

## Managing COVID Stress and Fatigue

**Like most Small Business owners, you're probably used to handling problems on your own. But you don't have to.**

Free, confidential, one on one support to improve your financial, business and emotional wellbeing.



### **Small Business Owners Attitude towards mental health**

The Australian Government released a report in January 2021 which details small business owners (SBOs) attitudes towards mental health based on their research. Here is an extract of the results:

*'Whilst SBOs are tolerant of mental illness in the workplace for their employees, they are likely to want to conceal their own mental health issues from others.'*

*More than half of all SBOs surveyed (57%) agreed that they would be more likely to seek mental health support if their identity were anonymous and nearly half (48%) agreed that SBOs would be treated poorly if they were to disclose they had been diagnosed with a mental illness.*

*More than four in ten participants surveyed (44%) agreed that as an SBO, even in a crisis, "I would not tell anyone if I had been diagnosed with depression". More than four in ten (42%) disagreed that they felt safe discussing their mental health with peers and work colleagues.*

*Three in ten (30%) agreed that they would feel embarrassed to ask for help with their mental health. The effect of recent crises has only made a little over one quarter feel more comfortable talking about their mental health openly compared to previously.*

*More than two thirds (69%) disagreed that they would not want to work with someone if they knew that they had been diagnosed with a mental illness. Overall, this highlights an SBOs compassion for others, but not for themselves.'*

[View full report here.](#)

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### **Anticipatory Anxiety:**

I am sure most of us can relate to the anxiety that on some level was building with the anticipation of the circuit breaker lockdown being extended, not being able to operate our businesses still as restrictions ease, discussions with staff and customers, etc.

Is this common and how can we manage it?

- The anticipation that something is going to go wrong and impact you negatively. The constant 'rumination of thoughts' playing over and over in your head about the potential issues the crisis may cause.
- The mind reinforces the negative impacts and builds the issue well out of proportion leaving little space for perspective and positive self-talk.
- Counter this with brief solutions focussed work: strengths based, identify the positives in your life, set achievable goals, focus on what you can control, have a support network and be accountable for your wellbeing outcomes.

### ***It's OK to not be OK:***

As a manager, leader, or parent we take on this roll that we need to be OK, to lead, be seen as a rock, the stability amongst our groups. I think one thing we've learnt over the past 12 months is that it's OK not to be OK... how can we help each other in this space.

- Be kind and considerate wherever you can. You don't know what someone is going through.
- Psychologically safe workplace: Practice empathy first... sanctioning behaviour later (OSAKA article). [French Open 2021: Naomi Osaka withdraws from tournament over mental health issues \(theage.com.au\)](https://www.theage.com.au/news/french-open-2021-naomi-osaka-withdraws-from-tournament-over-mental-health-issues-20210601)
- Ask open questions
- Allow the person to speak
- Be comfortable with silence
- Use non-verbal cues
- Playback what you have heard
- Provide verbal cues that you want to hear more
- Manage your emotions, facial expressions and body language

### ***Resilience workout***

Resilience is a term we've all come to learn about... what is resilience, how do we build it and practice it?

- Do at least one tough thing every day
- Give up a bad habit
- Develop positive self-talk... what are you grateful for?
- Identify challenges and set a goal
- Create a wellbeing network: Friends, family, mentor, psychologist, GP, etc.

### ***Having difficult conversations***

Sometimes we just have to have difficult conversations. We'll go with staff as with this example. Out of no fault of the business owner or staff member, the business will remain closed. What simple steps can a business owner keep in mind when having these difficult yet necessary conversations?

- Non-judgemental EAR
- Practice Genuine Compassion – minimises stress response no matter what message you have to deliver.

- Offering support leads to reduced conflict, improved absenteeism / presenteeism, productivity improves.


***Tips to improve the mental health wellbeing:***

We've all got a little time on our hands now... choose 3 basic and small steps to improving your well-being and hopefully we can continue these beyond the circuit breaker:

- Get outside and walk, run, sit, etc.
- Meditation mindfulness – there are many free apps available. Choose one that works best with you, and start small. 5-10 minutes sessions are enough if you haven't done mindfulness before.
- Pre-plan your day and tick off.
- Calming playlist
- Less NEWS
- Notice what you have achieved and acknowledge it.

## Signs of good Mental Health

- you are confident when faced with new situations or people
- you feel optimistic
- you do not always blame yourself
- you set goals
- you feel good about yourself
- you have good self esteem



**Ultimately, mental health is about being cognitively, emotionally and socially healthy – the way we think, feel and develop relationships - and not merely the absence of a mental health condition.**

## Why is mental health and mental ill-health relevant at work?

Cost of Mental ill-health to the Australian workplaces was estimated at **\$12.8 billion per year** by KPMG in 2018

**54% living with mental ill-health do not seek treatment**

### Leading cause of absence

Mental ill health is now the number one reason for sickness absence and long-term incapacity.



**One in five Australian workers is currently experiencing a mental health condition<sup>5</sup>**

•7,200 Australians are compensated for work-related mental health conditions, equating to around 6% of workers' compensation claims

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You can now access support for wellbeing, financial counselling and business advisory services through the [Partners in Wellbeing](#) program. How does this the program work?

VTIC has a dedicated wellbeing representative, Dannii, who can support you, your staff and your family, through these challenging times. Wellbeing support can be anonymous if you choose. Referrals to financial counselling and business advisory services will need name and details.

Here are the contact details:

Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC)

**Danielle (Dannii) Hose**

Mental Health Consultant / Clinician

E: [consultation@vtic.com.au](mailto:consultation@vtic.com.au)

P: (03) 7035 5732 – Mon-Fri, 9am to 5pm

P: 1300 375 330 - Partners In Wellbeing Statewide helpline, outside office hours