

# Lived Experience Telephone Support Service (LETSS)

A PEER WORKERS GUIDE TO  
STAYING WELL



# LETSS *Stay Well Together*



IN THIS ISSUE ...

ARTICLES

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WORKSHEETS

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IDEAS FOR  
SELFCARE

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CHECKLISTS

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RECIPES

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AND MORE...





# A message from LETSS



Welcome to your first issue of the peer workers guide to staying well!

We understand that coping at a time like this can be challenging, so we invite you to journey with us, as we learn about ourselves and our wellbeing in these changing times.

Inside you will find:

- articles
- worksheets
- ideas
- checklists
- and more!

This guide to staying well has been created by peers, for peers, and we welcome you to use this resource to support your recovery and wellness.

And of course, please reach out for support from LETSS if you need it. We are here.

Yours in health,

***The LETSS Team***

# Strategies for Maintaining Mental Health



Science has shown that boredom can contribute to feelings of depression, anxiety, and loneliness, so our LETSS peer workers have come up with 5 strategies that could help should you need to self-isolate.

## 1. Maintain a routine as much as possible

Shower, eat, and most importantly, get out of your PJs and dressed every day! Small things like these really matter.

## 2. Achieve something everyday

It might be doing the dishes, cleaning out a cupboard, or calling a friend. A sense of achievement helps us to feel like we are doing something meaningful with our time.

## 3. Write about your experience

Writing about what has been going on can help us to feel like we are talking to someone and sharing our experiences.

## 4. Keep connected socially

Skype friends and family, find a Facebook group to follow that lifts your spirits, create a Whatsapp, or messenger group to check on each other. The more ways that you can communicate the better!

## 5. Reach out for support

It's going to be a challenging time for all of us, and it's important to reach out for support. If you're feeling safe but need to talk things through, call LETSS and chat with our Peer Workers.

**Lived Experience Telephone Support Service**

**1800 013 755**

**letss.org.au**



## **ACT TEACHES PEOPLE TO EMBRACE ALL OF LIFE'S EXPERIENCES - THE GOOD AND THE BAD- IN ORDER TO LIVE A RICH AND MEANINGFUL LIFE**

I was first introduced to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (or ACT for short) in a group setting. There were a dozen or so highly anxious individuals (myself included) trying to avoid eye contact with each other and the group facilitator. When the facilitator asked what we knew about ACT, we kept our eyes fixed on the ground and our mouths shut.

Being well accustomed to awkward silences, the facilitator pushed on. She said, 'I'm guessing you're all here because you've struggled with your mental health in the past'. Then she asked, 'What have you done in the past to try and cope with difficult thoughts and feelings?' Everyone's eyes slowly lifted and the room became animated; we all wanted to speak at once. We weren't strangers to struggling with our thoughts and emotions.

That was precisely what had brought us here together, in this moment. The answers to the facilitators question were varied yet comprehensive. About a third of group members referenced drugs or alcohol as their go-to coping strategy. Some would restrict their eating (or barely eat at all), while others would binge and purge. Some threw themselves into their work, leaving little time for family. Some would cut. Others would shop.

We could all talk, at length, about how we had tried to rid ourselves of the emotional pain we were experiencing. Not everything mentioned was what would be considered "unhealthy". Group members spoke of repeating positive affirmations until they were blue in the face, or spending a small fortune on vitamins and supplements.



“

*Everyone's eyes slowly lifted and the room became animated; we all wanted to speak at once. We weren't strangers to struggling with our thoughts and emotions.*

What all these coping strategies had in common is that they were an attempt to mask, distract from, push down or change our negative thoughts and emotions. They were an attempt to take back control of our emotions, at a time when we felt completely and utterly overwhelmed and out of control. The facilitator then posed another question. 'Look back on all those things you have tried to help yourself feel better. Did they get rid of your negative thoughts and feelings?'. The group members' gazes returned to the ground. In a collective silence, we reflected on the time, energy, and, in some cases, money we had spent trying to make ourselves feel better, using strategies that simply did not work. Not in the long term at least.

