

Lived Experience Telephone Support Service

LETSS Refresh

Issue 4



10 MINUTE RECIPES

*Nicole's Delicious
Udon Noodle
Recipe*

LETSS TALK ABOUT MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

*Busting common myths
about men living with
mental illness*

"YOU AREN'T SPECIAL"

*Why this was the
best thing my
psychologist ever
said to me*

**Links to
Wellbeing**

WELCOME 2021

The year 2020 was a challenging time for a variety of reasons. As such, we wish to acknowledge and commend our LETSS callers who have demonstrated incredible resilience during these tough times. You continue to inspire our team every day with your stories and strength!

As we begin a new year, we wish all our callers a safe, happy, memorable and exciting year ahead. Lets put aside 2020 and refresh as we step into a new chapter. We also hope you enjoy Issue 4 of our Wellbeing Booklet full of ideas on how to refresh. Think lots and lots of self-care! (but fun stuff too - did someone say colouring in?!)

And remember whatever this new year has in store, we'll be in it together!

Warmly
The LETSS Team

19.



26.

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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.



A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

Create a Gratitude Jar

01

STEP 1

Find a spare jar and place it somewhere you will see it.

02

STEP 2

Cut up some paper/magazine/scrapbook paper into small pieces & place them near the jar.

03

STEP 3

Daily/weekly/regularly, write down on one of the pieces of paper something that you are grateful for. Fold it up and place it in the jar.

04

STEP 4

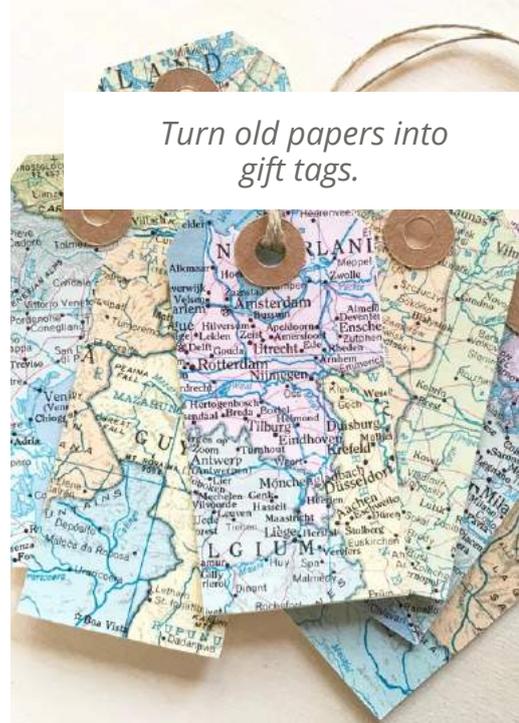
When you don't have a good day, or at the end of the year, read through the papers and appreciate all that you are grateful for!



Turn toilet rolls into an organisation station.



Imagine



Turn old papers into gift tags.

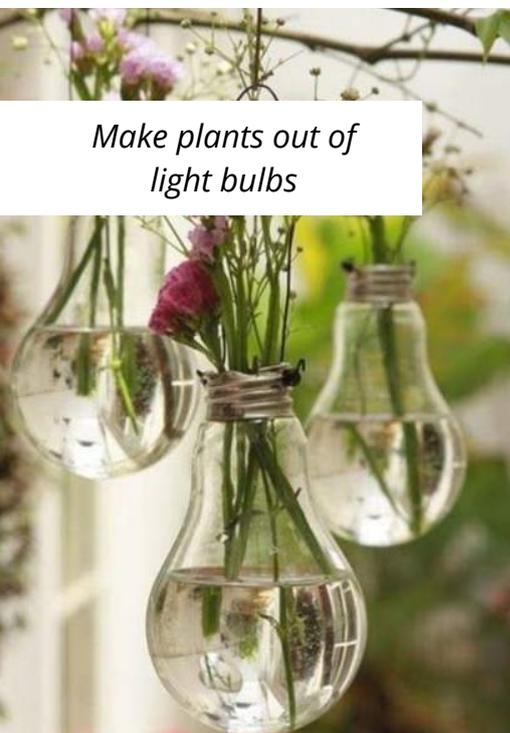


Paint mason jars for storage or vases,

Upcycling Ideas To Try These At Home



Paint old paint cans for plants or storage.



Make plants out of light bulbs



Create a photo frame card and photo holder.

Create

letss.org.au

You aren't special

AND WHY WAS THIS THE MOST HELPFUL
THING MY PSYCHOLOGIST EVER SAID TO ME

Now I know you're probably thinking – how can a psych say that!? However, for me, this was one of the most helpful things she has ever said to me.

We were talking about self-care. You know, enjoying creative activities like painting and craft, and I said to her... "But isn't it just a bit INDULGENT!? Shouldn't I be out saving the world!?" She pleasantly smiled and calmly said, "What would you tell your clients?"

And of course, I said "I'd tell them to do ALL the creative activities! I'd tell them to do the things that they needed to feel good about life and feel well and cared for!"

