

All the latest info from Self Help Queensland

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Support 4 Support Groups!

Self Help Queensland supports people to find their own solutions to improve wellbeing. We connect people to support groups across a broad range of health issues, assist people to start new groups and work with support groups to build their capacity. SHQ promotes community awareness of the benefits of self help groups for the wellbeing of individuals coping with adverse life circumstances.

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The C word - that's *Connected*

I write knowing that many of you in support groups belong to "vulnerable populations". But this is not new to you or to me. You all know much more than the average Australian about coping with major health and wellbeing challenges.

The support groups I have connected with this week are busy:

- organising phone trees, closed facebook groups and other ways to keep in touch.
- identifying people in their group who might need particular check-ins and making sure they are connected.

this will be decided.

All of these actions are called "business continuity" or "disaster recovery" plans. There are many templates and checklists for these, here's [an example](#). If your support group would like help with any of this planning, please contact us.

The population of Queensland is five million, and as of March 16th we officially have 68 confirmed cases. So, thinking about this, our current chance of having Covid-19 is low, while the potential for us to have it in the future is high.

The current Australian government position (March 16, 2020) is that mass gatherings, defined as over 500, should be cancelled. There are three additional recommendations: to limit non-essential gatherings of "critical workforce", to start measures to protect vulnerable people and for all Australians to take personal responsibility for social distancing (limiting physical contact with others). Many organisations are closing or reducing their activities, following their evaluation of the risks. Self Help Queensland receives a daily briefing from Queensland Health, and we are able to lodge general questions on your behalf.

Our key advice to groups is to stay connected, even if you decide not to meet in person. If you want us to help you to meet via telephone or video conference, please get in touch.

Self Help Queensland also challenges all government, business and community organisations to do more than send an email saying "it's cancelled" - we call for choices and options that encourage people to stay connected.

Selina and the Self Help team.

Q&A: What SHQ was asked about recently...

Q: Should our group continue to meet face-to-face?

A: There are two choices, don't meet in person but stay connected, OR, meet in person but take precautions.

Making this choice is based upon some key risk factors of your group...

Are you a vulnerable population, or closely connected to one?

Are you part of a "critical workforce"?

Would it be more stressful for your members to meet or not to meet?

Can you increase the safety of how you meet?

For every person and every group, the concept of reasonable risk applies. Your group can decide to meet in person and some people may choose not to come, based on their own risk factors. Your venue or support organisation may decide that they cannot manage the risk of your meeting. Also, the risk of meeting face-to-face will increase if the virus spreads more broadly, so you should revisit your choice before each meeting.



Connect - quick ideas and resources for you

A Phone Tree

Many groups already stay in touch using a phone tree. There are a few design options, this one is a way that shares lists with a limited number of

and each person calls the next person on the list. If they don't answer, you leave a message and call the next name on the list so the link is not broken. The last person on the list calls the first person to finish. Everyone on your list needs to know who will have their details and agree to have their personal details shared with others - time to make sure you have a privacy policy and good privacy practice that doesn't stop people from connecting, with consent.

A Closed Facebook Group

Using facebook, you can set up a group and post within this group. It is not visible to other people on facebook that you are a member of a closed group. Only people in the group can see each other's profile and messages. You need one or two people to be administrators, to receive outside messages and approve/remove group members.

Telephone and Video Conferencing

There are a range of teleconferencing and video conferencing possibilities, including Skype, Microsoft Teams app, Face Time, Whatsapp and Zoom. There are also videos and training to help you use them. Self Help Queensland can assist in setting up these options.

Resources for you to display

How to hand wash poster from the World Health Organisations

https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/How_To_HandRub_Poster.pdf?ua=1

How to hand rub poster from the World Health Organisation

https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/How_To_HandRub_Poster.pdf?ua=1

Resources on Covid-19 in other languages are available.

