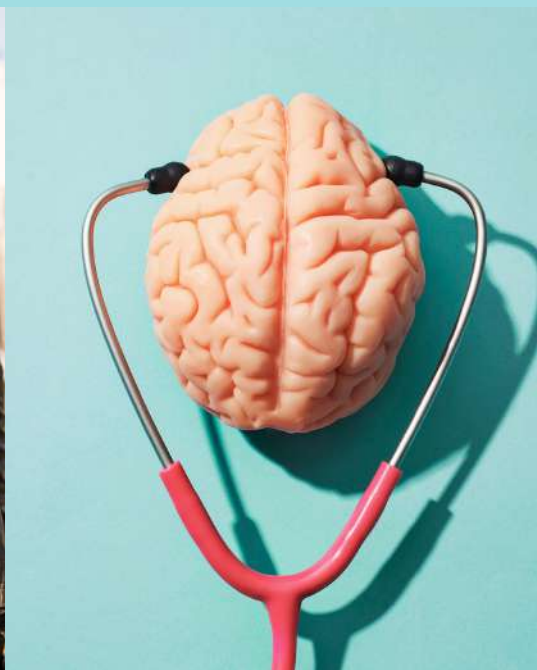


Lived Experience Telephone Support Service

Letss Talk Together

Mental Health Month Edition



Articles | Recipes | Worksheets | Reviews & more!

Links to
Wellbeing

Links to Wellbeing

Counselling and
Mental Health Support
Across Central
Southern Adelaide



Links to Wellbeing is a consortium commissioned by the Adelaide PHN and run in partnership between Neami National, Mind Australia, Skylight Mental Health and Uniting Care Wesley Bowden.



LETSS Talk

Here at LETSS, we have been reflecting a lot after our latest issue on change and we have decided that maybe it's time to go through some changes of our own!

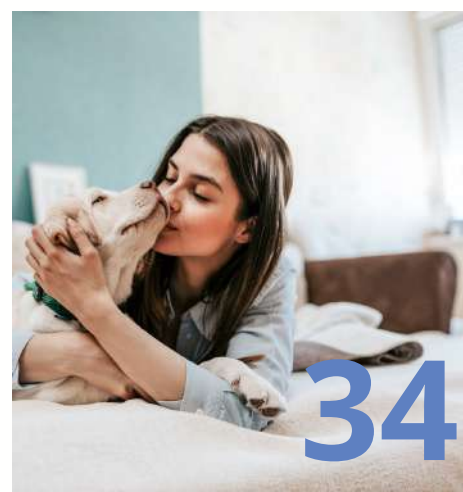
Following on feedback from readers, this includes;

- Perhaps a name change! Changing "Wellbeing booklet" to "Peer Mag"?!
- A greater focus on cultural diversity
- More for the LGBTIQ+ community
- Referring to readers as community members
- Interviews with Community Members
- More Psycho-education but in peer terms
- Covering 'Heavier' topics in the future such as drug withdrawal, financial counselling, food support, domestic violence, sexual abuse, pet grief, suicidal ideation, self-harm, sexology (e.g., what is it?), or how to cope with family and friends who don't believe in mental health

We hope you enjoy some of the changes we make and we enjoy hearing your feedback or suggestions for future editions so please keep them coming! But for now, we hope you enjoy Issue 7 of our wellbeing booklet which focuses on Mental Health Month and as you probably already know we love talking about mental health!

We believe talking about mental health is super important as it can increase awareness of mental health, help decrease stigma, and empower people to seek help. That is why the theme of this issue is *LETSS Talk Together!* So let's all play our part and keep the conversation going! It could even save someone's life one day.

Your peers,
The LETSS Team



6. Mental Health Month
Lets celebrate Mental Health!

**7. Being an Ally to
Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander Peoples**
**Find out how you can be an ally
to Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Peoples**

**8. Trans & Gender Diverse
Inclusive Guide**
**A guide to Trans and Gender
Diverse Inclusive Language**

**9. Self-Care Bingo
Worksheet**
**Have you practiced self-care
today?**



LETSSAus



letssaus



letss.org.au



10. LETSS Colouring in
Lets get creative!

12. Chocolate Protein Balls Recipe
Easy and quick to make! What's not to love?!

13. Banana Pancakes
Any day is a good day for pancakes

14. Misconceptions and Myths about Lived Experience Peer Workers
Lets tackle some of the myths surrounding lived experienced workers

17. The Importance of Listening to our Body
Find out why its important and how it can benefit our mental health

19.Its the Small Things in Life

Lets appreciate the small things that make life wonderful

20. My Ultimate Coping Playlist Worksheet

Put together the ultimate playlist!



21. Interview with a Lived Experience person

We sit down and interview a community member about their lived experience of being a carer

24. Notas in Ventrem

Latin for Notes on the Stomach

29. Planning for Behaviour Change Worksheet

Have you been thinking about a change? Let us help you make it

32. LETSS Review

The team review books, apps, podcasts, and more!

33. LETSS Shout Out

We discuss the new Urgent Mental Health Care Centre

34. Coping with Grief of Losing your Pet

Find out how to cope with the passing of your loved fur baby

Look out for our new Trigger Warning Symbol for content that some people may find distressing.



36. Resources for Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Populations

Services for CALD peoples

37. Signs of Domestic Violence

Learn how to recognise the signs and get help for yourself and others

41. Distraction Techniques and Alternative Strategies to Self-Injury Worksheet

Learn new ways to cope with negative events and feelings

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

The theme for Mental Health Month this year is *Tune In* to Mental Health Month.

Tuning In is about being present and aware of what's happening both within and around you. Tuning in can not only help you focus your mind but it can also help you understand what's going on for both yourself and others. It can help you make more effective choices, gain new perspectives, and help you build self-awareness.



Mental health Month is about helping to increase awareness of mental health, decrease stigma, and encourage people to seek help for mental health concerns.

To find out more about Mental Health Month or to see how you can get involved please visit:

mentalhealthmonth.wayahead.org.au

BEING AN ALLY TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

Amplify and be guided by the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples instead of speaking on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Speak up if you hear any inappropriate or disrespectful comments.

Educate yourself on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and relevant political and historical contexts.

Listen, be respectful and open to learning when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are sharing perspectives on how various issues and topics are affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives and communities

Be mindful of the space you take up. Always prioritize the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE GUIDE

Trans and gender diverse communities are still disproportionately affected by discrimination, prejudice and violence. Often times incorrect language can be used unknowingly when speaking to/about trans and gender diverse individuals - which adds to these experiences of exclusion and abuse. So it's important to have an understanding of appropriate and inclusive language. See below a brief outline of some key terms:

Trans and gender diverse:

Umbrella terms that describe people who identify their gender as different to what was assigned to them at birth.

Non-binary: Another umbrella term that is used to broadly describe gender identities that sit outside of, across or between the male and female binary.

Cisgender: A term used to describe individuals who identify as the same gender as the one that was assigned to them at birth.

Gender dysphoria: The distress and unease that is sometimes felt by an individual whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth or sex-related physical characteristics.

Sex characteristics: Physical parts of the body which are related to body/development and regulation and reproductive systems.

Cisgenderism/Cissexism: A view that discriminates against trans and gender diverse individuals. Assumes that gender identity is determined at birth and fixed, and only binary (female and male) identities are valid and real.

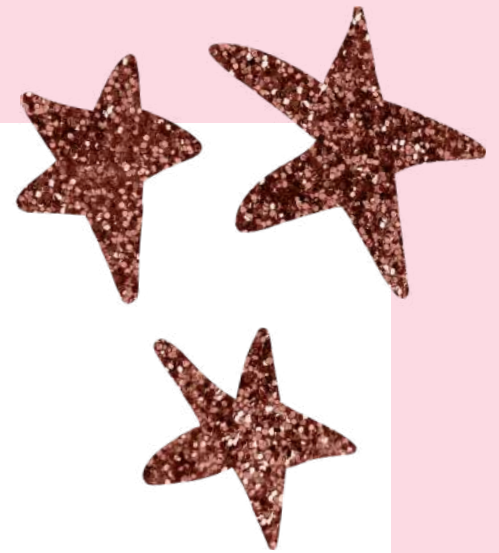
Legal sex: The marker/classification that is assigned and recorded when a child's birth is registered. This is either 'F' or 'M'. The marker can be amended to 'F', 'M' or 'X'.