And this is when she delivered her "You're not special" bombshell.

And it clicked. Why are our expectations of others so different from our expectations of ourselves? None of us are special. None of us are above this thing called self-care. None of us are above needing nourishment and creativity and activities that keep us well. None of us are too good for that! So I encourage you, please go forth and feel your 'un-specialness' and treat yourself like you treat everyone else. Encourage yourself to:

- Paint that picture
- Eat those delicious strawberries
- Read for 4 hours straight
- Sleep in on Saturday
- Engage in activities that nourish you

Do what you need to, to feel well because there aren't any special rules for you. You're just as deserving as everyone else.

- Amanda, Peer Worker

Finding Meaning in Difficult Times

There have been multiple periods in my life during which I felt overwhelmed by many negative emotions. I'm not going to sit here and tell you that during these periods I could easily find positivity or a 'silver lining' for what I was experiencing. If anything, trying to 'think positive' about the situation more often than not left me feeling no less distressed. However (after taking the time to sit with and process heavy emotions), what I felt I could always do was explore how these experiences were bringing meaning to my life.

As an example, during a particularly difficult period, I remember noticing that with these new and intensely distressing emotions also came a new, deeper empathy for other people and their experiences. It felt easier to be with others painful emotions and to genuinely connect with them in these moments. In more general, day to day interactions I also caught myself taking more time to connect with strangers. Whether this was to simply smile at a stranger on the bus or take a couple of extra minutes to chat to my barista when grabbing a morning coffee. While it may have been a difficult and turbulent space to be in, having these experiences, initiated a deeper appreciation for the importance of connecting with one another – something which has since stayed with me through both the good and bad times.

This period also forced me to explore what was truly important to me. Whether I liked it at the time or not I had to have a look into what my values were and how I could actively incorporate them into my life. It almost felt as though, these intense and distressing emotions, filtered out any small or insignificant worries that I would previously spend a great deal of time and energy thinking about or trying to distract myself from.

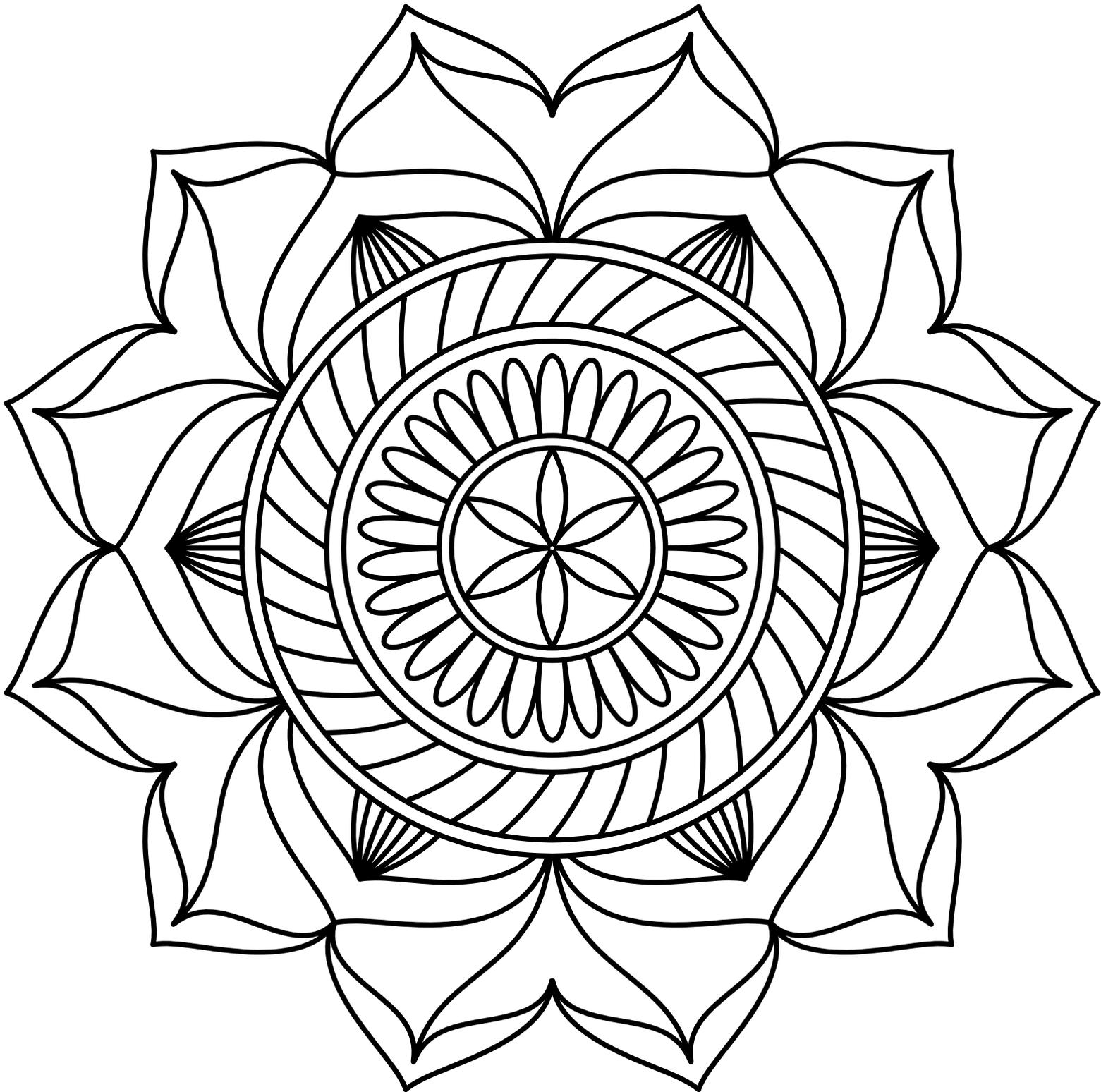
While this did seem to give rise to bigger and scarier fears, fears that I couldn't distract myself from, it forced me to acknowledge, learn from and make space for them. In other words, experiencing these fears forced me to evaluate why I was experiencing them and what they were saying about what's important to me. It allowed me to more deeply explore what old values I may have forgotten about, and what new values I could incorporate into my life – and again, these values seem to have stuck with me years down the track.

