



## Supporting Your Child

Geelong Grammar School have already taken several precautionary measures to respond to COVID-19. We acknowledge that the current situation may cause concerns or some stress for you and your children. The following is some guidance from our school's clinical psychologists as to what to look out for in relation to your child's wellbeing, as well as strategies to assist and options for additional support.

Common reactions during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Dealing with nonspecific worry and general feelings of anxiousness.
- Worry about adjusting to the immediate future.
- Grieving events that cannot be celebrated.
- Worry about your own health and the health of loved ones.
- Minor changes in sleep or eating patterns.
- Minor difficulties with attention and concentration.

Encourage and assist your child to:

- Keep and/or develop a daily routine and structure.
- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting and increase worry.
- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Exercise regularly.
- Get plenty of sleep and continue healthy sleep habits.
- Make time to unwind and do activities they enjoy.
- Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- Maintain safe social distancing whilst also staying connected to others.
- Talk about their concerns and how they are feeling.

### Providing Reassurance

Children and teens react, in part, in response to what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with COVID-19 calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children. As COVID-19 has been in the news, we recommend that all families discuss this topic openly. When speaking to your child about the virus, it is important that parents are well-informed, factual and remain calm.

Whilst it's not always possible to shield children from media about the virus, it is important that parents and caregivers focus on:

- Positive messages: reassure your child or teen that they are safe, that the world has faced many viruses before and that it is okay if they feel upset or worried.
- Dispelling myths and untruths.
- Emphasising the importance of good health and hygiene practices.
- Engaging in activities and interests, rather than consuming too many news stories.



## Concerns about Relatives

Your child may be concerned about the wellbeing of others - in particular, grandparents and older relatives. It can be helpful to regularly connect with these individuals by maintaining online connection via phone, Facetime/Skype and messages.

Not all children and teens respond to stress in the same way. Some changes to watch for include:

- Excessive crying or irritability.
- Excessive worry or sadness.
- Returning to behaviours they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting).
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits.
- Acting out or unusual changes in behaviour.
- Loss of motivation to complete schoolwork.
- Difficulty with attention and concentration.
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past.
- Unexplained headaches, body pain, stomach aches/nausea.
- Preoccupation with illness and death.
- Obsessional washing and preoccupation with germs and contamination.

If your child is experiencing these symptoms for several days in a row and you are concerned, please contact your healthcare provider. Children and young people with pre-existing mental health conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms.

During this period of school closure, Geelong Grammar School is committed to the ongoing support of our students and their families. This will include maintaining a sense of community connectedness whilst students are learning remotely, as well as promoting proactive wellbeing strategies. Geelong Grammar School will continue with the usual pastoral structures and we encourage students and/or parents to contact the School if they have any concerns or require further guidance.



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