



We understand this may be a challenging and stressful time for our Trinity community. Whilst we can take some comfort in knowing we are all quarantining together in spirit, that unfortunately does not change the reality of what we are facing over the next two weeks. The experience of home quarantine or isolation may differ between households, with some more adversely affected than others. For many it may produce some worries and feelings of unease about school-related issues, the pandemic or other concerns. We have outlined some tips and strategies below that may assist you and/or your children to manage this uncertainty.

## SLEEP

Ensuring that your child has good sleep habits will improve their wellbeing and assist them in their ability to cope with, and manage, change. For many families, sleep routines may have altered over this period of isolation and children will likely require some time and support to return to more regular and healthy sleep patterns. Establishing regular school-based wake times and bedtimes as well as bedtime routines as soon as possible is likely to assist with overall wellbeing.

## EAT

Healthy eating habits aid students learning and behavior. Establishing healthy eating routines including regular mealtimes and healthy food options will assist in developing routines that can continue when the boys return to school. Younger boys may also benefit from beginning to pack and eat from their lunchboxes now, while in Distance Learning, to assist them in maintaining these routines on return to school.

## CONNECT

Whenever possible, encourage your child to stay connected with a friend/s in the class to enable them to feel like they have someone they feel comfortable with. Maintain your own connections and reach out to those around you.

## LISTEN

It is normal for children to experience a range of emotions about Distance Learning and periods of quarantine or isolation. It is important to create a time to listen to, acknowledge and normalise their feelings. Children sometimes benefit from just being listened to, so where possible, try not to rush, dismiss or be quick to reassure them about their concerns. Providing spaces for them to express themselves, during the day, and not at bedtime when everyone is more likely to be tired, is preferable.

## TALK

Children look to adults for a sense of security and safety. Be aware of how you talk about COVID-19. Your discussion about COVID-19 can increase or decrease your child's fear. It is therefore important that we try to model calm behaviour (even when we are not always feeling it) to our children to help them feel secure. Helping children to focus on the things they can do now and managing their routine rather than providing excessive reassurance is likely to be more beneficial. While it can be tempting to reassure our children with statements such as "You will be OK" and "Don't worry" these statements can inhibit a student's independent coping and ability to manage worries. Replacing these with statements like "*What do you think will help you worry less?*" have been shown to be more successful in helping students to develop longer-term coping skills



## COURAGE

Focus on a time that your child has been courageous in managing something challenging and remind them of this. Parents modelling a sense that they believe in their child's capacity to cope and manage difficult situations assists and reinforces the child's belief in themselves.

## MANAGING QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19

**Let your children's questions guide you** – Answer their questions truthfully, but don't offer unnecessary details or facts. Often, children and youth do not talk about their concerns because they are confused or don't want to worry loved ones. Younger children absorb scary information in waves. They ask questions, listen, play, and then repeat the cycle. Children always feel empowered if they can control some aspects of their life. A sense of control reduces fear. **Correct misinformation** – Children often imagine situations worse than reality; therefore, offering developmentally appropriate facts can reduce fears.

## MONITOR TELEVISION VIEWING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Parents/guardians should monitor television, internet, and social media viewing—both for themselves and their children. Watching continual updates on COVID-19 may increase fear and anxiety. Developmentally inappropriate information, or information designed for adults, can also cause anxiety or confusion, particularly in young children. Dispel rumours and inaccurate information. Explain to your child that many stories about COVID-19 on the internet may include rumours and inaccurate information. Older children, in particular, may be accessing a great deal of information online and from friends that contains inaccuracies.

## BIG FEELINGS AND BEHAVIOUR

There will be many emotions and stressors being felt in people's homes from loss and worry to indifference, excitement, apprehension, and anticipation. Please be assured that all the emotions being experienced are very normal. However, with heightened emotions, comes changes in behaviour. We need to remember that behaviour is a form of communication, especially for younger children who may not have the language to explain how they are feeling. We are all adjusting, and it will take time.

## MANAGING YOUR OWN EMOTIONS

There is no denying this is an incredibly challenging and likely stressful time for the entire Trinity school community. While individual circumstances may vary, the challenge of balancing work and home-schooling, while confined to our homes, has become real for all of us. Despite our best intentions it is likely at times our own emotions will become heightened and our capacity to self-regulate, impaired. During these times it is important to remember that we can only do the best we can in any given moment, and often this may look far from perfect. Where possible we need to **ground** ourselves when experiencing a wave of emotions. Grounding techniques begin with **noticing** what you are thinking and feeling. **Slowing down** and **connecting** with your body - slow your breathing (taking deep breaths, in and out). Press your feet into the floor, stretch your arms out wide or press your hands together. Then **refocus** on the world around you. Tune into your senses: what can you see hear, feel, smell, taste? Try to let the difficult thoughts and feelings come and go, while focusing on the world around you. This allows us to create a bit of space from our emotional world and return to acting in line with our values.



## ACCESS SUPPORT AND INFORMATION WHEN NEEDED

If you think your child is experiencing excessive stress, please let your classroom/form teacher or Head of Year know and we will do our best to support your child through this time. The MyTGS COVID -19 Hub (<https://mytgs.fireflycloud.net.au/covid-19-information-hub>) has a range of links and resources that may be helpful. Alternatively you can contact the counselling team for support as per the details below.

**Junior School** - Kelly Cooch - [coochk@trinity.vic.edu.au](mailto:coochk@trinity.vic.edu.au)

**Years 7 & 8** - Mary-Rita Waldron - [waldronm@trinity.vic.edu.au](mailto:waldronm@trinity.vic.edu.au)

**Years 9-12** - Dr Aisling Malone - [malonea@trinity.vic.edu.au](mailto:malonea@trinity.vic.edu.au)