



MAREE TEESSON

Welcome, everyone to the Sydney Ideas conversation. I'm Professor Maree Teesson, and I'm director of the Matilda Centre. The Matilda Centre is a research centre for mental health and substance use at the University of Sydney. And I'm also a National Mental Health Commissioner.

I'd just like to start today by acknowledging and paying respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which we meet, and the traditional owners of the lands across the country. And from where everyone is joining us today. I'd also like to acknowledge those people with lived experience of mental disorders who have joined us for this webinar.

So a very warm welcome to everyone online today, and to those who will listen as a podcast later.

Wellbeing and COVID-19 is new to all of us. And so we're really looking forward to the conversation. And we're really keen to hear from you; to hear about your concerns and hear about how you're faring.

And I'll just ask Lexine Stapinski who is also online with me to introduce yourself as well.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Okay, thanks, Maree. So I'm Lexine Stapinski, and I'm a clinical psychologist, and Lead in Intervention and Implementation also at the Matilda Centre.

And as Maree said, we'd really love to hear from you today with any comments or questions that you have on this topic.

But to start things off, I'd like to ask Maree a question, first off, so Maree, can you tell us a little bit about your concerns for the wellbeing of our community in view of COVID-19.

MAREE TEESSON

Thanks, Lex. And it's certainly been a tumultuous time for all of us and it feels very much like a rollercoaster ride, and I'm sure everyone online would be feeling the same way.

My concerns for wellbeing are really in three main areas. The first one is the fear of the virus.

The second one is the impacts of isolation. This is a new phenomenon that we really haven't experienced before – the levels of whole world and whole community isolation from each other.



And then the longer-term impacts on our mental health and in our community. So, there's a lot of fear and stress in our community.

And I think like everyone, I'm worried about the future. We're all worried about the future. People around the world, we hear, are dying. When they die, they die alone. That's a terrible way to die.

And I hear so many people tell me they're all worried about their loved ones, fearful that our way of life has changed and also really fearful for our health and safety. And just yesterday there was a report out that seven in 10 Australians were concerned or very concerned about their health due to COVID.

So that's most Australians, are concerned about this. Also, at the same time, we have our frontline workers and a shout out to any frontline workers who are online today. Who are facing extreme and often unthinkable situations.

And it just really does feel like we're all thinking about COVID 24/7, it definitely feels like it to me. So that's really that fear factor and the fear and stress in the community and compounded on top of that, now we also have the isolation.

Now we absolutely must to defeat this virus, we absolutely must physically distance. But I think it's really important and a challenge for our mental health, the physical distancing, because it leaves us more vulnerable, our usual ways of staying connected have been broken.

We all have to get online like we are now. And social isolation we know can increase anxiety and depression. So while we are social beings; while we've got the challenges of physical distancing, that means we leave ourselves vulnerable.

Now Australians, as a community are doing brilliantly at coming together and protecting ourselves by physically distancing. We just need to make sure we're also socially connecting.

And the last one is impact on the future. This is the first time that we've seen this type of pandemic anywhere in the world. We're going to have economic downturn, people are gonna lose jobs, and we know that we've got extreme stress.

So all of those things coming together. There is a real risk that we will see increases in mental health problems, as happened in particular countries after SARS and more people needing help.

So the pandemic is gonna have impacts far beyond the initial battle with the virus. But having said all those things, I think it's also really important that we think about the things that we can do now.

What can we do now? What can we do to make things even a little bit better for ourselves and others? And so I thought, after laying all that out, I'd throw you the hard task Lexine, in



giving us some hints about how we might practically deal with the fears and the anxiety in the community at the moment?

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Yeah, thanks Maree, and I think you have really just acknowledged how challenging this is. Okay, for all of us. It really is a perfect storm of so many things going on.

And I guess the first, the first practical step that we can take is just to acknowledge how we're all feeling in this time. It's natural that we're feeling anxious, stressed or sad at this time, and sometimes it helps to just notice, acknowledge, talk about it.

