

teenAID Tips for Mental Health during COVID-19



When our world changes quickly and suddenly, in ways that feel disappointing, unpredictable, unsafe or threatening, it is normal to experience changes to our thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Normal reactions include:

- Feeling stressed or overwhelmed, frustrated or angry, worried or anxious
- Feeling restless, agitated, on 'high alert', or not able to calm down
- Being teary, sad, fatigued or tired, losing interest in usually enjoyable activities or finding it difficult to feel happy
- Worrying about going to public spaces, becoming unwell or contracting germs
- Constantly thinking about the situation, unable to move on or think about much else
- Experiencing physical symptoms such as increased fatigue or other uncomfortable sensations

People can react very differently to stressful situations such as the COVID-19 virus and you should not expect any particular reaction. Instead, reassure yourself and others that feeling any of the above symptoms is understandable in these challenging times.

Tips for mental health:

- Maintain a daily routine with consistent sleep, activity and study patterns
- Stay connected with others and try to find moments of humour
- Talk to people you feel comfortable with about your feelings or worries, then give yourself permission to stop worrying
- Eat breakfast every morning, plus snacks and meals at regular times throughout the day
- Increase the amount of fresh fruit and vegetables you are eating but do not make any drastic changes to your diet
- Limit alcohol and other drugs and try not to use these as coping strategies
- Limit coffee/caffeine or energy drinks as these will increase feelings of anxiety and make it difficult to relax
- Look for patterns or be aware of which situations make you feel particularly worried or anxious; try to use relaxation or distraction techniques, or get a family member or friend to help when in these situations
- Relieve times of high anxiety with exercise or physical activity; engage in regular aerobic exercise (e.g., walk, jog, yoga, dance)
- Limit the amount of time you spend talking about or watching/listening to news media or social media if you are finding information about the COVID-19 situation overwhelming or distressing
- Do hobbies or activities that you enjoy, calm you down or focus your mind and body. These could be art/craft, physical activity, listening to music, reading, journaling, watching tv/movies or chatting with friends (remotely)
- Understand that the people around you are probably also finding this situation stressful and they might also be having difficulty controlling their emotions; try and resolve conflict
- If you continue to feel overwhelmed, out of control or unable to calm down after a period of weeks, seek help from a mental health professional.
- Be kind to yourself and each other as we work through this together.

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While the current situation is unsettling, there are lots of resources and support to help us maintain our health and safety.

Helpful Resources

Some of these free online resources might help you to cope with stress and better manage these uncertain times:

- <https://headspace.org.au/young-people/how-to-cope-with-stress-related-to-covid-19/>
- <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>
- <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/mindfulness>
- <https://au.reachout.com/tools-and-apps>

If you continue to feel overwhelmed, out of control or unable to calm down after a period of weeks, seek help from a mental health professional:

- <https://headspace.org.au/ehespace/> or 1800 650 890
- <https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens> or 1800 55 1800
- <https://online.beyondblue.org.au/Webmodules/chat/InitialInformation.aspx> or 1300 22 4636
- <https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/online-services/crisis-chat> or 13 11 14

References

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