SUICIDE AND CRISIS SUPPORT

If you, or someone you care about is in crisis and you think immediate action is needed, call emergency services (triple zero – 000), contact your doctor or mental health crisis service, or go to your local hospital emergency department.

Thank you

We would like to thank the blueVoices members who have contributed quotes to this resource. blueVoices is beyondblue’s national reference group for people who have personal experience of anxiety and depression, or support someone who does.

For more information, or to register, visit www.beyondblue.org.au/bluevoices
Introduction

Anxiety and depression affect our entire community. Around 3 million people in Australia live with anxiety and/or depression every day, while family, friends and colleagues watch a person they care about go through this experience. Seeking support from a health professional is often an important step in the pathway to recovery, but just as important are the day-to-day lifestyle choices that we make.

This booklet is designed for people who have or are at risk of developing anxiety or depression. It provides useful tips on maintaining a healthy lifestyle to assist your recovery and reduce the risk of relapse. Everyone is different, so find what works for you. There’s a section at the back where you can plan your strategies to stay well – discussing these with your partner, family and/or friends is a good idea so that they can support you along the way.

For further information on anxiety and depression, visit www.beyondblue.org.au or call the beyondblue Support Service on 1300 22 4636. A list of useful resources is also provided at the end of the booklet.
Reducing stress

Stress is a common response to tough events or situations. Some stress is normal and stress itself is not anxiety or depression. However, severe and ongoing stress may be a risk factor if it persists.

You may be at risk if, for the majority of the last two weeks, you found it hard to relax, felt stressed or overwhelmed, and/or felt panicky or anxious. If this is the case, managing your stress levels should become a priority.
Ways to reduce stress

1. Postpone major life changes
Making major changes in your life can be stressful at any time. If you’re already feeling stressed or anxious, it might be best to avoid or delay significant events, such as moving house or changing jobs.

2. Resolve personal conflicts
Stress in personal relationships can be a major contributor to anxiety and depression. Learning how to communicate honestly with people and address problems or conflicts as they arise is important.

A counsellor or psychologist can help you find ways to work through your problems.

3. Do the things you enjoy
Take your mind off your worries by making sure you allow plenty of time for enjoyable activities, such as listening to music, reading, gardening, or spending time with family and friends. Try doing something creative or learning a new craft – a project, such as making a gift for a friend, can provide a goal to work towards and give you a great sense of achievement.

4. Control your work
Work plays a big role in our lives, but it’s important to have a sustainable work/life balance. If work is increasing your stress levels, avoid long hours and additional responsibilities, and learn to say ‘no’ more often.

5. Exercise regularly
Physical exercise can help relieve tension and relax your mind. Team sports can be a great way to socialise and connect with others while exercising. Try to do some physical exercise every day, even if it’s just going for a walk.

6. Get support
Simply talking to someone such as a friend, doctor or counsellor can help relieve stress. Don’t be afraid to ask for support at home, at work or in your other activities.

7. Remember to relax
Incorporating breathing and muscle relaxation exercises into your daily routine may be helpful. They can also be used as short-term coping strategies. Some people find meditation or yoga a good way to unwind.
How I stay well – Brian, 68

What is your strategy for staying well?

I work holistically on my health every day – physical exercise, brain training, mindfulness – to encourage my mind, body and spirit to be the best they can as I move into older age. I combine this with positivism – trying to find positives in every aspect of life. I add a large measure of community work, mainly in men’s and community health and wellbeing, with the excellent spin-off that I am constantly finding new and exciting information about how to stay well and how to share that information with others.

What are some of the things that you find have a negative impact on your mental health? How do you manage these?

Negative criticism by others which I perceive as unjust or unfair causes negative stress signals in my brain. This can trigger my fibromyalgia – leading to tight muscles and dysfunction in my back, neck and sometimes headaches. To counter this, I try and do my best to be objective and avoid criticism. I practise my physical, relaxation, brain and emotional exercises daily, and I go to a movie which has positive messages, is inspirational or is just plain fun – ‘diversional therapy’ if you like.

If you could give one piece of advice to someone experiencing anxiety or depression, what would it be?

