

Dear Valued Client,

Please find enclosed our **RELATIONSHIP PACK**

We understand these are difficult times for everyone and the health safety and wellbeing of clients, families and our staff are important to our service. With consideration of the current COVID-19 public health status, we have made the difficult decision to cancel many of our groups due to Coronavirus restrictions.

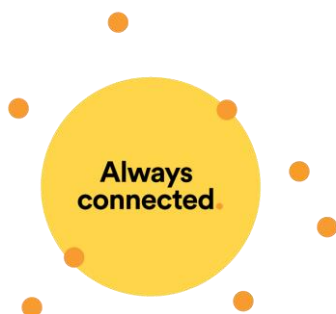
To ensure we can stay connected and provide support during this uncertain time, we have developed this relationship pack to help provide support and helpful tips and resources, until we are able to reconnect with you face to face.

Please know that we are always here if you ever need. Our counselling services are still available to support you and your family to navigate the uncertainty. We offer confidential online and phone counselling to support you in grief and loss, family, relationship and marriage difficulties, stress/anxiety/depression and changes in personal or family situations.

To find out more about our counselling service call us on 4254 9395.

Regards,

Roseanne Plunkett
Executive Manager, Family Services



25-27 Auburn St
Wollongong NSW 2500
P (02) 4227 1122

35A Cordeaux St
Campbelltown NSW 2560
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E enquiries@catholiccare.dow.org.au

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Many of us are currently going through some challenging times due to the effects of COVID-19 on ourselves, family and friends. These challenges range from very practical, such as availability of food and essential items in supermarkets, right through to health risks and emotional and psychological coping and wellbeing.

It is common to need support and it is important to reach out if you are experiencing any troubles as everyone is affected differently.

Ways to maintain your wellbeing during this time.

- Enact good hygiene practices - washing hands, covering coughs, using hand sanitiser
- Eat well
- Make sure to get plenty of rest when required
- Allow time to exercise and clear your mind
- Take time to go outside
- Have a break from social media
- Plan some simple activities to keep yourself busy such as reading a book, listening to music, watching a movie or organising the house.
- Find time to do things you enjoy and find relaxing
- Recognising the signs that make you feel stressed or anxious and putting in practice plans to help you remain calm.
- Don't panic, if you are after information, look for it from a reputable source such as the Australian Government or World Health Organisation

Sometimes it can be difficult to focus, and problems might creep up on you. Here are some signs to look out for in yourself and others you know:

- Constant Uncertainty
- Anxiety and Disorientation
- Excessive use of Drugs or Alcohol
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Changed eating habits
- Feeling of being overwhelmed

If you or someone you know are experiencing difficulties CatholicCare is here to help.

CatholicCare offers Counselling Services (with online options available) and a range of courses to help strengthen relationships.

We also offer a range of courses including a parenting course on managing **ANXIETY** in children and young people.

To book a counselling session please call **4254 9395** or email intakeservice@catholiccare.dow.org.au

www.catholiccare.dow.org.au



CatholicCare's tips and links to help you thrive.

We know everyone is pretty confused right now and that the news is grimmer than usual. We're here to offer any help we can. Read our tips to help you and your loved one's deal with the COVID-19 crisis in the best way possible.

Tip 1. Be kind to each other

We're all in this together, we might as well take care of each other. That's the most important thing at the moment.

A bit of kindness and community spirit will go a long way to making sure we reduce the harm that comes from Coronavirus. What can you do?

Join "The Kindness Pandemic" and/or "Illawarra Kindness Pandemic" on facebook

Tip 2. Read reliable health information

Follow the links at the end of the document to the latest COVID-19 information. Join the official Australian Government site on whatsapp +61 400 253 787

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

Tip 3. Don't put your mental health on hold

Isolation is only intended to tackle Coronavirus. If anything, we need people struggling with mental health to be more connected than ever to friends and support services.

If you take medication, chemists are still open and if you're out of scripts, call your doctor.

Telephone mental health services are fantastic. Here are some quality options:

<https://www.lifeline.org.au>

Apps such as "Clear Fear" and "Calm Harm", "Insight Timer" and "Smiling Mind" are excellent for mental health

Refer to our support services document for more options.

Tip 4. Use home workout apps

On the couch too much? Need a distraction? Need exercise. Your mental health still needs the many benefits of exercise. We can be using apps to guide workouts (we value their expertise). Here are some suggestions.

- Nike Training Club: 105 free, no-equipment workouts and a 4 -week bodyweight fitness plan ((and plenty more)
- Daily Workouts Fitness Trainer: another similar option to the Nike app is available on Google Play and the App Store.

- Daily Yoga: yoga lovers, this is the only app you need. Available on Google Play and the App Store.

Tip 5. Video call your friends and family

We are social beings, and we need to contact with our loved ones. Get in touch and make a friend or relative smile. Whatsapp, Facetime, Zoom and Housepar-ty are all good (free) options.

Tip 6. Master working from home

- Pick a fixed start and end time for your workdays. Keep to your routine as much as possible. Switching off is more important to your energy levels than staying switched on.
- Prepare nutritious meals. A good diet is essential to your health. Use your home time wisely by making your own meals.
- Exercise and stretch. Your kitchen chair was never designed for a full day's slog. Take regular breaks to stretch.
- Check in with your colleagues. Video calls can keep the smiles and connectedness going.

Tip 7. We're still around to help

Catholiccare is still here, caring for you. We will be publishing more helpful tips and information. Visit our website [Home | Catholic Care \(dow.org.au\)](#) and follow us on our Facebook page [CatholicCare | Facebook](#).

Helpful Links:

- [Symptoms and how the virus spreads](#)
- [Check COVID Symptoms](#)
- [Seeing a doctor and getting tested](#)
- [Social distancing and avoiding infection](#)
- [About Self-isolation](#)
- [Groups at higher risk](#)
- [Information for older Australians](#)
- [Information for Carers](#)
- [Childcare & School Exclusions](#)
- [Travel Advice and Restrictions](#)
- [Where can I get Local Information?](#)



Support Services



Emergency 000

If you or someone you are with is in immediate danger, please call **000** or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

Beyond Blue

Talk to a trained mental health professional any time of the day or night. Calls are confidential. They will listen, provide information and advice and point you in the right direction to seek further support.