AMAB/DMAB: Assigned male at birth/designated male at birth

AFAB/DFAB: Assigned female at birth/designated female at birth



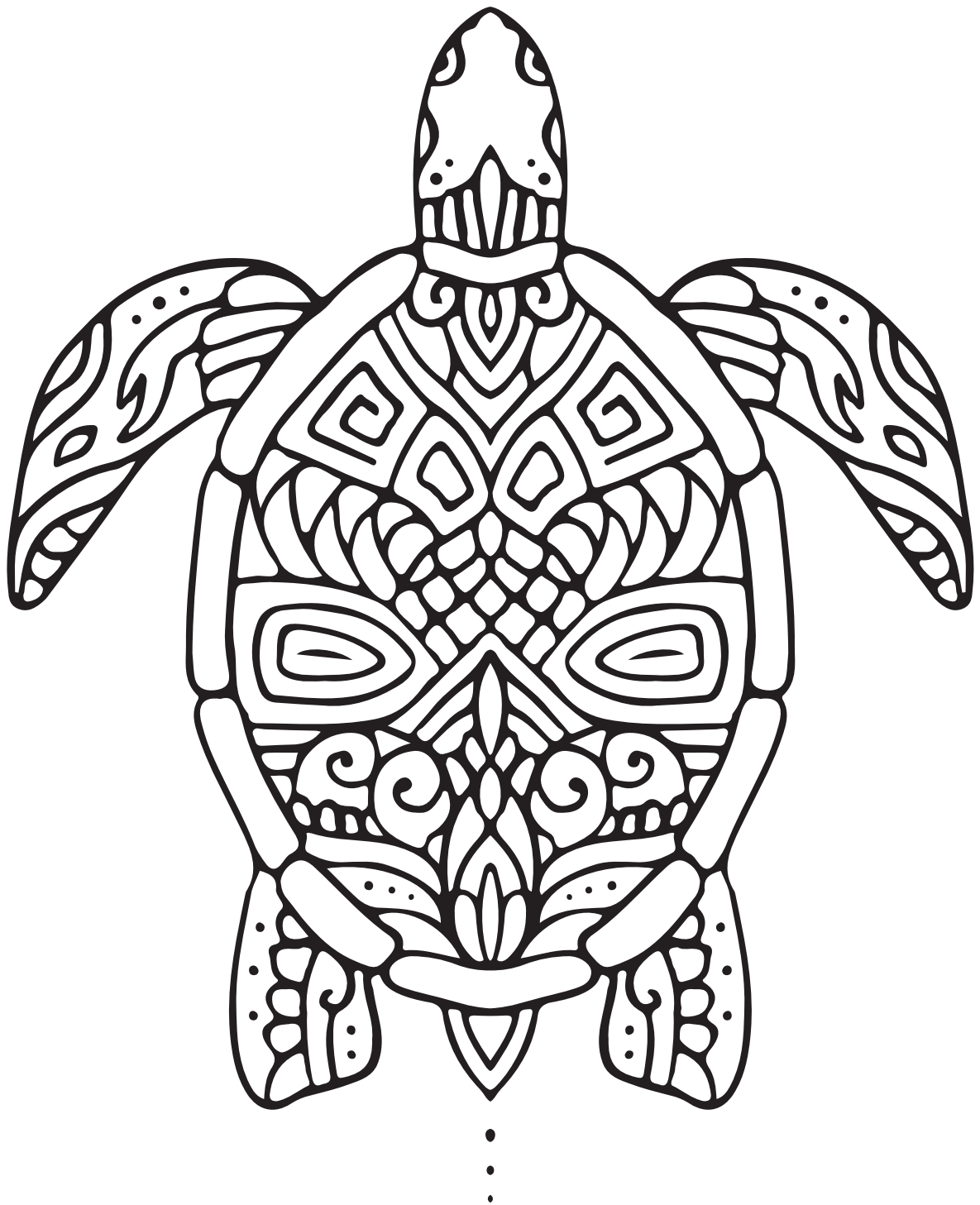
SELF-CARE BINGO

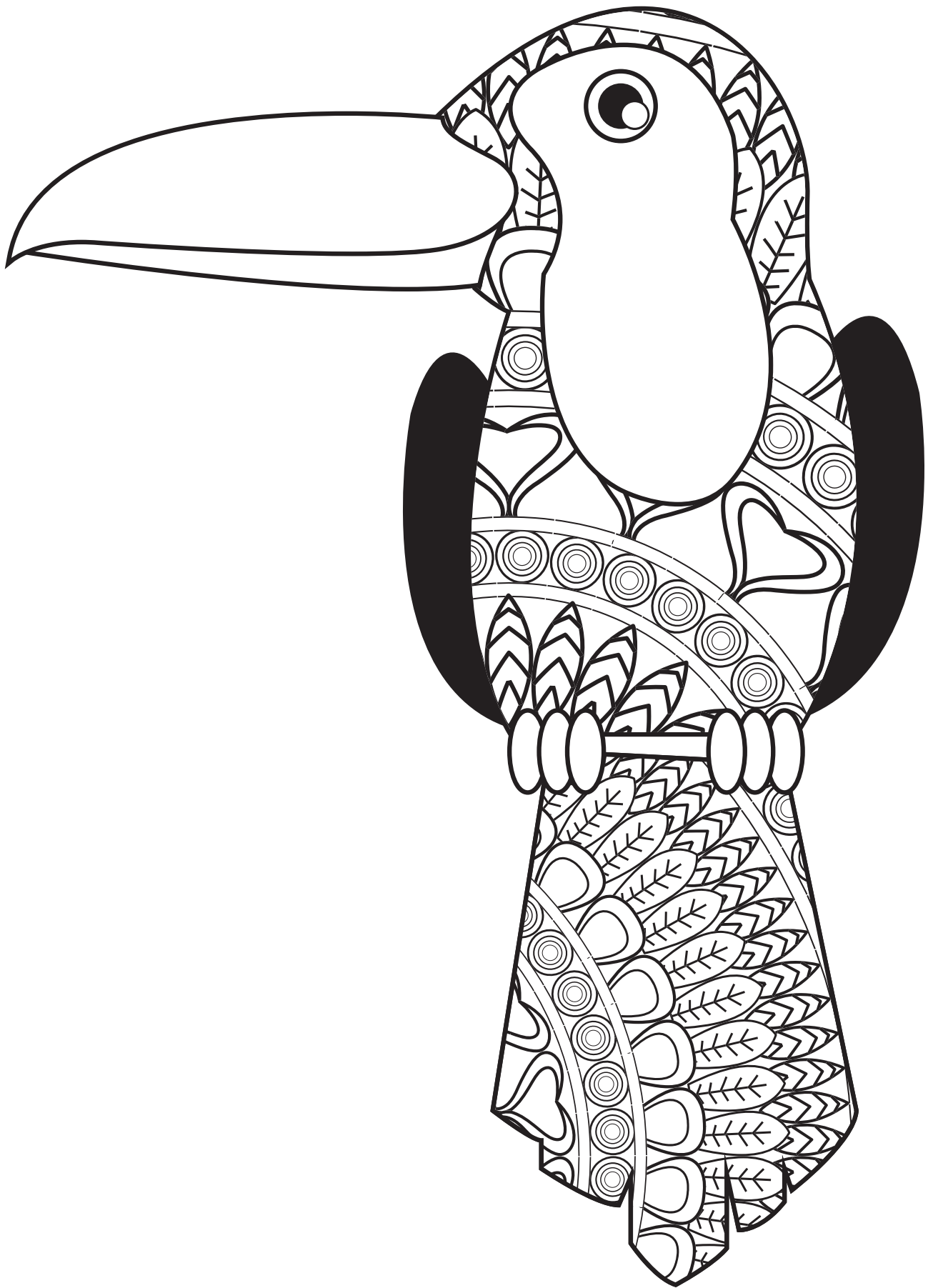


TOOK A SHOWER	GOT DRESSED	CAUGHT UP WITH FRIENDS	PROCESSED MY FEELINGS	COMPLIMENTED MYSELF
MEDITATED	ATE GOOD FOOD	LISTENED TO MY BODY	HAD FUN	ASKED FOR HELP
TOOK A MUCH - NEEDED BREAK	DRANK WATER	Free	TAKE A SOCIAL MEDIA BREAK	TREATED MYSELF
COMPLIMENTED SOMEONE	GOT 8 HOURS OF SLEEP	TOOK STEPS TO TAME NEGATIVE THOUGHTS	HUGGED MY PARENTS OR A FRIEND	DROPPED A HABIT THAT IS NOT GOOD FOR ME
TOOK A MENTAL HEALTH DAY	SPENDING TIME WITH NATURE	DECLUTTERED MY SPACE	WROTE DOWN IN MY JOURNAL	PRACTICED SELF - COMPASSION



Colour us in





CHOCOLATE PROTEIN BALLS

Super quick and easy to make, Chocolate Protein Balls are the perfect go-to snack! And best of all, no baking is required!

