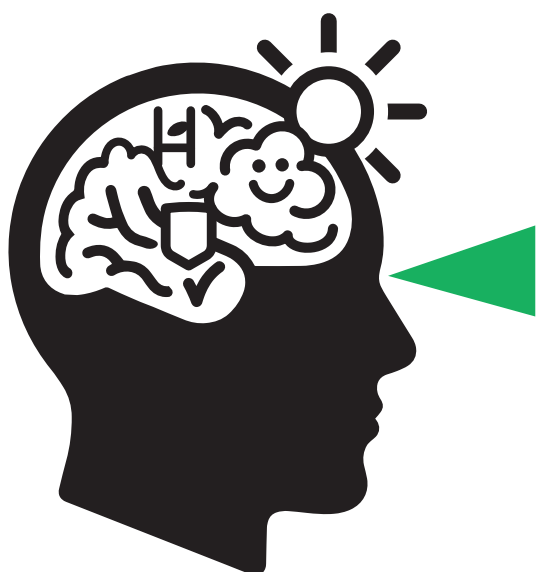




Wellbeing and Education

# How to maintain mental health in times of uncertainty.

The current COVID-19 pandemic is evolving and changing moment by moment, bringing with it a range of uncertainty. Here are some tips to help you maintain your mental health during this challenging time.



## 1. Control the controllables

Focusing on things outside our control can have a negative effect on our mental state. This can negatively affect your motivation to train/work, your energy levels and your thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Whilst it's important to acknowledge the things that are outside of your control, it's important to refocus on the things that are within your control (see below points for examples).

## 2. Stay structured and remember self care

Looking after yourself includes exercise, making healthy dietary choices, having a healthy sleep routine and maintaining structure in your day. People are used to, and generally thrive on, structure and routine. Schedule in specific times to exercise, intentionally connect with family and friends (within the boundaries of the government's social distancing guidelines), and do things you enjoy or find purpose and meaning in.

## 3. Know your strengths and values

Use your character strengths and core values to guide your decisions and actions. In a time of uncertainty, the most certain things you have are your values. Rather than being guided by worry or unhelpful thinking styles, think about what's important to you (values) and ways to cope that you would be proud of (strengths). Be guided by the question "What is helpful right now?" And remember, mood is contagious. Think about what the most helpful way of thinking and acting will be not only for yourself but for your family, friends, teammates and community.

#### **4. Worry is normal – choose helpful worry strategies**

Try to use problem-solving (helpful) worry rather than unhelpful worry which goes around in circles and doesn't reach a solution or conclusion. Problem-solving is structured, solution-focused and logical. Questions to help you apply a problem-solving approach to worry are:

- » What am I worried about?
- » Is the outcome, or any part of the outcome, within my control?
- » If yes, what can I do about it (what actions can I take)?
- » What are the pros and cons to each possible action?
- » Which action makes the most sense and how/when will I implement this plan?

#### **5. Focus on short-term goals**

There are multiple reasons you feel uncertain at the moment – these may include uncertainty about your career, finances, studies, your own and your family's health, the timeline of the pandemic, etc. In times of uncertainty, realistic short-term goals are important. Think about what you'd like to achieve over the next week and how you're going to achieve that. You can have multiple goals across a range of areas including social/family, community commitments, physical, self-development (e.g. learning a new skill, studying), etc. You may also write a list of things you've been putting off and start to tick them off (whilst still following the social distancing policies of the Government).

#### **6. Stay connected**

Social connection is important for our mental health, so think of other ways you can connect with friends and family whilst adhering to medical advice to distance yourself. This can include technologies such as video calling (e.g. FaceTime, Skype, etc) and instant messaging, but don't be afraid to get creative in ways to stay connected throughout this challenging time.

#### **7. Practice gratitude**

Experiencing a range of emotions is completely understandable at this time; but there are still ways to use gratitude to keep things in perspective. Gratitude practices can be as simple as listing the 3 best moments of your day, or the three things you're most grateful for about today. Paying attention to the things that we have can be a useful strategy at any time, but particularly in times of uncertainty.

#### **8. Stay informed, within reason**

It's important to get your information from reliable sources, e.g. the Department of Health. Set yourself reasonable boundaries and try not to spend too much time checking different information sources as this can increase anxiety and worry. .

[www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert](http://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert)

#### **9. Seek help if needed**

If your mental state feels negatively impacted or unmanageable, please reach out to speak to a psychologist or one of the many support services (e.g. Lifeline: **13 11 14**).