

COPING DURING THE STRESS OF COVID-19

At different points during the COVID-19 pandemic, many Australians have been asked to practice social distancing, and in some parts of the country, self-isolate or wear protective facemasks. However, many of us have never experienced anything like this before. These unexpected changes can impact our daily life and routine, freedom and social connections. It can leave us feeling stressed, and like we have lost our sense of control.

We might also feel bored, anxious, sad or frustrated as well as a wide range of other emotions. It may be especially difficult for those supporting someone who is using alcohol and/or other drugs. While many of these feelings are normal, they can trigger some unhelpful thoughts and less helpful behaviours. You might even find yourself drinking more alcohol or thinking about using other substances to cope. Remember, it's important you look after yourself so that you can support others. You have the power to look after your own mental wellbeing - you might just need some help to do it!

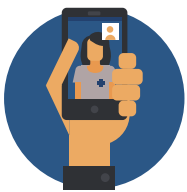
This factsheet will provide you with tips for managing stress, looking after yourself and seeking support.



4 KEY STRATEGIES TO COPE AND CARE FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

1. STAY CONNECTED

It's important to surround ourselves with people that make us feel good. This is particularly important if you are supporting a loved one, as we know this in itself can be an isolating experience without the added stress of the COVID-19 pandemic. Surrounding ourselves with positive support networks can be a little more difficult when practicing social distancing. However, there are still plenty of ways we can stay connected if not always face-to-face.



You can:

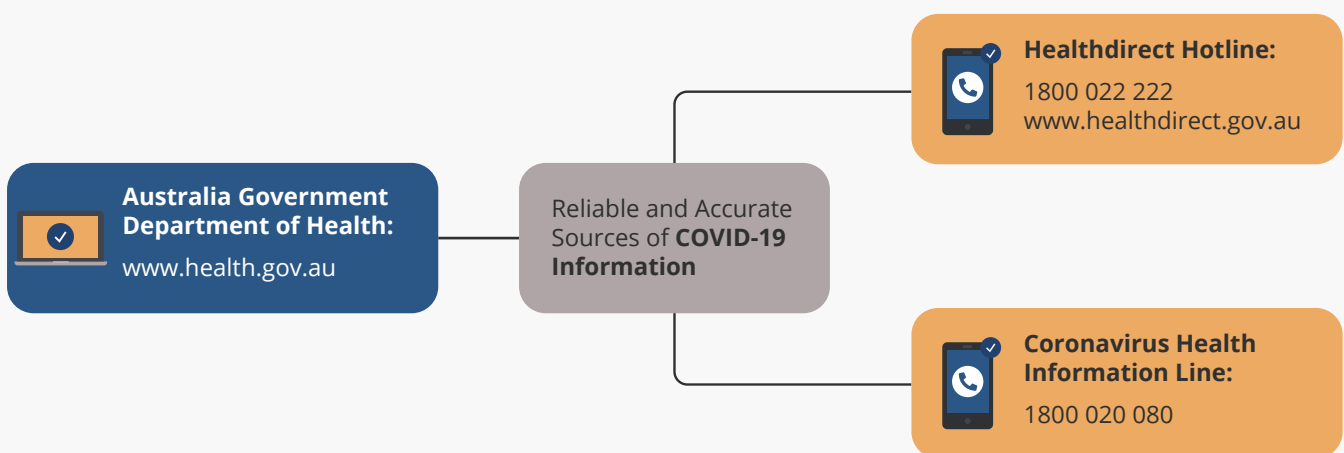
- Phone friends and family members to talk about your experiences.
- Message people just to check-in.
- Use video calling apps to see and speak to people.
- Spend quality time with the people you live with by having conversations, playing games, watching movies or enjoying other activities together.

2. BE INFORMED – NOT OVERLOADED!

As the situation is constantly changing, it's important to keep up to date with current information about COVID-19. It's important to know how the related restrictions might impact your daily life and your relationship with your loved one. However, increased media exposure can also lead to increased anxiety and distress. It's important to be careful about where you get your information and how much time you spend reading about COVID-19.

It's recommended that you seek information:

