

Community Group/Club Suicide and Mental Health Awareness Guide



Disclaimer

The information in this guide is for general use only. While Neami National has made every effort to ensure the information in this guide is accurate, the advice within it may not apply to all circumstances. Neami National is not responsible for the suitability of the information for your organisation's specific circumstances, or any actions taken as a result of the information included in this guide. You must make your own assessment of the information contained in this document and whether or not you choose to rely on it.

Acknowledgments

This resource was prepared by Perth Metropolitan Suicide Prevention Coordinators with members of the Metropolitan Suicide Postvention Development Group and the Metropolitan Suicide Reference Group.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed.

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The most up-to-date version of this resource will be on our website here:

www.neaminational.org.au/find-services/perth-metro-suicide-prevention-coordination 

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This document discusses suicide and related topics that may be upsetting for some readers, in particular those who are recently bereaved. If you feel overwhelmed or distressed please seek out a trusted friend for support or call one of the phone lines below.

Immediate assistance in an emergency, do not hesitate to call emergency services; 000

Crisis Support Phone Lines

- **Lifeline Australia** – 13 11 14 – www.lifeline.org.au
- **Kids Helpline** – 1800 55 1800 – www.kidshelpline.com.au
- **MensLine Australia** – 1300 78 99 78 – www.mensline.org.au
- **Suicide Call Back Service** – 1300 659 467 – www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
- **Beyond Blue** – 1300 22 4636 – www.beyondblue.org.au
- **Open Arms - Veterans and Families Counselling** – 1800 011 046
- **Samaritans** – 135 247
- **Q Life (LGBTIQ+ support)** – 1800184527
- **Translation and Interpreting Support Service** (Services for club members whose first language is not English) – 131 450 – www.tisnational.gov.au
- **National Relay Service** is an Australia-wide phone service for people who are deaf, have hearing impairment and/or speech impairment and people wanting to communicate with them – 113 557 or TTY 1800 555 630 – www.communications.gov.au/what-we-do/phone/services-people-disability/accesshub



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What is this Guide



This document has been written to help community club or group officials and volunteers to assist with responding to and raising awareness of mental health issues and suicide prevention. It assumes limited knowledge of mental health issues and draws on various existing published guidelines to provide basic suicide prevention information, helpful tips and links to other resources. It is not the club's role to offer counselling or medical supervision but clubs can play a key role in providing support to its members and building a culture that reduces the stigma of help-seeking.

This guide integrates with the WA State Government Think Mental Health public education campaign www.thinkmentalhealthwa.com.au  and should be used in conjunction with the Think Mental Health Toolkit.

The toolkit includes:

- Posters and social media posts that can be used for the club
- Advice on appropriate mental health-related message placement on club websites
- Information on where members can seek further advice or support
- Links to other useful resources

The Community Toolkit can be found here:

www.thinkmentalhealthwa.com.au/media/1118/181214_thinkmenalhealth_communitykit_final.pdf 



Clubs and Mental Health



“ Every year, one in five Australians will experience a mental illness. So, odds are someone at your club could use support from a person around them and a mental health professional.

Clubs are the perfect place to provide a positive support network to assist with mental health. Clubs can make a huge difference in both your community and the lives of your members.¹”

As a club official it is likely you have at some point provided emotional support to members. You might have directly helped someone experiencing a mental health problem or illness or you might have had a role in promoting the mental health and wellbeing of members in other ways.

Mental health problems, especially depression and anxiety, are common within our community. Statistics show that almost 45% of Australians will experience mental illness at some point in their lifetime, with one in five Australians aged 16-85 experiencing a mental illness in any given year. Most of us will either personally experience a mental health issue or be in close contact with someone who has.

While some people may go through long-term mental health difficulties, many others experience mental ill-health for a relatively short period that can be overcome with assistance from friends, family and their mental health professional.

