



Looking after yourself and others during times of uncertainty:

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has caused widespread disruption and concern internationally and closer to home. It is not unusual for people to experience heightened levels of anxiety and distress during times like these.

Physical health, mental health, employment stability and social connection are all linked to overall wellbeing. It's important to remember that you can take some simple steps to take control of your mental health and wellbeing, and to look out for those around you.

You are not alone with your concerns.

Most people are experiencing concerns due to the impact of the coronavirus. Whether it is worries about health, uncertainty about employment, or distress caused by social disruptions – your feelings are valid.

For many people, work conditions or income may be impacted. This can have negative impacts on social, emotional and mental wellbeing.

For those with pre-existing physical or mental health concerns, public health crises can exacerbate worries and other symptoms.

For those who are medically vulnerable, there can be added fear of contracting the virus, or concerns about isolation.

Additionally, many of the things that are enjoyable, and which contribute to wellbeing, may be increasingly limited such as sports, hobbies and social gatherings.

Help is available. We can all feel supported by discussing concerns, staying connected, focusing on positives, and taking care of both physical and mental wellbeing.

How does a public health concern like coronavirus impact mental health?

Stress and challenging times impact everyone differently. Some common concerns include:

- Feeling helpless, sad or overwhelmed.
- Frustration or resentment towards others.
- Feelings of isolation, disconnection or loneliness – particularly if working from home or practicing social distancing.
- Physical concerns – symptomatic responses to stress like feeling rundown or exhausted, loss of appetite, headaches.
- Loss of sleep – due to worrying or changes in schedule.
- Substance misuse – increased alcohol intake or use of other drugs.
- Stress over employment changes such as shutdowns, changed working conditions, or loss of income.

Proactive strategies:

- 1. Acknowledge mental health.**
Take steps to maintain your overall wellbeing. Physical and mental health is important.
- 2. Stay calm.**
By staying alert and informed with official advice, you will support your own wellbeing and the broader community health response.
- 3. Limit exposure to media coverage.**
Avoid being overwhelmed by negative media stories. Consider accessing media less frequently, and sticking to reliable sources with proactive messages.
- 4. Look after your physical health.**
Ensure you have a healthy diet, good water intake, plenty of rest, and enough exercise to benefit overall wellbeing and lift moods.
- 5. Practice self-care.**
Do things that make you feel good and rejuvenate your body and mind. Give yourself a positive break.
- 6. Think of the good.**
Remind yourself of the good in the world, read positive stories, set goals for the future and minimise negative self-talk.
- 7. Supporting each other.**
Stay connected. Keep up conversations and check in with others as this can be a positive boost for all. Messages, online forums and phone calls all count. Chat with loved ones, or access professional support services such as an EAP, GP, helpline or counselling service.

Wellbeing at work

Workplaces have an important role in helping staff feel safe and supported. OzHelp recognises that the situation will be different depending on your type of employment or the industry you work in. Job stresses, employment uncertainty or loss of income can have negative impacts on wellbeing. Speak to your workplace about concerns, and seek out helpful wellbeing resources and support services.

Wellbeing in isolation

Isolation may be self-imposed, recommended by your workplace for social distancing, or instigated more widely due to official advice from the government. If you are quarantined or need to practice self-isolation it is important to remember that this is a temporary measure. You may also like to remind yourself of the part you are playing in keeping others safe. Do what you can to stay informed, stay well and stay connected.

Need help?

OzHelp:

1300 694 357 (Weekdays, 9am - 5pm)

Lifeline:

13 11 14 (24/7)

Health professionals:

GP, psychologist or counsellor.

If life is in danger, call 000.

Stay informed:

Australian Government – Health Alerts

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts>

Connect with others:

Beyondblue - <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/online-forums>