

Workplace Distress

Staff Wellbeing Access Program

Anger and frustration.

COVID-19 is an extraordinary event, that the RACF workforce and health provider workforce have never experienced before. As such, we are being asked to do extraordinary things, over long periods of time and for how long, we do not know. We are a tired workforce who continue to show up for our residents, our colleagues, our families and our RACF community.

As a worker of a Residential Aged Care Facility, you may have experienced the feeling or witnessed the display of anger through the Pandemic.

- You may be seeing anger displayed by Residents and their families because there has been a change in how visitation can occur.
- Anger may occur when you are watching the T.V., listening to the radio or looking at social media in relation to how the media has / was portraying RACFs. You might find this frustration when hearing that others who are working in different fields are praised and your work is being questioned, rebuked or minimised.

Anger can be our way of expressing or responding to a range of other feelings like stress, jealousy, hurt or sadness, feeling unfairly treated, guilt or shame, feeling unable to control a situation, feeling misunderstood or not listened to, feeling a loss of connection to family and your community. When we look at the impact of the Pandemic and its impact on our feelings, we can understand why we may be angry.

Through the Pandemic we have experienced many emotions that could increase our likelihood of anger and frustration:

- guilt or shame if we received a positive COVID 19 virus result after working hard and adhering to all the right procedures.
- Increased stress levels due to the extra steps and time that are now required to complete simple tasks
- Quick response to restrictions and lockdowns, which may increase feelings of loss of control in these situations.
- Varying levels of communication with our line managers.
- Tiredness from working overtime to keep an RACF open due to staff shortages, sick leave and additional workloads.

It is important you understand why you may be angry at work. This may have consequences if your anger becomes an action such as verbal aggression or violence. It is important for you to reflect and understand what are the triggers and early warning signs that you are getting angry. If you are unable to manage your anger and are concerned about how you are responding this may be a good indication to seek help to reframe and obtain some strategies moving forward.

Anger and the workplace can have consequences if your anger is having an impact on others. While this is an extraordinary time workplace legislation still applies and it is important that a Pandemic does not define who you are as a member of a workforce.

Anger



Signs of Anger:

- If you are finding that you are having trouble controlling your emotions and it moves to feeling angry
- If you are finding that you are consuming more alcohol to help cope and manage your anger
- If you are finding that you are becoming more isolated within your family network
- If you are finding it increasingly more difficult to manage your anger at work
- If you begin to withdraw and are not talking to anyone about what you are experiencing and it 'boils' over into anger

Things that may help with Anger.

- Talking with your colleagues about how you are feeling may help make meaning of your experiences rather than dwelling on what is making you angry.
- Learn new strategies such as: relaxation therapy or mindfulness,
- Attend to self-care through eating well, exercising, maintaining social connections, and getting sufficient rest.
- Support each other, as colleagues who have shared experiences.
- Seek professional support if you are feeling distressed or troubled by your experiences and things are not improving for you.
- Attend staff wellbeing activities with your colleagues and remain connected.
- Making it work through social distancing measures – develop a creative list of ways to remain connected, such as morning tea, staff message boards and staff chat forums.

Tips for self-love

- Healthy eating
- Minimise alcohol
- Create a regular sleep routine
- Increase exercise or walking
- Reach out to those important to you
- Take time to breathe.
- Learn mindfulness.

Where to get help:

- Access to your Employee Assistance Program: Information can be found on your Organisation's website.
- Make an appointment to see your G.P. for an emotional wellbeing health check.
- Visit your G.P. to get assistance for referral to a counsellor.
- Contact HeadtoHealth – <https://headtohealthvic.org.au/> and phone support: 1800 595 212
- Reach out to your support network of work colleagues, friends, and family.
- Allow yourself to engage in self-care such as mindfulness, meditation, exercise.
- If you are religious talk to your spiritual guide / leader
- If you find it difficult to manage your anger talk to a counsellor about anger management techniques

Website links & resources:

1. Beyondblue – www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/ 1800 512 348
2. Lifeline- <https://www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/information-and-support/covid-19/> 13 11 14
3. Visit Head to Health which hosts a variety of website links and tools: <https://headtohealth.gov.au/>
4. Smiling Mind – www.smilingmind.com.au/thrive-inside and smart phone app.
5. Headspace: 'What is anger & the effects on mental health': <https://headspace.org.au/young-people/what-is-anger-and-its-effects-on-mental-health/>