[Beyond Blue](#) 1300 22 4636 Open 24/7
[Beyond Blue chat online](#) Open 3pm to midnight, 7 days a week

Lifeline

24-hour crisis support telephone service. Lifeline provides 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services.

[Lifeline](#) 131 114

Kids Helpline

A telephone counselling support line for children and young people ages 5 to 25 and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

[Kids Helpline](#) 1800 551 800

NSW Mental Health Line

A mental health professional will answer your call about mental health concerns for you or someone you are concerned about, including children, teens, adults and older people.

[Mental Health Line](#) 1800 011 511

Suicide Call Back Service

National services that provides free 24/7 phone, video and online professional counselling to people who are affected by suicide.

[Suicide Call Back Service](#) 1300 659 467

Domestic Violence Line

The [NSW Domestic Violence Line](#) provides counselling and referrals to women experiencing domestic and family violence.

[1800 65 64 63](#)

1800RESPECT

[1800RESPECT](#) is a counselling, information, and referral service for all Australians

[1800 73 77 32](#)

Black Dog Institute

[Black Dog Institute](#) is a free online clinic providing a mental health assessment tool and other support services.

Head to Health

[Head to Health](#) can help you find digital mental health and wellbeing resources.

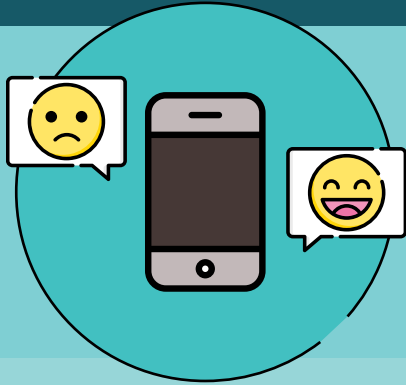
Alcohol & Drug Information Service (ADIS) NSW

[ADIS 1800 25 00 15](#) - operates 24/7 and provides telephone counselling, support, referrals and information for those affected by alcohol or other drugs.

NSW Health

NSW Health have published a PDF of [mental health counselling supports](#).

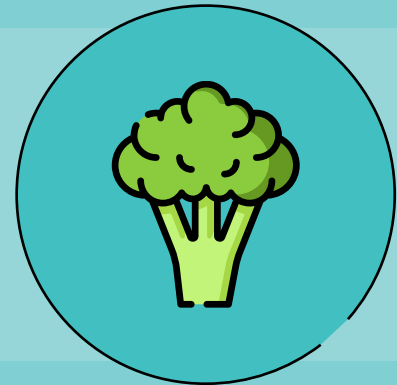
Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

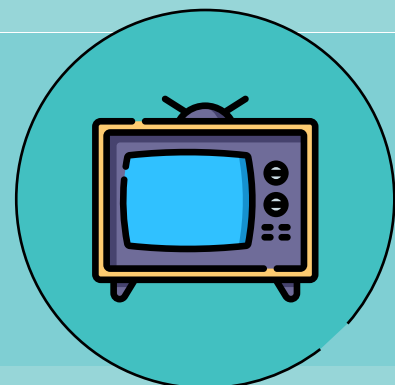
If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

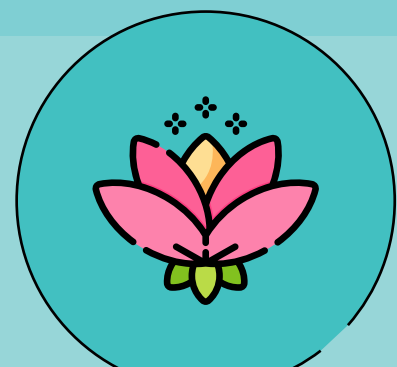
If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.



Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.





COPING CALENDAR: KEEP CALM. STAY WISE. BE KIND



30 actions to look after ourselves and each other as we face this global crisis together. Please use & share 🙏

1 Make a plan to help you keep calm and stay in contact

2 Enjoy washing your hands. Remember all they do for you!

3 Write down ten things you feel grateful for in life and why

4 Stay hydrated, eat healthy food and boost your immune system

5 Get active. Even if you're stuck indoors, move & stretch

6 Contact a neighbour or friend and offer to help them

7 Share what you are feeling and be willing to ask for help

8 Take five minutes to sit still and breathe. Repeat regularly

9 Call a loved one to catch up and really listen to them

10 Get good sleep. No screens before bed or when waking up

11 Notice five things that are beautiful in the world around you

12 Immerse yourself in a new book, TV show or podcast

13 Respond positively to everyone you interact with

14 Play a game that you enjoyed when you were younger

15 Make some progress on a project that matters to you

16 Rediscover your favourite music that really lifts your spirits

17 Learn something new or do something creative

18 Find a fun way to do an extra 15 minutes of physical activity

19 Do three acts of kindness to help others, however small

20 Make time for self-care. Do something kind for yourself

21 Send a letter or message to someone you can't be with

22 Find positive stories in the news and share these with others

23 Have a tech-free day. Stop scrolling and turn off the news

24 Put your worries into perspective and try to let them go

25 Look for the good in others and notice their strengths

26 Take a small step towards an important goal

27 Thank three people you're grateful to and tell them why

28 Make a plan to meet up with others again later in the year

29 Connect with nature. Breathe and notice life continuing

30 Remember that all feelings and situations pass in time



“Everything can be taken from us but one thing: the freedom to choose our attitude in any given set of circumstances” ~ Viktor Frankl



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



www.actionforhappiness.org

Find out more about the Ten Keys to Happier Living, including books, guides, posters and more here: www.actionforhappiness.org/10-keys

When Covid-19 crashes your wedding plans, be gentle, take control, and play the long game

April 4, 2020

By [Guest Contributor](#)

Important issues—: “The deeper question you need to ask yourself is: do I want to be married or do I want to have the dream wedding? Our old way of thinking thought of those as inseparable. New times necessitate new ways of thinking.”

