



Tips and resources for coping with the COVID-19 virus

For parents and caregivers

General tips

- Try to limit media exposure.
- Try to continue a regular routine or create a new routine in a new environment. Ensure that students still get enough sleep.
- Encourage older students to only view information from reputable websites (e.g. World Health Organisation or Queensland Health) and use their critical lenses when encountering posts or information about COVID-19.
- Take time to recognize your own feelings and needs – look after yourself.
- Students respond to stress in different ways – they may be irritable, more clingy, anxious or withdrawn. They may argue or fight more due to a feeling of lack of control or fear.
- Allow students to talk about their concerns and validate them. Let them know that it is normal to have these sorts of feelings in this situation.
- Help students identify their thoughts and feelings, reassure them and help them find strategies to assist with their uncomfortable feelings – e.g. do something they enjoy or practice mindfulness (see simple mindfulness ideas below).
- Help students focus on what you can control and things to be grateful for.
- Visit our page on Community Wellbeing for information on professional help and support available at school and in the community <https://tas.qld.edu.au/beyond-the-classroom/community-wellbeing/>.

Some simple ways anyone can practice mindfulness:

- **Stop and smell the roses:** When you go for a walk outdoors or sit in your garden, really focus on your senses – what do you see/hear/smell? How do you



feel. Children might like to count the number of colours or the different types of plants they see.

- **Favourite place:** Close your eyes and imagine your favorite place to go to and try to feel like you are there – notice what you see/hear/smell around you and how you feel.
- **Mindful eating:** When you eat, try to focus on experiencing your food – what are the textures like? How does it taste? How does the food make you feel?
- **The eagle:** Close your eyes and imagine you are a bird – move your arms up as you breathe in, and down as you breathe out. What would a bird see, hear and feel?
- **Let your thoughts go:** While you sit still and focus on deep breathing, imagine you are placing your thoughts in little boats or individual leaves and letting them drift away down a stream.
- **The Dandelion:** Imagine you are holding a dandelion, take a deep breath and then slowly blow the dandelion seeds with your exhale – imagine them floating away into the distance.
- **Balloon:** Younger children may like to pretend they are slowly blowing up a balloon as they practice deep breathing.
- **Apps:** Calm and Smiling Minds may be helpful for guided mindfulness and relaxation



How to talk to your child about COVID-19

Be aware of your own anxieties (as children can pick up on these)

Communicate from a place of calm – choose a safe plan and time to chat

Ask what they know/have heard about COVID-19

Ask how they are feeling and validate their feelings

Invite questions

Reassure and let them know about what is being done to help/protect people

Give simple and honest information, but also keep it as positive as possible

Give them things they can do, e.g. hygiene practices like hand washing, coughing etiquette, etc.

Use this as an opportunity to learn together, e.g. you could watch a video or read a book on how our immune system works

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Further resources

- Australian Psychological Association Coronavirus (COVID-19) information for Australians (for parents) - <https://www.psychology.org.au/COVID-19-Australians>
- Emerging Minds – Helping children cope with stress during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
- <https://d2p3kdr0nr4o3z.cloudfront.net/content/uploads/2020/03/17140913/Helping-children-cope-with-COVID19.pdf>
- Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Helping Children Cope with Emergencies (for parents) - <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html>
- Short video suitable for most students on Behind the News – Important things to remember about upsetting news - <https://www.abc.net.au/btn/campaigns/upsetting-news/10500572>
- Headspace – How to cope with stress related to COVID-19 (for senior students) - <https://headspace.org.au/young-people/how-to-cope-with-stress-related-to-covid-19/>

For students

- Avoid too much exposure to the news and be critical of posts and information you see and hear
- Take time to recognize the things that you can control and things that you are grateful for
- Keep doing what recharges you and look after your mental health
- Use coping strategies to deal with uncomfortable feelings – e.g. try to be present and practice mindfulness
- Talk to a trusted adult about your feelings, see the school counsellor or use one of the support lines on our Community Wellbeing page <https://tas.qld.edu.au/beyond-the-classroom/community-wellbeing/>

Further resources

- Headspace – How to cope with stress related to COVID-19 <https://headspace.org.au/young-people/how-to-cope-with-stress-related-to-covid-19/>
- Mindfulness videos and resources - <http://mindfulnessforteens.com/>



What to do when you're anxious about a pandemic

Make sure you get your info from reputable sources like the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Limit access to media to prevent feeling overwhelmed

Focus on what you can control, e.g. practice good hygiene

Know it's normal and ok to be concerned

Give your thought patterns a 'reality check', e.g. if you get stuck in a 'thinking loop', think about something else, or reassure yourself

Remind yourself to be in the present moment (anxiety is often focused in the future on 'what ifs')

Seek support if needed

Look after yourself

Stay connected with family and friends