**MANAGING STRESS AND ANXIETY**

DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Experiencing anxiety and stress about COVID-19 is normal.

These strategies can help you to manage how you are feeling, and reduce the chances of you developing greater anxiety and panic.

**REMEMBER THAT EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT**

Everyone is experiencing their own thoughts, feelings and reactions to COVID-19. Some of the things people are experiencing are:

* Feelings of stress or a sense of being overwhelmed
* Increased emotions, such as sadness, anger, frustration, fear and anxiety
* Physical symptoms, such as a faster heart rate, loss of appetite and fatigue
* Difficulty concentrating, relaxing or sleeping
* Loss of motivation or interest in usually enjoyed activities
* Feelings of isolation and disconnection from others

These reactions are normal and understandable during current circumstances.

**GET THE FACTS**

Having access to large amounts of information about COVID-19 can increase feelings of anxiety and stress.

Take breaks from the news, and get information from only reliable and factual sources such as the World Health Organization (www.who.int) and the Australian Government’s COVID-19 health alerts (www.health.gov.au).

**IDENTIFY AND MANAGE YOUR TRIGGERS**

Allow yourself the time to acknowledge and express what you’re feeling. This can help you to identify triggers. Managing triggers might include:

* Getting off social media and limiting your news intake
* Having an agreement with loved ones to limit talk about COVID-19
* Making sure you keep a daily routine

**PRACTICE MINDFULNESS STRATEGIES**

Mindfulness is derived from meditative techniques which get you to focus on the here and the now. Practicing mindfulness can help you to check in with what is really going on for you, your physical responses and your emotional reactions.

Consider trying some of the practices below:

* Moving mediations: A slow yoga sequence which allows you to focus on your breath. Search YouTube for free classes, yin yoga and restorative yoga – there are heaps of resources out there.
* Practice mindfulness when doing daily tasks: You can try this when you are making your bed. What do the sheets feel like? What can you smell? What can you hear? Did you notice something different?
* Just sit: You might be finding yourself with a lot of time on your hands, but how often are you really taking in what is going on in and around you? Find a comfortable seat and take notice: What can you hear? Can you feel the sun on your skin? What is that like? What can you see?
* Breathe: In what can feel like an inconsistent world, your breath can be consistent and stabilising. If you are feeling overwhelmed come back to it – it will always be there. Try focusing on a deep inhale into the belly for two counts and a slow exhale for four – This can help bring you out of the mind and back into the body.
* Journaling: Write down your feelings; try to unpack them a bit more. What is rational? What can you change? Acknowledging that this is a difficult time and that some of these feelings are normal is a great place to start.

**STAY PHYSICALLY DISTANCED – BUT REMAIN CONNECTED!**

It is important that we all follow government advice to stay at home and maintain a 1.5m distance from others to help ‘flatten the curve’, This doesn’t mean you have to miss out on social contact though!

To stay socially connected try:

* Using the video call feature on your phone (e.g. *Facetime*) or a video conferencing app (e.g. *Skype*) to see your friends and loved ones
* Writing letters, this can also be a therapeutic way to get your thoughts and feelings out and keep in communication with others
* Scheduling regular phone calls with loved ones

**HELPFUL RESOURCES**

1. WHO: Mental health and psychosocial considerations during COVID-19 outbreak
2. Beyond Blue: Looking after your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak
3. Australian Psychological Society (APS): Tips for coping with coronavirus anxiety