

A guide to...

Dealing with change due to COVID-19

Rostrevor's counselling team recommends this document to help our students cope with the disruption caused by COVID-19. This guide draws on useful resources from [ReachOut](#).

From the moment when COVID-19 first steamrolled into our lives, we've had to learn to deal with change, as each stage of the pandemic has changed the way we live, work and socialise.

While it's normal to feel frustrated and unsettled by all this uncertainty, there are ways you can equip yourself while dealing with life changes.

Work out what you can and can't control



Much of the anxiety during COVID-19 comes from the reality that many decisions are out of our hands. Feeling like we're not in control of our own path is pretty unsettling but figuring out precisely what you can and can't do will help you to maintain a sense of stability and reduce any fear or anxiety.

But how?

You can't prevent a storm from happening, but you can pack an umbrella. Preparation is the key to figuring out what you can and can't control. Try making a list of what's worrying you (i.e. fears). You can then start to figure out ways to address these problems (i.e. fixes). For example:

Fear: *Returning to team sport will be tough, and I won't be any good after all this time off.*

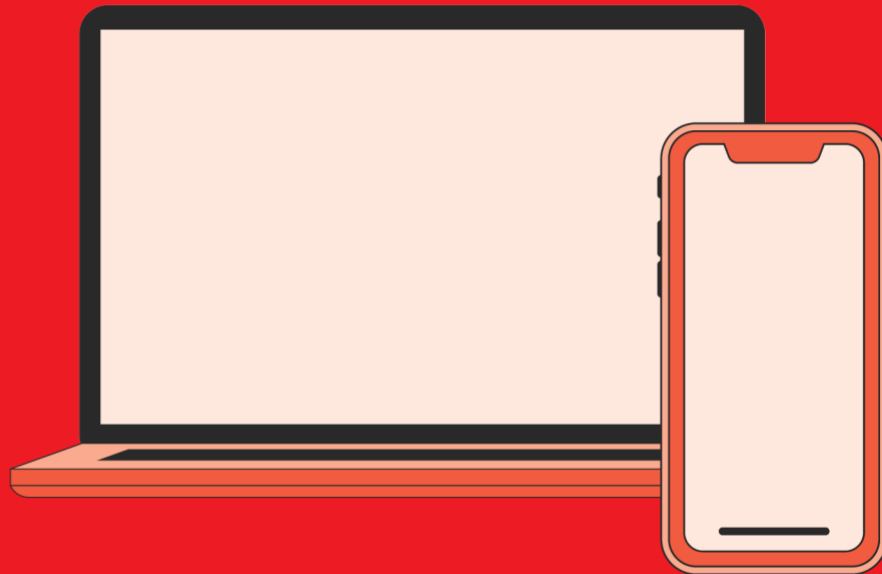
Fix: *Remind yourself that everyone is in the same boat. You can also start working on your skills at home, so that when training resumes, you're not coming in cold.*

Fear: *There might be a second wave of COVID-19 cases.*

Fix: *Maintain your personal hygiene, continue to practise social distancing and encourage others to do the same.*

By coming up with fixes for any fears you have, you'll take back your decision-making power.

Practice self-control



Chances are your self-control has already been well tested during COVID-19. Whether you've been studying remotely or working from home, you'll have faced many tempting distractions – PS4, anyone? By strengthening your self-control, you'll be more comfortable if (and when) things around you change.

But how?

Set yourself mini-tasks each week to strengthen your self-control. Maybe all the time you're spending online keeping up with the news is leaving you feeling flat and empty, but you're finding it hard to look away. Start small by committing to switch off your phone during lunch. Then, day by day, slowly increase the amount of time you spend offline.

The key to building self-control is to use small victories to work up to bigger wins. Start with a manageable goal and build on that, day by day, week by week.

Focus on the positives



It's easy to see the negatives when things change, but it can help to try and see the positives, too. As restrictions gradually relax, look for the upsides. For example, you might now be able to return to your favourite restaurant, even if it's only operating at half capacity, or to resume sports training, but in smaller groups. Remember that even these small changes are a big step forward.

But how?

Practise gratitude. As the rules change and life start to open up again, practise identifying the things you are grateful for – even if it's as simple as being able to have a coffee with a friend at a cafe!

Speaking of friends, surround yourself with positive pals. If certain friends are continually banging on about how crazy everything is, then maybe mute them for a while. Laughing is also a sure-fire way to feel more positive when the going gets tough. Start a LOLS-Only WhatsApp thread with friends, dedicated to swapping funny videos or appropriate memes (whilst ensuring all communications are respectful).

Practising positive self-talk can also be a big help. Each week write down one thing you like about yourself. At the end of every month, you'll then have a little list that proves you're a legend. Ultimately, the better you feel about yourself, the more likely you'll be to find the good in any situation you face.

Change thought patterns



Hands up if you've had a rough day and gone straight down the rabbit hole? Often our default response to change is negative thinking. This is because there's safety in the familiar, and change feels like a threat to our comfortable setup. But learning to adjust your thought patterns will do you a world of good during uncertain times.

But how?

Having negative thoughts is normal, but sometimes the best way to deal with them is to put a limit on them. The [ReachOut WorryTime app](#) lets you decide on a time, place and length of time to deal with your worries each day. Often this is easier said than done so, if you notice you're on a slippery slope with worries, anxieties or fears, remember, you are not alone and help is available by contacting Rostrevor's counsellors, Beyond Blue and other supports [HERE](#)

Live in the now



It's easy to find yourself gazing into the COVID crystal ball and worrying about what the future might hold, especially if your school, work and livelihood have been affected. But if you invest too much time in thinking about what hasn't happened yet, you might just miss out on the moments that are right in front of you.

But how?

Try meditation or mindfulness. [Smiling Mind](#) is an Australian-made mindfulness app designed for users of all ages. It works off the idea of dedicating just ten minutes a day to focusing on the here and now.

If mindfulness isn't your vibe, why not try to master the art of distraction, whether it's by going for a run, hitting the gym (when they reopen), starting your own at-home fitness routine or jumping on the baking bandwagon and whipping up a cake. Concentrating on these kinds of tasks will help to block out the noise. It's hard to worry about the state of the world when your brain is focused on something in front of you!

Appreciate the small things



Take a second to stop and breathe. Listen to the sound of birds tweeting outside. Feel the breeze or sunshine on your face. When we get stuck inside our minds, it can be hard to see the beauty in the world. Take a step back and keep it simple: listen to a favourite song, watch a favourite show or play a favourite game. It's easy to forget that there is a lot that's still good in our world, even in isolation.

Remember: **you're not alone & this too shall pass**

Our minds can play some pretty awful tricks on us.
But we aren't alone. There are millions of people who
feel the same way, and there is no shame in feeling
what we're feeling – no matter what it is.

Up until now, we've survived everything life
has thrown at us.

This situation, too, shall pass.

