



Tips for Maintaining Mental Health through COVID-19

The escalating COVID-19 virus situation is leading to natural increases in stress, worry and anxiety in many people. The uncertainty associated with COVID-19, the disruption to usual routines, the need for working from home or self-isolating can have significant impacts on your wellbeing and mental health. If you or people close to you fall into a high-risk category, then your anxiety and mental health may be particularly impacted.

The Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences has provided some basic tips on managing your mental health and wellbeing during this difficult time and how to manage working from home or self-isolation.

Set a routine and try to stick to it

- It's important for wellbeing to keep a regular routine and try to keep it as normal as possible
- Get up at a regular time, eat at regular times, work at regular times, and sleep at regular times
- Make sure you make time for relaxation, exercise, fun and social contact – aim for a balance of these activities throughout the day
- Morning exercise is particularly helpful to assist with your mood through the day
- Ensure you take mini breaks to stretch and hydrate when working
- Recognise this opportunity to set a healthier routine
- If you need to take care of children while working from home, try and set working times that are optimal for concentrating with kids around and, if applicable, liaise with your partner if they are also working from home to organise schedules to optimise both your working time and demands

Managing working from home

- Keeping regular routines around work – set regular work and break times
- Ideally, if your accommodation allows, try to create a separate workspace to minimise distractions and create a distinction between work and home
- Consider when meetings are and develop your work schedule around this – writing in the morning, meetings in the afternoon etc.
- Let go of anxiety or expectations around things that are out of your control (e.g. postponed clinical trials), and focus on what is achievable and what is within your control
- Set yourself achievable daily and weekly goals to work towards
- Continue meetings with colleagues, students and teams via zoom

Managing stress

- Exercise regularly
- Use online resources to practice mindfulness, yoga or relaxation at home
- Eat healthy food and moderate your use of caffeine and alcohol

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- Ensure you get sufficient sleep
 - Manage your expectations in terms of work and your relationships – recognise that these are difficult and stressful times – be compassionate with yourself and focus on the present
 - Break tasks into smaller achievable chunks to prevent being overwhelmed
 - Make sure you get outside – even if on your balcony, to get sunlight (vitamin D) ... if you can get into your garden, walk outside (practising safe social distancing)
 - Avoid conflict – be aware of your stress/conflict points with others you are living with and make collaborative plans with them in how to avoid stress and reduce tension (find retreat areas in your space)

Useful Online Tools

Mindfulness: [Insight Timer App](#)

Depression/anxiety: [Mind Gym](#), [Beyond Blue](#)

Crisis: [Lifeline](#), [SANE Australia](#)

Kids anxiety: [BRAVE Online](#)

Domestic violence: [RESPECT helpline](#)