



# Mindframe and Dart Centre Asia Pacific: How news personnel can prioritise self-care when covering traumatic news

This guide has been co-developed by *Mindframe* and the [Dart Centre Asia Pacific](#) (DCAP) to support media workers' wellbeing when reporting on suicide, mental health concerns and other challenging stories.

A potentially traumatic event is defined by Phoenix Australia as including any threat, actual or perceived, to the life or physical safety of a person, their loved ones or those around them.

Journalists, like their audiences, are not immune to indirect or vicarious trauma after hearing or viewing distressing stories, and are reminded to seek help early.

If signs or symptoms continue for more than a month, clinicians will generally assess for the presence of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Access *Mindframe's* dedicated suite of resources for media, including self-help information and guidelines for safe reporting on suicide, mental health concerns, and alcohol and other drug concerns [here](#).

## Some signs you may be impacted by reporting on a traumatic event:

- Sweating, rapid heartbeat, dizziness or nausea
- Sleeplessness, recurring reminders of the event
- Being easily startled, tense, or agitated
- Feeling numb and empty
- Feeling unable to handle intense feelings or physical sensations
- Feeling you have no support with which to share your feelings and emotions
- Having relationship problems with friends, family and colleagues
- Increasing your use of alcohol or drugs.





Use the *Mindframe self-care action plan for journalists* on the following page, along with the advice below, to plan your self-care activities when taking on challenging assignments.

### Key guidance:

- Consider any emotional, physical, logistical and ethical risks and discuss these with your editor or news director. If you have lived experience of loss or harm, you may experience more pronounced trauma reactions.
- Remember to take care of yourself: eat well, drink water, avoid alcohol, sleep regularly, take breaks and exercise.
- For prolonged distant or difficult assignments, factor in a decompression break of a day or so to process what you have experienced and ask a supervisor to keep your partner and/or family informed. DCAP has also posted [10 useful tips on preparing for assignments in unstable and unpredictable environments](#).
- After reporting distressing content check how you're feeling. Journaling may be helpful, and if you are distressed, talk to someone you trust, such as a peer, mentor or health professional. Seeking help is neither weak or unprofessional. If your newsroom does not have a peer support program, encourage your editor to contact DCAP.
- Enact your self-care plan and complete at least one activity a day that helps you sustain your mental health and wellbeing.
- If you find your wellbeing is significantly affected – especially if your distress persists for more than three or four weeks – seek professional assistance from appropriate support services, such as those listed at the end of this resource.






It is essential for media professionals to receive ongoing professional development and support to prepare for potentially traumatic assignments, as there is often little time to do this prior to exposure. DCAP has training and resources that can help media professionals with this preparation.

## Mindframe self-care action plan for journalists

### How can self-care be incorporated into our lives?

Incorporate self-care by identifying activities and behaviours that will benefit our wellbeing and that we can practically implement.

A 'self-care action plan' can be a valuable tool and reminder to incorporate self-care activities into our lives.

My self-care action plan				
Self-care domain	My self-care goal	What do I need to achieve this goal?	How can I achieve this goal?	How did achieving this self-care goal make me feel?
 Physical	<i>Example: Attend a gym class once a week</i>	<i>Example: Scheduled time to go when I don't have other commitments</i>	<i>Example: Organise for partner to pick up kids on a Tuesday. Pack change of clothes and go straight after work.</i>	<i>Example: Energised and calm</i>
 Relationships				
 Work				
 Thoughts and emotions				
 Spirituality				





It is important to be aware of the potentially distressing nature of this work and be prepared to speak to your managers, peers or reach out for professional support if required.

### General support services:

Lifeline [13 11 14](tel:131114) | Text [0477 13 11 14](tel:0477131114) | [lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au) (24/7)

13 YARN [13 92 76](tel:139276) | [13yarn.org.au](http://13yarn.org.au) (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service available 24/7)

Suicide Call Back Service [1300 659 467](tel:1300659467) | [suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://suicidecallbackservice.org.au) (24/7)

Beyond Blue [1300 224 636](tel:1300224636) | [beyondblue.org.au/forums](http://beyondblue.org.au/forums) (24/7)

StandBy Support After Suicide [1300 727 247](tel:1300727247) (6am-10pm, 7 days)

QLife [1800 184 527](tel:1800184527) | [qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au) (LGBTIQ+ service available 3pm - midnight, 7 days)

MensLine Australia [1300 78 99 78](tel:1300789978) | [mensline.org.au](http://mensline.org.au) (24/7)

### Other resources:

Head to Health Mental Health Portal [headtohealth.gov.au](http://headtohealth.gov.au)

SANE online forums [saneforums.org](http://saneforums.org) | [1800 187 236](tel:1800187236) (10am-10pm)

## Mindframe support

For advice when reporting on suicide, mental health concerns or AOD concerns, contact *Mindframe*:

☎ (02) 4924 6900

✉ [mindframe@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mindframe@health.nsw.gov.au)

🌐 [mindframe.org.au](http://mindframe.org.au)

## DART support

For further expertise for journalists when reporting trauma, contact the Dart Centre Asia Pacific:

☎ 0408 148 749

✉ [admin@dataspac.org](mailto:admin@dataspac.org)

🌐 [dartcentre.org/asiapacific](http://dartcentre.org/asiapacific)