While many of you will have been putting a great deal of thought into how to help your children cope during this pandemic, it’s important that you also put some thought into how to maintain your own wellbeing. Parents/carers may have a range of different emotional reactions, including feeling overwhelmed, apathetic, worried or irritable. Although you might be tempted to go into overdrive to minimise the impact on your kids, you are not immune to the stress either. Remember that taking care of your own wellbeing is essential. That age-old maxim holds some truth: You can’t pour from an empty cup. If you’re burnt out, it’s not only you who will suffer – it can impact how you parent, your work and your relationships. It’s important for your own wellbeing, and for that of your family, that you create some time and space to prioritise taking care of yourself.
HERE ARE FOUR THINGS TO HELP YOU LOOK AFTER YOUR OWN WELLBEING:

**BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF**
In the world of parenting, there is a drive to be the best you can be and to be everything to everyone. Your kids don’t need you to be the perfect parent/carer. They need you to be good enough and to help them feel safe and supported. For this to happen, they need you to be OK. It’s OK if you’re not completing Pinterest-worthy craft activities with your kids, or you’ve had to relax your rules about screen time. It’s OK if you’re struggling to help your kids to complete their allocated schoolwork and the house is messier than usual. If you’re juggling work, it’s OK if you need to be more flexible with your hours – adjust your productivity expectations or take leave if you need to. Remember that you’re doing the best you can in this unusual and challenging situation. Try to create more realistic and achievable expectations to reduce the pressure.

**TAKE BREAKS FOR SELF-CARE**
Make sure you take some breaks to do the things that will help you feel less stressed. This could be things such as:
- talking to a friend
- listening to music
- having a bath
- exercising
- sitting in the garden
- enjoying a cup of tea.

If you have someone to watch the kids, take a walk by yourself and enjoy the break. Try to find some time each day to take care of yourself, even if it’s just five minutes.

**STAY CONNECTED**
While it’s important to make time to have fun and connect as a family, make sure you schedule time for you to connect with friends and family. As much as you might adore your kids and your work colleagues, make sure you create time for your own social connections. Vent. Laugh. Share ideas about coping and compromising. Be there to support each other. If you have another parent/carer in the house, make sure you continue to talk to your partner and support one another. Discuss how you can share the household and parenting responsibilities, so you both have an opportunity for breaks and to get your work done. Remember, we are in this together.

**BE MINDFUL OF HOW YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT THE SITUATION – TAKE IT SERIOUSLY, BUT KEEP YOUR RESPONSE IN PERSPECTIVE**
Stay informed from reliable sources, but remember that this will end. It might not feel like it some days, but it won’t be like this forever. These are sacrifices that you as an individual, as you as a family, are doing to take care of our community. Kids will catch up on missed learning and reconnect with their friends. You can help them to feel safe, to feel loved and to manage their emotional responses. But you will do this better if you are feeling more in control of your own emotions. Kids learn how to cope with their own feelings by watching those around them, so investing the time to make sure you are coping well will be one of the most important things you can do for them.

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**HEAD TO HEALTH (AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT)**
headtohealth.gov.au/covid-19-support

**BEYOND BLUE**
Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service
T: 1800 512 348
A dedicated COVID-19 online forum is available for people to share their concerns and connect online to support one another.
coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au

**REACH OUT**
Online youth forums and online parents forums for COVID-19 offer peer support in safe and established online communities.
au.reachout.com

**MINDSPOT CLINIC**
T: 1800 676 822 – Mental Health Emergency Response Line
contact@mindspot.org.au
mindspot.org.au

**HEADSPACE**
headspace.org.au

**AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY**
psychology.org.au/FindAPsychologist

In an emergency, dial 000.