

The Act-Belong-Commit

Guide to Keeping Mentally Healthy



A great way to live life!



actbelongcommit.org.au

Mentally Healthy WA

Acknowledgments

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Government of **Western Australia**
Mental Health Commission



Curtin University

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Welcome to the **Act-Belong-Commit** Guide to Keeping Mentally Healthy

Keeping mentally healthy is just as important as keeping physically healthy. This Guide will show you how. It is based on the principles of the 'Act-Belong-Commit' positive mental health and wellbeing campaign. Keeping active, alert and engaged with the world around us (Act), having a feeling of belonging and a sense of identity (Belong), and doing things that give meaning and purpose to life (Commit) all contribute to our overall wellbeing.

This Guide will show how you can get involved in Act, Belong, and Commit activities that will contribute to keeping you mentally healthy and help you enjoy life more.

Who is this Guide for?

This Guide is designed for a broad audience of people, including people who are already mentally healthy, but simply want to learn more about keeping that way; people who feel 'just ok' or a 'bit down' and want to enjoy life more or find more meaning and purpose in life; and people who have – or have had – a mental illness or mental health problem and who are looking for positive ways to build their mental health in addition to any medication, counselling or treatment they might be receiving. Whatever your reasons, we hope you find this Guide helpful.

We hope you find this Guide easy to follow and the tips useful. Any suggestions you have for additions, improvements or clarifications are most welcome. Additional tips that have worked for you are also welcome. You can send your feedback by email to info@actbelongcommit.org.au or by post to Mentally Healthy WA, CBRCC, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth WA 6845. For further information on Act-Belong-Commit please visit the website at actbelongcommit.org.au or call **08 9266 4648**.

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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 the normal problems and tragedies that occur in life – usually with a little help from friends or relatives when things get really tough. Good friends make the good times better and the bad times tolerable.

In this busy day and age, it is more important than ever to do things to keep ourselves mentally healthy so we can enjoy life and cope with the demands and pressures of everyday living.

Most of the things we do to keep physically healthy are also good for our mental health like being physically active, eating a healthy diet, avoiding drugs and using alcohol in moderation.

But we can do much more for our mental health - and it's as easy as A-B-C

Act: Keep physically, mentally, socially and spiritually active: take a walk, say g'day, read a book, do a crossword, dance, play cards, stop for a chat...

Belong: Join a book club, take a cooking class, be more involved in groups you are already a member of, go along to community events...

Commit: Take up a cause, help a neighbour, learn something new, set yourself a challenge, help out at the school or meals on wheels...

Being active, having a sense of belonging, and having a purpose in life all contribute to good mental health.

Phone. (08) 9266 4648 | Email. info@actbelongcommit.org.au | or visit. actbelongcommit.org.au

1. Act-Belong-Commit: What is it all about?

It's about keeping mentally healthy by keeping active, keeping up friendships and connections with others, and engaging in activities that provide meaning and purpose in life.

Act-Belong-Commit is a community-based health promotion campaign that encourages people to be proactive about their mental health and wellbeing. Just as there are things we can and should do to keep physically healthy, there are things we can and should do to keep mentally healthy. These are summed up in the three words Act, Belong, Commit:

Act: keep active in as many ways as you can -physically, socially, mentally, and spiritually. In short ...
“Do Something!”

Belong: keep connected to friends and family; get involved in groups you are a member of; join in local community activities. That is ...
“Do Something with Someone!”

Commit: commit to an interest or a cause; set goals to aim for; become a volunteer; learn a new skill; challenge yourself ...
“Do Something Meaningful!”

1.1 Act-Belong-Commit: What's the evidence?

If you want to get straight to it, skip this section and go to page 8.

Act: Being active is a fundamental requirement for mental health. Individuals with higher levels of physical, cognitive, social and spiritual activity have higher levels of wellbeing and mental health. Such activities can also alleviate mental health problems such as anxiety and depression and help people cope with life's stressors.

Belong: Belonging is essential for good mental health. Regular involvement in social activities results in a strong personal support group, one of the most important factors for maintaining good mental and physical health. Overall, the more social interactions an individual has, the better their mental health will be and the better they will be able to cope with trauma and the stresses of life. Involvement in local community activities and organisations builds social cohesion, which is also important for an individual's mental health.

Commit: Taking up challenges and achieving one's goals, even small ones, provide a sense of accomplishment, feelings of efficacy and a stronger sense of self—a core requirement for good mental health and resilience. Similarly, volunteering and activities undertaken to benefit the community have positive returns for feeling good about oneself and others, and provide meaning and purpose in life.

References are listed on our Evidence for Act-Belong-Commit factsheet. For a summary of the research literature, visit the resources page on our website:

<http://www.actbelongcommit.org.au/resources/fact-sheets.html>

2. Getting started

The main purpose of this Guide is to help you build your Act, Belong and Commit levels to protect and strengthen your mental health and wellbeing. This will not only help you cope better with problems and stress but will also help you feel better about yourself, your life, and other people. And, as our TV ad says “you’ll simply feel happier too”.

