

# Coping with COVID

Firstly, it's OK not to be OK right now. If you're anxious and pretending you're not or denying it, this can make things worse. It's OK not to be OK, and it's OK to do something about it.

The best way to cope with whatever this global pandemic means for you and those around you, is by **managing your stress and worry** so that;

- Your stress doesn't turn into panic,
- if it does, you can get back to thinking calmly sooner,
- you can better manage the general level of anxiety and panic that is going on around you.

## Things you can do:

### 1) Create calm

If you are feeling panicked, overwhelmed and anxious; breathe. Here are two breathing techniques to help your brain move from **fight or flight** mode to **ok, I can get through this** mode.

#### Box breathing

- Breathe in for 4 seconds (through your nose)
- Hold for in for 4 seconds
- Breathe out for 4 seconds (through your mouth)
- Hold for 4 seconds
- Repeat

#### Diaphragmatic breathing

- Breathe deeply into your stomach (trying not to move your shoulders) for 4 seconds
- Hold for 2 seconds
- Slowly exhale through your mouth and allow your shoulder to drop and relax as you exhale for 8 seconds
- Repeat

### 2) Self-Care

Your brain cannot be positive or even practical when it is not getting enough sleep, balanced nutrients and a break from worry.

Think about what **looking after your brain** means for you. In times of crisis, self-care is often the first thing to be forgotten. Look at this list below and see where you think you could improve right now.

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enough sleep                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exercise                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Re-visit hobbies                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eating healthily            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Music                      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mindfulness/ relaxation            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Practice acceptance         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Be kind to yourself        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deep breathing                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sunshine or getting outside | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engage with nature or pets | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Call with people you love or trust |

It is also important to avoid coping by using alcohol or other recreational drugs. These tend to create short term relief but cause long term problems. This is unlikely to be a short-term stressor.

### 3) Be deliberate about your information intake

Are you constantly listening to the news, scrolling social media and speculating? **Stop** What is this constant flow of bad news and uncertainty telling your brain? It is telling your brain that nothing is OK. But we need to know what's going on right? Right. So be deliberate.

#### News

Choose news that is evidence based (e.g. WHO or Australian Government). Access this information at a designated time (or times) during the day and limit the amount of time you are reading about it.

#### Social Media

Limit your social media use. Memes and your friend's speculative opinion on the pandemic may be funny or outrageous but they are also contributing to the overload of unhelpful information for your brain.