

KEEPING PACE

MAY 2020

NEW ONLINE COMMUNITY EDUCATION SESSION

The COVID-19 crisis has caused a great deal of worry, stress and anxiety for most of us, and the way we deal with these will have a huge impact on our mental health and quality of life. In response to the crisis, PACE has developed a new community education session, "Thriving in a crisis: Strategies for managing worry, stress and anxiety", which will be offered online via Zoom. The session will provide people with practical strategies to help them thrive during the current crisis and beyond. The free session will be offered to community centres, libraries and other community services. We are also able to deliver our usual range of community education sessions and workshops on anxiety, OCD, eating disorders and hoarding online.

For more information call us on 8303 6660 or email us at pace@centacare.org.au

Welcome to the latest edition of Keeping PACE.

The world has changed dramatically since our last newsletter. The COVID-19 crisis has completely changed the way we live, and for many of us, the way we work. It's presented many challenges, but also some opportunities.

Things have certainly changed here in PACE. We are all working from home now, which has created a few challenges, but we have adjusted to the changes and we are doing well. The biggest change has been to the way we support our clients. Generally most of the work we do is face to face, but from the 16th of March we were no longer able to provide face to face services, which meant we had to find other ways of supporting our clients. I pleased to say that we were able to adapt quickly, and continue to offer support in one way or another.

At the moment we are providing individual support to clients via phone and video chat, we are running online support groups for panic and anxiety, OCD, eating disorders and binge eating, and we care also delivering online presentations and training on request. So far things are going well, and many of our clients have embraced the new ways of accessing support.

Although the crisis has presented some challenges, it has also provided opportunities to be creative, learn new skills and develop resilience. I am proud of my team, and especially proud of our clients for the way they have handled the challenges and embraced the changes. I hope you are coping with the challenges, and making the most of the opportunities that arise too.

Until next time, look after yourself.

Shane

Team Leader, PACE

THINGS TO DO IN ISOLATION

With social restrictions in place we have to stay home. For some people this will be easy, for others it will be difficult, but most of us will be looking for something to do at some stage. A good way to pass the time and stay connected with family and friends is to play an online game. Many traditional board and card games have online versions, which are available to download at Google Play or the App Store. There are hundreds to choose from, including dominoes, chess, checkers, Connect Four, Uno, Battleship, Monopoly, Yahtzee, Cluedo, Scattergories and Taboo. Many of them are free to download, so why not give them a go.



VIRTUAL TOURS AND LIVE STREAMS YouTube

If you're looking for something else to do while social restrictions are in place, why not take a virtual tour. We can't travel at the moment, but we can visit some interesting places online. You might be surprised to learn that you can do virtual tours of many famous tourist destinations like the Pyramids, Amazon rainforest, Grand Canyon, Louvre, Colosseum, Taj Mahal, Petra, Great Wall of China, Machu Picchu, and Chichen Itza. You can take tours of famous cities like London, Paris, Rome, Venice, New York, Prague, Amsterdam, Jerusalem, Las Vegas, Tokyo, and almost any other city you would like to see. Just get on YouTube and search for the virtual tour you would like to take.

You can also live stream animals at the Zoo. The Melbourne Zoo provides a live stream of several animal enclosures, including penguins, zebras, snow leopards, lions and giraffes. The Taronga zoo also live streams several of their enclosures, including otters, seals, tigers, elephants and meerkats. The San Diego Zoo live streams baboons, pandas, polar bears, orangutans, elephants and tigers. Visit their websites and have a look.

<https://www.zoo.org.au/animals-at-home/>

<https://taronga.org.au/taronga-tv>

<https://zoo.sandiegozoo.org/live-cams>



PHONE COUNSELLING SERVICE FOR COVID-19

Centacare has recently started a new counselling service for people struggling to cope with the uncertainty and fear surrounding COVID-19. The service will provide phone support for mental health concerns, family stress due to job loss, social isolation and other challenges arising from the coronavirus pandemic. It's inevitable to feel stressed and anxious when faced with a crisis, and talking to someone can help. The service will give people a chance to talk to a qualified counsellor, who can help them find ways of coping with the situation. People do not need a mental health care plan or referral to access the short-term support, they can contact Centacare directly between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday if they want to book an appointment. Counselling appointments are available during the day and in the evening.

For more information about the service or to book a phone appointment, call Centacare on 8215 6700.

