

Change

Issue 6

***Article:
Just Listening***

Sounds simple enough but is it really?

Toxic Positivity

Let's change the way we support one another

Make butterfly origami with us!

Change a piece of paper into a beautiful butterfly.

**Links to
Wellbeing**

Change....this word can bring up a lot of different feelings - excitement, anxiety, hope, confusion - just to name a few. While change can undoubtedly be a positive thing, we also understand that oftentimes changes (even the good ones) can be really scary and uncomfortable. And as much as we might often try to avoid or outrun change it is inevitably something that we all have to face during many points in our lives.

For this edition of our wellbeing booklet, we've decided to sit down and really think about change and the role it plays in our lives. We've put together some tips on coping with change, reflections on what change means to us, some handy ideas for when you want to make a change in your life, as well as other bits and pieces.

We hope you enjoy this issue (and don't get too tired of hearing the word 'change' by the end of it)!

Warmly,
The LETSS Team

CONTENTS

- 04. Peer worker reflection on change
- 05. Reflective exercise
- 07. Recipe: blueberry muffins
- 08. When you want to make a change
- 10. A simple guide to mindfulness
- 12. Colour in Mandala
- 13. Coping with change
- 14. Worksheet: stress kit
- 15. Recipe: sausage briedie
- 16. Article: Reminiscence
- 18. Worksheet: feeling in control
- 19. Winter survival tips
- 20. Butterfly origami
- 23. Self care ideas
- 24. Colour in Mandala
- 25. Stages of change
- 26. Article: just listening
- 28. LETSS reviews
- 30: Toxic positivity

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.

Peer Worker Reflections on Change

The idea of change can elicit a lot of different, and often conflicting feelings. Putting this issue together really got us thinking about how we feel about change. We've put together a few reflections from some of our Peer Workers below. We invite you to have a read through and take some time for yourself to reflect on how you feel about change.

How do I feel about change? Initially, I really don't like change. Especially if I don't have time to think about what is going to change and have a plan on how to adapt to the new situation. I find that having time to process how I am feeling about a change and to maybe make a plan on what I need to do to work with a new situation can change my negative outlook to a more positive one (even though I may still be nervous).

My feelings around change are a bit of a mixed bag. It kind of makes me feel simultaneously excited and anxious! Sometimes it seems like a really scary thing and other times it gets me feeling really inspired and energetic. I think this often depends on what else is going on in my life at the time and how I'm travelling as a whole at the time. However, typically I try to embrace the change as best as I can - use it as an opportunity to grow and maybe learn something new.

For me to change can be a bit of a mixed bag but depends on what it is. Personally I love to explore different things and love learning so change is exciting most of the time, but when I'm under the pump and at the limits of my capacity change can be something that depletes me as I split my focus - something that came automatically now I have to remember to think about (but I remind myself that this is how new neural pathways are formed so one can never have too much of those).

How do *you* feel about change?

A Reflective Exercise

We've reflected on how we feel about change... but how do *you* feel about it? We invite you to think about your feelings and thoughts around change. This isn't an exercise about judging whether your relationship with change is good or bad, healthy or unhealthy. Rather a space to just reflect and explore what it means to you. If you're a bit stuck for ideas feel free to draw some inspiration from the question prompts below.

***What feelings come up for you when you think about 'change'?
Are they mostly positive/negative? A bit of both?***

***Are there any particular events that come to mind when you
hear the word 'change'?***

***Are there any changes that you're currently contemplating in
your life?***

***Do I usually seek out change in my life? Or does it generally
feel like it comes about spontaneously and unexpectedly?***

These are just a few prompts that we've come up with but feel free to be creative in whatever way suits you, draw a picture, write a poem, make a collage, come up with your own set of questions to contemplate!

Flip over to the next page for a space to explore.

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal blue lines across its entire width. The paper is otherwise completely empty, with no margins, text, or other markings.

6

Healthy Blueberry Muffins

I have a confession to make... I am yet to test out this recipe. But it is on my to-do list and I've heard from a reputable source that they are very tasty. More importantly, they're also ridiculously easy to make (just 5 ingredients)!! They're also freezer-friendly, so you can make a big batch and then set aside for snacks/breakfast/dessert when you need.

