



POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

What is Positive Mental Health?

Having positive mental health is broadly experiencing life in a positive and meaningful way. It enables us to think good thoughts about ourselves and the people around us, connect with our communities, develop meaningful social, workplace and school relationships and be generally satisfied with life. It doesn't mean we avoid feeling sad or negative emotions – but with positive mental health we are able to be more resilient and 'bounce back' easier when facing challenging experiences.

Our mental wellbeing isn't always in a fixed place, and can move back and forth along the mental health continuum at different times during our lives.



At the **green** end of the continuum, people are well; showing resilience and high levels of wellbeing. Moving into the **yellow** area, people may start to have difficulty coping. In the **orange** area, people have more difficulty coping and symptoms may increase in severity and frequency. At the **red** end of the continuum, people are likely to be experiencing severe symptoms and may be at risk of self-harm or suicide. (*Heads Up, www.headsup.org.au*)

What are some signs someone's mental health could be improved?

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling anxious or worried | <input type="checkbox"/> Weight or appetite changes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates difficulty experiencing enjoyment in pleasurable activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse or engaging in destructive or high-risk behaviour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in behaviour or feelings | <input type="checkbox"/> Quiet or withdrawn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Problems with functioning in social, work, school situations | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling guilty or worthless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sleep problems | |

The next page includes strategies and supports to promote positive mental health

How can I promote Positive Mental Health?

Get enough sleep - Sleeping well is good for your brain and body, and helps you feel energised, stay focused and protect your mental health.

Eat well - Eating well can improve your mood, energy levels and general health and wellbeing. Fill up on nutritious food (like veggies, fruit and whole grains) and drink plenty of water to give your body and brain all the power it needs to function well.

Get in to life - Keep doing the stuff you love to do and the things that are important to you. It can help keep the fun in your life, give you a sense of accomplishment and purpose, boost your confidence and help to connect with others.

Stay active - Staying active can help you to sleep better, manage stress and boost your mood. Make time to take a break from study or work or hanging out, whether it be going to the gym, kicking a ball around with a mate or just going for a walk. Whatever it is, start small, and make sure it's something you enjoy.

Connect - Spending time with family, friends (including pets) and people in your community can help strengthen your mental health and wellbeing. You can try things like volunteer work, hobbies, clubs or committees or sports.



Just like physical fitness, mental fitness takes regular effort, but sometimes life can get in the way of improving your mental health. Here are some important things to know:

Learn new ways to handle tough times - Taking time to think about how you're handling tough times is really important. Sometimes the things we do naturally can help, and other times they don't. Increase your options for handling tough times as they'll come in handy now and into the future. Some options to consider include:

- using art, music or journaling to express yourself
- spending time in nature or practicing mindfulness activities
- setting some small goals, and getting help seeing them through
- talking kindly to yourself
- searching for websites and free apps that can help.

Cut back on alcohol and other drugs - Cutting down on the amount of alcohol and other drugs that you take, or avoiding alcohol and other drugs altogether, will help you sleep better, feel better, and keep a healthy headspace.

(Headspace, www.headspace.org.au)

NEED SUPPORT? HERE ARE A LIST OF USEFUL SERVICES:

Remember to always phone 000 in an emergency

ONLINE/TELEPHONE SUPPORTS:

These services are useful if you need some immediate support

- **Eheadspace** - Online chat with a mental health clinician for young people aged 12-25 and their families. Visit www.headspace.org.au/eheadspace
- **Lifeline** - 24-hour crisis support and suicide preventions services. Call 13 11 14 or Text 0477 131 114
- **Suicide Call Back Service** - 24-hour support service for suicide-related issues. Phone 1300 659 467
- **Beyond Blue** - 24-hour telephone or online chat support and information service. They also have services for those needing an interpreter and the deaf community. Phone 1300 224 636 and online at www.beyondblue.org.au.
- **Butterfly Foundation** – Phone and online support and information from 8AM-Midnight for those who may be experiencing eating disorders. Phone 1800 33 4673 and online at www.butterfly.org.au.

COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES:

These supports may be in your community to support you to link with mental health practitioners

- **Mental Health Care Plan** – visit your GP to access a care plan to access specialised mental health practitioners in your community. See below information about accessing this plan.
- **Headspace** – Nationwide mental health service for young people aged 12-25. They have local community centres, telehealth supports and group counselling. www.headspace.org.au
- **Child and Mental Health services (CAMHS)** - A family-focused service that provides assessment and treatment for children aged 0-15 with complex mental health issues. Phone 1300 094 187 (24-hour phone service)
- **Orygen Specialist Program** – Providing early intervention to young people with severe and/or complex mental health conditions www.oyh.org.au

A **Mental Health Care Plan** can be a useful tool if you or someone you support is tracking towards the **orange** area on the mental health continuum. It is best to seek supports before reaching the **red** area, when crisis supports may be needed. It is always best to address potential mental health concerns early – focusing on taking preventative measures to avoid reaching points of crisis.

Visit your GP to discuss what you may be experiencing and whether a Mental Health Care Plan would be beneficial to assist you back to positive mental health. They may ask you to complete a questionnaire to decide what may be the best support for you.

A Mental Health Care Plan will provide you with up to 10 sessions with a mental health expert in a year. The cost of this will either be partly or fully covered through the Medicare rebate, depending on the cost of the healthcare practitioner. Your initial visit with the GP will provide you with 6 sessions in your plan, you then will need to return to your GP for a review for the additional 4 sessions.

It may take a number of weeks until a mental health expert has capacity to make the first appointment with you.

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