



MENTAL HEALTH MONTH ^{ACT}

Awareness, Belonging, Connection

Resources

Your mental health and wellbeing are important year round, not just during Mental Health Month. Here are some resources to help keep you positive and mentally healthy.

SUPPORTING YOUR POSITIVE WELLBEING

Our **wellbeing** is the balance of our physical, mental, social and emotional health. When we take care of all these aspects of our lives, we build a positive sense of self and support our mental health.

We can all take steps to maintain and boost our mental wellbeing.

Stay active: Keeping your body moving is essential for your physical health, and it's also great for mental health and wellbeing. Fresh air, fitness and movement can bring a sense of balance, generate endorphins, and help your focus your mind and live in the moment. Longer term, exercise can help you sleep better, give you more energy, improve concentration, improve confidence, boost your mood, release stress and lower anxiety.



Be social: Connecting with people you care about and who care about you helps maintain a positive sense of self and belonging. Engaging with others can also help you de-stress by sharing experiences, sharing a laugh or enjoying some quality time.



Eat well: There is a strong link between what we eat and how we feel. A healthy diet that includes a range of fresh fruits and vegetables is associated with improved mental health. Find tips and recipes at [Eat for Health](#).

Sleep well: Getting enough quality sleep improves mood and helps us think more clearly throughout the day. This can help in decision making, handling stress and communicating well with others, as well as just having more energy in your day! Staying active and eating well can help you sleep better.

Take 'me time': Self-care is not selfish. It is vital to maintaining and boosting our wellbeing. However, it is often one of the first things to fall off when life gets busy. It is important to schedule regular time doing something that brightens your day: paint, read, play games, sing in the shower or even go for the full spa pamper experience!

When you prioritise your wellbeing, you are more likely to feel positive, know your worth and relate to others in a more positive way—all of which cycle back to your wellbeing too!

MIEACT has more [resources on self-care for wellbeing](#).





HOW TO GET STARTED

Getting started is usually the hardest part of any new routine. We often either go all in and get exhausted within days, or get so overwhelmed we don't start. Here are some tips to help:

Start small: Make small changes and set small goals in the beginning. This will help them be more achievable and keep you motivated.

Do what you enjoy: Find delicious healthy recipes, fun exercise options and rewarding self-care routines. You might need to try a few things before you find what's right for you.

Make incremental changes: Increase the elements of your routine as you go. Add a new way to move, a new hobby, or more fresh food to your weekly menu.

Set a routine: Planning your meals and scheduling exercise and social events—even when times are stressful—will help you cope with these situations and make you less likely to give up.

Don't go it alone: Think about ways you can get your friends or family involved. Share recipes, go for walks together or join a class to help with motivation. More social time will also increase the positive impacts from your activities!



RECOGNISING THE SIGNS

Although we might each exhibit different signs that our mental health needs some support, there are some general signs to look out for in yourself and others. Here are nine from [Health Direct](#).

- 1. Feeling anxious or worried.** We all get worried or stressed from time to time. But anxiety could be the sign of a mental health condition if the worry is constant and interferes all the time. Other symptoms of anxiety include heart palpitations, shortness of breath, headache, sweating, trembling, feeling dizzy, restlessness, diarrhoea or a racing mind.
- 2. Feeling depressed or unhappy.** Signs of depression include being sad or irritable for the last few weeks or more, lacking in motivation and energy, losing interest in a hobby or being teary all the time.
- 3. Emotional outbursts.** Everyone has different moods, but sudden and dramatic changes in mood, such as extreme distress or anger, can be a symptom of mental health issues.
- 4. Sleep problems.** Lasting changes to a person's sleep patterns (such as insomnia or sleeping too much or too little) could be a symptom of a mental health condition.
- 5. Weight or appetite changes.** For some people, fluctuating weight or rapid weight loss could be one of the warning signs of a mental health condition.
- 6. Quiet or withdrawn.** Withdrawing from life, especially if this is a major change, could indicate a mental health condition. Refusing to join in social activities may be a sign they need help.
- 7. Substance abuse.** Using substances to cope, such as alcohol or drugs, can be a sign of a mental health condition.
- 8. Feeling guilty or worthless.** Frequent self-criticism like 'I'm a failure', 'It's my fault' or 'I'm worthless' are all possible signs of a mental health disorder. When severe, a person may express a feeling to hurt or kill themselves. If they are suicidal and need urgent help, call 000 for an ambulance immediately.
- 9. Changes in behaviour or feelings.** A mental health condition may start out as subtle changes to a person's feelings, thinking and behaviour. Ongoing and significant changes could be a sign that they have or are developing a mental health disorder.

HOW TO REACH OUT FOR YOURSELF



When you're going through a difficult time, having feelings of anxiety or depression, or thinking of suicide, talking about it can be difficult. But going through it alone is even harder. Support from your friends, family and health professionals will help.

Start with finding someone you trust and who you feel will be understanding. This could be a professional if you don't feel ready to talk to those close to you.