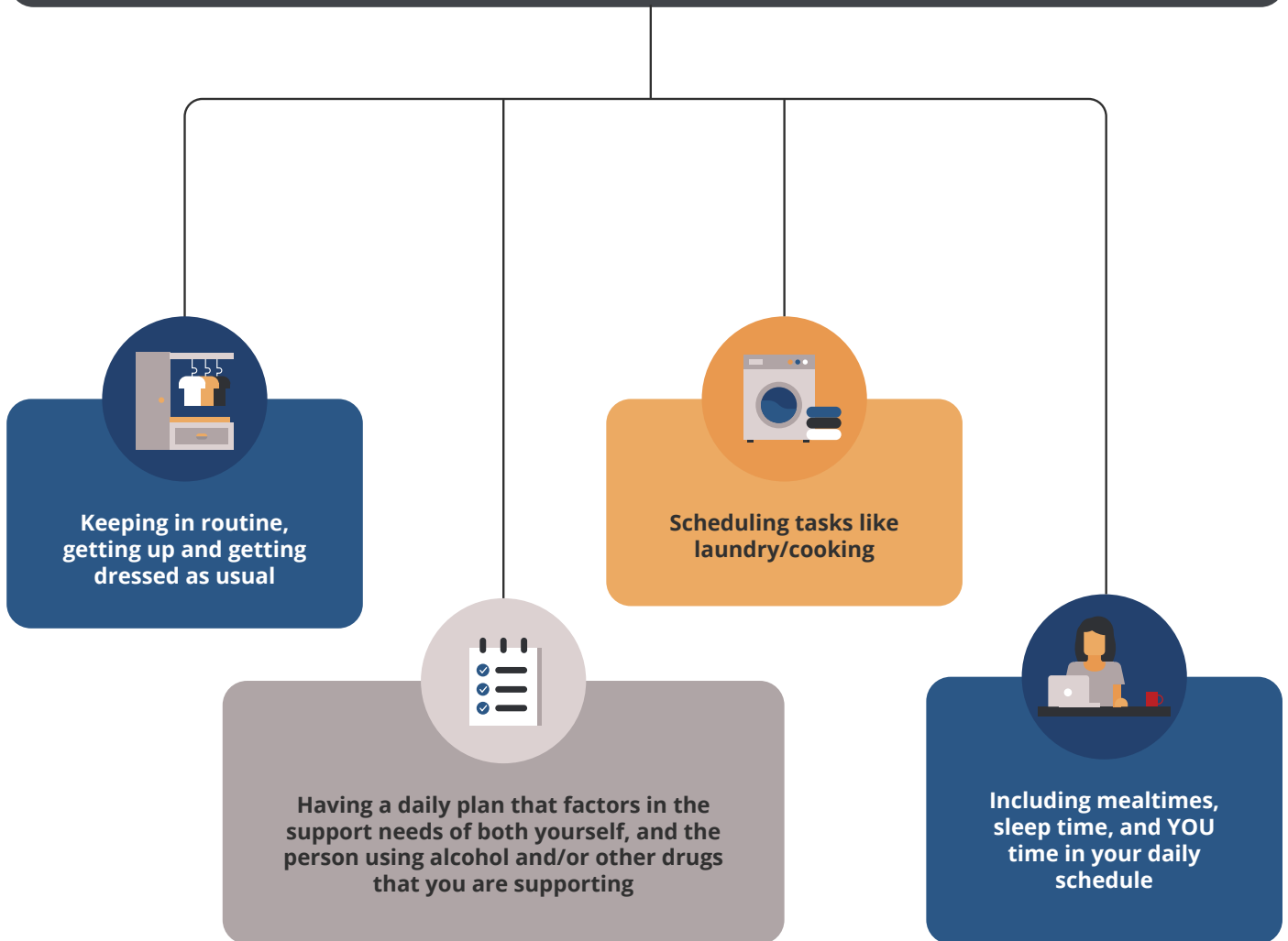
- From a reliable source.
- For a limited amount of time.
- Once or twice a day.



3. STICK TO YOUR USUAL ROUTINE – AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE!

Establishing structure can help you maintain a sense of purpose and normality in your daily life. Supporting someone using alcohol and/or other drugs can be very unpredictable, and sometimes, keeping a routine isn't always possible, but trying to maintain business as usual during COVID-19 can be helpful for both you, and the person you are supporting.

TRY TO STAY STRUCTURED BY:



4. LOOK AFTER YOURSELF!

It's also important to take care of yourself by continuing to do the things that you enjoy! This will make you feel good and will help to keep the not-so-pleasant feelings at bay. It is important to limit overindulging in things that you might like a little too much of, like comfort food. It's also important to monitor your own intake of alcohol and/or other drugs. These substances can alter your reality, negatively affect your mood and make mental health issues worse.

TRY TO:

Eat healthy

Get a good amount of sleep

Exercise regularly

Play sports or engage in hobbies that you love

Lastly, it's important to know that everyone will respond differently to this situation. Remember to be kind to yourself and know that you don't have to be productive all the time. It's also okay if supporting your loved one becomes a bit more challenging during this time. Regardless of what other people are doing, it's fine to take some time-out and look after your own wellbeing. It's also normal to experience some mood changes as well as emotions like sadness, anger, frustration and boredom. However, if these symptoms become severe or persistent, you should seek help. It is also important to seek help if the person you are supporting becomes distressed or is at risk of harm.

IF THIS HAS RAISED ANY CONCERNS, PLEASE CONTACT ONE OF THE SERVICES BELOW:

This factsheet has included a list of services and resources to support you. Seek professional help if you are feeling overwhelmed or as though you cannot cope.

Lifeline

13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

National Alcohol and Other Drug Information Service

1800 250 015

For more evidence-based information, resources and links to support services relating to crystal methamphetamine please visit Cracks in the Ice. The Family and Friends Support Program also provides more information/resources and support for families concerned about a loved ones AOD use.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES VISIT CRACKS IN THE ICE AND/OR THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS SUPPORT PROGRAM