

## Protecting your mental health

### Introduction

As the COVID-19 pandemic is happening in Australia we understand that people may have feelings of anxiety, worry, sadness and even anger. It is important to remember that the health experts worldwide are working hard to contain the virus and treat those that have been affected.

### What to do if you experience feelings of anxiety or distress

- Find a healthy balance in relation to media coverage – if you are seeing/hearing a lot of negative information this can heighten these feelings.
- Go for a walk – remember to follow the social distancing advice. Visit [www.qld.gov.au/health](http://www.qld.gov.au/health) for further information on social distancing.
- Write down your thoughts.
- Practice focused/deep breathing – try breathing in for four counts and breathing out for four counts. Do this for five minutes.
- Practice mindfulness activities (see page 2 for examples).
- Be kind to yourself and others around you as it could be stressful for your loved ones too.
- Find something you can do safely to still contribute to your community – think about our Elders and families that are struggling. Give them a call or text to check in on them.
- What have you done in the past that has helped manage these feelings?

### How to manage your mental health while in self-isolation

- Remind yourself that this is a temporary period of isolation to slow the spread of the virus.
- Stay connected with friends, family and colleagues via email, social media, video conferencing or telephone.
- Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing.
- Keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy foods.
- Maintain physical activities.
- Practice mindfulness activities.
- Limit news and social media if you find it distressing.

### Who to contact if you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed

- 13YARN - 13 92 76
- Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636
- Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800
- Lifeline – 131 114
- MensLine – 1800 600 636
- DV Connect – 1800 811 811
- GriefLine – 1300 845 745
- Suicide Call Back – 1300 659 467
- 1300 MH CALL – 1300 64 2255
- GP or councillor
- eMNprac – [emhprac.org.au](http://emhprac.org.au)

This initiative is supported by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Leadership Team, Metro North Health

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# Mindfulness activities



## Observe a leaf for five minutes

- This exercise calls for nothing but a leaf and your attention. Pick up a leaf, hold it in your hand, and give it your full attention for five minutes. Notice the colours, the shape, the texture, and the patterns. This will bring you into the present and align your thoughts with your current experience. Pay attention to what you are holding, notice the feeling of it in your hands. Once you have noticed the texture, the weight and the colour, bring your awareness to the smell.



## Mindful eating for four minutes

- Pay attention to what you are holding, notice the feeling of it in your hands. Once you have noticed the texture, the weight and the colour, bring your awareness to the smell. Finally, move on to eating, but do so slowly and with concentrated attention. Notice the taste and its texture against your tongue.

This exercise may help you discover new experiences with familiar foods.



## Mindfulness 5-4-3-2-1

- This is an especially great activity to help manage anxiety or anger. Look around your current surroundings and find five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. By the time you get through listing all of those, you will be more present and calm.

## Listen to music

- Play your choice of nature sounds, classical, any acoustic music or Dadirri Aboriginal Listening ([www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/education/deep-listening-dadirri](http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/education/deep-listening-dadirri)). You can play the music while kids are doing something independently or allow kids to just sit down and relax while mindfully listening to the music.

## Read a book or download reading apps

- Reading can stimulate your brain and reduce your stress and anxiety. Try and read for at least 30 minutes a day.



## Colour in

- Spend some time colouring in. Colouring in reduces stress and boosts creativity. This activity can help pass time and is beneficial to your mental health.