Ingredients

- 3 large ripe bananas (2 cups total)
- 1/3 cup coconut flour sifted
- 1/3 cup smooth nut butter of choice (peanut, cashew, almond - whichever you prefer)
- 1/3 cup pure maple syrup can sub for honey
- 1/4-1/2 cup blueberries

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a 12 count muffin tin with greased muffin cups and set aside.
2. In a mixing bowl or using a blender, combine all the ingredients except for the blueberries and mix/blend until fully combined. Gently fold in the blueberries.
3. Divide batter amongst the muffin cups until mostly full (they won't really rise so don't worry about overflow). Bake for 20-25 minutes, until tender on the outside.
4. Remove from oven and allow to cool in muffin tray completely. Remove from muffin tins and enjoy straight away or refrigerate for an hour.

When you want to make a change...

Making changes to our habits and routine can seem so easy in theory but can often be so hard in reality. Whether you're caught up in an unhelpful habit of going to bed later and later each night, or you just can't seem to stop scrolling on your phone, or perhaps you've eaten take out more nights than you care to admit the past few months. Maybe you need to make a big life-changing change. Making changes to these habits (even when we *know* they're impacting on our wellbeing) can be such a tough job - and it can be really tricky to know where to start. So we've decided to break it down and put together a few tips on how to slowly make changes to unhelpful habits and routines.

Tip #1 - Start small. Tackle one habit at a time rather than trying to do everything at once. Or break things down even smaller. For example, if you're wanting to make a healthier change to your diet, set the goal of eating healthy for one meal per day and go from there.

Tip #2 - Share what is happening with others. You could even get a friend to check in with you periodically around how you're going with shifting your habit. Sometimes having this external accountability can be really helpful when motivation is running low

Tip #3 - Acknowledge the progress you make. Even if it's having a small internal celebration at the end of each day, or setting a time each week to reflect on far you've come. Focusing on the progress you've made can help fight feelings of discouragement.

Tip #4 - Practice mindfulness. This can help gain awareness of our thoughts, feelings and actions. Doing this, particularly when struggling with an impulse to engage in an old habit can help to think clearer and explore other options. (Want to try some mindfulness but not sure where to start? Check out page.10!)

Tip #5 - Reflect deeply on what you will get out of changing the habit. For example, rather than simply thinking that you have to change your diet to "be healthier", think about what 'healthier' will look like. I.e. are you changing your diet to have more energy to do the things you love?

A Simple Guide to Mindfulness

A green leafy branch with several leaves extends from the top left corner across the top of the page, partially behind the title.

What is mindfulness?

The practise of maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and the surrounding environment through an observing and non-judgmental lens

How to practice mindfulness

In essence, practising mindfulness simply means actively bringing your attention to the present moment. However, there are many ways to practice this skill - see the next page for some ideas!

What are the benefits?

The benefits of consistently practising mindfulness include but are not limited to; reduced stress and anxiety, improved attention, boosted creativity, decreased rumination and improved relationships



The Body Scan

Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Bring awareness to your breathing and gently zone in on one part of your body at a time. Explore the different sensations in each part of your body as you focus on them.



Mindful walking

Take a walk! It can be as short or long as you like. During the walk really focus on paying attention to your body. How does each step feel? how does your breath feel? Gently bring your attention back to this when you feel your mind wandering.



Raisin exercise

Engage all five senses through the process of eating a raisin.

E.g. take a few moments to really focus in on what the raisin looks like, how does it feel, does it have a smell, mindfully explore what it tastes like and the different textures.

Mindful seeing

This is the practice of consciously noticing everything within your visual field. To start with you focus in on one small thing (e.g. the cover of a book, an apple you're about to snack on) and really pay attention to all the details of this object.



Coping With Change

Change can be really tough! Whether it's good or bad change, things shifting around us can often create a sense of instability and create stress and anxiety. But there are ways to make it easier, have a look below for some simple and practical tips.

