

# Navigating our home relationships during COVID-19



Practices like social distancing and self-isolation are impacting how we interact with our partners, children, flatmates and extended family. These changes can lead to tension in our households. The following tips are designed to help us navigate the challenges we may face in our home relationships.

## Communication is key

While there are many factors that support healthy relationships, effective and respectful communication is key to keeping relationships healthy and strong. Communication can be enhanced through:

- Active listening: make a concerted effort to slow down and listen with an open mind, to the other person's ideas, experiences and needs.
- Providing feedback that shows we have understood the other person.
- Clearly and respectfully sharing our own ideas, experiences and needs.

## Collaborate on a contract

Speak with the people you live with about how you can best navigate home life and working from home life. It can help to write out a contract to confirm the arrangements. List 3-4 points that are important that you are asking the other person to respect. These might be small things under usual circumstances, however in the current context are important. The contract may include things like:

- When I get home I need 15 minutes to myself before talking.
- If you see me looking stressed, encourage me to listen to some music.

Continue to check in with the people you live with to review these arrangements. As the COVID-19 situation changes so may your needs and their needs.



## Remember we all cope differently

We all respond differently to stress and have different ways of coping under pressure and uncertainty. For example:

- Some people benefit from talking when under pressure, whilst others may need time by themselves.
- Some people benefit from maintaining their day-to-day routine, whilst others value flexibility in adapting to changes.

Your way of coping is likely different to those you live with. Talk about your stress responses and ways of assisting each other to maintain positive wellbeing.

## Take and make space

Taking space will refresh you and help you cope with the stressors of changed living conditions. This might mean spending 20 minutes in a private space, or putting in your earphones to listen to a podcast. Where possible, create physical space such as by sitting outside. Use this time to relax, process your thoughts, breathe and reconnect with your body. The people you live with also need space.

## Maintain connections

Connected relationships are an important to our wellbeing and resilience. Each day try to connect with the people you live with in a meaningful way. Focus on the quality, not quantity, of the time together. Try turning off the TV and having a conversation. Ask them questions and really listen to their answers.

## BE KIND

Practice showing compassion to yourself and the people you live with. Remember, kindness is contagious too, so try each day to do one nice thing for someone you live with. It can be something as simple as making them a cup of tea or plugging in their phone to charge.



## PLAN FUN ACTIVITIES

In stressful and uncertain times engaging in fun, shared activities will help our relationships stay healthy. Consider scheduling an at home date night, a family cooking or movie night, or a flat mate group project or game night.

## SEEK SUPPORT

If you are concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on you or your relationships reach out for support.

Speak to your **General Practitioner** to make a plan for support, including referral to a Psychologist

**Employee Assistance and Psychological Service (EAPS):** Support is available 24/7 for all NSW Ambulance employees, partners and families. Phone: **1300 360 364**

For 24/7 phone and online support, try:

- 1800 RESPECT** (1800 737 732)
- Beyond Blue:** 1800 512 348
- Lifeline:** 13 11 14
- MensLine Australia:** 1300 78 99 78