Ingredients:

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 cup peanut butter (preferably smooth)
- 1/3 cup honey
- 2 scoops of chocolate protein powder
- 1/4 cup of chopped dark chocolate or chocolate chips
- 1/3/ cup of shredded coconut

Directions:

1. Combine oats, peanut butter, honey, chocolate protein powder, and chocolate in a large bowl and stir till evenly mixed
2. Cover bowl with plastic wrap and place in fridge for 30 minutes
3. Scoop the mixture into balls and roll in shredded coconut
4. Refrigerate again and keep cold into serving
5. Enjoy!

BANANA PANCAKES

A delicious breakfast made from only three ingredients!

Ingredients:

- 1 banana
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons wholemeal self-raising flour
- Dash of oil for frying

Directions:

1. Mash the banana in a bowl with a fork until it's nice and smooth
2. Whisk in the egg and flour and let it sit all sit for five minutes or so
3. Heat your pan with a little oil, then pour the mixture into the size of pancake desired
4. Cook for 1-2 minutes on each side, until pancake is lightly browned
5. Enjoy with fruit and ice cream (who said you can't have ice cream for breakfast?)

MISCONCEPTIONS AND MYTHS ABOUT LIVED EXPERIENCE PEER WORKERS



The concept of a Lived Experience staff is a reasonably new but quickly emerging and popular notion within the Mental Health field. However, the idea of having people with their own lived experience of mental illness or distress supporting other people with mental health issues is still a foreign idea to some. As such, there are still many misconceptions or misunderstandings about who lived experience workers are or what they even do. Therefore, as lived experience peer support workers ourselves, we thought we would debunk some of the common misconceptions and answer some of the questions we get about our lived experience peer support workers!

1. Sooo... what even is a Lived Experience Peer Support Worker?

A Lived Experience peer support worker is often defined as someone who is employed in a role that involves them having a lived experience of mental illness or distress and recovery. Further, they can then effectively apply their experience and knowledge in practice within the context of the role to support others.

2. What are the benefits of having a Lived Experience workforce?

There are many benefits to having a lived experience workforce! For instance, workers with a lived experience can understand the experience of illness, oppression, and discrimination that many people face when trying to access mental health support. In addition, lived experience staff also have their own periods of recovery and healing and therefore can provide real and practical advice and strategies when dealing with mental health. Furthermore, speaking to someone with lived experience often removes the power dynamics and imbalances that are commonly found in consumer/service provider relationships.

3. "So, you have lived experience but no actual mental health training or qualifications?"

There is a common misconception that lived experience staff have no official training or qualifications. In fact, it could not be further from the truth!

At LETSS, all our staff are highly trained and have qualifications and backgrounds in various aspects of mental health including social work, teaching, community development, counselling, psychology, and other allied health fields. Our qualifications in combination with our lived experience give us a diverse and rich understanding of mental health.

4. "I cannot tell you my problems because I am worried you are too vulnerable or too much at risk due to your lived experience background"

This is something we get from time to time ...callers that are worried about our wellbeing or worried about sharing with us because they feel we cannot handle it. However, it is important to note our lived experience does not make us more vulnerable or at greater risk of burnout! We are all extremely equipped and trained in hearing about or supporting people through difficult situations. In fact, going through our own lived experience has given us even greater resilience and tools to help us remain calm and cope in difficult situations. More importantly, just because 'lived experience' is in our job title this does not mean we are defined by our mental health. Look at it this way, the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing 2007 estimated that nearly 1 in 2 (46%) of Australians experienced a mental health condition in their lifetime.



In addition, it is also estimated that 1 in 5 (20%) of the population had experienced a common mental disorder in the previous 12 months. When considering these statistics, it is probable that you have met many people who have experienced mental illness or distress without you even knowing! Hence, although we may make it publically known that we have Lived Experience this does not mean at all that we cannot do our job properly or to the highest standard.

5. "If I cannot talk to someone with the exact diagnosis or experience as me, then what is the point of having lived experience staff?"

We sometimes get callers asking or requesting to speak to a peer that has the exact same diagnosis or experience as them. However, this is not always something that we can provide. Reason being, everyone is unique and different and whilst people may have similar experiences no one is ever going to have the exact same experience as you because they are not you.

Therefore, whilst we may not always be able to provide someone with the exact same experience what we can provide is a shared understanding, compassion, and a safe space to share.

In addition, we can also provide further referrals to social or support groups in which you can seek support from people with the same diagnosis or who are experiencing a similar situation.

6. Since you have lived experience, can I ask you personal questions about yourself?

It is an amazing feeling when you share something with someone and you are met with something like “Me too! I have felt exactly the same way before” or at least something similar.

At LETSS, we understand how great the feeling is when you can connect or relate to someone, and we know it can be a powerful healing tool. That is why at LETSS we may sometimes self-disclose aspects of our own lived experience with our callers. However, just as we respect our callers’ privacy and to only share, what they feel comfortable with, we also are entitled to our privacy and to disclose only what we feel is relevant to the call and what we feel comfortable with. That is why at LETSS we always welcome all kinds of questions however we may just not always have the answers. At the end of the day, the call is about our wonderful callers, not us!

7. Can you give me advice or the answer to my problem?

We are here to provide a friendly and supportive listening ear, talk through your problems, and help you make sense of your experiences. As such, we may suggest certain strategies or services, however, we are not here to necessarily provide direct advice or opinions. Instead, at LETSS we take on a collaborative approach meaning we can talk through and look at your options together, and work out a plan together. At the end of the day, you are the expert in your life and we are just here to help guide you!

A.C, Peer Worker



THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING TO OUR BODY

Our body is constantly communicating with us in a variety of different ways. Whether it's through tension in our muscles, butterflies in our stomach, aches and pains in the back or tightness in our chest, all of these sensations are there for a reason and can provide important information if we learn to tune into them.

Despite these important connections, it often feels that we separate the physical sensations in our body from our emotional state, attributing ongoing physical sensations to purely physical causes. Now I'm not recommending that anyone refrains from seeking medical advice - absolutely do so if there are genuine concerns - but if no physical causes have

been established perhaps it is worthwhile to explore if there are some emotional stressors going on.

Often times our body knows before our mind that we may not be travelling so well! I wanted to share a little of my own experience to highlight how tuning into my physical body helped me navigate my mental health. I'm someone who tends to always be on the go, and in particularly busy periods I often don't find moments to sit down and tune in with how I'm really going. Previously I used to miss early warning signs that I was overloading myself with commitments and moving steadily towards a point of exhaustion. This only really became apparent when it was a little late and I was at a point where I just couldn't keep up with my day-to-day life. Through these periods it almost felt as if I went from being completely okay and on top of everything to suddenly hitting a wall.

***Often times
our body knows
before
our mind that we
may not be
travelling
so well!***

Spirit

Body

Mind

letss.org.au



However, as I learnt to tune in to my body I realized that there had been signs all along. Although my mind couldn't necessarily keep up or consciously tell me to slow down, my body absolutely was. I noticed things such as; more tension through my entire body, dull but persistent headaches and a constantly clenched jaw. Now, when I'm in similar spaces, I often notice the signs in my body long before my brain consciously puts into words what is happening. When I notice these signs I can actively work on slowing down and focusing in before I reach that point of burnout. Although I am still just learning how to tune in to my body, even just the very early steps of this process have felt really eye-opening and powerful. I am aware that this connection between the mind and body is by no means a new idea and you may already have experiences and understandings of it beyond what this brief article shares.



Relax

However, if this does feel like something new that you're wanting to explore we've put together a diagram below that specifically focuses on tuning in to and releasing anxiety from your body.