It is essential to have someone on your health team whom you know and trust and who gets to know you in more depth. Depression and anxiety are deeply personal issues and you probably won’t feel confident talking to a stranger in a 24-hour medical clinic about them, nor will that doctor have much hope of picking up cues and talking to you about them. Find a GP whom you can relate to and feel comfortable with, and stick with them.
Potential stress triggers

**Family or relationship breakdowns**

Relationship problems with family or friends can cause you to worry or stress. It is important to address these issues quickly, as well as develop coping strategies for ongoing conflicts. Talk to a professional, such as specialist counsellors/psychologists and organisations (such as Family Relationships Online and Relationships Australia).

Further information and national health professional directories are available from [www.beyondblue.org.au/find-a-professional](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/find-a-professional).

**Redundancy or financial problems**

Losing your job or getting into financial difficulty, like being late with mortgage or credit card repayments, are common triggers for anxiety and depression. It’s important to find out what your options are. Useful resources include job websites (Seek, MyCareer and Australian JobSearch), support services (Centrelink) and free financial counsellors (such as Financial Counselling Australia).

For more information, see beyondblue’s [Taking care of yourself after retrenchment or financial loss](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/resources) booklet at [www.beyondblue.org.au/resources](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/resources).

**Health concerns for yourself or a loved one**

Being diagnosed with a serious illness can be extremely distressing. It is important that you immediately discuss your feelings with someone you trust (such as your GP or a close friend). Counselling is often beneficial in these situations. Bottling up your emotions will only make you feel worse and can lead to anxiety and depression. For more information see beyondblue’s [Coping with a serious health event](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/resources) brochure at [www.beyondblue.org.au/resources](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/resources).

**Caring for a newborn baby**

Life can change dramatically when you bring home a newborn baby. While it is normal for new mothers and fathers to experience a range of emotions, persistent feelings of sadness and an inability to cope may be signs of postnatal depression. Contact your GP, beyondblue or PANDA for more information.

You can also download beyondblue’s [A guide to emotional health and wellbeing during pregnancy and early parenthood](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/resources) and the [Dad’s handbook](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/resources) at [www.beyondblue.org.au/resources](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/resources).

**Traumatic events, including physical or emotional abuse**

These can be particularly difficult situations to deal with – victims may have feelings of guilt, shame and anger, and concerns about social stigma. Support from a specialist counsellor or psychologist is essential to address or prevent long-term mental health conditions, including anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Your GP can help you access the right services.
Sleeping well

Getting a good night’s sleep is crucial for your mental and physical wellbeing. There are two types of sleep – ‘deep sleep’ and ‘dream sleep’. Good quality sleep is about the amount of ‘deep sleep’ a person gets, not the length of sleep.

Most ‘deep sleep’ occurs during the first five hours after falling asleep.

Sleep can be disrupted for a number of reasons, such as illness, pain, anxiety or depression.

How disrupted sleep affects your wellbeing

Examples of disrupted sleep patterns
• difficulty in getting to sleep
• poor-quality sleep
• less sleep
• frequently waking during the night
• waking very early in the morning and being unable to get back to sleep.

Consequences of inadequate deep sleep
• tiredness during the day
• poor concentration
• irritability
• aches and pains in muscles and bones
• weakened immune system
• longer periods of depression.
Tips for improving your sleep

1. When you wake in the morning
   - get out of bed immediately
   - get up at approximately the same time every day
   - get some fresh air by going outside
   - do some physical activity.

2. During the day
   - don’t nap during the day
   - try to be physically active
   - limit your caffeine intake and avoid caffeine after 4pm
   - address any stressful issues during the day.

3. Before going to bed
   - avoid going to bed too early as it isn’t the right time for ‘deep sleep’
   - avoid smoking, vigorous exercise and drinking alcohol
   - don’t go to bed hungry or with a full bladder
   - allow yourself time to wind down
   - avoid using electronic devices in your bedroom or within 30 minutes of your bedtime
   - avoid sleeping pills where possible.

4. While you sleep
   - keep your bedroom quiet, dark, well ventilated and cool
   - avoid too many blankets and electric blankets – if you’re too hot, you won’t go into a deep sleep.