THROUGHOUT the world, engaged couples are reeling in shock. Meticulously planned weddings are unravelling amid the various lock-down policies.

The disappointment is crushing and the change in plans come with very real financial consequences.

Some couples fear their deposits will be forfeited and others are struggling to find available venues for later dates when – hopefully – this all settles down.

How can couples navigate this stressful time without burning their relationship and losing their peace?

Here are a few tips to help you rise above the disappointment.

Be gentle on yourself

That uncomfortable feeling you’re experiencing – it’s called grief. It’s a spirit-crushing, gut-churning, heart-wrenching emotion.

You didn’t ask for it, and you don’t deserve it. But it still is.

Right now, you’re grieving a dream; a long-cherished dream for a certain kind of wedding day.

For many couples, this is a dream that’s been in development for many years. It’s normal to be upset and angry.

That dream is no longer feasible, and your emotional task now is to let it go so you can begin the process of re-investing in a new vision for your wedding day. It’s important to let the old dream go. Really let it go.

Be gentle with each other

Everybody grieves differently.

Couples often come unstuck during intense grief because their coping processes are misinterpreted by the other.

Some will need to talk, talk, talk about it and this will drive the other nuts. Some will withdraw and want to process it privately, and this will send the other into panic.

Some will bounce between rage, denial, despondency and apathy.

These are all normal reactions to grief.

Be respectful of each other’s needs and draw on the support and empathy of close family and friends.

Politely put distance between you and those whose own upset or issues are unproductive in helping you deal with your grief.

It can help to use tools like journaling, meditation and prayer to process your loss.

For some, the grieving will also tap into long-suppressed misgivings about the relationship.

While scary, this is a healthy thing if it brings them to the surface where they can be addressed and resolved.

Take control and move forward

The positive response is to move forward together in the new reality. Living in the past of what was meant to be does not serve you well.

How do you do that? Some ideas include:

Don't try to simply transfer your "old" dream wedding to a new date. That is fraught with complications for aligning the venues, people and services and will almost certainly lead to more disappointment and frustration.

It is also out of touch with the new reality that is our world. Things may not get back to normal as quickly as we would hope, and this pandemic may change our way of life permanently. No one really knows yet, but it would be foolish to base your wedding plans on a return to the old way of doing things.

Most couple's wedding plans become the accumulation of every good idea and desire we've ever had. It grows from two people desiring to commit their lives to loving each other, to a multi-day, multi-venue extravaganza: buck's weekends, hen's nights, kitchen tea, rehearsal dinners, meet-the-international-family lunches, pre-wedding and post-wedding events.

These may have been good things, but in our world right now, many of these are simply an indulgence that is out of step with the present reality.

They are also not necessary to your central desire to begin living your life as husband and wife.

Your wedding day as you planned it, would have been a beautiful experience with friends and family. However, the next day it would have been just a memory; a cherished memory for sure, but none-the-less, a past event.

The deeper question you need to ask yourself is: do I want to be married or do I want to have the dream wedding? Our old way of thinking thought of those as inseparable. New times necessitate new ways of thinking.

Dealing with the implications

Weddings are already expensive enough. With this added complication, your budget may be stretched beyond reasonable levels.

Before crafting new wedding plans, take some time together to really explore your financial values:

With how much debt are we prepared to begin our marriage or expect our parents to take on? There's not the same job security and many of us have lost significant investment wealth.

What are our 'non-negotiables' versus our 'nice-to-haves'?

What aspects of our wedding day plans might be better transferred to a different occasion, for example, a first wedding anniversary, house-warming or new baby baptism?

Are all our guests absolutely necessary or could we honour their influence in other ways or at another time?

Play the long game

Some of the best advice we read when looking for ways to help our stressed daughter during her final school year was to ask the question: will this matter in five years? It really helped keep things in perspective as she prepared for her final exams and worried about whether her marks would be good enough to study her chosen course.

It also works well in other situations. In five years, will the kind of wedding day celebration we have matter? We don't remember much of ours. It was a great day and if we put our mind to it, we remember something about the flowers (arum lillies), the reception (a crowded restaurant that no longer exists) and the guests (family and friends of our parents).

What really matters looking back was the fact that on that day we said, "I do" to loving each other for life.

That is what made the day, both literally and liturgically.

One of our younger work colleagues married last week with just three other people present: the celebrant and two witnesses.

Their family, spread over two continents, tuned in on Facebook-live to share in their joy.

For them, making their wedding promises before the Lord was more important than the parties and celebration or even the international honeymoon.

They chose "I do" over "I will ... when everything is perfect". It was a choice to not let circumstances prevent them from what was most important.

Keeping perspective on disrupted wedding plans includes remembering that the purpose of the wedding event is to become married. It is remembering that there are lots of people suffering right now.

And it is remembering that every challenge we face together and overcome, is building our relational resilience and laying the foundation for our endurance over the decades.

Yes, it is an incredibly important day in your life, perhaps THE most important day.

But it is still just a day and it's important not for the details but for the sacred promises you will make, and which will define the rest of your life.

COVID19 has crashed your wedding and destroyed your wedding plans.

Please don't waste this time chasing after old dreams. Use this precious opportunity to re-connect with your most important mission as a couple and pursue it with passion.

Francine and Byron Pirola are the co-authors of the SmartLoving series. Visit www.smartloving.org for information.

Written by: **Guest Contributor**

Understanding Grief in the Age of the COVID-19 Pandemic

By [Kendra Cherry](#) Reviewed by [Amy Morin, LCSW](#) on April 13, 2020

Published on April 09, 2020

The global coronavirus pandemic has created a new reality marked by grief and loss. Weddings, concerts, meetings, travels plans, school events, and more have been canceled in the wake of the virus. It has forced us to process both individual and collective grief in the face of an uncertain future which we are powerless to control.

“We are all dealing with the collective loss of the world we knew,” explained grief expert David Kessler in an interview with Brené Brown for her "Unlocking Us" podcast.

