

Living Library

Mental Health stories from south west Sydney

Facilitated group discussion guide

CONVERSATION STARTER



Objective of Facilitator Guide

Living Library aims to challenge stigma, stereotypes and prejudice. It also aims to increase inclusion in the community.

The storytellers live in south west Sydney and share their lived experiences as consumers, carers and clinicians.

This facilitator guide aims to start conversations and reflections using the Living Library resources. This includes exploring the challenges of mental illness, promoting self-care and normalising seeking help.

For more information, visit WayAhead.org.au



Target audience

This resource is intended for general audiences to start conversations about mental health.

It can also be used to complement other mental health education groups. It is NOT designed as individual or group therapy.



Facilitator tips

- ✓ Acknowledge that you are not an expert.
- ✓ Choose stories and guides that are relevant to your group.
- ✓ Create a safe space. Promote respect for others' opinions and experiences.
- ✓ Topics covered by storytellers may be triggering for some participants. Please provide relevant support phone numbers on the back of this guide.

- ✓ Acknowledge to the group that in some cultures mental health is not discussed and, in some cases, there may not be words to define mental health and/or mental illness.
- ✓ The pre-session activity is best suited to groups that do not usually have a focus on mental health.



Resources required

- ✓ Butcher's paper
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Audio visual equipment (if using the videos)

- ✓ Copies of Living Library resources are available on, <https://wayahead.org.au/living-library>
- ✓ Suggested session time – 60 minutes



Definition of mental illness vs mental health

Mental health

The World Health Organisation defines mental health as a state of wellbeing in which every person realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community.

Mental illness

A clinically diagnosable disorder that significantly interferes with a person's cognitive, emotional or social abilities. Examples include anxiety, eating and bipolar disorders, depression and schizophrenia.

Pre-session activity

The aim of this pre-session activity is to get people prepared to explore mental health and discuss mental illness, the barriers to seeking help and what people can do to overcome them. The myths (right) are 'generalised misconceptions' about mental illness with the subsequent texts for you to inform the conversation. Read the statements and ask participants whether they agree, disagree or are unsure and then discuss their answers.

1. Myth: You're either 'normal' or 'mentally ill'.

Fact: Mental health is a spectrum and we all go through periods of life where we feel distressed, worried or disconnected. We can all benefit from good and accessible support for our mental health.

2. Myth: If you have a mental illness, you'll never get better.

Fact: Many mental health issues are temporary, and with access to the right support people can create and live fulfilling and meaningful lives.

3. Myth: People with a mental illness are dangerous.

Fact: People with a mental illness are far more likely to be victims of violent crimes than perpetrators of them. Additionally, people who need urgent help may be victims of police violence or coercive treatment.

4. Myth: Mental health is the individual's responsibility.

Fact: Many things contribute to mental health and wellbeing including things beyond a person's control, such as discrimination and access to issues like housing and support.

5. Myth: People experiencing mental illness are unemployable.

Fact: People diagnosed with a mental illness work in all professions and at every level. Stigma and shame at work can stop people from asking for help when they need it.

6. Myth: Everyone with a mental illness needs medication and psychology.

Fact: There are many different ways people can find recovery. Many people use a combination of techniques and therapies to help them through.

For more information, visit www.Wayahead.org.au

Support services

Mental Health Line
1800 011 511

Lifeline
13 11 14

Transcultural Mental Health Line
1800 649 911

Carer Gateway
1800 422 737

General Practitioner (your doctor)

Session outline

1. Introduction – *5 minutes*

2. Pre-session activity – *20 minutes*

3. Watch video or read printed story – *5 minutes*

4. Discussion – *20 minutes*

- What are your thoughts about the story?
- Can you empathise or relate to the story? In what way?
- How does the story encourage you to be more open to talk about mental health?
- How does the story encourage you to be more open to seeking help or helping others in need of mental health support?
- How does the story help you gain a better understanding of mental health/mental ill health?

5. Summary and highlight support services – *10 minutes*

6. Highlight support services listed in video or under 'Support Services' and other relevant national, state or local services.

We acknowledge the bravery of each Living Library storyteller for sharing their story.

Additional resources

[Mental Health Jargon](#)

[Fact sheets on Mental Health](#)

[Stigma](#)

[Your GP and mental health care](#)

[Carer support](#)