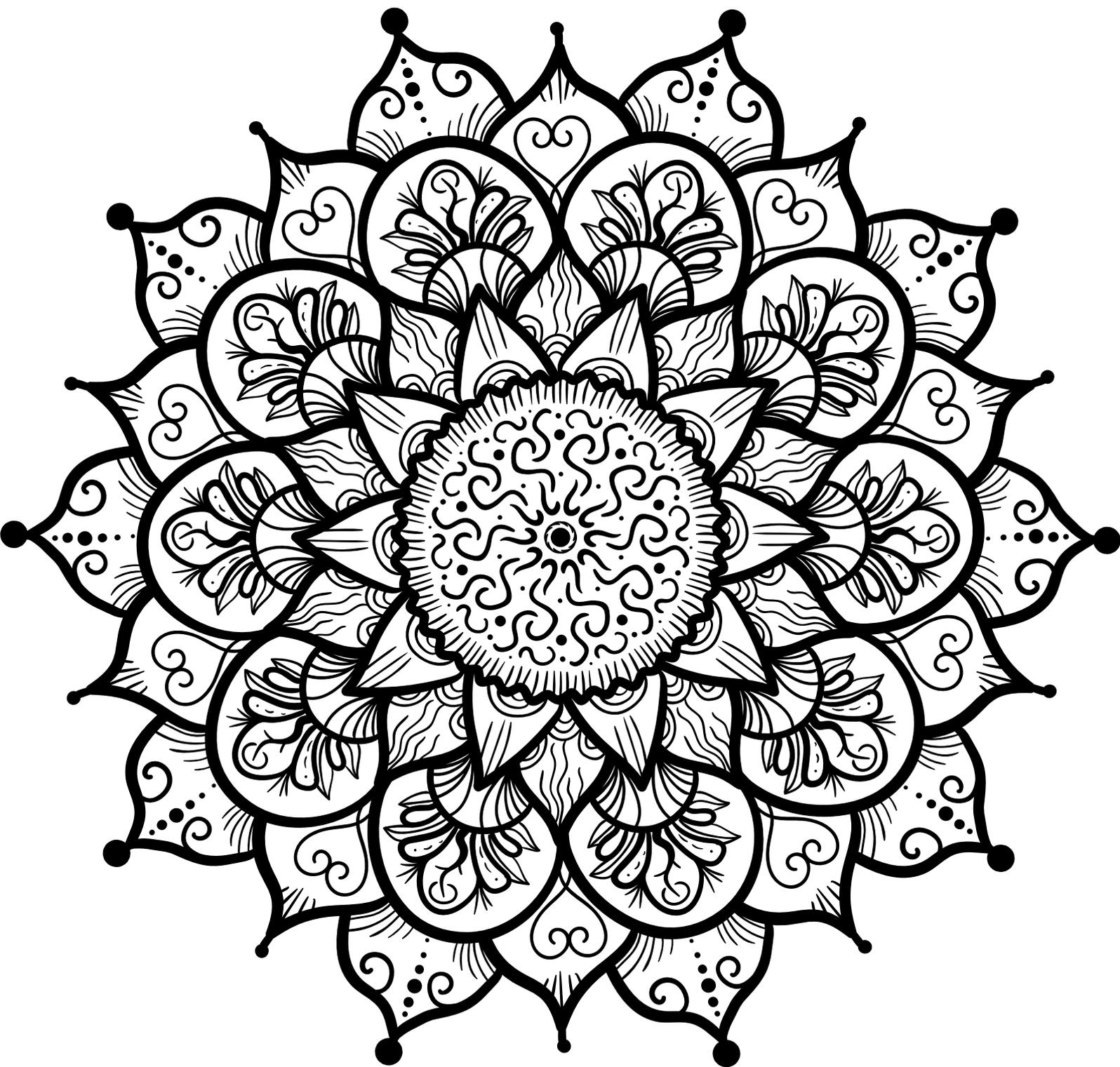
Before I wrap it up I want to be clear in saying that summarizing an entire experience in a couple of paragraphs (as I've just done), where I highlight the meaningful aspects of it, might make it seem as though it was a smooth and easy process. It wasn't, nor am I saying it should be. Over this period, there were times where things felt intensely bleak and meaningless. Where I refused and was unable to think of how this experience could possibly bring value to my life. It was only with time and space that I could genuinely appreciate and learn from everything these intense feelings had taught me. What I'm trying to say is, if you're currently in the midst of a distressing time and trying to find meaning in your experience seems entirely foreign and unhelpful– that's okay. Give yourself the time and space to feel what you need to feel.

