



COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Mental Health and Wellbeing

In light of COVID-19 which is affecting significant numbers of people across the world, the AIS Athlete Wellbeing team is providing some information specifically for AW&E Managers. Please distribute as you agree with your Performance Director to athletes, staff and family networks.

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While this is a worldwide issue, we appreciate that the nature of high performance sport is unique and the impacts on our high performance community, particularly for those preparing for Tokyo, may be significant.

Common responses of people affected (both directly and indirectly) include:

- Fear of falling ill, losing livelihood, the challenges of securing the things you need (i.e. groceries and personal care items) being socially excluded or quarantined.
- Feeling of powerless in protecting loved ones or providing appropriate care and support.
- Feelings of hopelessness, boredom, loneliness and depression due to isolation.
- Uncertainty or ambivalence towards the situation, which may include high performance objectives as well as personal circumstances.
- Some people may find they experience positive emotions such as a sense of pride about finding ways of coping, a sense of resilience or satisfaction from witnessing community altruism and cooperation.

Ways to support yourself

- Limit media exposure to useful and quality information sources (e.g. the AIS [website](#) & [Dept of Health website](#))
- Stay connected to your support network to foster a sense of normality, share feelings and relieve stress.
- Practice self-care by doing things that work for you and are consistent with health advisory guidelines e.g. additional physical activity, eat well, follow routine, meditate, do things you enjoy.
- Keep things in perspective by educating yourself about the facts and taking reasonable precautions as advised by reliable health information sources.

Ways to support others

- Share useful and quality information to friends and family.
- Be aware of the social stigma and discrimination that can be associated with pandemics and seek to be inclusive.
- Psychological First Aid is a research-informed method to help people (including ourselves) which looks at the practical ways to support people by **LOOKING** out for people with serious distress reactions, **LISTENING** to needs and concerns and **LINKING** people with social support, information and professional help if needed.



Support and when to seek additional help

- While most people will be able to build on existing coping resources, we can expect that a minority of people will experience a negative response that worsens or does not settle over a period of weeks to months.
- A level of anxiety over coronavirus is completely normal however if the anxiety or stress you are experiencing continues to acutely impact on everyday life, and is not responding the strategies suggested above, a trained mental health professional may be able to help.

With this in mind, the [AIS Mental Health Referral Network](#) is opening its availability to impacted friends and family networks of our categorised athletes and staff in the high-performance sports that we service. If people would like to seek mental health support or advice from the AIS Mental Health Referral Network, they or someone on their behalf can contact on the below details. The service is covered Mon – Fri, 9am – 5pm AET. A qualified clinical psychologist is available to speak to them about their needs and connect them with one of our mental health professionals around Australia.

Mental Health Referral Network

Ph: +61 2 6214 1130

Email: mentalhealth@sportaus.gov.au

More information

<https://ais.gov.au/health-wellbeing/covid-19>