The facilitator deserved a round of applause, as she had found a very effective way to introduce ACT's alternative approach to emotional suffering. Many of the group members (myself included) had already been exposed to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, or CBT for short. The overarching principle of CBT is that our thoughts affect our feelings, which, in turn, affect our behaviour. The "cognitive" component of CBT involves challenging negative thoughts and replacing them with more balanced, neutral thoughts, whereas the 'behavioural' component involves increasing our engagement in pleasurable and meaningful activities. In other words, CBT aims to change negative thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

The approach taken by ACT is entirely different. According to ACT guru, Russ Harris, "The aim of ACT is to help you live a rich, full and meaningful life, while effectively handling the pain that inevitably comes your way".

ACT recognises that painful thoughts, feelings and events are an inevitable part of life - part of which makes us humans!

Unlike CBT, which teaches people to challenge negative thoughts, ACT teaches people to see thoughts for what they are – thoughts – instead of objective truths that must be believed and acted upon. ACT teaches people to engage with the present moment, and to sit with unpleasant feelings, rather than to avoid, distract or push them away. 'Why would I want to sit with uncomfortable thoughts and feelings?' you may ask. 'The whole reason I'm in therapy is to get rid of them!'

ACT acknowledges that pain is a natural part of life, and that living a rich and meaningful life involves embracing the bad with the good. According to ACT:

pain + non-acceptance = suffering

“

*Pain + non-*  
*acceptance*  
*= suffering.*

In other words, by struggling against painful thoughts and feelings, we inadvertently cause ourselves to suffer more. In contrast, when we accept the pain that inevitably comes along with the human experience and drop the struggle, we no longer suffer.

The Quicksand Metaphor illustrates the struggle we often find ourselves in by not accepting our experience. Imagine that you are stuck in quicksand:

Your body is beginning to sink, and, with that, your anxiety is building. Understandably, every inch of your body is screaming at you to try to scramble your way out of there.... However, when it comes to quicksand that is the worst possible thing you can do: struggling to get out will only lead you to be swallowed up by the sand sooner! The safest and surest way to get out of quicksand is to float your way out, by gently leaning backwards until you are floating on your back and your legs are freed.

After we, as a group, had collectively answered the two questions posed by the facilitator, there was a shift in the atmosphere in the room. For myself, I realised that throughout the years I had been bending over backwards trying to escape my reality, whether it be by avoiding, distracting or dampening painful thoughts and feelings with a few glasses of wine.

What's worse, I realised, is that none of these strategies had worked in the long term, with many of them only leading to an entirely new set of problems. Running away from my reality had not helped me to escape it; it only made me tired.

Struggling against my reality was exhausting, and left little time or energy for me to engage with the people and things that truly mattered to me. By struggling to close myself off from the pain in my life, I had also inadvertently closed myself off from the parts of life that I cherished the most.

After that first day of ACT, my mind had opened to a completely new way of looking at painful thoughts and feelings. I won't lie; I was feeling nervous about the prospect of being vulnerable and leaning into my emotional pain.

However, I was also excited: I was beginning to see that emotional avoidance certainly wasn't the key to a better life.

-Jenna, Lived Experience Peer Support Worker

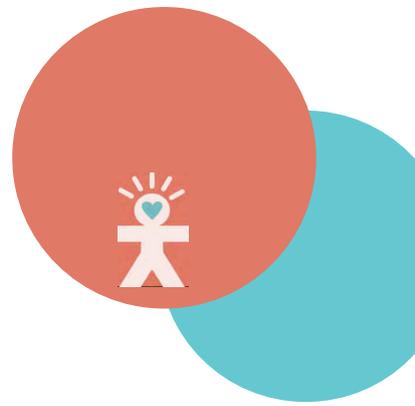
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*However, I was also excited: I was beginning to see that emotional avoidance certainly wasn't the key to a better life.*



