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2020 Term Dates

Term 1: 28 Jan to 27 Mar

Term 2: 14 Apr to 26 Jun

Term 3: 13 Jul to 18 Sep

Term 4: 05 Oct to 18 Dec

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Links

[Advance College Web Site](#)

[VCAL FAQ's](#)

[Youth Central](#)

Message from the Principal

The current pandemic has obviously had a significant impact on our College. As the situation changed rapidly from February through March it required all staff to assess its impact both professionally and personally. We have been very fortunate not to have any reported cases of the virus from staff students or their families. Hopefully this will remain unchanged.

All staff were given the option to work either on site or from home. Most have elected to work on site with a couple working both from home and on site when necessary. This has worked well and the College has continued a dynamic learning program for all students.

Starting in the last week of Term One, teachers and support staff have done an amazing job preparing for online delivery. Using Google Classroom and Hangout students have been engaging and seem to be enjoying the different approach to teaching and learning with 'attendance' levels being consistently high.

Staff are providing a higher level of wellbeing support to the students with our Psychologist Julia being utilised in a range of roles from individual student support to running group sessions focussing on wellbeing and coping strategies. Staff are emphasising the need to have a routine and a range of activities to ensure students are optimising their engagement.

The State government have just announced that schools will start back on May 25. The College will have a staff planning day on that day with students starting on Tuesday, May 26. We very much look forward to our students resuming with some sort of normality. Staff will ensure that strict guidelines on hygiene and physical distancing are followed to minimise the risk of spreading the virus.

The current situation, although difficult, has seen some very positive aspects. For example, students who had difficulty engaging at school because of anxiety have benefitted from the distance learning mode. The College will retain some of this distance learning capacity to support student engagement if they are unable to attend regularly. Another major positive has been the excellent collaboration and mutual support shown by all staff.

In summarising, I believe we may have seen the worst of the pandemic and, with the easing of restrictions, albeit slowly, life and school will slowly get back to what it used to be. To all our students and their families, I would like to thank you all for your support and understanding. The health and wellbeing of our students and staff remains a priority throughout this time.

Steve Wright - Principal – (email: steve.w@advance.vic.edu.au)

Learning and change

Term 2 has been an incredible, unprecedented time of learning and change. With school staff having to move rapidly to an online learning platform, and students adjusting to learning from home, both staff and families have had challenges to overcome. Some of our staff are managing to fulfil their Advance role, and supervising online learning for their own children at the same time!

I have been in awe of watching Advance teachers running their online classrooms so smoothly. I have been able to join in online 'circle time' and facilitated well-being activities as part of the daily class schedule. It is incredible to see the creativity of teachers in coming up with new activities, and showing an unwavering enthusiasm to their students. I'm sure our students will learn from that demonstration of resilience.

As we now think about the transition back to face-to-face learning, staff are planning how we can meet the varying emotional, social and learning needs of students. Some students may feel anxious about returning to the routine of the face-to-face environment, some feel uncertain about change, and some may have felt lonely and eager to re-connect. Even though students are social media savvy they still tell me it's not the same as seeing their friends in person. Academic and well-being staff will all be ready to support students upon their return on 26th of May.

Please contact me if you would like to talk about how I may be able to support our students' mental health during this time.

Julia, Psychologist
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How to deal with the uncertainty during coronavirus

Let us be real: so much about coronavirus (COVID-19) is outside of our control. Not just the virus itself, but also all the other aspects of life that might be impacted, from work and finances to socialising and travel. Give yourself credit as you cope with this tough time and recognise that dealing with this challenge can make you more resilient.

Hold on to your 'stability rocks'

A 'stability rock' is a process or practice that adds something reliable to your life when it feels like things are spinning out of control. 'Stability rocks' are really grounding and help you to remember that there are some things that are within your control. Your own routines and rituals will become important at this time when some parts of your life are disrupted (e.g. school, uni, work).

Some examples of 'stability rocks' could be:

- waking up at the same time every day
- eating regular meals
- going to bed at the same time
- doing some form of exercise every morning
- reaching out to a friend each day.



Accept that it's normal to be feeling stressed

Feeling stressed is an understandable response to the current coronavirus pandemic. You might be worried about catching the virus, about how your loved ones will cope, about the disruption to your studies and routines, and about whether you'll still have a job and enough money. These stressors, along with the constant media hysteria and dealing with disappointment (travel bans, events being cancelled, etc.), add up to a pretty crappy time.

