

Tips for Coping with COVID-19 Impacts

Maintaining healthy habits, connections and routines

Now is the time to try new habits and routines for work and wellbeing.



PRACTICAL STEPS WITHIN OUR CONTROL

The changes, disruptions and impacts of COVID-19 are understandably causing significant issues and concerns for many of us. No matter how tough, old, smart or 'chilled' we are, we can expect to feel some sort of reaction to this rare situation.



While our individual circumstances and coping habits are different, there are some practical and proactive steps we can take, that are within our control, to help maintain our wellbeing and manage stress. These can buffer us from overwhelming worry or anxiety, that may arise from frequent exposure to the news, frustrations, worries, and challenging behaviours of those around us and in the media.

REDIRECTING OUR ATTENTION TOWARD CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIONS

Often, we've thought and planned enough (for now) but our minds keep going over old ground, and the result is more mental work and stress. This means that our minds and bodies are just absorbing too much tension because we're constantly thinking (and ruminating) about what's happening.

The best thing we can do is to 'notice this' then redirect our attention towards healthy and constructive activities and conversations. The key to switching off (from work, worries or social media) is to *switch our attention to something else*. Professional help, for coping skills, is also available from counsellors, psychologists and your workplace Employee Assistance Program.

WHAT ARE YOUR CONCERNS?

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting to social distancing missing special events | <input type="checkbox"/> Change/disruption | <input type="checkbox"/> Health and wellbeing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial security | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to essentials | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting sick |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Helping children/family | <input type="checkbox"/> Health/safety of my loved ones |

EFFECTIVE COPING SKILLS AND MINDSETS

Monitor for Normal Signs of Stress

- Feeling anxious, worried or frustrated
- Increased tension or aches and pains
- Disturbed sleep, appetite or energy
- Poor concentration – easily distracted
- Can't switch off – can't stop thinking about things
- Mixed moods: disappointed, sad, demotivated
- Physically feeling sick, nausea in the stomach
- Increased substance use, stimulants & alcohol

If one or more signs persist - practice some healthy activities or seek help/tools from a professional.

Healthy Lifestyle Routines that Help Reduce Stress

- Eat a balanced diet (loaded with fruit and veg)
- Wind down before bedtime to get 7-9 hrs sleep
- Talk (daily) with friends/supports: call/text/video
- Exercise and keep active – move more / sit less
- Use your way to relax and switch off from the day
- Use helpful attitudes and thoughts that point you towards constructive and healthy actions – eg *"I can cope with this, follow the facts, make a plan"*
- Circuit break your day (and worries) with rest breaks – walking or listening to music etc
- Limit your exposure to negative news/content

Sharing Good Advice – that at some point feels true

- Accept that the change has happened
- Don't take it personally (you're not to blame)
- Remember we have the capacity to adapt in time (you've adapted many times in life already)
- Set limits on 'worry time' – write things down
- Remember it's human to experience this, and many others are experiencing it too, right now
- As best you can, maintain healthy lifestyle routines – because they make a difference to mental health
- Sometimes we need support, and sometimes that will be you/me - today or next week
- When in doubt, check-in and clarify expectations
- Be patient and compassionate with everyone!

Helping Conversations – a sample script

- How are you going?
- What's on your mind? (main concerns)
- What do you need?
- What are your expectations? (are they fair?)
- What's your strategy or plan to manage it?
- Is there anything I can do to help you?
- Do you mind if I touch base again to check-in?

Practice Relaxation or Mindfulness Exercises – Daily

- Take 5 slow, deep breaths, relaxing your muscles as you breathe out; relaxing from head to toes.
- Ground yourself in the 'here & now' by taking note of your body posture; feel the contact of your feet on the ground; and begin to note what you sense around you – 5 things you can feel in your body, 5 things you can hear, 5 things you can see; then becoming fully aware of yourself, in this moment, in this spot.
- Use free smartphone apps/sites like *SmilingMind*
- Your own relaxer, e.g. music, bath, TV, read, yoga

Use a Problem-Solving Approach to Concerns – Write down or talk about these key questions:

1. What is the specific situation that concerns you?
2. What impact is this having on you?
3. What sensible options are there to take?
4. What further information or help do you need?
5. What's your deliberate plan of action? and Plan B?

Reconnect to your Sources of Strength and Support

- The people (and pets) that support you
- Healthy activities that make you feel good
- Recall your strengths, accomplishments
- Live to your personal values and principles
- Recall the good things to be grateful for
- *Try a buddy system with workmates and family, if you're working from home or house-bound*

CREATE OR REFRESH YOUR OWN WELLBEING PLAN

You can create your own "*Individual Wellbeing Plan*" by recording: your coping strategies, strengths, guiding values, good things in life, support network, current personal concerns/conditions and how you will deal with those concern/conditions, and lastly the things you want to talk about with your workplace before returning to work (if you've been working from home).

NOW IS THE TIME TO PRACTICE COMPOSURE AND MINDFULNESS

Tactical Composure exercises support wellbeing and productivity and activate the 'clear thinking centers' of the brain. Follow the link below to access free audio files with brief exercises in how to - 1) Relax tension levels, 2) Refocus attention 3) Reconnect to positives and 4) Rehearse and prepare a constructive and composed response to things that bother or affect you. URL: <https://www.tacticalcomposure.com/samples-tactical-composure-exercises/>