



# Working from Home

Positive connections  
for team members



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## Positive connections for team members

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Many Arts Centre Melbourne team members are now working from home to assist with the prevention efforts for COVID-19.

Last week's guidelines focused on setting up and settling in - hopefully you've set up your space and are settling in nicely.

Remember to:

- Complete your [Working From Home Health and Safety Checklist](#) to ensure you're set up with the most comfort and safety.
- Revise your work plan, set clear objectives, tactics and actions for the upcoming 30 days.
- Use Microsoft Teams – it is ACM's preferred team collaboration tool.
- Over-communicate!
- Get into good habits and stay social #acmconnects

This week's guidelines are designed to assist you with positive connections for your mental health and wellbeing.

As before, each section links to one of our core values.

Our values will continue to unite us, and critically, our values are unchanging – no matter how uncertain the world around us may be.

# Positive connections

As we adjust to a new way of working, it's important to continue our positive connections.

When we're physically at ACM, a lot of these happen organically. Whether you're running into someone at Wirth's, manoeuvring in the tiny kitchens, queuing at Protagonist, bumping out a show, or even just a thirty second lift ride, we have hundreds of positive connections by accident every day.

Add to that all the wonderful routines you have with family and friends, and our days are filled with beautiful interactions that we might not even have noticed!

Working at home, having our partners, flatmates, children and pets around us, chatting on video calls rather than face to face, and eating in our home kitchens have disrupted many of these incidental connections. Hopefully, it's also presented an opportunity for new ones, too.

## Mental health and wellbeing

The World Health Organisation defines mental health as "a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community."

Connecting with people is a critical element of psychological wellbeing and happiness. Martin Seligman, one of the founders of positive psychology, developed five core elements, termed PERMA:

**Positive emotion** - feeling good, remaining optimistic

**Engagement** - being absorbed in activities or tasks

**Relationships** - authentic connections, sense of belonging

**Meaning** - purpose, contributing to the 'why'

**Accomplishment** - goals, ambition and achievements

At a time when so many people are feeling the impacts of chaos, uncertainty and fear, caring for our mental health and wellbeing is more important than ever.

We want to take care of each other, too – but remember, you can't pour from an empty cup, so focus first on ensuring you're prioritising your own wellbeing and self-care.

This guide aims to seed plant ideas on how to increase our positive connections - with each other, with our family, friends, pets - even within our own brains – to help us thrive during this uncertain time.

# Leadership

Take responsibility for your own behaviours

## Focus on what is in your control

So much of the COVID-19 outbreak is out of our control. Sometimes, our feelings of anxiety may come from a place of wanting to make sense of uncertainty - a perfectly human thing to want to do!

We all have a limited amount of energy, and sometimes we drain our energy focussing on things that are out of our control. If you're spending all your time and energy concerned about things that you can't change, make a choice to focus on those things that are within your control.

Identify what you can control by writing it down versus what is causing you concern but can't be controlled.

For example:

We **cannot** control:

- The actions of others; whether they follow the rules of physical distancing
- The amount of toilet paper, tissues, or pasta at the local shop
- How long this will last, or what will happen next

We **can** control:

- Our attitude and the way we interact with others
- Where we get our information from, and what we share with others
- Conscious engagement with social media and news outlets
- Avoiding speculation and rumours
- Staying in the present - if you find yourself worrying about something that hasn't happened, gently bring yourself back to the present moment
- Offering support to others, and reaching out if you need support
- Staying in touch with our family, friends, colleagues, neighbours and community
- Our own physical distancing and personal hygiene
- Washing our hands properly and varying which [20 seconds of a song](#) we sing each time!

# Community

Walk the floor: actively engage with colleagues outside of your own team

## Working with new 'colleagues'

The situation we find ourselves in has affected every workplace. As such, you might have acquired new 'colleagues' in your workspace! Perhaps your partner, flatmate, sibling, or parent is now also working from home. It can be tempting to hope that it will just 'all work out', and you'll work in the same space happily and harmoniously, but just in case, aim to:

- Establish boundaries - when are you working, and when are you available? How is this signified?
- Phone and video calls - can you easily take them at the same time, or is it distracting? How do you share that you're on a video call to minimise the chance of any unwanted background shenanigans?
- Ground rules - set up some basic ground rules and write them up on a piece of paper. Agree on how you will share if something is not working - consider a regular 'house meeting'.
- Cleaning - high traffic areas such as kitchens and bathrooms will likely get more of a workout. Consider a cleaning roster, or allocating time at the end of the day for a quick tidy.

## Active engagement

Alternatively, it might just be you in your space, and it might feel isolating or even lonely. Remember - we're physically distancing, not socially distancing. We are still a connected, compassionate, creative team.

- Use Microsoft Teams, and **call** as your first option, rather than email or chat - otherwise, it can be easy to go the whole day and not talk to anyone!
- Make sure you don't just talk about work in your meetings and catch ups - in the same way you ask how people are when you are together you should do the same remotely. Using video, sharing photos or just checking in with others are all great ways to maintain positive connections.
- Keep your manager informed of your work progress, and any concerns or issues you may have. It's harder for them to pick up those little signals that maybe something's not ok, so we have to be honest, open, and trust that our managers and colleagues want to support us - so ask.

