Keeping Mentally Healthy

When we think about mental health, we often think of words and images associated with mental 'ill' health. Mentally Healthy WA aims to re-frame this perception to something more positive: we can all do things to strengthen and promote our own mental wellbeing and that of others. It's as easy as A-B-C: Act-Belong-Commit.

Mental health and mental illness - the facts

Mental health is a state of wellbeing, in the same way that physical health is not merely the absence of disease.[1] A person with good mental health is able to cope with the normal stresses of life, can maintain healthy relationships and is able to contribute to the community, professionally and personally[1]. Unfortunately not all of us experience good mental health all of the time.

Almost one in five Australians will experience a mental health problem each year.[2] The most common forms of mental illness are depression and anxiety.

Mental health problems can lead to relationship difficulties, financial hardship and troubles at work, and can increase the risk of physical health problems such as heart disease. Alarmingly, mental health problems are on the rise in Australia and worldwide. This increase will have devastating effects on individuals, families and the wider community. Clearly preventative actions are required to protect and promote mental health to reduce the ever increasing burden on society and improve the quality of life of individuals.

What does it mean to be mentally healthy?

It means that most of the time you feel good about yourself, good about what you do and good about others. You enjoy the simple things in life, feel fairly optimistic about the future and are interested in what's going on in the world.

Being mentally healthy also means you are able to cope with life's stressors. A mentally healthy person will bounce back from hard times and flourish in the good times. Mentally healthy people tend to be more active physically, socially and mentally.[3] They have hobbies, good social networks and have meaning and purpose in their professional and personal pursuits.

How can I become more mentally healthy?

Keeping mentally healthy is just as important as staying physically healthy and it's as easy as A-B-C: Act-Belong-Commit

act

Take a walk, read a book, do a crossword puzzle, dance, say g'day. Being active physically, socially and mentally helps us cope with stresses, build friendships and lift spirits. Make a list of things you enjoy and spend more time doing them!

belong

Join a book club, a sporting team, a walking group or a cooking class. Be more involved in community organisations and attend community events. Hang out with people who share your values and interests. Belonging helps build friendships, creates opportunities for meaningful participation, strengthens communities and it simply feels good!

commit

Make that extra 'commitment' to a hobby or a good cause. Help out a neighbour or volunteer for a good cause, be a coach or a mentor. Support your community clubs and groups. Try something challenging– learn a new skill. These activities give meaning to life.

Being active, having a sense of belonging and having a purpose in life all contribute to happiness and good mental health. Act-Belong-Commit.

How can I get involved?

• Contact your local council and speak to a Community Development Officer.

• Surf the web. Most local governments have a community directory on their website.

• Ask your friends, neighbours and colleagues about groups they are involved in.

• Scan your local newspaper; community newspapers contain a wealth of information on local activities and events.

• Visit actbelongcommit.org.au to find activities in your area, or call the Perth office (08) 9266 4648 to find out if there is an Act-Belong-Commit project officer in your area.

If you are experiencing a mental health problem, feeling suicidal or are concerned about someone, see your GP or contact one of the organisations below:

Crisis Care: (08) 9223 1111 or Freecall: 1800 199 008 Lifeline: 13 11 14 (AUS)
The Samaritans: (08) 9381 5555 or Freecall: 1800 198 313 Translating and Interpreting Service: 13 14 50 (AUS)
Kids Help Line: 1800 55 1800 (AUS)
Mental Health Emergency Response Line: 1300 555 788 (Rural WA) 1800 676 822

"Keeping mentally healthy is as important as staying physically healthy"

1 World Health Organisation. 2010. Mental health: strengthening our response. Geneva. (fact sheet no. 220)

2 Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2007. Mental Health and Wellbeing: Profile of Adults, Australia. 1007. Cat No. 4326.0 ABS Canberra.

3 Donovan, R., Henley, N., Jalleh, G., Silburn, S., Zubrick, S. & Williams, A. (2005a, submitted) People's beliefs about factors contributing to mental health: implications for mental health promotion.

actbelongcommit.org.au

Government of **Western Australia**
Mental Health Commission

Curtin University

healthway