



COPING WITH STRESS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

As the number of COVID-19 cases rise in Australia and the globe, fear and anxiety about the disease is on the increase and may be stressful for people and communities.

Feelings of worry and unease are to be expected during difficult times, such as during a global pandemic, although it is important to recognise and manage our stress before it turns to more severe anxiety and panic, and begins to impact our day-to-day functioning.

KNOW THE SIGNS OF STRESS:

- **Your Body** – difficulty sleeping, appetite changes, headaches and other pains, stomach ache or diarrhoea, tremors and/or twitches
- **Your Emotions** – feeling anxious or fearful, feeling depressed and overwhelmingly sad, feeling guilty, feeling angry, not caring about anything
- **Your Thoughts** – difficulty concentrating and thinking clearly, trouble remembering things, confusion, trouble making decisions
- **Your Behaviours** – excessive worrying about your health/ the health of others, obsessive checking social media and other media for health information, blaming others, difficulty listening or communicating with others, difficulty giving or accepting help, wanting to be alone, frequent crying, difficulty relaxing or sleeping, increased irritability, anger and frequent arguing, changes in your energy levels, increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE AND RELIEVE STRESS:

- **Focus on the facts** – ensure you are seeking out reputable and factual information about the outbreak from reliable resources, such as the Australian Government’s health alert or the World Health Organization’s disease update.
- **Maintain perspective** – be mindful of how much time you’re spending reading about the outbreak on social media and news. While it’s important to stay up to date, you should also take a break from the news to focus on aspects of your life you can control.

- **Take precautions to protect yourself and others** – this includes maintaining good hygiene practices such as washing your hands thoroughly and frequently, avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and staying home and seeking medical care if you feel unwell or experience known symptoms
- **Look after your health** – eat healthy foods, stay hydrated, exercise regularly, get enough sleep, avoid excessive alcohol and caffeine, do not smoke
- **Stay connected** – maintain contact with loved ones, and make the most of video-based technologies for communication. Talk about your feelings openly and ask others for reassurance.
- **Relax and recharge** – ensure you continue to make time to engage in relaxing and pleasurable activities – read a book, listen to music, watch a movie, take a bath, and talk to family and friends. Practice deep breathing, mindfulness and meditation to manage anxiety levels and return to calm.
- **Seek out help** – if you are concerned, or continue to experience signs of stress for several days or weeks, speak to your GP, a close friend, or contact your EAP for a confidential discussion.



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