Overcoming long-term sleeping problems

Sleeping problems may last for weeks, months or even years in some people. This can lead to anxiety about getting to sleep, which can make the problem worse. Try the following routine if you have difficulty falling sleep.

1. If you can’t fall asleep after 30 minutes, get up.

2. Distract yourself from your worries or restlessness by playing cards, knitting or taking a warm bath. If your mind is very active or you can’t stop worrying, try something that requires more concentration, such as a crossword puzzle or reading. You could also try some relaxation or breathing techniques.

3. Go back to bed when you feel more relaxed and sleepy. If you’re still awake after 30 minutes, get up again. Repeat the process until you fall asleep shortly after returning to bed.

If you regularly have trouble sleeping, speak to your doctor.

“I disclosed that I was having problems coping with work tasks and asked for changes to help me stay at work, rather than taking time off.”

– Sonia, 54
How I stay well – Rita, 39

What is your strategy for staying well?
My strategy and philosophy is ‘healthy body, healthy mind’. I keep a checklist as a guide to help me stay on top of the things which can potentially have an impact on my mental health. All of the points in my checklist work together in a holistic ‘mind-body’ approach and work to help me stay well – this includes exercise, eating and sleeping properly, limiting alcohol, and practising mindfulness techniques and meditation. I push myself to get out of my comfort zone. I am proactive and I set challenges for myself in order to face and work through my fears and anxiety.

If you could give one piece of advice to someone experiencing anxiety or depression, what would it be?
Don’t think anxiety will go away like I did by covering it up. It won’t. It just gets worse. Get help and you’ll get on top of it in no time and you will thrive.

You are not alone. Don’t be scared – you will be ok. Don’t hide it. Don’t be ashamed. Reach out and get help. The sooner you get help, the sooner you’ll feel better. There is great professional help out there and you will feel better and you can live a happy life. There is no shame in being unwell – mental or physical, there is no difference.
Keeping active

Regular physical activity is a good way to help prevent or manage mild anxiety and depression. Keeping active can help you stay physically fit and mentally healthy.

Research shows that keeping active can:
• help lift mood through improved fitness and the release of natural chemicals in the brain
• help improve sleeping patterns
• increase energy levels
• help block negative thoughts and/or distract people from daily worries
• help people feel less alone if they exercise with others.

“Exercise helped me a lot as it distracted me from my thoughts and made me feel better about myself. Starting something I had previously enjoyed – playing hockey – also helped as it made me feel more normal and forced me to socialise.”

– Mary, 25
Physical activity increases your wellbeing. The current recommendation is at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, and preferably all, days of the week.\(^2\) However, people with anxiety or depression may find it difficult to get started or get motivated, or continue to exercise on a long-term basis.

"I built my confidence by step-by-step expanding my activities, starting small and expanding from there. Like for example going back outside – first with a friend in the garden, later alone in the garden, to the grocery store with a friend, to the grocery store alone etc.”

– Hanneke, 36

Tips to get started

1. **Start simple**
   Increase your activity levels gradually to improve your self-confidence and build motivation for more energetic activities. Start with simple activities such as shopping, driving, gardening or small household tasks.

2. **Do what is enjoyable**
   People with anxiety and/or depression often lose interest and pleasure in doing things they once enjoyed. Plan activities with friends or family that are enjoyable, interesting, relaxing or satisfying – with time these activities will become enjoyable again.

3. **Include other people**
   People with anxiety and/or depression often withdraw from others, but continuing to socialise is an important part of recovery. Staying connected with friends and family helps increase wellbeing, confidence and provides opportunities to socialise.

4. **Make a plan**
   Planning a routine can help people become more active – make sure some form of exercise is included each day. Try to stick to the plan as closely as possible, but be flexible.

"I worked at getting well every day. It might have been just a minor thing but I was proud of myself for achieving even that and was not so hard on myself. I learnt to laugh, become the person I used to be – it took a while and there are still moments, but I know what to watch for and learn to nip it in the bud before it takes over.”