Almost
45%
of Australians will
experience mental illness
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**One in five
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aged 16–85**
experience a mental
illness in any given year



¹ Good Sports Healthy Minds Program Overview (June 2017) <http://goodsports.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Good-Sports-Healthy-Minds-Program-Overview.pdf>



Important Definitions



Before proceeding it is important to define some of the terms used within this guide to ensure a common understanding of their intended meaning as defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO),² and the Australian Government Department of Health.³

Mental health

The ability to cope with life stresses and the fulfilment of goals and potential.

Mental health is a critical component of overall health and wellbeing, enabling an individual to interact successfully with their family, friends, workmates and the broader community.

Mental health problem (mental health issue)

A term used to describe symptoms such as changes in emotion or behaviour not of sufficient severity to be diagnosed as a mental disorder (distress or difficulty coping during periods of stress).

Mental illness

A clinically recognisable set of symptoms or behaviours associated with distress and interference with personal functions. Beyond Blue provide the following statistics showing that no one is immune to mental illness, and you yourself or many of your members are likely to have been touched by mental illness.



Beyond Blue Developing A Work Place Mental Health Strategy – A How To Guide (January 2018) pg 4
www.headsup.org.au/docs/default-source/resources/393615_1117_bl1833_acc-2.pdf?sfvrsn=f5cf264d_6

2 Herrman, H., Saxena, S., & Moodie, R. (Eds.). (2005). *Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice*, p.19. https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/MH_Promotion_Book.pdf

3 Australian Government Department of Health. (2007). What is Mental Illness. <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-pubs-w-whatmen-toc~mental-pubs-w-whatmen-what>



What to look for



While people at risk of suicide may try to hide how they are feeling, there will often be warning signs. You might notice changes in their behaviour or be aware of major events in their life that could be affecting them. Some signs to look for include:



If you notice any warning signs or if another club member comes to you with concerns about a friend act immediately by talking to that person using the tips in the next section. If you feel out of your depth, ask the person if you can contact someone else who could help. Identify if any club members or officials have completed suicide prevention training and ask that person to assist. If this is not an option, consider calling one of the helplines listed to seek anonymous advice on how you can best support them, or call 000 if you are concerned for their immediate safety.



Tips for talking to someone



“ There is no evidence to suggest that talking to someone about suicide will increase their risk. ”

If you suspect a club member is struggling use the following tips to check in with them:

DO



- Talk to them in a quiet place
- Break the ice by talking about something neutral
- Listen without judgment
- Encourage the person to take action to seek help e.g. talking to a mental health professional or a General Practitioner
- If you have immediate concerns for their safety stay with them/plan to present to the local hospital Emergency Department or call 000



DON'T

- Ignore or avoid the person
- Try to fix their problems
- Talk about your own problems
- Say things that are dismissive or minimises their experiences e.g. “you’re worrying about nothing”, “you will feel better soon”, “you have a good life”, etc.



For more detail on how to support someone in a distressing situation see the following guides from the Mental Health Commission: www.mhc.wa.gov.au/media/2182/helping-someone-in-distress-booklet.pdf  and Orygen: www.orygen.org.au/Training/Resources/Physical-and-sexual-health/Toolkits/Supporting-mental-wellbeing-in-community-sport/MH-in-community-sports-guide-WEB 



Non-Suicidal Self Injury (Self-Harm)



What is Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI)?

Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) is a deliberate act to harm oneself without the intent to die and is aimed at reducing uncomfortable or distressing emotions. The behaviour is often repetitive in nature.⁴

“NSSI is often referred to as self-harm. Common methods of NSSI can include cutting, scratching and/or picking skin, burning, pulling hair and hitting objects or oneself. Injuries from NSSI can vary from very mild to severe. Recent research indicates that NSSI is a significant issue, with 17.2% of adolescents reporting that they have engaged in NSSI at some point.”⁵

“Self-harm and suicide are distinct and separate acts although people who self-harm are at an increased risk of suicide.”