## Care More

Check in on team members' wellbeing and show empathy

### Check in on your own wellbeing

- It is difficult to support others when we are experiencing heightened stress, so focus on yourself first. Remember that feeling anxious, fearful, stressed, angry and irritable are common and normal feelings during uncertain times. Ensure that you look after yourself and get support.
- Look at how you have coped in the past. What has worked for you before? This could be chatting with a friend, catching up with your counsellor, meditating, listening to music, or positive self-talk.
- Don't wait until you're exhausted before engaging your self-care. Self-care is preventative. Focus on the basics of good sleep, diet and exercise. This gives you more in the tank to draw on during times of stress.

### Check in on the wellbeing of others

- Be relaxed, friendly and concerned in your approach. Ensure your genuine care and concern for the person leads the conversation - this is not an opportunity for gossip.
- Unless you have concerns for the person's safety or the safety of those around them, ensure confidentiality and privacy.
- Just listen. You don't have to solve their problems or 'fix' anything. Ask open-ended questions, and use all your best listening skills.
- It is not always helpful to say "I know exactly how you feel..." or play, "my problems are worse than yours". Share techniques that you use to manage your own mental health, but keep the focus on them, not you.
- Let them know it's ok to feel the way they do, and most of all, be a friend - not a therapist.

### Use the [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP)

- You and your family have 24/7 access to professional mental health support, completely free of charge. Simply call 1800 808 374, visit [assureprograms.com.au](http://assureprograms.com.au) or SMS 0439 449 876.
- Encourage your colleagues to use the EAP.
- If you are speaking with colleagues or friends in the industry who do not have access to an organisational EAP, remind them that they can use the Arts Wellbeing Collective's [Support Act Wellbeing Helpline](#).

## Creativity

Use creativity to effectively manage uncertainty and disruption

### Creatively use your time

- Depending on your role, there might be some projects (or parts of projects) 'on hold' momentarily. In our busy work lives, we often crave extra time! If you're lucky enough to have it, try to receive it as a gift.
- Get up to date with your mandatory training on Masterclass, do that data entry that you've been meaning to, clean out your inbox, do some I: filing - write a list of everything you wanted to do, if only you had the time, and pick one to start with, and then pick the next. Achieving one small goal makes you much more likely to tackle the next. No matter how small the task, be sure to savour a sense of accomplishment.

### Creatively use your resources

- Maybe your projects are still flat chat, but someone on your team has capacity. The ACM team is a community full of creative, diverse, skilled, and generous people. Ask for help with your work, and offer to help others. You might discover untapped skills!

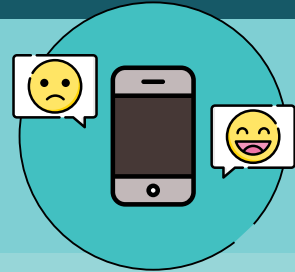
### Change it up

- It can be easy when you are working from home to sit at your desk or computer for long periods without a break. This is not beneficial for your health, productivity or creativity.
- Take a proper lunch break – spend time away from your work area and try to get a little exercise or activity that is different from your work.
- Take short breaks throughout the day. It is important to let your brain relax a little so you can return to work feeling more focused and invigorated.
- Utilise outdoor spaces, such as your garden or balcony if you have them. Even 15 minutes in nature and fresh air can improve your mental health.

### Look for the positives

- Remember, this situation is temporary - ACM is going to reopen. So, what can you relish about being at home? Savour little things - having your favourite tea on hand, skipping a long commute, eating lunch with your children/partner/pet, having the heater set to whatever you want.
- Actively look out for all the wonderful moments this unexpected change has brought with it.

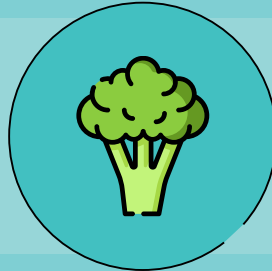
# Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



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.

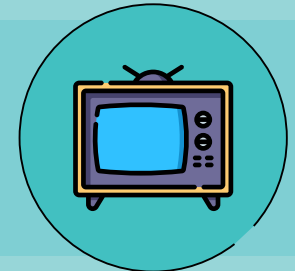
If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



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

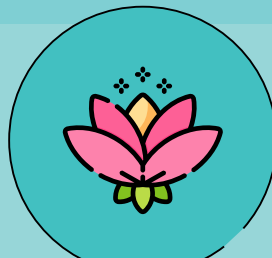
If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

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.



## Other resources

Creating positive connections

[Arts Wellbeing Collective: Looking after your mental health during COVID-19](#)

[Arts Wellbeing Collective: Performance Energy Meditations](#)

[Arts Wellbeing Collective: Your Pocket Guide to De-Role](#) (perfect for transitioning from work mode to home mode!)

[Arts Wellbeing Collective: House Lights Up – podcasts promoting positive mental health in the performing arts](#)