

TIPS AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH*

SOME THREATS TO OUR MENTAL HEALTH

Information overload and the negativity bias of the media. Try picking one credible source + check it once or twice per day (eg. 7pm ABC news). To balance it out – join a group like [The Kindness Pandemic](#) on Facebook – it will restore your faith in human nature.

Financial stress – a dramatic reduction of income can lead to significant stress. Get help early. Access government support if needed – there is no shame in this, these are ‘unprecedented’ times. Everything is figure-outable and people want to help. Some of us might need to ‘reinvent’ when this is over and it could lead to an improved version of our self/career/life.

Example financial resources: [Government support](#) (COVID-19 information and support) | [Money Smart](#) (free financial counselling) | [National Debt Helpline](#) (free, independent and confidential service financial counselling)

Isolation – We’re facing long periods of isolation but we’re wired for connection. Thank goodness for technology. You can plan an online social event, embrace social media and/or start calling your friends to check in as a start. This can be a great time to connect with family, read or take a course on one of the many free or inexpensive online platforms.

Example video conferencing platforms: [Zoom](#) (up to 100 people + 40 mins for free) | [House Party](#) app (up to 8 people and free) | [What’s App](#) chat (up to 4 people and free)

Example course providers: [Udemy](#) | [Coursera](#) | [Khan Academy](#) | [Class Central](#) | [MOOCs](#)

Fear and uncertainty – We don’t know when all this will end or how many casualties there will be. There are even conspiracy theories going around.

What we focus on grows and before we know it, everything can feel out of control. It’s tragic that the COVID-19 virus will cause deaths but to lose people because of the associated stress and mental illness will be a greater tragedy.

It can be helpful to ask yourself – “Is this a useful belief?” as thoughts pop into your mind. We need to be focused on thoughts that empower rather than debilitate us as there are decisions and actions to be taken.

Example services for mental health support: [Lifeline](#) | [Beyond Blue](#) | [Black Dog Institute](#)

Right now, all we can do is focus on what we can control and support each other.

MAINTAINING OUR MENTAL HEALTH

Our resilience will be strongly tested so maintaining it more important than ever.

Gratitude – now is the time to introduce or keep up your gratitude practice. You could write your gratitudes in a journal, write a list of friends you’re grateful to and start calling them, or create a gratitude group where you text your gratitudes to each other daily.

Gratitude Group Guidelines:

- Invite up to four people to join the group (you can progressively grow to that number).
- Ask each person to send a daily text containing three things they are grateful at a specified time, eg. in the evening or following morning.

- Consider not saying the same thing twice over a month (or even ever) as this encourages greater reflection and recognition of the many things we take for granted. Otherwise there can be a tendency to regularly say things like “family, health and home”.
- Ask everyone to commit to sending the gratitudes even if they are not feeling it (that’s when it can have the largest effect).

Every day is not good but there is good in every day.

Breathing – when it feels too much, and even when it doesn’t, stop and ground yourself with your breath. In the moment we can take a rest from racing thoughts. If you want to progress to a meditation practice, this can be an awesome way to create a sense of calm.

Example meditation apps: [Buddify](#) | [One Giant Mind](#) | [Simply Being](#) | [Headspace](#)

Helping others/connection – this can be a quick route to lifting your mood. Your brain releases happy chemicals (oxytocin, serotonin and dopamine) when you are kind to someone else. Research shows that someone you help is likely to pay it forward twice. We can create a ripple effect that surely is an antidote to the Corona fear.

Exercising, good sleep and a balanced diet will all help your mental health. There are lots of free options for exercising like walking, running, cycling, as long as we stay physically distanced from others.

PLEASE Reach out to someone if you’re struggling – We all need to get through this. Don’t let pride get in the way.

A problem shared is a problem halved.

HOW TO SUPPORT OTHERS

Many people in our community are suffering and it’s critical that we all support and look out for each other.

Stay connected – Write a list of the people you are going to check in with each week. Think about all your different friendship groups. (One of the joys in all of this can be re-connection.)

Ask people if they’re ok. The RUOK? conversation model is great:

Ask are you ok?

Listen with an open mind

Encourage action (they may benefit from speaking to a professional)

Check in (make a note to come back and see how they’re travelling)

The RUOK? [website](#) expands on this and has lots of awesome resources for supporting others.

Practise asking people if they are having thoughts of ending their life. Not easy but it can save lives. Mental Health First Aid has a comprehensive [Guide for Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviours](#) that you can familiarise yourself with.

We can get through this together one step at a time ... one conversation at a time ... one day at a time.

* *This information was put together to support you in maintaining good mental health during the COVID-19 crisis. Please note that you should do your own due diligence on any of the resources mentioned. Some of the meditation apps may incur a fee.*