– Christina, 57
Examples of activities to include in your routine

**Keep fit**
- Go for a walk or bike ride
- Do some gardening
- Go bush walking
- Go swimming
- Go to the gym

**Socialise**
- Invite a friend over
- Visit a neighbour
- Phone a friend for a chat
- Take your children/pets to the playground/park

**Pamper yourself**
- Have a bubble bath
- Buy some flowers
- Lie on the beach and read a book
- Get a massage

**Around the house**
- Cook something new
- Listen to music/the radio
- Play in the backyard with your children or pets
- Do some gardening

**Entertain yourself**
- Read a book or magazine
- Write a letter/email
- Play a solo card game
- Do a crossword/Sudoku

**Away from home**
- Visit a friend
- Join a club or group
- Go to a market
- Visit a museum/art gallery/library
- Go to a movie

Example of an activity plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Morning</th>
<th>Afternoon</th>
<th>Evening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Borrow a book from the library</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Movie with a friend</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Take the kids/pets to the playground</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yoga</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>30-minute walk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dinner with a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Tennis with the family or a friend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If an activity seems overwhelming, try and break it down into manageable chunks. For example, if you want to play tennis with a friend, you might need to find and book a court, borrow or buy a racquet, and get some comfortable clothes.

**Useful resources when developing an activity plan**

- **General practitioners (GPs)** can provide advice and information about anxiety, depression and exercise, and provide referrals to exercise physiologists.

- **Exercise physiologists** are qualified health professionals who provide advice about health, fitness and exercise. People with ongoing health conditions can access their services at subsidised rates through Medicare.

- **Many councils** offer free or subsidised sport and recreation facilities, such as swimming pools, walking circuits, tennis courts and skating ramps. Check with your local council to see what is available in your area.

- **Gymnasiums and sports clubs** often have a range of classes, such as aerobics and Pilates; equipment such as rowing and walking machines; and some may have swimming pools. Most gyms have instructors who can develop personal fitness plans and help keep you motivated.

- **Community centres or neighbourhood houses** host a variety of groups with affordable membership fees. These may include aerobics, yoga, tai chi, dancing and walking groups. You can find these groups through your local council.

> “While I’m still struggling I found doing a part time course at TAFE to be a useful excuse and motivator to get me out of the house and meet new people. I also felt a boost to the system every time I successfully completed a subject.”

— Adam, 42
How I stay well – Sue, 41

What is your strategy for staying well?
Initially it was taking small steps to improve my physical health and to deal with day-to-day issues around lack of sleep and low self-esteem. I plan my week ahead to ensure that I have scheduled exercise and time for relaxation in among the daily routine. My long-term plan is to ensure that I have ongoing support from my family, friends and professionals. Allowing people to understand my mental health issues and to develop a better understanding of the triggers for setbacks has resulted in a greater network of supporters who really look out for me and know the warning signs. Depression and anxiety will be a health issue for me to monitor forever, however it will no longer restrict my life or what I can achieve.

What are some of the things that you find have a negative impact on your mental health? How do you manage these?
The most unhelpful behaviour for me was bottling up my concerns and negative thoughts. By committing to regular counselling sessions with my psychologist, I have learnt strategies to deal with personal issues and have a much better understanding of myself and how to get the most out of my relationships.

If you could give one piece of advice to someone experiencing anxiety or depression, what would it be?
It’s a cliché but talking to a professional or a supportive friend or family member is the most important step. Often we have thoughts or worries that we think other people will dismiss or not understand but by talking about our problems or thoughts, it’s amazing how quickly you realise that you are not the only one. Sharing problems and concerns is vital.
Eating well

Food plays a vital role in maintaining physical and mental health.

Eating a nourishing, balanced diet helps to give people an overall sense of wellbeing.

Supplements

1. General vitamin/mineral supplements
Supplements are only of value if your diet is lacking something. Vitamins such as A, D and E are not recommended in high dosages. It’s best to speak to your GP or another health professional about adding extra supplements to your diet.

2. Omega-3 fatty acids
These are found in seafood (tuna, mackerel, perch, sardines and herring) and can work in a similar way to antidepressant medication. However, they can also cause side-effects, including blood-clotting disorders, and should only be taken under medical supervision by someone who is experienced in their use.
How I stay well – Heather, 55

What is your strategy for staying well?
I have a wellness relapse and prevention plan that I’ve shared with family members and they encourage me to follow it if things start to slip. I have a good GP who ensures I take care of my physical health as well. As well as staying optimistic and believing in myself, I try and remember how far I have come and not beat myself up over little setbacks. I surround myself with people who care about me and are positive.

