

Warrior Wellbeing Article
STRESS IN A VIRAL WORLD

Ironically, many of us “crack a Corona” after a long day at work as a way of easing stress, however many blokes and community members are currently feeling under the pump a little more than usual and therefore, a discussion around that discomfort is timely. The feeling of not being in control and the subsequent stress that we feel has probably never been more widespread than it is today with the threat of Covid19 (The Coronavirus) affecting not only Australia, but the world.

Stressful events can creep up on us, however the current situation is more like that big wave bearing down on us at the beach, we’re watching it, but we just have to brace ourselves and hang on. Stress is an entirely normal response to a perceived threat and it’s useful when preparing us to take action. That fight or flight mechanism, getting us ready for impending trouble can serve us well, but given free reign, can also result in us becoming dysfunctional. Letting unresolved stress overburden us is termed “situational distress” and it’s important that we understand (depending on our individual capacity and other contributing factors) staying in this distressed state for prolonged periods can push some of us towards a mental illness diagnosis.

What Not to Do

- Retreat into yourself and shun the support of friends and family.
- Self-medicate with alcohol or drugs.
- Ignore surrounding events and do nothing or procrastinate about making any preparations.
- Over-analyse or dwell upon the mountain of negative media and sensational reporting.
- Catastrophise and hoard toilet paper and face masks for the zombie apocalypse.

So, What Can We Do?

- Maintain social networks (within guidelines of self-quarantine if ill, and by phone if necessary).
- Make reasonable and prudent preparations for the contingencies that are within our control. An example might be to have enough supplies for a possible 14-day self-quarantine period. This doesn’t constitute hoarding; it’s a balanced and proportionate response.
- Have discussions with family around what we will do if someone in the household does get sick. What is the most appropriate room for them? Bathroom access (easier if there is two)? Meal preparation options and shopping options (friends/family/online)?
- Brush up on our sick leave/carer entitlements. Have a discussion with our employers around whether working from home might be an option should we be sick and short of leave.
- Reinforce to our kids and ourselves and importantly practice, good hygiene. The most effective preventative step we can take is as simple as washing our hands thoroughly.

Three ways that we can alleviate the burden of stress are to: **Avoid the stressor**; so be informed but don’t dwell or pore over the inexhaustible mountain of sensationalist press. **Adapt to the stressor**; make reasonable and proportionate precautions. **Accept the stressor**; sometimes we just need to realise that some things are beyond our control. This can be difficult but it’s also healthier than railing against an unchangeable situation.

Finding ways to relax are also important, so meditation, music, fishing or any favourite pastime, may help us to get things back on an even keel. Most importantly it’s our connection with others that has undeniably the greatest health benefits, so ...**before it all gets too much...Talk to a Mate!!**

Glen and the Team

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