

# Basic self-care and coping strategies

- **Eat a nutritious diet.** For most adults, this means less fat, sugar and salt, plus more fibre, green, red and orange fruit and vegetables (unless you have been advised otherwise by a health professional). Most farmers love red meat, but guidelines suggest that only a quarter of your plate should be covered by meat (or an alternative) – another quarter should be covered with a carbohydrate (e.g. potatoes, bread) – the other half should be covered with green, red and/or orange vegetables. Eating well is important for both your physical and mental health
- **Be active** on most, if not all, days of the week. If you find that hard, remember that any exercise you can do is better than none. Exercise brings health benefits if done in a few smaller bouts of around 10 minutes, or in one or two longer bouts each day. You can aim for a mix of both moderate (e.g. walking) and vigorous activities (e.g. running or riding- the activities that make you puff or breathe harder). Strength exercises are also beneficial. Remember, you are more likely to develop exercise as a life-long habit if you choose activities that you enjoy. The good news is that you should feel free to choose what exercise you do, when you do it and whether you do it alone or with others! Your GP will be able to give you more information on what is an appropriate level of activity for you
- If you are sitting for long periods (e.g. driving a header or a tractor), try to break it up with a **quick stretch and walk** when you can
- If you choose to drink alcohol, **watch how much you drink.** It is recommended that healthy men and women should drink no more than two standard drinks per day (and one standard drink is generally one can of mid-strength beer, about 100ml of wine, or a standard 30ml nip of spirits). Alcohol and other substances might seem to help you manage problems in the short term, but in the longer term, they usually make things worse
- When you are feeling down or worried, **be kind to yourself.** It is okay not to feel positive all the time. Treat yourself the same way you'd treat a friend in the same situation
- Do as many things as you can that you find **fun** and/or that give you a **sense of achievement.** Visit family and friends, play sport, go on a holiday or volunteer... the possibilities are endless
- At the end of every day, consider asking yourself **three things that you are thankful or grateful for.** Even when you are feeling really down, it doesn't hurt to remind yourself of the small things that went right (even if it is just the fact that your dog was good company, or that there was just enough bread left to make lunch)



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- If you enjoy it, take some time to listen to your favourite **music**. It can have a powerful impact on your mood
- In hard times or on hard days, try to accept that life may not be entirely the way you'd like it to be, but it is the way it is for now. You can't change some things but ask yourself **what you can do to make the most of today**
- **Share how you are feeling** with those who are close to you. Interacting with friends, family and acquaintances is important and can help to bring value to your day
- Be proactive and **take control of your health** as much as possible. Remember your GP is there not only to look after you when you are sick, but also to help you prevent illnesses, detect problems early, address mental health concerns and ensure that you are as happy as possible with your overall quality of life

**Phone numbers to keep handy:** Lifeline: **13 11 14** | beyondblue: **1300 224 636**

**Learning techniques in the ifarmwell modules will also help.**