

Acknowledge and name uncomfortable feelings and thoughts

Feelings of anxiety, discomfort, frustration are all understandable at this time. Our feelings and emotions give us messages about what is going on in the world around us. One of the most helpful tools we can use is to name and acknowledge our feelings when they arise – eg “Here is anxiety”, “This is anger” “I am feeling worried”, “I’m having the thought that I can’t do this”. Naming our emotions is a sure way to help tame them and get unstuck. This can also be a really helpful way to help children with challenging feelings

Breathe and Be present

Bring your attention to your breathing. You can use your breath to anchor you in the present moment. One strategy for becoming aware of your breathing is Box Breathing – count 4 as you breathe in, count 2 and hold the breath, count 4 as you breathe out, count 2 and hold the breath and repeat. Our mind is really good at taking us into the past or the future, however staying present in this moment right now is a really helpful way of managing stress. We don’t have to be present 100% of the time, but finding small moments daily to practice being in the moment can help put on the brakes in our mind. Try mindfully doing the dishes, having a shower, or washing your hands! Be aware of the sensations, the smell, the feelings, the sounds.

Connect with others

We are social creatures and we are wired to connect with others. Social connections help us to feel safe. It is vital at the moment that we all practice physical distancing. But we can maintain social connection while maintaining physical distancing. Use technology to your advantage – use facetime, messenger, zoom or other video platforms to share a coffee with a friend or have a catch up with a few friends at once. Or, go old school! Pick up the phone and make a phone call or mail card or letter to a loved one

Do what matters

Our values give us a sense of meaning in the world. We can use this time to reflect What kind of person do I want to be? How do I want to act in the world? How do I want to treat others around me? What would I be doing to live a rich and meaningful life? Our values may include kindness, respect, love, fun, honesty, courage, plus so many others. Each and every day we can find small ways to take steps towards our values. Think of your values like a compass, they guide the direction of where you want to head. Often we veer off track (especially when we get caught up challenging situations, difficult thoughts and feelings) but we can always practice coming back on track with small steps towards our values.

Engage in what you are doing

Bringing your attention to what you are doing in this moment. We like to think that we are fantastic multitaskers but doing lots of activities at once means we just put a lot of extra pressure on our brains. We also then tend to be distracted by our mind, thinking about things that have happened in the past or things that may occur in the future. However, we can practice the skill of being present in this moment right now. This can be as simple as switching off autopilot on so many daily activities which we do each day. Be aware of the sensations, smells, the feelings, the sounds.

5-4-3-2-1 is a great exercise to get present:

Name:

5 things you can see

4 things you can feel on your body

3 things you can hear

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste

Focus on what's in your control

The Corona pandemic presents a huge amount of challenges for us all. Anxiety and fear are inevitable at some stage of a pandemic. When we are faced with uncertainty our minds tend to try and focus on “fixing the problems” which often means spending a lot of time thinking about things that are out of our control. We may get stuck thinking about frustrations and challenges. While it is normal and understandable for our mind to do this, it isn't helpful and can tend to make us more anxious or worried. We can counter this by focusing on things that are in our control.

E.g

- Establishing healthy routines
- Choosing to take time away from social media/ news / radio
- Following the recommendations of health and government authorities. Each of our individual actions can make a big difference of ourselves and our families, but also for our wider community around us.

Helpful Resources

headtohealth.gov.au

sahealth.sa.gov.au

beyondblue.org.au

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

<https://psychology.org.au/>

For families

raisingchildren.net.au/

emergingminds.com.au/resources/communicating-with-your-child-about-covid-19/

emergingminds.com.au

SA COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line 1800 632 753

Regional Access 1300 032 186 – up to three telephone counselling sessions for regional South Australians