# 50 SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES TO DO AT HOME

- Watch a movie you enjoy
- Incorporate stretch into your routine
- Read a book or a magazine
- Listen to a podcast
- Try some creative writing
- Yoga
- Tend to your indoor plants
- Take a warm shower/bath
- Switch off from social media
- Light your favourite candle
- Jigsaw puzzle
- Give yourself a hand massage
- Make a gift or a card for a friend
- Learn a musical instrument
- Research a topic that interests you
- Rearrange your books alphabetically
- Wear your favourite clothes
- Try beading/jewelry making
- Find a new recipe and cook up a nice meal
- Tidy a part of the house
- Call a friend
- Watch the sunset/sunrise
- Practice positive affirmations in the mirror
- Bake a cake
- Practice some breathing techniques
- Listen to your favourite music
- Practice mindfulness
- Create a vision board
- Organise your wardrobe
- Explore the world of self care apps
- Complete a crossword puzzle
- Take a nap
- Give yourself a manicure
- Watch something that makes you laugh
- Have a cup of tea outside
- Start writing a journal
- Learn how to knit or sew
- Mediate
- Hang out with your pet
- Take a Youtube class/tutorial
- Write down what you are grateful for
- Look at your photo albums
- Explore a sleep routine
- Create a to-do list
- Restyle a room in your home
- Start a blog
- Make yourself a hot drink
- Create a wellness plan



# Peer Support Word Search

Got a spare half hour? Feel free to complete this word search based on the values of peer work.

GBXKNOWLEDGEGPC  
RECOVERYFGYCERF  
QUALIFIEDRUCXOS  
EXPERIENCENEPFU  
CONNECTIONDWEEP  
LXQLOOWEPMEERSP  
BJESLLSNEERLTSO  
AWRMVLHGENSELIR  
ADSDEAOARTTBSOT  
HFVTZBPGIOAEENW  
JVDOQOEAEARNINAV  
WDWWCRRGDIDNBLR  
LJBDXAKSUNIGTMW  
KQNKDTCXJGNYPFI  
MSAKKEKYFCGQHQL

understanding	professional	experience	collaborate
wellbeing	qualified	advocacy	support
connection	recovery	engage	peer
expertise	mentoring	knowledge	hope

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# Social Connection Challenge

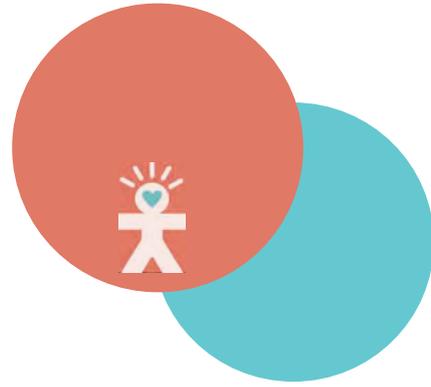
Are you ready to get creative!?

Join us as we challenge ourselves to connect socially.

Let us know how you're going on Facebook!

#letssconnect

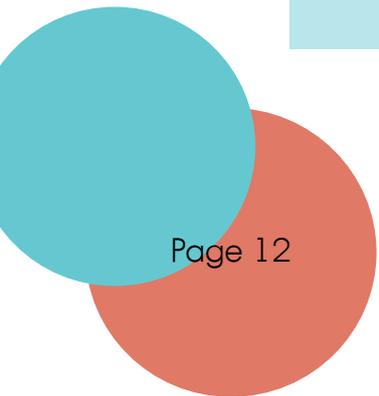
- Start a Facebook group and post something you learn each day
- Find online group games like drafts, chess or scrabble
- Take up an online yoga class each day to stay fit
- Put some hand written notes in your elderly neighbours letter boxes
- Write a group story - each person takes it in turns at writing a sentence
- Cook the same meal as a friend and share it together on video chat
- Create a competition with your friends - who can read a book faster?
- Download the House Party App - play games with friends on video chat
- Start a podcast on how you're going - interview your friends
- Go old school - call a friend - check on old friends
- Find an online community or forum that discusses something you enjoy
- Start a blog and share it online - ask for people to comment and relate
- Skype or Facetime with others - make the extra effort to connect visually
- Start a video chat and teach your friends a dance or a new skill



# Daily Schedule

It can be helpful to write up a schedule of activities that you can do today. A daily schedule can be motivating if you are feeling depressed – it can help keep you active. Likewise a daily schedule can assist if you are feeling overwhelmed – it can help you plan and prioritise. Remember to put in at least one self-care activity each day!

