



## Stress Management

For healthcare workers

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds globally and locally, it's normal for people to have a wide range of reactions.

Looking after your wellbeing in times like this can help to reduce stress, and is crucial in enabling you to still take calm and effective action in the midst of this global health event.

People are naturally concerned for their own and their loved ones' health and safety.

There is still much uncertainty.

A main source of stress for frontline workers is **day-to-day job stress**, particularly during a crisis.

Examples of job related stress are:

- working long hours
- overwhelming responsibilities
- poor communication
- working in dangerous situations.

### Taking care of yourself and your co-workers

- Acknowledge that it is normal to feel stressed in your situation.
- Take care of your basic needs. Take time to eat, exercise, rest and relax, even for short periods.
- Be mindful of the hours you are working and communicate with your leader if those hours become unreasonable or unmanageable.
- Check in with co-workers to see how they are doing, and have them check in with you. Find ways to support each other.
- If you are a leader, try to make sure your team is keeping reasonable working hours, where possible, so they do not become too exhausted and burn out.

Your patients/clients may be experiencing a range of issues arising from COVID-19.

If you are having an adverse response helping people remember:

- **You are not responsible for solving everyone's problems.** Do what you can to help people help themselves.
- Talk with friends, loved ones or other people you trust for support.
  - Stay connected to friends, family, and community through phone, social media, or messaging apps. This keeps you safe and helps bridge the gap if you find yourself experiencing avoidance by friends, family, or community due to their fear or perceived stigma.
  - Turn to your colleagues, your manager or someone you trust for social support - your colleagues may be having similar experiences to you.
- Minimise your intake of alcohol, caffeine or nicotine and avoid non-prescription drugs.

**Remember, stress and the feelings associated with it are by no means a reflection that you are not doing your best to help people where you can.**

## Rest and reflect

The crisis situation and the needs of people you have met may have been very challenging, and it can be difficult to bear their pain and suffering.

Taking time for rest and reflection is an important part of balancing your wellbeing with the needs of others.

The following suggestions may be helpful to your own recovery:

- Talk about your experience of helping in the crisis situation with a supervisor, colleague or someone else you trust.
- Acknowledge what you were able to do to help others, even in small ways.
- Learn to reflect on and accept what you did well, what did not go very well, and the limits of what you could do in the circumstances.
- Take some time, if possible, to rest and relax before beginning your work and life duties again.

It is important to get support from someone you trust. Speak to a health care professional or, if available, a mental health specialist if you find yourself experiencing the following:

- upsetting thoughts or memories about the event
- feeling very nervous or extremely sad
- having trouble sleeping
- increased alcohol or drug intake.

## Helpful resources and support

[Beyond Blue](#) - Phone: 1300 22 4636 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). [Beyond Blue online chat](#).

[eheadspace](#) - confidential mental health and wellbeing support for young people (12 - 25 years) and their families, including information, support, and health services. Phone: 1800 650 890 (9am - 1am, 7 days a week). [eheadspace online chat](#).

[MensLine](#) - professional telephone and online support and information service for Australian men. Phone 1300 78 99 78 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). [MensLine online counselling](#).

[Mindspot](#) - free telephone and online service for people with stress, worry, anxiety, low mood or depression. It provides online assessment and treatment for anxiety and depression and can help you find local services. Call 1800 61 44 34 (8am - 8pm, Monday - Friday; 8am-6pm, Saturday).



## Further health and wellbeing support

### Tip sheets and online resources

- Australian Psychological Society (APS): [Tips for coping with coronavirus anxiety](#)
- Beyond Blue: [Looking after your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak](#)
- WHO: [Mental health and psychosocial considerations during COVID-19 outbreak](#)
- Ted article: ["I'm incredibly anxious about coronavirus"](#)
- Dr Russ Harris, author of The Happiness Trap: [How to respond effectively to the coronavirus](#)

### Mobile apps

- [Smiling Mind](#) - free mindfulness meditation app to help you look after your mental health and manage stress and daily challenges.
- [Headspace](#) - free "Weathering the Storm" program available to help support the global community through this time including a curated list of calming meditations, help with sleep, and at-home workouts or movement exercises.

### Crisis support

- [Lifeline](#) - provides crisis counselling and suicide prevention services. Phone: 13 11 14 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). [Lifeline online chat](#).
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) - provides online and phone counselling if you or someone you know is feeling suicidal. Phone: 1300 659 467. [Suicide Call Back Service online chat](#).

### Specialist areas

- [1800Respect](#) - confidential counselling, information and support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse via phone or online chat. Phone: 1800 737 732 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). [1800Respect online chat](#).
- [Butterfly Foundation's National Helpline \(ED HOPE\)](#) - confidential service that provides information, counselling, and treatment referral for people with eating disorders, and body image and related issues. Phone: 1800 33 4673 (8am - midnight).
- [Directline](#) - confidential alcohol and drug counselling and referral service. Phone: 1800 888 236 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). [Directline online counselling](#).

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