

# ALPINE MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING GUIDE

APRIL 2020





"Yes, but they will move on,"  
said the horse, "the blue  
sky above never leaves."

# MENTAL HEALTH & WELL BEING DURING THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID 19) PANDEMIC

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Discussions and concerns around the coronavirus outbreak and practising self-isolation can be stressful and impact our mental health and wellbeing. It's natural to feel a range of emotions, such as stress, worry, anxiety, boredom, or low mood. Many people feel distressed by the constant news and overwhelming amount of information about the situation.

This Guide is a resource from Alpine Health is to assist the community to access practical mental health and well being resources in this difficult time.



# 10-TIPS-FOR-COPING-WITH-THE-HARD-STUFF

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**When you're experiencing a tough time or life seems particularly difficult, what do you do to get through the hard stuff? Try using some of the coping strategies listed below. They'll help you to manage and relieve stress.**

## **1. Talk to someone**

Share your worries with a trusted friend, family member or health professional. It will take some weight off your shoulders, and they just might have some advice that you'll find useful.

## **2. Get journaling**

Writing down your feelings can help you work out what might be troubling you and ways you can improve the situation. Don't worry too much about what you write; just write down whatever comes to mind.

## **3. Self-love**

You've got to look after yourself! Try some regular exercise, or meditate, or listen to music. Do whatever makes you feel good, even if it's only for five minutes a day.

## **4. Take a break**

Give yourself permission to leave situations that make you feel stressed or angry. E.g, if you're in a stressful conversation, try leaving the room for a moment and only resume talking when you feel calm and ready.

## **5. Be nice to yourself**

How we talk to ourselves makes a huge difference to how we feel. Use positive self-talk to overcome negative thought patterns. Here's some ways to talk yourself up. Examples: 'I am doing the best I can', 'I can totally make it through this exam', 'I don't feel great right now, but things could be worse'

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# 10-TIPS-FOR-COPING-WITH-THE-HARD-STUFF CONT.

## 6. Take a step back

Remember: you can't do everything. Make a list of the things you need to get done, and work out a schedule that will help you get there. Don't forget to schedule in some fun and relaxing times, too!

## 7. Think about the big picture

When you're going through a stressful situation, ask yourself: 'How important is this? Will it matter in the long run?' Some people find it handy to ask themselves: "Is this going to matter in five years time?"

## 8. Focus on the positive

Try to find at least one positive thing about a situation. Is it teaching you something about yourself? Or strengthening your relationship with someone? It's hard, but it will help you to see a more balanced picture.

## 9. Say thanks

If you're feeling down, practice being grateful by writing down three things you're thankful for. They can be really little things, like your morning coffee. Look at these gratitude lists whenever you're feeling down.

## 10. Do something... anything!

Try breaking big tasks down into smaller, more achievable goals. Celebrating small wins (like finally doing the laundry) will help you to build confidence and stay motivated until life feels easier.

## 10-tips-for-coping-with-the-hard-stuff



# TIPS FOR STAYING MENTALLY HEALTHY DURING THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC

**During this challenging time, it's important to pay attention to our mental health and not completely cut ourselves off from our loved ones and our community.**

- Keep socially connected to others via phone, social media, email or skype.
- If the news is bothering you, take a break from the news
- Create a routine to maintain a sense of normalcy, such as regular physical activity, cooking healthy meals and continuing to work or study if you feel well enough.
- Focus on what you can control – for example washing your hands frequently, following physical distancing guidelines – instead of what you can't control ie what other people do.
- To avoid panic, get your information from reliable sources such as the Federal and Victorian health departments.
- Practice mindfulness: focus on the moment you're in. Meditation and breathing exercises can help calm your mind and reduce anxiety. Try these resources [Smiling Mind](#), [Stop, Breathe and Think](#) or [Headspace](#)
- Take stock of your emotions: it's completely normal to feel concerned or upset about what is happening. If you feel anxious, talk to a trusted friend or family member or seek professional help:  
Phone Lifeline: 13 11 14,  
BeyondBlue: 1300 224 636 or  
Headspace: 1800 650 890

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# PARENTS SHOULD TALK TO THEIR KIDS ABOUT COVID-19 PANDEMIC BY USING LANGUAGE THEY CAN UNDERSTAND.

When stress is heightened – which it is for all of us right now because of the COVID-19 pandemic – children become aware of it and they try to locate the source of the stress. It is important to both acknowledge their concerns and be open to discussing them. Helping children to make sense of the consequences of COVID-19 and helping them to organize their thoughts and feelings is the best approach. As a first step, ask your child what they know about COVID-19 or what they have heard about it. If they don't seem too concerned, you do not need to have an in-depth conversation about it. You can simply reinforce the importance of handwashing and letting you know if they are feeling unwell.

However, if your child voices worry or concern about COVID-19, you can correct any misinformation and provide them with emotional support. Here are some common questions parents may have about how to talk to their children about COVID-19.