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			





# Ana's 3 Ingredient Peanut Butter Cookies!

## NOTES

One day, when I was about sixteen or so, I was sick and staying home from school. Everything was fine and I was enjoying my time watching daytime TV and wearing my PJ's, when suddenly the cravings hit for something sweet. I immediately raided the fridge and pantry but feeling unsatisfied with muesli bars and nut mix, I realised I needed to get creative with limited supplies. After some quick research on the net, I found the perfect solution! 3 Ingredient Peanut Butter Cookies. Not only was it easy and quick to make but all the ingredients were things commonly found in the household!

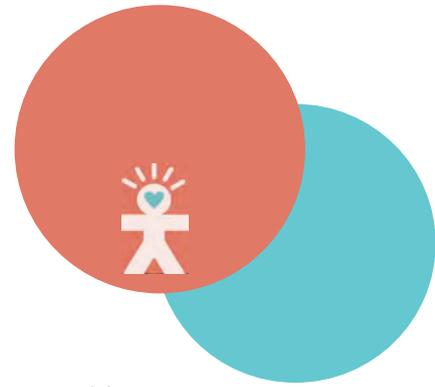
- 1** Add 1 cup of sugar, 1 cup of peanut butter, and 1 egg into a mixing bowl
- 2** Using your hands, take the dough and roll into small balls
- 3** Flatten the dough balls using a fork and place mixture on a greased tray
- 4** Bake for 12-15 minutes at 160C
- 5** Allow to cool and then enjoy!

## INGREDIENTS

1 Cup of Sugar

1 Cup of Peanut Butter

1 egg

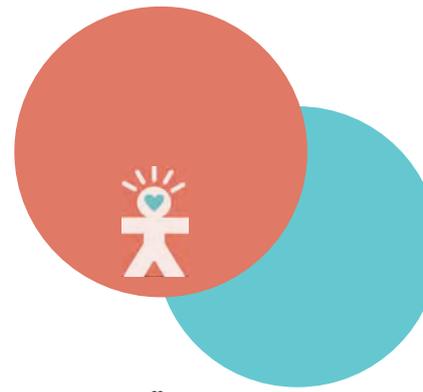


# Warning signs

It's important to notice when life starts becoming more stressful or you start to have trouble coping. A good way to do this is to notice what warning signs you can see at the time and begin to implement strategies to get you back on track. Following, brainstorm some warning signs that you notice coming up for you when life starts to get stressful, e.g. more headaches, spending all night on the computer, not eating properly etc. Then think about what kinds of strategies you could use to help combat or cope with those warning signs e.g. a relaxation CD, mindfulness skills, walk every day, pre-prepare food, listen to music etc.

Warning Signs	Strategies
<i>I start to get lots of headaches.</i>	<i>Go to bed early for a couple of nights this week.</i>

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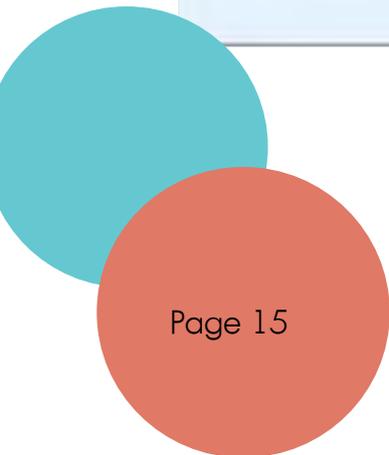


# Triggers

Another way to help you cope with stressful times is to consider those things that trigger or set off stress for you. In this way you can be as prepared as possible. Triggers may include visiting relatives, illness, busy periods, special occasions etc. Again brainstorm strategies that you can use around the time of the trigger, to help you cope.