Soften between the eyebrows

Check for jaw tension

Notice breath

Notice posture

Relax eyes and forehead

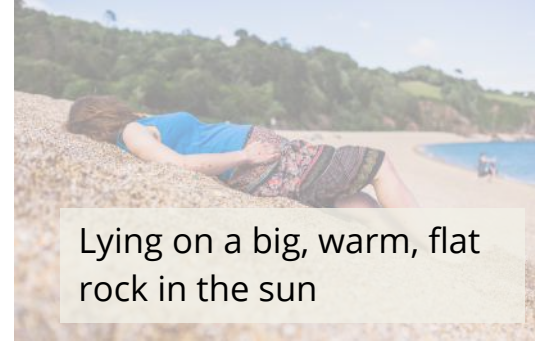
Drop the shoulders

Take a deep belly breath

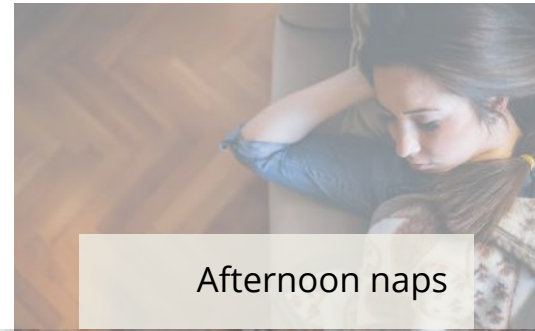


Sometimes it's the simple things...

Sharing the quirky and simple things that bring a little bit more joy to our lives...



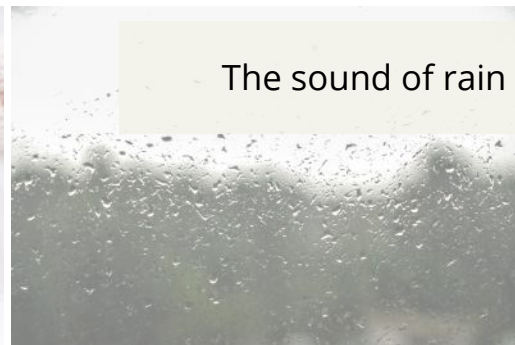
Lying on a big, warm, flat rock in the sun



Afternoon naps



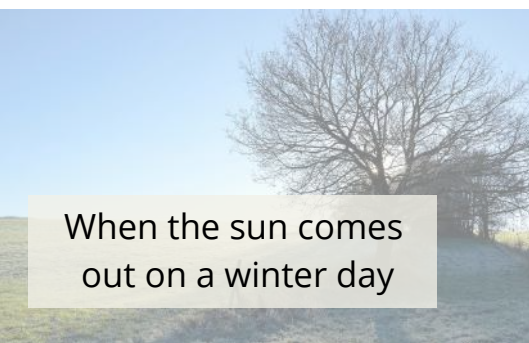
The first sip of tea in the morning



The sound of rain



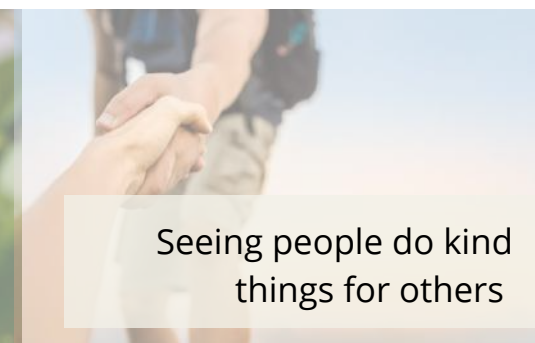
Opening the first page of a new book



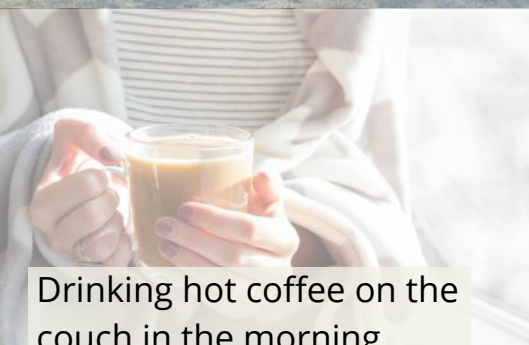
When the sun comes out on a winter day



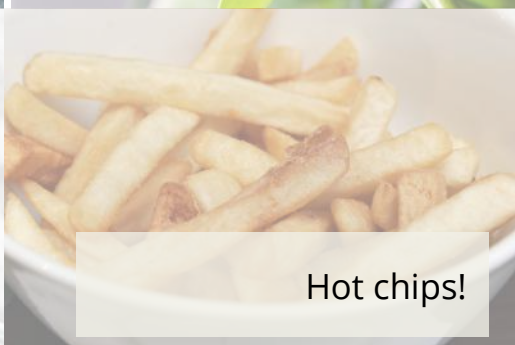
Noticing a new leaf pop up on my houseplants



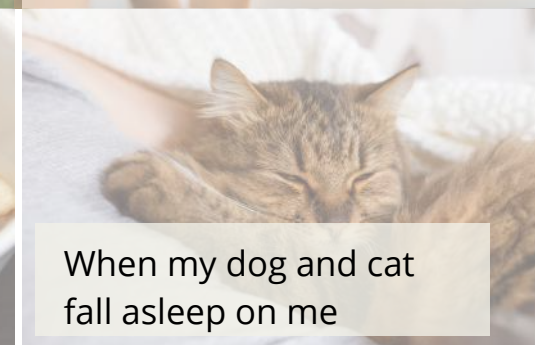
Seeing people do kind things for others



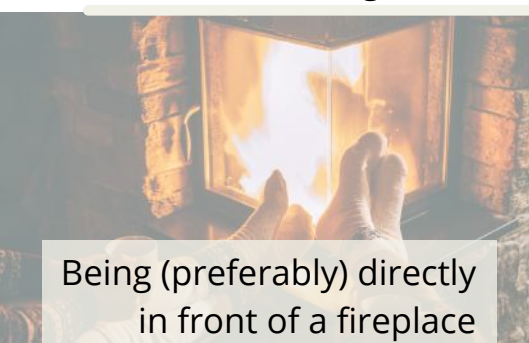
Drinking hot coffee on the couch in the morning



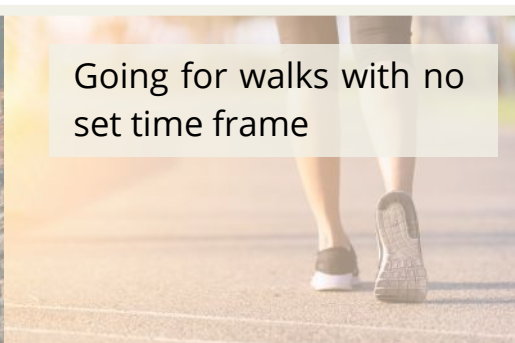
Hot chips!



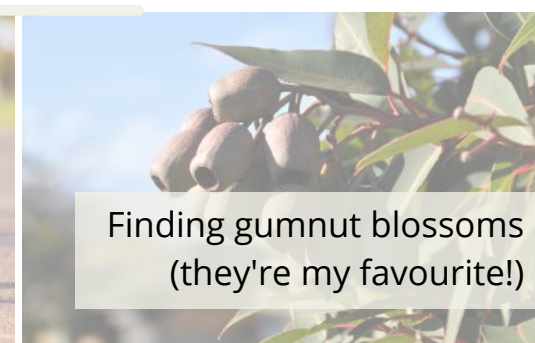
When my dog and cat fall asleep on me



Being (preferably) directly in front of a fireplace



Going for walks with no set time frame



Finding gumnut blossoms (they're my favourite!)

MY ULTIMATE COPING PLAYLIST

We go through different positive and negative emotions every day. It is okay to have all those feelings but we must also find ways to cope.

Fill each box with the title of songs (and their artist) that you think fit the descriptions provided.

