



Looking after your mental health during the coronavirus outbreak

Beyond Blue recognises and understands the feelings of anxiety, distress and concern many people may be experiencing in relation to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and offers the following wellbeing advice.

Try to maintain perspective

While it is reasonable for people to be concerned about the outbreak of coronavirus, try to remember that medical, scientific and public health experts around the world are working hard to contain the virus, treat those affected and develop a vaccine as quickly as possible.

Find a healthy balance in relation to media coverage

Being exposed to large volumes of negative information can heighten feelings of anxiety. While it's important to stay informed, you may find it useful to limit your media intake if it is upsetting you or your family.

Access good quality information

It's important to get accurate information from credible sources such as those listed below. This will also help you maintain perspective and feel more in control.

- [Australian Government coronavirus \(COVID-19\) health alert](#)
- [Health Direct – Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [smartraveller.gov.au – travel information for Australian citizens](#)
- [World Health Organization – coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

Try to maintain a practical and calm approach

Widespread panic can complicate efforts to manage the outbreak effectively. Do your best to stay calm and follow official advice, particularly around observing good hygiene habits.

The Australian Psychological Society has [advice about maintaining positive mental health during the outbreak](#).

Try not to make assumptions

To contribute to a sense of community wellbeing, try to remember that the coronavirus can affect anyone regardless of their nationality or ethnicity and remember that those with the disease have not done anything wrong.

Managing your mental health while in self-isolation or quarantine

There are a number of ways to support your mental health during periods of self-isolation or quarantine.

- Remind yourself that this is a temporary period of isolation to slow the spread of the virus.
- Remember that your effort is helping others in the community avoid contracting the virus.
- Stay connected with friends, family and colleagues via email, social media, video conferencing or telephone.
- Connect with others via the Beyond Blue forums thread: [Coping during the coronavirus outbreak](#).
- Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing.
- Keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy foods.
- Try to maintain physical activity.
- Establish routines as best possible and try to view this period as a new experience that can bring health benefits.
- For those working from home, try to maintain a healthy balance by allocating specific work hours, taking regular breaks and, if possible, establishing a dedicated work space.
- Avoid news and social media if you find it distressing.

Conversations with children and young people

Families and caregivers of children and young people should discuss news of the virus with those in their care in an open and honest way. Try to relate the facts without causing alarm, and in a way that is appropriate for their age and temperament. It is important to listen to any questions they may have, to let them know that they are safe and that it's normal to feel concerned. If the media or the news is getting too much for them, encourage them to limit their exposure. [This video has some useful tips](#) for talking to young people about scary stuff in the news.

Health care workers

Health care workers may feel extra stress during the COVID-19 outbreak. This is a normal response in these unprecedented circumstances. Such feelings are not a sign of weakness and it's important to acknowledge this. There are practical ways to manage your mental health during this time, including:

- getting enough rest during work hours and between shifts
- eating healthy foods and engaging in physical activity
- keeping in contact with colleagues, family and friends by phone or online
- being aware of where you can access mental health support at work
- if you're a manager, trying to create mentally healthy work structures.

It's important the general public recognises the pressure that health systems and workers themselves are under and takes steps to support them where possible. Following government advice about ways individuals can help slow the spread of the virus will support the health care workers who are saving lives and keeping people safe.

Seek support

It's normal to feel overwhelmed or stressed by news of the outbreak. We encourage people who have experienced mental health issues in the past to:

- activate your support network
- acknowledge feelings of distress
- seek professional support early if you're having difficulties.

For those already managing mental health issues, continue with your treatment plan and monitor for any new symptoms.

Social contact and maintaining routines can be supportive for our mental health and wellbeing. In circumstances where this is not possible, staying connected with friends and family online or by phone may assist. Beyond Blue also has a dedicated page on its forums about [coping during the coronavirus outbreak](#).

Acknowledge feelings of distress and seek further professional support if required.

Beyond Blue has fact sheets about [anxiety](#) and offers other practical advice and resources at beyondblue.org.au.

The [Beyond Blue Support Service](#) offers short term counselling and referrals by phone and webchat on **1300 22 4636**.