The disruptions in the normal routines and rhythms of everyday life contribute to the lingering unease and sadness that we are all feeling. Not only are we mourning the loss of thousands of lives, but we are also mourning the loss of normalcy, from seeing our coworkers to engaging in the mundane routines that we previously took for granted.

Any Type of Loss Can Trigger Grief

Grief is typically also associated with death, but it can follow any type of loss. For example, people often experience grief after a divorce or a job loss. Some of the things that we are grieving as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic include:

- Job loss
- Financial anxiety
- Loss of safety
- Worry about loved ones
- Social distancing, quarantine, and feelings of isolation
- Changes in daily habits and routines
- Special plans and events that have been cancelled
- Clashes with family members over how to protect yourself
- Worries about how to pay rent, utilities, and other bills
- Sadness over how the pandemic will affect the world
- Fears for the future

Signs of Grief

It is important to remember that grief is a normal reaction to a loss. We all experience grief at some point in our lives. While we might expect feelings of shock, numbness, sadness, anger, and anxiety, signs may be less clear for those experiencing anticipatory grief.

Some signs that you might be coping with grief in light of the pandemic include:

- Trouble focusing on normal tasks
- Sleeping much more or less than usual
- Feelings of anger and irritability
- Headaches and upset stomach
- Fatigue or low energy
- Re-experiencing feelings of past grief
- Engaging in activities such as eating, drinking, or online shopping to cope with anxiety
- Avoiding thinking or talking about the pandemic

The good news is that people tend to be resilient in the face of grief. Once the immediate crisis has passed, people are usually able to reach a place of acceptance where they are able to adapt and find ways to cope with their loss.

The Physical Effects of Grief

Ways You Can Cope

No matter what type of loss you have experienced, it is important to remember that your feelings are valid and that you are not alone in this. If you are not sure how to manage your feelings of grief, there are some things that you can do that may help.

Practice Self-Care

In the immediate aftermath of a loss, caring for yourself can seem like a monumental task. Focus on the basics and make sure that you are eating, staying hydrated, and getting enough rest. Don't put too much pressure on yourself to maintain normalcy in the face of a crisis.

How Proper Self Care Can Reduce Your Stress Levels

Give Yourself Time

Remember That Your Feelings are Valid

Find Support

If you are struggling to deal with feelings of grief, talking to a mental health professional can be helpful. Many therapists are now offering online therapy options in order to follow the physical distancing recommendations.

A Word From Verywell

Grief is a normal response to loss, but the COVID-19 pandemic has upended many aspects of the normal grieving process. Even if you have not yet experienced a direct loss, don't assume that what you are feeling is not grief.

Whether you are coping with job loss, financial instability, loneliness, or a general sense of anxiety about coronavirus, the emotional upheaval caused by coronavirus may trigger feelings of grief and loss. How you deal with what you are feeling can depend on a wide variety of factors including your overall resilience and social support systems.

Give yourself permission to mourn and treat yourself and others with kindness during this difficult time.

Helpful Links

[How to Support Someone Affected by Coronavirus](#)

[Practicing Empathy During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

[How to Cope With Loneliness During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

[How to Be a Good Partner During Quarantine](#)

[Coping With Missed Activities During the COVID-19 Pandemic \(From Verywell Family\)](#)

[How to Optimize Your Immune System to Fight Disease \(From Verywell Fit\)](#)

5 Rituals to Reconnect in Your Relationship



[Terry Gaspard, MSW, LICSW, Contributor](#)

Jun 2, 2017

Never underestimate the power of intentional time with your partner.

In his book *The Intentional Family*, Bill Doherty discusses “rituals of connection” as an important tool for successful relationships. A ritual of connection is a way of regularly turning towards your partner that can be counted on.

Erica and Rob, both in their late forties, have been happily married for ten years and are raising three children. When I asked Rob about the rituals in their marriage, he reflects:

“We hug every day when I get home because physical touch is one of my [Love Languages](#). Erica is not as affectionate as I am, but she’s up for it because she know’s how important it is to me.”

Couples with relationships rich in rituals and traditions are able to create shared meaning, the top level of the [Sound Relationship House](#).

Daily rituals shape our lives in positive ways

In *The Power of Habit*, author Charles Duhigg explains that habits are crucial to success in all realms of our life. Overall, they make us more productive and healthier. In a relationship, Dr. Gottman calls these habits rituals of connection.

Here are five rituals to help your relationship thrive.

1. Eat meals together without screens

It may not be possible to do this for every meal, but whenever possible, turn off the TV and put away your cell phone. Your emails and Facebook feed can wait.

2. Have a stress-reducing conversation

[Spend 30 minutes each day](#) having a “how was your day, dear?” talk with your

partner. The purpose of this conversation is to discuss external stress; it is not a time to bring up issues about your relationship. Couples who actively listen, take turns sharing how they feel, and show compassion to each other will reap the rewards of more emotional connection in their marriage.

3. Take a vacation

Take an annual vacation without the kids to somewhere you both agree upon. Drs. John and Julie Gottman have an [annual honeymoon](#) in the San Juan Islands off the coast of British Columbia. If your budget doesn't allow you to take a vacation, you might try camping or looking for moderately priced accommodations nearby for a long weekend.

4. Exercise together

Go biking together every Saturday morning or take a daily post-dinner walk with your partner. Add a little novelty and excitement by trying kayaking in the summer or cross country skiing in the winter months. Studies show that sharing an exciting experience can bring couples closer together.

5. Share a six-second kiss

A daily [six-second kiss](#) will increase your emotional and physical intimacy. According to author Dr. Kory Floyd, physical contact releases oxytocin (the bonding hormone), can improve our mood (for days), and can help you stay calm. Holding hands, hugging, touching, and making out can reduce your stress hormones (cortisol) and increase your sense of relationship satisfaction. If kissing for six seconds feels like too much, share a hug like Erica and Rob.

Never underestimate the power of intentional time with your partner. Doing fun things together like singing in the shower or riding a bike can bring joy and laughter. Telling jokes, watching funny movies, or anything else that brings you both pleasure can ignite passion and keep you connected.

