

Factsheet 5: How to look after yourself and others affected by trauma



Coping with the impact of our past experiences whilst dealing with the challenges of settling into a new country can sometimes feel overwhelming. Simple strategies can help us regain a sense of control and manage stress.

The following is a list of suggestions provided by other survivors who found these strategies helpful in coping with the stress of settling to Australia and healing from their past experiences.

If you are struggling, maybe there is just one thing from the list you can do for yourself or someone else this week.



Acknowledge and be kind:

- Understand that adjusting to life in Australia takes time
- Be kind to yourself and others. Focus on small positive steps that have been achieved
- Acknowledge your feelings and remind yourself that it is normal to feel overwhelmed sometimes



Remind yourself that you are safe:

- Reassure yourself and others that you are safe now
- If you are not in a safe environment, consider reaching out to QPASTT or another service that you trust



Eat healthy meals:

- Eat three healthy meals daily including fruits and vegetables, fish, whole grains, legumes, beans, olive oil, yoghurt and some lean meat or other protein and dairy
- Avoid excess sugar and processed foods (such as chips, biscuits and fried foods)



Manage your exposure to news and social media

- It is natural to want to keep up with news reports and social media, but they can cause distressing thoughts and emotions and disrupt sleep. Try watching and reading information earlier in the day and plan for how you will ground and calm yourself if you see something distressing (See *Factsheet 8: Understanding and coping with fear, tension, hypervigilance and panic* for some grounding and relaxation exercises)



Drink water and limit caffeine:

- Drink plenty of water (at least 6-8 glasses per day)
- Limit caffeinated drinks (cola, coffee, energy drinks)



Establish a sleep routine:

- Follow a sleep routine by going to bed and waking up at the same time each day
- Spend some quiet time before bed winding down away from phones, televisions and other devices



Enjoy family activities:

- Engage in enjoyable family activities like picnics, exploring, or cooking together



Maintain routine:

- Keep you and your family to a routine so that life feels safe and predictable. Attend school, work and study. Eat breakfast and dinner. Sleep at a similar time each night



Spend time outdoors and move your body:

- Spend at least 10 minutes outdoors every day
- Engage in physical activities you enjoy, like walking, dancing or swimming



Connect with culture and community:

- Stay connected to your culture through engaging in cultural activities. This may be through cooking traditional food that brings comfort, reading books and listening to music in your language and linking with people in your community



Engage with your faith and/or spiritual beliefs:

- Connect with your faith-based community and spiritual beliefs in a way that feels healing to you



Ask for help:

- Asking and accepting help as early as possible is important for healing. In Australia it is safe to ask for the help you need. There are many services like QPASTT in Australia to help you cope and adjust

“I have been through two wars and those things are in my mind all the time. I dream about it. I can't control it. It is good when I can talk and take it out of my mind.”

QPASTT client

To speak with QPASTT or find out more about our services, please call 07 3391 6677 or visit qpastt.org.au.

QPASTT is the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma. It is a community organisation which provides a variety of flexible and culturally sensitive support services to people who have been tortured or who have suffered refugee-related trauma. QPASTT has offices across Queensland.