

HELP LINES AND WEBSITES

- » Somazone
- » Reach Out
- » Kids Helpline
- » Headspace
- » Lifeline
- » Livewire
- » Black Dog Institute
- » Youth Beyond Blue
- » Coming Out Australia
- » RUOK? Day

WHO CAN YOU TALK TO?

- » A counsellor or youth worker
- » Health professionals
- » Community group leader
- » A friend, family member or colleague
- » Teachers or work managers/supervisors
- » A member of your division or other St John member

PRETTY NORMAL

"I'm a university student, I have a job and have had for the past five years. I live out of home and have a dog, a cat and a fish. I volunteer my time with a number of organisations and come from a loving and supportive family.

However, I have experienced episodes of anxiety since I was 16 years old. At first I thought that I was being silly, I didn't know why I was having panic attacks, I couldn't explain to anyone why I was upset and no one could help me calm down.

Eventually someone recognised that I needed help. I was first a little sceptical but with a little patience persistence, plus assistance from some medication, I was able to regain control. I still have episodes of anxiety, but not as often or as intense and they are a lot more easily managed **now I have developed the skills to deal with them.**

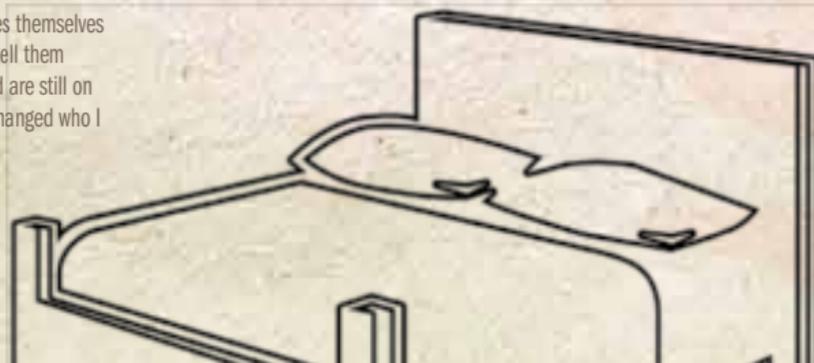
The hardest part now is not the episodes themselves but the way people view you when you tell them you've experienced a mental illness and are still on medication. The mental illness hasn't changed who I am or what I'm capable of.

—Anon"

CARING FOR YOU

If you feel like you may be experiencing any of the issues discussed in this resource there are a number of things you can do:

- » **Get help.** It doesn't matter how small the issue is, it will be easier to conquer with the help of someone else. Talk to friends, family, your doctor, call one of the helplines or get on to the webpage of the organisations listed in this booklet.
- » **Reduce stress.** Don't overload yourself with too many things. If there is a lot to do and you can't reduce your load, take some time out to do something you want to do or try some relaxation and deep breathing. For example, lie down somewhere comfortable with your eyes closed and breathe deeply as you slowly flex and relax each muscle from your toes to your head.



- » **Sleep.** Essential for good health and wellbeing but most people do not get enough! Aim for eight hours a night and spend at least half an hour before bed getting your body ready for sleep. Try some deep breathing!

- » **Stay active and watch what you eat.** Making sure your body has enough energy is important to make sure you get through the day. Eating proper foods help you sleep and mean you get less tired. Also just 30 minutes of exercise a day will help you sleep and reduce your risk of health issues.

- » **Decrease alcohol and drug use.** Although it may provide short-term relief, substance use can increase your likelihood of developing a mental illness, experiencing the worse side-effects of a mental illness, and create other life-long health and wellbeing problems.

“ONE MUST STILL HAVE CHAOS IN ONESELF TO BE ABLE TO GIVE BIRTH TO A DANCING STAR – FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE”

SO I'M OK, BUT WHAT ABOUT MY FRIEND?

Often we are scared to approach someone we think is experiencing problems because we don't know what to say or do. But really it's simple.

- » **Start a conversation.** Ask someone if they are ok and if they'd like to talk. Sometimes it may take a few questions and some time for someone to open up to you. It may be that they will not want to talk to you. If this is the case tell them about some of the organisations in this resource.

- » **Listen.** Most people just need someone to share their experience with, so just listen.

- » **Encourage** them to talk to their family or doctor. If you're worried that the person is more than normally stressed or upset, encourage them to talk to someone who can help. A health professional has the experience and resources to assist in these circumstances.

- » **Take care of yourself.** Supporting someone through a difficult time can also have an impact on you. Try not to make promises that you are not sure you can keep and make sure you look after yourself too.