Stuck for Ideas?
Why not check out
our LETSS Spotify
Playlists?! Just scan
the QR code below



a song that gets
stuck in my head

a song I know all
the words to

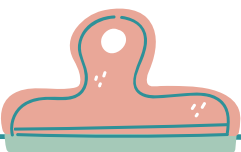
a song from my favorite
movie or tv series

TO UPLIFT

a song I associate
to freedom

a song that gives
me energy

a song I'd like to
wake me up



FOR DIVERSION

a song that makes
me feel safe

a song that helps me
think positively

a song that inspires me

TO DISCHARGE

a song for when you
get anxious worried

a song for when you
get angry or annoyed

a song for when you
feel lonely or afraid

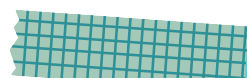


FOR STRONG EMOTIONS

a song that reminds
you of a good memory

a song that makes you
think of a loved one

a song to remind you
that you are loved



INTERVIEW WITH A PERSON WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF...



Caring for someone with a mental health condition

*As part of a series of new changes LETSS is making, we are introducing a new **INTERVIEW** feature in which one of our peer workers sits down and interviews a community member about their lived experience. On this issue, we sat down with an individual with a lived experience of being a carer. Continue reading to find out more about their experience, advice, and tips that other carers may find helpful.*

Q: Thanks for speaking with me today. Would you like to tell me a bit about your background caring for someone with a mental health condition?

I don't really know what to say, I don't have an official 'carer' role, but I have cared for my partner for the past 4 years since they were officially diagnosed with depression. However, if I look back, I think that I knew that my partner was living with depression from very early on in our relationship, which took 8yrs to find some answers. I thought that what they were experiencing was loneliness and that someone hadn't cared for them before, and that by loving them, I could fix how they were feeling.

We had a lot of really good experiences together, but, as the years went on, it became harder for them to put on the façade that they were OK. After a few years, I tried to encourage my partner to speak to a GP, which was not an easy conversation to have and it was a difficult balancing act to try and help someone to seek support, but also trying to be supportive to them in the choices they were making. I myself had no background in mental health at this point and was just going on a feeling that things weren't right and that I couldn't be the answer to how they were feeling. My partner has also had quite a few gut-related health issues that were impacting upon their health and we had no idea about what was happening, apart from how limiting this was for them being able to comfortably leave the house. There were a few scary trips to emergency and stays in ICU while tests and treatment was being sought.

This did play a role in their mental health deterioration and isolation. After a breakdown at work, they did speak to a GP and were referred to a counsellor. Unfortunately, the issue was seen that their job was stressful and this was the reason for the breakdown. It wasn't the support that we had hoped for, but, my partner left that job and we thought that maybe things would improve with a new job.

Q: For someone that doesn't know what depression is how would you describe it in a nutshell?

I remember that my partner described it as "the world being grey", and when they started to feel a bit better, that their world began to have different shades of grey and the beginnings of some colour.

Q: What were some of the early signs that your partner might be experiencing a mental illness?

If I'm honest, the signs were there from the very beginning of our relationship, low mood, feeling hopeless, fatigue, sleeping solidly for the night but still feeling excessively tired when they woke up. Disconnected from family, very limited contact with friends, feeling guilty about how they were feeling, lack of energy to do tasks that they were interested in.

Later on in our relationship, I noticed that we thought that getting a better job, moving in together, getting a dog, a different car, having a holiday, getting married etc would solve how they were feeling. We couldn't understand why these achievements were not helping and why they were no longer finding joy in hobbies that they used to love doing. I understand now that this was a part of depression, but it hurt that we were trying so hard to reach all of these goals that we'd set but this wasn't making them happy, and ultimately, I couldn't 'solve' this for my partner.



Q: People with depression are often stigmatised and discriminated against. Have you experienced this with your partner?

Well, it has been interesting. I don't think my partner has experienced discrimination. His work has actually been incredibly supportive. My partner was hospitalised after only a few months of starting at their new job and the understanding and support that has been shown still continues. Having said that, my partner has excelled in the job I believe largely through the support that has been given and this has been a win-win for the company and my partner. I was fortunate that I had some personal leave that I was able to use during this time from work and savings but it was challenging to navigate questions as to why I was on extended leave.

Regarding friends, we've been open with them about the attempts and hospitalisation. Quite a few remarked that they weren't surprised which wasn't particularly helpful. Very few friends ask how my partner is going regarding their mental health or have ever spoken about what happened. I see that it is a difficult, awkward topic to talk about, so I am very selective about whom I talk to because it's really difficult when you try to talk about how you are feeling/what is happening and you have the topic changed abruptly.

My partner chooses to talk to their GP when they need, they are very private and have accessed support through a psychologist when first diagnosed and hospitalised but have chosen to not continue to see them. Medication has had a positive effect, although there have been side effects which has impacted upon concentration.

They have been without medication for a year now, with monitoring from the GP, so far they have felt OK. We do have some very clear guidelines established regarding when to seek help and that when I am feeling concerned, that we see their GP for a review. So far this is working well.

Q: Do you have any positive experiences of accessing the mental health system that you could share?

I'm so glad to say that we do. After my partner made an attempt, I was 6hrs away at the time, I returned home to find them safe but I was completely lost as to what to do next. I googled what to do and found the number for Beyond Blue. The person I spoke to was incredible, they talked me through the steps on how to get my partner support and checked to make sure that I was OK enough to be able to follow this through.

"I won't lie, some people who cared for my partner were more helpful than others"

So, I took my partner to the ED and I know we were lucky and I am so grateful for this. They were taken in for assessment, I've never seen my partner with no emotion, they were empty and I knew that they needed help and this was the right decision. They were later detained and supported in an inpatient facility where I was able to visit daily. I won't lie, some people who cared for my partner were more helpful than others, but they were safe and we were finally getting some answers after 8 years of us battling through this together, and countless years going through this alone. I also had to make the difficult choice to not consent to my partner being released over a long weekend based on their being very limited supports available at this time.

The way that this was framed to myself and my partner was focused on safety and what was best for us at this time, it was so helpful to have that said in a non-judgemental way as it was an awful decision to make.

I don't want to sugar coat everything, we did return home confused about the next steps to take and I had to make a lot of calls to services in which I had no idea what to tell them or ask. My partner was reluctant to seek further support after coming home, which was difficult as I felt that I was pushing them. It took a lot of advocating too which was challenging as I'm a pretty quiet person.

Q: What are some things you wish you knew from the outset caring for your partner?

That it isn't all up to me, that I am not responsible for their happiness. That it is OK to seek help, and if your partner won't seek help then it's OK for you to seek help to be able to manage these times and this role.

Q: That sounds like great advice. What support have you personally found most useful as a carer?

Local GP, it took a bit to find the one that understood our situation but it has been worth the search. Counsellors, even though it was brief, they challenged some of my thinking (I had a lot of "I should be doing...") that saw me take sole responsibility for my partner and their wellbeing. It was also helpful to speak to someone about my concerns around my partner's health and to learn to trust myself and my judgments again.

- LM.

We thank L.M for her openness, honesty and courage in sharing her story with us. Thank you! We appreciate you!

Have an interview topic idea you would like to read about? We would love to hear it! Please let us know at letss@skylight.org.au

NOTAS IN VENTREM

(Latin for “Notes On the Stomach” – because saying things in Latin is always fun!)

Folks with lived experience of emotional distress or who have survived trauma often report abdominal pain and discomfort, and have long known there is some kind of link between their emotional wellbeing and belly pain.



Increasingly, health research has focused on increasing our understandings of the gut-brain connection and has explored a range of themes - from the way nervous system activity affects the motility (movement) of the intestines, through to the impact of stress and distress on the gut microbiome (the micro-organisms of the intestines, or “gut flora”). Below are some ideas to improve your gut health and/or seek relief from discomfort.

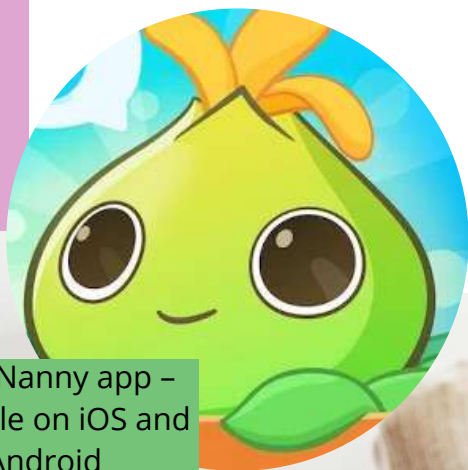
Check your water intake

Being reminded to drink water can be so annoying! But ok. Staying hydrated is a core component of health in general and is often super relevant to addressing digestive issues, so yeah.

