



GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

APS services are essential to the Australian community during times of crisis. COVID-19 has meant that for many APS employees, services are being delivered in very new ways, either from home or new work environments. As a result, we have been required to juggle the demands of abrupt change with continued caring responsibilities for children, elderly parents, friends or family members with a disability or health condition.

According to the latest APS census, 41 per cent of employees have carer responsibilities. This dual role can take a significant toll on parents and carers at the best of times. Right now, the challenges facing all of us can cause considerable pressure, to assist we have put together some practical tips to ensure you stay healthy, safe and support your wellbeing.

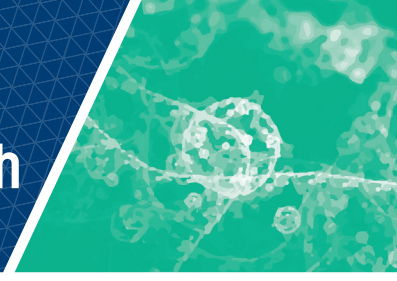


Practical tips

- **Design a flexible routine to maintain work-life balance.** Finding the new normal can be difficult, particularly for children that are adjusting to distance learning. Create a flexible schedule that allows you to respond to changing needs in work, caring responsibilities and self-care. Discuss flexibility options with your manager and share the new routine with those around you. Remember to be kind to yourself, some days will be easier than others in keeping a routine.
- **Be aware of your own reactions.** Parents and carers are powerful role models. You can set the tone for a calm, positive and supportive environment. This is particularly important for children who will take their emotional cues from you.
- **Listen and provide clear information.** COVID-19 can be a difficult topic to discuss and some questions we still can't answer. Whether your caring for your children, elderly parents or a person with a disability or health condition, take time to listen, acknowledge their feelings and be as honest and open as you can.
- **Focus on positive messages and actions.** There are lots of people working hard to keep us safe and healthy during COVID-19. Everyone can play their part by staying home, washing their hands, practicing physical distancing, and finding new ways to connect with family and friends online.
- **Find positive ways to manage frustration.** Everyone is adjusting to spending more time at home and using new technologies for work and distance learning. Feeling frustrated with your children, partner, family and friends is possible. Getting some fresh air and taking some time to yourself can help to channel frustration in positive and proactive ways.
- **Stay connected with others.** Add virtual play dates and catch ups into the schedule, join a new online community or network of carers and parents to seek support, tips and strategies. For example, talk to other parents from your children's school to see how they are coping with distance learning.



CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): Looking after your Mental Health

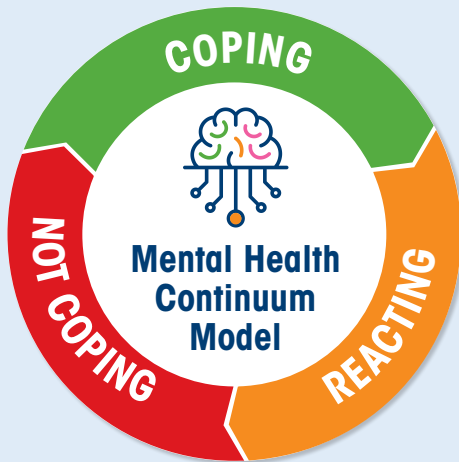


TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF



It is important parents and carers remember that their mental health must be prioritised. You need to ensure you're taking some time to rest and recharge between your work, home and caring commitments. This is where a flexible routine can provide structure to help you stay on top of things and the ability to adjust to changing needs.

Get started by putting together a schedule that covers team meetings, work tasks and projects, caring responsibilities and time to yourself. Remember to be gentle to yourself when things don't go to plan. You can use the mental health continuum to check in with how you're feeling and seek support when you need it.



Coping

- Feeling like yourself, resilient and generally managing day-to-day demands
- Able to care for others, focused and maintaining a routine
- **ACTION:** keep checking with yourself in and stay connected.

Reacting

- Overwhelmed, stressed, demotivated and/or feeling burnt out
- Finding it difficult to care for others, increasingly frustrated and/or withdrawn
- **ACTION:** Reach out to a trusted friend, colleague or contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Not Coping

- Excessively distressed, frustrated, anxious, hopeless, unsafe, angry and/or numb
- Unable to provide adequate care for others, unable to concentrate, maintain a routine or feeling constantly frustrated and angry with others around you
- **ACTION:** Seek professional help from your GP, a counsellor or psychologist, EAP or other services.

Self help tools

- [Beyond Blue Wellbeing Plan](#)
- [Black Dog Self-Care Planning](#)
- [My Compass Self-Help App](#)
- [Mindspot Online Mental Health Assessment](#)
- [HeadGear Worker Mental Health App](#)
- [Smiling Mind Thrive Inside App](#)

Support services

- Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support: 1800 512 348
- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Carers Australia: 1800 242 636
- Relationships Australia: 1300 364 277
- [COVID-19 Telehealth Services](#)
- [Raising Children Network](#)

For more information

- Australian Government
- UK Government guidance for parents and carers
- Health Direct
- Australian Psychological Society
- World Health Organization
- Beyond Blue