

# Maintaining wellbeing during COVID-19

As we respond to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic, the frequent changes and current uncertainty is likely to contribute to increased worry and anxiety. It is important that we recognise the impact and take care of our physical and psychological wellbeing.

## 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 to worry.** When that time is up (start with 5 minutes), distract yourself, or 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 bodies 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.** If your usual activities have changed because of COVID-19, select one new thing to try. It might take a while for it to become as enjoyable as your other hobbies.
- Drink plenty of water, and fuel yourself with sufficient and **healthy foods.**
- **Avoid using alcohol** and other substances as a means of managing stress.

## Limiting engagement with media

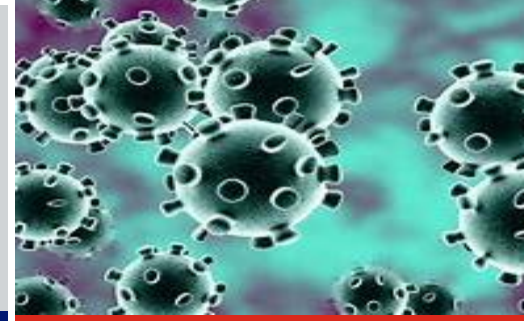
The continuous and often conflicting media coverage is likely to increase confusion, unease and anxiety. Try to limit exposure to media coverage by planning periodic engagement, for example seeking updates once or twice per day from reliable sources such as [NSW Health](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au).



## Staying connected

Remaining engaged with your social 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.

- 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.



## IT'S OK NOT TO BE OK

With all the changes that are happening due to COVID-19, another emotion you might be feeling is grief.

Grief can come when we lose loved ones, but also when we lose our freedom, our sense of security, and our plans for the future.

Take time to let yourself feel the pain of those losses.



Clean your hands



Cover your coughs and sneezes



Stay at home

## 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, seek extra support.

Speak to your **General Practitioner** to make a plan for support, including referral to a Psychologist

**Employee Assistance and Psychological Service (EAPS):** Support is available 24/7 for all NSW Ambulance employees, partners and families. Phone: **1300 360 364**

Speak to a **NSW Ambulance Chaplain**

For 24/7 phone and online support, try:

**Beyond Blue:** 1800 512 348

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14

Visit the NSW Ambulance Families page for more details, including the support options that are available to NSW Ambulance staff.

[www.ambulance.nsw.gov.au/fonassn](https://www.ambulance.nsw.gov.au/fonassn)