I also want to highlight that this was just my personal experience with finding meaning in distressing times. Yours might be entirely different. However, if you do feel you're in a space to explore this I'd definitely encourage you to do so. If you're looking for a place to start feel free to check out the 'self-help' section of our website where we've come up with a worksheet called 'finding meaning in challenging situations'

- O, Peer Worker

Colour in Mandalas





Nicole's Udon Noodles with Chicken and Cashews

In Under 10 Minutes!

This recipe is so quick and easy, I was able to get it ready for my family while on a 10-minute break during a recent work (from home) training! The below will feed 4, so you may have plenty of yummy leftovers for the next day! Feel free to add any other veggies you might have kicking around your fridge too – carrot, beans, spring onions, coriander... it's also great with tofu!

Ingredients:

- 400 grams of chicken breast strips
- 1 jar sweet and sour noodle sauce (or similar – any jar of noodle sauce works well!)
- 2 packs udon noodles
- 1 pack mini fresh sweet corn
- Half a red capsicum
- 1 broccoli head
- 1 cup cashews
- 1 red onion

Method:

First, put your udon noodles into a heat-proof bowl, fill your kettle up with water and boil.

While the water is boiling put a large saucepan on the heat and add a couple of splashes of oil.

Start slicing your chicken, baby corn, capsicum, broccoli and onion as finely as you like, then throw them all into the hot pan to start cooking.

Pour in the sweet and sour sauce and mix well.

By now the kettle would have boiled, so pour the hot water over the noodles, and leave for 2 minutes to separate.

Strain noodles and add into the chicken and veg mix, then sprinkle in cashews, and stir again.

Serve and enjoy!

Liz's Chickpea Burger Patties

Ingredients:

- 2 x 420g cans of drain chickpeas
- 1 cup semi-dried tomatoes
- 1 cup bread crumbs (fresh)
- 1 grated carrot
- 1 egg
- A pinch of salt and pepper

Method:

1. Drain chickpeas
2. In a food processor, place chickpeas and semi-dried tomatoes, pulse until coarsely combined
3. Add breadcrumbs, carrot, egg and pulse again
4. Season with salt and pepper
5. Form into patties and leave to set in the fridge for 30 mins before pan frying

Sensory Modulation

Sensory modulation refers to strategies that we can use mindfully to calm ourselves or to feel more alert. Calming sensations may be helpful when we are feeling anxious, overwhelmed and stressed, whereas alerting sensations may be helpful when we are feeling depressed, lethargic and unmotivated. The following examples are categorized as calming or alerting to help you brainstorm what strategies may be helpful for you. Each of these examples are also identified as using different sensory areas. This is to help you think about what types of sensations you may prefer. Please take a moment to check off the strategies that you may find helpful.

Sensation	Calming	Alerting
Movement 	<input type="checkbox"/> Yoga or stretching <input type="checkbox"/> Slow rhythmic dancing <input type="checkbox"/> Rocking back and forward <input type="checkbox"/> Leisurely walk or hike	<input type="checkbox"/> Aerobic exercise <input type="checkbox"/> Fast paced dancing <input type="checkbox"/> Jogging, running or sprinting <input type="checkbox"/> Shaking out your arms or legs
Temperature and Touch 	<input type="checkbox"/> Dressing in compression wear <input type="checkbox"/> Getting a deep pressure massage <input type="checkbox"/> Placing a heat bag on your neck <input type="checkbox"/> Sitting outside in the sunshine <input type="checkbox"/> Taking a hot bath or shower <input type="checkbox"/> Wrapping up in a heavy blanket	<input type="checkbox"/> Body brushing <input type="checkbox"/> Placing an ice pack on your eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Sitting by an open window <input type="checkbox"/> Taking a cold bath or shower <input type="checkbox"/> Using an acupressure mat <input type="checkbox"/> Walking bare foot
Hearing 	<input type="checkbox"/> Humming to yourself <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to relaxation music <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking with supportive people <input type="checkbox"/> Using noise canceling headphones	<input type="checkbox"/> Clapping or stomping <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to upbeat music <input type="checkbox"/> Playing a musical instrument <input type="checkbox"/> Singing loudly
Vision 	<input type="checkbox"/> Colouring in a mandala <input type="checkbox"/> Decorating your space with cool colours, such as blues or greens <input type="checkbox"/> Closing your eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Reducing clutter in your space <input type="checkbox"/> Sitting in a dimly lit area <input type="checkbox"/> Watching the sunrise or sunset	<input type="checkbox"/> Completing a jigsaw puzzle <input type="checkbox"/> Decorating your space with warm colours, such as reds or yellows <input type="checkbox"/> Going to the cinema <input type="checkbox"/> Playing a video game <input type="checkbox"/> Sitting in a brightly lit area <input type="checkbox"/> Watching sport