Sometimes it helps to have a cry. And we should also cut ourselves some slack. Just know that we may be less productive than we normally are. And it's going to take us some time to adjust and that's okay.

The second step I think, is to really make sure that we engage in active and not avoidant coping. So this means working within the situation that we're in, uncertain and challenging as it, is to look after ourselves and others.

So most of you will be familiar with RUOK day and I think at the moment sort of everyday needs to be an RUOK Day, so checking in with each other, listening to how they're feeling goes a long way. And we need to do the best we can for our own mental health through things like exercise, paying attention to exercise, sleep, healthy eating, and also finding ways to have fun.

I know that's not on everyone's probably top of the agenda at the moment. But it is really important that we're still finding some ways to enjoy things.

MAREE TEESSON

Yeah, Playing Cards Against Humanity online was my fun, last week.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Ah, excellent. Well, that brings me well to the next point, which is finding alternatives.

So at the moment, we really need to be creative and think outside the box and a lot of our usual ways to socialise or exercise or have fun are not really available at the moment.

But we have to get creative, find new ways to do things. And we can also motivate each



other by sharing the newly discovered options.

So yeah, sharing things like ways that we're finding to connect virtually. Now the next one might also be a tip for you, Maree, given what you said in the beginning, is that we do need to make sure we switch off sometimes.

So I think in a time of uncertainty like this, we can find ourselves experiencing information overload and I think you said every living and breathing COVID-19 24/7, and we need to stay informed, but we also need to take a break sometimes switch off take time out from thinking or hearing about COVID-19.

MAREE TEESSON

So like limiting the amount of time on Twitter.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Yeah, limiting and also being selective about the sources that we're, that we're getting our information from. They're not all information sources are equal.

There's obviously some that are more alarmist and yeah, so really being selective and choosing reputable sources as well.

And finally, and this is just reiterating one of your points, I think, Maree that we all need to be connecting and reaching out for help, and encouraging others in our networks to reach out and being aware that there are many resources available - online resources, for example, telehealth resources that can help us to develop coping strategies to prevent problems from snowballing.

So speaking of reaching out, we'd like to now spend some time addressing some of the questions that people have had about managing during this time.

And the question that a lot of people are wondering about I think Maree is work-life balance. So people often juggling multiple roles simultaneously looking after kids homeschooling while working from home. How do you think this can affect our wellbeing?

MAREE TEESSON

So yeah, the juggling the multiple roles. This really came home to me yesterday with a release of a report out of the UK showing that in terms of mental health and wellbeing across UK countries, people who were juggling both family responsibilities - young kids,



trying to work and also working under pressure of uncertainty about the about their future financial security, they were the ones that were faring the worst with the wellbeing.

So it really, as you said, that idea about perfect storm of many factors. There is just not going to be always an easy answer.

I know I've had people who have to have had to do Zoom within cupboards just to actually find a quiet space in their house where they could participate in meetings.

So there's not going to be an easy answer. But I think definitely if you can; splitting up space in your house where there's workspace and there's recreation space, that does help because that allows you to switch off and switch on as you're switching from your work and your home life.

And then the other one is, while it can be really hard, it's looking all the time for ways that you can manage and juggle it.

So, another question that a lot of people have been asking us, Lex, is concerning how to manage concerns about that finance, about really being very worried in this economic environment about losing a job.

Are there some ways that people can deal with that intensity of anxiety and stress?

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Yeah, it really is so understandable that many of us are feeling anxious, stressed or even panicky with the current situation.

As it is, and as it continues to unfold, and what we really need to do, though, is differentiate between productive thinking, productive problem solving, and worry.

And what happens when we get anxious is that our brain gets stuck in a cycle of worry, that is focused on imagining the worst-case scenario that might happen.

So not necessarily likely, but that might happen. And one worry can lead to a cascading chain of worries that seems to snowball and lead to us feeling more and more anxious.

So what's really important is to notice and identify when your worries start to snowball like this, and do something to deliberately interrupt that cascade of worry.

It can help to change environment, even if at the moment that just means changing room or refocus on something completely different that's really centred in the here and now rather than in the future.



