



Mental health and wellbeing during the Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak

The outbreak of the coronavirus COVID-19 has impacted people in varying ways on an international scale. It is understandable that during times like this, people may be feeling afraid, worried, anxious and overwhelmed by the constantly changing alerts and media coverage regarding the spread of the virus.

While it is important to stay informed, the following are some mental health and wellbeing tips and strategies to continue looking after ourselves and each other during these difficult times.

We would like to reassure Australians that the Lifeline telephone, text and webchat services will continue as normal throughout the COVID-19 crisis. To contact Lifeline:

Phone: 13 11 14 (24 hours/7 days)

Text: 0477 13 11 14 (6pm – midnight AEDT, 7 nights)

Chat online: www.lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat (7pm - midnight, 7 nights)

Manage your exposure to media coverage as this can increase feelings of fear and anxiety. Be mindful of sources of information and ensure you are accessing good quality and accurate information. We have provided some links below.

Follow a “calm yet cautious” approach – do your best to remain calm and be mindful not to contribute to the widespread panic that can hinder efforts to positively manage the outbreak. Ensure you are following directives issued by the government, medical advice and observe good hygiene habits.

Show compassion and kindness to one another – these times of fear, isolation (both physical and social) and uncertainty are when it is most important that we strengthen our sense of community by connecting with and supporting each other. Remind ourselves that we can manage

this much better together in solidarity, and that COVID-19 doesn't discriminate – it can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, nationality or ethnicity.

Actively manage your wellbeing by maintaining routines where possible, connect with family and friends (even if not in person), staying physically active, eating nutritious foods and seeking additional support by contacting Lifeline or further professional support as required.

Strategies to cope with social distancing, self-isolation or quarantine

Going into a period of social distancing, self-isolation or quarantine may feel daunting or overwhelming, and can contribute to feelings of helplessness and fear. In addition to the above, we encourage the following;

- Perspective – try to see this time as unique and different, not necessarily bad, even if it something you didn't necessarily choose
- Connection – think of creative ways to stay connected with others, including social media, email and phone
- Be generous to others – giving to others in times of need not only helps the recipient, it enhances your wellbeing too. Is there a way to help others around you?
- Stay connected with your values. Don't let fear or anxiety drive your interactions with others. We are all in this together!
- Daily routine – create a routine that prioritises things you enjoy and even things you have been meaning to do but haven't had enough time. Read that book, watch that show, take up that new hobby.
- Try to see this as a new and unusual period that might even have some benefits.
- Limit your exposure to news and media. Perhaps choose specific times of day when you will get updates, and ensure they are from reputable and reliable sources.

Staying connected through the COVID-19 crisis

Research after the SARS pandemic in Hong Kong in 2008, provides evidence of the significance of connection through epidemics. It found that residents in Hong Kong experienced increased social connectedness, which offset the negative mental health impacts of the pandemic.

As connection is so important during this time, here are some tips on staying connected to others during this time. Remember – we are all in this together.

- If there is someone you think may struggle through social isolation, it is important to reach out to them and let them know you care:
 - Call them to check on their welfare
 - Send an email
 - Leave a note under their door
 - Don't underestimate the power you have to offer hope to another person.
- We encourage people to get creative with how they interact, here are some ways to stay connected if self-isolating:
 - Set up a gratitude tree – where every member posts a message or sends a text to other members to share something they are grateful for.
 - Find a buddy, or group of, to set daily challenges with. These could include a healthy habit, a mindful practice, a creative pursuit. Be sure to encourage and check in daily to stay motivated.

- Set dates and times to watch the same TV shows/movies with someone and message each other your thoughts along the way... kind of like Goggle Box but you're not sharing the couch!
- If your local community has one, join its social media group! This will keep you up to date with what's going on directly around you. It may also include ways you can perhaps reach out and connect with someone less fortunate than you and ways to assist them.

Helping children cope through COVID-19

This is an uncertain time for everyone, and children may be impacted by fear and anxiety. Here are some tips on how to ensure your children are supported;

- Give your children extra attention and reassurance. Where possible, minimise their exposure to media and social media that may heighten anxiety
- Acknowledge your own feelings about the situation and let children know it's okay to share their own feelings
- Include your children in plans and activities around the house
- If you don't see an improvement in 4 weeks, or if you're concerned, seek professional help (earlier if needed)

Reputable sources of information

- Australian Department of Health – www.health.gov.au
- World Health Organisation – www.who.int
- Smart Traveller (information for Australian travellers) - www.smartraveller.gov.au/news-and-updates/coronavirus-covid-19

Where to go for support?

It is extremely important to seek out help if you feel you need it. We want to remind everyone that Lifeline is here to offer support to you and listen. Lifeline are committed to ensuring our services continue as normal during this time.

- 13 11 14 will continue to be operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Lifeline Text 0477 13 11 14 will continue to operate 6pm – midnight (AEDT), 7 nights a week
- Lifeline webchat will continue to operate 7pm – midnight (AEDT), 7 nights a week
- Kids Helpline – for children that may need support 1800 55 1800 www.kidshelpline.com.au
- Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636 www.beyondblue.org.au