Sensory Modulation

Sensation	Calming	Alerting
Smell	<i>Calming scents include: vanilla, rose and lavender</i>	<i>Alerting scents include: lemon, peppermint and rosemary</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Burning incense<input type="checkbox"/> Lighting a scented candle<input type="checkbox"/> Practicing aromatherapy<input type="checkbox"/> Wearing scented lotion, perfume or cologne	
Gustatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Taking a deep breath<input type="checkbox"/> Sucking on hard candy<input type="checkbox"/> Half smiling<input type="checkbox"/> Drinking herbal tea, such as chamomile or passionflower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Having a cold smoothie<input type="checkbox"/> Eating chewy or crunchy foods<input type="checkbox"/> Drinking coffee<input type="checkbox"/> Cooking a meal with sour or spicy flavours



What is a half smile?

Like the Mona Lisa, the half smile is almost imperceptible. The half smile starts with relaxing the facial muscles, from the forehead to the jaw, and turning the corners of the mouth slightly upward. According to scientific research, this expression physiologically stimulates a serene feeling in the brain.

Are there other strategies that are not listed that you think might be helpful?

Have you noticed that you prefer a particular type of sensation?

List your top 6 strategies:

1. _____	4. _____
2. _____	5. _____
3. _____	6. _____

You may like to use the above check list to create your own personalised sensory box.

LETSS PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Fun and easy self-care ideas for home



HONEY YOGHURT FACEMASK

Indulge in a honey and yoghurt face mask. All you need is 1 teaspoon of honey, 1 tablespoon of yoghurt, and 3/4 egg yolk. Mix ingredients together and apply to clean skin for 20 minutes. Rinse off with warm water and pat dry with a towel.

MOOD-ENHANCING BATH

Have a mood-enhancing bath! Add 1/4 grated lemon peel and 1/4 cup grated orange peel to your bath and enjoy.

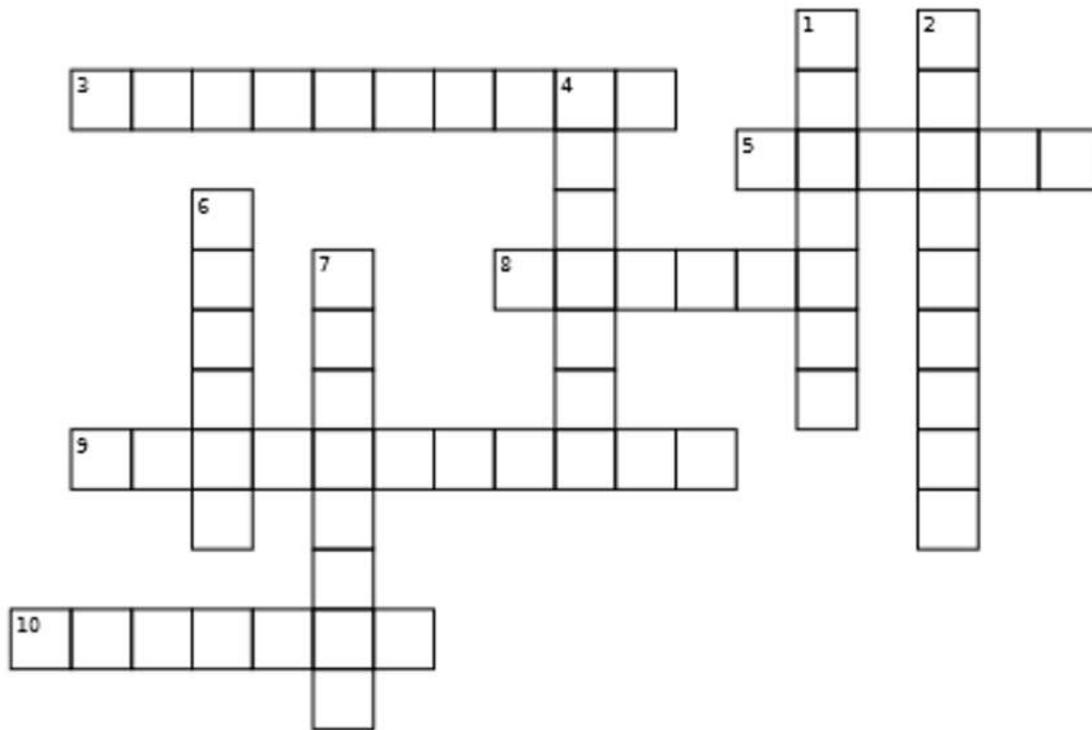


RESTFUL SLEEP

Turn your bed into the ultimate comfort zone! Drop a few drops of lavender oil onto your bed sheets/pillow to help you relax and unwind after a long day.



