

Share the Journey

THIS OCTOBER



Mental Health Month,

held in October each year, gives us an opportunity to raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing through running a broad campaign and supporting community events. It is a chance to promote activities and ideas that can have a positive impact on our daily lives and the lives of others.

Each year, Mental Health Month ties everything together with a specific theme. This year's theme is "Share the Journey".

Connecting with others

is important for all aspects of our health and wellbeing. Research tells us that feeling connected with others gives us a sense of security, support, purpose and happiness. Close connections and good relationships with others help us enjoy good times in our lives as well as cope with difficult experiences. Many of us report feeling lonely and believe loneliness is increasing in Australia. For those experiencing or living with mental illness, loneliness can have an even bigger impact, especially when you factor in the added experiences of social exclusion and stigma.



Share the Journey is all about ways we can connect with others, both for our own health and wellbeing, as well as theirs.

Sharing the journey can mean many things:

- Telling your loved ones about both your successes and difficulties
- Reaching out to people who might be withdrawing from others
- Working with someone to find and access services or support
- Asking for help with day-to-day things when you need it
- Getting involved in group activities, like sports or book clubs
- Sharing a cuppa with a mate

Whether you reach out to someone who might be feeling a bit lost or find a way to connect with others when you need some help, building positive social connection is something we can all try and do.



SHARING THE JOURNEY MEANS UNDERSTANDING WHERE SOMEONE IS EMOTIONALLY, HOW THEY GOT THERE, AND WHERE THEY ARE GOING



How do you like to connect with your NEAR People?



How do your NEAR people like to connect with you?

Chatting on the phone

Teaching them about something you love

Going out together

Staying in together

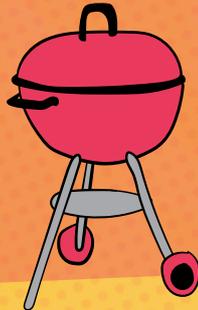
Going for a walk

Playing games

Helping with chores

Sharing a cuppa

Sharing a hobby



Connecting - Near and Far

So what kinds of connections can help us?

There are two main relationship types identified as being important: “Near” and “Far”

NEAR

The Near relationships are the ones we have with people close to us, those we choose to spend quality time with. Strong, deep Near relationships take time and a bit of work but can help us feel supported and give our lives meaning and enjoyment.

Share the Journey can mean being attentive to your Near relationships, but when things are difficult, these relationships can be hard to maintain. If you are able, reach out to Near people who seem to have dropped off the radar. Does someone you love seem a bit down or distant? Maybe you can see them and help them with a chore or task, or just sit and have a chat.

Time and attention are two of the most important ways we can strengthen relationships with our Near people. What that looks like is different for everyone.

FAR

The Far relationships are more casual than your Near relationships, but they can still have a big impact on your health and wellbeing. These are the broader relationships we have with our wider communities.

Our Far relationships provide a sense of connectedness, familiarity, and belonging.

When we are going through tough times, maintaining our Far relationships can feel really difficult. We can often feel like we don't belong.

Share the Journey means thinking about the broader communities you are part of, and how to make them easier to access for people experiencing difficulty with their mental health and wellbeing. This might mean something specific, like hiring a bus to pick people up to go to community events, or it could be more general, like making sure mental health and wellbeing are not “taboo” topics. Don't be afraid to reach out to people who have become less involved with your community. See what you can do to help them reconnect.

How can we connect with our FAR people?



How can we make our communities easier for others to connect to?

- Start some wellbeing activities at work
- Challenge negative ideas around mental health
- Make sure events are inclusive
- Create a range of options for people looking to connect
- Review accessibility options
- Reach out to community members who haven't been seen much
- Make sure your community/workplace/group takes part in Mental Health Month
- Head to a free community event – libraries are a good option
- Join a local hobby group

NEAR OR FAR – WHAT YOU THINK MATTERS

What does connection look like? How many friends do you need? Studies have shown that your perception of your own social connection is the important factor. Some people feel connected when they have lots of friends and many social connections; others feel connected with only a few. If you're feeling isolated or lonely, that feeling is real and worth addressing, no matter how many people might be around you. How many connections someone else has and how lonely they feel can be different to how you feel. This means that when we're reaching out, it's important to remember that people who seem connected, might not be feeling that way.



Connecting with concepts

Some of the mental health terms have different meanings for different people. These are the terms we use and what we mean when we use them.

MENTAL HEALTH – the overall state of mental wellbeing a person is experiencing. Just as everyone has a state of physical health, everyone also has a state of mental health, which varies over time and in response to things we experience.

MENTAL DISTRESS - a term used describe experiences a person may be having rather than a diagnostic term. This can occur at any point of the wellness to illness spectrum.

MENTAL ILL-HEALTH - when our ability to think, feel and respond to others is negatively affected. This often occurs in response to life events and stressors and may resolve over time or when stress is reduced. If it is ongoing or getting worse, mental ill-health may be a sign mental illness.

MENTAL ILLNESS – a clinically diagnosable illness. The diagnosis of mental illness is generally made by professionals according to the classification system of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM). Mental illnesses are diverse and can have varying degrees of severity. When referring to people, the preferred terminology is “person/people with lived experience of mental illness” or you might refer to a specific diagnosis, for example “person with lived experience of Bipolar disorder”, rather than saying “mentally ill person” or “Bipolar person”.



“THE GREATNESS OF A COMMUNITY IS MOST ACCURATELY MEASURED BY THE COMPASSIONATE ACTIONS OF ITS MEMBERS”

- Coretta Scott King

DO YOU NEED SOME MORE HELP?

mentalhealthmonth.org.au

You can find a number of resources and links including downloadable resources, information and a calendar of events during Mental Health Month.

1300 794 991

WayAhead's Mental Health Information Service (9am – 5pm, Monday Friday) for advice and support.

wayaheaddirectory.org.au

An online directory of mental health and community services, searchable by location and support type.

Finally, if you don't find the right help the first time, it's important to keep trying. It's okay to ask again or to talk to another mental health professional until you find the support and help that is right for you.

wayahead.org.au

You can read more information on mental health or maintaining wellbeing, download and view our factsheets or find out more about our support programs.

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If you need to talk to someone immediately, you can call Lifeline.

(02) 9912 3851

If you are from a culturally or linguistically diverse background, you can also contact the Transcultural Mental Health Centre (TMHC) Information and Clinical Consultation Line.

More useful contact information

- For all emergencies call **000**
- MensLine Australia - **1300 789 978**
- Suicide Call Back Service – **1300 659 467**
- Kids Help Line - **1800 55 1800**
- Domestic Violence line – **1800 656 463**
- National Sexual Assault, Domestic & Family Violence counselling service
1800Respect – **1800 737 732**
- Alcohol & Drug Info Services (ADIS) –
1800 422 599

These numbers are either free or the cost of a local call.



WayAhead is an ACNC registered Australian Charity and is endorsed by the Quality Improvement Council.



WayAhead acknowledges and actively supports the culturally diverse community we work in. This includes recognising and working with the Indigenous community, the LGBTI community, multicultural Australia and people living with a mental health condition.



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Mental Health Month is supported by



Mental Health Commission
of New South Wales