



A Guide for Aboriginal Health Staff

Staying Mentally Strong and Healthy

Feeling under extra pressure is a likely experience for you and many of your colleagues during the coronavirus pandemic. It is quite normal to be feeling this way in the current situation.

Remember that this is the time to take care of each other. Even though we need to physical distance, it is still important to stay emotionally connected.

Our people and culture have been through so much before. We have stayed strong and at times of need have taken inspiration from our culture and our ancestors to help us through those tough times. Like many challenges before us we will fight through and come out the other end tougher and more spiritually connected to ourselves and our loved ones.

Take care of yourself

Our people are good at looking after everyone else. Right now is the time to make sure you are looking after yourself as well. Finding ways to cope during these times can benefit your wellbeing.

Taking care of yourself can include:

- get enough rest between shifts or on your days off
- eat healthy
- take part in exercise or physical activity
- stay in contact with family and friends via telephone or social media
- plan daily debriefing sessions with colleagues and supervisors and remind yourself you are doing the best you can in these difficult circumstances.

If you are worrying about being in a high-risk group of the workforce, with concerns for your health and safety, speak with your line manager/supervisor to discuss your options.

If you are strong in mind, body and spirit then those around you will feel strong.

Recharge

When we are stressed we sometimes avoid doing things we normally do to help us recharge.

Focus on the things you can control and try not to stress over matters you are unable to control. Find different ways to engage in your usual activities and hobbies that will keep your spirit happy.

Step away from the noise

It's important to recognise as health employees, we are impacted by COVID-19. Whilst it is recommended to stay updated with the latest COVID-19 situation, it can also leave you feeling stressed and overwhelmed.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, step away from looking at social media or the news. Be mindful that some things we see on social media aren't true so make sure you get your information from a reliable source.

Don't buy into the yarn! At these times we need to support one another – we all have a role to keep our people safe.

Keep your routine

We all have routines. They may not look the same right now, but we need to try to stick to them as much as possible.

Not only can routines keep us organised but they can give us a sense of achievement and accomplishment.

Spend some time thinking about how to modify these routines in such a way that works around your home situation.

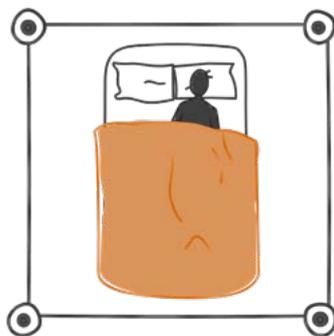


Get good sleep

We all need a good night's rest. We know this can be easier said than done especially after a long stressful day at work. You might have to go home and care for your kids or elders living with you.

Things that can help you get a good sleep are:

- stick to a bedtime routine, that includes everyone in the house
- plan your to do list before bed
- start switching off devices an hour before bed
- pick up a book instead of your phone
- make sure your room is set up for sleep
 - all devices off or on silent
 - no light is coming into the room
- have a yarn with your family about things you are looking forward to doing.



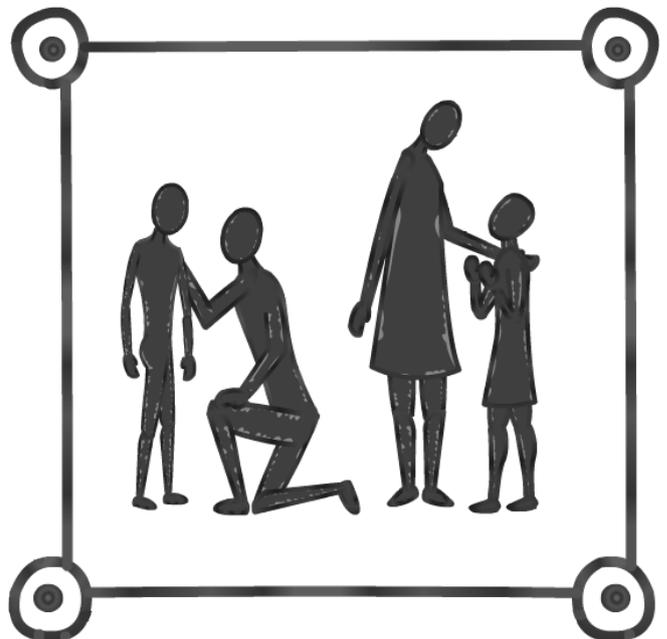
Lead by example

Don't underestimate the impact of your actions during this uneasy time. You may not realise but many people will be looking for strength in the people around them.

Ensure Aboriginal people are contributing and communicating cultural knowledge to inform planning and implementation across the health service and community.

Act in a way that inspires others to be kind and considerate, which in turn can give them the confidence they may need during this time.

So when you look back at how you handled yourself during this time, you are proud of the person you were.



Have hope

It may not feel like it right now, but in the future things will return to normal. It's important to have hope.

These are challenging times, however stay focused on the good things you can do to stay happy and healthy. Maintain your long term goals but also think about things you look forward to on a daily and weekly basis.



Employee Assistance Providers (EAP) and Resources

If you are an Aboriginal employee you can access free and confidential counselling support from either of the two designated EAP providers below:

Converge International

Converge International can provide support and counselling for a broad range of personal and work-related issues.

Tel: **1300 687 327** or **1300 687 633**

www.convergeinternational.com.au

LifeWorks

Speak with LifeWorks clinicians who can provide cultural support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees.

Tel: **1300 361 008**

www.lifeworks.com

For more information on the Employee Assistance Program visit:
<https://healthpoint.hdwa.health.wa.gov.au/workingathealth/staffsupport/Pages/employee-assistance-program.aspx>

For WA Country Health Service employees visit:

<http://wachs.hdwa.health.wa.gov.au/index.php?id=10789>

Other places of help

If you need to yarn in more depth about how you are feeling or how this challenging time is impacting your life, spirit and culture there are people here to help.

Beyondblue

1300 224 636 for free telephone counselling

Lifeline

Mental health crisis **13 11 14**

Western Australia Coronavirus information helpline

13 COVID (13 268 43)

For Aboriginal specific agencies visit:

https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/N_R/Perth-Aboriginal-services-mental-health-services

