



CANA CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Health and Wellbeing Support

Dear Parents / Guardians,

During these unprecedented times with COVID 19, our health and economic crisis puts a lot of strain on our Mental health.

Everybody has access to Mental Health, Psychology, and Psychiatry services via telephone/telehealth. Most importantly, during this time when our community members are losing jobs and being stood down these services have become bulk-billed (no out of pocket cost).

During this time people may be experiencing stress, social isolation, anxiety, and grief. Our normal ways of coping and dealing with stress have been removed.

I have attached information brochures regarding ways to manage this period of isolation and stress for your perusal.

I wish to express my appreciation to Mrs. Catherine Panayi, who thoughtfully advised about the information above and provided the brochures to be shared with the Cana families.

Yours Sincerely

Carmen Blatti (Principal)



Coronavirus (COVID-19) anxiety and staying mentally healthy

FOR OLDER ADULTS

As the number of COVID-19 cases rise across Australia, the level of anxiety within the community is likely to increase. It is important to take reasonable precautions, however, we also need to learn to manage our stress before it turns into more severe anxiety and panic. The following tips may help older Australians to keep stress and anxiety at bay during this challenging period.

Learn the facts (but limit media exposure)

Stay up-to-date with factual information from reliable sources such as the [Australian Government Department of Health](#), the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), or the [World Health Organization](#), and follow their recommendations.

However, a constant influx of information and media coverage about COVID-19 will actually make us feel more anxious and concerned. Try to limit how often you are exposed to news updates on COVID-19. Take breaks from both media coverage and COVID-19 conversations throughout the day so you can focus on other things.

Take reasonable precautions and keep things in perspective

As the pandemic continues to develop, we all worry about how this is going to affect our own and our family's health, work and finances. Try to keep your concerns in perspective. Rather than imagining the worst-case scenario and worrying about it, ask yourself:

- What are the actual levels of risk and are there other facts that are important to remember in this situation?

Current evidence suggests that older adults are no more likely to contract COVID-19 than younger adults. Among those who do contract COVID-19, those over the age of 60 are at greater risk of serious or life-threatening health complications that may require medical intervention. However, even with this increased risk, the large majority of older adults who contract this illness will recover.

Remember there are qualified professionals working to keep people well and policymakers are working on strategies to manage the spread of COVID-19, and create economic support packages to assist people. Health professionals are working hard to help people recover. The scientific community is working on understanding the illness, and developing treatments.

Be familiar with the difference between symptoms of COVID-19 and cold/flu symptoms, but also try limiting how often you monitor changes in your physical sensations. For example, don't excessively check your temperature if you are otherwise feeling well.

- Am I overestimating how bad the consequences will be and underestimating my ability to cope?

Consider how you (or your family) have gotten through difficulties in the past, and whether these coping skills might help you to get through this situation. Also remind yourself



To help control the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) across the country, all Australians have been asked to practise social distancing. In some cases people are required to, or may choose to, self-isolate. Understandably, the challenges associated with social distancing and isolation, including separation from loved ones, loss of freedom and reduced income, are leading some people to experience feelings of anxiety, boredom, frustration and fear.

This information sheet outlines some useful strategies you can use to maintain good mental health during this unprecedented time of social distancing and isolation.

Stay connected

Positive social connections are essential for our mental health and can help us cope in times of stress. In the current crisis, we are being asked to distance ourselves from others so it is important that we maintain our social networks using available methods of communication. This can be as simple as phoning a friend to share your experience, using videoconferencing technology to check in with a family member, or spending quality time with the people you live with.

The information in this tip sheet is current as at 20 March 2020.

psychology.org.au

Avoid difficult situations

At times, people will be required to self-isolate with others in their household. While this will provide opportunities for social connections, living with someone 24/7 with little or no time away from each other may give rise to arguments and/or tension. There are a number of things you can do to limit conflict with those you are isolated with, including:

- creating a roster to help you distribute chores equally and fairly
- identifying and taking part in activities you like doing together such as movies, board games, jigsaws, gardening
- sharing positive emotions and experiences, rather than anger, frustration and disappointment
- communicating about your worries and concerns, and seeking support from one another
- maintaining your sense of fun and positive humour
- remaining respectful of each other in times of conflict – walk away and take time to calm yourselves, returning to the discussion later and repairing any hurt caused.

Structure your day

While in isolation it is beneficial to plan out your days to restore a sense of purpose and normality to your daily life. Schedule tasks such as cooking and laundry, as well as activities you enjoy to help you stick to your routine. Structuring activities around mealtimes and bedtime can also help you keep to your schedule while ensuring you eat regularly and get enough sleep.

Given the current need to practise social distancing and isolation, many people are also being encouraged to work from home where possible. Working from home can bring a whole new set of challenges and the need to provide structure to your day is even more important.



As the number of coronavirus cases rise across Australia, the level of anxiety within the community is increasing.

Feelings of worry and unease can be expected following a stressful event, such as the recent declaration of a global pandemic, however, it is important that we learn to manage our stress before it turns to more severe anxiety and panic.

This information sheet outlines some useful strategies which can help both adults and children cope with the stress or anxiety experienced as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

Learn the facts

Constant media coverage about the coronavirus can keep us in a heightened state of anxiety. Try to limit related media exposure and instead seek out factual information from reliable sources such as the Australian Government's [health alert](#) or other trusted organisations such as the [World Health Organization](#).

Keep things in perspective

When we are stressed, it is easy to see things as worse than they really are. Rather than imagining the worst-case scenario and worrying about it, ask yourself:

- *Am I getting ahead of myself, assuming something bad will happen when I really don't know the outcome?* Remind yourself that the actual number of confirmed cases of coronavirus in Australia is extremely low.
- *Am I overestimating how bad the consequences will be?* Remember, illness due to coronavirus infection is usually mild and most people recover without needing specialised treatment.
- *Am I underestimating my ability to cope?* Sometimes thinking about how you would cope, even if the worst were to happen, can help you put things into perspective.

Take reasonable precautions

Being proactive by following basic hygiene principles can keep your anxiety at bay. The World Health Organization recommends a number of protective measures against the coronavirus, including to:

- wash your hands frequently
- avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- stay at home if you begin to feel unwell until you fully recover
- seek medical care early if you have a fever, cough or experience breathing difficulties.