And often it can help to talk through whereas with someone else which might help to put those worries into perspective

MAREE TEESSON

I'm just wondering Lex. We've got a couple of questions coming up about this. I'm wondering if we could go over to that now and just because they're directly on this issue around concern about losing jobs.

So we have someone asking, you know, as a younger worker in the university sector, they're very worried about the job market and my contract will finish this year, it seems unlikely I'll find work at the Uni or in the wider sector. Any suggestions?

They've been putting in proactive applications, which is fantastic. But of course, that can feel demoralising, so really suggestions about how to deal with that demoralisation that can happen around rejections, but keeping your energy levels up, just wondering, I can put you on the spot and throw that one to you.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Yeah, look, it's really hard, isn't it? And you're like, your heart really goes out to people. when you know, when this situation is going on. You're hearing this from so many people.

And I guess we all sort of need to remember at the moment is that this is a situation that is not going to last forever. The feelings that we have at the moment, the anxiety that we have at the moment, it's related to a very particular situation.

And to a degree, we sort of got to weather the storm. Now, I guess the tips that I was talking about before in terms of really trying to make sure that, I guess it's realistic to worry about things at the moment, but sometimes we can catch those worries spiraling out of control and really going beyond maybe the situation and really catastrophizing things.

So, staying on the lookout for when that starts to happen, and as I said, trying to switch back to another, refocus on something else focus on, like this person has said, really being proactive and looking at what can I do in this situation?

What steps could I take to make it a bit better and this person's been really inspiring in terms of really being proactive and sounds like doing everything that they can put themselves in the best possible situation when given a really, really tough situation.

The other things, just to finish on that, that I want to mention is that if you do find that your worry is becoming really overwhelming or stopping you from being able to get on with things, also maybe causing sleep problems or really having trouble concentrating, then it's



important then to think about whether you might need some extra support.

And we do know there are really effective strategies out there that can help people manage their thinking patterns and behaviours that fuel anxiety.

MAREE TEESSON

Maybe just while we're quickly on it, one other small one that's come through in the questions but also related to work.

And that life work balance is, 'finding it hard to keep the office hours can't get motivated in the mornings, but then end up working at night.' Boy, can I relate to this one! I feel less productive and then feel bad about myself. 'How can I structure my day to my best and feel like I'm doing a good job.'

And I think that structure in that one embedded in the question is really the important thing. Setting yourself that structure. One thing that's really helped for me is putting a very significant difference between where office is in my house and where life is in my house.

So, I really am finding that incredibly useful, because that then allows me to set structure around when is work when it's morning, when is evening, when it's rest.

So I'm using geography as a solution, practical solution to that one. So, one part of the house is work, one part isn't, but I don't know if you've got another tip for keeping those office hours.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Well, actually, I was gonna ask you about what you thought the role of managers might be in that because I guess the sort of embedded in this question is the fact that there needs to be an awareness at all levels that we might not be as productive as normal at the moment.

MAREE TEESSON

Yep. Yep. So really feeling less productive. There's a lot of conversation around, everyone at the moment is working from home.

But what is actually happening is we're trying to do our work in a situation of world crisis, often with kids and often with many competing demands.

So it's, I think, as you said earlier, cutting yourself a little bit of slack that maybe you are going to have days where you're going to feel less productive.



Just now that I did have this question, we'll get back to our questions, but one person said 'Is it okay to be enjoying this challenge? I don't have any paid work, but it's been time to address long awaited projects'.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

There has been a few a few stories coming out of people. I saw on the news the other night about a man, a father, who had been looking at the positive side in terms of spending more time working from home, spending more time with family.

So yeah, there certainly are people that are finding some silver linings in really challenging situation.

MAREE TEESSON

Yeah. And, and coming out of the recent UK studies, a small proportion, one in 10 people saying that they were finding more time to do things that they haven't been able to do before.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

And while we're on anxiety, one just came through as well, while we were chatting about social anxiety, which was a great question, I think.

But just saying, given what these this kind of social distancing that we're going through at the moment, what impact might this have on social anxiety?