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Rear of 78-80 St Vincent St Port Adelaide SA 5015

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Thriving

~~SURVIVING~~ IN A CRISIS

Strategies for managing worry, stress and anxiety

In times of crisis it's normal to feel worried, stressed and anxious, and COVID-19 is a serious crisis. It's dramatically changed the way we live and created a huge amount of uncertainty. The way we deal with the worry, stress and anxiety caused by the COVID-19 crisis will have a significant impact on our mental health and our quality of life, so it's important to have strategies which will help us deal with them effectively. Here are some things you can do to help you thrive during the current crisis and beyond:

1. Keep busy – too much free time can lead to worry and anxiety, so it's important to keep busy. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as it keeps your mind occupied and makes you feel productive. Find a hobby, do some gardening, read a book, do a puzzle, play a game with the kids, do some arts and crafts, or do some housework. If you keep busy you will have less time to worry, and you will feel like you have achieved something worthwhile.
2. Stay connected – isolation can cause stress and anxiety, so it's important to stay connected with family and friends. It can be difficult at the moment, but there are ways to keep in touch. Stay connected however you can, and be pro-active. Don't wait for people to contact you, reach out and make contact with them. You'll feel better, and they probably will too.
3. Look after your physical health – the mind and body are closely connected, and taking of your physical health can have a huge impact on your mental health. Eat well, exercise and try to get enough sleep. These will help you manage stress and anxiety better.
4. Find ways to relax – stress and anxiety can take a huge toll on our mental and physical health, so it's important to find ways to relax. Listen to music, spend time in nature, take a bath, have a massage or do a guided relaxation exercise. Anything you can do to help your mind and body relax will be beneficial.
5. Practice deep breathing – when you're stressed and anxious you can feel it in your body. Your muscles feel tense, your heart beats faster and your breathing becomes shallow. One of the simplest things you can do to calm your body down is to breathe slowly and deeply. Your heart, lungs and muscles are all connected, so when you slow your breathing down, your heart rate will slow, and the tension in your muscles will reduce too.
6. Practice mindfulness – much of our anxiety is caused by thinking about the past or worrying about the future, and mindfulness helps to reduce this. Mindfulness is being in the present moment, and giving full attention to what you are doing. You can do anything mindfully, as long as you give your full attention to it. If you do something that captures your full attention, you won't be thinking about the past and the future, and your stress and anxiety will decrease.

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7. Use grounding techniques – when you find yourself worrying excessively about something, you can use grounding techniques to bring you back into the present moment. The best way to ground yourself is to use your senses. Try to find five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can feel, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste. There are many different ways to ground yourself, but anything you can do to get out of your head and into reality will help to reduce your worry and anxiety.
8. Stop and think things through – stress and anxiety aren't always caused by situations and events, they are often caused the way we think about things, and the way we think isn't always helpful. Are you expecting the worst? Are you making things out to be worse than they really are? Are you only seeing one side of the situation? Is there another way to look at the situation? What would you say to a friend who having similar thoughts? You can reduce your stress and anxiety by recognizing and letting go of unhelpful thinking.
9. Recognize the positives – It's easy to only see negatives in a crisis, but there are always positives and negatives in any situation. If you focus only the negatives you will feel more stressed and anxious than you need to be, so it's helpful to recognize the positives. That doesn't mean you forget about the negatives, because that's not possible, it just means that you don't focus on them completely.
10. Focus on the things you can control – there are some things in life we can control and some things we can't, and it's up to us what we focus on. If you focus on the things you can't control, you will feel helpless and anxious, but if you focus on the things you can control, you will feel more confident and hopeful, so focus on what you can control.
11. Let go of worry – it isn't easy, but you can learn to let go of worry. Remind yourself that worrying doesn't actually help, it doesn't change anything, and it will only make you feel more anxious. If you continue to remind yourself of these facts, eventually your mind will accept them as true, and you will be able to let go of worry more easily. That doesn't mean you won't worry at all, it just means you won't worry as much.
12. Encourage yourself – the more you encourage yourself, the better you will feel about yourself and your ability to cope with the crisis. Think about how you would encourage a friend, and say that to yourself. Tell yourself that you will be okay, that you'll get through it, that you've been through difficult situations before, and that you can cope with whatever happens.

The key to managing stress and anxiety is to be pro-active. There are many strategies you can use to manage stress and anxiety, but they are only useful if you actually use them, so find what works for you, and try to make them part of your routine. Stress and anxiety are a normal part of life, and it's inevitable that you will experience them throughout your life. If you can learn to manage them effectively during this difficult time you, will be well equipped to manage them in the future, no matter what happens.

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