Mental Health and COVID-19

Try to maintain perspective

While it is reasonable for people to be concerned about the outbreak of coronavirus, try to remember that medical, scientific and public health experts around the world are working hard to contain the virus, treat those affected and develop a vaccine as quickly as possible.

Find a healthy balance in relation to media coverage

- Being exposed to large volumes of negative information can heighten feelings of anxiety.
- While it's important to stay informed, you may find it useful to limit your media intake if it is upsetting you or your family.

Access good quality information

It's important to get accurate information from credible sources such as those listed below. This will also help you maintain perspective and feel more in control.

- Australian Government coronavirus (COVID-19) health alert- 1800 398
- Health Direct - Coronavirus (COVID-19): Health Direct have also developed a COVID-19 Symptom Checker - an online, self-guided tool to help people find out if they need to seek medical help.
- smartraveller.gov.au – travel information for Australian citizens
- World Health Organization - coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak

Try not to make assumptions

To contribute to a sense of community wellbeing, try to remember that the coronavirus can affect anyone regardless of their nationality or ethnicity and remember that those with the disease have not done anything wrong.

Managing your mental health while in self-isolation or quarantine

- Remind yourself that this is a temporary period of isolation to slow the spread of the virus.
- Remember that your effort is helping others in the community avoid contracting the virus.
- Stay connected with friends, family and colleagues via email, social media, video conferencing or telephone.
- Connect with others via the Beyond Blue forums thread: Coping during the coronavirus outbreak.
- Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing.
- Keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy foods.
- Try to maintain physical activity.
- Establish routines as best possible and try to view this period as a new experience that can bring health benefits.
- For those working from home, try to maintain a healthy balance by allocating specific work hours, taking regular breaks and, if possible, establishing a dedicated work space.
- Avoid news and social media if you find it distressing.

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Try to maintain a practical and calm approach

Widespread panic can complicate efforts to manage the outbreak effectively. Do your best to stay calm and follow official advice, particularly around observing good hygiene habits.

Children and young people

- Families and caregivers of children and young people should discuss news of the virus with those in their care in an open and honest way.
- Try to relate the facts without causing alarm, and in a way that is appropriate for their age and temperament.
- It is important to listen to any questions they may have, to let them know that they are safe and that it's normal to feel concerned. If the media or the news is getting too much for them, encourage them to limit their exposure.
- Beyond Blue's Be You initiative has developed the resources to help educators support children and young people's mental health during the coronavirus outbreak.

Support for those experiencing financial hardship

- As the ongoing spread of the coronavirus continues to affect the global economy, many people in Australia are losing jobs, livelihoods and financial stability.
- For information and services provided by the Australian government, please visit Services Australia.
- If you are experiencing financial hardship, National Debt Helpline offers free financial counselling.

Seek support

It's normal to feel overwhelmed or stressed by news of the outbreak. We encourage people who have experienced mental health issues in the past to:
- activate your support network
- acknowledge feelings of distress
- seek professional support early if you're having difficulties.

For those already managing mental health issues, continue with your treatment plan and monitor for any new symptoms.

Social contact and maintaining routines can be supportive for our mental health and wellbeing. In circumstances where this is not possible, staying connected with friends and family online or by phone may assist.

Acknowledge feelings of distress and seek further professional support if required.

Beyond Blue has fact sheets about anxiety and offers other practical advice and resources at beyondblue.org.au.

Mental Health Services

SHDH Counselling and headspace Swan Hill are offering telehealth consultations.
- SHDH Counselling- 5033 9880
- headspace Swan Hill- 4010 7100

National Helplines:
- Emergency- 000
- Lifeline Australia- 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue- 1300 224 636
- Kids Helpline- 1800 551 800

Reference:

https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak

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