

COVID-19 has brought many changes to the way we live. For people living with disability, there are added complexities, such as changes to supports, or anxiety about COVID-19. Existing issues can get worse. Strong emotions and behaviours of concern may be displayed more often. Ways of connecting and communicating with others may change and make everyday tasks more difficult.

## Tips for Looking After Your Mental Health

#1

### Acknowledge & Allow

If you are not feeling 100% positive, that is quite normal. Getting cross at yourself and telling yourself to 'think positively' or 'get on with it' will actually make you feel worse. Instead, allow yourself to feel what you feel, without judging yourself or trying to push the feelings away.

Try some guided self-compassion exercises, developed by Dr Kristen Neff  
<https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#guided-meditations>



#2

### Stick to a Routine

When our normal routines are disrupted, our body systems can feel out of balance. Your body has natural rhythms (called circadian rhythms), influenced by the times you eat and sleep. This impacts your energy level.

Try to create a routine for each day, and week, keeping as close to your pre-Covid routine as possible. This may need some modification, for example a big family dinner might need to become a video chat over dinner while eating the same meal.

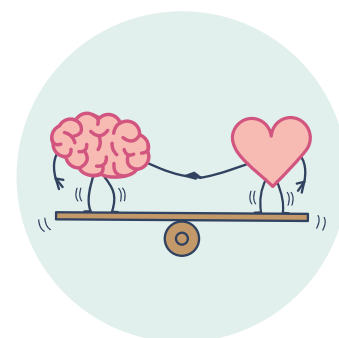


#3

### Balance Pleasure & Achievement

Aim to complete an 'achievement' based task, and a 'feel good' task each day. An 'achievement' task should be a realistic goal, such as completing a load of washing. The 'feel good' task should be purely for pleasure. Examples include a favourite hobby, taking a bath, reading a book, etc.

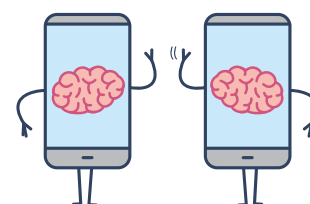
Most people find they tend to do too much of one type of task and not enough of the other. For instance, are you someone who always needs to be busy and never sits still? Then you may benefit from adding a 'feel good' task to your daily schedule. If you are someone who tends to avoid doing things you need to do, add a small 'achievement' based goal.



#4

### Stay Connected

Social connection is a basic human need. Connect with a family member or friend each day by phone or online. Some people find video calls to be quite tiring. If that is the case, start small and reach out to old friends with an email or a text message. If you feel that you need some new connections, think about joining an online support group.



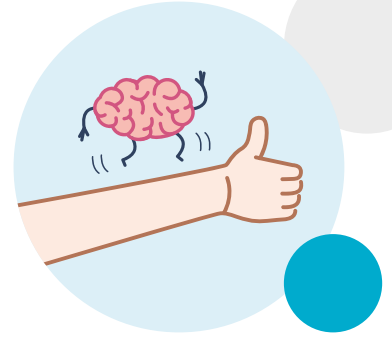
## Tips for Looking After Your Mental Health

### #5

#### Change Your 'Mental Channel'

When there have been a series of negative events, often all we notice in our environment are more negatives. Negative moods act like magnets for negative thoughts. Make a conscious effort to 'switch channels' in your brain.

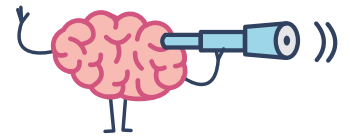
Try starting a gratitude list you can add to every day. List things such as a warm bed, people, memories, and personal attributes you are grateful for. Once you start noticing these things, feelings of gratitude will start to flow more naturally.



### #6

#### Look for Hidden Opportunities

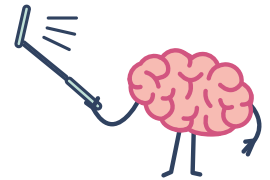
Have you wanted to do something, but had to put it off until you had time? Now is the time! Learn a new skill, reconnect with an old friend, or try a new hobby. There are lots of free activities available online. Try an internet search for free or low-cost learning opportunities.