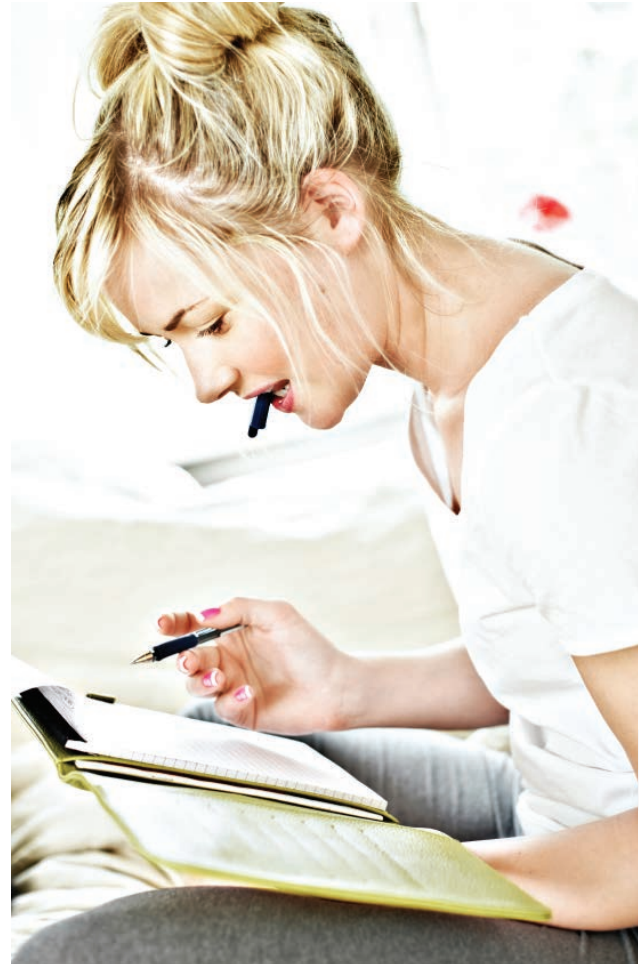
The Guide contains

- A questionnaire to measure your wellbeing now and in the future.
- Questionnaires to measure how much you Act, Belong and Commit now - so that you can see where you might need to do more. You can then measure your progress over the coming months by re-doing the questionnaires (or rate your activity level online: www.actbelongcommit.org.au/Take-the-Test).
- Practical tips to help you do more in each of the Act, Belong and Commit domains.
- Where to get advice on healthy eating, sleep and alcohol – all important contributors to keeping mentally healthy.
- Where to get more information on psychological coping and mood lifting strategies.
- Who to contact if you, or someone you know, needs to seek professional help .

2.1 How to use this Guide

1. We suggest you work through the sections in the order they appear.
2. You can work through the booklet in one go, or do one section at a time.
3. For each of the Act, Belong and Commit sections, do the questionnaire at the beginning so you can see how you score now in each of these domains.
4. If you score low in some areas and want to improve your score, work through the activities in the section and use the tips to plan how to increase your activity levels in those areas. Even if you score well you might like to see how you can vary the activities you do – and perhaps try something new.
5. Where you decide to do something in particular, we suggest you set a date and put it in your diary to help you remember to do it.
6. It could be helpful to work through the booklet with a friend or family member and select things to do together.
7. The questionnaires might show that you could be doing a lot more in some areas. The good news though is that you can do something about it and by the time you get to the end of the Commit section we think you'll be motivated and inspired to make some positive changes in how you live life!

Good luck in setting and achieving your goals – no matter how small or how big.



My pledge

Before we begin, how about making a pledge to complete the Guide by a certain time?

Depending on their circumstances, people take between two and five hours in total to work through the Guide. This could be done in one day or over several days.

Write out a pledge in your own words setting a start date and a realistic date to finish the Guide by:

Example pledge:

"I will start the Guide tomorrow (the 15th) and finish working through it by the end of next week (the 21st)."

My pledge:

Act-Belong-Commit 'Activity Finder'

You can visit the Act-Belong-Commit website actbelongcommit.org.au for information on the Act-Belong-Commit message, community partners, research and resources, and to use the 'Activity Finder' tool. This helps you find groups, clubs and activities in your area.

We suggest you work through this Guide and use this tool for the 'Get involved' activity on page 36.



3. Your overall wellbeing

This set of questions measures your current state of overall wellbeing. Answer the questions in the order that they appear. You can then work out your overall wellbeing score and see what it means.

Below are some statements about your feelings and thoughts. Please tick the box that best describes your experience over the last 2 weeks.

Over the last 2 weeks ...

1: I've been feeling optimistic about the future

None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

2: I've been feeling useful

None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

3: I've been feeling relaxed

None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

4: I've been feeling interested in other people

None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

5: I've had energy to spare

None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

Continued **Your overall wellbeing**

6: I've been dealing with problems well

None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

7: I've been thinking clearly

None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

8: I've been feeling good about myself

None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

9: I've been feeling closer to other people

None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

10: I've been feeling confident

None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

11: I've been able to make up my own mind about things

None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>

Continued **Your overall wellbeing**

12: I've been feeling loved

None of the time Rarely Some of the time Often All of the time
1 2 3 4 5

13: I've been interested in new things

None of the time Rarely Some of the time Often All of the time
1 2 3 4 5

14: I've been feeling cheerful

None of the time Rarely Some of the time Often All of the time
1 2 3 4 5

Now add up your score (all the numbers of the boxes you ticked) and write that total in the box.

Today's date: _____

3.1 What does your wellbeing score mean

A score between 14- 49: Approximately 25% of the Western Australian population score in this range. You can aim to boost your wellbeing score by finding activities to get involved in that you will enjoy. If you are feeling very low or unnecessarily anxious, you could talk to your GP about counselling programs that help people deal with their negative thoughts and feelings.

You can also get information on depression and other issues from [beyondblue](http://beyondblue.org.au) (beyondblue.org.au) or the Black Dog Institute (blackdoginstitute.org.au).

A score between 50-59: Approximately 50% of the Western Australian population score in this range. You can aim to maintain or even boost your wellbeing score by finding new activities to get involved in that you will enjoy.

A score of 60 and above: Approximately 25% of the Western Australian population score in this range. You can aim to maintain your wellbeing score by keeping up the activities you are already involved in or perhaps trying new activities that you might enjoy.

When you have finished the Guide and started on some of your plans, answer the questions again after a month or so (using a different coloured pen) and calculate your score. Then do it again 3 months later and 6 months later.

1 Month

Date: _____

3 Months

Date: _____

6 Months

Date: _____

4. Act: What does it mean?

At a basic level it simply means “*Doing Something*”.

You can keep physically active in any number of ways – by taking a walk, doing some gardening, kicking a footy, going for a swim or cleaning the shed.

You can keep socially active by talking with salespeople while shopping, saying hello to your neighbours and maintaining contact with family, friends and workmates.

You can keep mentally active by reading a book, working on your car, doing a crossword puzzle, going to the movies or visiting a museum.

You can be spiritually active by attending religious services, engaging in meditation or prayer, experiencing the wonders of nature or practicing tai chi or yoga.

Some activities, like visiting a zoo with friends, can involve physical, social and mental aspects all in one. As we’ll find out on the next pages, you are probably already doing a number of mentally healthy things.