Dr. John Gottman suggests that couples commit to a [magic six hours](#) a week together, which includes rituals for saying goodbye in the morning and reuniting at the end of the day. Sticking to these rituals will help you to reconnect when life gets in the way.

6 hours to a better relationship

Partings

Happy couples make an effort to learn one thing that is happening in their partner's life that day before saying goodbye in the morning. The goal is to ask questions and learn about the exciting and not so exciting things about your partner's day.

10 minutes per week
(2 minutes a day x 5 working days)

Reunions

When you see your partner again at the end of the day, share a hug and kiss that lasts at least six seconds. The six-second kiss is a ritual of connection that is worth coming home to. Afterwards, have a stress-reducing conversation for at least 20 minutes.

1 hour and 40 min per week
(20 minutes a day x 5 working days)

Appreciation and Admiration

Use an admiration journal to record something small you notice and connect it to a trait you admire in your partner. This primes your mind to see the positive traits of your partner, instead of focusing on the negative and also makes your partner feel valued.

35 minutes per week
(5 minutes a day x 7 days)

Affection

Make sure to embrace each other before falling asleep (cuddling or goodnight kiss). Think of these moments of affection as a way to let go of the minor stressors that have built up over the day.

35 minutes per week
(5 minutes a day x 7 days)

Date Night

During your date, ask open-ended questions and focus on turning towards each other. This important "we time" is a relaxing and romantic way to stay connected to each other.

2 hours once a week

State of the Union Meeting

Spending just one hour per week discussing areas of concern within the relationship gives couples the freedom to express their fears and concerns in a way that makes them feel heard and loved instead of feeling neglected.

1 hour once a week

The Sound Relationship House: Build Love Maps

[Ellie Lisitsa](#) Nov 7, 2012

<https://www.gottman.com/blog/the-sound-relationship-house-build-love-maps/>

One of the most significant theories created by The Gottman Institute is the [Sound Relationship House](#). In John Gottman's book, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, those seven principles are connected to each level, or floor, of the Sound Relationship House. Those levels are:



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1. Build Love Maps
2. Share Fondness and Admiration
3. Turn Towards Instead of Away
4. The Positive Perspective
5. Manage Conflict
6. Make Life Dreams Come True
7. Create Shared Meaning

And the two walls holding up the house are trust and commitment, which are essential to all relationships. We'd like to start at the foundation with the first level of the Sound Relationship House: **Build Love Maps**. The principle of building Love Maps is simply this: knowing the little things about your partner's life creates a strong foundation for your friendship and intimacy.

Why Love Maps are so important

In our research, we found that [emotionally intelligent couples](#) are intimately familiar with each other's worlds. We call this having a richly detailed Love Map: our term for that part of your brain where you store all the important, and even not so important, information about your partner's life.

Another way of saying this is that these couples have made plenty of cognitive room in their minds for their relationship. They remember the major events in each other's histories, and they keep updating their information as the facts and feelings of their spouse's world change. They know each other's goals in life, each other's worries, and each other's hopes and dreams. Without such a love map, you can't really know your partner. And if you don't really know someone, how can you truly love them?

From knowledge springs not only love, but the fortitude to weather marital storms. Couples who have detailed love maps of each other's worlds are far better prepared to cope with stressful events and conflict. Partners who are already in the habit of keeping up to date and are intently aware of what each other are feeling and thinking aren't as thrown off course by changes and stress in each other's lives. But if you don't start off with a deep knowledge of each other, it's easy for your relationship to lose its way when your lives shift with the challenges and stressors that come to you over time.

How to build Love Maps

Start creating and strengthening your Love Maps today! Try to answer the following questions about each other and find out how much you really know about your partner's world. While you're having fun playing, you'll also be expanding and deepening your relationship.

Love Map Exercise:

- Name my two closest friends.
- What was I wearing when we first met?
- Name one of my hobbies.
- What stresses am I facing right now?
- Describe in detail what I did today or yesterday.
- What is my fondest unrealized dream?
- What is one of my greatest fears or disaster scenarios?
- What is my favorite way to spend an evening?
- What is one of my favorite ways to be soothed?
- What is my favorite getaway place?
- What are some of the important events coming up in my life? How do I feel about them?
- What are some of my favorite ways to work out?
- Name one of my major rivals or "enemies."
- What would I consider my ideal job?
- What medical problems do I worry about?
- What was my most embarrassing moment?
- Name one of my favorite novels/movies.
- What is my favorite restaurant?

Asking these questions will help you develop greater personal insight and a more detailed "map" of each other's lives and worlds. However, getting to know your partner better and sharing your inner self with them is an ongoing process. We suggest regularly updating each

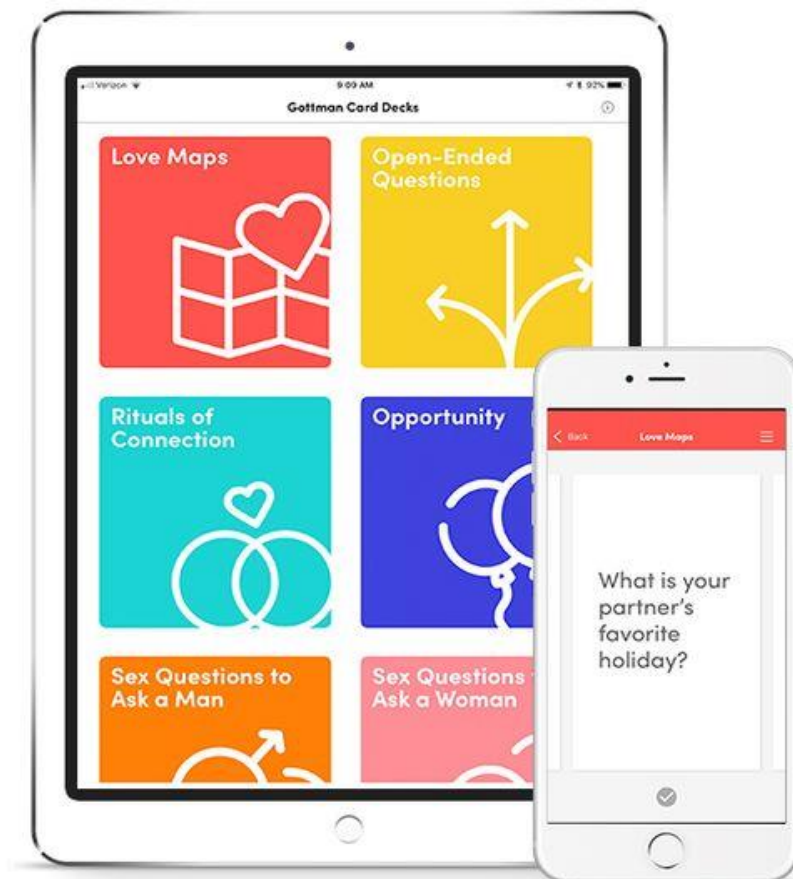
other's love maps by sitting down and catching up. Remember, the more you know about each other, the more you feel a strong connection, and the more profound and rewarding your relationship will be.

