

COPING DURING TIMES OF STRESS AND UNCERTAINTY

Over the course of our lives, each of us will experience unexpected change and times of stress. These might include environmental disasters, global pandemics, global conflicts, or financial hardship. These unexpected changes can impact our daily life and routine, freedom and social connections. It can leave us feeling stressed, and like we have lost our sense of control.

We might also feel bored, anxious, sad or frustrated as well as a wide range of other emotions. It may be especially difficult for those supporting someone who is using alcohol and/or other drugs. While many of these feelings are normal, they can trigger some unhelpful thoughts and less helpful behaviours. You might even find yourself drinking more alcohol or thinking about using other substances to cope. Remember, it's important you look after yourself so that you can support others. You have the power to look after your own mental wellbeing - you might just need some help to do it!

This factsheet will provide you with tips for managing stress, looking after yourself and seeking support.



3 KEY STRATEGIES TO COPE AND CARE FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

1. STAY CONNECTED

It's important to surround ourselves with people that make us feel good. This is particularly important if you are supporting a loved one, as we know this in itself can be an isolating experience. Social connection can improve our mental health by reducing stress levels, increasing self-esteem and resilience, and creating a sense of belonging, purpose, and identity. Good social connection is important to everyone, however, it may not always happen naturally and sometimes can take a bit of effort particularly during times of change and stress. Some ideas for connecting: Give someone a call during your commute or on your way somewhere to just check in, do exercise or play a sport together e.g., walking/jogging/running, pickleball or tennis, group fitness classes such as pilates or boxing, meet up to try a new cafe or restaurant. It can also be helpful to meet new people and form new connections through: joining a gym or sports team, volunteering in your community, joining a social club related to your interests (book club, trivia, board games, sports, hiking etc.)



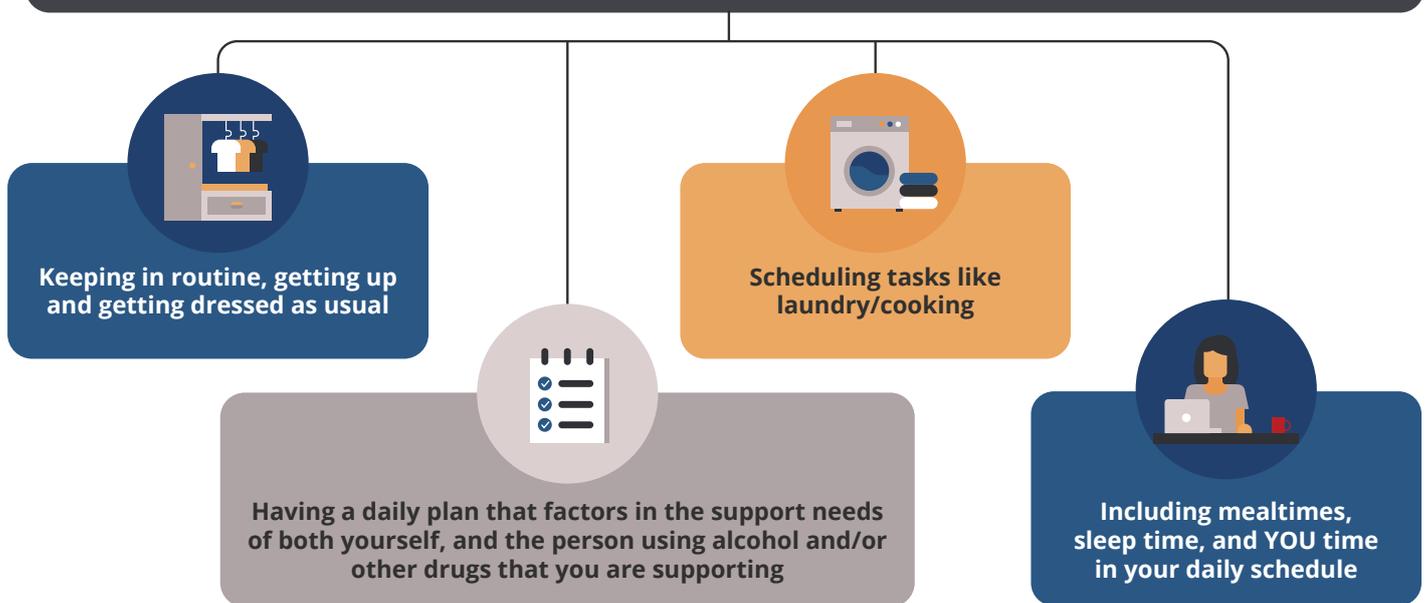
You can:

- Phone friends and family members to talk about your experiences.
- Message people just to check-in.
- Use video calling apps to see and speak to people.
- Spend quality time with the people you live with by having conversations, playing games, watching movies or enjoying other activities together.