My Nana was a health expert...

“Use it or lose it”
she used to say.

And according to the health experts she was right. Be physically active, she said. Take a walk, ride a bike, dance a little, dig the garden. Keep mentally active, she said. Do a puzzle, read a book, play cards, knit a scarf. Keep socially active, she said. Say hello to your neighbours. Have a chat down the shops.

Health experts now tell us that keeping physically, mentally, socially and spiritually active is how we keep mentally healthy.

*Want to get
involved?*

Contact us
phone: 08 9266 4648
email: info@actbelongcommit.org.au

actbelongcommit.org.au

4.1 What's your Act score?

Answer the following questions and find out how active you are.

Q1: Physical Activity: Apart from your job and household tasks, how often do you do something physically active (e.g. walk, garden, dance, jog, swim, and so on)?

Less than monthly 0

Monthly 0

Once a week 1

2–3 times weekly 2

4–6 times weekly 4

Daily 5

Q2: Mental Activity: Apart from your job, how often do you do something requiring thinking and concentration (e.g. read, paint, learn something, do a crossword puzzle, play video games)?

Less than monthly 0

Monthly 0

Once a week 1

2–3 times weekly 2

4–6 times weekly 4

Daily 5

Continued **What's your Act score?**

Q3: Social Activity: Apart from on your job and with members of your household, how often do you have contact with other people where you stop for a chat, talk on the phone or chat online?

Less than monthly 0

Monthly 0

Once a week 1

2–3 times weekly 2

4–6 times weekly 4

Daily 5

Q4: Spiritual Activity: How often do you engage in spiritual activities like attending a service, meeting with others for a spiritual purpose, meditating, reflecting on the meaning of life or the natural world?

Less than monthly 0

Monthly 0

Once a week 1

2–3 times weekly 2

4–6 times weekly 4

Daily 5

Now add up your score (all the numbers of the boxes you ticked) and write that total in the box.

Today's date: _____

4.2 What does your Act score mean?

A score between 0–7: You can definitely improve! Look at where your scores are low: Physical? Social? Mental? Spiritual? Follow the activities and tips in the following pages to see how you can become more active in those areas where you had a low score and you would like to do more.

A score between 8–13: You are doing well, but you could do more – especially if you scored less than 10. Look at where your activity levels are lowest and think about how you can get more of that sort of activity into your day using the tips on the following pages.

A score of 14 or more: Very good! Your activity levels are really good for your mental health and wellbeing. Keep it up and encourage others to follow your lead and have a more active lifestyle.

Remember, even when you are busy or feeling tired it's important to keep up these activities to help you cope better with problems and stress.

When you have finished the Guide and started on some of your plans, answer the questions again after a month or so (using a different coloured pen) and calculate your score. Then do it again 3 months later and 6 months later.

1 Month

Date: _____

3 Months

Date: _____

6 Months

Date: _____

4.3 Becoming more physically active

Any physical activity is great for your mental health (and your physical health). You don't have to go to a gym or exercise class, you can be more physically active simply doing regular everyday activities.

Get involved

Think of physical activities that you enjoy doing, would like to try doing, or would like to do more of. If you need some ideas, take a look at the list on the next page. Which of these would you find easiest to fit into your daily routine?

Select an activity and pick three days on which it would be easiest to try it out.

Physical activity:

Days: 1) _____
2) _____
3) _____



Continued **Becoming more physically active**

Some ideas you can try

- Leave the car keys on the hook and walk or cycle to the shops.
- Kick a ball in the park with your kids or throw a frisbee.
- Turn up the music, sing along and dance.
- Hop off the bus or train one stop early and walk the rest of the way.
- If you work in an office, take a break from your desk and walk over to speak to your colleague instead of emailing them.
- Plan active outings such as swimming, bush walking or bike-riding.
- Get your mates together and kick a footy around over the weekend.
- Join a walking group.
- Wherever you can, take the stairs instead of a lift or escalator.
- Take up gentle exercising like tai chi.
- Tidy up the garden regularly.

Tip

Get active outdoors:

There are increased mental health benefits from being active outdoors, especially in natural environments. So keep that in mind when you need an extra boost.

Once you have successfully increased your physical activity levels, celebrate or reward yourself for this achievement and aim to make it part of your regular routine.



4.4 Becoming more socially active

Spending time with other people not only brings joy, laughter and fun to our lives, it also provides us with people to support us in times of need.

Sharing the good times and being supported in the not-so-good times is what friendships are all about. 'Friends are good medicine' is indeed a scientific fact—and having several close friends is very good for our mental health and wellbeing.

But even just being around other people whether at work, amongst crowds at sporting or music events, in shopping centres or at the movies seems to satisfy an in-built human need.



Get involved

Make a list of activities that you enjoy doing with someone or where there are lots of people around (like at the beach in summer, having a bbq with good friends, phoning your grandparents on Sundays, going to a sporting event, movie or concert by yourself or with a friend).

Now choose one to do next week, make time to fit it into your schedule and put it in your diary.

Activity: _____

Who: _____

Where: _____

Possible date: _____

Booked in diary:

Continued **Becoming more socially active**

Get re-connected

List some of the people who have been important to you in the past, for example old school friends, work colleagues, previous neighbours, long lost cousins.

Who would you like to re-connect with or see more of? Why not look them up (try Facebook, Google or a mutual friend) and suggest meeting for a coffee or meal or something you both would enjoy doing, and find a time when you can do them together.

Activity: _____

Who: _____

Where: _____

Possible date: _____

Booked in diary:



Continued **Becoming more socially active**

Some ideas on how you can be more socially active:

- Acknowledge people you walk past with a friendly smile or a hello.
- Interact with sales assistants and ask them how their day has been.
- Spend some time with a person over the age of 70 or under the age of six to get a different perspective.
- Learn the name of someone you see regularly, such as at the post office, in your local coffee shop or pub, your child's school friend's parent, or your pharmacist, and introduce yourself.
- Make the effort to keep in touch, respond to emails, reply to text messages, acknowledge missed phone calls and get back to people.
- When using social networking sites provide positive comments and praise friends' successes.
- Ask friends to introduce you to other friendship circles. This can introduce you to new activities and places you can share with existing friends.
- If you are already physically active try being active in places that increase your social interaction, for example, in an exercise group or in a popular park. This allows you to be both socially and physically active.

