



Dear parents and guardians,

As the situation relating to COVID-19 unfolds, including news reports, travel restrictions, and concerns for the health of ourselves and loved ones, people can experience a wide range of thoughts, feelings and reactions. We are aware that this is a very challenging and stressful time for our school community, and we would like to provide some information on the supports available to our students.

### Common reactions

As the situation relating to COVID-19 unfolds, young people may experience periods of:

- Feeling stressed, overwhelmed or helpless
- Anxiety, worry or fear
- Sadness, tearfulness, and/or loss of interest in usual enjoyable activities
- Physical symptoms such as: increased heart rate, stomach upset, low energy, or other uncomfortable sensations
- Frustration, irritability, or anger
- Difficulty concentrating or sleeping
- Isolating or withdrawing from others, and/or fear of going to public spaces

These are all expected reactions to a very stressful situation. The 'unknown' element of current events can also increase anxiety for young people as it reduces their sense of control.

### Strategies to cope with stress, anxiety or distress

- **Acknowledge their feelings.** In situations that are uncertain and evolving, it is understandable to have an emotional reaction. Allow your child to notice and express what they are feeling. This could involve talking to others, writing in a journal, doing something creative, or practising mindfulness or meditation (visit <https://www.headspace.com/covid-19> for example exercises)
- **Maintain their day-to-day routine where possible.** Having a healthy routine can have a positive impact on young people. This can include eating healthy meals, physical exercise, getting enough sleep, and engaging in hobbies and activities.
- **Stay connected.** Receiving support and care from others has a powerful effect on helping us cope with challenges. Spending time with others can bring a sense of comfort and stability. If there are barriers to connecting in person, explore alternative ways to stay communicate through video and phone.
- **Seek accurate information.** Finding credible sources you can trust is important to avoid the fear and panic that can be caused by misinformation. [The Australian Government – Department of Health](#) have up-to-date and accurate information on their website.
- **Set limits around news and social media.** It's understandable to want to keep informed, especially if you or your loved ones are affected. However, constant exposure to media coverage can unnecessarily intensify worrying. Help your child to take a break from news or social media and focus on the positives in their life, or things that they have control over.

- **Stay up to date with advice and support from the school.** Check email communications regularly for updates and information so you are well-informed.
- **Follow protection and prevention recommendations provided by qualified health professionals.** The Australian Department of Health has [information about COVID-19 and how to protect yourself](#).

### **For more support**

If your young person feels unable to cope because of overwhelming or intense emotions, you should encourage them to talk with a trusted adult, or speak to a General Practitioner (GP) to help make a plan for their recovery. If you have any concerns that your young person may be harming themselves or thinking about suicide, they should seek support immediately.

We have included the contact details of mental health services who are available to provide support, including telephone and online supports.

- **HeadSpace** is a youth-friendly counselling service for young people aged 12-25. The Joondalup office can be contacted on (08) 9301 8900, or chat to a counsellor online at [www.headspace.org.au/ehespace](http://www.headspace.org.au/ehespace). For more information on how to cope with stress relating to COVID-19 visit: <https://headspace.org.au/young-people/how-to-cope-with-stress-related-to-covid-19/>
- **KidsHelpline** provides 24/7 phone and online counselling support to young people aged 5-25. Call **1800 55 1800** or visit [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)
- **Lifeline** provides 24/7 phone and online counselling support to people in crisis, including suicidal thoughts and self-harm. Call **13 11 14** or visit [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- **Youth Beyond Blue** is a website dedicated to providing information to young people on anxiety and depression. The website helps young people to understand mental health and strategies to cope through tough times: [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)
- **The BRAVE program** is a free and interactive online program for the prevention and treatment of anxiety in young people. The program provides ways for young people to better cope with their worries. There are also programs for parents to learn strategies to support young people. The program can be used on any computer or tablet device and includes up to 10 sessions that you can work through at your own pace. There are three versions of the program: **Young Child Program** (ages 3-7), **Child Program** (ages 8-12) and the **Teen Program** (ages 12-17). For more information visit <https://brave4you.psy.uq.edu.au/>

If you have any questions about how to access these supports, please feel free to get in touch with the student services team on (08) 9381 1655, and we will be happy to direct you toward appropriate supports.

Kind regards,

Kelly Lewis  
 School Psychologist  
 West Leederville Primary School