

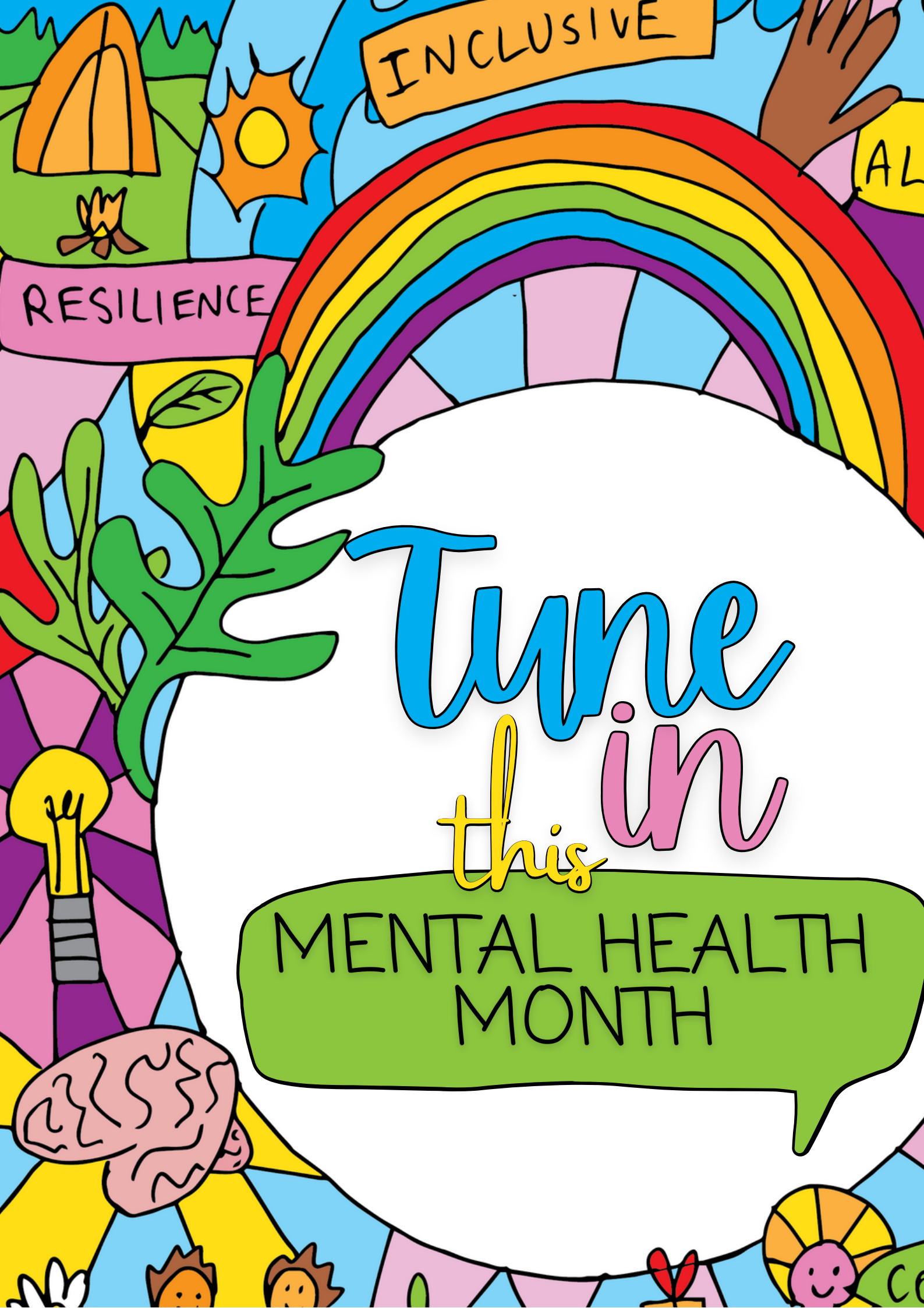
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MENTAL HEALTH
MONTH



Tune in this Mental Health Month

Mental Health Month is a chance to promote activities and ideas that can have a positive impact on our daily lives and the lives of others. These events and messages are tied together with a specific theme, and this year's is "Tune In"

Most of us have faced some big challenges over the last few years. Tuning in to ourselves and others can help rebuild connections and communities and can help us learn from and lean on others.