Acts of self-harm should always be taken seriously as they can be physically dangerous and suggest an underlying mental health issue that needs professional support.

How do I help someone who self-harms?

People who self-harm may be secretive or feel ashamed about their behaviour. It helps to talk calmly and without judgment about your concerns for them. Encourage the person to discuss their issue with a GP or other health professional. Treating the underlying causes has been shown to make a long-term difference to reducing and removing the impulse to self-harm and you can tell the person that there are ways that expert help can reduce their desire to self-harm.



People who self-harm may be secretive or feel ashamed about their behaviour. It helps to talk calmly and without judgment about your concerns for them.

⁴ Department of Education Western Australia. (2018). *School response and planning guidelines for students with suicidal behaviour and non-suicidal self-injury*.

⁵ Swannell, S., Martin, G., Page, A., Hasking, P., & St John, N. (2014). *Prevalence of Non-Suicidal Self-Injury in nonclinical samples: Systematic review, meta-analysis and meta-regression. Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior, 44(3)*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sltb.12070>



If your club is touched by suicide (Postvention)⁶



When a suicide occurs, the effect on those touched by it – families, friends, communities – is immediate and potentially traumatic. The impact on a club community is no different; it often happens unexpectedly and leaves members with many questions about what to do next. Members often struggle to cope, and it can be difficult for the club community to know how to respond. In these circumstances, club officials need clear, practical and reliable information, which they can rely on for guidance and direction.

“ Postvention is psychological first aid, crisis intervention, and other support offered after a suicide to affected individuals or the community as a whole to alleviate possible negative effects of the event. ”

In the aftermath of a suicide, some affected vulnerable individuals may become at increased risk of suicide themselves. This is also known as a contagion effect and the causes behind it are complex. To reduce the risk of contagion, it is important when informing people of a suicide to avoid discussing the method used.

If your club experiences the tragedy of a suicide, these are some basic actions you can take to support members:

- Appoint an appropriate club official to be the designated contact point to liaise with the family (this could be the President or team coach).
- Identify members who have been significantly impacted and in need of a greater level of support. Maintain discretion and confidentiality.
- Gently determine whether family and friends of the deceased are open to receiving support. People experiencing a sudden loss are often in shock and may not want help straight away. When appropriate, provide information and contact details for mental health services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Arbor, Cypress or Lifeline. For further resources and information refer to the Supports After Suicide Guide www.neaminational.org.au/find-services/perth-metro-suicide-prevention-coordination
- Keep the committee and other relevant stakeholders such as coaches informed about the steps taken to provide support (in line with the family's wishes). The designated club official should brief other relevant members about: the facts of the situation, including any family wishes about information being shared or withheld. If a death is not confirmed as suicide or families have asked that the term suicide is not used, then refer to it as a “death” at this stage.
- If the club members wish to hold an event to acknowledge the loss, first liaise with the family to ensure they are comfortable with this idea. Find and engage with a counselling agency for advice on how to ensure the event is conducted safely to avoid triggering vulnerable members.

Finally, clubs should be sensitive to anniversaries, notable events, traditions the deceased enjoyed, and other major dates that might trigger reactions from members. For further information refer to the Safer Memorials Guide www.neaminational.org.au/find-services/perth-metro-suicide-prevention-coordination

The West Australian Mental Health Commission provide the following resource to assist with Postvention support www.mhc.wa.gov.au/media/1826/what-next-booklet-pdf-version.pdf

⁶ Adapted from Headspace National Youth Foundation. (2012). *Suicide Postvention Toolkit: A Guide For Secondary Schools*. <https://headspace.org.au/assets/School-Support/Compressed-Postvention-Toolkit-May-2012-FA2-LR.pdf>



Other tips to support member wellbeing




Things your club can do to reduce stigma, encourage conversations and help individuals to seek help:

- **Take note of sudden extended absences** and take the time to check in with them.

