



# ADJUSTING TO A NEW WAY OF LIFE: MANAGING EMOTIONS THROUGH A CHANGING WORLD

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# CONTENT OUTLINE

- COVID-19: A new daily challenge
- Recognizing and understanding anxiety in others
- Working with stressed and distressed people
- Managing our own anxiety and building self-resilience



# COVID-19:

A NEW DAILY CHALLENGE

# IMPACT ON AUSTRALIA

- **25 January:** COVID-19 confirmed in Australia
- **19 March:** Government began enforcing travel and social restrictions
- **23 March:** all non-essential services were ordered to close or restrict trading
- **11 May:** 6927 confirmed cases in Australia
- **HNE LHD:** 277 confirmed cases





## CHALLENGES FOR DAILY LIVING

- Loss of employment or working from home
- Isolation from colleagues, family
- Restrictions of movement
- Social distancing
- Panic buying
- School disruption
- Mass cancellation of events
- Significant economic impact

# THE EMOTIONAL EFFECT OF COVID-19

- Uncertainty about health
- Resentment of changes and restrictions
- Uncertainty of securing food
- Impact on self-esteem
- Financial stress



- Increased care for children
- Loneliness and boredom
- Anger at others
- 24 hour media coverage



RECOGNIZING AND  
UNDERSTANDING ANXIETY IN  
OTHERS

# ANXIETY – A COMMON EXPERIENCE

- Feeling fearful and anxious is normal and appropriate
- Our ‘fight or flight’ response may trigger an acute stress response
- Feelings may be more intense than usual
- Other personal issues can increase anxiety
  - Past trauma
  - Relationship breakdown
  - Mental illness
  - Lack of medical knowledge





# ANXIETY & IT'S EFFECTS

## Physical

- Nausea or 'butterflies in your stomach'
- Poor sleep and fatigue
- Muscular Tension (neck, shoulders, jaw)
- Headaches or other pain
- Racing heart
- Breathlessness
- Changes in appetite



## Mental

- Ruminating on problems rather than solutions
- Catastrophic thinking
- Struggling to focus or concentrate
- Difficulty completing tasks
- Difficulty making decisions
- Forgetful
- Frustrated

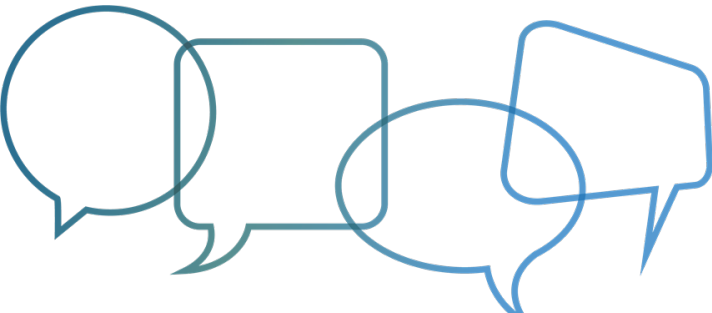
# ANXIETY & IT'S EFFECTS

## Behavioural

- Snapping at people
- Avoiding people
- Making mistakes
- Skipping meals
- Drinking more alcohol

## Emotional

- Feeling overwhelmed and unsafe
- Displaying strong emotions (crying, worried, angry )
- Feeling edgy and irritable
- Defensiveness & hypervigilance
- Losing patience





# WORKING WITH STRESSED AND DISTRESSED PEOPLE



## WORKING WITH ANOTHER PERSON'S ANXIETY

When people present to medial services they are looking for:

- Validation of their concerns
- Respect, compassion and kindness
- Answers to their questions
- Reassurance
- Treatment options
- Clear and understandable directions
- Strategies to stay well

# WORKING WITH ANOTHER PERSON'S ANXIETY

People in distress respond much better to:

- Calm and friendly communication
- A helpful attitude
- Using their name during the conversation
- Eye contact
- Clear and simple explanations
- A reasonable amount of time and attention
- Privacy
- An explanation about what you can and can't do

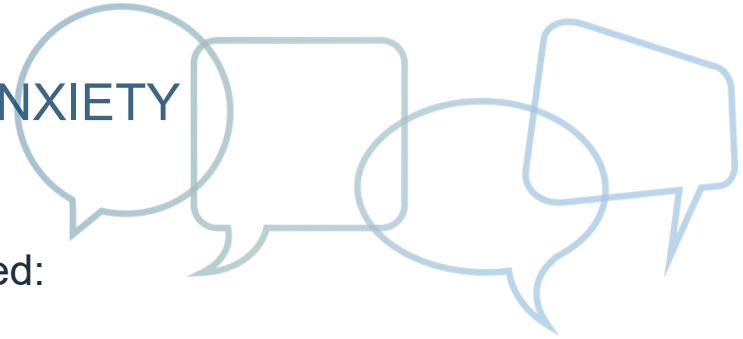


# WORKING WITH ANOTHER PERSON'S ANXIETY

People in distress respond much better to:

Communication strategies when someone is distressed:

- Try to establish some rapport  
*Speak in a calm, even, tone and use their name if you know it.*
- Validate their emotions  
*"I understand how that would make you feel upset; I can see you have been through a lot"*
- Show compassion  
*"I care, I want to help"*
- Offer hope and encouragement  
*"We'll sort this out, let's work together on this"*



# WORKING WITH ANOTHER PERSON'S ANXIETY

Communication strategies when someone is distressed:

- Try to negotiate realistic options and reasonable boundaries

*“I want to help and we can talk about this, but I am having trouble understanding you while you are shouting, please lower your voice”.*

- Offer an opportunity for questions or follow-up

*“Let me know if I can assist you in some way. I do what I can.”*



MANAGING OUR OWN ANXIETY  
AND BUILDING SELF-RESILIENCE



# SUPPORTING YOURSELF WHILE SUPPORTING OTHERS

What might be helpful to you:

- Be aware of your own level of anxiety or distress
- Use strategies to keep calm (controlled breathing, grounding)
- Realise you don't have to solve all their problems
- Stay focussed on your role
- Have access to information on what help is available
- Know it's okay to get help from a colleague or a friend
- Have a good support network for debriefing
- Realise when it's time to take a break



# SUPPORTING YOURSELF WHILE SUPPORTING OTHERS

Practical strategies to stay resilient:

- Keep a routine
- Limit media exposure
- Look to reliable sources of information for latest updates
- Maintain social connectedness through technology
- Be aware of our relationship with drugs and alcohol
- Maintain exercise and ensure we get some fresh air or outside time



# SUPPORTING YOURSELF WHILE SUPPORTING OTHERS

## Practical strategies to stay resilient:

- Manage our sleep and diet
- Use relaxation strategies like mindfulness, breathing or gratitude
- Utilise supports we have used in the past
- Reflect on our past resilience.



## Places we can go to for help:

- [coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au](https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au)
- [headtohealth.gov.au](https://headtohealth.gov.au)
- [ramhp.com.au](https://ramhp.com.au)
- Smiling Mind
- headspace



# ramhp

RURAL ADVERSITY  
MENTAL HEALTH  
PROGRAM

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