## **1. Will talking about COVID-19 increase my child's anxiety?**

No, it shouldn't. Parents often worry that talking to kids about scary social issues may increase the child's worry and anxiety. Knowledge is a powerful tool and it gives children some predictability in knowing what lies ahead, which can be very helpful in taming anxieties.

## **2. What is an appropriate age to talk to my kids about COVID-19?**

The information you provide should be tailored to the individual needs of your child. A general rule is that children's ability to understand information about COVID-19 will be low in very young children (i.e., less than age 3) and will become more sophisticated with age. By school age, children likely have more capacity to understand and communicate what is happening. Younger children, however, can still experience the effects of stressful events in their environment.

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# PARENTS SHOULD TALK TO THEIR KIDS ABOUT COVID-19 PANDEMIC BY USING LANGUAGE THEY CAN UNDERSTAND. CONT.

## 3. Should I tell them what the symptoms are?

Yes, especially for children who are old enough to understand, such as school- aged kids. You should go through the most common symptoms of COVID-19, which include fever, dry cough, fatigue, shortness of breath, etc., and distinguish for kids how shortness of breath when they are playing a sport is different from shortness of breath when sitting down or walking around. Ask them to tell you when they feel any of these symptoms coming on. You could also tell them that you are taking everyone's temperature morning or night, just to be safe. There is comfort for kids in knowing that parents are on top of things.

## 4. How can I help reduce my child's anxiety and worry about COVID-19?

**First**, use age-appropriate language for example, "a new germ that we don't know very much about" and "we are doing everything we can to keep from getting sick", rather than language that is stress-inducing or catastrophic.

**Second**, avoid voicing your emotional concerns in front of your children, and be sure to monitor your own stress and anxiety levels around your children.

**Third**, try to avoid exposing children to media reports about COVID-19. Research shows this can increase their symptoms of stress.

**Fourth**, talk about your family's plans to stay healthy such as washing hands, cancelling holidays, avoiding places with lots of people and staying home if you aren't feeling well.

**Lastly**, as much as possible, stick to regular activities and routines for things like meals, naps, baths and bedtime. This increases predictability for kids. Spend time doing activities that promote calm in your family like reading together, watching movies, playing board games or getting outside for a walk.

Parent/Child conversation

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# SELF-ISOLATING? QUARANTINED? WORKING FROM HOME? HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR STAYING ACTIVE

## **Any physical activity is better than none**

Try to move in as many ways as you can throughout the day,

## **Build up over 30 minutes a day**

The Australian guideline for adults is to build up over 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity physical activity. This is about the equivalent of a brisk walk – enough to make you puff a little, but still be able to conduct a conversation.

## **Moving about while at home**

Ideas include:

- Catch up on gardening.
- If you have an exercise bike or swimming pool, use them!
- Develop your own short exercise routine and do it several times a day (adding up to at least 30 minutes).
- YouTube to find a home workout that best suits your fitness needs.
- Access an activity tracker, watch your steps and aim for 10,000 a day
- Introduce a challenge between friends & family (steps or minutes)

## **Building strength**

- Muscle strengthening exercises are also recommended on at least two days each week. Try:
- Water bottle weight workout – fill a water bottle/carton or similar and do some light weights with it.
- Do some resistance exercises against a wall or chair.
- Follow a simple program of yoga; step-ups using a makeshift step, modified push-ups or sit-ups, lifting weights, lunges, calf raises or half squats.

## **Sit less**

- Avoid sitting for long periods; break it up by moving about the house.
- On the mobile phone? Stand or walk around the house as you talk. Set timers/reminders to get up and move.
- Do some exercises (push-ups, sit-ups or half-squats) in the TV ad breaks.
- Try standing for activities for which you may usually sit (TV, folding washing, phone calls).

[PhysicalActivityTipsforstayingathome](#)



# GETTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

It is important we prioritise our sleep and health. There are things that we can do to reduce the worry and improve sleep.

1. **Limit media exposure.** Be sensible about what you learn about COVID-19. Check official web sites (such as [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)).
2. **Make time to unwind.** Spend some time relaxing and watching, listening or reading about things that have nothing to do with COVID-19 especially in the hour or so before going to sleep
3. **Take care of your body.** Try and keep a normal routine throughout the day including exercise, good food, limited alcohol, and avoid caffeine close to bed. Have fun and try and have a laugh.
4. **Connect with others.** Try and deal with concerns before going to bed by talking to some-one you trust. Get advice from a trusted person who might be able to help you solve the problem.
5. **Take care of your mind.** If the worry is still on your mind as you prepare to sleep, sit down quietly, think about what the issues are and how you might deal with them tomorrow. It may help to write these things down, You may also like to try use an app called '[Smiling Mind](#)' which has helpful short mindfulness activities to help you relax.
6. **Your bed is predominantly for sleep.** If you go to bed and find that you cannot get to sleep, or wake up during the night and can't get back to sleep, get up and do something relaxing in dim light that is quiet and away from the bedroom. Go back when you feel ready to fall asleep.
7. **Keep a regular sleep-wake routine.** As much as possible try to keep a normal sleep routine. Going to bed at the same time, and getting up at the same time is important for getting a good night of sleep
8. **Managing fatigue.** Even if you did not get much sleep, or it seemed to be poor sleep, it is not the end of the world. You will get through the next day all right and, you will probably sleep better the next night.
9. **Sleep is like a butterfly.** You cannot reach out and grab it and catch it. If you stay quiet and still, the butterfly will come to you. It is the same with sleep. You cannot force yourself to go to sleep, so do not try. Simply allow yourself to be relaxed and quiet, and sleep will come to you.