When you are ready to talk, only share as much as you are comfortable with. You are in control of how much you share.

However, when speaking to a health professional, it helps to be open about what you are thinking and feeling, and how it impacts your daily life. Remember, this is their job. They are there to help you, and many others are going through what you're going through.

Beyond Blue has [resources on talking about your mental health](#), including [how to talk about your feelings](#) and [speaking to a health care professional](#).

REACHING OUT TO SUPPORT OTHERS

One of the most powerful things we can do is offer support to people in our community. But if you are worried about someone in your life, it can be challenging to know what to say and where to start the conversation.

It's usually as simple as asking them how they are going, but there are a few things to think about first:

- Make sure you're ready for the conversation. You might need to do some research and prepare yourself mentally.
- Select a time and place where they'll feel safe and supported, without distraction, and the conversation will be private.

When asking how they're going, keep it relaxed and friendly. You might mention any behaviours or changes that made you concerned.

Then take time to really listen to and acknowledge what they are saying and feeling. Be patient and supportive. Don't interrupt or rush the conversation, or judge them for what they tell you. Allow time for silence and encourage explanations where needed.

If they seem ready to seek help, consider how you can encourage them to take that step. They will also need social support as they start their recovery journey, which you can offer to help with if you're comfortable doing that.

Before you finish the conversation, line up a time to check in and have another chat, or get in touch afterwards to let them know you care.

If they don't want to talk, don't push them. Remind them that you care and are there to provide support whenever they need it. If you're really worried, you could encourage them to seek professional help or make sure they have the details of a mental health support line.

[RUOK?](#) and [Beyond Blue](#) have for more resources on supporting people on their mental health journey.





WHERE TO GET HELP

If you, or someone you know, is ready to seek help, there are many people and organisations that can help. A good first point is your GP, as they are equipped to offer advice on treatments, support services and other options.

If you're feeling in a really bad spot and can't get into your GP, crisis helplines are available. Most provide both phone support and online chat options.

The community mental health sector is full of service providers and programs that often accept self-referrals for their services or can be referred to by your GP or other specialists. You can find one that's right for you on the [Head to Health website](#) or by calling 1800 595 212.

There are also online portals, assessment tools and directories that can help you better understand your needs and where to go for support.

Crisis helplines

- Access Mental Health by the ACT Health Directorate | 1800 629 354 | 24 hours/7 days a week.
- [Beyond Blue](#) | 1300 22 4636 | 24 hours/7 days a week .
- [Lifeline](#) | 13 11 14 | 24 hours/7 days a week.
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) | 1300 659 467 | 24 hours/7 days a week.
- For young people aged five to 25: [Kids Helpline](#) | 1800 55 1800 | 24 hours/7 days a week.
- For men: [MensLine Australia](#) | 1300 78 99 78 | 24 hours/7 days a week.
- For ADF personnel, veterans and their families: [Open Arms Veterans and Families Counselling](#) | 1800 011 046 | 24 hours/7 days a week.
- For LGBTQIA+ people: [QLife](#) | 1800 184 527 | 3pm to midnight every day.



Non-crisis helplines

- [MindSpot](#) | 1800 61 44 34. Telephone and online service for people with stress, worry, anxiety, low mood or depression from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday, and 8am to 6pm on Saturday.
- [SANE Australia](#) | 1800 197 263. Guided service combining digital and telehealth supports, tailored to the needs of people affected by complex mental health issues.
- [Mindmap](#) | 1800 862 111. Telephone and online portal helping children and young people navigate Canberra's mental health system and find the right service and support. Midday to 11pm every day.
- [ehespace](#) | 1800 650 890. Mental health and wellbeing support, information and services to young people aged 12 to 25 years and their families, from 9am to 1am every day.
- [Butterfly Foundation](#) | 1800 33 4673. For people with eating disorders or body image issues, from 8am to midnight, every day.
- [Blue Knot Foundation](#) | 1300 657 380. For adult survivors of childhood trauma and abuse, and those close to them, from 9am to 5pm every day.

Other support services

- [Carers ACT](#): Connecting carers to support services.
- [Perinatal Wellbeing Centre](#): Early intervention support and information to help families understand perinatal mental health, normalise their experiences and build resilience.
- [Meridian Wellbeing Services](#): Safe, inclusive and affirming support for all experiences and identities.

Self-assessment tools

- [Black Dog Institute's Online Clinic](#)
- [eCouch](#).

Directories

- [eMHPprac Directory](#) provides an overview of various Australian online and teleweb programs, all of which have been developed by credible sources, including apps, online programs, online forums, phone services, and digital information resources.
- [CNCT](#) helps connect young people with the services they need in the ACT.

Online mental wellbeing programs

- Beyond Blue's [NewAccess](#) mental health coaching support
- Black Dog Institute's [MyCompass](#) and [HeadGear](#)
- [MoodGym](#)
- [This Way Up](#).