And it's a fantastic question. Because what we do know about anxiety is that there's a really strong link between avoidance and anxiety, the more that we avoid the things that we feel, so in the case of social anxiety, people feel nervous and anxious about social interactions and how they appear to others.

The more we avoid that, the more difficult it becomes, the more anxiety increases. So at the moment, yeah, we are in a situation where people are sort of forcibly having less social contact.

So I think a really important thing here is coming back to a point I mentioned earlier about finding alternatives. We can't socialise in the same way.

But for people that find themselves prone to shyness and social anxiety, it is important to keep up those social connections, keep practising those social skills, keep those friendships



going. Even more than ever. It's so important at this time, so a great question.

MAREE TEESSON

Yeah, yeah. And can we also say that there's lots of questions coming through and we won't be able to answer them all online, but we'll try and we'll keep all of them. We'll try and type some answers and give some feedback to people online as well.

Maybe one more Lex, which is a really great question around the difficulty of reconciling the fact that prior to this, we were being told to limit our time, our passive digital time, our screen time, especially kids who are being told to limit their screen time.

Around kids, I think we just got to cut ourselves some slack at the moment, this is not gonna last forever. If the kids are on zoom a lot, then they're on zoom a lot. If they're online a lot.

They're online a lot at the moment, we've got to cut ourselves some slack around that.

But in terms of an adult, this person, and I'm assuming it's an adult, is saying that they're finding it hard to adapt, that finding alternatives has been hard. They have Zoom fatigue, and they want to put their phone on silent, but at the same time, you know, they live alone and they need human connection.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. And after a full day of Zoom meetings you come out of it, and you really do feel the effects of that, it's very different. So maybe it does come back to that kind of pacing.

And, you know, making sure we take time for fresh air, you know, you've got to get out at lunchtime when we're all at home, it does make it a little bit easier to, you know, have a good lunch break, have a walk around the block.

MAREE TEESSON

That exercise is really critically important. Making sure that you're not just scheduling in Zoom meetings, but you're also scheduling in exercise, and outside time.

So someone also just asked on the extra support that Lexine just mentioned, for a student, is there a service we can turn to find some more help? We're going to pop up a whole list of places at the end of the session here.



You can also hop online to Matilda Centre website, and you'll find resources there as well. And we'll also try and answer that online. We're getting there, Australia has been actually one of the first countries in the world to have a solid mental health response to COVID-19.

And all of the many questions that we've got coming through obviously indicates how important that is. But clearly, we still need to have more resources.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Well, we've got a question that's come here. And again, my heart goes out to this person who said that they've got a real tendency towards avoidant coping.

And I guess that kind of links well to one of our other questions that we wanted to cover today around alcohol use because I guess this is some, this is one way that people can rather than kind of taking active steps, can want to, you know, bury their head in the sand and avoid the problem.

And so I guess my question to you Maree, is do you that there's risks that there will be an increase in alcohol use at the moment?

MAREE TEESSON

Great question and it really flows on from the questions that question that we got in the Q&A.

Look, alcohol. Australians or people across the world, you know, we do have a tendency to turn to alcohol with coping with anxiety and stress. And the recent reports that we have coming out are the one in four people are reporting drinking alcohol to cope with anxiety and stress.

We are seeing one in five people purchasing more alcohol and close on a third using alcohol daily. So it is as many of our other coping strategies for mental health, anxiety, for stress; are threatened under the COVID-19.

There's that, you know, there's a tendency, we're starting to see that people are turning to alcohol at this time to cope. And of course, as we know, alcohol provides a very short-term relief, but longer term it can spiral and it is not a very effective coping strategy for anxiety and stress.

I'm just wondering, you know, if some people are feeling themselves spiralling and drinking a lot earlier, drinking a lot more than they normally would drink, are there practical things



people can do, Lex, to really try and help their alcohol use and keep it under control at this time,

LEXINE STAPINSKI

I think an important and simple first step is just becoming more aware of how often and how much alcohol you're drinking.

And some of the situations thoughts or emotions, like you've been talking about Maree, that might lead you to drink.