So, how can we Tune In?

Tune in to yourself – what you can sense within yourself and around you?

Tune in to communities and connections – what's happening that you can be part of and help others be part of?

Tune in to hope and learning – What's given others hope, what have others found useful? What can you share with others?

Tune in to be a mental health ally – how does stigma impact people? How can we help challenge stigma?

Tuning In means being present.

It means being aware of what is happening within you, and in the world around you.



The Bigger Picture


Often, we only talk about mental health as an individual responsibility, but lots of things outside our control contribute to mental health.

Things like discrimination, inequality, intergenerational trauma, access to services, and government policies can negatively impact people's and communities' mental health.

During Mental Health Month we all have a chance to Tune In to things we can do as individuals for our own, and others' mental health, but without organisations and groups doing work on the bigger picture, outside factors will continue to impact individual's mental health and wellbeing.

At WayAhead we work to change the Bigger Picture through research, advocacy, policy, submissions, and community support. Our work is evidence-based and co-designed with people with lived experience. We work with other organisations that share our values to support and promote their work.

Creating a world where people can create their own best possible mental health means creating a world where all systems, structures, policies, and services support this vision. We aren't there yet, but we'll keep working until we get there.



This factsheet has information and a few activities to help you tune in. Each section has some ideas, information, and things you can do to Tune In

Tune in to Learning

Here are some of the terms we use in this tool kit -

Mental health:

Mental health is the general state of a person's mental wellbeing. Similar to physical health, we all have a current state of mental health, which can change over time, and in response to the world. It's also sometimes called "mental wellbeing".

Social and Emotional Wellbeing:

This term originated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and is often preferred to "mental health". It describes the social, emotional, cultural, and spiritual wellbeing of a person, and acknowledges the ways these can interact to impact a person's wellbeing. The term also recognises the importance of connection to Country, and that policies (past and present), past and current events, social attitudes (such as racism), and intergenerational trauma can all impact an individual's social and emotional wellbeing.

Mental distress:

A term used to describe a negative experience a person may be having, rather than a diagnostic term. Everyone will experience mental distress, not just people who have been given a mental health related diagnosis.

Mental ill-health:

A state where our mental health negatively impacts on our ability to think, feel and respond to others. This may occur in response to life events and stressors and may resolve over time or when stress is reduced.

Mental illness:

This term is generally best to avoid. The term "mental illness" can add to social stigma surrounding mental health, so it's important to understand what it refers to, and to avoid using it where possible. Mental illness refers specifically to a clinical diagnosis. They usually describe various mental health symptoms which can interfere with an individual's cognitive, emotional or social skills. The "illness" medical model is only one way of understanding mental health.

Many people prefer not to use the term "mental illness" as it reduces complex experiences to a medical diagnosis.

The preferred term is "person/people with a lived experience of mental illness/mental ill-health" – never "mentally ill person" – though if referring to an individual, ask them what terms they use to describe themselves.

DO YOU NEED SOME MORE SUPPORT?

mentalhealthmonth.org.au - access all our Mental Health Month resources

wayahead.org.au - find out more about WayAhead's programs and resources

wayaheaddirectory.org.au - an online directory of mental health and community services, searchable by location and support type.

1300 794 991 - WayAhead's Mental Health Information Service (9am – 5pm, Monday – Friday) for advice and support.

(02) 9912 3851 - If you are from a culturally or linguistically diverse background, you can also contact the Transcultural Mental Health Centre Information and Clinical Consultation Line.

1300 554 660 - Carer Connection Helpline in NSW, supported by Mental Health Carers NSW assists mental health carers in navigating the NSW mental health system.

Finally, if you don't find the right help the first time, it's important to keep trying. It's okay to ask again or to talk to another mental health professional until you find the support and help that is right for you.

For all emergencies call 000

13 11 14 – Lifeline, available 24/7
1300 659 467 – Suicide Call Back Service
1300 789 978 – MensLine Australia
1800 55 1800 – Kids Help Line
1800 656 463 – Domestic Violence line

1800 737 732 (1800Respect) – National Sexual Assault, Domestic & Family Violence counselling service
1800 250 015 – Alcohol & Drug Info Services (ADIS)

WayAhead acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation as the traditional custodians of this land and pay respects to Elders both past and present.