Triggers	Strategies
<i>My birthday.</i>	<i>On the day, take myself to the beach and mindfully eat my favourite meal for lunch.</i>

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# Daily Wellbeing Reminders

- Spent some time outside my bedroom
- Drank some water
- Took my medications/vitamins
- Did something nice and self-caring (Tip: DIY Face Scrubs)
- Got enough sleep
- Had a shower
- Had a nourishing breakfast, lunch, and dinner
- Connected with friends and family
- Did an activity I enjoyed

## DIY Facial Scrub

Try mixing the following ingredients together for a soothing (and yummy) scrub!

1. Add 3 table spoons of olive oil to a small bowl
2. Stir in a 1/2 cup of sugar
3. Mix ingredients together
4. Massage the scrub onto skin for 60 seconds into circular motions
5. Rinse with water and towel dry



# Gratitude Checklist

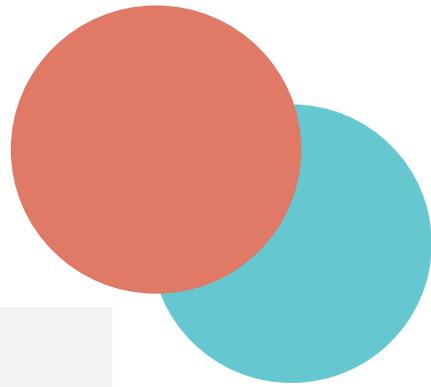
Sometimes it can be helpful to think about all of the things that we are grateful for in life, no matter how big or small! We might be grateful to pat our dog, drink a tea, or have a nice conversation with someone. List all of those things that you are grateful for.

Five things that I am grateful for:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Four places that I love to go to:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



Three people I can count on

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Two things I worked hard to achieve

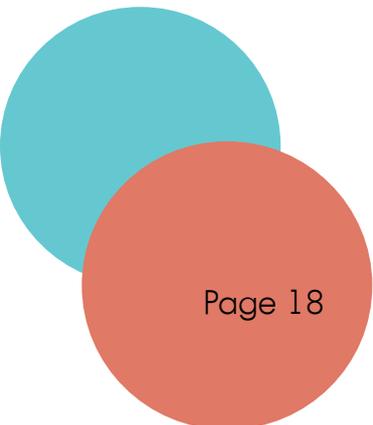
- 1.
- 2.

One thing that is going well right now

- 1.

Three things to look forward to:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



# Links to Wellbeing

Lived Experience Telephone Support Service

## My Wellbeing Plan

List the things that help keep you well...

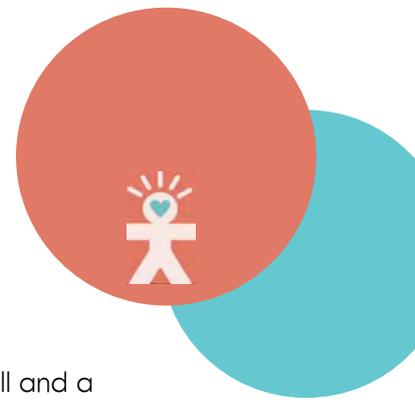
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.