2. STICK TO YOUR USUAL ROUTINE – AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE!

Establishing structure can help you maintain a sense of purpose and normality in your daily life. Supporting someone using alcohol and/or other drugs can be very unpredictable, and sometimes, keeping a routine isn't always possible, but trying to maintain business as usual during times of stress/crisis can be helpful for both you, and the person you are supporting.

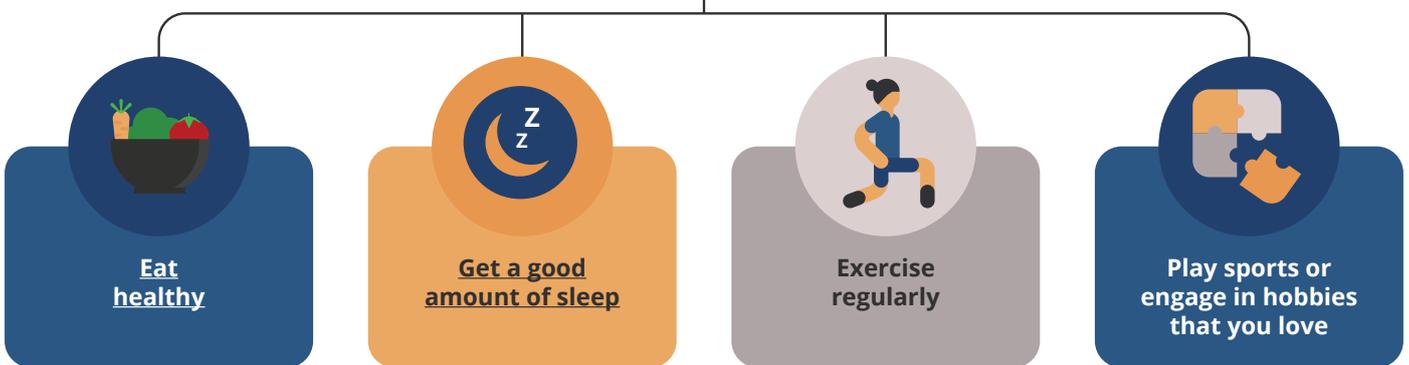
TRY TO STAY STRUCTURED BY:



3. LOOK AFTER YOURSELF!

It's also important to take care of yourself by continuing to do the things that you enjoy! This will make you feel good and will help to keep the not-so-pleasant feelings at bay. The Centre for Clinical Interventions has a list of "**Fun Activities**" which you can use to help you identify a few activities that you enjoy and can introduce into your routine. It is important to limit overindulging in things that you might like a little too much of, like comfort food. It's also important to monitor your own intake of alcohol and/or other drugs. These substances can alter your reality, negatively affect your mood and make mental health issues worse.

TRY TO:



Lastly, it's important to know that everyone will respond differently to stressful situations. Remember to be kind to yourself and know that you don't have to be productive all the time. It's also okay if supporting your loved one becomes a bit more challenging during this time. Regardless of what other people are doing, it's fine to take some time-out and look after your own wellbeing. It's also normal to experience some mood changes as well as emotions like sadness, anger, frustration and boredom. However, if these symptoms become severe or persistent, you should seek help. It is also important to seek help if the person you are supporting becomes distressed or is at risk of harm.

IF THIS HAS RAISED ANY CONCERNS, PLEASE CONTACT ONE OF THE SERVICES BELOW:

This factsheet has included a list of services and resources to support you. Seek professional help if you are feeling overwhelmed or as though you cannot cope.

Lifeline

13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

National Alcohol and Other Drug Information Service

1800 250 015

For more evidence-based information, resources and links to support services relating to crystal methamphetamine please visit Cracks in the Ice. The Family and Friends Support Program also provides more information/resources and support for families concerned about a loved ones AOD use.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES VISIT [CRACKS IN THE ICE](#) AND/OR THE [FAMILY AND FRIENDS SUPPORT PROGRAM](#)