

Take the Panic out of Pandemic



In uncertain times, we are likely to feel fearful, tense and nervous about the future. The good news is, we all have internal and social resources to get through this challenging time.

With an increasing number of coronavirus cases across Australia, the level of fear and anxiety within the community is also likely to grow. During these challenging times it's important to invest in effective strategies that manage our stress levels rather than escalating into severe anxiety and panic. This Tip Sheet outlines some useful strategies which can help you and those you care about to cope with the stress or worry experienced as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

Find the facts

Many of us reach for our phones the minute we wake up and often turn to social media to stay informed. While working from home it might be tempting to keep the TV news running in the background, constant media coverage about the coronavirus can keep us in a heightened state of anxiety. Try to limit your related media exposure and instead seek out factual information from reliable sources such as the [Australian Government's Department of Health](#) or other trusted organisations such as the [World Health Organization](#).

Practice compassion

During these times of isolation and uncertainty it is vital that we strengthen our sense of community by connecting with and supporting each other. We can manage this difficult situation much better together and in solidarity, after all COVID-19 doesn't discriminate – it can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, nationality or ethnicity. Compassion is about showing care, kindness, and understanding towards someone else. Practicing compassion can help you to feel calm, in control, and supportive of those around you. A random act of kindness can go a long way and inspire others to do the same. If we make a conscious effort to show compassion towards ourselves and others we increase feelings of hope, gratitude and reassurance.

Put things into perspective

During periods of stress, we tend to lose perspective and see things as worse than they really are. In fact, our brains are geared to look for the negative; our innate drive for survival focuses on identifying threats in our environment.

To combat this ask yourself these questions to challenge unhelpful thoughts:

- Am I assuming something bad will happen when I really don't know the outcome? **Remind yourself that the actual number of confirmed cases of coronavirus in Australia is extremely low.**
- Am I overestimating how bad the consequences will be? **Remember, illness due to coronavirus infection is usually mild and most people recover without needing specialised treatment.**
- Am I underestimating my ability to cope? **Sometimes thinking about how you would cope, even if the worst were to happen, or how you have coped with past challenges can help you put things into perspective.**

Practise self-care

To help encourage a positive frame of mind, it is also important to look after yourself. Although there is no 'one size fit all' approach to self-care, here are some suggestions:

- maintaining good social connections and communicating openly with family and friends
- making time for activities and hobbies you enjoy
- keeping up a healthy lifestyle by eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, getting quality sleep and avoiding the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs to cope with stress
- practising relaxation, meditation and mindfulness to give your body a chance to settle and readjust to a calm state
- talking to others about how you are coping, feelings of worry and concern are normal and valid.



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(continued)



Seek out support

If you feel that the stress due the pandemic is impacting on your everyday life, a psychologist may be able to help. Psychologists are highly trained and qualified professionals, skilled in providing effective interventions for a range of mental health concerns, including stress. A psychologist can help you manage your stress and anxiety using techniques based on the best available research. If you are referred to a psychologist by your GP, you might be eligible for a Medicare rebate. You may also be eligible to receive psychology services via telehealth so that you do not need to travel to see a psychologist. Ask your GP or another health professional to refer you.

Additional resources

[The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) provides reliable information about the corona virus such as its symptoms, steps you can take to protect yourself, and what to do if you are affected.

Find out more

-  [Tip sheet 14 – Staying Mentally Healthy While Working From Home](#)
-  [Tip sheet 15 – Supporting Your Team Remotely](#)

Visit the Aspect Mental Health website at www.aspectgroup.com.au/aspect-mental-health/ for more information about our best-practice tools and training to enhance mental health in the workplace.

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