4.5 Becoming more mentally active

Just as our body performs better when we are physically fit, so does our mind when we are mentally fit. Keeping alert to what is happening around us is good for our overall wellbeing.

One way to increase our mental activity is to be curious about things: How did they do the special effects in that movie? Where does that road lead? Who invented that? Why do dogs sleep so much? What's in that recipe? How does a car engine work? These days the internet can be a great help, but so can browsing through your local library.

Learning something new or solving a puzzle contribute to feelings of self-confidence and a belief in one's abilities, which are good building blocks of mental health and wellbeing.



Get involved

Think of a time when you could do some activity that requires thinking and concentration.

This could be learning something new or doing something you are already interested in such as baking, ballroom dancing, doing crosswords, playing video games, reading a book or working on a hobby.

Pick a day and give it a go this week.

Activity: _____

Where: _____

Possible date: _____

Booked in diary:

Continued **Becoming more mentally active**

Some ideas you can try

- Read a book, a newspaper or a magazine.
- Learn to operate a new device—like a computer, smartphone, the internet.
- Do a Sudoku, crosswords, daily teasers or quizzes.
- Teach something you are good at to a friend, relative or neighbour.
- Learn something new—a language, how to cook, how to change the tyres on a car.
- Visit a museum.
- Get creative: paint, draw, take photographs, make scrap books.
- Start a blog about something you are passionate about.
- Write down important, funny stories to share with others or younger family members.
- Watch something educational on TV like a documentary, or a history or geography channel, or have a look at TED.com for the latest new ideas from around the world.
- When watching a quiz show, try answering the questions or remember the facts and share your knowledge with someone else.

Tip

Think of mental activities that will benefit other areas of your life—such as finding healthy but tasty recipes, or basic accounting and budgeting.

Try things that you think you will enjoy - not just any old thing.

4.6 Becoming more spiritually active

Having a sense of spirituality helps people keep things in perspective, provides hope in times of need, relieves stress and can also have social benefits. While the term spirituality can mean something different to different people, engaging in some form of spiritual activity contributes to mental health and wellbeing.

Being spiritually active can be done through formal religious activities or in non-religious ways, such as spending time in nature, meditation, yoga or creative practices.

Get involved

Set aside some time during the week to reflect on what spirituality means to you. Write down here how spirituality is, or could be, important in your life.

What spiritual activities do you currently do (e.g., meditating, attending a religious sermon, praying, yoga, connecting with nature or learning more about spirituality)?

Now think of some other ways you could be spiritually active, with or without other people.

Select one or two and pick a day to try them out:

Spiritual activity: _____

Day: _____

Booked in diary:

Continued **Becoming more spiritually active**

Some ideas you can try

- Belong to a faith and take part in services or other activities with other people.
- Go on a retreat.
- Spend time in meditation and prayer.
- Read scripture.
- Listen to music.
- Engage in reflection (contemplation).
- Try yoga, Tai Chi or similar disciplined practices.
- Spend time enjoying nature.
- Spend time in contemplative reading (of literature, poetry, philosophy, etc.).
- Appreciate the arts.
- Be creative - by painting, sculpture, cookery, gardening etc.



Additional Act information

10,000 steps

Health promotion campaign that encourages you to monitor and log your daily physical activity levels; includes health and physical activity information, workplace challenges, and an online community.

10000steps.org.au

Shape up Australia

Health campaign promoting a healthy active lifestyle. Includes 'swap it' tips, activity finder.

shapeup.gov.au

Mind your Mind

Health promotion campaign providing scientific evidence, practical advice on dementia and resources to keep mentally healthy.

mindyourmind.org.au

Department of Culture and the Arts

Initiatives and partnerships to develop arts and culture in the community.

dca.wa.gov.au

Phone: 1800 199 090

Email: info@dca.wa.gov.au

Country Arts WA

Provides advice and information to regional artists and community groups.

countryartswa.asn.au

Phone: (08) 9200 6200

Email: info@countryartswa.asn.au

You can find events and groups by looking in:

- *Community newspapers*
- *Community notice boards*
- *Local library*
- *Local government websites*

5. Belong: What does it mean?

Relationships and social connections provide us with a sense of belonging, which is essential for our mental health. Belonging to groups, whether formal or informal, large or small, local or even international, contributes to our identity and our sense of who we are.

You can belong to all sorts of groups such as a sports team, a car club, a book club, a group of friends in your street, your local community or an online community. Feelings of belonging are particularly important in schools and workplaces.

New arrivals, whether from overseas or other parts of the country, often lack family support and old friends. In these cases new connections can be made at the workplace or the children's school or by linking up with other recent arrivals in various cultural or other associations.

Grandad was a health expert too...

Grandad was the
great participator...

He was a member of lots of groups: his fishing buddies, a book club and the local footy club to name a few. I think it was his variety of friends that made life so enjoyable for him and made him so interesting to us. He always knew someone to call to help him out – or, more often, help one of us grandkids out.

Grandad said being part of a group gave him a real sense of belonging. Health experts say belonging helps define our sense of identity and satisfies our psychological need for friendship, making us mentally healthy. Maybe Grandad knew that all along.

*Want to get
involved?*

Contact us
phone: 08 9266 4648
email: info@actbelongcommit.org.au

actbelongcommit.org.au



5.1 What's your Belong score?

Answer the following questions and find out how much you Belong.

Q1: Friends and Family: How often do you get together with a group of friends, workmates or family for outings, meals or special events?

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Once a year or less | 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A few times a year | 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Every few months | 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Monthly | 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Weekly | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q2: Local Community: How often do you attend community events (e.g. music festivals, theatre, markets, local sporting events, school fairs, residents' meetings, local government events, local business groups, local 'clean up' events)?

