



Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia acknowledges and pays respect to Elders, both past and present and all generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples now and into the future as the Traditional Owners of this land.

Tips for staying healthy and strong during the coronavirus outbreak

For further resources and reliable information, including how to get mental health support, see the longer version of this tip sheet at gayaadhuwi.org.au/coronavirus

We are all feeling worried and stressed about the coronavirus. Our lives are going to change in many ways, and we have to prepare ourselves now. To stay mentally strong, here are some tips:

- 1. Be informed the right way** - We need to know what the health experts are saying and follow their advice. Knowing what to do is important - not just to stay physically healthy, but to help bring peace of mind. However, do limit how much time you spend on news for your own wellbeing.
- 2. Be practical and prepared as things change** - It's good to think ahead more than usual at this time. There's no need to hoard things, but have some back-up food, supplies and medication in storage. Keep a 'things to do' calendar and a list of important phone numbers or contacts.
- 3. It's OK to be stressed and worried** about the virus. What's not so good is to bottle it up. Talk about your fears and worries with family and friends and get it off your chest.
- 4. Have hope – This won't last forever** - At some time, the virus will come under control and life will return to something like normal. It's important to remember this and have hope, even as we prepare to cope with what is ahead.
- 5. Our culture keeps us strong** - We have faced many battles before and survived. Think about our ancestors' strengths and where we have come from. Focus on what makes you strong for the journey ahead. Remember, our ancestors are always with us.
- 6. Take time away from the news and social media** - It's important to stay informed, but if the news or TV is stressing you out turn it off for a while. And make sure what you're reading and watching is reliable, so you don't waste time worrying about things that aren't true.
- 7. Keep in touch with friends and family** - When you are outside, you need to keep two big steps away from other people to stop the virus spreading, and you shouldn't visit other people. But you can still yarn on the phone or by social media. Keep in touch that way – don't visit!

Coronavirus Emergency Contact Numbers

If you feel unwell, have a fever or sore throat, PLEASE do not go to the medical centre/family clinic or the hospital. Instead, contact the following for instructions:

- **ACT Health:** 02 6205 2155
- **NSW Health:** 1300 066 055
- **SA Health:** 1300 232 272
- **TAS Health:** 1800 671 738
- **QLD Health:** 13 432 584
- **VIC Health:** 1300 651 160
- **WA Health:** 08 922 8588
- **Northern Territory helpline:** 1800 008 002
- **National helpline:** 1800 020 080

8. **Get some fresh air and exercise** – If permitted, go for a walk but remember to keep at least two big steps from anyone outside. If you've got a garden or balcony - use it. Exercise as much as you can without going out – it will help with stress.
9. **Eat well** - Think about what you're eating and try and eat well - plenty of fruit and vegetables, can make a big difference to how you feel. Some foods also help to boost your immune system so try some new foods or recipes.
10. **Be creative or learn something new** - Get into playing music, singing, storytelling, dancing and creativity to reduce your stress and raise your spirits. Being creative takes our mind away from our worries and give us joy in difficult times. This is important for children too.
11. **Chill out** You might find yoga, meditation and mindfulness helpful, and there's also dadirri – the deep, spiritual reflection that our mob have been doing for thousands of years. Some people find it easier to do something active first and then chill.
12. **Keep the kids happy** Check in with your kids to see if they're OK, especially if they are behaving differently. Give them some space to explore and be creative, but also spend good time together to and give them reassurance.
13. **Keep Elders happy** - It's important we protect our Elders and make sure they don't get the virus. It's tough, but for most of us that means staying away, and keeping the kids away, until the virus is under control and speaking on the phone or by internet.
14. **Keep yourself happy** - Our people are good at looking after everyone else but not so good at looking after ourselves. Do things that make you feel good and build your strength. If you are strong and happy, this will help others to do the same, especially kids.
15. **Be kind to others** - Everyone will be stressed at a time like this. We're all sharing the worry and dealing with the virus in our own way. It's important to put yourself in the place of others at this time, to keep as calm as we can, and be as kind as we can.
16. **Find and give space and respect** - Wherever you can, make some part of where you live your own space –a small corner, a chair, or a room. Add a plant, a cushion, whatever makes you calm and happier. Create your own space and respect other people's need for space as well.
17. **Create a Stay Strong Plan** - Think about all the things that keep you and your family strong and what you might need to help. Learn some new ways to talk about what is going on with the family. Make sure you check in with everyone and see how they are going.
18. **Don't let money worries get on top of you** - You may have new or additional money worries until the virus is under control. Its ok to get some support, many people will be in the same boat.
19. **Cut back on smoking** - It's important to keep your lungs strong and healthy because the lungs are particularly vulnerable to virus infection. Despite the added stress, aim to cut back or quit if you can. It is also important to not smoke inside or around kids and family to keep them and their lungs healthy.
20. **Think before you drink** - In times of stress, it might feel normal to reach for a drink. But think first – How might my drinking affect others in the house? Is drinking becoming the main way I am coping with the coronavirus? Talk to your doctor or health service if this is the case.