- **Place relevant information, banners and/or links on your website and Facebook pages** e.g. the ones found in the toolkit or Lifeline and other crisis lines.

- **Promote mental health messages** at events/club days.


- **Celebrate mental health awareness days** such as *R U Ok? Day*, *Men's Health Week* and *WA Mental Health Week*. A comprehensive list of dates and mental health related awareness days can be found at www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/About/events 


- **Display brochures** from local mental health providers at your club. Such as Information about support helplines placed in visible locations e.g. posters.

- Ensure the club's social events are **inclusive and accessible** to all members.

- **Implement the *Think Mental Health Community Toolkit*.**

- **Encourage members to take part in suicide prevention training** (see next section)

- **Be aware of significant dates that may be difficult times of year for individuals or the club community**, e.g. anniversary of a death, and consider ways the club can offer support. A guide to organising memorials in a safe way can be found here: www.neamination.org.au/find-services/perth-metro-suicide-prevention-coordination 

- **Develop, publish and implement a mental health policy.** An easy to use document is the Beyond Blue Heads Up Workplace Mental Health Policy Template: www.headsup.org.au/docs/default-source/resources/bl1252-template---mental-health-policy.docx?sfvrsn=4 

“ It is not the club's role to offer a counselling service or provide medical supervision. Anyone showing signs of mental distress should be encouraged to seek help and speak to their GP. If their mental distress is urgent, and you are worried about their safety, call 000. ”



Training available to community



Increasing awareness of mental illness for committee members, coaches, captains, members of an appropriate age, and parents of younger members is an important and effective way to help those facing mental health challenges.

Neami National maintain an online training calendar advertising upcoming mental health and suicide prevention training courses. There are a variety courses delivered by different service providers and most have an associated cost, though some training is free for community groups. It can be found here:

www.neaminational.org.au/find-services/perth-metro-suicide-prevention-coordination 

Training Courses Available

Start

Start is a 90-minute **online** training program that prepares trainees with the skills to recognise when someone is having thoughts of suicide and respond to keep them safe.

www.livingworks.com.au/programs/livingworks-start 

safeTalk

safeTALK is a **half-day** alertness workshop that prepares anyone over the age of 15, regardless of prior experience or training, to become a suicide-alert helper.

www.livingworks.com.au/programs/safetalk 

ASIST

In ASIST, people learn to apply a suicide intervention model. It helps caregivers recognise when someone may be at risk of suicide. It then explores how to connect with them in ways that understand and clarify that risk, increase their immediate safety and link them with further help. The training is done over 2 days.

www.livingworks.com.au/programs/asist 

Mental Health First Aid

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Australia offer a range of course to the community:

Standard MHFA –

12-hour course for adults helping other adults (suitable for delivery within communities and workplaces)

Youth MHFA –

14-hour course for adults helping adolescents (suitable for teachers, school staff, parents, coaches etc.)

Teen MHFA –

3 classroom based sessions for adolescents helping their peers (suitable for delivery in schools and community groups)

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander MHFA –

14-hour course for adults helping an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Person

Older Person MHFA –


12-hour course for adults helping an older person (suitable for aged care workers and family members)

www.mhfa.com.au/course-overview 



Deadly Thinking

Deadly Thinking is a social, emotional well-being and suicide prevention program specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, confronting core social and emotional well-being issues in a culturally appropriate and compelling way. The course is suitable for Elders, Aboriginal communities and anyone who works with Aboriginal people.

www.rrmh.com.au/programs/deadly-thinking 

CALM - Suicide Awareness Training

Available in a 1 day and half day format in person or online

CALM (Connect, Ask, Listen, Monitor) teaches you how to carry out life-saving interventions for someone who may be thinking about ending their own life. This workshop will help you recognise the subtle warning signs that are often missed or overlooked, how to open up a conversation in a comfortable manner and know what to say. Above all it will empower you to “keep CALM”. This is an evidence and lived experience informed program.