1. Where possible **plan ahead**. although sometimes change can be unpredictable there are also times where we can see it coming. In these cases coming up with a plan for when the change comes about can be helpful.
2. **Reframe your thinking**. This can be a tricky but very powerful skill. Although undoubtedly some changes can be really negative - there are also some that while stressful provide opportunities to learn and grow.
3. **Take time to reflect** on what you're feeling. There's a whole heap of emotions that can come about with a new change. Give yourself the time and space to reflect on and be with these feelings.
4. Do what you can to **maintain your normal routine**. In situations where this is possible, do your best to maintain routines that bring you stability and comfort.
5. Actively **incorporate comforting and de-stressing activities**. In combination with maintaining your regular routines and activities, perhaps (where you can) actively include some extra self-care while you're adjusting (not sure where to start? Have a flick over to page 22 where we've got some self-care inspiration).
6. **Reach out** for support. The most important one (in my humble opinion)! Whether it's to ask for practical support or just share what's been happening for you - you don't have to go through it alone.



Stress Kit

Life can often be stressful – there's not too much we can do to avoid that. What we can do is be prepared for when these stressful periods inevitably come. It's handy to have a 'stress kit' ready to go – this kit can include having people you can turn to for a chat, activities you can do and places you can go to help manage these difficult periods.

When I'm stressed here are...

People I can talk to:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Places I can go:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Activities I can do:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Services I can contact:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Simple Sausage Bredie

This simple version of sausage bredie is actually epic. Why? Because this is the meal that allowed my children to start to change (that word again!) the stories they told themselves about the flavours they do and do not like. Before eating this, my kids often said that they did not like different foods (before trying them!) and felt afraid to try new flavours. They felt safe with plain sausages and familiar foods though. By adding some new flavours to foods they were accustomed to, they felt more confident about exploring the world with their taste buds...

Ingredients

One pack beef sausages
One big onion - chopped
2 carrots – peeled and chopped
Half a cup of peas
1 teaspoon garlic – fresh, powder or crushed – whatever you have!
1 teaspoon ginger – fresh or crushed works fine
1 can diced tomatoes
1 teaspoon cumin
1 teaspoon coriander
1 tablespoon turmeric
1 tablespoon curry powder

Directions

1. Boil the sausages for a few minutes to cook through and remove some of the fat
2. Drain sausages and chop into 1cm slices – remove skins if preferred
3. Fry onion, garlic and ginger in a pot and add chopped sausages
4. Add can of tomatoes and stir
5. Add remaining ingredients, stir, and simmer until carrots are soft

Can be served with almost anything – rice, pasta, mashed potato – whatever you wish!

Reminiscence

Have you ever been looking through old photographs or listening to a song and found yourself reminiscing and smiling at positive memories from your past? This scenario of recalling positive memories in order to re-experience happy events and emotions is an example of positive reminiscence.

Positive reminiscence has shown great potential in reducing feelings of agitation, depression, isolation and stress. In fact, as a therapeutic tool, positive reminiscence is often used in the treatment of people living with dementia to improve their mood and to reduce their feelings of loneliness.

Positive reminiscence can also be helpful for people who are struggling with their mental health. It can be used to strengthen our feelings of self-identity and self-worth, to re-establish control over our lives, and to recollect past coping skills or strategies that can be repeated if we are feeling distressed.

Reminiscence VS. Rumination

While reminiscing can be a positive experience, it can also be unhelpful if we find ourselves ruminating about a problem or a negative event from our past that is upsetting. If you have experienced this, then you will be familiar with how debilitating ruminating can be, particularly at night when you are trying to sleep.

Instead of solving our problem, or reducing our feelings of agitation, depression, isolation and stress, rumination can leave us caught in a tangle of negative thoughts. If you find yourself ruminating, it can be helpful to distract yourself, for example, going outside for exercise, listening to relaxing music, playing a video game, speaking with supportive people, or watching a TV show.

Looking For Exceptions

Another way to counter rumination is with positive reminiscences, such as looking for exceptions: times when a problem could have happened, but it did not. Looking for exceptions can be helpful when we cannot think of past coping skills or strategies that can be repeated.

Working backwards, we can trace what we have done in the past, perhaps without realising, to relieve our distress, to solve difficult situations or to achieve our goals.

Positive reminiscence has shown great potential in reducing feelings of agitation, depression, isolation and stress

Looking for exceptions can help us to recognise that we, in fact, have skills and strategies that we can mobilise to deal with present challenges.

This exercise can improve our feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy. It also reminds us that every difficult situation or distressing sensation is a temporary experience.



Feeling in Control

It can be overwhelming when there is a lot going on in the world. During these times it can be challenging to focus on what we can control in our day to day lives. Writing down what is in and out of our control can help create a clear divide in what we can influence.