So as you mentioned, it is common for people to report that they're drinking as a way of coping with feelings of stress or anxiety or low mood, but what we know is that over the longer term, alcohol tends to have a rebound effect and makes low mood and anxiety actually worse.

So there's some great apps available that can help you track your alcohol use. And it's really important because we find that over time drinking can have a tendency to creep up. This is particularly true if it's becoming habitual.

So for example, it's common, maybe for people to have a drink, alcoholic drink at the end of the day as a way of winding down. And over time, this can lead to drinking every day, maybe drinking increasingly more alcohol.

Which brings me to the fact that it's really important to have several alcohol-free days per week to help you stay in control and avoid building up a tolerance to alcohol.

So tolerance is like an in-built warning sign that happens when your body becomes used to alcohol so that you need to drink more to experience the same effect.

And if your drinking is becoming habitual, making changes can be challenging at first, but it just takes some experimentation I guess with different strategies.

So for example, some people find that replacing that evening wine down drink without a non-alcoholic alternative can be a good starting point or another great option is getting a housemate or partner that you might live with onboard for solidarity and support in achieving a target number of alcohol-free days.

MAREE TEESSON

Did you just notice that a question came through Lex that weirdly, (the questioner said) 'weirdly', the reverse for them that they were having trouble using alcohol as a support for several years but have stopped in the crisis and have had more time to exercise, change



lifestyle positively. No commute etc. What a great comment.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Yeah, fantastic. I imagine it probably is like that. It's sort of probably going either way for people like for some people, the context that they may have drunk before; the triggers for them.

So drinking might have been around going to pubs going to parties, you know. At the moment, it might be a good time to be a bit opportunistic about making some changes.

Whereas for other people, it might be the opposite it might be a harder time to really keep control of your alcohol use. But that's great news.

MAREE TEESSON

Yeah, there's a couple of positives. A couple of stories and people are positive, and it's then also using the opportunity of the change and keeping that change going longer term.

There's one on being thrust together 24/7 with partners and teenagers means that niggly personalities and issues integrate with each other and finding it difficult to find the time to be selfish and find some me time without offending others in the house who want to want you to be there all the time.

You've got to apply the oxygen mask to yourself. You definitely need some me time. So in the longer term, it's a lot better in those situations again, that's trying to use the geography if you can, or popping in the 'me' time, into the, however that is, into the environment exercising I find is a really active coping strategy for finding some me time.

I don't know if you've got any other suggestions or strategies for around the 24/7?

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Yeah, I think your first point is just such an important one that we often particular people and I've been thinking a lot about health professionals at the moment, who are under extraordinary stress and so for health professionals, for parents, for all these people that have additional demands on them - It's so important that we realise that to take time out for ourselves means that we're more effective carers as it means that we're supporting our own mental health, emotional wellbeing.

And that we're going to be better at our jobs and be more able to support those around us.



So it's not selfish. It's actually a selfless act to take time to care for yourself. So yeah, I just encourage that person to carve that time out, ask for support to carve it out if need be,

MAREE TEESSON

If need be. And someone was asking, you mentioned health care workers, and someone was asking about providing support to health care workers who were COVID positive, and then feeling the stress and the stigma around that.

As I said, the Australian Government has been some of the first in the world to start to put some resources in place for the mental health of both health workers and also the mental health of the community.

And so very shortly, there will be some resources, more resources available for workers and health care workers particularly, around those issues, but also the stress and the potential trauma associated with being on the front line around COVID.

So we will send a link to those as they get up, they're not up yet. And again, it's really reframing as the stigma is around the guilt and the feeling very responsible for those, you know, in terms of a health setting, but it's really reframing it as we're all humans and this can happen to anyone.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

I saw a question before I swear, which was about young people. So I thought I might put that one to you with your expertise in this area about whether you think that young people are particularly vulnerable at this time, or are teenagers bulletproof?

MAREE TEESSON

Well, I think teenagers like to think they're bulletproof. But we know when it comes down to previous disasters internationally, SARS, the fallout after the hurricane Katrina; that actually it was younger people and adolescents who were the hardest hit in terms of mental health.

