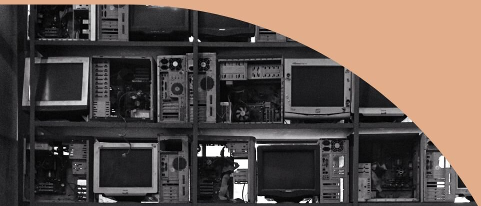
Our Advice during COVID-19

As the number of COVID-19 cases rise across Australia and the globe, the level of distress within the community is increasing. Feelings of worry and unease are expected as ourselves or loved ones are impacted with health concerns, unemployment, financial losses, social isolation, worried children, and uncertainty for the future. However, it is important that we seek the necessary support to manage our stress in order to develop resilience amidst these challenges.

Our team of experienced general and clinical psychologists are prepared to support you and assist you in managing the psychological challenges associated with COVID-19. If you or someone you know could benefit from psychological support during this time, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. Amidst the necessity of Social Isolation right now, the need for Social support is significant in fostering resilience. The Government has made temporary provisions for accessing psychological support through Medicare via Telehealth Sessions (Telephone, video call etc.). The provisions for psychological support may be adjusted in other ways over coming weeks, please contact us to find out more. We will attempt to keep clients of 4life Psychology abreast of any changes that might be relevant.

Below are a few key points of focus that might assist you to foster psychological resilience during this challenging time:



1 manage your exposure to information

As with the tale of Goldilocks and the three bears, it is important that we get it 'just right' when it comes to managing the type and amount of information that we are exposed to.

Too much and we become overstimulated, and trigger our internal threat response system unnecessarily.

Too little information and we risk being under prepared and out of step when it comes to required precautions and psychological readiness for upcoming changes.

so, how do you get it "just right"?

Don't allow your emotions to determine your relationship with the media.
Times when your mood is depressed or anxious are most likely the times when you will want to turn to the TV.
This natural inclination is worth disrupting.

Come to some decision ahead of time about how much information will keep you adequately informed. This is probably somewhere in the range of 10-20 minutes every other day.
It is also important to choose your source carefully. Try to focus on options that are less prone to sensationalise. Below is a list of reliable, up-to-date information:

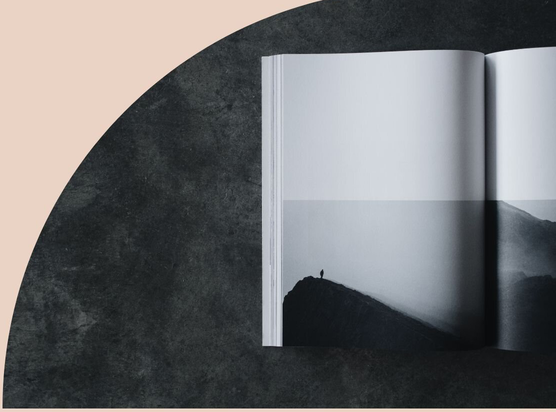
Coronacast: https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/coronacast/

Department of Health (Coronavirus) COVID-19 resources:
A collection of resources for the general public, health professionals and industry about coronavirus (COVID-19), including translated resources

Local state and territory health departments:
For questions about testing or the welfare of people with the virus, contact your state or territory health authority.

2

focus on what you can control



Apart from a few sensible precautions there is relatively little for us to do with respect to managing our health risk and social responsibility. Make sure that you have things that you can focus on that are within your control.

Perhaps you have an opportunity to work on a creative project, invest more time in a hobby, or get ahead of some 'life admin' that you have not had the time for.

Here are just a few examples from the mundane to the intellectually stimulating:

- Clean out/organise closets and/or drawers
- Organise your photos
- Go through your e-mails and throw out all those old ones
- Clean up all those apps and folders sitting on your mobile devices or computers
- Binge watch a favourite show
- Catch up on movies
- Colour/draw/paint
- Read a book
- Write a book
- Learn a language
- Take an online course in a topic of interest to you
- Develop a new skill
- Pick up that musical instrument you've had at home and play
- Call people you haven't talked to in a long time
- Start a gratitude journal for those things you're grateful for during these hard times
- Reach out to others online - join a virtual book club or simply connect with friends for a virtual cup of coffee

3

retain as many daily practices as possible

If you would normally go to the gym in the morning, maintain your exercise routine by

doing something else.

If you are working from home, think about still "getting ready" in the morning and designating a work station.

Try to maintain social connections - it is wise to practice physical distancing but this does not have to translate to 'social disconnection'. If you cannot get together with friends and family physically then have dinner together over Skype!

4 cultivate optimism

a) Be clear about “what is not changing”

Our focus is naturally drawn to significant changes in our lives that have resulted from COVID-19.
These changes are significant and consequential and yet for most of us the things we value most remain unchanged.
Make a list of the good things in your life that are currently stable (health, personal safety, relationships, environment etc).

b) Reflect on learning and positive change that might result from this experience

Perhaps our lifestyles needed to change and this event is the catalyst.
For many families this time provides an opportunity to look to one another more directly for support and social connection.
This challenging time will be the context in which many positive memories are created.

Memories that will be reflected upon positively for many years to come.
What are the kinds of memories you want to create for yourself and those close to you?

c) Actively counter the tendency to ruminate

Actively counter the tendency to ruminate. Without optimism, we can tend to increase our rumination and worry, becoming fused with new feeds and other information that matches our internal state of distress spiralling us into a negative loop of rehearsing worse-case scenarios. Rumination is a cyclical thinking process serves only to increase the production of stress hormones in our body, problem solving on the other hand is linear and helps us to take positive action. Get better at disrupting rumination.