www.brainambulance.com.au/workshops---training/calm-1-day-suicide-prevention 

Opening Closets

Available in 1 day and half day formats

LGBTIQ+ individuals are at a higher risk of developing a mental health condition. The WA based organisation Living Proud. Opening Closets training package aims to help organisations tackle homophobia, transphobia and improve their accessibility and services for LGBTI community.

www.livingproud.org.au/opening-closets 



Talking about suicide with wider club community e.g. newsletters and social media⁷

Certain ways of talking about suicide can alienate members of the community, sensationalise the issue or inadvertently contribute to suicide being presented as glamorous or an option for dealing with problems.

People who are vulnerable to suicide, or bereaved by suicide, can be particularly impacted by language. Below is a summary of preferred language to use when communicating about suicide.

Issue	Problematic	Preferred
Presenting suicide as a desired outcome	'successful suicide', 'unsuccessful suicide'	'died by suicide', 'took their own life'
Associating suicide with crime or sin	'committed suicide', 'commit suicide'	'took their own life', 'suicide death'
Sensationalising suicide	'suicide epidemic'	'increasing rates', 'higher rates'
Language glamourising a suicide attempt	'failed suicide', 'suicide bid'	'suicide attempt', 'non-fatal attempt'
Gratuitous use of the term 'suicide'	'political suicide', 'suicide mission'	refrain from using the term ' <i>suicide</i> ' out of context

Some further basic points from the Australian Mindframe standards (www.mindframe-media.info) on how to discuss such issues are as follows:


- Ensure information is accurate and avoid mentioning method and location of the suicide.
- Communicating unsubstantiated, sensational, or inaccurate information can be harmful.
- Avoid simplistic explanations that suggest suicide might be the result of a single factor or event.
- It is preferable to avoid using the word 'suicide' in a headline and key search terms as these can lead vulnerable people to the story.
- Encourage people to seek help - It is important to include information on where vulnerable people can access crisis support if they are distressed by the information. A list of some suitable crisis lines can be found in the additional resources section of this document.

⁷ Everymind (2020) Reporting Suicide and Mental Ill Health: A Mindframe Resource for Media Professionals. Newcastle Australia

Talking About Suicide on Social Media

Orygen have developed guidelines for talking about suicide on social media. The following is an excerpt from the recommended guidelines:

“Before you communicate online about suicide, take some time to think about why you want to ‘share’ this post. Reflect on how your post could affect other people and whether or not there is a different way to communicate this information in a way that is safer or more helpful. It can also be helpful to be aware of some of the warning signs of suicide risk before you post online, as well as some of the suicide prevention resources offered by the ‘social media’ or online platform you are using. For example, Facebook’s Suicide Prevention Help Centre provides information on how to report suicide-related content to Facebook, as well as a number of resources and links to suicide helplines in Australia.”⁸

Please visit the page for full tips and examples. www.orygen.org.au/chatsafe/talking 

The Orygen guide also lists these considerations for posting about suicide safely on social media:

- Use Safe Language as per the Mindframe guidelines
- Be aware posts can go viral especially when facts are sensationalised causing distress for the families involved
- Posts can be permanent thus any wrong information or hurtful posts can not be taken back causing further distress
- Monitor your posts for unsafe or harmful comments as these may trigger the reader
- When posting on social media about mental health and suicide always include links to helplines and resources



⁸ Orygen. (2018). *Talking Online About Suicide*. www.orygen.org.au/chatsafe/talking



Additional resources



For immediate assistance in an emergency, do not hesitate to call emergency services 000

Crisis Support

If you need support call one of the following:

- **Lifeline Australia** – 13 11 14 – www.lifeline.org.au
- **Kids Helpline** – 1800 55 1800 – www.kidshelpline.com.au
- **MensLine Australia** – 1300 78 99 78 – www.mensline.org.au
- **Suicide Call Back Service** – 1300 659 467 – www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
- **Beyond Blue** – 1300 22 4636 – www.beyondblue.org.au
- **Open Arms - Veterans and Families Counselling** – 1800 011 046
- **Samaritans** – 135 247
- **Q Life (LGBTIQ+ support)** – 1800184527
- **Translation and Interpreting Support Service** (Services for club members whose first language is not English) – 131 450 – www.tisnational.gov.au
- **National Relay Service** is an Australia-wide phone service for people who are deaf, have hearing impairment and/or speech impairment and people wanting to communicate with them – 113 557 or TTY 1800 555 630 – www.communications.gov.au/what-we-do/phone/services-people-disability/accesshub

Helpful Websites

General Mental Health Information, guides and resources including fact sheets

- **Australian Government Mental Health Support Portal** – www.headtohealth.gov.au
- **West Australian State Government mental health campaign** – www.thinkmentalhealthwa.com.au
- **Black Dog Institute** – www.blackdoginstitute.org.au
- **Lifeline WA** – www.lifelinewa.org.au
- **Headspace (Youth)** – www.headspace.org.au
- **Sane Australia** – www.sane.org.au
- **Standby Support After Suicide** – www.standbysupport.com.au
- **Sudden Loss Booklet Tasmania Government** – www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/47354/DHHS_Sudden_Loss_Kit_Booklet_v3.pdf
- **WA Mental Health Commission Resources** – www.mhc.wa.gov.au/reports-and-resources/resources/mental-health-resources/
- **Beyond Blue** – www.beyondblue.org.au/home



Multicultural Mental Health Information

- **The Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)** provides free access to phone and on-site interpreting services in over 150 languages – Ph 131 450
- **Health Translations Director** provides links to over 12,000 reliable multilingual resources covering a range of health topics (including mental health) at the Health Translations Directory – www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au
- **The Engage Mental Health website** provides health resources in multiple language and information on services and multicultural groups in your area – www.embracementalhealth.org.au

Carers Supports and Information

- **Carer support and advice – Mental Illness Fellowship WA** – www.mifwa.org.au
- **Carers WA** – www.carerswa.asn.au

Aboriginal Mental Health Resources

- **Strong Spirit Strong Mind** – www.strongspiritstrongmind.com.au
- **Social, emotional and cultural wellbeing online resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People** – www.wellmob.org.au
- **National Indigenous Postvention Service** - The National Indigenous Postvention Service (NIPS) supports individuals, families, and communities affected by suicide or other significant trauma – www.thirrili.com.au/nips

Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) Resources and supports

- **LGBTIQ+ Support** – [www.qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au)
- **LGBTIQ+ Support Friends and Family** – www.pflagwa.org.au
- **LGBTI+ Transfolk of WA support for Trans people and family** – www.transfolkofwa.org

Sporting Club Mental Health Resources

- **Good Sports – Healthy Minds program for Clubs** – www.goodsports.com.au/programs/healthy-minds
- **Orygen Mental Health Toolkit for Community Clubs with members 12–17 years old** – www.orygen.org.au/Training/Resources/Physical-and-sexual-health/Toolkits/Supporting-mental-wellbeing-in-community-sport
- **Beyond Blue Guide Developing a Mental Health Strategy for your Organisation** – www.headsup.org.au/training-and-resources/getting-started-pack
- **West Australian Government Act Belong Commit Campaign to keep people to join community groups** – www.actbelongcommit.org.au
- **R U Ok Community Guides including Hey Sport Materials** – www.ruok.org.au/community
- **Movember's Ahead of the Game** – www.aheadofthegame.org.au



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We acknowledge Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities as the Traditional Custodians of the land we work on and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise that their sovereignty was never ceded.



We are committed to cultivating inclusive environments for staff, consumers and carers and celebrate, value and include people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.





www.neaminational.org.au

Providing mental health, homelessness and suicide prevention support
and working to strengthen local communities.

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