# COVID-19 and your Mental Health

Here are some tips to help you maintain your mental health during this challenging time.

* Control the Controllable: Focusing on things outside our control can have a negative effect on our mental state. This can affect your motivation to perform your usual daily activities and to work, your energy levels and a range of other negative impacts on 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).
* Self-Care: Looking after yourself includes exercise, making healthy dietary choices, having a healthy sleep routine and maintaining structure in your day. Everyone generally thrives 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.
* 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 and friends, and your work colleagues.
* Worry is normal: 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?
* Short-term Goals: 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).
* Be creative: Social connection is important for our mental health, so think of other ways you can connect with family and friends whilst adhering to medical advice to distance yourself. This can include 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.
* 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.
* Stay Informed, Within Reason: It’s important to get your information from reliable sources, which include your Doctor and 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.
* Talk to Someone: If your mental state feels negatively impacted or unmanageable, you can access our workplace EAP provider for support.