**Phone: 1800 013 755**

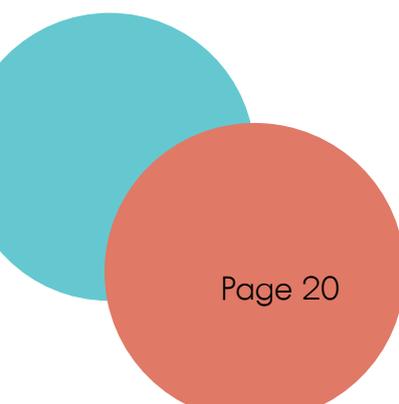
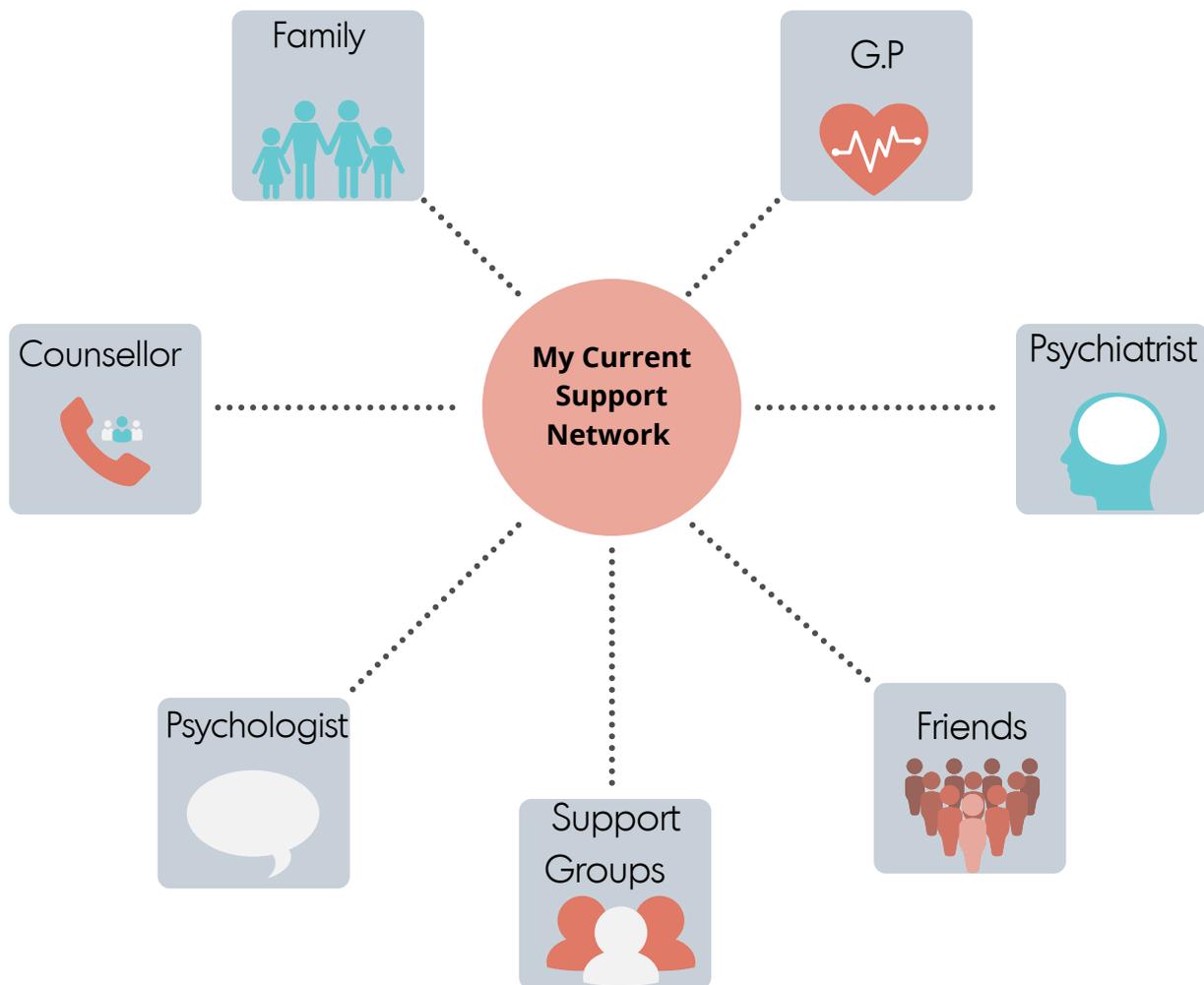
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If you would like to have this as a fridge magnet please send us an email on [letss@skylight.org.au](mailto:letss@skylight.org.au). we will send you one in the mail



# My Support Network

Having a plan about who to contact when you are not travelling so well and a quick list, can make seeking help easier. It can also help you feel more in control of the situation; you decide who to reach out to and when to contact them. Consider people or services that you may be able to contact when you need support, here are some ideas:



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Due to recent events, at LETSS we get that our usual supports are not always accessible or available in person. This is why it can be helpful to have a brainstorm about who you can contact or how you can gain support from home.