There is a super cute free app called Plant Nanny which incentivises you to drink water with the most adorable little plants. Basically each time you drink some water you log this in your app and you will grow your plant some more. As you care for your plants they will grow and you will be able to grow different types of plants as well!

To move or not to do that and go back to bed?

The temptation to crawl into bed and hide from the world can be real at the best of times - let alone when you have pain of any description. However (another slightly annoying reminder coming up) gentle movements such as stretching or walking can actually be helpful to aid stomach pain in some cases.



Plant Nanny app – available on iOS and Android

Certain yoga poses are even known to er...set free trapped air, if you know what I mean (ok, I'll just say it: Downward Dog pose makes you fart which can provide relief from tummy pain). A simple yoga app is Asana Rebel – there are options for low, medium or high intensity routines, and you can also pick by how long you would like to practice for. But maybe laying down is better than moving around for you right now. If so, you may find that laying on your left side provides relief, as this supports the internal shape and movement of your bowel, along with any trapped gas that may be contributing to belly pain.

Heat

Heat is known to relax muscles, and can ease abdominal discomfort. A bath, shower, or heat bag are some ways you can provide yourself warmth.



Food

Of course food is a thing to talk about in relation to the stomach.

Many herbs, spices, roots, fruits and vegetables are said to aid internal health in a range of ways, from easing irritation and reducing acid or gas, to speeding up or slowing down digestion.

All over the world from time immemorial, people have recognised the healing power of foods.

There are far too many to list, and you may like to research these in a more targeted way, depending on what your specific trouble is.

Some suggestions for easing digestive discomfort include basil, ginger, mint, cloves, cumin, and liquorice.

Likewise, some foods are thought better to avoid. For example, fried and fatty foods, rich and creamy foods, and salty or heavily preserved foods are not advised when experiencing gut issues. Also, alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine are advised against (sorry).

Some people find that gas-producing vegetables can be problematic at times. Asparagus, beans, broccoli and cauliflower can cause gas which then results in stomach ache.

These foods can also be important sources of nutrition however, so it's best to consult with your health practitioner before deciding to eliminate any foods from your diet on an ongoing basis.

Eat Slowly...

Yes. Even if it is delicious. Chew. Chew. Chew.

Eating slowly can not only aid your digestion and allow you time to enjoy your enjoyment of food, it can help to make you feel more in control, and in doing so reduce stress and increase feelings of calmness.



Pre- and Pro-Biotics

Prebiotics are substances found in foods that assist the helpful micro-organisms in your intestinal tract to grow and do their helpful things. Prebiotic foods include asparagus, bananas, chicory, garlic, artichoke, onions and whole grains.

Probiotics are living micro-organisms that when taken in food can help to support healthy gut flora. Yakult is a popular probiotic drink available in most supermarkets. Fermented foods can also be a natural source of probiotic, such as kefir, kimchi, kombucha, miso, sauerkraut and tempeh.

Limit fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides and polyols (FODMAP's)

Whaaaaat? The short, I'm-not-an-expert



version is that FODMAP's are carbohydrates (sugars) that can cause intestinal distress (hence, stomach pain)

Following a low FODMAP diet has been shown to reduce discomfort for many people. As this is an elimination diet it is best to do under the guidance of a qualified health practitioner.



There is no harm trying a few recipe's out though if you are curious – there are many low-FOD recipes online and a really cool magazine called FODMAPPER is available at most supermarkets and news agencies.

There is also the Monash University FODMAP Diet app and the FODMAP Friendly app which assists you find low FODMAP products in local stores. Both the Monash University FODMAP logo and the FODMAP Friendly logo can be found on selected products in the supermarket.

There are even chocolate biscuits and melting moments now (eat them slowly).

Stomach in Expression

A final note on the stomach and emotions... Have you ever noticed how often the stomach appears in everyday language in expressing strong feelings?

A stomach in knots describes an unpleasant, tight sensation in the abdomen which often rides along with Anxiety. Used as a verb, to bellyache is to complain. For example, I tend to bellyache about my uni assignments. Someone with butterflies (in the stomach) is experiencing extreme nervousness or anticipation... they may even be nerviced!

(Nervous-excited – it's a thing). This stems from the idea that the 'fluttery' feeling in the stomach is like having butterflies flying around inside it

If you've had a gutful of something, it means you've had enough – more than you can tolerate. This is similar to the expression that one can't stomach it when a situation has become too distressing, distasteful or otherwise intolerable.

Finally, the way to someone's heart is often said to be through their stomach. This old proverb has been around forever, and basically means that the way to make someone fall in love with you is by feeding them wonderful food. While it is doubtful that you can really influence someone to fall in love with you based on your best carbonara (even if it is that good), it remains a fact that we are all more happy when our belly is happy – so why not help your loved ones have happy bellies anyway?

A.M, Peer Worker

Please note - all content in our Peer Mag is created for your interest only. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Always see your doctor or other qualified health professional with any concerns you have regarding your health and wellbeing. You can contact HealthDirect to discuss health related issues with a Registered Nurse 24 hours a day on 1800 022 222. In an emergency, please call 000.

FODMAP Diet App



FODMAP Friendly App

PLANNING FOR BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

We all have behaviours that we would like to change. Maybe it's an addictive behaviour, like drinking, smoking or drugging. Or maybe it's something more subtle, like spending too much time on social media, or not eating enough greens. Recognising the need to change is an important first step in the change process. However, planning ahead and taking a few extra steps can go a long way in helping us to make – and maintain – change.

When we first reach the conclusion that we need to make a change, we often focus on why the behaviour is problematic. For example, a smoker contemplating change may have thoughts such as "Smoking is costing me too much money", "I can no longer get up a flight of stairs without huffing and puffing" or "I don't want to end up with lung cancer". These thoughts can be powerful catalysts for initiating change. However, sustaining change can take a bit more work. As humans, we perform behaviours to fulfil specific needs or functions. People spend countless hours perusing social media for a reason. Perhaps that reason is to alleviate boredom or anxieties around "missing out" on something by not checking it frequently.

If we only focus on our reasons for wanting to change, ignoring why we perform the behaviour in the first place, we are more likely to come across obstacles that may thwart our progress towards change. Conversely, if we adopt a holistic view, acknowledging the benefits and costs of change, we are in a better position to anticipate potential obstacles and barriers and to problem-solve them. Next time you are contemplating behaviour change, I encourage you to consider not only the reason for changing but also the reasons why you engage in the behaviour in the first place. It can be helpful to consider:

- The benefits of continuing the behaviour
- The costs of continuing the behaviour
- The benefits of changing/stopping the behaviour
- The costs of changing/stopping the behaviour

To illustrate, let's use the example of a cigarette smoker who is contemplating quitting (bottom of the article)

Amplifying the advantages

In this example, some of the positives of stopping the behaviour included improved health and fitness, saving money, and reduced conflict with family members. Here are some suggestions of how to amplify these advantages, which can provide added motivation to stop smoking:

- Calculate how much money you would typically spend on cigarettes. Once you stop smoking, put the money you have saved into a money tin so you can physically see the savings growing!
- Desired behaviours are more likely to be repeated if they are rewarded. Set rewards for yourself for each milestone of not smoking that you reach (one day, 1 week, 2 weeks etc.)
- Is there a favourite sport you used to play? Now could be the perfect time to get involved in a sport you love. Not only is it a great way to get fit, it's also a great way to meet new people!

Problem-solving potential pitfalls

This involves focusing on the reasons why you perform the behaviour in the first place and why it may be challenging to stop, and problem-solving to maximise your chances of success. Here are a few problem-solving strategies for the example above:

- Book an appointment with your GP to discuss nicotine replacement therapy options, such as patches, lozenges and gum.
- Let your friends, family and colleagues know that you intend to quit smoking and ask them for their support during this process.
- If smoking is providing stress relief from work, there are a few different options: you could replace the smoking with another activity that relieves stress (eg. going for a brisk walk, using a stress ball) or perhaps you could focus on maintaining a better work-life balance to reduce work-related stress overall.

