

For now, psychology is our best anti-coronavirus tool

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Aside from a vaccine or cure, knowledge of human behaviour and psychology may be the best means of controlling the spread of COVID-19.

In a new, freely available book, UQ psychologist Professor Jolanda Jetten said psychological theory was—appropriately—informing planning and [public debate](#) around the most significant world event of our lifetimes.

She and co-author Professor Alex Haslam and other international experts collaborated on *Together Apart: The Psychology of COVID-19*, using decades of insights from social [psychology](#) research to better understand events of recent months.

"Our means of controlling the infection spread depends on behavioural changes and hence upon psychology," Professor Jetten said.

"An effective response to the pandemic hinges on people coming together and supporting each other as members of a common community, which is why the social psychological dimensions of the pandemic are so important."

Professor Haslam said many of the book's contributors had been advising a range of bodies since the start of the pandemic on the psychology of how to best support the COVID-19 response.

"They have provided input to governments and task forces around the world on topics including communications and messaging, adherence to lockdown and physical distancing, trust-building, leadership, public order, and the mental health impact of physical distancing measures," Professor Haslam said.

"This knowledge and expertise contributes to chapters on dynamics that have been found to be extremely important in the COVID-19 crisis."

The book covers topics including leadership, compliance, behaviour change, [conspiracy theories](#), threat and risk perception, [social isolation](#)

(in particular for [vulnerable groups](#) such as [older adults](#)), trauma, crowds, emergencies, solidarity, social order, inequality, polarisation and prejudice.

Professor Haslam said the book's most important aim was to help people understand the importance of the phrase 'we're all in this together'.

"In the words of New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, it's time to get our heads around the 'we' concept," Professor Haslam said.

"He said 'It's not about you or me, it's about all of us'."

The book—part monograph and part edited volume—is co-authored by Professor Steve Reicher from the University of St Andrews, and Dr. Tegan Cruwys, from Australian National University, with contributions from 24 international experts.

More information: Together Apart: The Psychology of COVID-19: www.socialsciencespace.com/wp-...ncorrected-proof.pdf

Provided by University of Queensland

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