

30 March 2020

Dear Families,

I hope that this letter finds you all well, though no doubt concerned about the Coronavirus situation we are experiencing. Dealing with change is always challenging, and when we are faced with so much uncertainty and fear about the significant changes happening in our lives, we can quickly become overwhelmed and feel as though we have no control.

As parents, our instinct is to protect and care for our children during this time. However, this can be difficult when we the adults, are also feeling anxious and fearful about the future. I often think about my role as a parent at the moment, as like an Air Host/ess on a plane. It is my job to try to remain as calm and composed as possible, so as to reassure my passengers that everything will be okay. Our children are looking to us for reassurance and support, to make sense of their world.

With this in mind, I wanted to write to you to offer some guidance for yourselves and your children about how to handle these uncertain times. There are numerous websites and help lines available, which offer fantastic information and support. Here is a list I have compiled which may be of assistance.

Kids Helpline (5-25 year olds)

kidshelpline.com.au

1800 55 1800 Free call

Lifeline

13 11 14

lifeline.org.au

Online chat also available 7pm-4am daily

Headspace

headspace.org.au

Online and telephone counselling

1800 650 890

ehespace.org.au

Parent Helpline

1300 364 100

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
8724 7055

Beyond Blue

1300 224 636

beyondblue.org.au

Online chat 3:00 pm – Midnight daily

Raising Children Network

raisingchildren.net.au

ReachOut Australia

au.reachout.com

R U OK?

ruok.org.au

Regional Access

1300 032 186

saregionalaccess.org.au

Free online and telephone counselling 24/7

Please note that I have also organised a Well-Being section, under the Parent Portal on our College website. This list has been included there, and I will continue to update and add new information as it comes to hand.

As of today, I will be working from home. If you would like to contact me about your child, my work mobile number is 0472 990 161 and my email address is jsavage@stmartins.sa.edu.au. I will be available between 9-4pm. I will also be able to use a video conferencing program called Zoom, if a face to face discussion with you or your child is preferable. I am still learning this system, so please be patient with me.

Finally, with many of us staying at home it is important to be mindful of the impact of this physical isolation on our emotional well-being. Here are some tips that might help you to survive this new way of being, with your sanity intact!

1. **Set up a daily routine** - This gives your day purpose and direction.
2. **Exercise regularly** - When you don't get exercise, you stop being able to manage stress, you have difficulty sleeping well and there is nothing like insomnia to make you feel emotionally dysregulated. If you dislike it, aim for 10 minutes. If you are having trouble sleeping, exercise is a great remedy.
3. **Socialise as much as possible** - Obviously from a safe distance or online, but it's so easy to fall into a pattern of work and TV, binging on news, and self-isolation. Sharing

your experience with others, talking and human contact are critical. If you live with others, continue to be physically affectionate. We are tactile creatures and a lack of human contact can cause depression, stress, and poor health overall.

4. **Disconnect from the scary things and laugh as much as possible** - It is so easy to spend your days on social media and news feeds trying to keep track of what's going on, but this is not great for mental health. Check in on that as needed, and then tear yourself away and feed your brain with books, conversations with others, movies, TV, online classes etc. Take advantage of all the stuff that is being made freely available, learn a skill or use the opportunity to finish those jobs around the house that you have been wanting to get to. Most of all, laugh. Watch comedies, read funny books, appreciate the ironies of the situations you'll inevitably encounter, write them down. Laughter releases endorphins, promoting wellbeing and relieving stress. Ideally, laugh with others.
5. **Help someone** - It makes you feel useful in a time when it's hard to feel useful. Guaranteed there is someone around you who needs help. Offer to purchase groceries for a family member or walk their dog. Call family members, let stressed-out friends vent to you, be a safe space. If you have extra money, think about helping someone who may need it. There are many ways to help, and every one of them will make you and someone else feel better.
6. **Check in on your own mental health** - It's easy to think you're fine, mental health issues often can sneak up on you. Stop, take a minute and ask yourself how you're doing. Ask for help when you need it and know that lots of mental health support services are available online, including therapy over Skype/Zoom.

Please take care of yourself and those around you. I wish you all the very best for what is ahead of us and most importantly, remember that there is always help and support available.

With kind regards,

Jane Savage

School Counsellor