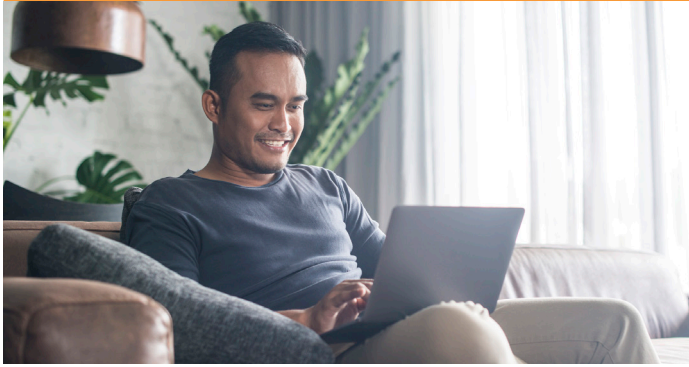# A weekly mental health check-in
COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing resources

What this fact sheet covers:

- Ways to check-in on your mental health
- What to do if you are not coping
- Useful online resources & tools

As the news that you will be staying at home for an extended period of time sinks in, it's more important than ever to keep on top of your mental health.

Many people will not be able to catch up with friends and family members for some time. These are often the people who will first notice any changes in your ability to cope. For now, you need to do those check-ins yourselves. Here are six things you should check-in on weekly.

Feelings

Set an alarm on your phone, or a reminder in your calendar, so at a set time each week you can quickly do a check-in on a scale from 0 ('not at all') to 10 ('extremely') of how stressed, anxious or down you are feeling.

It is normal for these scores to go up and down each day and throughout the week but if you notice the scores are increasing and remaining very high, then it's time to prioritise your mental health.

Body

Take a moment to notice any tension in your body like tight shoulders, chest, or jaw. Other signs that you might be feeling stressed include dryness of the mouth, difficulty breathing, and a racing heart.

Sleep

Have there been changes in your sleep pattern? If you are constantly struggling to get to sleep, waking in the night or waking earlier than usual and finding it difficult to get back to sleep, these are signs your mind is unable to switch off and relax.

Thoughts

Are you always worrying about the worst-case scenarios? Wondering if things will ever get better or if you will be able to cope? Focusing on the 'what if' scenarios is not useful and it is best to try to limit this as much as possible.

Reactions/behaviour

Every day brings challenges but it's how we deal with them which shows how we're coping.

If you find yourself frequently snapping at those you love, finding it extremely difficult to focus, or always depending on things like alcohol or food to cope, it is time to prioritise your mental wellbeing.

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Check-in buddy

Choose a check-in buddy. This may be your partner, housemate or even a friend or colleague you're keeping in touch with via video messaging. Be honest about how you are coping.

Remember that you are in physical isolation, not social isolation. When we're at home, we may need to be creative about adapting the strategies we normally use.

For example, if socialising helps your mood, schedule a virtual coffee. If going to the gym helps you reduce stress, try an online workout. If taking time out helps, find a quiet place, take a few deep breaths, go for a walk or listen to music.

What to do if you are not coping

If you take the steps above and notice that you are not coping, you can:

1. Make a self-care plan

Draft a plan of action and enlist a supportive person to help you stick to it. Download our self-care planning fact sheet and template.

2. Do activities to help reduce your anxiety

● Try to do some physical activity or get some fresh air each day. Even an hour of exercise a week improves depression and anxiety.

● Try to do something that gives you a sense of pleasure and/or achievement each day. This could include eating a nice meal, reading a book, joking with friends, listening to music, tidying up around home or work tasks.

● Notice when you are thinking in unhelpful ways. Ask yourself, 'is there another, more helpful way I could think about this situation?'

3. Get professional help when you need it

If you are feeling very anxious or sad for more than two weeks, it is time to get professional help.

There are a range of free and low-cost online programs that you can access from home and complete anonymously or with the support of a health professional.

Helpful online tools and resources

myCompass
www.mycompass.org.au

Black Dog Institute Online Clinic
onlineclinic.blackdoginstitute.org.au

This Way Up
thiswayup.org.au

MindSpot
mindspot.org.au

For information: blackdoginstitute.org.au

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Weekly Personal Mental Health Check-in Template

Use the table below to help you check-in with yourself and identify any changes in your ability to cope.

If you notice any changes, make a note of what strategies you are going to try, to take care of yourself.

Week: #_____ Date:_____

Area of check-in	Answer
Feelings *Have you noticed any changes in how you have been feeling this week? Give yourself a score from 0 (not at all) to 10 (extremely) of how stressed, anxious or down you are feeling.*	
Body *Have you noticed any changes in your own body? Do you have tight shoulders or jaw, tightness in your chest, dryness of mouth, difficulty breathing or heart racing?*	
Sleep *Have there been changes in your sleep pattern? Are you struggling to get to sleep, waking in the night or waking earlier than usual and finding it difficult to get back to sleep?*	
Thoughts *Have you been focusing on 'what if' situations? Are you always worrying about the worst-case scenarios?*	
Reactions & Behaviour *Have you been acting differently to those around you or how you treat yourself? Are you snapping at those you love, finding it extremely difficult to focus, or always depending on things like alcohol or food to cope?*	
Check-in buddy *Have you spoken to your check-in buddy about how you're feeling this week?*	

Strategies I will try this week

☐ Make a self-care plan

☐ Do physical activity or get fresh air each day

☐ Do something that gives me pleasure and/or achievement each day

☐ Notice my thoughts and try to think in a helpful way

☐ Try an online program

☐ Get professional help when I need it

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