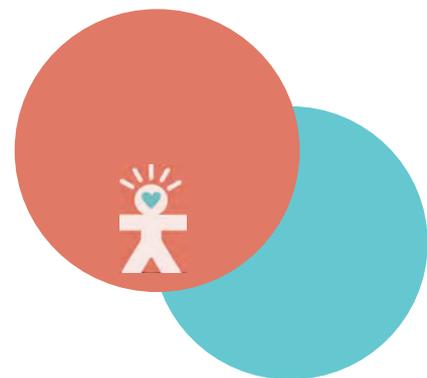
**Links to Wellbeing**

# My Support Network



Person/Service	When to call	Contact Details
LETSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When I need information about supports and referrals to services</li> <li>• When I'm not coping and need support to develop strategies</li> <li>• Short episode informal counselling</li> </ul>	1800 013 755

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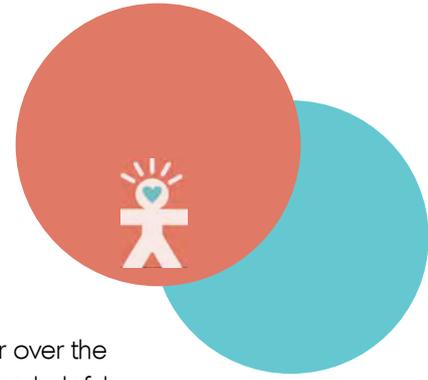


# My Support Network

Sometimes we may not feel like talking to people that we personally know or perhaps we just want some extra support! That's when it can be helpful to have a list of services that you can contact over the phone! Here are some ideas

 <p>LETSS Ph. 1800 013 755 5pm - 11:30pm 365 days a year</p>	 <p>Beyond Blue Ph. 1300 224 636 24/7</p>
 <p>1800RESPECT 1800 Respect Ph. 1800 737 732 24/7</p>	 <p>Lifeline Saving Lives Crisis Support. Suicide Prevention. Lifeline Ph. 13 11 14 24/7</p>
 <p>Qlife Ph. 1800 184 527 3pm - 12am 365 days a year</p>	 <p>Samaritans Ph. 116 123 24/7</p>
 <p>Suicide Call Back Service Ph. 1300 659 467 24/7</p>	 <p>Kids Helpline Ph. 1800 55 1800 24/7</p>

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# My Support Network

Sometimes we may not feel comfortable talking to anyone face-to-face or over the phone! In those moments, there are plenty of online resources which can be helpful to help you cope with how you are feeling. Whether it is connecting with peers or using self-help worksheet, below are some suggestions

Beyond Blue offers a free and safe online space for discussion and support from peers

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/online-forums>



Sane offers forums that are full of people who care and want to be able to offer their support!

<https://www.sane.org/forums>



E-Couch is an interactive online self-help program which provides evidence-based information and self-help tools!

<https://ecouch.anu.edu.au/welcome>



MindSpot Clinic can provide a number of online courses to help people manage symptoms of depression

<https://mindspot.org.au/>



MoodGym is a free and interactive online resource that helps people learn how to cope with depression and anxiety

<https://moodgym.com.au/>



The Centre of Clinical Interventions provides a range of free self-help worksheets and modules for a range of mental health conditions.

<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself>



The LETSS blog provides mental health related blog posts written by people who have experienced a mental health condition

<https://www.letss.org.au/index.php/individual-blog>



The SANE blog provides a range of mental health related articles including stories from people experiencing mental health concerns

<https://www.sane.org/information-stories/the-sane-blog>



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# Lived Experience Telephone Support Service

# 1800 013 755

webchat:

## letss.org.au

Mental health support for everyone in the  
Adelaide Metropolitan region

365 days a year  
5pm - 11:30pm

你好	שלום	السلام عليكم	γεια σας	Xin chào	Helo	Kudual
Ninna Mami	Habari	Ciao	Amakuru	سلام	ਸਵਾਹਿ	Hallo
Zdravo	Merhaba	Hola	Привет	درود	مرحبا	Bonjour