Crossword Time



Down

1. A safe, confidential space to talk about your difficulties or challenges*. Can be individual or group. Overseen by therapist. I am ___.

2. How comfortable, healthy, and happy we are. Exists on a spectrum we all move throughout every day. The state of being well or unwell ___.

4. Something that impacts us every day, we rarely often think about it, but it has the power to impact our mental state with less than a whisper. Rhymes with vulture.

6. A verb. Something you do to help yourself to manage in hard times. Also referred to as ___ skills.

7. When I take care of myself, I am practising ___.

Across

3. When it feels like life keeps throwing you curveballs but you keep going. Recovering quickly after facing adversity shows good levels of ___.

5. A six-letter word that describes a psychological spectrum everybody falls somewhere on, and moves throughout. Parallel to your physical health, is your mental ___.

8. The cloud of negative connotations that surround mental illness; the mean comments from others; one reason it can be so hard to reach out for help. Lets break the ___ around mental health.

9. The practice of being present, grounded, and aware of the current state of things around you and/or yourself.

10. The people or things in life that help assist you, sometimes called a ___ network.

Crossword answers on page 18.



We asked our Peer Workers about what they do to get ready for bed. This is what they said:

SLEEPING WELL



Crossword answers:

Down. 1. Therapy 2. Wellbeing, 4. Culture, 6. Coping, 7. Self-Care
Across. 3. Resilience, 5. Health, 8. Stigma, 9. Mindfulness, 10. Support

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MY SLEEP ROUTINE

Check the boxes next to the things you'd like to keep or add to your own sleep routine:

- Brush my teeth
- Wash my face
- Take a hot shower or bath
- Switch my phone to night mode
- Drink a cup of tea
- Spend some time reading
- Listen to calming music
- Stretch my body
- Use a diffuser or room spray
- Hot water bottle/wheat bag
- Avoid screens before bed
- Write a journal entry
- Reflect on what I'm grateful for
- Change my sheets or pyjamas
- Try to get to bed by __:__ PM

LETSS Talk About Men's Mental Health

Did you know that men are less likely than women to actively engage with mental health services, even though the rate of mental health disorders is very similar? Men are also twice more likely to use destructive coping strategies such as drugs and alcohol. Even more concerning, men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women. These are scary statistics, but it's really important that we talk about them. More specifically, it's important to ask; why is there such a stark difference?

The answer is not a simple one – with a range of psychological, physical and environmental factors potentially contributing to the problem. However, it is thought that one of the main factors that contribute to these worrying statistics is the way in which men deal with stressors and worries. Typically men are much more reluctant to talk about their concerns – due to fears of it being perceived as a sign of weakness.

Between the stigma that exists surrounding mental illness and the pressure for (more often) men to always be strong, a lot of men struggle to reach out when they may need help. In light of this, I wanted to debunk some myths that may be influencing how men are dealing with mental health issues.

Myth 1: Mental illness = weakness

I cannot emphasize enough, mental illness is not in any way mental weakness. Just like physical illness, mental illness can affect anyone and can so often be outside of our control. It can occur due to a variety of factors such as; abnormal brain chemistry, substance abuse or response to stressful/traumatic events or abusive situations. More simply, things that are in no way reflective of personal weakness, or the fault of the person experiencing the mental illness.

Myth 2: Real men don't ask for help (asking for help is weak).

There's no doubt that being vulnerable and open with others is really hard, so if anything, asking for help is a show of courage and strength. Whether it's talking to a professional or a loved one – men and women alike can benefit from reaching out when they feel they need to.

Myth 3: Talking about it won't help.

Sometimes having an outside voice can really help bring another perspective to the situation. While talking about it won't necessarily 'fix' or 'solve' what's going on, it can often help you make sense of your experience, as well as leave you feeling more supported and less alone.

Myth 4: Asking for help will burden others.

Asking for help does not make you a burden, people want to support the ones they love. Everyone goes through times in their lives where they really need the support of others. Being open to asking for this support will in turn encourage those around you to reach out when they need it.

"I cannot emphasize enough, mental illness is not in any way mental weakness"

Don't think of it as dumping your problems on others, but rather as fostering open and honest relationships where there is space for both you and others to ask for support when it's needed.

These are just a few of the myths that may make it difficult for men to reach out for support. The truth is, there are still some deeply ingrained and problematic attitudes surrounding men's mental health which won't go away overnight. But that doesn't mean there's nothing we can do. Acknowledge that these attitudes exist, be aware of how your own beliefs might be influenced by them and don't be afraid to call out problematic comments. As well as this, whether you're male, female or don't identify as either, don't forget to check-in on your friends and provide them with a safe space to share their experiences.