So this is also now starting to play out in the very early data that's coming out of the UK, that's showing that young people are experienced some of the greatest levels of distress and stress following the initial outbreak of COVID in March in the UK.

So young people are particularly vulnerable. And then of course, that snowballs later on. So,



we've even got someone now saying online, my teenager seems to be having a harder time about the self isolation than anyone in my family.

Of course, there's going to be some kids who relish the isolation, that they're that those reports coming out of the other disasters plus the UK say that for some young people, they really are going to be hit hard by this self-isolation.

So we definitely need to be responsive. And we really need to be providing resources and as many resources online as we can. So we've been building evidence based online resources for young people over many years.

And you can pop on the Matilda Centre and see those resources. We've made a number of those resources free over the period and distributing over the period of COVID.

So I think it's just really: get on and give teenagers as much of the skills and advice as we can now, so that we build up as much as support for them so that they are at least buffeted against the effects of this

So, like I said, Get online Have a look at those resources on Matilda centre. Teenagers while they really find it hard; they actually also increase their learning machines. And so let's take that opportunity and give them the skills that we can.

Someone's just asking us about HSC – supporting teenagers sitting the HSC and having supported a teenager through the HSC last year, that is incredibly challenging. And now with COVID.

On top of that, you've definitely got the increased double whammy of both HSC and COVID. That person's mentioned, a lack of sleep is a common characteristic and lack of sleep, you know, compounding with being highly anxious and avoidance is a strategy I think coming back to being active coping exercise, trying to make sure you've got some really solid sleep strategies in place.

They're all brilliant things to be doing for a teenager. But I think that first point that you made Lex about cutting some slack. I know some universities now are going to be accepting the Year 11 marks for entry. So just really testing an understanding that it's going to be a difficult time. Any other strategies around HSC?

LEXINE STAPINSKI

No, but I've got another interesting, almost more of a comment about someone's written in and said that they're an introvert who's actually quite liking this situation.

And the suggestion is that we should be asking more people that are more introverted and



asking them about the ways that they cope and the things that they're doing. And so she's saying that she feels very comfortable, alone.

She's developed some very good strong Self Care strategies, including exercise. So that I guess, hearing the voices of people that are maybe more suited to this kind of physical distancing might be a really good thing at this time.

MAREE TEESSON

So there are many Australian studies happening at the moment to try and actually capture how what strategies people are using to cope in these. So one; acknowledging that it can be challenging for people and we know that the social isolation can lead to increased anxiety and depression.

But then it's also important to understand what strategies people are using in this very unknown. So thanks for sharing that.

And, again, we're trying to bring together the research studies that are happening both nationally and internationally so that we can actually learn for now and for potentially the future, what are the ways that people cope? So definitely, that question has some great strategies that we will be collecting.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

So just a comment or a question actually; a question someone's asked, 'Is it just me or people also having difficulty concentrating on uni work during this time, even though I technically have more time.'

And I think this sort of harks back to what we talked about right at the beginning, but yeah, I think, well, obviously there are some people as we just spoke about the person who self-described introvert but I think for a lot of us, you know, people really are finding things are a bit harder at the moment.

There's kind of this, you know, those worries that you've got about the future about what's happening. That's the uncertainty.

And so I do think it's very, very common to have less capacity to concentrate on what we need to be doing at the moment. Do you have anything to add to that, Maree?



MAREE TEESSON

No, I think you're right, that we've got the added cognitive load and I think the way that we talk about it is very important.

We are thinking about this as working constantly as working from home. Whereas the framing is actually we're trying to do some work, some productive work in the face of a global crisis, where we are concerned where we do have the load of worrying about our health, if one in seven Australians are very concerned about their health, that is going to take some mental energy.

And some of the strategies that we've been talking about is trying to take that in and make sure it isn't happening 24-7, that you put that in a in a particular time, in your day or you use strategies to contain that, so that when you are working, even if it isn't as many hours as you normally work, you've got time, you've got some headspace to do that.