If you could give one piece of advice to someone experiencing anxiety or depression, what would it be?
Believe in yourself. There is a great deal of help available but it is important that you want to challenge your anxiety for your recovery to begin. Surround yourself with positive people and do not be afraid to ask for help.

Australian Dietary Guidelines
- Eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits.
- Eat plenty of cereals, preferably wholegrain, such as breads, rice, pasta and noodles.
- Include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives.
- Include milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives (preferably low-fat varieties).
- Drink plenty of water.
- Limit intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol.

Nutritional challenges
People with anxiety or depression can find it challenging to eat properly.
This might be from a lack of motivation, loss of appetite or comfort eating, using drugs or alcohol as a coping strategy, irregular meals, feelings of isolation, or financial insecurity.

1. Lack of energy/motivation
Keep things as simple as possible and ask for support from friends or family if necessary. Some tips are to:
- include food-related activities, such as grocery shopping, cooking and eating, in your daily timetable
- learn to prepare simple, quick, healthy meals and use frozen pre-cut vegetables to save time
- make use of online shopping and home-delivered groceries
- use times when you are feeling well to cook large quantities of food to freeze
• use frozen or home-delivered meals (such as Meals on Wheels or meals from commercial providers), which are better than no meals at all.

2. Weight loss
Loss of appetite is common in people with anxiety or depression. If you are underweight, snack regularly on nutritious, energy-dense foods (such as cheese and biscuits or dried fruit and nuts) and try exercising to stimulate your appetite. Meal replacement supplements may be required for some people – but seek advice from a doctor, dietitian or pharmacist first.

3. Weight gain
Weight gain can occur in people with anxiety or depression if they are not physically active, are comfort eating and/or eating unhealthy foods. Some antidepressant medications, particularly mirtazapine, tricyclic antidepressants and lithium (a mood stabiliser), can cause weight gain.

Regular exercise and healthy eating can help minimise weight gain. Maintaining your weight may be more achievable than weight loss. Consult your doctor or dietitian for specific advice. Referral to a psychologist may be required to address the causes of comfort eating or binge eating.

4. Postnatal depression and breastfeeding
Women who are breastfeeding need to eat a healthy diet and drink more water. If you are experiencing postnatal anxiety or depression, you might lose your appetite and feel additionally tired, making it more difficult to eat properly and drink enough water. This can lead to a drop in your milk supply.

If you are breastfeeding:
• keep healthy snacks handy like cheese and crackers, fresh fruit or raw vegetables and dip
• ask a friend or family member to help you with the preparation of healthy meals you can freeze such as soups and casseroles
• avoid dieting during the first few months after birth as your body needs extra energy to produce milk
• get your iron levels checked.
5. Eating disorders

Anxiety and depression are common for people with eating disorders. This is especially the case for anorexia nervosa because the physiological effects of semi-starvation and extremely low body weight can affect your mental health. People with an eating disorder whose weight is ‘normal’ (such as those with bulimia nervosa) are still at risk of anxiety and/or depression. This can be a consequence of fasting, purging and chaotic eating. Sometimes anxiety or depression can lead to an eating disorder.

People with eating disorders should seek support from a team of health professionals with medical, psychological and nutritional expertise. Recovery from an eating disorder, and any associated anxiety or depression, involves improving your diet, adopting regular eating patterns and returning to a healthy weight. Addressing and resolving any personal, family and social issues is also important.

“Reading is a great way to immerse yourself in another world, and develop as a person. Also, catching up with family and close friends regularly is great – surround yourself with down-to-earth and positive people.”

– Steph, 21

For more information, see beyondblue fact sheet Eating disorders, anxiety and depression from www.beyondblue.org.au/resources
Reducing use of alcohol and other drugs

People may use alcohol, cigarettes, cannabis and other drugs, such as amphetamines and ecstasy, as a coping strategy. However, these are addictive substances that can themselves cause anxiety and/or depression. Some of these substances may put you at risk of suicide.

