

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WITH DEPRESSION THROUGHOUT COVID-19

Created by Psychology Services – Catholic Education Services Cairns

As schools continue to remain open only to the children of essential workers to stop the spread of COVID-19, most children are spending an increasing amount of time at home. Throughout this time, it's normal for people to experience a wide range of thoughts, feelings and reactions which can compound one's already low mood, sadness, and feelings of isolation or helplessness. This tip sheet has strategies to assist your child with diagnosed Depression to successfully study from home. It is important to remember that you are not required to be your child's teacher or counsellor during this time, but rather to help them to engage optimally in this new learning environment.

During this time, it's very important that your child continues their usual treatment and support, and that you monitor their wellbeing and safety as per recommendations from their treatment provider. You may wish to discuss these suggestions with them to work out ways of incorporating them into treatment.

Students with Depression may find it difficult to maintain motivation and concentration for their schoolwork. The following are some ideas which may assist.

**Please note, Depression can present differently across age groups and some of the following suggestions may not apply to your child:

- ✓ **Pay extra attention to your child's emotions and needs.** You may notice changes in your child's behaviour, sleep, mood or eating habits. Noticing and responding with care and support can help your child to feel better.
- ✓ **Maintaining routine and structure** is one way of helping them with this.
 - » Set a schedule for the weekdays and weekends. Children and teens do their best if there are plans for each day, especially the weekdays when they would have been in school.
 - » Establish a school day schedule. Find out how your child's school plans to keep students engaged and active and follow the suggested schedule.
 - » Regular bedtime and rising time, limiting screen time, maintaining a healthy diet and getting exercise will all help in this.
- ✓ Provide a **specific 'schoolwork' area** that has minimal distractions to increase concentration.
- ✓ Provide **extra encouragement** to enhance their engagement with their work. Helping them to remember simple but important things like that life and school will be back to normal soon, and that their work now will bring them benefits in the future will be helpful.
- ✓ Create **boundaries around social media** and other screen time use. Having phones or devices that can access social media in the schoolwork area should be strongly discouraged. Negotiate certain times where these can be accessed (e.g., for a part of the lunch break or after school).
- ✓ Encourage your child to stay **socially connected** outside of learning hours ([see this page](#)). This might be during their scheduled breaks in the school day (as they would typically engage during lunch or recess) or outside of school hours.
- ✓ Minimise the amount of time your child engages in **news reading and discussions** around the pandemic, as this can negatively affect mood.
- ✓ **Consult with your child's treatment provider** (psychologist, counsellor, GP, psychiatrist) on other specific approaches to use.

(Continued overleaf)

Available supports:

- If it is an emergency or you have immediate concerns, contact 000
- Your child's treating specialist (e.g. Psychologist, Counsellor, GP, Psychiatrist)
- Your child's school counsellor
- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- Headspace Cairns (40413780) or [ehespace](#)
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800
- See our list of [support services](#) for further options

Further information can be found at:

<https://headspace.org.au/assets/Uploads/headspace-Fact-Sheet-Coping-with-COVID-19-Stress-v1.pdf>

<https://childmind.org/article/supporting-teenagers-and-young-adults-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/>

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>

