



Maintaining positive relationships

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FROM TAL AND ASSURE PROGRAMS



During these uncertain times, many of us are facing changes to our work arrangements and our day to day lives.

For those of us fortunate enough to work from home, our new normal can take some time to get used to.

It's easy for boundaries between work and home to blur when your office is a few steps from your living space. You might also be home schooling your kids, which puts increased demands on your time. And as much as we love our partners, being together 24/7 isn't always easy.

As the impact of the pandemic continues, couples may be feeling the pressure. If it's starting to build in your relationship or has already escalated, remember you're not alone in feeling this way. Even prior to COVID-19, difficulties in relationships was one of the main reasons people reached out for help.

To help you manage the increased pressure on your relationships during this time, Assure Programs have put together a few tips to keep in mind.

HELPING YOU STAY POSITIVE DURING COVID-19

As a leader in the life insurance industry, TAL has always been focused on helping Australians through life's biggest challenges. COVID-19 has made many of us realise we live in an unpredictable world. As the situation continues, we may be feeling increased uncertainty and potentially a sense of loss.

That's why we've partnered with Assure Programs to provide resources, tools and expertise to super fund members who might need some extra support with the challenges of the current crisis.

ABOUT TAL

TAL is a leading Australian life insurer, helping people protect what matters most in their lives for 150 years. Together with its partners, TAL provides life insurance and disability benefits to over 4 million Australians and in 2019, paid over \$2.3 billion in claims to more than 34,000 customers. TAL partners with leading superannuation funds to provide members with options to protect their future choices with insurance through super.

ABOUT ASSURE PROGRAMS

Assure Programs is a leading mental health organisation with an extensive network of experienced psychologists and specialists. With a holistic model of counselling, wellbeing coaching and evidence-based development programs, Assure Programs helps individuals, teams and organisations across the entire mental wellbeing spectrum.

1

Routine, boundaries and respect

Daily routines are important, whatever the circumstance. Whether you're working from home or not, it's important to have structure in your life. This might include setting working hours, daily exercise and time for ourselves, as well as time with our loved ones.

It's helpful to agree boundaries at the start of the day. You could ask your partner, "*What's your plan for the day? Which room will you be working in? Are there any times that you shouldn't be interrupted?*" Once you've agreed how you'll set out the day, respect what you've agreed to.

2

Mutual support

The current situation may bring up a range of feelings, which could impact how we respond to each other. You might find that you're snapping more than usual or your patience is thin. Communicate openly with your partner and give each other the opportunity to talk about any issues affecting the relationship or about your feelings and concerns. Importantly, take turns being the speaker and the listener.

When being the speaker, try to be kind when explaining how you're feeling, using lots of 'I' statements to denote how you feel rather than how your partner is behaving. When being the listener, actively listen and let your partner tell the whole story, rather than jumping in with solutions too quickly. Be empathetic in your responses and try to understand their point of view. Come up with solutions together and accept that compromises may have to be made on both fronts.

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3

Connect with friends and family

Don't forget about staying connected with others. Have virtual catch ups with friends, call a family member you haven't seen in a while or have a virtual trivia night. With so many technology options, we can still stay in touch with our social circle.

4

Focus on your wellbeing

Looking after your health and wellbeing is an important part of keeping your relationships healthy. If you recognise that you're not feeling yourself or your partner may be struggling, it's important to get help quickly. This could be speaking to a friend, contacting your GP or booking a counselling session.

5

Make memories

This is a great time to make memories and have fun with our partners. Here are a few ideas to consider:

- Get dressed up, order take away or cook a meal together
- Create a games night you can both enjoy
- Pick something to paint or make together
- Try some form of exercise together, even if it's just going for a walk each day
- Create a treasure hunt in the house
- Create a home spa and pamper each other
- Watch your favourite childhood movie
- Learn a new skill or language.

6

Have some you time

Taking time for you can be a helpful strategy. Whether it's going for a walk, reading a book, speaking to a friend or just having quiet time, it's important to ensure you have space from each other.

Use this time as an opportunity to reset.

Communicate with your partner about the changes you'd like to see in your relationship and what new routines you'd like to put in place. Use this time to work together to start planning your "new normal."



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR YOUR WELLBEING



If you'd like to continue your mental health journey, Head to Health is a website provided by the Australian Department of Health that brings together a range of mental wellbeing information, programs and forums available to the wider community.

Visit headtohealth.gov.au

Hopefully this information helps to strengthen the relationship between you and your loved one. Your mental health is vital to your overall wellbeing and there are always more actions and behaviours you can learn to safeguard it, especially during times of so much uncertainty.