“IF WE DID ALL THE THINGS WE ARE CAPABLE OF DOING WE WOULD LITERALLY ASTOUND OURSELVES. – THOMAS EDISON”

SUPPORT COULD SAVE A LIFE

"I was really close friends with my housemate: we both had boyfriends and we were really happy but things soon started going downhill for my friend. She started arguing a lot with her boyfriend and eventually they broke up. She took it really hard and before long I started noticing her trying to avoid any situation where we had to eat together. She started going for long runs late at night and early in the mornings, and before long she had lost a lot of weight. She would avoid eating and if I asked her to eat something she would immediately go and exercise to burn it off.

I was so worried. I contacted her family and together we spoke to her about her problem. At first she refused to admit anything was wrong and didn't want to talk about it. We supported her as much as we could and eventually she admitted to us that she needed some help. **We got her in contact with people that could help** and they diagnosed her with anorexia. It took a long time but she is now happy and healthy because of the support of her family, friends and health professionals that helped her overcome her eating disorder.

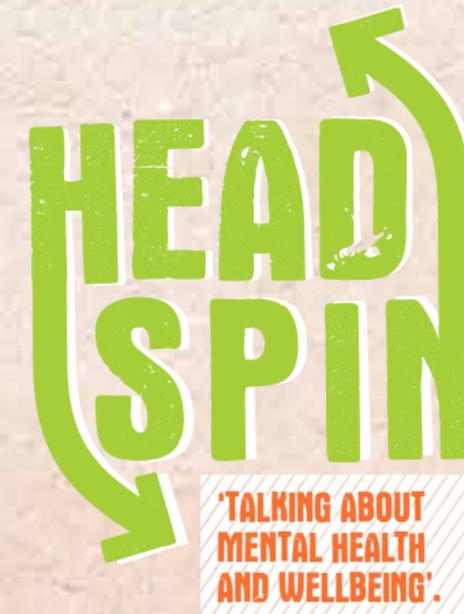
— Anon”

THE FINAL COUNT

- » One in five people in Australia are currently living with a mental health illness.
- » In 2007 almost half of all Australians have experienced a mental health illness at some point in their lifetime.
- » One in five children and adolescents are affected by mental health problems. Those aged 18–24 years have the highest prevalence of mental health problems of any age group.
- » Women are more likely to experience mental health issues; however, men are less likely to seek help.
- » People who are in a relationship, or have a close network of friends and family are less likely to experience mental health problems.
- » The World Health Organisation estimates that depression will be the number one cause of disability in both the developed and developing worlds by 2030.

So, start a conversation with your friends, work or school mates or someone at your division today! You never know, that one conversation could end up saving a life.

“LIFE MOVES PRETTY FAST IF YOU DON'T STOP AND LOOK ONCE IN A WHILE YOU COULD MISS IT. – FERRIS BUELLER”



WWW.STJOHN.ORG.AU

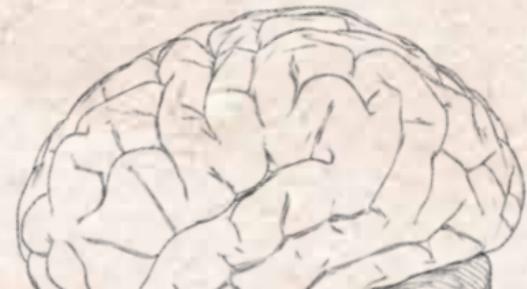
GREETINGS READER

The AYC believes that mental health and wellbeing is an important issue facing young Aussies today. Young people often have difficulty finding or asking for help when mental health problems arise. They may not know who to talk to or what services are available. Further young people may not be aware they are experiencing a mental health or wellbeing problem at all.

We hope this resource will assist you and others identify mental health and wellbeing issues that you or someone you know may be experiencing. We will address common misconceptions and answer questions you might have about mental health and wellbeing. We hope it will give you some guidance on where to find and how to provide support.

We hope you find it useful!

Australian Youth Council
St John Ambulance Australia



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING — THE LOWDOWN

Good mental health is a sense of confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing. If you have good mental health and wellbeing you are able to work, study, cope with everyday stresses, be involved in your community and live life in a satisfying way.¹

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY?

We all have times where we feel stressed, angry, sad, nervous or extremely happy, but they can become mental health problems when these feelings continue for a while or stop you from doing what you normally like or have to do. Where these things continue to occur for long periods of time they may become mental health problems.

“OUR GREATEST
GLORY IS NOT IN
NEVER FALLING BUT
IN RISING EVERY
TIME WE FALL. –
CONFUCIUS”

MENTAL HEALTH ILLNESSES

DEPRESSION: A person experiencing depression will have feelings of sadness for long periods of time, often making them unable to join in everyday life and enjoy things they once did. They may also feel anxious, irritable, be withdrawn, constantly tired and feel worthless.