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Once a year or less | 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A few times a year | 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Every few months | 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Monthly | 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Weekly | 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Continued **What's your Belong score?**

Q3a: Specific Interest Groups:

Do you belong to any formal or informal groups, clubs or organisations, (e.g. sports club, car club, book club, fitness group, dance class, theatre group, social club, cooking group, card group, hobby group, cultural or ethnic group)?

No Go to Q4 on the next page

Yes Continue to **Q3b** and **Q3c**

Q3b: How many groups are you an active member in? (Write in box)

Q3c: How often do you attend or have contact with members of any of these groups?

Once a year or less 0

A few times a year 1

Every few months 2

Monthly 2

Weekly 3

More than once a week 5

Continued **What's your Belong score?**

Q4: Large Public Events: How often do you attend large public events such as major sporting fixtures, major musical events, or any events where there are very large crowds?

- Never 0
- Less than every 3 years 1
- Every 2-3 years 2
- 1-2 times a year 2
- Every 2-3 months 3
- Monthly or more 5

Q5: If you are in paid employment, how much do you feel part of a close knit team?

- Am not employed 0
- Don't feel part of a team much at all 1
- Feel part of a team but not strongly 3
- Very much feel part of the team 5

Now add up your score (only the numbers of the boxes you ticked) and write that total in the box.

Today's date: _____

5.2 What does your Belong score mean?

A score 0–8: Definitely can improve! Look at the different questions above and pick one or two where you could most easily improve your score. Where would you like to improve? Remember you don't have to score high in each area. The following pages provide some helpful tips and advice to help you Belong more.

A score of 9-13: You are doing well, but you could do more - especially if you scored under 10. Your current involvement in groups and clubs provides you with a good sense of belonging. However, if you have the time, you could further boost your mental health by selecting one or two activities you enjoy most and do them more often.

A score of 14 or more: Very good! You are certainly bolstering your mental health and wellbeing through your involvement in clubs and community groups. Perhaps you can encourage those around you to become more involved by inviting friends or family to join you. Read through the next section for some ideas on how to continue to Belong. But remember not to overdo it.

When you have finished the Guide and started on some of your plans, answer the questions again after a month or so (using a different coloured pen) and calculate your score. Then do it again 3 months later and 6 months later.

1 Month

Date: _____

3 Months

Date: _____

6 Months

Date: _____

5.3 Belong more with friends and family

Who would you like to see more often? Perhaps there is someone from your past or present job or school that you would like to spend time with doing things together. Make a list of people and then think about who you would like to do more with.

Get involved

Consider starting an activity night (or morning) like a movie night, games night, cooking night or cards night.

Day: _____

Who could you invite? _____

Check who is interested: _____

Tip

Make a promise to do a group activity once a month and put it in your diary!

As you think of how to Belong more, keep in mind how you can also be active. For example, joining a book club increases belonging and keeps your mind active; joining a sports team increases belonging and also keeps you physically and socially active.

5.4 Belong more by attending community events

What sorts of things go on in your local suburb or community? Markets? Swap meets? Music concerts? School fairs? Arts or theatre events?

Tip

Tip: If you're a bit shy, or even if you're not, invite a friend, family or neighbour to attend with you.

Get involved

Visit your local community centre, or look in your local newspaper or the community notice board at your shopping centre, or the local library or on the internet for an upcoming community event that you think you might like to attend.

Write it down in your calendar to make sure you don't miss it.

Event: _____

When: _____

Where: _____

Booked in diary:



5.5 Belong more by joining a club or group

What are you interested in or would like to become interested in? Could you attend current groups more often? If you are from overseas, perhaps you would like to join an ethnic or cultural group.

Some examples of clubs you might like to join:

- Scrabble, Bridge, Chess or Bingo group.
- Car club, footy club.
- Book club, choir, dinner, music or theatre group.
- Nature and conservation group.
- Cycling, swimming, dancing or walking groups.
- Volunteer organisations, e.g. Salvation Army, the Samaritans, the Red Cross charity and fundraising groups.
- Service clubs like Lions or Rotary.
- Ethnic or cultural clubs.
- Men's Shed.

Get involved

Write down some activities that you would like to do, used to do or already do: _____

Visit the Act-Belong-Commit website and use the “Activity Finder” tool or do your own research to see if there are any groups or clubs doing the activity you like. Collect all the important details and make an enquiry.

Name of group: _____

Date and time they meet: _____

Where they meet: _____

Contact information: _____

Booked in diary:

Continued **Belong more by joining a club or group**

If you already belong to a group or are a member of an organisation, could you be more involved? The deeper your involvement, the stronger your sense of belonging to the group.

If you already are involved in a group, have you thought of getting a friend you know is lonely to join in? What about asking a friend to involve you in some of their social or community groups?

Tip

If there isn't a group in your area, why not start your own? (See page 34).

If you join a new group, research shows it's important to keep attending. After about seven appearances, you will be feeling like a regular.



Additional Belong information

The Department of Sport and Recreation Clubs Online (WA only)

Search for local sports and recreation clubs.

clubsonline.dsr.wa.gov.au/find-a-club

Meet Up

Search for local social groups and clubs, or create your own group for members of the public to join.

meetup.com

Grow

Peer support program for people with a mental illness and people experiencing difficulty coping with life's challenges.

grow.net.au

Men's Shed

Provides free practical support and assistance. Focuses on male health and wellbeing.

mensshed.org

Email: amsa@mensshed.net

Community Arts Network WA

Explore, express and develop skills through art production.

canwa.com.au

Phone: (08) 9226 2422



6. Commit: What does it mean?

Commit refers to doing things that provide meaning and purpose in our lives. These can range from successfully completing challenging tasks to volunteering and doing good deeds for others.

Doing something that we are proud of, even if it's just fixing a toy or repairing a chair or baking a great cake, builds self-confidence and self-esteem. Doing something for others provides extra feelings of satisfaction.

The more we commit to a cause, interest or a group, the greater our sense of self and satisfaction with life. Getting involved by volunteering contributes to personal and community mental health.

Helping other people who are disadvantaged in some way has special returns. We not only feel good about helping other people but we learn to put our own problems into perspective and be thankful for what we have.

**Aunt Sally
also knew a
thing or two
about health...**



“Tis better to give than receive” she used to say.