<https://www.ethnolink.com.au/covid-19-coronavirus-translated-resources/>

Free on-line training in infection control

DSC has released a free eLearning module [Supporting People to Stay Infection Free](#). It is designed for the Australian disability workforce and takes 30 minutes to complete.

Actions to calm anxiety

Suggestions from our groups in the autism space

As anxiety may be a concern for many, we share this collection of tips

Anxiety can be contagious, stay calm and make sure you maintain as best you can your everyday routines. If you don't regularly use breathing exercises or yoga or mindfulness in your day, add something simple into your routine.

Think about how to turn the plan for isolation into a positive. What could you do to make it a special time? eg. we're going to talk to Grandma on the computer every day! Or, I'm going to write a novel. Store up entertainment activities just in case you have to go into isolation - food is far less likely to be a problem than boredom. Here's a list of 12 museums with [virtual tours](#). Maybe you need play dough or puzzles.

Think about where you could enjoy the outdoors while being isolated. Vitamin D is a need all humans have to stay healthy. Isolation doesn't mean that you have to stay indoors.

There's a lot of media and news blitzing our screens and radio. Make sure you disconnect regularly across the day and week from the overload. If you go on-line, why not look at photos from your last holiday or blogs on knitting or select your favourite music.

Make sure that you get your information from reliable sources and that you don't pass on any misinformation. The principles of reliable on-line information are:

Is the author of the content clearly visible?

How old is the information?

Can you judge if the information is correct and complete? (eg. what is unknown is also mentioned)

Is the financial backing of the information clear? (eg. advertising is clear and easy to identify, conflicts of interest are disclosed)

Use visuals and modelling to explain and demonstrate behaviours. There are great songs and samples of [hand washing](#).

A mindfulness exercise: the quiet cup of tea

Get a cup of tea (or your choice of beverage), but wait, don't drink it yet. Pause for about 20 seconds. Now, imagine that you have never ever ever drunk a cup of tea before, this is the first time you have ever ever had a cup of tea. Concentrate on opening all your existing senses - what can you smell, how does it feel, what can you hear, what can you see. Then taste the tea. Sip slowly and carefully. Think of how you would describe it to another person, but don't speak until you've finished your cup.

Immune system boosts

Key immune system boosts are:

- get enough sleep
- eat a healthy balanced diet, and
- regular moderate exercise.

We all know that smoking is bad for your health. If you can reduce or quit smoking, that is one of the best challenges you could take for yourself to get through Covid-19. QUITLINE: 13 78 48.

Support for your group: lowering the risks of in person gatherings

This is a list of precautions that we should be taking all the time. If your group is at particularly high risk of infection, seek specialist help.

Hygiene tips

1. Everyone needs to wash their hands often, rubbing them together with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Everyone should wash their hands before and after meeting, after coughing or sneezing and before handling food at the very least.
2. Avoid touching faces with hands - this still applies with mask wearing as well. Eyes, nose and mouth are key entry points for germs.
3. Anyone who is feeling sick, particularly with a fever and/or cough should not meet, and currently anyone who has been overseas within fourteen days should also self isolate. You can check this with everyone as they enter through both signs and direct questions.
4. Increase the ventilation and fresh air flowing into your meeting. Avoid meeting in small enclosed spaces.
5. Take precautions to avoid sharing food or passing around any item where you can pass on germs as well - like a microphone or water jug. Precautions can include changing foods to single serve items to BYO hand weights to wiping down surfaces like door handles one extra time yourself.
6. Increase the physical distance between people, don't sit too close to one another, the recommended distance is 1.5m (called social distancing).

- space (eg. dispose of tissues straight away into a pedal bin away from your table and then wash your hands, don't put them down on the table)
8. Limit the number of people attending any gathering.
 9. Limit the time of your interaction, you could meet for a shorter time.
 10. Training - increase everyone's knowledge and also their actions to prevent the spread of infections.



International Women's Day - a great event, good memories to sustain us through the coming months.



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