Most illegal drugs and alcohol also interfere with the effectiveness of prescribed antidepressant medications. Tell your doctor if you’ve been taking drugs or drinking large amounts of alcohol so he or she can help you access the appropriate treatment.

Quitting smoking is one of the most important things you can do to improve your health and is likely to improve your mental wellbeing. This can be more challenging for people with active anxiety or depression. However, with the right support, you have a good chance of quitting successfully. Seek advice from your GP or an organisation such as Quitline.

Reducing your alcohol and drug use

Record your alcohol and/or drug use in a diary – being aware of your pattern of use is helpful when you try to reduce your intake.
1. **Stop completely**
This is important when:

- your anxiety or depression is severe
- you have suicidal thoughts
- you have experienced physical health problems as a result of your drinking or drug use
- you have become dependent on alcohol or another drug
- your life and happiness are affected
- you are taking antidepressants.

2. **Moderate or control your use**
It can be very hard to stop drinking or taking drugs completely. Ask your family and friends for support. Your doctor can also provide more structured advice about how to change your habits. If necessary, he or she may prescribe medication to help you stop drinking alcohol.

If you have developed drinking or drug problems because of your anxiety or depression, you will need to address both issues in order to make a full recovery.

At the very least, it is important to control or moderate your drinking or drug taking. Start by setting your own personal goals on how you plan to cut back. For example:

- How many alcohol- or drug-free days you will have each week (aim for at least two alcohol-free days each week and as many drug-free days as possible).
- How many standard drinks you will limit yourself to on any one drinking day (Australian guidelines recommend a maximum of two standard drinks per day²).

- Your maximum number of standard drinks per week.

Other strategies to help stop or reduce your alcohol/drug intake:

- Don’t drink or take drugs when you are feeling down or anxious.
- Don’t keep alcohol or drugs in the house.
- Avoid situations where you know you will drink excessively or take drugs.
- Don’t drink alone, and limit drinking to meal times.
- Consume drinks with low alcohol content, or alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks.
- Have alcohol-free weekends and weeks, and don’t drink on weekdays.
- Drink slowly – limit yourself to one drink per hour.
- Consider counselling or a rehabilitation facility if necessary.

For more information, see beyondblue web page **Drugs, alcohol and mental health** and **Depression and quitting smoking: An information booklet from** www.beyondblue.org.au/resources.

“**A big thing for me was understanding that depression is a medical condition and not an embarrassment. Sharing with others that you have suffered from depression is really important, and finding something positive in all you do and understand how fortunate you are actually are.”**

– Mark, 60
Staying well

Developing a plan to help you manage your anxiety or depression is an important part of your recovery and ability to stay well.

A ‘stay well’ plan will help you identify what your personal triggers are and the strategies that help you cope best, based on your own experiences. It will also teach you to recognise early warning signs of a potential relapse, allowing you to implement coping mechanisms as quickly as possible. The earlier you intervene, the better your chances of recovery.

You may find it useful to get input from people you trust, such as a GP, counsellor, family or friends. It’s also important to understand that your ‘stay well’ plan is a work in progress. This means that you need to review it regularly and make adjustments as necessary. For example, if you find that a particular coping strategy no longer works for you, find another one to replace it.
Example of a ‘stay well’ plan

| Setting goals/building confidence | • Talk to my GP about finding a counsellor.  
|  | • Take one day at a time.  
|  | • Exercise at least two times this week.  |
| My triggers and ideal response | • Financial concerns: speak to a financial counsellor.  
|  | • Feeling overwhelmed: have one day a week to relax at my own leisure and stop taking on too many projects at work.  |
| Things I like to do to keep myself well | • Catch up with family/friends.  
|  | • Take the dog for a walk.  
|  | • Do some gardening.  |
| Things that I must do to keep myself well | • Establish a regular sleep routine.  
|  | • Open up to my partner/family/friends about how I am feeling.  
|  | • Eat properly.  |
| Things I notice about myself when I am becoming unwell | • I want to sleep all the time.  
|  | • I fight with my partner/family/friends constantly.  
|  | • I get worked up over small things.  |
| Things others notice about me when I am becoming unwell | • I stop socialising.  
|  | • I am more irritable.  |

Getting and giving support

1. Seeking support from family and friends
Share your strategies for staying well with those close to you, so that they can help you stick to them. Talk about how you’re feeling – don’t keep things bottled up. Discuss potential triggers with your family and friends so that they can support you in avoiding or managing difficult situations. You may identify with some of the common triggers listed throughout this booklet.