See below an app created by Gottman that may be useful:

Welcome to Gottman Card Decks

Want to improve your relationship? This app has the qualities you can ask your partner, as well as suggestions for things to do and say. Start with one or two and see how it goes, then come back for more.

Download it via your app store



10 things you can do now to start improving your relationship.

1. Start catching your partner out doing good things and let them know.
2. Everyday say 20 positive things you appreciate about your partner to one negative thing; that's right, a 20:1 ratio. This is about building up the emotional bank account.
3. Start really listening to what your partner is saying. Suspend your judgements and invest in understanding their needs and desires.
4. Spend time getting to know your partner's interests, likes, dislikes, favourite movie, music and so on. Remember, we change over time. Updating what we know about each other is essential.
5. When in conflict with your partner, look for the aspirations and future goals within that conflict. Remember, conflict is a normal component of relationships.
6. Always remember, the use of contempt, criticism, stonewalling and defensiveness in conflict is highly destructive.
7. Research clearly shows that the use of contempt in relationships is the number one predictor of divorce.
8. Manage your own stress levels and by learning techniques to reduce your physiological and psychological symptoms of stress and anger such as increased heart rate, tightness in the body and narrowing in thinking.
9. When your partner bids for your attention, turn towards them and show genuine interest.
10. Take a moment to breathe.



Engaged couples in COVID-19 links to more resources

- The Gottman Institute

Coping with Uncertainty During COVID-19: An International Gottman Trainer Shares Their Perspective

<https://www.gottman.com/blog/coping-with-uncertainty-during-covid-19-an-international-gottman-trainer-shares-their-perspective/>

- The Gottman Institute

Check out this website for the COVID-19 related blog articles they have collated

<https://www.gottman.com/blog/category/covid-19/>

- Syd Morning Herald article:

It was meant to be their big day. Four hours later, they married on Zoom

<https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/they-were-downtrodden-four-hours-later-they-married-on-zoom-20200415-p54k3d.html>

(How to pull off a live-streamed wedding ceremony)

- *How can I miss you when you won't go away? A couple's survival guide*

<https://news.berkeley.edu/2020/04/14/how-can-i-miss-you-when-you-wont-go-away-a-couples-survival-guide/>

- *A dozen great tips for couples dealing with COVID-19 cabin fever*

<https://news.berkeley.edu/2020/04/14/tips-for-couples-on-how-to-weather-covid-19-cabin-fever/>

- *Tips For Strengthening Your Relationship During COVID-19 Lockdown*

<https://www.premierhealth.com/your-health/articles/healthnow/tips-for-strengthening-your-relationship-during-covid-19-lockdown>



A Guide To Self-Care and Wellbeing During Times of Uncertainty.

In times of uncertainty, it is normal and natural for children and adults to respond in unique ways. It can be helpful to focus on the aspects of our lives that we can control like caring for our physical health, safety and emotional wellbeing.

“The only thing in life that is permanent is change.
Change is the one constant in life”

(Fallin, 2013)



Steps for Self-care

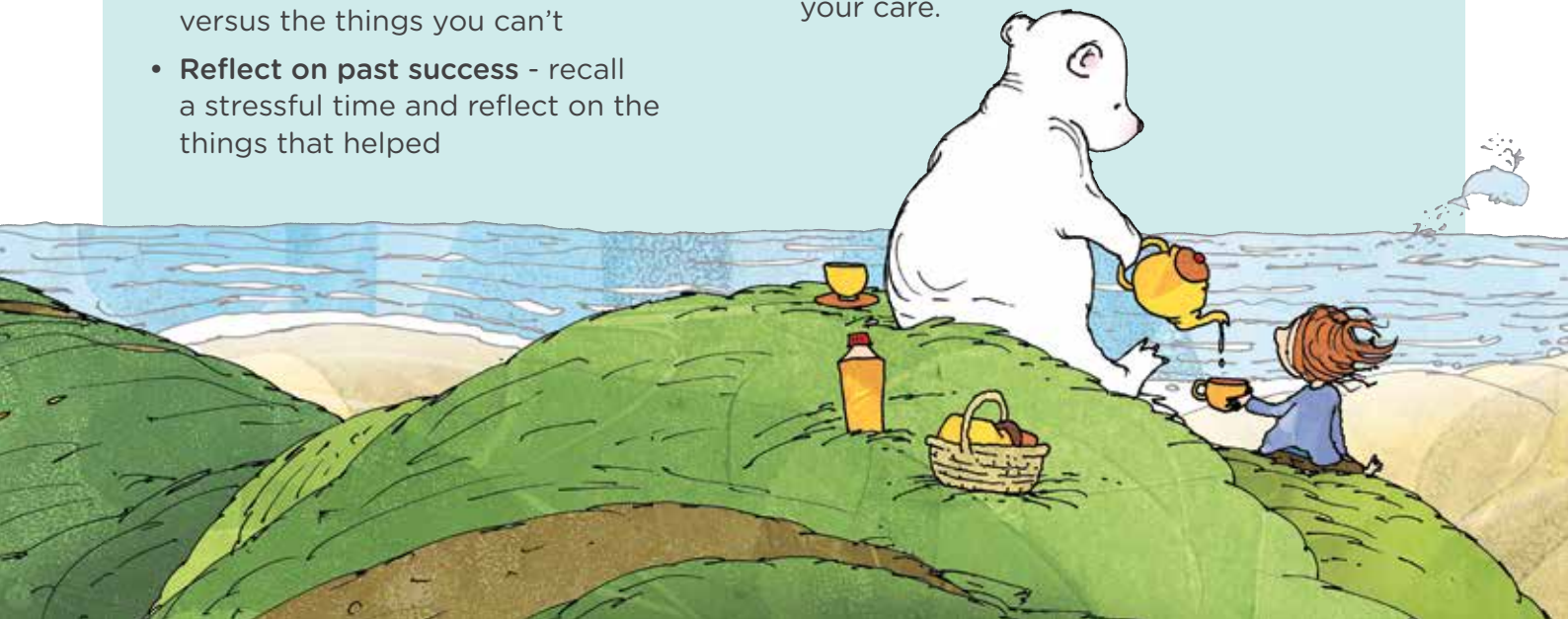
There are things you can do to support yourself, your friends and your family:

- **Listen** - to your needs and your own advice
- **Offer kindness** - for yourself and others
- **Stay connected** - with others by phone and online
- **Keep informed** - just enough information from reliable sources
- **Maintain a healthy routine** - diet, activity and sleep
- **Focus on the things you can control** - versus the things you can't
- **Reflect on past success** - recall a stressful time and reflect on the things that helped
- **Learn a new skill** and make plans for the future
- **Help others** - if and when you can
- **Seek support** - It's okay to ask for help and advice
- **Build hope** - Focus on 3 things you are grateful for.



You can't pour from an empty cup.

Look after yourself so you are better able to help the children and young people in your care.



Ideas to Help the Children and Young People in times of Uncertainty ...

In times of uncertainty and change, it is normal and natural for children and young people to respond in different ways. Adults can play a vital role in supporting children and young people through the experience.

How may Children and Young People Respond?

- Worried, clingy and uncooperative
- Sad and angry one minute, okay the next
- Frightening thoughts and nightmares
- Regression to earlier behaviours
- Stomach aches and headaches

Adolescents may react in similar, but different ways:

- Mood changes
- Tired and distracted
- Retreating from social networks
- Sleep problems and headaches



Helpful Hint – children and young people respond in unique ways and it is helpful to recognise if your child or young person is behaving differently.

Help Your Child or Young Person

- Offer your attention, patience and love
- Calmly listen to your child's story and encourage your child to ask questions
- Acknowledge and affirm your child's feelings and help your child to identify helpful ways to manage the feelings
- Encourage your child to ask for help from trusted adults
- Involve your child in decisions that affect them
- Respond to your child's questions with clear and factual age appropriate information
- Model positive ways to cope and prioritise quality time together

Other Ways to Help

- **Maintain daily routines** as much as possible
- **Stay social** – create ways to connect with special people and loved ones
- **Get active** – go for a walk, listen to music, sing, play with a pet
- **Be curious** – learn a new skill or research an interesting topic together
- **Help others** – encourages social connections and an "I Can" attitude
- **Plan fun activities** to look forward to

Find helpful resources, updates and training dates at goodgrief.org.au



"I think the most significant learning for children in the group was knowing they are not alone and not the only ones that experience change, loss & grief"

Companion, Seasons for Growth Program, 2019

MINDFULNESS BENEFITS AND ACTIVITIES

Visit our website to view our Mindfulness webinar series: [Keeping Calm and Connected: Mindfulness Sessions \(Webinars\) | Catholic Care \(dow.org.au\)](#). These sessions provide an opportunity to stop and reflect, providing an opportunity to re-focus, re-energise and re-connect with who we are. These sessions provide an understanding of the benefits of mindfulness as well as some practical strategies to implement.

Also see below some activities:

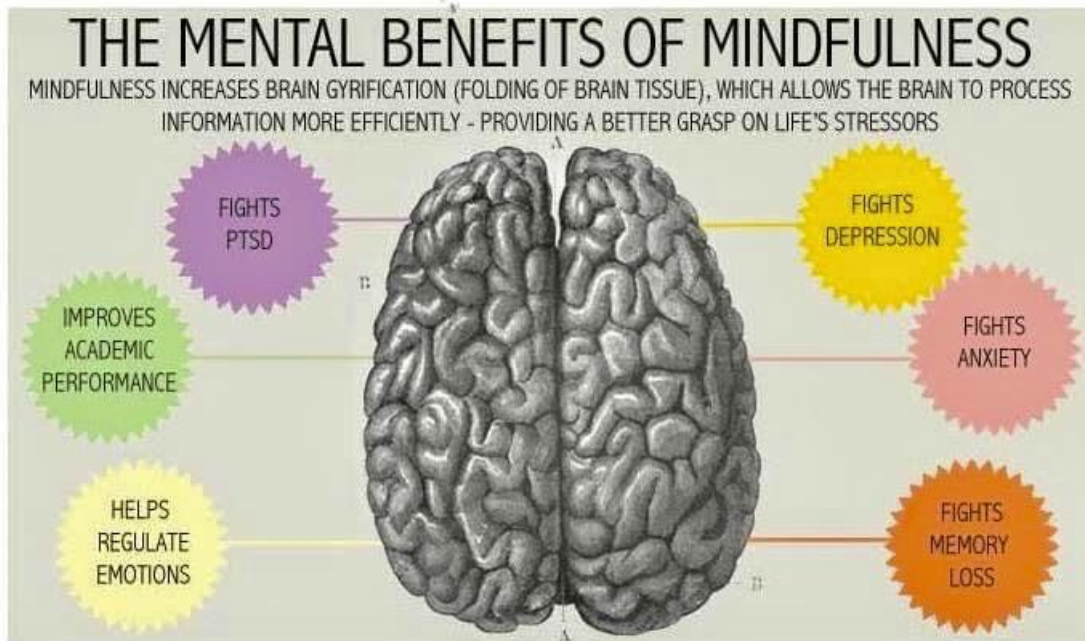
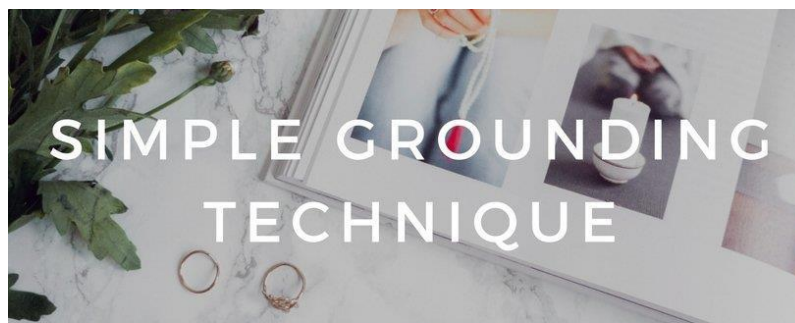