To us kids, receiving was much better than giving! But now I know what she meant. I'm a volunteer for a local group that takes disadvantaged kids on outings. The kids have a great time, and although it's pretty demanding, so do we. In fact I think we get more out of these outings than the kids do. All volunteers will tell you the same thing. Giving your time and energy for a good cause makes you feel really good about yourself.

Health experts say that doing good deeds adds meaning to our lives and helps our self-esteem – all of which are good for our mental health and feeling content with who we are.

I think Aunt Sally already knew that. No wonder she encouraged us all to take up a cause and get involved in local community issues.

*Want to get
involved?*

Contact us
phone: 08 9266 4648
email: info@actbelongcommit.org.au

actbelongcommit.org.au

6.1 What's your Commit score?

Answer the following questions to find out how much you Commit.

Q1a: Personal challenges and goals: Are you doing something challenging at the moment? (For example, home or garden renovations, enrolled in a course, training for a 'fun run' or competitive sport, learning a new skill, like woodwork, the guitar, painting or welding?).

No Skip to **Q2**

Yes Continue to **Q1b**

Q2: Challenges at work: If you are employed, is your work challenging and involve learning new things, or is it fairly easy?

I am not employed 0

Fairly easy 2

Somewhat challenging 3

Very challenging 5

Q1b: How often do you do this activity?

A few times a year 1

Monthly 2

One day a week 3

More than once a week 5

Continued What's your Commit score?

Q3a: Positions held in groups: Do you belong to any formal or informal groups, clubs or organisations?

No Skip to **Q4**

Yes Continue to **Q3b**

Q3b: Do you hold any committee or office roles in any of those groups?

(e.g. Are you the treasurer, a committee member, president, vice-president, secretary, and so on?)

Yes 5

No 0

Q4a: Activism: Are you actively involved with a cause-related group seeking additional resources, legislative or policy change? (For example, for disadvantaged groups, environmental preservation, etc.?)

No Skip to **Q5a**

Yes Continue to **Q4b**

Q4b: How often do you do something as part of that group?

Once a year or less 1

A few times a year 1

Monthly 2

Once or twice a week 4

More than twice a week 5

Continued What's your Commit score?

Q5a: Volunteer work: Are you a volunteer for any charitable organisations, community groups, health or social welfare organisations, or other non-government organisations? (Coaching a sporting team, mentoring a colleague, volunteering for Red Cross, meals on wheels, etc.?)

No Skip to **Q6**

Yes Continue to **Q5b**

Q5b: How often do you do this volunteer activity?

A few times a year 1

Monthly 2

One day a week 3

More than once a week 5

Q6: General helping out: Apart from any formal volunteering work, how often do you do something to help someone? (e.g. help a neighbour, cook a meal or clean for a sick friend, help students with projects?)

Once a year or less 1

A few times a year 1

Monthly 2

Once or twice a week 4

More than twice a week 5

Now add up your score (all the numbers of the boxes you ticked) and write that total in the box.

Today's date: _____

6.2 What does your Commit score mean?

A score 0–8: Definitely can improve! Look through the questions where you scored lowest. Think about things you could do in those areas. Work through the activities on the following pages to see how you could increase your score in those areas.

A score of 9-13: You are gaining mental health benefits from your current activities, but you could do better, especially if you scored under 10! Look at your scores and see where you could be doing more. It might be volunteering more often, or taking on a personal challenge.

A score of 14+: Congratulations on making commitments to a number of activities. Occasionally take time to reflect on the good you are doing for yourself and the good you are doing for others.

When you have finished the Guide and started on some of your plans, answer the questions again after a month or so (using a different coloured pen) and calculate your score. Then do it again 3 months later and 6 months later.

1 Month

Date: _____

3 Months

Date: _____

6 Months

Date: _____

6.3 Taking on more personal challenges and goals

Is there a new skill you would like to learn?

Have you ever wanted to play a musical instrument, cook food from other cultures, grow a vegetable patch, learn carpentry or how to speak another language?

If you already engage in a lot of activities, perhaps you could set some goals to make these more challenging.

As you think about how to Commit more, keep in mind how these activities help you to Act and Belong. For example, if you already Belong to a group could you make this a Commit activity by taking on a committee position, such as treasurer or secretary?

Get involved

Make a list below of the new things you would like to learn or list some activities you already do and set yourself a challenge or a goal. Then set a start date.

Activity : _____

Challenge: _____

Start date: _____

Booked in diary:

Continued Taking on more personal challenges and goals

Some ideas for taking on new challenges

- If you play an instrument, try practicing a new piece or set yourself a goal to perform this piece at an 'open mic' night, as a busker at a community event, or perform a free concert at an aged care home.
- Think of a project you would like to do – like a home or garden improvement project, or restoring some old furniture or an old car.
- Do you want to learn to paint or make a sculpture? Ask a friend to teach you or enrol in a course and set yourself a project to complete with this new skill.
- Try to make what you already do more challenging by setting yourself some goals, entering competitions, or trying something new.
- Raise money for a charity whilst doing something challenging and fun.
- Learn a language, a musical instrument, or to sing.
- Learn how to better use the computer.
- Take up painting, sculpting, sewing, needlework, or knitting.
- Learn welding or woodwork.
- Enter a sporting event that involves training such as a trek, marathon or fun run, swimming or cycling event, or a tennis match.
- Take up bike riding, dancing.



Tips for setting challenging goals

Undertaking challenging activities can be quite demanding. However, perseverance and mastery provide a real sense of achievement and boost your self-esteem. So when learning something new it's important to stick at it. Setting goals gives you something to aim for and helps you keep going when things are a bit tough.

1. Take your time to think of a challenge that excites you and write it down as a goal. Make sure to include what you want to do, when and where you will do it, how long it will take, and what you need to achieve it.
2. If you feel your goal is too big, break it down into smaller daily, weekly, or monthly goals.
3. Put your goals on the fridge or the mirror and tell a friend. This will increase the likelihood of you achieving your goals.
4. Keep at it! Challenges aren't meant to be easy, and they will take time. Keep a diary or log book to keep track of your progress.
5. Reread your goal from time to time and adjust your goal if you're finding it too easy or too hard.
6. Celebrate! Once you have achieved your goal, it's important to celebrate and reflect on the feelings you experienced while you worked towards the goal and how you feel now that the goal has been achieved.