It’s also important to recognise the early warning signs if you’re becoming unwell and when you should speak to your doctor. Your friends and family can help by looking out for changes in your thoughts and behaviour that you may not notice yourself.

2. Supporting someone to stay well
It’s common for people who know someone with anxiety or depression to worry about doing or saying the right thing. They may also experience their own feelings of anger, guilt or fear.
Overcoming these feelings and understanding how they can help to provide a safe and supportive environment for their loved one is important.

The role of a support person may include listening (without judging), identifying early warning signs, helping to make and sometimes attend medical appointments, encouraging healthy lifestyle habits and social contact, and encouraging the use of activity and ‘stay well’ plans.

The journey to wellness
With the right treatment and support, most people with anxiety and depression will recover. Many people find that their condition doesn’t disappear altogether, but that they are able to manage it.

Remember that getting well can be a process, so be patient with yourself – use setbacks as learning experiences to help improve your ‘stay well’ plan.

By being proactive and using some of the techniques outlined in this booklet, you are taking control of your condition and your life. Have confidence in yourself, but don’t be afraid to ask for support if you need it.

“What helped me was the gradual realisation that anxiety and depression are illnesses that are able to be managed, allowing me to live a normal, happy and successful life.”

– Bruce, 62
Useful resources

General

**beyondblue**
www.beyondblue.org.au
📞 1300 22 4636
💌 Email or 📩 chat to us online at www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

Learn more about anxiety, depression and suicide prevention, or talk through your concerns with our Support Service.

**Youthbeyondblue**
www.youthbeyondblue.com
*beyondblue’s* website for young people – information on depression, anxiety and suicide prevention, and how to help a friend.

Relationships

**Relationships Australia**
www.relationships.org.au
📞 1300 364 277
Relationship support for individuals, families and communities.

**Family Relationships Online**
www.familyrelationships.gov.au
📞 1800 05 03 21
Government support services for families with relationship issues.

Finance

**Financial Counselling Australia**
www.financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au
📞 1800 00 70 07
Find a free, independent financial counsellor near you.

**Centrelink and Medicare**
www.humanservices.gov.au
Government organisations delivering a range of payments and services.

Exercise

**Exercise and Sports Science Australia (ESSA)**
www.essa.org.au
Find an accredited exercise physiologist near you.

**Life. Be in it.**
www.lifebeinit.org
Links to ‘Life. Be in it.’ programs across Australia.
Nutrition

Dietitians Association of Australia
www.daa.asn.au
Find an accredited dietitian near you.

Meals on Wheels
www.mealsonwheels.org.au
Low-cost, home-delivered meals for those unable to cook or shop for themselves.

Pregnancy and early parenthood

Healthy Families
www.healthyfamilies.org.au
Information for new and expectant parents, covering everything from bonding with your baby to spotting the signs of anxiety and depression.

Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia (PANDA)
www.panda.org.au
1300 72 63 06
Information and support for anyone concerned about how they, or someone they know, are coping during pregnancy or after having a baby.

Smoking

Quitline
www.quitnow.gov.au
13 78 48
Information about how smoking harms your health, and support for those wanting to quit.

Alcohol and drugs

National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre
www.ncpic.org.au
1800 30 40 50
Evidence-based information about the health implications of using cannabis and related substances.

Australian Drug Foundation
www.druginfo.adf.org.au
1300 85 85 84
Information about alcohol and other drugs, and drug prevention

Hello Sunday Morning
www.hellosundaymorning.org
Encourages people to take a short break from alcohol and share their story with others.

References

Where to find more information

**beyondblue**
www.beyondblue.org.au
Learn more about anxiety, depression and suicide prevention or talk it through with our Support Service.
☎ 1300 22 4636
✉ Email or ✉️ chat to us online at www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

**mindhealthconnect**
www.mindhealthconnect.org.au
Access to trusted, relevant mental health care services, online programs and resources.

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**Donate online** www.beyondblue.org.au/donations