Outside of my control...

Within my control...

Winter survival tips

Changes to the seasons can be challenging to adjust to. Particularly when winter comes about, the colder weather and shorter days can really impact our mood. Have a look below for a few tips on how we can take care of our mental health over the winter



Stay hydrated. *It can be easy to forget to drink water during winter. But staying hydrated is just as important when the weather is cooler!*

Get some sun. *We know, easier said than done when cold weather hits. As much as you can try to get outdoors, especially on those sunnier winter days!*



Eat healthily. *It's so easy to reach for comfort foods. These may leave us with a short-lived mood boost but depleted and low on energy in the long-term.*

Stay connected. *Many of us are less social in the colder months. While getting may seem tough initially, it can really help boost our mood.*

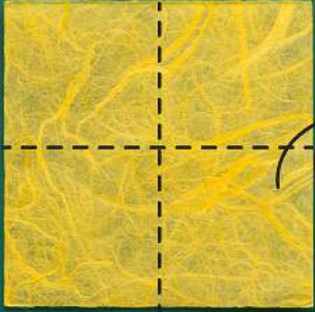


Keep active. *Again, we know this can be so hard when it's chilly outside. Just do your best to do what you can - even if it's just 10 minutes here and there!*

Make butterfly Origami with us!

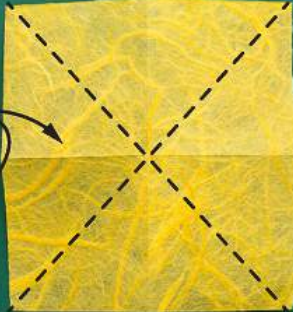
Turn a piece of paper into something beautiful...

1. Fold in half both ways

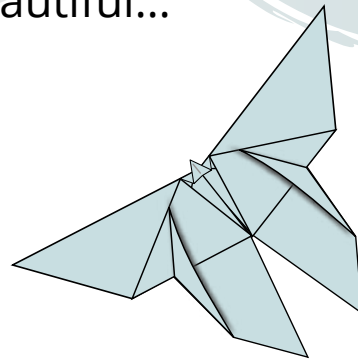


Unfold and turn over

2.



Fold diagonally both ways



3.



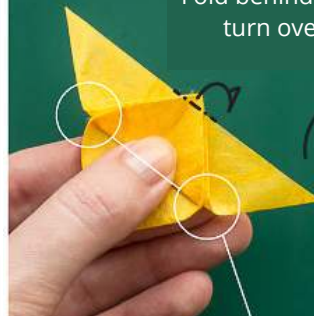
Collapse into waterbomb base

4.



Fold upper layer only

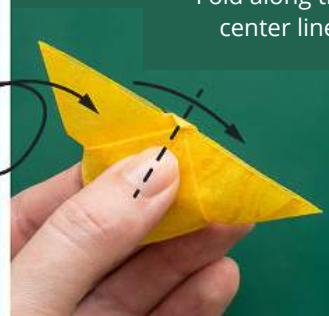
7.



Fold behind and turn over

Do not flatten here

8.



Fold along the center line

5.



Turn over

6.



Fold the corner past the edge

9.



goorigami.com

10.



Instructions by Go Origami: <https://goorigami.com/single-sheet-origami/origami-butterfly/3006>

**Scan the QR code
here to watch a
step by step
video!**





cut here

Self-care ideas.... *for whatever space you're in*

If you're feeling **creative...**

- Design your own zine
- Try a new make-up look
- Start a blog or write a short story
- Try your hand at some photography

If you're feeling **reflective...**

- Practice a guided meditation
- Journal your thoughts/feelings
- Eat your favourite food mindfully
- Read up on a new topic

If you're feeling **high energy...**

- Re-organize a part of the house
- Have a dance around the room
- Sing loudly!
- Do some aerobic exercise

