



COVID-19: Managing stress together as a group

For leaders

COVID-19 has seen rapid changes to our way of life (e.g. study, work, social gatherings), and disrupted plans due to travel restrictions and **physical distancing** measures as part of our effort to slow the spread of transmission.

Looking after our wellbeing, and supporting our teams to do the same, can help to reduce stress. It's also crucial in enabling us 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

Emotions can be contagious

Stress and anxiety can spread among a group. It is therefore important to mitigate stress and anxiety before they escalate between group members.

The role of leaders

Emotion is even more contagious between leaders and their staff. Staff look to their leaders for cues about how to react to sudden changes or crisis situations. If the leader communicates stress and helplessness, this will have a trickle-down effect on staff.

As a leader in a crisis situation such as this, you should:

- Pay extra attention to your own wellbeing and be sure that you are physically and emotionally able to help others
- Take care of yourself so that you can best care for others
- Show positive emotional expression to uplift your staff's mood.

Building common goals

Social identity is people's internalised sense of their membership in a particular group.

When a group's sense of shared identity increases, members provide each other with more social support and resist the adverse effects of situational stressors.

A strong social identity can be developed using the following:

- Common goal. This can resolve conflicts and facilitate cooperation.
- Positive group perception
- Shared norms and values
- Interdependence of tasks and roles.

If you feel you or your team need more support please speak to a healthcare professional or someone you trust.



Staying connected

Physical distancing does not need to mean social disconnection.

Building social connectedness and social support can act as a buffer for stress, reduce loneliness during lockdown, increase health and wellbeing, and help individuals develop better coping strategies.

Social support can be offered as:

- Instrumental or practical support (e. g., practical help, assistance, or financial support)
- Informational support (e. g. providing information which may help members in problem solving, giving someone advice)
- Emotional support (e. g. comfort, sympathy, encouragement)

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).

If you have any questions about icare Research, please email Research@icare.nsw.gov.au