### #7

#### Dress to Impress

How you look can have a big impact on how you feel. Change out of your pyjamas every morning, even if you are not planning to leave the house all day. Put on a spray of cologne or perfume and do your hair. Even if you don't see anyone else all day, you are likely to feel more positive if you are also looking and feeling fresh.

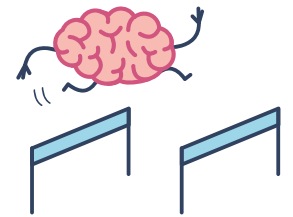


### #8

#### Move Every Day

Include exercise in your daily routine – both indoor and outdoor. Research suggests regular, moderate intensity exercise is good for your mood. Natural light is also thought to be good for your mood, so try to take exercise outdoors where possible.

Some level of exercise (modified or otherwise) is possible for most people, even if there are physical limitations. Speak to a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist if you need support to build a safe exercise program.



## NEED MORE HELP?

#### Get Help for Your Mental Health

##### Are you an NDIS, TAC, or My Aged Care participant?

If so, you may be able to access a psychologist using your existing funding. Check with your support coordinator or case manager, or contact our intake team at [intake@nrah.com.au](mailto:intake@nrah.com.au) to make an enquiry.

##### No funding? No problem.

Government funded Mental Health Care Plans allow you to access psychology services. They have temporarily been increased in scope to allow up to 20 sessions. Check with your GP if you are eligible. Gap fees vary. Check with the Psychologist before booking.

##### Prefer Self-Help?

Various free programs are available, including

- Mental Health Online – <https://www.mentalhealthonline.org.au/>
- Mind Spot – <https://mindspot.org.au/>
- For an easy read version, see <https://www.healthymind.org.au>

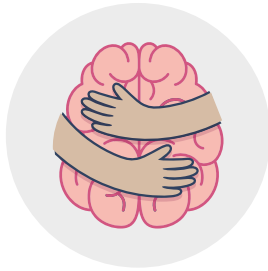
##### Try a Carers Support Group

Visit <https://www.carersvictoria.org.au/carer-support-group-directory> for a list of support groups. Some of these groups have transitioned to an online format due to COVID-19.



If you need to talk to someone immediately for mental health support, contact Lifeline: 13 11 14 or the Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467

# Tips for Looking After Your Mental Health

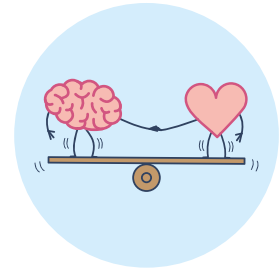


Be kind to yourself when you feel bad. Try:

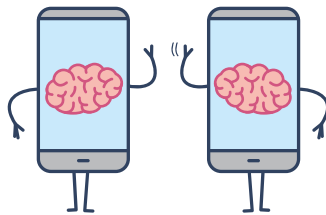
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Sleep and eat at the same times every day.



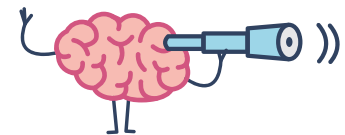
Do at least one thing you like to do each day.



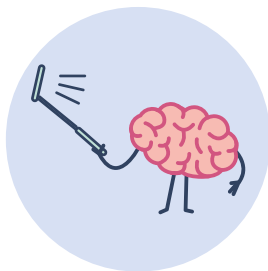
Talk to family or friends every day on the phone or internet.



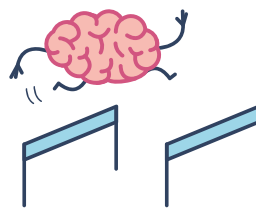
Practice gratitude. Write down at least one thing every day you are lucky to have.



Join an online group or learn something new online.



Get out of your pyjamas every day, even when staying home.



Exercise each day.



Speak to your Doctor, Psychologist, Case Manager, Support Co-ordinator or therapy team about your mental health concerns.

**GET HELP**

If you need to talk to someone immediately for mental health support, contact **Lifeline: 13 11 14** or the **Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467**