If you're feeling **low energy**

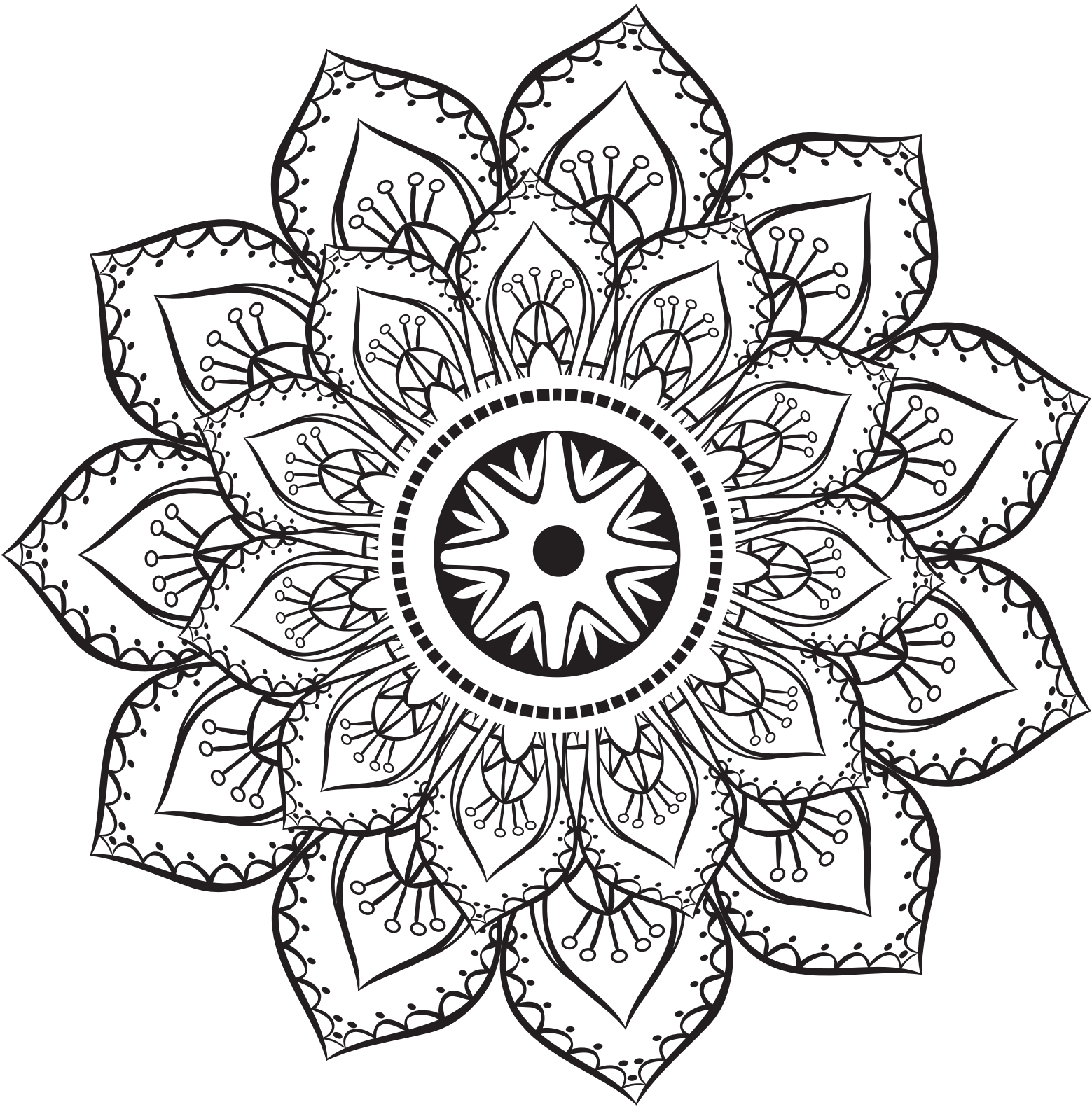
- Have a gentle stretch
- Listen to a favourite music album
- Go cloud watching
- Eat your favourite microwave meal

If you're feeling **frustrated...**

- Listen to some music...loud!
- Practice mindfulness
- Go for a power walk
- Give yourself permission to cry

