

Our world keeps changing

You've got this!

COVID-19 continues to influence who we can see and what we can do – and it keeps on changing, often at very short notice. Even with the benefits of technology, the yo-yo restrictions can feel very frustrating. Isolated from friends, school and independent adventures, it is easy to become upset and annoyed with the situation. So, how can we take care of our mental health during the ongoing ups and downs?

Evidence from young people who have managed to cope and adapt to a wide range of disaster situations all over the world, points to the same tips. The Tree of Knowledge tool on the next page can help you put these tips into practice. Keep coming back to it on difficult days and see if you can get it to work for you.

Stay Connected, Make Memories

Snap lockdowns and changes can put pressure on family relationships, but relationships remain the foundation for resilience and wellbeing. Keep connected – at home, school and online – with positive people who are doing the right thing. Get together when you can, and during lockdowns try to do activities you may not usually have time to do.

Get Active, Keep Going

Exercise reduces stress and boosts mental health. When we least feel like it, we probably could benefit the most. During lockdowns, and also afterwards, be active outside as much as the regulations will allow and, where possible, spend time in parks or nature. Inside, try a new dance or fitness style or set yourself a flexibility challenge. Get friends or family involved to help keep you motivated.

Reach Out and Help Out

Find a time to talk to a trusted adult about any worries, frustration or disappointments, no matter how trivial you think these sound. Let them know what you need – just a listening ear, to problem-solve or to do something fun together. Return the favour and ask what worries they have experienced what they've found helps in managing with the ups and downs.

Be Grateful, Stay Positive

Even though it has been going on for a long time now, the pandemic won't last forever. Try to remember that we are experiencing a unique time in history. What would you like to tell your grandchildren about what you learned from the COVID-19 experience, who you helped, the creative projects you did, and the memories you made. Try to take a moment, at least once each day, to remind yourself of the things you are grateful for.



Keep in mind: Home is not a safe place for everyone. Where this is the case, many of the suggestions above won't likely make it safer. Where safety is a concern for you, your family or a friend, please seek support from organisations set up to assist.

The Tree of Knowledge Tool

Overwhelming Feelings

Worried? Upset? Bored? Frustrated? It's normal. Feelings like these are important. They let us know when something doesn't feel right and can help remind us to do important things, like checking up on a friend or remembering to wear a mask. Sometimes though, feelings take over our behaviour. Other times, we can get stuck in our thoughts and feelings and it stops us making the best of the situation. This Tree of Knowledge tool provides some steps for managing thoughts and feelings in a positive way. It can be helpful for keeping your wellbeing on track during this time.

Keep Talking and Listening

If you are concerned that you really aren't coping it is important to talk to a trusted adult or seek professional advice (many services are available online or by phone).

Top Tip:

It's not always easy to know how you feel, but often your body, behaviour or thoughts show you. For example, if you are feeling grumpy, looking for a snack or bugging others you might be feeling bored. If you are starting to rant, snapping at your parents or struggling to concentrate you might be feeling frustrated with the lockdown situation. This might be the time to use your Tree of Knowledge.

Get in touch

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This resource was developed by the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University in collaboration with The MacKillop Institute.

Activities

1. Draw a tree with a strong trunk and many branches and choose one or two emotions that are bothering you (e.g., boredom, frustration, anxiety, anger, lethargy).
2. Think of several things you would like to do (and can do) over the coming week - a creative project, a fitness goal, to video call a friend etc. Also think of several things that help to calm or relax you when you're feeling overwhelmed (some of these might be the same - working towards a fitness goal, calling a friend). Write all of your ideas on the tree.
3. Stick your tree somewhere you can find it easily.
4. Now the tricky part ... notice when you are feeling the emotion. Don't try to stop or ignore it, just spot it. Then consciously choose to do one or more of the activities on your Tree of Knowledge.
5. Make a new drawing as often as you want. Try different designs if you prefer - clouds, umbrella, speech bubble, flower, a leaf ...

