

Mental Health

5th Edition

This Edition includes:

Mental Health Continuum

Mental Health Self-assessment tools

Mental Health Care Plans

Free Online Anxiety Programs

Parenting During Covid-19

Mental Health Edition

Mental health has been impacted with the covid-19 pandemic. Helplines Beyond Blue, Headspace and Kids Helpline have all experienced an increase in calls. Monash University conducted a mental health survey in April 2020, their results 'indicate a widespread change in usual psychological state with about a quarter of the whole population experiencing mild to moderate symptoms of depression (26.5%) or anxiety (24.5%)'

Mental Health has become a priority for all Australians during this pandemic and we need to learn ways to assess our own mental health.

In this edition of Parenting During Covid-19 we are focusing on mental health. Covid-19 stress is testing our resilience and coping skills. With a complete change to our way of life, we have had to be adaptable, change the way we live, work and interact. Usually when we make changes they are planned for, carefully considered and we have time to sit with the change; evaluating all the pros and cons, before we make our decision to change. Currently we are facing the biggest changes in our lifetime and we have not had the luxury of feeling in control. This edition will allow you to explore where you are feeling on a mental health continuum, provide links to self-assessment tools, evidence based online programs and mental health services.

The mental Health continuum can be a useful tool when considering our or our children's mental health. On any given day we tend to move along the continuum, depending on whether we are feeling angry, happy or sad we can move into different sections of the continuum. We can slide up and down it as our day progresses. This ability to move along the continuum, shows our coping mechanisms, shrugging off a worry or sadness.

Mental Health Continuum

- Positive
- Happy
- Healthy
- Good relationship with peers and family



- Irritable
- Sad
- Ruminating thoughts
- Anxiety, racing heart, sweating
- Difficulties with relationships family & friends

In the red zone it makes it hard to manage tasks for example remote learning, working from home and socialising. It becomes harder to thrive.

For younger children it can be helpful to use emoji's, ask children to select the emoji that reflects how they currently feel.



Some Mental Health Symptoms

Racing thoughts
Can't think straight
Ruminating thoughts
Poor concentration/memory
Feelings of nervousness
Fatigue
Insomnia
Extreme fear or worry
Chest pains
Sweating
Rapid heartrate
Irritability
Anger
Frustration
Joint or stomach pains
Feeling breathless
Lack of motivation
No longer experiencing pleasure in activities you previously loved.
Feelings of being a failure
Withdrawing contact from family and friends
Experiencing guilt
Increased use of drugs & alcohol to cope
Appetite changes
Feeling indecisive

When we experience sadness, anxiety or depression we tend to sit in the red zone. If you are finding you are angry, or quick to anger, playing negative thoughts, or worries on a continuous replay loop in your mind, and/or having difficulties with relationships, this can indicate that you are in the red. It is really important we don't sit too long in this red zone, without seeking intervention. The longer we stay in the red, the worse we tend to feel and the harder it is to feel well again.

By following this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohpEsitFkDY> you can see a video explaining the mental health continuum.

If you are constantly in the red zone and can't move out of it, it can be an indicator to seek some help. Early intervention is recommended, to get you back to being able up to slide along the continuum.

Self-Assessment Tools

If you are feeling a bit stuck in the red zone, lots of resources are available. Beyond Blue has a self-assessment tool. The tool is available online and asks you to answer 10 questions, about how you have felt over the past 4 weeks. This can be done at your convenience and in the privacy of your own home. From the survey you will be given a score in low, medium or high range, the website will also give you information about where you can access resources or support.

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety-and-depression-checklist-k10>

GP's are currently available for telehealth and you can meet your GP and give them your K10 score. This will give your GP valuable information about your mental health. GP's are your first point of call if this is not a mental health emergency. They will be able to work with you and develop a mental health care plan.

The Black Dog Institute also provides access to a mental health self-assessment tool, upon completion you will be sent a report and links to resources.