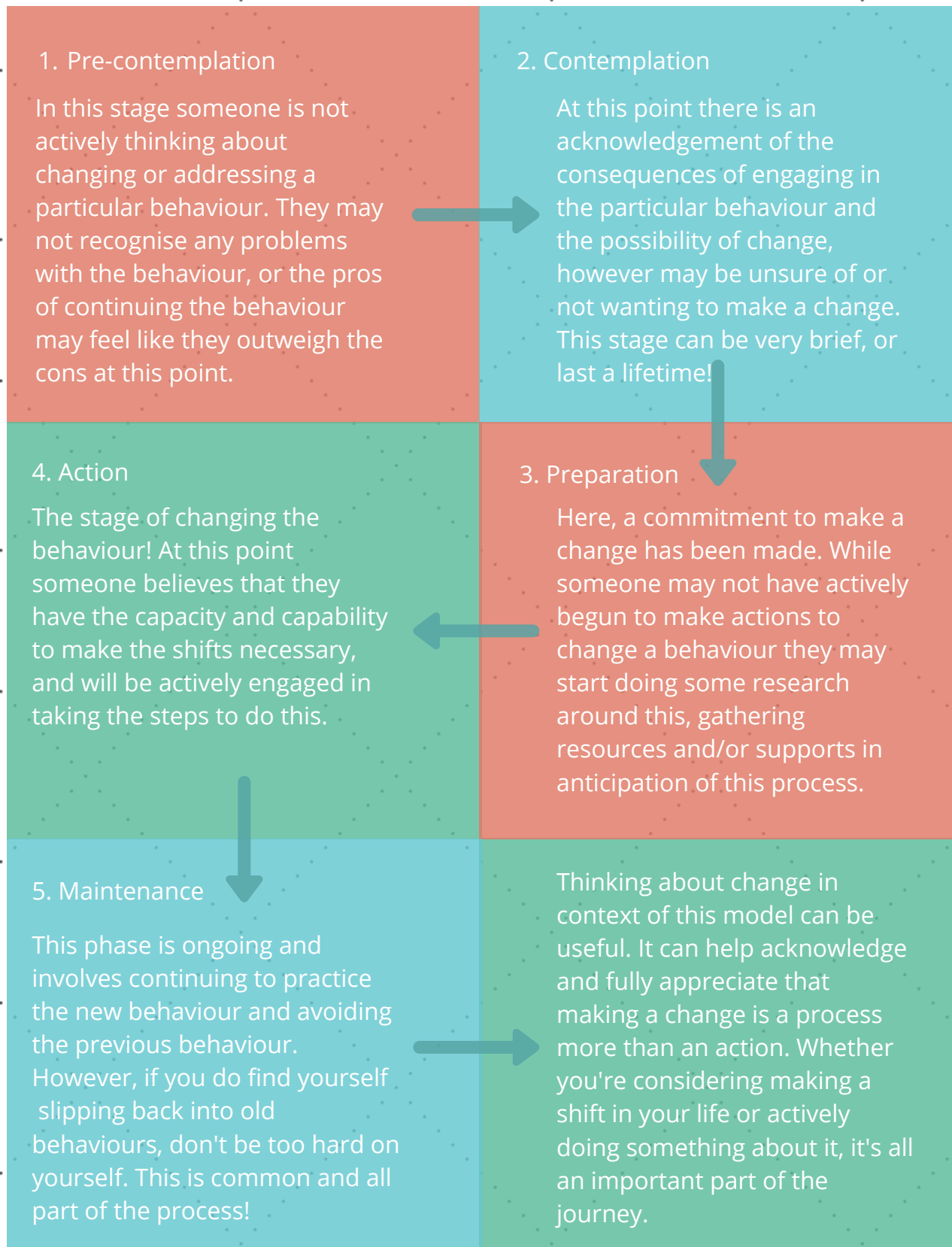
If you're feeling **anxious...**

- Have a cup of herbal tea
- Tidy any clutter in your space
- Try a progressive muscle relaxation
- Talk through it with a friend



Stages of change

Sometimes it's easy to get caught up in the belief that to make a change you just have to "do it". But in reality, this is rarely the case! In fact, there's a lot that comes before the actual change occurs. Have a look at the 'stages of change' model below if you're curious to know more.



Just Listening

Just listening... sounds simple enough right? But how often do we feel the need to jump into giving advice when someone comes to us for support? How often has someone else done this when all we've wanted is to be listened to?

It may sound easy, but just listening is something we regularly forget to do, and yet this can often be the most valuable way we can provide support for someone. Many problems and challenges can't be solved quickly or from one conversation, it's just about finding ways to get through the tough times. Having someone just sit and listen in these times can help make things feel a little lighter.

So how do we listen actively and mindfully? This is something that does take practise – but it's also something we can practice every day.

