



## Tip sheet



# COVID-19 MENTAL HEALTH TIPS

## MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

As we respond as individuals, families and communities to COVID-19, we may run the risk of prioritising a 'healthy body' over a 'healthy mind'. Poor physical health can lead to an increased risk of developing mental health problems, and poor mental health can negatively impact on physical health. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has provided some helpful guidelines for maintaining your physical health. These are listed to the left below. On the right, are some corresponding guidelines for promoting your mental health and wellbeing.

### Physical Health

- **Wash your hands frequently**  
Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.  
**Why?** Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.
- **Maintain social distancing**  
Maintain at least one metre distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.  
**Why?** When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.
- **Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth**  
**Why?** Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.
- **Practise respiratory hygiene**  
Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.  
**Why?** Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

### Mental Health

- **Practise mindfulness frequently**  
Focus on the present and notice what is going on around you, as well as within your mind and body.  
**Why?** When we gently shift to the present moment, we often experience a natural sense of calm and clarity.
- **Maintain social connections**  
Maintain social connections by reaching out to at least one significant other each day. If in-person isn't possible or safe, try contacting them online.  
**Why?** Your friends and family are important! Also, research suggests that loneliness can weaken the immune system, increase sensitivity to pain, and contribute to inflammation in the body.
- **Grab your exercise kit**  
**Why?** Exercise improves mental health by helping address anxious, depressed, and/or negative mood and by improving cognitive function. Exercise also causes healthy changes in immune system cells that fight disease.
- **Improve sleep hygiene**  
Sleep difficulties are on the rise among working Australians, and those with mental health challenges are doubly affected. Sleep problems are closely related to anxiety, depression, mood swings, and inattention.  
**Why?** Studies suggest that a good night's sleep helps foster both mental and emotional resilience, while chronic sleep deprivation sets the stage for negative thinking and emotional vulnerability.

## Physical Health

- **If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early**  
Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.  
**Why?** National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.
- **Stay informed and follow advice given by your healthcare provider**  
Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow advice given by your healthcare provider, your national and local public health authority or your employer on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.  
**Why?** National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on whether COVID-19 is spreading in your area. They are best placed to advise on what people in your area should be doing to protect themselves.

## Mental Health

- **If you are experience mental ill-health, seek psychological care early**  
Take a mental health day if you need it. Mental ill-health looks different to everyone, but a hallmark sign is when you stop engaging with valued activities. When feeling 'blah' starts to have no end, it's time to talk to your GP and/or a mental health professional.  
**Why?** This will protect your mental and emotional wellbeing, and help prevent further spread of anxiety, within your own mind, as well as your family, your community, and wider society.
- **Access relevant information mindfully**  
Avoid excessively checking social media and the news. Allow yourself to check one reliable source once a day, but try not to exceed this. The WHO is one such source. As a general rule, websites that end in .gov and .edu are often also reliable and helpful sources.  
**Why?** As our mental health is intertwined with our physical health, the more stressed and anxious we become by reading too many news stories, the more we compromise our immune systems, and may be more vulnerable towards becoming physically ill.

Health anxiety can significantly impact any of us, and is amenable to treatment with evidence-based approaches. At present, we have an opportunity to learn a great deal about looking after our mental and physical health and limiting the spread of disease and dis-ease in our society. Let's meet this challenge together in a spirit of compassion, patience, and above all, an unflinching effort to seek truth and togetherness.

## About Dr Andrew Stock

Dr Stock is Director En Masse Asia. He was born and grew up in Perth, and has lived in Hong Kong since 2012. Dr Stock has significant experience working with multidisciplinary teams to deliver integrated and effective interventions, from prevention and early intervention through to crisis management. Dr Stock also has significant expertise working with complex issues that impact on individuals at work and in the home lives. Dr Stock is passionate about helping people respond to relatively common mental health challenges such as anxiety, toxic stress, depression. Andrew is trained and experienced in family therapy, and acceptance and commitment therapy, and can also provide, psychological, psychoeducational, and psycho-legal evaluations. He uses a combination of evidence based techniques for addressing a range of psychological, emotional, relationship, work and/or academic related problems and challenges.



## Further information

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