As hard as things are, it can be comforting to know that you're not alone and that others share your feelings. When you check in with your mates, take note of how they're feeling – it's likely that they're in the same boat as you.



Remember: you are not your thoughts

When you're feeling anxious, tell yourself it's a normal part of being human. It's important to understand that we are not our thoughts. Thoughts may come into your head for a whole bunch of reasons. By accepting that they are not facts, thoughts lose some of their power to upset us.

Try writing down the words that are going through your head, especially when you're in a tough situation. Then read them back as if someone else had written them. This can help you to realise that your thoughts aren't you, and to accept them for what they are: just thoughts.

Practise tolerating uncertainty

Predictability helps people to feel they are in control, and reassures them that their lives are settled and nothing bad will happen. On the other hand, having to deal with the unknown can make people anxious. Get a handle on anxiety by practising tolerating uncertainty. You can start by doing small things differently, such as experimenting with cooking a meal without triple-checking the recipe, or picking a random Netflix show to watch without knowing anything about it.

Write down how these behaviours make you feel (before and after doing them). One thing we don't like about uncertainty is that if we allow it into our life, sometimes things can go wrong.

To use the example of experimenting with cooking, perhaps the meal tastes pretty bad. Write down the outcome and then write down what you did to cope. For example, did you still eat the meal, or did you make something else? Maybe you sent a picture to a friend with a joke around how you #NailedIt.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Did things turn out okay even though I wasn't 100% certain?
- If things didn't turn out okay, what happened?
- What did I do to cope with the negative outcome?
- Was I able to handle the negative outcome?
- What does this tell me about my ability to cope with negative outcomes in the future?
- The idea is to learn that even if things don't go as planned, you can still deal with them.



Draw on skills you've used before

It's very likely you've dealt with uncertainty before, and you can do it again.

Reflect on what skills you have used in the past to cope with uncertainty, or ask someone who knows you well. Write a list so you have a little toolbox to refer to whenever you're getting anxious.

Your skills could include:

- focusing on what's in your control, and working with that
- writing down what's troubling you and what you can do to improve the situation
- practising self-care activities
- allowing yourself to take a break from what's bothering you
- practising positive self-talk.



Play to your strengths

Working out what our strengths are, and then playing to them, can give us more confidence in times of uncertainty. Take this free [VIA Character Strengths quiz](#) and then have a think about what you can do to act on those strengths. For example, if you're creative, you could spend 30 minutes each day doing something in that area, such as drawing, playing an instrument or experimenting with a new recipe. If a value is 'humanity', you could practise acting compassionately and do small, unexpected things for others like checking in on a neighbour or sending a friend a song you think they'd like.

Find ways to talk to others

When you're going through a tough time, one of the best and most effective things you can do to feel better is to talk with someone. If an in-person meeting isn't possible, organise a time to call, text, WhatsApp, Skype, Google Hangout, Slack Video or Zoom. When you talk to a trusted friend, family member or health professional, tell them what's stressing you out and why. They may not have all the answers, but just sharing what you're going through can help get it out of your head and make it feel less scary.

Watch our video on [why talking helps](#) and find out [5 steps to talking to someone you trust](#).



Stay up to date with the facts

Keeping up to date with factual resources can provide some more certainty about what's happening. Choosing media sources wisely means that you're less likely to get overwhelmed with the constant coverage and it will be easier to stay grounded.

If you feel overwhelmed, seek support

Sometimes things can get overwhelming, even if you've been practising these skills. As most people will be physically distancing or self-isolating, a great option is telephone and online services. Lifeline (13 11 14) and Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) can be accessed for phone and online counselling, with Lifeline phone counsellors on call from 7 pm to midnight, and Kids Helpline available 24/7. [Headspace](#) also offers free online and telephone support and counselling.

If it's available to you, you could consider seeing your GP or mental health professional for extra help (but make sure to follow the advice of [Healthdirect](#) if you're showing symptoms or are in self-isolation). You could also ask your mental health professional if they could chat over Skype/FaceTime if you're in self-isolation.

You can also head to the [ReachOut Forums](#) to connect with other young people online.

 The Newsletter is one of the methods of communication with our school community – but don't forget to check out our school website - www.advancecollege.vic.edu.au

and Facebook page –

<https://www.facebook.com/AdvanceVCAL/>

 Advance College can facilitate accredited training in short courses such as Food Handling. It also runs beginner computer classes and career guidance programs. Please check www.advance.vic.edu.au or call your local campus for further details.