A big part of listening effectively involves putting our own judgements aside and taking everything that's said with an open mind. Think about it as listening with curiosity and the intent of understanding rather than giving advice or having an answer. A good guide for doing this and demonstrating that we're actively listening is the three R's: Repeat, reflect and respond.

Repeat: This is exactly what it sounds like – just repeating key things that the other person has said. This doesn't necessarily mean, copying word-for-word what they're saying, rather summarising what the other person is talking about, or repeating short sentences and words. This maintains that you are present and listening, and can help the other person feel safe in the conversation and keep sharing. It can also provide the other person with the opportunity to correct or clarify anything that you may have misunderstood.

Reflect: Similar to repeating but involves offering some basic insight into the other person's experiences, and reflecting on what you've heard. For example, stating 'so, you're feeling hurt by what your friend has done and you're not sure how to bring this up with them?' Reflective statements such as these, not only show that you've been listening but that you're interested as well, providing space for the other person to delve deeper into what has been happening for them.

Respond: Listening doesn't necessarily mean remaining impassive, responding to what has been said shows you are interested in and value what the other person is saying.

Statements such as 'that must have been so hard' and 'I'm so sorry you had to experience that' are direct and supportive. However, often silence is also helpful – non-verbal responses can be just as effective. Nodding your head, facing towards the other person, maintaining eye contact and not interrupting while the other person talks are all things that demonstrate our attention.

This may seem like a lot to take in – and actively listening is something that may feel tricky when we're not used to doing it. But realistically the most important thing is to just be genuinely interested in hearing what the other person has to say and holding the time and space to let their voice and explore what they've been experiencing.

It may sound easy, but just listening is something we regularly forget to do, and yet this can often be the most valuable way we can provide support for someone.

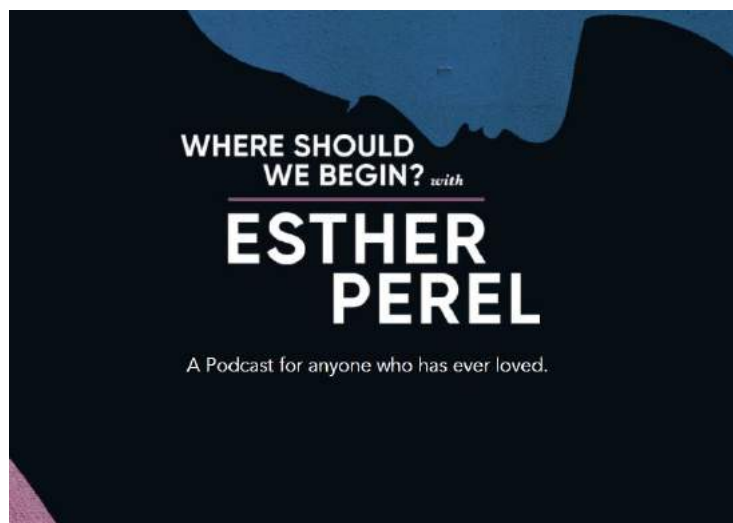
LETSS REVIEW

Podcast review...

Where should we begin? With Esther Perel

I love listening to Esther - she really gets to the heart of the matter, literally!

In this series of 11 half-hour episodes, 11 different couples have agreed to share their one-off sessions with Esther for others to hear and learn from. The couples are unique, and of course no situation can mirror our own exactly but the universal nature of the problems explored mean there is something that speaks to everyone here. Stories of betrayal, self-doubt and division of housework begin to change; as couples work to create stories of trust, courage, and connection.

