



Tip sheet

Supporting the LGBT+ community through COVID-19

The impact of COVID-19 has affected everyday life for us all. For many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people (LGBT+), the increased susceptibility to mental health issues, social distancing and financial hardship challenges of the pandemic has magnified the situation.

Some LGBT+ people face risks of homelessness, insecure employment, restricted healthcare access, and other fears, with many forced to move into unsafe domestic spaces, such as with families who may not accept or affirm their identity, gender or sexuality. Others may live alone and are afraid of becoming ill, or they may be feeling more isolated from their support networks. For all of these groups, and for many other LGBT+ people, they may feel safest going “back in the closet” or remaining silent about their sexuality.

Below are a few LGBT+ and other general tips and resources (in and outside BHP) for helping with self-care, building resilience and staying connected during the pandemic.

Strategies for staying connected and for non-LGBT+ affirming environments

- Interact with other members of the LGBT+ community at BHP on Jasper's [Yammer Group](#) – BHP's LGBT+ ally employee inclusion group. Start a conversation or join an existing discussion thread. Search ‘Jasper’ in Yammer to join the closed group. Note: You will need access to BHP's internal network to join.
- Join a Jasper Connect session via WebEx chat. Jasper Connect is a safe space for an informal group chat with others members of BHP's LGBT+ community. It's an opportunity to share what's on your mind and learn from each other's experiences. Group chats take place weekly and are great way to meet people in a similar situation across the globe. Email jasper@bhp.com to register your interest, with the subject line “Jasper Connect”
- If you can't find a safe space in your current environment, regular walks in a nearby park or close to home provide great opportunities to get some gentle exercise, fresh air, and to connect with others in your community – either in person (at a safe distance), or over the telephone.
- Find a hideout or place in the home to make your safe zone.
- While the safe places you may normally hang out are temporarily unavailable, stay in touch with your communities by following your favourite event/DJs playing free online or listen to a pod cast.
- The Internet can be your friend. You deserve to be surrounded by people who affirm you for exactly who you are. Join a Facebook group, reach out to on-line communities and people in other countries. We are all in this together.
- Cherish symbolic objects, such as a pride flag in your room, a photo of your close friend or partner which you can keep in your pocket, a scarf that signifies your authentic self, a friendship bracelet from a peer or partner – anything that helps you keep hold of your identity - even if you can't express it externally.
- Reach-out to LGBT+ affirming organisations or community partners who can help (see *Seek support* section).

	Remember, it helps to stay connected and talk. Acknowledging and talking about your feelings of isolation and the personal impacts of COVID-19, and discussing these, can help you manage any increased anxiety and stress.
Caring for yourself, and helping others	Self-care - Take time away from work. While tempting to immerse yourself as an escape from the real world this can lead to burnout. - Limit the amount of time spent watching or reading the news. Set limits on your devices. Most tech systems on your devices tell you where you are spending your time and how much time you are spending on each app. - If you can, focus on an activity that will enrich your heart and mind, e.g. read a book, indulge in your favourite TV show, bake some goodies, play a game or begin a creative project. - Above all else, love yourself and seek support if you need it. You don't need to be anything more than you are. Helping others A sense of connectedness can be achieved from helping others; - Look out for those in your own personal networks and/or neighbourhood who may need support, such as the elderly or people who live alone. - Offer to help buy groceries, or make time for a quick catch up and to check in on them. - Fostering a sense of community is important at this time. If your networks have gone silent, be the person to reconnect by setting up a Facebook or WhatsApp group, for example.
Seek support	- No matter what your situation, it's important to recognise how you feel and seek support should you need it. - Check in with family, friends and your network. It always helps to talk. Acknowledging your feelings of distress and discussing this can help you manage anxiety and stress. - Think about how you have overcome other difficulties in the past. Connect with those who have helped you, or put the same mechanisms in place if a certain strategy has worked for you. - Seek professional help - contact BHP's LGBT+ friendly Employee Assistance Program, which provides free and confidential support services for BHP employees and their families. Regular sessions with a counsellor or a psychologist can help you track how you're feeling, identify what you need if you are overwhelmed, and provide you with tools for self-care. - Use other LGBT+ service providers: - In Australia contact Qlife, between 3pm and midnight AEST on 1800 184 527 or start an online conversation https://qlife.org.au/ - In Asia contact Oogachaga Tuesdays to Thursdays, 7.00pm to 10.00pm SGT and Saturdays, 2.00pm to 5.00pm SGT. Hotline: +65 6226 2002, WhatsApp Chat (via text only) +65 8592 0609 www.Oogachaga.com - Or contact your regional Jasper chapter lead via SharePoint (BHP system access required) or email jasper@bhp.com.



	IMPORTANT: If you're feeling acute levels of anxiety or depression, please seek support immediately via EAP or another local service provider. If you're experiencing family and domestic violence, there is support available to you. Visit Digital Workspace for further details or email jasper@bhp.com.
Other useful resources	BHP The wellbeing page on bhp.com (English Spanish) provides support on a range of valuable mental health and wellbeing information for work and life, including a range of tools, tips and coping mechanisms for common conditions. These materials also include a COVID-19 personal action plan to help you acknowledge how you feel, and get you thinking about your own wellbeing. Useful tip sheets include; - Managing mental health and wellbeing - Living alone or feeling lonely - The importance of sleep - Fatigue and how to manage it
Reach out	Our Jasper Leads are always available if you have a question, need help, or would like someone to connect with locally. Email them in confidence at jasper@bhp.com or visit the Jasper SharePoint to connect with a lead in your region, if you have access to the BHP system. Note: Jasper's email address is accessible by Jasper leads only and your email will remain confidential.

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