

## COVID -19

# Managing stress and anxiety

As media outlets fill our screen with news of COVID-19, it is natural for people to begin to worry for their own and loved one's health and safety. It is important to acknowledge that fear and worry is a normal reaction to this unknown and unprecedented circumstance. However, it is crucial that we take steps to keep stress at a manageable level.

### Limiting exposure to news and social media

Be mindful to not oversaturate yourself with social media and 24/7 news outlets. Limit your exposure to breaking news and sensationalistic news outlets. Rather, direct your attention to established authoritative sources, such as the [World Health Organization](#) or the [Australian Government Department of Health](#). One of the best steps we can take in alleviating anxiety is to educate and inform ourselves with reputable sources of information.

### Concentrate on things that are in your control

When a situation feels unknown and out of our control, we can often begin to feel anxious. The stress of the unknown can lead us to think that we don't have the skills and tools to deal with the situation, which may lead us to think of worst-case scenarios. Rather than worrying about the situation, stay focused on the things that are under our control.

- Practice high levels of hygiene and social distancing.
- Inform yourself with accurate information about coronavirus from reputable sources.
- Follow up to date advice from the government and make a plan within your workplace and family to arrange what you will do if required to isolate or quarantine.
- Keep your immune system strong by eating a balanced diet, sleeping regular hours and engaging in regular physical exercise.

### Look after your physical health

Be sure to look after your physical health. Not only will this boost our immune systems but will also support mental wellbeing.

- Eating nutritious foods
- Engaging in physical exercise
- Avoid smoking, drug use and excessive alcohol
- Maintain consistent sleeping patterns and take regular breaks if at work

### Stay in touch

Maintaining our social connections with family and friends is fundamental to mental health and wellbeing. While we are currently limited to being in physical proximity to loved ones, it can be helpful to connect with family and friends via phone or online.

#### *Family & Friends*

Make regular contact to check-in with loved ones. If you are concerned for an older or vulnerable family member, discuss and make a plan on the best way to support them. This may include managing home visits to minimize risk of infection, putting hygiene practices in place or placing supermarket delivery orders.

#### *Colleagues*

Be sure to check in on colleagues regularly. Stay active on messenger and increase utilization of video chat. Being able to see the faces of co-workers will give the feeling that everyone is still connected.

Even if you don't have a specific question to ask, still catch up regularly, just as you would in the workplace. We recommend daily team meetings, being sure to check-in on one another and discuss non work-related topics as well.

#### *Neighbours*

While respecting social distance, consider introducing yourself to your neighbours. Check in with them, enquire if they need extra support and suggest swapping phone numbers to keep in contact over coming weeks.

#### *Children*

Be honest with children and provide up to date information regarding the situation. Explain what is happening and

present clear information about how to reduce their risk of being infected. Children can react to stress in a range of ways such as being more clingy, anxious, withdrawing, angry or agitated.

It is important to maintain regular routines and normal daily life as much as possible. Listen to children, reassure them supportively and give extra love and attention during times of stress.

## Simple ways to get present

At one point or another we will have all experienced a time of adversity and stress. Draw on skills that you have used in the past to manage stress during this time. If you find yourself getting worked up by thoughts of Coronavirus try using a grounding technique to centre yourself and engage with your environment.

### Drop Anchor

- Plant your feet onto the floor. Push them down and notice the floor beneath you, supporting you.
- Notice the muscle tension in your legs as you push your feet down.
- Notice your entire body and the feeling of gravity flowing down your head, spine and legs and into your feet.
- Look around and notice what you can see and hear around you. Notice where you are and what you're doing.

### Take Ten Breaths

- Take ten slow, deep breaths. Focus on breathing out as slowly as possible until the lungs are completely empty – then allow them to refill by themselves.
- Notice the sensations of your lungs emptying. Notice them refilling. Notice your rib cage rising and falling. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your shoulders.
- See if you can let your thoughts come and go.
- Expand your awareness: simultaneously notice your breathing and your body. Then, look around the room and notice what you can see, hear, smell, touch and feel.

## Maintaining a positive outlook

Be mindful to maintain a positive outlook during this period of uncertainty and possible isolation.

- Keep in mind that the current circumstances are only temporary.
- Rather than concentrate on the negative aspects of self-isolation, remember that staying home is ultimately having a positive impact on the community. People are working together to minimise the spread of the virus and protect the lives of vulnerable people.
- Limit your exposure to social media and breaking news.
- Engage in activities that occupy your mind and bring you joy – e.g. reading, gardening, exercising.

*If you are finding that your wellbeing and everyday functioning is being disrupted by anxiety and thoughts of COVID-19 please consider seeking support from a mental health professional.*

***If you are worried you may have come into contact with COVID-19 please call the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398 – open 24 hours, 7 days a week.***

## Financial Counselling

As the spread of COVID-19 affects the global economy, many people face losing their financial stability.

If you are experiencing financial hardship, please get in contact to be connected with one of our qualified financial counsellors.

For information and services provided by the Australian government please visit:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/affected-coronavirus-covid-19>

**To arrange an appointment today please call us on**

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