<https://onlineclinic.blackdoginstitute.org.au/?s=w>

For children please follow this link for the Beyond Blue Children's mental Health Check list.

<https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/age-6-12/mental-health-conditions-in-children/child-mental-health-checklist>

Mental Health Support Agencies



Black Dog Institute

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/coronavirus-resources-for-anxiety-stress/>



Ph: 1800 512 348

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/guest-support/online-forums/staying-well/coping-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>



Ph: 1800 650 890.

Provides fact sheets, blogs and courses for parents and youth 12-25 years. Family clinicians available.

<https://headspace.org.au/eheadspace/>

Mental Health Care Plans

During these Covid-19 times the Federal Government has prioritised mental health. Previously the Mental Health Care Plan gave individuals 10 Medicare funded sessions with a psychologist. This has just increased to 20 sessions in 2020 for Victorians. Once you have a mental health care plan, you can use this to access fee rebates for mental health services. Different providers charge different amounts, so ask when you book about gap fees.

Mental Health Care Plans are now 20 sessions, that's 10 extra sessions.

FREE Online Programs

While waiting for your telehealth appointment with a GP or psychologist, please consider using the following self-care tips and resources.

For over 16 years and adults, mood gym is an online free resource that guides you through self-help activities to manage and prevent anxiety.

https://moodgym.com.au/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwg8n5BRCdARIsALxKb94IBJGS981E_UbVISMvIJDGyPbF1OCKFJWDqDqfinHZnU9QWAoyOdoaAmv1EALw_wcB

If you are suffering from social anxiety the Australian Government funds a free program ecouch. This is for people 16 years and older. This site offers modules on developing social skills and changing your thinking about social situations.

<https://ecouch.com.au/>

For families needing extra help whilst supporting a young person waiting for mental health supports. The Brave Program is an Australian program offering free online cognitive behavioural therapy program, individuals complete 1 session per week over 10 weeks. Parents can also register and learn about their child's anxiety and learn tips to support them. This program supports primary and secondary aged children.

<https://www.brave-online.com/>

St Vincent's Hospital in NSW has developed a free program for over 18's. They also have other low fee programs.

<https://thiswayup.org.au/how-we-can-help/courses/coping-with-stress/>

The above programs do not replace the need for professional help, however they can provide valuable support, and tips to manage mental health during these times, whilst waiting for professional help.

Lifeline

Call 000 if you are in immediate danger

Lifeline

13 11 14

24hrs 7 days a week, call to talk to counsellors if you feel suicidal.

0477 131 114

Text only service if it is too hard to talk. 6pm-midnight 7 days

Crisis online Chat

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/online-services/crisis-chat>

Follow the link for online chat 7pm-midnight 7 days

Interpreter Service for Lifeline:

131 450

Ask to talk lifeline in the language you would prefer.

Parenting During Covid-19 newsletter, written by

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Apps

Head Gear is a Free mental health and wellbeing app, developed by Beyond Blue, NSW Government and Black Dog Institute. It is for individuals 17+ years. This app aims to improve your mental fitness with tools addressing sleep, relaxing and healthy coping tips. It allows you to track your feelings and tips to help a friend.



Final Word

Mental Health and Wellbeing is a priority for everyone. It is OK to feel down and worried about Covid-19 and the challenges it presents. It is vital we check in with ourselves; use the tools and resources available. Each day schedule time to do something you enjoy and brings you pleasure, walking, calling a friend etc. If it's getting harder to feel motivated to do simple tasks, please reach out for help. Reaching out is the first and hardest step. Mental Health professionals are there to help guide you through this process and provide support and care.

References

Beyond Blue. 2020, Signs and Symptoms, [webpage] <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/depression/signs-and-symptoms> accessed 11/8/20

Fisher J et al. (10th June 2020) *Mental Health of People in Australia in the first month of Covid-19 Restrictions: a national survey*, Monash University, Medical Journal of Australia [webpage] <https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2020/mental-health-people-australia-first-month-covid-19-restrictions-national-survey> accessed 12/8/20