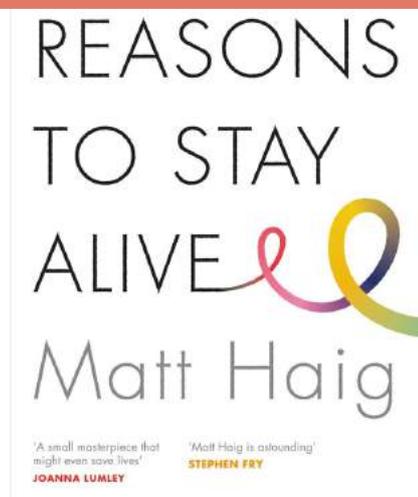
LETSS REVIEW

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

Reasons to Stay Alive by Matt Haig is a memoir about one man's battle with anxiety and depression. The book draws you in quickly with its easy-to-read style, and is as down-to-earth as humanly possible when writing about the toughest of subjects. Matt describes with brutal honesty his experiences with anxiety and depression, followed by a breakdown at the age of 24, and the long recovery process that followed.

Like me, Matt believes that by sharing our own stories of mental illness, we can help others with their healing process and describes this as "Where talk exists, so does hope"...

Throughout this book, Haig makes it very clear what worked and what didn't work for him while looking for 'cures' for his anxiety and depression, but encourages readers to try and find out what works for them – specifically their own brain. What worked for Haig were things at the very non-clinical end of the mental health care spectrum; things such as reading books, yoga, travel, running, and just plain time.



One of my favourite quotes from Reasons to Stay Alive describes the intensity and all-consuming nature of depression that so many of us experience, and particularly feeling that there is no escape from it... "When you are in it, you are really in it. You can't step outside it without stepping outside of life, because it is life. It is your life. Every single thing you experience is filtered through it. Consequently, it magnifies everything."

Reasons to Stay Alive started so many important conversations about mental health, and became a Sunday Times best seller in the UK. Do yourself a favour and put this book at the top of your self-care reading list – you won't regret it.

Nicole, Peer Worker

LETSS REVIEW

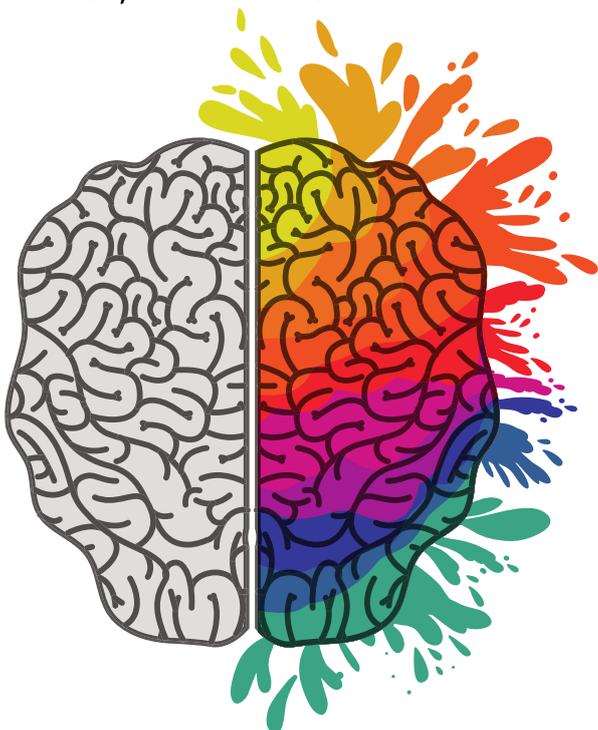
Welcome to LETSS review! Where our Peer Workers review books, apps, podcasts and more!

The Body Keeps The Score - Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma - by Bessel Van Der Kolk

Several times when reading this book I thought "YES! That's SO true!"

A very validating and informative book for anyone who has experienced trauma.

Amanda, Peer Worker



Re-awaken - Podcast

'Many of the things said in this podcast deeply resonated with me. Steph, Matt and Rory (the hosts/producers of the show) discuss and reflect on various aspects of mental health through a lens that is genuine, informed by experience and exploratory. (The 'just listening' and 'dissociachotic' episodes are couple of my personal favourites).'

-Olga, Peer Worker





Indoor Plant,
Bunnings \$9.99

Jigsaw puzzle 504
pieces, Big W
\$10

Chocolate, Haighs,
\$11.50

Water bottle, Kmart
\$9.00

Self-Care for under \$20

*The best things in life are free! But ... if you
do want to treat yourself why not get
something that also encourages you to look
after your wellbeing*

Bath soak, Priceline
\$6.00

Foot Cream. Body
Shop \$20.00
(100m)

Aroma Diffuser,
Kmart
\$20.00

Tea, T2
\$16.00

Yoga mat, Kmart
\$20.00

A5 Activity Book,
Typo, \$19.99



LETSS GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Sometimes it can be helpful to think about all of the things that we are grateful for in life, no matter how big or small! Practising gratitude is a great way to build resilience, improve wellbeing and health, feel positive, and think back on good experiences! We hope you find this gratitude journal a helpful tool in practising daily gratitude!

