

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Tips for veterans on Anzac Day 2020

Taking care of yourself this Anzac Day

Restrictions introduced to slow the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) will prevent us from observing many Anzac Day traditions. Veterans and their families will be wondering how they can commemorate the day while observing measures of physical distancing. It is also important to plan for how to protect mental health on this day.

The nature of the coronavirus means that there is a great deal of uncertainty about the disease, its spread, and its scope and impact. Some veterans will be feeling significant emotional distress because of coronavirus and the impact it has had on many aspects of their lives, including feelings of anxiety, isolation and depression.

Anzac Day is a day of heightened emotions for many veterans and their families, and any existing feelings of unease or distress may be compounded by the loss of usual Anzac Day customs and traditions.

Veterans who would normally seek to reconnect with those who understand their service may find themselves disconnected and alone. Those who usually choose to mark Anzac Day in reflective solitude may discover that such solitude is difficult to find when self-isolating with their family.

Below are some helpful tips for looking after your own, and your family's wellbeing on this very unusual Anzac Day.

Tips to help you stay healthy and calm on Anzac Day 2020

- Recognise that this Anzac Day will be different. The loss of usual Anzac Day traditions may bring about strong feelings such as anxiety, sadness or anger.
- These reactions can be distressing, but they are understandable. Be kind to yourself.
- Make a plan for the day that includes time for reflection, connection, and enjoyment.
- Spend time with people you care about - via video (e.g., FaceTime, Zoom, Skype), social media or telephone.
- If needed, ask someone to help you to connect with others on the day, or to find time alone.
- Watch the National Ceremony, live on the ABC, or later on ABC iView.
- Consider commemorating a different kind of dawn service by observing a minute's silence standing on your driveway or balcony at 6am.
- Engage in at least one enjoyable activity.
- Check in on the vulnerable.
- Avoid activities that will increase any feelings of anxiety and depression, such as excessive alcohol consumption.
- Establish new Anzac Day traditions like planting a garden, baking Anzac biscuits for neighbours, or establishing an annual family challenge or competition.
- If you experience distress, contact Open Arms on 1800 011 046 or Lifeline on 13 11 14.