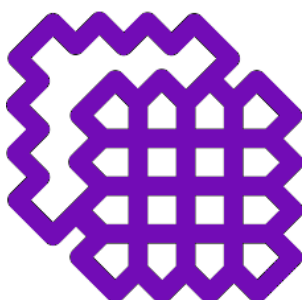
Practising wearing a face covering at home before going outside and slowly increasing the amount of time you wear it for



Using a visor or face shield instead of a mask



Putting calming scents on the face covering (such as lavender)



Trying different fabrics and materials (some people may find cottons or silks more bearable)



Wearing a face covering which isn't a mask (a scarf or snood)



Make your own mask for face covering that makes you feel more comfortable

A gentle reminder:

We recognise that face coverings may remind people of past events, so you may also find it helpful to remind yourself that you are in control, and you can step outside of a building and remove face covering at any point.



Grounding Techniques

You may find it helpful to use some grounding techniques whilst wearing a face covering, to help refocus your thoughts.

5-4-3-2-1

This technique helps you to focus your attention on the present:

- Name 5 things you can see
- Name 4 things you can feel (“my feet on the floor”)
- Name 3 things you can hear (“traffic outside”, “birds singing”)
- Name 2 things you can smell
- Name 1 thing you can taste

Imagery

Visualise something that stops you from focusing on your unwanted thoughts or feelings. For example you could imagine, a big STOP sign, changing the ‘TV channel’ and ‘Turning down the dial’ on your emotions.

Use an anchoring phrase

Describe who you are, how old you are, the date today, the time, where you are now.

Breathe

Pay attention to your breath. Inhale through your nose and out through your mouth. Place your hands on your belly. Watch as your hands move up and down as you breathe.

Touch a grounding object

Try carrying a small object in your pocket wherever you go – for example a small stone. Touch or grip this when you feel overwhelmed or triggered.