Continuing Behaviour

Benefits

All my friend's smoke, it gives me 5 minutes of respite from my demanding job and difficult relationships, I've tried to quit in the past but haven't been successful

Costs

Cigarettes are really expensive, my family keeps hassling me about smoking, I will continue to be out of breath easily

Stopping/Changing Behaviour

Benefits

I will have money for the things I enjoy, my health and fitness will improve

Costs

My partner finds me moody when I don't smoke, I will have nicotine withdrawals and feel irritable

Continuing Behaviour

Benefits

Cost

Stopping/Changing Behaviour

Benefits

Cost

LETSS REVIEW

Welcome to LETSS review! Where our Peer Workers review books, apps, podcasts and more!

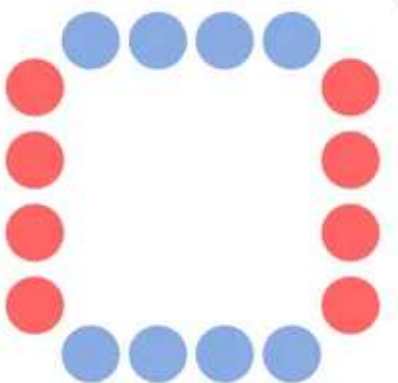
There is an app called Sunee which has hundreds of delicious recipes on it! And it caters for a range of dietary requirements (e.g. paleo, gluten-free etc). Highly recommend!

- Ash

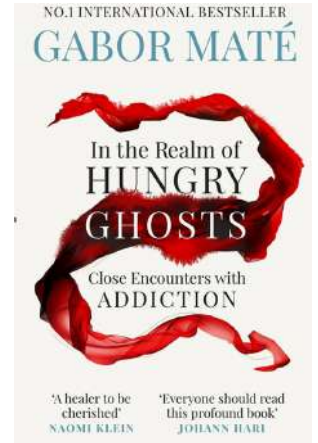


My favourite app at the moment is Worry Breath which helps people practice box breathing. Box breathing is a great strategy to help with anxiety and calm the body! The clean and simple visualisation of the box on the phone screen really helps me with my anxiety no matter where I am at.

-Anna



I am listening to this one on Audible but appreciate that it is now also on my Booktopia wishlist to get a hard copy. I think what I particularly liked was that not only is Gabor (you totally feel like you can call him by his first name after reading/listening to this book) an experienced and knowledgeable doctor; he uses his lived experience



to explore what addiction feels like. He is respectful and does not attempt to set himself above the people he worked with in the Downtown Eastside (Vancouver), as so many 'well intentioned' doctors and other professionals can do. Hungry Ghost's begins by sharing some of Gabor's experiences working at the Portland Hotel, then discusses addiction in terms of its development and mechanisms in our social context, and from a trauma-informed perspective. He reminds us that addiction needs 3 things to grow – not just a drug (or other addictive thing), but also an environment that triggers or supports an addiction, and a person who is vulnerable to addiction, such as through distress caused by trauma and social factors. He also reminds us that the very factors which are known to drive addiction such as stress, isolation, powerlessness, distress and loss of control, are the same factors resulting from the two main ways society deals with addiction: social stigma, and criminalisation. I highly recommend it for anyone – whether you feel impacted by addiction or not. The information is presented in an easy to understand way and the stories are real and raw, and may be distressing; so please listen with care.

-Alma

LETSS SHOUT OUT

A big part of LETSS is helping our callers navigate around the mental health system and find valuable supports. That is why we wanted to dedicate a section to some of the wonderful (and free) services that we refer our callers to which they might find helpful.

URGENT MENTAL HEALTH CARE CENTRE

One of our peer workers recently had the opportunity to have a look and learn a bit about the new Urgent Mental Health Care Centre (UMHCC) in the city. This service opened up earlier this year and attempts to provide a genuine alternative for people experiencing distress and seeking urgent support with their mental health. We know that it can be a bit intimidating and nerve-wracking going to a new place, so we thought we'd give a bit of an overview of what you can expect when visiting the UMHCC.

Walking into the centre there's a front desk (pictured) and a waiting area. You'll also be greeted by a peer worker who will be with you throughout your stay (50% of the staff on each shift are peer workers!).



There are also a few private rooms to the left where people are seen by a nurse on arrival at the centre. Behind the desk are a big set of double doors that lead through to what's called the 'living room' (pictured) This is a quiet and calm space that has a kitchen full of food to the left, as well as smaller private rooms to the right, one of which is pet-friendly. There is also a larger family room where anyone arriving with children can stay. During their stay, individuals have an opportunity to interact with nurses, doctors and peer workers to put together a safety plan and potentially explore some support options and strategies that may be helpful.

This is just a brief overview of what you might encounter when visiting the Urgent Mental Health Care Centre. We hope that having a bit of an idea of what the space is like might make the experience of attending the service feel a little less intimidating. If you're wanting any other information about the service, all the details can be found here:

neaminational.org.au/find-services/umhcc



COPING WITH GRIEF OF LOOSING YOUR PET

Pets are a part of the family, they provide support, love, comfort, companionship, not to mention that they can provide a lot of fun and enjoyment too. As a pet can hold such an important and valued part in our lives, we can feel overwhelmed with grief when they pass away.

It can be difficult to explain the impact that the loss of a pet has on us. For myself, the loss of my cat Jess I found to be really challenging to talk about, particularly the reasons why I missed her so much. I found there was an expectation that after a few months I should be able to move on and that another pet would resolve the sadness and loneliness that I felt. We can have an unspoken bond with our pets that is hard to describe.

Everyone is unique and will grieve differently. However, here are several suggestions that may help with the grieving process.



Allow yourself to grieve

Grieving is a natural response when coping with the death of a loved one. It is okay to feel upset or to cry or to feel angry. Allow yourself to feel those emotions without judgement or guilt.

Speak/reach out to those with similar experiences

People who have never owned or lost a pet may often find it difficult to relate to the pain of losing a pet. However, speaking to someone who has gone through something similar whether it is with someone you know, online forums, or a pet loss hotline, can be helpful in dealing with and understanding the grief.



Create a memory

Remembering the good times, the love, and the bond you shared with your animal companion can often be helpful in allowing you to move on. For instance, compiling some photos, preparing a memorial, or planting a plant in memory of your pet can help you celebrate the life of your pet.

Take Care

During the grieving process, it's often common to experience a loss of appetite and lack of sleep. Although you may feel unmotivated during this difficult period, make sure you take care of yourself by getting enough sleep, eating nutritious foods, and exercising regularly.

Seek Help

If your feelings of grief are making it difficult for you to function, consider speaking to a health professional to get some additional support and help.

Pets and People

24-hour support line

Phone number: 1300 431 450

Website:

<https://petsandpeople.com.au/>
(Please note below*)

Griefline

Open 6am-midnight AEST

Phone number: 1300 845 745

Connect with others online through their pet bereavement forum:

<https://griefline.org.au/forums/>



Resources for Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Populations

Multicultural Communities Council of SA

The Multicultural Communities Council of SA is the peak organisation that efficiently services, innovatively empowers and strongly advocates for cultural and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in South Australia. Find out more and check out about all the amazing things they do by visiting their website at:

www.mccsa.org.au

Peace Multicultural Services

PEACE stands for Personal Education And Community Empowerment and is a service that works with people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, regardless of their visa status. Peace provides a number of different services for individuals, families, and communities to help overcome barriers. Find out more by visiting:

www.rasa.org.au/services/couples-families/peace-multicultural-services/#our

SHINE SA

SHINE SA aims to provide culturally appropriate sexual health services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Male or female interpreters can be arranged on request. Find more information on their website at:

www.shinesa.org.au/community-information/working-with-multicultural-communities

Indaba HIV:

Indaba is a term used in South African countries meaning gathering or meeting for the purpose of sorting out problems. Check out their website for more practical information and resources for women living with HIV in South Australia at:

www.indabahiv.com.au

Multicultural Affairs

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet is responsible for the development of multicultural policies and programs and the promotion of cultural diversity in South Australia. Check out their list of state government, Commonwealth and key community service organisations at:

www.dpc.sa.gov.au/responsibilities/multicultural-affairs

Multicultural Youth SA

Is a leading community-based, not-for-profit organisation that provides a diverse range of services and programs to support multicultural young people and young families living in South Australia. To connect with MYSA and find out please visit:

www.mysa.com.au



**Trigger Warning:
Domestic
Violence & Abuse**

Signs of Domestic Violence & Abuse

Domestic violence and abuse is never okay! Learn how to recognise the signs and get help for yourself and others

The signs of domestic violence may not always be as obvious as you may think. That is because domestic violence is not always physical; abuse can also be financial, emotional, verbal, and sexual. Regardless, no one should have to experience abuse in their relationship and the first step is often coming to terms that the relationship may be abusive. Check out the signs of domestic violence and abuse to see whether you may be at risk.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is when a person uses physical force against someone else.