Funded by NSW Government.

The artwork for this year's Mental Health Month is by Nina Hurr. Nina Hurr is an artist with lived experience and is based in Byron Bay. The artwork celebrates all the good things in our community that keep us all mentally well. It is a reminder to keep tuning into these coping skills and things that make us happy.

WayAhead works closely with other wonderful organisations – special thanks to the Mental Health Month Reference Group, which includes experts and lived experience advocates from Western Sydney University, NSW Health, NSW Mental Health Commission, Beyond Blue, One Door Mental Health, Neami National, Mental Health Coordinating Council, Weave Youth and Community Services, ACON and University of Sydney.



WayAhead acknowledges and actively supports the culturally diverse community we work in. This includes recognising and working with the Indigenous community, the LGBTIQ+ community, multicultural Australia and people living with a mental health condition.

Mental Health Month is an initiative of WayAhead - Mental Health Association NSW. WayAhead is an ACNC registered Australian Charity, QIP accredited and funded by the NSW Government.



My Tunein

TOOLKIT



CONNECTION

HEALTH

♥ Tune In To Self ♥

Tuning In to yourself can start with checking in with yourself and asking a simple question: “what can I sense right now?”

See, touch, taste, smell, and listen to the world around you and experience the way it makes you feel. You can also ask the question “how do I feel right now?” Identifying what you feel can improve awareness of your surroundings, help focus your mind and understand what is going on inside you.

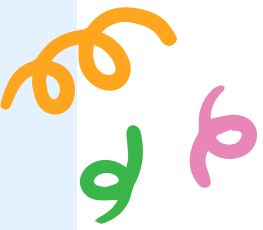
Tuning in to yourself can also mean identifying things that help or harm your own mental health.

For example, exercise may help improve your mental health and engaging in conflict might negatively impact your mental health.

It can also help to make a deliberate effort to Tune In to things that are positive, even if they are tiny. Our lives are overwhelmingly made up of small, everyday moments. Take some time to tune in to those small moments that bring pleasure, comfort, or even brief moments of quiet. This can help us notice these moments more easily in the future.

Try this

- Find a comfortable position to sit in where you won't be interrupted for a few minutes.
- Take a breath and tune in to what you can feel
- Can you feel your feet touching the ground?
- What do your clothes feel like, are they smooth? warm?
- Are there any parts of your body that feel more pressure?
- Notice where your body is up against something else, like a chair. Is the chair hard or soft?
- Where you are not touching anything, is the air warm or cool? Can you feel a breeze?
- Taking a few minutes to tune in to your sense of touch can help you connect to yourself.



Activity

Everyone has different things that help them to tune in to themselves. Think about what sort of things appeal - circle what you think might suit you

Tune in to senses

Tune in to movement

Tune in to thoughts

Tune in to breathing

Tune in to nature

Tune in to creativity

Tune in to _____

Tune in to _____

What are some ways you already tune in to that have worked to help you feel more connected to yourself? What are some things you might like try?



Tune In To Communities & Connection

Being part of a community and connecting with others has been shown to increase resilience and help us adapt and grow when things have been challenging.

Connecting with others also builds feelings of compassion and safety, which plays a key role in wellbeing.

All communities are different, but you can ask some questions to help find the best places to start. You'll see these questions in the activity box below.

It's important when doing community work that we check in with ourselves and ensure what we are doing is sustainable for us – not pushing ourselves too far. Take time out to tune in to yourself regularly and ask for support when you need it.

How can I contribute to my community sustainably? What skills are needed?

Are there ways I am able to help my friends and neighbours without expecting payment or involving the state in return?

Staying present is key to connecting with others: check in with yourself, Presence and compassion is key to building good relationships.



Find out more

Finding and being part of a community can be difficult if you've been experiencing distress or mental and emotional health challenges.

Connecting with others who have been through something similar can be really helpful.

The winners of the 2018 Mental Health Matters Award for Mental Health Promotion, Connections Broken Hill, connect people with lived experience of mental ill-health through accessible social events, and they have built an incredible community.