6.4 Committing more to groups you are already a member of

Are you already a member of a group?
Do you have the time to get more involved with this group? If so, here are some ideas on how to commit more to your existing groups:

- Attend more regularly.
- Become a committee member, president or vice president.
- Take minutes at the next meeting.
- Organise and lead a group session.
- Manage the budget.
- Do the catering at the next function.
- Build the membership.
- Help out with the admin.

Get involved

Think about the areas where you would like to help out or skills you have that could be an asset to the group.

Write them down and select one or more to try.

6.5 Committing more by volunteering or taking up a cause

Volunteering is a great way to give back to your community. Volunteering for a cause or to help other people provides meaning and purpose in life and a stronger connection to the world, to humanity, and even to our spiritual side.

When committing to volunteering there are a number of points to consider. What would you enjoy doing? How much time are you able and happy to give over a week, month, or a weekend? What skills can you offer? What skills would you like to learn? (Many organisations offer their volunteers training).

When you commit to volunteering, other people will rely on you so it's important to realistically consider how much time you are able to give.

Where to start

- Start local. For example, could you volunteer at your child's school canteen? Try approaching local community groups or organisations, your local library, hospital, or church.
- If you're passionate about a particular cause, join an advocacy group or action-group with similar values to your own.
- If you have come from overseas, perhaps you could draw on your experiences to help more recent arrivals settle in.



Continued **Committing more by volunteering or taking up a cause**

Organisations, charities, and groups need people to help out in a number of different roles, including administration, general maintenance, or even cleaning or baking. Think about your own skills and things you already do at home, at work, for your family or children, or for fun and how you might be able to do these things for the benefit of others.

Tip

Do not overload yourself. If you find that even after giving something a good go you are not enjoying that activity or can't keep up with other commitments, let it go and try something less demanding or more to your liking.

If you have a trade, technical skills or a profession, consider doing some 'pro-bono' work for a non-profit community organisation (ie working on some task for no payment or at a reduced rate).

Get involved

Think of some ways you could volunteer your time and write them down below.

Volunteer activity: _____

Where: _____

When: _____



Photo courtesy of the David Wirrpanda Foundation and Aranmore Catholic College.

6.6 Helping people out and ‘acts of kindness’

Think about your friends and people in your street or apartment block. Could you offer to help in any of the following ways?

- Offer to help with someone’s shopping.
- Visit a sick friend, relative or neighbour.
- Cook something for a neighbour.
- Offer to look after a friend’s children.
- Offer to mow your neighbour’s lawn.
- Visit someone who may be lonely.

A simple and easy way to feel good about helping others is to start with acts of kindness. An act of kindness could be towards a stranger, a neighbour, or a friend and could be as simple as letting someone into a line of traffic, giving up your seat on the bus or train for someone else, or holding the door open for someone.

Here are some ideas for ‘acts of kindness’

- Let someone in front of you in a queue.
- Let one car in on every journey.
- Pick up litter as you walk.
- Treat a loved one to breakfast in bed.
- Buy fruit for your colleagues .
- Send someone a ‘thank you’ when they least expect it.
- If there’s time left on your parking ticket, give it to someone else.

Continued **Helping people out and ‘acts of kindness’**

Get involved

Try doing a small act of kindness this week. Write down what it was that you did and how it made you feel.

Where were you? _____

What did you do? _____

How did you feel? _____

Not all your acts of kindness will be acknowledged with a thank you, but don't let that stop you!



Additional Commit information

Volunteer Australia

Provides information and links on how to volunteer and the skills and training needed and offered for volunteers.

volunteeringaustralia.org

Volunteer Alliance

Connects community based organisations in developing countries with international volunteers.

volunteeralliance.org

Volunteer WA (WA only)

Connects people looking to volunteer with organisations searching for volunteers.

volunteeringwa.org.au

David Wirrpanda Foundation

Promoting strong role models and healthy life choices for Aboriginal Australians.

dwf.org.au

Giving West

Supported by business and community leaders, Giving West facilitates the giving of time, talents and money to community organisations.

givingwest.org.au

Meals on Wheels

Volunteers can assist in a number of ways. To find a branch near you visit the website.

mealsonwheelswa.org.au

Training WA

If you are looking to increase your skills in some area, visit this website for TAFE and other courses available in WA.

trainingwa.wa.gov.au

7. Where to from here?

Congratulations on getting through the Act-Belong-Commit Guide to Keeping Mentally Healthy.

You should now have a good idea of what you could do to keep more mentally healthy. In the sections on the next page, write a brief summary of what you plan to do over the next 3-4 weeks in each of the Act-Belong-Commit areas. For each area write down what you intend to keep on doing and what you will try to do as a result of working through this Guide.

When you have finished, cut these out or write them on a separate sheet of paper and put it on your fridge. What also helps is to tell your friends or workmates or other family members what you intend to do. Making our goals public helps motivate us to achieve our goals. Why not post your goals on the 'pledge' feature on the Act-Belong-Commit website under 'Interactive Tools', 'Make a Pledge'.



Continued **Where to from here?**

Act

I intend to keep on doing: _____

I intend to try doing: _____

Belong

I intend to keep on doing: _____

I intend to try doing: _____

Commit

I intend to keep on doing: _____

I intend to try doing: _____

Remember

After a month or so, go back and do the Wellbeing questions again. You can also re-do the Act-Belong-Commit questionnaires to see whether you have improved your activity levels in these domains.

Keep on trying. Changes in activities take time and effort. If you find your activity levels falling back, take time out to think about why. Then when you feel you are able, set new goals and try again. The more times you try and succeed even a little, the more likely you will eventually succeed.

Let us know how you go

We would love to hear from you about your attempts, your successes, your failures, your inspirations and your disappointments, how you put the Guide's advice into practice and how we could improve the Guide.

