

MAINTAINING WELLBEING DURING COVID-19

MENTAL WELLBEING FACT SHEET

April 2020

As we respond to the evolving COVID-19 situation we may find that the associated activities and challenges impact our wellbeing. As an evolving pandemic, the current uncertainty is likely to contribute to increased worry and anxiety. It is important that we all take care of our physical and psychological wellbeing throughout the COVID-19 situation and response.

Managing worry and stress

Increased worry and stress are expected responses to the current COVID threat. It is our bodies usual safety response to risk. Having strategies to manage this response effectively is what is most important. Practicing and amplifying our usual resiliency and stress management strategies will be most helpful. Other tips include:

- **Don't compare your stress with anyone else's stress.** Different people respond differently to stressful situations and may have different impacts or challenges.
- **Get clear on what you can and can't control.** Make a list of the things you are concerned about and ask yourself what you can and can't control. Acknowledge the things that are beyond your control. Refocus your energy on what you can control by making an action plan for how to address these things.
- **Set an amount of time** in which you allow yourself to think worrying thoughts. When that time is up (start with 5 minutes), consciously redirect your thoughts and postpone further thinking until your next "worry session".
- **Write your worries down.** Eight to 10 minutes of writing can help our brains to process our worries.

Investing in self care

Self-care is different for everybody. Some common strategies to consider embedding in your usual routine include:

- **Exercise** can help our bodies to process the cortisol and adrenaline released when we experience stress and assist us to engage in rest and relaxation.

- De-activation strategies including **mindfulness, meditation, relaxation and breathing techniques** give our body a chance to settle, calm and self soothe. Regular gratitude practices and activities to connect with nature and green spaces also help us manage challenging emotions.
- Making time or increasing engagement in **pleasant events, interests and hobbies** ensures we are utilising our usual wellbeing activities.

Limiting engagement with media

The continuous and often conflicting media coverage is likely to increase confusion, unease and anxiety. Try to limit exposure to media coverage by planning periodic engagement, for example seeking updates once or twice per day from reliable sources such as NSW Health.

Staying connected

Remaining engaged with your social and collegial supports is important to wellbeing. Workplace and community measures such as social distancing and isolation could mean that your face-to-face interactions may be more limited. Stigma, misinformation and fear may also mean that some of us will experience withdrawal and avoidance by our family members and community.

- Consider connecting by phone, text, video chat and social media to access support.
- Reach out to those you know who are in a similar situation. Turn to your colleagues, friend or family for support - they may be having similar experiences to you.

Practical strategies

Remember to connect with practical strategies that assist with managing challenges including:

- Maintaining adequate levels of hydration,
- Optimising rest and recovery,
- Fuelling yourself with sufficient and healthy foods,
- Avoiding the use of alcohol and other substances as a means of managing stress,
- Raising any questions or concerns with your leader.

Seek additional support early where needed

If you feel that the stress or anxiety you are experiencing as a result of COVID-19 is impacting your ability to function at home seek extra support.

Support services include:

**MEMBER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
(Benestar)**

1300 360 364

**CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT SERVICES
(CISS)/PEER SUPPORT**

1800 049 933

CHAPLAINCY AND FAMILY SUPPORT

1800 049 933

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