One of the things we're asked here is it difficult to say no to requests, catch ups on FaceTime Skype chats, particularly when you don't have anything else to do, and finding it difficult to politely decline to participants.

So there are a lot of great strategies for politely declining without actually saying no. And I'm just wondering if you wanted to give a few of those some strategies to this person.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

I'm thinking I like this idea of politely just declining some requests by myself, yeah, I think sometimes we're not assertive about our situation, because we presume that someone is not going to be accepting.

And often that assumption might or might not be accurate. So I guess the first thing that I would say is to test it out to this person.

I guess you're clearly coming from a perspective where you want to politely decline and I think we've talked today about the overload of computers.

Okay, so perhaps it's about quite politely explaining to the person 'I've already had several zoom meetings booked into that day, I find that I get quite a headache if I have more than X number. So would you mind if we did it next week instead?'

I guess that would be one of the strategies that I might try. But it's really just about testing out what works for you and not assuming that the person is going to react when you when you're not actually sure actually finding that out.

MAREE TEESSON



Yeah, not assuming. Really, really important. We've got time for a couple of more questions before we have to close off but one of them here, I think is really important about the roller coaster ride that this can be.

They're saying that they cope well for two or three days. But then every third or fourth day, 'I find I'm quite teary and normal functioning is hard. How do I know whether this is a typical response in the circumstances, driven by how tiring it is to remain positive? Or whether it's indicative of needing more professional help?'

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Yeah, that's a really good question. And I think, I guess what this person is capturing here is an understanding that it is normal that we're going to feel a little bit more down at the moment or that we're going to feel a bit more stressed at the moment, perhaps teary at the moment.

But I guess some of the signs that I'd be looking out for, you know, for one thing that its persisting beyond just one day or one afternoon, but it really is something that's continuing on for quite some time, and that there is a significant impact on your functioning so that you're not able to concentrate, your sleep might be disrupted, your appetite might be disrupted.

You're really feeling some of those bigger impacts, and that you've kind of got that negative spiral of sorts going on. And that might indicate that you really do need some additional help.

But having said that, I guess, really, we can all benefit from learning some coping strategies. So I would encourage anyone who's feeling down to have a look at some of the resources that are available online, a lot of the strategies are just really simple, you know, common sense strategies, but that can just help you to be able to manage that, you know, the emotions that we all sort of confined to at the moment and to do that in a more proactive way.

MAREE TEESSON

Maybe even just mentioning that there now, telehealth is available and it's much more broadly available. So psychologists and, and mental health professionals are able to provide telehealth services for people so that if you are feeling as you say, there's no problem with reaching out, it doesn't hurt anyone to have either a brush up or to have skills in these areas.

So if you are, as you said, seeing it start to spiral, that then there's absolutely no harm. And you can find psychologists online, go to resources, go to online resources, I wouldn't hold



back in reaching out.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

Absolutely. And what we're going to provide at the end of today's session, I guess what we've, as Maree says, it's so important to reach out.

So what we've done is put together a whole bunch of resources that Maree can talk through in terms of how you might go about doing that.

MAREE TEESSON

There COVID-19 mental health resources, and we'll keep updating those. Both on the Matilda site and Sydney Uni sites.

There's resources for children and youth. And crisis support services. So if anything that we've talked about today has made you feel distressed and wanting immediate support, then please reach out to those crisis support services.

In terms of substance use assistance there's some amazing resources there. Both online help resources and Positive Choices has the online resources for young people that I was talking about. In terms of domestic violence, there's some great organisations and lines there if people are needing help in that area.

And then just lastly, the University of Sydney there's some ways to give back and to as people said, try and increase the research in this area.

So we'll post this on the Sydney Ideas website and also on the Matilda Centre website, this slide and we keep adding to it. And please throw your questions in because the more we know the more information we have about the gaps and the more areas we can add.

And that is it. Thank you so much, everyone for tuning in. And thank you for the amazing question and answer session. Look out for the podcast and hopefully we can answer some of the questions online. Thanks very much.

LEXINE STAPINSKI

All right. Thanks, everyone. Bye.