Image sourced from 'Mindfulness Works Australia' Facebook page



If you're feeling anxious or worried, bring your attention back to the current moment with this simple grounding exercise. Notice the following around you:

- 5** things you can see
- 4** things you can feel
- 3** things you can hear
- 2** things you can smell
- 1** thing you can taste

Mindfulness Activities



Everyday Mindfulness

Focussing on the here and now, will often help you to manage your anxious thoughts and feelings about things that have already happened or things that haven't happened yet.

Learning to be mindful teaches you how to focus on the present in a way that helps you get distance from upsetting thoughts and emotions. If you get distance, you can observe events without immediately reacting to them.

You can practice your everyday mindfulness skills with each of your five senses;

Vision:

Buy one beautiful flower; light a candle and watch the flame. Set a pretty place at the table, using your best things, for a meal. Go to a museum with beautiful art. Go sit in the lobby of a beautiful old hotel. Look at nature around you. Go out in the middle of the night and watch the stars. Walk in a pretty part of town. Look at beautiful pictures in a book. Go to a dance performance, or watch one on TV. Acknowledge each sight that passes in front of you, not lingering on any.



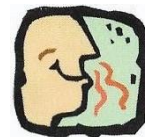
Hearing:

Listen to beautiful or soothing music, or to invigorating and exciting music. Pay attention to sounds of nature (waves, birds, rainfall, and leaves rustling). Sing out loud to your favourite songs. Hum a soothing tune. Learn to play an instrument. Listen to a chat show on the radio or a pod cast to hear a human voice. Be aware of any sounds that come your way, letting them go in one ear and out the other.



Smell:

Use your favourite perfume or spray, light a scented candle. Put potpourri in a bowl in your room. Boil cinnamon; bake cookies, cake or bread. Smell the roses. Walk in a wooded area or along the beach, breathe in and let the fresh smells of nature come and go.



Taste:

Have a good meal; have a favourite soothing drink such as tea or hot chocolate; treat yourself to a special dessert. Put whipped cream on your coffee or hot chocolate. Sample flavours in an ice-cream store. Suck on peppermint. Chew your favourite gum. Get a little bit of a special food you don't usually spend the money on, such as fresh squeezed orange juice. Really taste the food you eat, eat one thing at a time and allow the taste of one bite to flow into the next.



Touch:

Take a bubble bath; put clean sheets on the bed. Pet your dog or cat. Have a massage; soak your feet. Put a cold compress on your forehead. Sink into a really comfortable chair in your home. Wear or touch material textures which are soft, silky, fluffy or rough. Brush your hair for a long time. Hug someone.



GRATITUDE scavenger hunt

SO F' THING I'M GRATEFUL FOR.....

1. in nature
2. that makes a beautiful sound
3. that tastes good
4. that smells amazing
5. that has been hard for me
6. that I would like to share with others
7. that is older than me
8. that I recently discovered or learned
9. that shows vibrant color
10. that has words on it
11. that makes me feel strong
12. that makes me laugh
13. that makes me cry
14. that represents my country or culture
15. that is someone I love (outside of my group)



50 Ways to Take a Break

Take a Bath



Listen to Music



Take a Nap



Go to a body of water



Watch the clouds



Watch the stars



Write a Letter



2x
Move
twice as
slowly

sit in
NATURE



Fly a Kite



Let out
a sigh



REST
your legs up
on a wall



Light a candle



Learn something
NEW



Listen to a
guided
relaxation



Read a Book



Take
Deep
Belly
Breaths



MEDITATE



Call a
Friend



Meander
around
Town



Buy
Some
Flowers



Find a
relaxing
scent



WRITE
in a journal



Notice
Your
Body



Walk
Outside



Go for
a run



Take a
bike ride



Create
your
own
coffee break



View
some
ART



Shhh!
in
SILENCE

Examine an
everyday
object
with
Fresh
Eyes



Turn off
all electronics



Go to a
Park



pet a
furry
creature



Forgive
someone



read
or
watch
something
FUNNY



COLOR
with
Crayons



Make
some
MUSIC



Climb
a
Tree



Go to a
Farmer's
Market



Let go of
something



Engage in
small acts
of
KINDNESS



Do some
gentle
stretches



Paint on a
surface
other
than
paper



Write a
quick
poem



Read
poetry

Put on
some music
and
DANCE



Give
Thanks



NATURE SCAVENGER HUNT

flowers

a pinecone

leaves from different trees

a colored rock

bark

a bird's nest

something white

mushrooms

a seed

wild berries

a feather

moss

something fuzzy

something sharp

an acorn

a flat rock

something red

a frog

"y" shaped twig

an anthill

something fuzzy

something with a hole in it

something beautiful

a walking stick

Which treasure is your favorite?

Which item was most difficult to find?

Did you collect anything that wasn't on the list? If so, what made you choose it?

