

COVID-19: Stress, anxiety and the Coronavirus 2019



In any health event it's normal to feel threatened, confused, scared, sad or angry. News about the spread of Coronavirus may give rise to feelings of stress, anxiety and fear of the future. At the same time it's important to keep your level of concern or anxiety proportionate to the actual threat posed by the virus. There are a number of simple things you can do to help with this:



Be realistic in your appraisal of the risk

Our brain's intrinsic, fight-or-flight response has a tendency to take a threat that is new or unknown and inflate the risk of it actually happening to you. Thus a new virus outbreak, like the Coronavirus, might feel scary. Managing anxiety and avoiding catastrophising is all about working with real evidence. Gather information that will help you accurately determine risks so that you can take reasonable precautions. Use resources such as the public health agencies listed overleaf to learn about what is happening and the actual level of risk. Follow government advice and directions.



Avoid overconsumption of media

Limit the time you and your family spend watching or listening to sensational media coverage and instead focus on the things that are positive in your life and things you have control over. Source information from reputable news sites or official government websites. Follow government advice and directions.



Keep connected

Maintaining social networks and activities helps maintain a sense of normalcy, and provides outlets for sharing feelings and relieving stress. This is an ideal time to reconnect with colleagues, friends and family. Let your family and friends know how you're doing so that you don't feel alone. Connect online or if in person, apply the social distancing protocols. Follow government advice and directions.



Take normal, healthy precautions to control the things you can

Anxiety is almost always about uncertainty. We like it when we feel we have control over things. The problem with contagions like the Coronavirus is that there are lots of things you can't control. Nevertheless, try to control the things you can such as general health and hygiene. Coronaviruses, like a lot of viruses are spread through contact - through touch, a cough, or a sneeze. If you're sick, stay home and don't go to work. If you're not sick, stay away from close contact with a person who is and engage in healthy habits when it comes to cleanliness. Adopt the required social distancing protocols. Stay healthy. Ensure you adopt and maintain the essential ingredients for a healthy lifestyle; using them to improve your overall emotional and physical well-being. Keep your immune system happy and healthy, with a balanced diet and sufficient sleep. Engaging in regular exercise is also important. These activities are great for general mental health too.



Use your past coping Skills or develop new ones

If you've faced adversity in the past, think about what has worked well for you previously and re-employ those skills. Maybe it's engaging in positive self-talk. Maybe it's engaging in some mindfulness or meditation techniques. Whatever has worked to help you cope, try to do more of that if you feel stress is getting to you. If you have never used mindfulness before now is a great time to give it a try. There are a number of free apps that you can try including: Smiling Mind; Headspace; and ReachOut Breathe.



Support for your children

Concern over this new virus can make children and families anxious. Acknowledging some level of concern is appropriate and can result in taking actions that reduce the risk of illness. Helping children cope with anxiety requires providing accurate prevention information and facts without causing undue alarm:

- Remain calm and reassuring - "Adults at home and school are taking care of your health and safety."
- Be honest and accurate - Keep Explanations Age Appropriate
- Make yourself available.
- Monitor television viewing and social media.
- Maintain a normal routine to the extent possible.

Additional resources on supporting your children can be found at: <https://publicdocumentcentre.education.tas.gov.au/documents/coronavirus-talking-to-your-child-parent-factsheet.pdf>

Want further help or resources?

Public Health Information

- The Tasmanian Public Health Hotline for people who think they may have COVID-19 is **1800 671 738**
- Visit the Tasmanian Health COVID-19 Info Page at https://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/communicable_diseases_prevention_unit/infectious_diseases/coronavirus
- The Coronavirus health information hotline is **1800 020 080**
- The Australian Government Department of Health at **www.health.gov.au**
- The Public Health Information Line on **1800 004 599**



Seek additional help

If you try the above strategies and still find you are anxious, overwhelmed or your life, work or relationships are adversely affected you might want to contact Wellbeing Support or consult with a health professional. Remember Wellbeing Support is a confidential service.

Wellbeing Support Officers can assist with referrals for:

- Counselling
- Psychological support
- Transition pathways (e.g. to retirement, a new role)
- Drug and/or alcohol counselling
- Grief and loss counselling
- Accident, illness or hospitalisation
- Work related difficulties
- Relationship support
- Return to work planning and assistance

CISM Peers provide assistance, advice and referral to emergency services workers who have been exposed to traumatic incidents. The CISM Program also offers the following services:

- Assessment (phone contact by a peer)
- On scene support
- Defusing
- Debriefing - Group
- Debriefing - Individual
- Follow-up Assistance
- Advice to Partners, Families & Friends
- Education and Information Sessions



AT & DPFEM

GPO Box 308, Hobart TAS 7001
Level 5, 111 Macquarie St, Hobart TAS 7000

P (03) 6173 2188

E wellbeing@dpfem.tas.gov.au

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GET HELP NOW

You can access a range of confidential services, which are designed specifically for the Tasmanian emergency services community from Wellbeing Support.

Ambulance Tasmania Peer Support 6166 1994

CISM 0427 181 207 | manager@cism.tas.gov.au

Wellbeing Support Psychological Services

Phone (office hours) 6173 2188 | wellbeing@dpfem.tas.gov.au

Wellbeing Support Officers:

South 0429 453 689 or 0436 800 604 **North** 0436 812 038 **North West** 0419 126 551

Further general information is available at mypulse.com.au

Printed fact sheets are available from wellbeing@dpfem.tas.gov.au

Acknowledgement: Australian Federal Police