TUESDAY

Time _____ Weather _____

Date _____ Mood _____

What acts of kindness did I witness today?

What was a negative that I managed to turn into a positive today?

WEDNESDAY

Time _____ Weather _____

Date _____ Mood _____

What was one small victory I had today?

What strengths did I use of mine today?

FRIDAY

Time _____ Weather _____

Date _____ Mood _____

Who was kind to me today?

What made me feel hopeful today?

What did I enjoy listening to today?

SUNDAY

Time _____

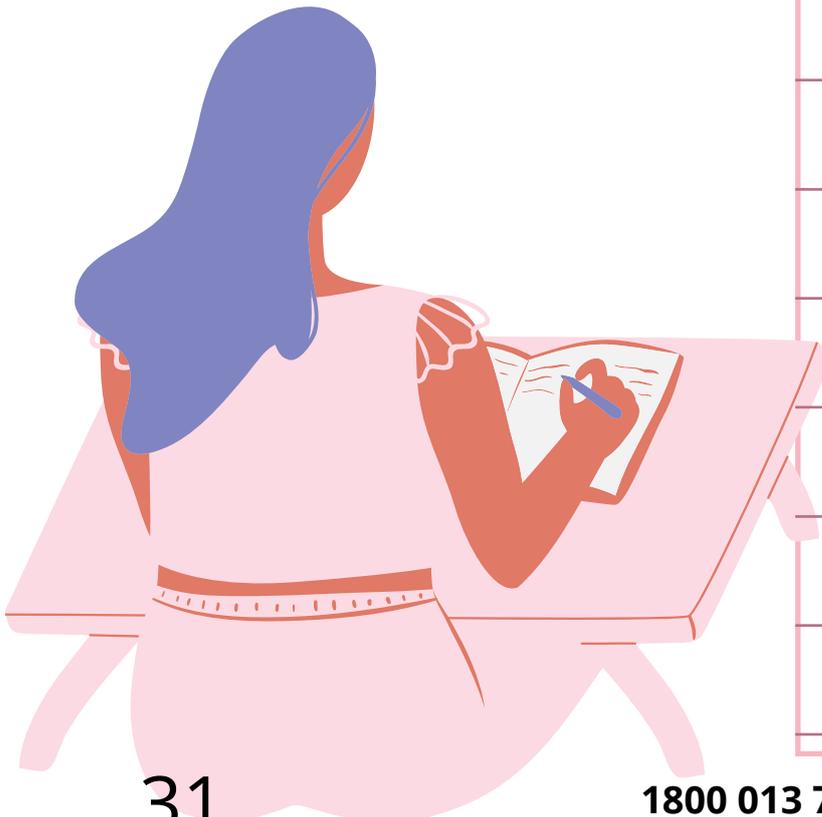
Weather _____

Date _____

Mood _____

What simple pleasure
did I enjoy today?

How did I show myself
compassion today?



LETSS get grounded...

a quick 'how to' guide on grounding exercises

Body awareness

Begin by taking a few deep breathes before focusing on the sensations in one body part at a time. Start with your feet and then slowly work your way up your legs, through to your arms and then to your fingertips.

The 5-4-3-2-1

Take note of each of your senses. Slowly pay attention to 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can feel, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste (you can do these in whatever order works best for you).

Deep breathing

Slowly bring your attention to your breathing. Take a deep breath in for 1-2-3-4. Take a deep breath out for 1-2-3-4. Repeat for as long as needed.



Visualizing a safe space

Visualize a space where you feel safe and comfortable (e.g. your favourite room, the beach, a rainforest). Take the time to notice this space in detail - focusing on what you can see, smell, hear, taste and touch.

2020 Reflections



A little while back our peer workers reflected on 2020. Now we'd like to invite you to do the same! Feel free to have a look at the questions below and use them as prompts.

1. What is an important lesson you learnt last year?

2. What new skills did you learn?

3. What new hobbies did you pick up?

**4. How would you describe this year
using 3-5 key words?**

5. What are you most proud of last year?

2020 Reflections from LETSS Peer Workers



What new skills did you learn?

To be with another's pain in a more deeper, compassionate and humane way.

- Kate

What are you most proud of last year?

Looking after my 2 new kitties!

- Amanda



What is an important lesson you learnt last year?

That it's okay to slow down and that you don't need to fill every minute of your life with activities or tasks. That it is OK to sit outside and just 'be'.

- Liz

How would you describe last year using 3-5 words?

Unpredictable, confusing and interesting.

- Ana

What is an important lesson you learnt this year?

Hmm that's a tricky one, there have been so many lessons! However, I guess something that had really been solidified for me last year is the importance of holding space for someone and just listening.

- Olga

What are you most proud of last year?

Advancing my studies and adapting to online learning.

- Liz

What new hobbies did you pick up?

Had no time to try new hobbies, but I did turn up my self-care, and explored nutrition/women's wellbeing and fitness online training during my year.

- Kate



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



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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