[sleephealthfoundation](http://sleephealthfoundation)

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# FINANCIAL COUNSELLING

**Upper Murray Family Care** delivers FREE individual or family Financial Counselling in the Alpine Shire

How they may be able to help:

- Budgeting and money management strategies
- Debt collection processes
- Financial hardship agreements
- Victorian and NSW government concessions
- Centrelink entitlements
- Preventing disconnection of electricity, gas, water or phone and internet services
- Preventing repossession of a house or car
- Bankruptcy and the alternatives
- Referrals to other organisations, including emergency relief providers

To access the service, call **(02) 6055 8000** or **(03) 5720 0000** and leave your details with the receptionist. A Financial Counsellor will call back to discuss your circumstances and what they can do to help.

## **Rural Financial Counselling Services are:**

- Free, independent and confidential
- For primary producers of livestock, milk, honey, fruit, crops, wool, meat, vegetables, eggs, fish, plants, trees and logs
- For small businesses who mainly support primary production such as: fencing, shearing sheep, controlling weeds or agricultural pests, managing stock, planting crops etc. Able to assist farm or small agribusinesses experiencing or at risk of financial hardship
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They can help by:

- Understand your financial position and the viability of your enterprise.
- Identify options to improve your financial position
- Develop a plan to implement your chosen options, and implement that plan to name a few

To access the service call **1300 834 775**

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# PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLING

## **Australian Primary Mental Health Alliance (APMHA)**

It is normal for a traumatic event to affect you emotionally and physically, or may re-trigger previous memories and emotions. You may also need practical assistance to help you get back on your feet. This funding is for bushfire affected areas and consequent emotional concerns. With the onset of COVID-19 and the stresses concerned with it you are able to access this free counselling if you live in a bushfire affected area.

As health workers working directly with people we often forget to look after ourselves. Below is an opportunity to care for you so you can care for others.

To access FREE personal counselling call 1300 514 811 between 9am-6pm Mon-Fri to access free counselling services and advice on options.

Or Bushfire Case Support Program on 1800 560 760 between 8am-6pm Mon-Fri and 9am - 5pm Sat & Sun to access practical support & advice around:

- Your needs & options
- Available services & support
- Financial grants information
- Financial counselling & assistance
- Paperwork: information & advice
- Business owners: information & advice
- Property clean up registration

For urgent assistance speak to your GP, your local health professional or call Lifeline on 13 11 14  
For Mental Health Crisis: 1300 881 104

For online / Phone App support

- [headtohealth](#)
- [smilingminds](#)
- [moodgym](#)
- [mindspot](#)

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# BE MORE MINDFUL: 7 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR AWARENESS

**Mindfulness is the quality of being present and fully engaged with whatever we're doing at the moment – free from distraction or judgment, and aware of our thoughts and feelings without getting caught up in them.**

## 1. **Meditate.**

Taking even just 5 minutes to sit quietly and follow your breath can help you feel more conscious and connected for the rest of your day.

## 2. **Focus on one thing at a time.**

Studies have found that tasks take 50% longer with 50% more errors when multi-tasking, so consider “uni-tasking”, with breaks in between, whenever possible.

## 3. **Slow down.**

Savor the process, whether it's writing a report, drinking a cup of tea, or cleaning out closets. Deliberate and thoughtful attention to daily actions promotes healthy focus and can keep you from feeling overwhelmed.

## 4. **Eat mindfully.**

Eating your meal without the TV, computer or paper in front of you, where you can truly taste and enjoy what you're eating, is good, not only for your body, but for your soul as well.

## 5. **Keep phone and computer time in check.**

With all of the media at our fingertips, we can easily be on information overload. Set boundaries for screen time – with designated times for social networking (even set an alarm) – and do your best to keep mobile devices out of reach at bedtime.

## 6. **Move.**

Whether it's walking, practicing yoga, or just stretching at your desk, become aware of your body's sensations by moving.

## 7. **Spend time in nature.**

Take walks through a park, the bush, mountain tracks or by the beach – wherever you can be outside. Getting outdoors is good for body, mind and spirit, and keeps you in the present.

[7 tipstoimproveyourawareness](#)

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