ANXIETY DISORDERS: Anxiety disorders can often be misunderstood as stress. Stress is a normal feeling a person will have when under pressure or overwhelmed. However, after the pressure has subsided, so too should the stress. With anxiety disorders these feelings don't stop.

EATING DISORDERS: Body image is a big concern, especially for young people. Eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia occur when a person is so concerned with their body image that it affects their physical and mental health. Eating disorders can affect both male and females.



WHAT ELSE COULD BE AFFECTING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING?

SEXUAL ORIENTATION: Sexual orientation is who we are attracted to sexually and emotionally. Some people are attracted to the opposite sex, their own sex or both. In Australia same-sex relationships are legal, however as they have not always been legal or socially acceptable, there are still some people who discriminate based on people's sexual orientation.

BULLYING: All of the issues that have been discussed can lead to being bullied, as people don't understand or are afraid of your difference. Bullying includes being threatened or intimidated, physically hurt, being teased or online posting of messages or videos without permission. Bullying can happen anywhere, including on the internet e.g. social networking sites such as Facebook. It is never ok for you to bully or be bullied.

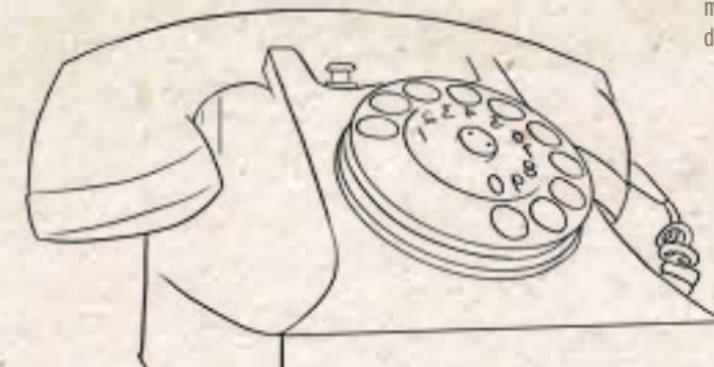
GENERAL HEALTH: We all know the saying 'a healthy body means a healthy mind' – and it's true. Diet, exercise and sleep patterns are strongly linked to mental health and wellbeing.² Living off fast food, sitting in front of the TV or computer and getting little sleep can leave you feeling mentally 'down'. It is important to listen to what your body is telling you and act on it.

[open quote]If you are patient in one moment of anger you will avoid one hundred days of sorrow –

HELP IS ONLY A PHONE CALL AWAY

“It all started when I was 13, when I moved interstate. I left all my closest friends behind and started feeling really lonely. I thought it would get better, but I only started feeling worse – I didn't want to leave my bed, I hated school and I never wanted to speak to anyone. It kept building up until I felt I couldn't deal with life anymore and was considering suicide. It was then that I called one of my old friends and told her about how I was feeling. She was shocked and talked to my mum who took me straight to the GP. It has been a year now since I was diagnosed with depression, and although life isn't perfect every day, I feel things are getting better. **Talking to someone about how I was feeling was the best thing I ever did.**

– Anon.”



BUSTED

MYTH: People who experience mental health issues are weak and should just get over it.

FACT: Mental illness is not a result of personal weakness. It is caused by social, environmental, biological and genetic factors. Anyone can develop a mental illness or have mental health problems.

MYTH: People with a mental illness are violent.

FACT: People with a mental illness are not any more violent than the rest of our population. In fact, they are more likely to harm themselves or let themselves be harmed.

MYTH: People who self-harm are just attention seekers.

FACT: Self-harm is not about attention seeking. In fact most people who self-harm go to extreme lengths to deflect any attention away from themselves.

MYTH: Mental illnesses are incurable and lifelong.

FACT: When treated appropriately and early, many people recover fully and have no further mental health issues. For some, mental health issues may reoccur throughout their lives and require on-going treatment (like physical illnesses such as diabetes). However, in most cases people live full and productive lives with recovery based on wellness.

MYTH: Stigma is the biggest problem for people with mental illness.

FACT: Yes! People who experience a mental illness or mental health problem already feel isolated. Further isolating them or discriminating against them with negative attitudes like the myths above does not support their recovery.

“ LIFE IS NOT ABOUT
WAITING FOR THE
STORMS TO PASS IT S
ABOUT LEARNING HOW
TO DANCE IN THE RAIN.
– VIVIAN GREEN “

JUST ONE CONVERSATION

“ I was in year 10 when I started noticing that something was happening to my best friend. First she stopped playing netball, which was strange because she loved it. I watched as my fun-loving friend become more and more withdrawn. One day I decided to talk to her about it and she just broke down on my shoulder and told me how she felt. **The most important thing was that I listened and was there for her.** Now all our friends know that she has depression, and it makes no difference, in fact we're even closer to each other because of the experience.

– Sarah “