There are many forms of physical abuse which often start as minor incidents (e.g., throwing an object) and then get progressively worse over time. Some examples of physical abuse can include the following;

- Pushing, scratching, kicking, spitting, pushing, biting, or punching
- Strangling or choking
- Using weapons
- Throwing or destroying property
- Abusing other people or pets in front of the person
- Depriving the person of food, water, and sleep
- Physically restraining someone, pinning someone against the wall or ground



Financial Abuse

Financial abuse is when someone takes control of someone else's finances. For instance, they may take control over their bank accounts or forbid them from spending any of their money. Some more examples of financial abuse can include;

- Restricting access to someone's bank account
- Taking control of their finances and money
- Limiting their money and monitoring their spending habits (e.g., giving an allowance)
- Preventing someone from going to work or from being able to work (e.g., hiding car keys, constantly calling the person while they are at work)
- Using someone's money or credit card without their permission
- Failing or refusing to contribute to expenses



Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse may often not be as obvious as the signs of physical abuse. However, emotional abuse also can have a huge impact on someone's mental health and wear down someone's self-esteem, happiness, and confidence. This is what allows the perpetrator to maintain control in the relationship and manipulate the person from leaving the relationship. Some signs of emotional abuse can include the following;

- Humiliating and intimidating your partner
- Blaming the person for everything that goes wrong in the relationship
- Constantly comparing the person to other people and making them feel bad about themselves
- Insulting, name-calling, and yelling
- Forcing them to stop seeing their friends and family, or making them ask permission
- Threatening to suicide if they try to leave you
- Preventing them from wearing what they want
- Purposely making you confused and doubting your own sanity. Commonly known as gaslighting (e.g. moving things around, denying things which you know to be true)



Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse is when the person constantly makes negative remarks about the other person, thus gradually wearing down their self-esteem. Some signs of verbal abuse include:

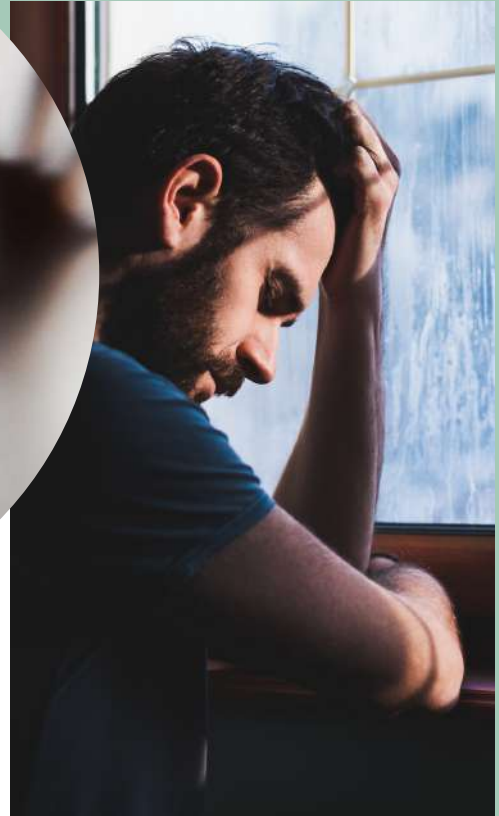
- Calling the person names
- Yelling or constantly raising voice
- Criticising and comparing the person to others
- Swearing and humiliating the person in private or public

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is a form of unwanted or forced sexual activity. The person inflicting the sexual abuse may often use threats, violence, or physical force. Some forms of sexual abuse can include the following:

- Rape
- Unwanted touching or unwanted exposure to pornography
- Purposely causing pain during sex
- Being sexually degrading
- Coercing someone into sexual acts or forcing someone to have sex without protection from STI's or pregnancy
- Withholding sex as a form of punishment





In some instances, you may suspect that someone you know may be experiencing domestic abuse whether it is a colleague, friend, or family member. Some of the signs to look for may include;

- Seem to be distant or have stopped seeing friends or family
- Their partner often criticises them or humiliates them in public
- They seem to have lost their confidence and suffer low-esteem
- When they talk about their partner they may mention that their partner often gets angry or forces them into doing things they don't feel comfortable with
- They seem afraid of their partner
- Unexplained bruises or injuries

If you suspect that your friend or family member is in an abusive relationship there are a number of things you can do. Often the person may be in denial or afraid to admit they are in an abusive relationship. Therefore, it is important to approach the topic gently and try not to push the person into talking. Rather, let them know you are worried and that you are there to talk and support them.

If you feel that you or someone you care for is in a domestic violence relationship, there is help and support available! Check out their website below to view the list of available resources and supports.

www.whiteribbon.org.au/find-help/domestic-violence-hotlines

Distraction Techniques and Alternative Strategies to Self-Injury Worksheet



**Trigger Warning:
Self-Injury**

Sometimes people may use self-injury as a way of coping with negative events or negative feelings. Often, people may feel they have no other alternative or had not learnt how to express difficult feelings in a safe and healthy way. Distraction techniques and alternative methods to self-injury can be used to help to suppress the urge to cause self-injury and assist in the recovery process. This worksheet highlights some practical strategies that can be used as a distraction or alternative strategies to self-harming.

Self-soothing Techniques and Alternative Strategies

- Have a bath
- Light some candles
- Listen to some calming music
- Try some aromatherapy oils
- Rub some nice smelling lotion onto your body
- Soak your feet and give yourself a pedicure
- Massage your hands and feet
- Meditate or try some yoga
- Cuddle your pet
- Hug a loved one
- Call up a friend
- Wrap yourself up tightly in a blanket
- Make a list of things that you are grateful for or make you happy
- Visit some family or friends
- Watch a favourite tv show or movie
- Play a game on the computer
- Do some crosswords or a puzzle



Creative

- Start writing in a journal
- Write some poetry or a short story
- Paint or draw something
- Do some sewing or knitting
- Research a new topic on the net you are interested in
- Learn a new language
- Take some photos
- Make a scrapbook
- Try baking or cooking something new

Expressing your anger or frustration in a healthy way

- Squeeze some ice or throw it against a wall outside
- Eat some sour lollies or take a bite into a hot pepper or a piece of ginger
- Go for a run or a walk
- Take a cold bath or shower
- Dance to some loud music
- Punch a cushion
- Rip up some old newspapers
- Sing loudly
- Write or draw how you are feeling
- Kick a ball around the oval or against a wall
- Bang some pots and pans together
- Clean your room or your car
- Bite into a lemon
- Put on some heavy shoes and stomp your feet on the ground hard



Getting Out and About

- Visit the library and borrow some books on a topic you are interested in
- Check to see which movies are screening at the local cinema
- Go window shopping
- Catch up with a friend
- Treat yourself out to lunch
- Go for a walk or a jog around the block
- Take a walk on the beach
- Visit the art gallery or museum
- Find out which classes the local council offers and attend whichever class sounds interesting
- Visit a park or a nursery or nature reserve
- Visit the zoo
- Take a train or a bus to a new place you have never been before
- Go outside and look at the stars



My Distraction Techniques and Alternative Strategies to self-injury

Write down some techniques and strategies you can try next time you feel like engaging in self-harming behaviours

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10

TIP

Often, we find that it can be helpful to match the activity to how you are feeling. For instance, if you are feeling sad it can be helpful to do something soothing like tuck yourself up in bed and make a hot cup of tea. However, if you are feeling angry or frustrated it may be helpful to go for a run or to listen to some fast-paced music.

If you would like some help implementing these strategies or would like some additional mental health support please contact LETSS via 1800 013 755 or start a webchat via letss.org.au

LETSS Keep Connected!

LETSS is a free non-crisis mental health support service for people in the Adelaide Metropolitan Region.

Call us or webchat

7 days a week from 5:00pm - 11.30pm

Information | Navigation | Support



1800 013 755



@LetssAus



/LETSSAus



letss.org.au

Links to Wellbeing is a consortium commissioned by the Adelaide PHN and run in partnership between Neami National, Mind Australia, Skylight Mental Health and Uniting Care Wesley Bowden.