

# OUR WELLBEING MODEL

a guide to wellbeing during COVID-19



## How might my wellbeing be impacted?

Mental Health experts are highlighting the need for Australians to prepare for a secondary health and wellbeing impact of COVID-19 - the social and emotional impacts of the lifestyle changes necessary to stop the spread of the virus.

Some of the wellbeing impacts due to COVID-19, isolation and the shut down are obvious:

- fear for our physical health and the safety of our loved ones;
- loss of income and financial hardship;
- increase stress on families due to working at home and home schooling.

But a lot of other building blocks of wellbeing have also been impacted:

- loss of everyday social connections due to physical distancing and isolation;
- loss of social structures, routines and rituals in workplaces, schools, gyms and community sport;
- loss of freedom and purpose;
- uncertainty about when life will return to normal;
- impacts of media saturation about the pandemic and global deaths.

For families, the impacts on teenagers and young adults are particularly stressful because freedom and independence are important during this period of development.

**Summary:** COVID-19 has interrupted many of the critical building blocks of wellbeing for most football communities and families – team sport, connection, routine, purpose and feeling safe. The AFL Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been put in place to support all our people and football communities during the industry shutdown.



## What adjustment phases can help make sense of this situation?

The disruption that we are all experiencing can be thought of as moving through four phases. Mapping adjustment in phases can be more meaningful than counting down weeks or days in isolation or until life returns to how it was. It can also ensure we put in place the right supports at the right time. Understanding that everyone's stage looks different is also helpful.



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## COVID-19 Adjustment Phases

### Phase 1: How do we stay safe?

If we are cautious in our day to day lives, we will be vigilant and adhere to the hygiene, isolation and physical distancing measures necessary to keep ourselves and others safe. Knowing where to seek help if we are unwell or in crisis is critical. Knowing how we can help others access medical care and wellbeing support is also important. Social and mainstream media may communicate messages that increase anxiety or negative emotions, so minimising unhelpful media content is important in this phase.

### Phase 2: What will help us adjust?

The second stage involves adjusting to losing many things we took for granted in our daily lives. Most of us are experiencing uncertainty and loss. Acknowledging the impacts, establishing new routines, engaging in self-care, adopting the 6 elements of wellbeing, and taking a different perspective are core ways to support adjustment. Helping children and teenagers adjust is also critical to support the social and emotional wellbeing of families and young people.

### Phase 3: How can we find a healthy 'new normal'?

Finding a healthy new normal involves daily actions in line with the 6 elements of wellbeing. Knowing that we are working towards a phase that is sustainable over several months of isolation, physical distancing and restricted travel helps us to consider how we can replace past activities or routines and adapt to our current environment. The 6 elements of wellbeing are the building blocks for finding a healthy new normal.

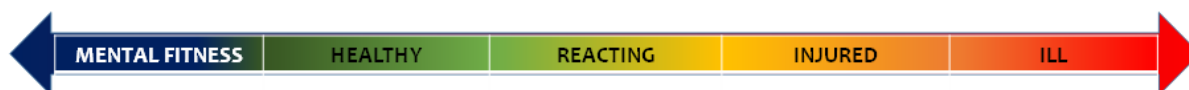
### Phase 4: How can we maintain optimism for recovery?

It is important to acknowledge COVID-19 impacts will end. Maintaining a hopeful mindset will build our resilience and mental fitness to the hardships of now. Gradually we will be able to return to parts of our lives. Gratitude toward all Australians who followed social distancing will boost our sense of community. Knowing that our sacrifices have saved many lives gives us purpose.



## Use the wellbeing continuum to navigate each phase

Our wellbeing model is based on the mental health continuum. It assumes wellbeing isn't something that we either have or don't have. Instead, wellbeing is something that we can grow through practice. The continuum acknowledges our wellbeing changes over time and we all move up and down the continuum in response to life stressors. Most of the stressors in our life we can't control at the moment. But we can grow mental fitness to help keep us in the green.



### What Q's to consider when finding a healthy 'new normal'?

How can I build our own pockets of certainty during community and global uncertainty?

How can I build purpose and freedom during isolation?

How can I maintain meaningful and deep connections to others during isolation?

How can I maintain cultural and spiritual health while isolated from family of origin, places of worship?

Can I take a different perspective during this difficult time in order to learn and grow?

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## Six elements of wellbeing to find a healthy 'new normal'

Just like all skills, it takes practice and persistence to build wellbeing and mental fitness. Coaching from a professional can help (ask your People Leader, GP or contact Benestar). Our wellbeing model during COVID-19 is based on 6 building blocks of wellbeing. These 6 elements are recommended by researchers who study how to optimise resilience and mental fitness. They are your guide during throughout the different phases. If you spend time and attention growing each of these areas in a typical week you will find a healthy new normal.



### Positive Emotion

Knowing the behaviours that bring you daily joy and happiness



### Engagement

Understanding what you're good at and using your personal strengths



### Relationships

Fostering meaningful and energizing connections with others



### Meaning

Discovering a sense of purpose that is greater than ourselves



### Accomplishment

Persisting to believe in and grow the things that matter to us most



### Health

Maintaining quality nutrition, sleep and movement



Trigger positive feelings daily with activities and actions (positive feelings include content, happy, safe, calm, connected, loved, worthy, valued, grateful). Have a catalogue of actions to choose from.



Spark your confidence by setting up tasks that you're good at each day. Use your personal strengths daily in your relationships with others.



Maintain and deepen authentic, meaningful and energizing connections with others several times a week.



Start each day with a purpose. Volunteer or give your time and support to others. Be an advocate and stand up for people less fortunate than yourself. Connect with your family of origin and culture.



Set an achievable task each day that gives you a sense of accomplishment or mastery. Focus on learning.



Sharpen your knowledge, skills and discipline to maximise quality sleep, nourish your body and mind with good nutrition, and move daily. Minimise the things that deplete your health (processed foods, alcohol, screens and inactivity).