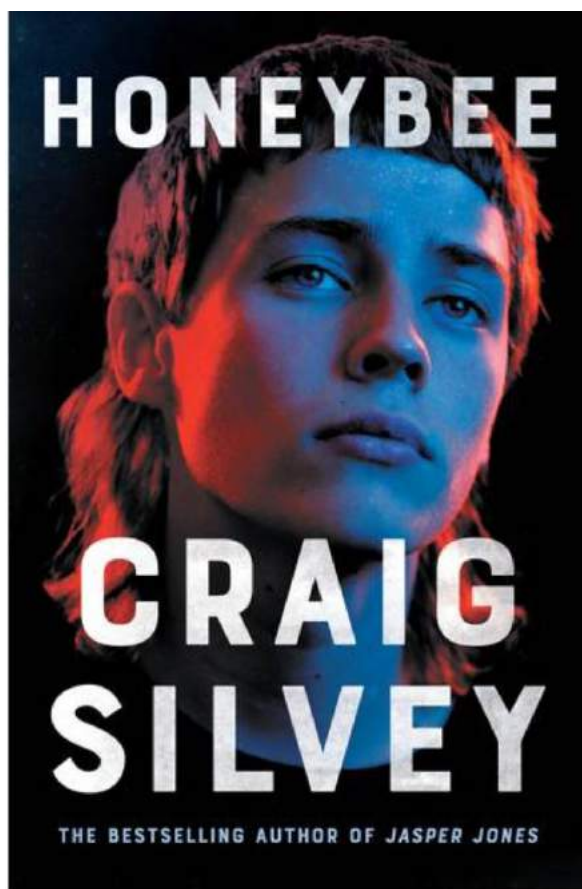


Welcome to LETSS review! Where our Peer Workers review books, apps, podcasts, and more!

Book Review...

Honeybee by Craig Silvey

Content warning



Honeybee is one of the most emotional, moving and insightful books that I have read to date. The narration from the main character, Sam is heartbreaking but also inspiring with their ongoing journey to self-acceptance. The book provides an insight into the challenges of learning how to accept kindness from others when it has not been previously provided. It highlights that we do not know what other people are truly going through until we take time to listen and hear what they are willing to share.

Let's change the way we support one another... toxic positivity edition.

Have you ever experienced a difficult or distressing situation and shared how you feel with someone, only to be told to 'look on the bright side of things'? I know I have – and I know I'm not the only one. And while generally these things are said with the best of intentions – the hard truth is that in many circumstances these responses can be deeply unhelpful.

This idea of utilizing and encouraging excessive and ineffective 'positive thinking' or optimistic/happy emotions across all situations, is what's often referred to as 'toxic positivity'. Now I know that as much as I have been on the receiving end of this 'toxic positivity', I have also undoubtedly been on the giving end of it as well (again, I imagine many of us have). This is not intended as a criticism, but rather an invitation for us all to think about how we can more meaningfully be in feelings of distress (both with ourselves and others).

Okay...so what can we do instead?

In some sense, this part is both simple and difficult. When someone comes to us with their experience of distress and shares big and painful stories with us – it can be a really uncomfortable space to be in. Truly sitting and empathizing with another person, also means feeling some of their distress yourself.

However, often times this is the most helpful thing that can be done. Rather than attempting to shuffle that person along to a 'positive' space (that perhaps seems more comfortable in the moment), stay with them in their story. Validate that what they're going through is really difficult, give them the space to fully share what they're experiencing and do your best to genuinely be present throughout the conversation.

I want to be mindful in saying that – accepting and being with these distressing emotions doesn't mean that you can't let positive ones arise. If the person you're with naturally moves through to a space where they are looking at the positive side of things or recognizing their own strengths through what is happening– you can be in that space with them too. Just like this isn't about forcing positivity on someone, it's also not about forcing someone to be in that negative space if they're feeling ready to move through it.

I recognize this broad response may sound great in theory, but not be entirely helpful in practice. It can often be so tricky to know what to say, so we've put together a bit of a resource to help out. Feel free to have a look over the next page for a few ideas.

What toxic positivity might sound like...

'Don't think about it, stay positive!'

'Everything happens for a reason'

'Things could be worse'

'Just look on the bright side'

'Stop being so negative'

'Don't worry, you'll get over it'

Trust me, it's not as bad as it seems

There's always a silver lining!'

What you could say instead...

'Talk me through what's happening, I'm listening'

'That sounds like a really tough situation to be in'

'I can hear that things are really hard right now'

'If you feel like talking about things, I'm happy to listen'

'I'm here with you through this difficult time'

'That sounds stressful, it's understandable to feel worried'

'Is there anything I can do support you with this?'

'It's really valid to be feeling this way right now'

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.

phn
ADELAIDE

An Australian Government Initiative

 **neami**
National
Improving Mental Health
and Wellbeing

 **mind**
Help, hope and purpose

 **SKYLIGHT**
SEE MENTAL HEALTH DIFFERENTLY

 **UCWB**
UnitingCare Wesley Bowden