

Emergency Services Foundation WorkWell Learning Network (ESFWWLN)

Literature Digest 3

Protecting mental health during the response to COVID-19: tips and resources

Introduction

There is an abundance of resources that provide guidance, advice and tools to help manage mental health at this time of COVID-19. This digest:

- Summarises what the experts are saying to stay safe and sane
- Provides an overview of websites with COVID-19 related resources

Summary of tips to promote wellbeing during the pandemic

The following is a summary of the range of advice for managing mental health right now from Beyond Blue, Phoenix, MindSpot, New Economics and the Australian Psychological Association:

Maintain perspective

- There will be a vaccine
- Get to know history
- This is temporary, the pandemic will pass
- Stick to the facts and rely on scientific sources for your information

Find a healthy balance in relation to media coverage

- Avoid exposing yourself to a constant stream of negative information because it takes a huge psychological toll.
- Avoid reading social media posts that warn of an apocalypse and don't get drawn into doomsday discussions.

Maintain a practical approach

- Keep good distance and hygiene
- Follow official information and advice
- Get organised - make plans and write your list of what you need to buy, organise, or set-up, and get on with doing

Stay calm

- Practice mindfulness and self-reflection (ESF is about to launch a series of mindfulness meditations developed with Dr Richard Chambers)

- Refer to tips for managing anxiety, grief and social isolation (will be covered in the next Digest)
- Keep looking forward

Practice Compassion.

- Be gentle, kind, and respectful to yourself and to others
- Take care to not seek blame. Coronavirus can affect anyone regardless of their nationality or ethnicity, those with the disease have not done anything wrong.
- Give – do service work, spontaneous kindness, anything that involves giving

Self-care

- Do something nice or fun for yourself
- Engage in hobbies
- Use the time to do something you have been meaning to do or wanted to learn

Seek support

- Activate your support network
- Stay connected with friends and family through social media and over the phone.
- Acknowledge feelings of distress and talk to loved ones about worries
- Seek professional support early if you're having difficulties.

Stay healthy

- Maintain a healthy diet, exercise and sleep regime
- Keep routine
- Avoid or reduce the use of alcohol and tobacco.

References

Beyond Blue: https://mindspot.org.au/assets/pdf/10_Tips_for_Coping_with_Infectious_Diseases.pdf

Phoenix: <https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Coronavirus-Families-tip-sheet.pdf>

MindSpot: https://mindspot.org.au/assets/pdf/10_Tips_for_Coping_with_Infectious_Diseases.pdf

Australian Psychological Association: <https://www.psychology.org.au/About-Us/news-and-media/Media-releases/2020/Coronavirus-psychologists-offer-advice-for-mainta>

New Economics: <https://neweconomics.org/2020/03/five-ways-to-wellbeing-at-a-time-of-social-distancing>

Lifeline: <https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/topics/mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

DHHS: <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19>

Wellbeing check-in tools during COVID

SuperFriend: <https://www.superfriend.com.au/covid-19-support/wellbeing-self-check-in/>

Black Dog: <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/news/news-detail/2020/04/03/your-weekly-personal-mental-health-check-in-during-coronavirus>

COVID-19 info and support websites

Life in Mind

<https://lifeinmindaustralia.com.au/support-for-those-impacted-by-adverse-events/mental-health-support-for-covid-19>

'Life In Mind' and the 'National Mental Health Commission' have developed a landing page consolidating resources available in to one spot, which is updated regularly.

Red Cross

<https://www.redcross.org.au/coronavirus>

Elaborates on 4 steps to protect yourself and help prevent the spread of coronavirus:

1. Know - facts about COVID-19
2. Check in – with links to help with:
 - Looking after your mental wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Ways to help families stay happy and hopeful during self-isolation
 - Talking to children and young people about COVID-19
 - fight the spread of harmful myths.
3. Organise
4. Act

Beyond Blue

<https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/>

This comprehensive site has links to info about/for:

- small business owners
- working from home
- talking to kids
- health workers
- staying connected (includes an online forum for sharing experiences of coping)
- staying positive if you have lost your job; keeping routine; sleep; offsetting loneliness

Reach Out

<https://au.reachout.com/collections/coping-during-coronavirus>

links to info about/for:

- dealing with uncertainty
- dealing with bad world news
- practicing gratitude
- mindfulness
- tips for dealing with change
- creative ways young people are coping with COVID

Phoenix

<https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Coronavirus-Families-tip-sheet.pdf>

Tip sheet on:

- staying informed
- staying healthy and calm
- helping children
- self-isolation/quarantine
- when to seek help

Dept of Health, Federal Government

<https://headtohealth.gov.au/covid-19-support/covid-19>

Lots of resources, including

- where to get the facts about the COVID-19 outbreak
- tips for maintaining good mental health, information
- how to access mental health services
- information for parents
- how to keep older Australians safe and connected by helping them get established online
- relies on MindSpot info (below) for tips on managing mental health

Mindspot

<https://mindspot.org.au/coronavirus>

Provides lots of info through the following links:

- Free telephone counselling
- Maintaining mental wellbeing during the pandemic
- Maintaining mental wellbeing for people working on the frontline
- health alerts and advice
- Restrictions and safety advice
- Financial support
- Community advice
- telehealth guide for health professionals

BlackDog

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/coronavirus-anxiety-resources>

- Articles on fear, kids and screen time, sleep, exercise)
- digital tools (for MH assessment, self-help, guided meditation)
- Webinars – MH and COVID series
- Info and resources on anxiety
- Support for: young people, people working from home

Lifeline

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/topics/mental-health-and-wellbeing-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

- Gives general coping tips and links on where to go for help
- Specific advice on social isolation/quarantine/staying connected

DHHS

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19>

- Videos
- Tips for staying calm and healthy
- Staying positive
- Staying connected
- For those in self-isolation or quarantine
- Conversations with children and young people
- For Victorians aged 17-25
- Conversations with older Victorians
- Who to call to get help
- Resources – info for seniors, for families and parents, those in isolation and links to Beyond Blue, Phoenix and Lifeline

World Health Organisation (WHO)

[WHO COVID-19 Mental Health Considerations](#)

Info for the public, health workers, parents and people in isolation.

Mental Health Commission

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/News/2020/March/COVID19-Mental-Health-Information>

Links to lots of national and international resources