Go to our Facebook page ([facebook.com/ActBelongCommit](https://www.facebook.com/ActBelongCommit)) and tell your story. It just might inspire someone else to try and do things to keep mentally healthy. Or phone us on **(08) 9266 4648**.

8. Lifestyle guidelines for keeping mentally healthy

Your diet, alcohol consumption, drug use and sleeping habits all contribute to keeping mentally healthy. Here is where you can get more information on each of these.

8.1 Nutrition

A balanced diet is important for staying mentally healthy. The food we eat can affect our mood, energy levels and brain functioning. For more information on a balanced diet visit:

Heart Foundation

Advice on healthy eating, a balanced diet and recipes.

heartfoundation.org.au

LiveLighter

Nutritional advice on increasing fresh fruit and vegetable intake, recipes, and tips for increasing exercise.

livelighter.com.au

Australian Government Department of Health and Aging

Information about the Australian Dietary Guidelines and the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating.

health.gov.au/internet/healthyactive/publishing.nsf/Content/eating

8.2 Sleep

The amount and quality of our sleep significantly affect our mental health. On average, an adult needs between 7-8 hours sleep a night, while adolescents require slightly more. If you constantly feel tired throughout the day, you may need to consult a sleep clinic.

Australian Sleep Association:

Information on sleep and a sleep service directory.

sleep.org.au

Continued Lifestyle guidelines for keeping mentally healthy

8.3 Alcohol

Alcohol can have a negative effect on our mental and physical health. High levels of alcohol consumption affect our mood and impact on our social and work life. Cutting down on alcohol consumption has both immediate and long term benefits.

Recommended daily alcohol allowance

- No more than 2 standard drinks a day to minimise your risk of harm.
- At least 2 alcohol free days a week, or more if possible.

For more information visit:

National Health and Medical Research Council

nhmrc.gov.au/your-health/alcohol-guidelines

8.4 Illicit drugs

Illicit drugs can bring on depression, anxiety and psychosis, worsen mental health symptoms and inhibit recovery. The use of illicit substances doubles the risk of serious mental health problems.

For more information:

National Drugs Campaign:

Information on drugs and how to get help and services in your area.

drugs.health.gov.au

National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre:

Information on Cannabis.

Phone: 1800 30 40 50

ncpic.org.au

8.5 Tobacco smoking

Cravings for nicotine, the addictive substance found in tobacco, can lead to feelings of irritability, stress and anxiety, which are only temporarily alleviated by smoking. A recent review in the British Medical Journal showed that stopping smoking is associated with a

lessening of depression, anxiety and stress, and an increase in psychological quality of life and positive mood.

For more information including tips to quit:

Make Smoking History

MakeSmokingHistory.org.au

9. Coping strategies and Positive Psychology

Psychologists provide a wide range of coping strategies to help people deal with negative thoughts and behaviours that affect our mental health and wellbeing.

To find a psychologist visit the **Australian Psychological Society** website: psychology.org.au/findapsychologist

or

Speak to your GP who will be able to put you in contact with an appropriate psychologist.



Positive psychology is a relatively new branch of psychology that emphasizes how people stay well – rather than why people get unwell.

Visit the **positive psychology** website: the homepage for Positive Psychology. authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu

10. Where to get support or advice

Australian Government the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA): Information and links to services for Families and Children, Housing, Seniors, Communities and Vulnerable People, Disability and Carers, Women, Indigenous.

fahcsia.gov.au

The Government Of Western Australia Mental Health Commission provides information on mental health services in your area.

mentalhealth.wa.gov.au

Grow provides peer support to people with a mental illness and people experiencing difficulty in coping with life's challenges.

Phone: 1800 558 268

grow.net.au

MindHealthConnect is dedicated to providing access to mental health care services including stress, anxiety and depression.

mindhealthconnect.org.au

Beyondblue provides information and links on depression, anxiety and related disorders.

Phone: 1300 224 636

beyondblue.org.au

Reach Out is Australia's leading online youth mental health service.

au.reachout.com

Citizens Advice Bureau information on local and government services, clubs, organisations, resources, aids and benefits. Provides information and referral, legal services and mediation services.

www.cabwa.com.au

Black Dog Institute provides support programs and information on diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mood disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder.

blackdoginstitute.org.au

Gambling Help a free and confidential 24 hour telephone and online service.

Phone: 1800 858 858

gamblinghelponline.org.au



11. Where to get help in a crisis

If you or someone close to you are distressed, in crisis, or feel you or they need to talk to someone, here are a number of organisations that can offer support.

Lifeline offers a National counselling service 24 hours, 7 days. Suicide Prevention & Crisis Support.

Phone: 13 11 14

lifeline.org.au

Samaritans provide 24 hour telephone counselling to suicidal and despairing people.

Phone: (08) 9381 5555

Youthline Perth: (08) 9388 2500 or

Country line Regional WA: 1800 198 313

Samaritans TTY WA: (08) 9382 8822

thesamaritans.org.au

Kids Help Line is a 24 hour anonymous and confidential telephone and online counselling for young people aged 5-25years.

Phone: 1800 55 1800

kidshelpline.com.au

Mental Health Emergency Response Line

24 hours, 7 days a week crisis service.

Professionals can come to a person's home for emergency assessment and provide advice about what to do in a crisis for clients and their carers.

Phone: 1300 555 788 Rural: 1800 676 822

Salvation Army (WA) 24 hours, 7 days:

Crisis Line: (08) 9442 5777

Hope Line (Suicide Bereavement): 1300 467 354

Care Line: 1300 36 36 72 - for general counselling

Suicide Call Back Service (National)

24-hours, 7 days. Provides crisis counselling to people at risk of suicide, carers for someone who is suicidal, and those bereaved by suicide.

Phone: 1300 659 467

suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Translating and Interpreting Service

Phone: 13 14 50



Mentally Healthy WA

Address:	Phone: (08) 9266 4648
Act-Belong-Commit Campaign	Email: info@actbelongcommit.org.au
Mentally Healthy WA	Website: actbelongcommit.org.au
Curtin University	Facebook: facebook.com/ActBelongCommit
GPO Box U1987	Twitter: @actbelongcommit
Perth WA 6845	YouTube: youtube.com/ActBelongCommit