

Anxiety

Staff Wellbeing Access Program

Anxiety

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.

When living with the Pandemic you may have opportunities to create a level of safety for yourself and people who are important to you in your own space outside of the workplace. This may assist in reducing the anxious feeling you may be experiencing through this time as it is allowing you a level of control in how you manage your contact with the virus.

When you are at work this can create an increase in that anxious feeling you may have as this is a shared space. The contact with the virus itself is creating an anxiety amongst us as we are anxious that we may bring the virus into our workplace. If the virus enters our workplace, we are then anxious:

- About the impact and who will be affected,
- will I transfer it to my family?
- will I transfer it within my workplace?
- the wait for the outcome of your COVID 19 swab
- people outside your workplace may abuse you in person, via social media as they are anxious about an increased exposure to themselves.

There is no opportunity to relax in our workplace as we are being extraordinarily vigilant each moment we are at work as there is still the potential for exposure to the virus.

When experiencing a normal event that raises stress or an anxious feeling, these feelings will leave when the event has subsided or been removed. What we are currently experiencing is an extraordinary long exposure to a stress and anxious event that has not subsided. The impact for us in the workplace is that over time those anxious feelings can start to intrude our own space, our workspace and the features of this intrusion can be varied.

We may start to experience a: *Physical response*: panic attacks, racing heart, quick breathing, or a *Psychological response*: excessive fear, obsessive thinking, or a *behavioral response*: avoidance of situations that make us feel anxious. These experiences of anxiety may impact on your ability to manage work, engage at home, move in your community. The trigger for these experiences may be the fear of contacting the virus and the anxiousness that is created for you.

It is important that you seek support, remembering that this is an extraordinary event which has required us to be continually vigilant. Consequently, you may be experiencing increasing anxious feelings that have not had an opportunity to resolved.

Anxiety



Signs of Anxiety:

- Finding it difficult to sleep or experiencing bad dreams.
- Finding it increasingly difficult to concentrate at work.
- Finding that you are easily startled.
- Increase in anxiousness towards activities that are reminders of what you experienced and may still be experiencing due to the longevity of the Pandemic.
- Feeling restless or on edge
- Finding it hard to stop worrying

Things that may help with Anxiety.

- Understanding and talking with your colleagues about your feelings of anxiety may help make meaning of your experiences.
- Learn new strategies which help when you are beginning to feel the signs of anxiety, such as: relaxation therapy or mindfulness,
- Attend to self-care through eating well, exercising, maintaining social connections, and getting sufficient rest.
- Learn new sleep hygiene techniques to assist in establishing a sleeping pattern.
- Support each other, as colleagues who understand 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

- Eat balanced, healthy meals.
- Minimise alcohol intake
- Create a regular sleep routine.
- Increase exercise or walking.
- Reach out to those important to you
- Take time to breathe.
- Learn mindfulness.
- Hug yourself and know you are amazing.

Where to get help:

- Access your Employee Assistance Program: speak to HR or look at your Organisation's employee website or noticeboard.
- Contact HeadtoHealth on 1800 595 212 or <https://headtohealthvic.org.au/>
- Make an appointment to see your G.P. for an emotional wellbeing health check.
- Ask your G.P. to support you to access a counsellor.
- Have a look at the many web-based supports that are available such as Head to Health: <https://headtohealth.gov.au/>
- Reach out to your support network of work colleagues, friends, and family.
- Allow yourself to engage in self-care such as mindfulness, meditation, exercise.

Website links & resources:

1. HeadToHealth – <https://headtohealthvic.org.au/> and phone support: 1800 595 212
2. Phoenix Australia - www.phoenixaustralia.org/
3. Beyondblue – www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au/
4. Mind Spot – www.mindspot.org.au
5. MoodGym – www.moodgym.com.au
6. Smiling Mind – www.smilingmind.com.au/thrive-inside and smart phone app.