You can search the WayAhead directory for peer services near you – directory.wayahead.org.au



CONNECTION

Activity



What communities are you part of? This could be local, cultural, social, educational or work, or common interests like sports.

What are some ways your community is connected? (events, social media, newsletters?)

What skills do I have that I can contribute to my community?

What would make my communities easier to connect with for myself and others?



Tune In To Hope & Learning

The last few years have been incredibly challenging, and many of us have experienced times where we haven't felt a strong sense of hope. Hope plays a big role in helping us get through tough situations, but it's not something that you can just "switch on" – it's important to acknowledge and reflect on what you're experiencing. Hope can come and go over time, we can work to help it grow when things aren't great.

One way to build up hope is to tune in to others' experiences and learn how other people got through their struggles. This could be someone you know personally, or a public figure you admire.

You can also build hope through sharing things you've learnt with others. This could be through sharing skills in person or online, or through creating something – writing, making a video or artwork, for example. Even if you don't share it, seeing how you've gotten through in the past can help you tune in to hope and learning, develop skills you already have, and even find new ones.

Get Support

Peer-to-peer support groups can be a great way to tune in to hope and learning – hearing others' stories of their journey and recovery can give hope to others, and sharing stories not only helps others learn, but can help us learn more about our own experiences.

Not sure where to go? WayAhead Anxiety support groups are safe, friendly, and accessible peer-to-peer groups for people who experience anxiety. Participants often form a bond based on the commonality of their day-to-day experiences. They learn from each other, experience relief, have fun, and become inspired by each other's journeys.

Learn more: Understandinganxiety.org.au

CONNECTION





Activity

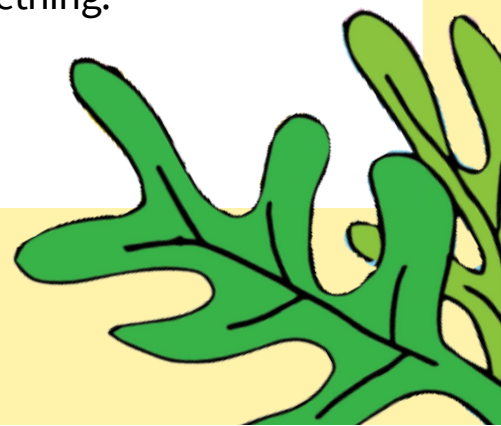
Write down some of the people that you like to learn from - this could be people you know in real life, or public figures like writers, influencers or artists.

Write down a skill you'd like to learn:

What is a small first step you can take toward learning that skill?

Write down a few words that describe how you would feel if you developed that skill:

Get creative - make something that shows a journey you've been through and how you coped. You could write a story, make a video, do a painting, collage or anything! You don't have to show it to anyone, just take your time and tune in to the process of making something.





Tune In & Be A Mental Health Ally

Everyone tells you to reach out if you're feeling mental distress, but sometimes reaching out is really hard. Stigma, shame, and prejudice all contribute to people feeling unable to reach out when they're going through tough times.

Being a mental health ally means challenging this and helping to create a world that is safer and more supportive for people experiencing difficulties with their mental health.

Negative attitudes toward mental health are everywhere and can be difficult to recognise if you're not familiar.


There's lots to learn about mental health, and the best place to start is by learning from people with their own experiences. There are lots of creators on platforms like YouTube and TikTok who share their experiences, as well as podcasts, seminars, and personal essays.

Challenging stigma also means tuning in to our own thoughts and actions. If you can talk about your emotions or mental health, you let others know it is safe for them to share as well. This can feel uncomfortable, it can go a long way to help make everyone feel safe and supported.



Language Matters

Instead of using words that stigmatise mental illness, like “crazy” or “mental” to describe things, try one of these:



Hectic

Frenzied

Extreme

Ludicrous

Horrible

Write your own

Laughable

Unbelievable

Obnoxious

Outrageous

Intense

Foolish

Absurd

Despicable

Activity

One of the factors in mental health stigma is that we don't always see everything a person has going on – kind of like an iceberg. Choose one of these words to put at the tip of the iceberg, then on the bottom of the iceberg, write down all the things that might be going on “under the surface”

Angry

Frantic

Crying

Withdrawn

Agitated

Distracted

