What is it all about?

Each year, Mental Health Month is celebrated in NSW during the month of October. The aim of this month is to encourage all of us, whether we have experienced mental illness or not, to learn and understand the importance of looking after our mental health and wellbeing.

According to the World Health Organisation, mental health is the state of wellbeing in which every person can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and contribute to their community (WHO, 2014). Often, our views of mental health and mental illness is misguided. This can confuse us about what mental health really is and sadly, does not allow us to see its importance in our everyday lives.

Helping people learn more about their mental health can allow them to be more aware of their mental state and the wellbeing of others.

This can encourage people to seek or ask for help when things aren't going well which is also an important part of self-growth.

Learn & Grow

Thinking about this,
our theme for Mental Health Month this year is:

LEARN AND GROW

This message is simple and very important: We should all learn about mental health, know about our thoughts, feelings and take action to improve our mental wellbeing. This will help us grow towards maintaining our mental health & wellbeing.

Learning about mental health is important for good health and wellbeing in our everyday lives. It also helps breakdown any shame around mental health. We are also encouraged to learn other new and exciting things because learning can have many positive outcomes for our wellbeing. Whether it's learning at work, home or in everyday life all are essential for our mental growth and are enjoyable.

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH OCTOBER

MENTAL HEALTH MONTH 2016 - Learn and Grow

Engage your mind

Research tells us that taking part in challenging activities benefits our mental health and wellbeing. For example, leisure activities that you find interesting and/or socially engaging are linked to better mental abilities.

Regardless of age, culture, gender or if you are studying, working or retired, using the mind is a good strategy for taking care of your mental wellbeing. Learning new and challenging things is not always easy. But trying something new and getting out of our comfort zones can be rewarding and over time, relaxing. Whatever the outcome, we are taking an active approach towards looking after ourselves, particularly our mental health).

Take part in an enjoyable activity like learning to play a new instrument, picking up a hobby such as photography or engaging in formal/informal education such as learning a new language.

Regardless of our preference, making an effort to learn something new are all great ways to work our minds.

Have a mindful *moment*

Express *optimism*

Learn ways to stress less

In a world of technology, we can often feel overwhelmed with all the information we can access. While it is good to have technology always available, it can also be a large distraction in our lives . The 2015 Stress & Wellbeing report found that social media is both a cause of stress and a way of managing stress. It also mentioned that our use of social media can cause sleeping difficulties and problems with relaxation.

The most important thing for our mental health is to do everything in moderation. Try and set some tech-free time every day and take a moment to explore your surroundings, enjoy the sunshine or go for a walk. As you learn to make this important change in your daily routine, you might be motivated to engage in other enjoyable and relaxing activities.

Set a *tech-free* time

Listen to different views

We all have our own way of seeing ourselves the world and other people. No matter how hard it can be, it is important to listen to different views as it can change how we understand things and the way we act. Listening to different views about mental health can go a long way when it comes to maintaining a healthy mental wellbeing for both ourselves and others. Listening without judging people's experiences can help change the way we view mental health and mental illness. It can help to explain misunderstandings about mental health that stop us from seeking help. It can also motivate us to learn more about our mental health, take better care of ourselves and allow us to reach out to others when things aren't going well. Being open to different views can go a long way when it comes to maintaining a healthy mental wellbeing for both ourselves and others.

Share your passions with others

Having a passion or love for an activity, hobby or idea allows us to experience positive emotions and ultimately lead to helping us maintain a positive wellbeing. We may want to share something about our background, culture or an experience which can allow us to connect and engage socially and emotionally with others. This can have an ever bigger impact on us and other people. When we share something we are passionate about such as looking after the environment, or teaching guitar, we are sharing our knowledge and experience. By doing this, we may come across new ideas about what we love and allow for greater self-growth.

Share your **passion**

Remind yourself of **good times**

Volunteer to **help** others

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Do you need some more help?

Sometimes our biggest priority will be getting some help for things that are causing us problems or for changes in the way we are feeling and thinking.

Often, a good first step is having a chat to a local doctor who can refer you to someone who can help. You may be able to obtain a Medicare rebate for some sessions with a psychologist when your GP develops a management plan.

For more information on how to find help, call the Mental Health Information Service on **1300 794 991** (9am – 5pm, Monday - Friday) or the NSW Mental Health Line on **1800 011 511** (24hrs). Another option is to go online for more information of mental health services via **www.wayahead.org.au**

If you would like more information regarding mental health, support or about maintaining wellbeing visit our website **www.wayahead.org.au** to download and view our numerous factsheets and support programs.

If you need to talk to someone now call Lifeline on **13 11 14**

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

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

Mental Health Month is supported by

Mental Health Month factsheet acknowledges the support of our partner

Mental Health Commission of New South Wales

Transcultural Mental Health Centre

For 24/7 counselling and support

- Lifeline - **13 11 14**
- MensLine Australia - **1300 789 978**
- Suicide Call Back Service – **1300 659 467**
- Kids Help Line - **1800 55 1800**
- National Sexual Assault, Domestic & Family Violence counselling service 1800Respect – **1800 737 732**
- Domestic Violence line – **1800 656 463**

These numbers are either free or the cost of a local call.

WayAhead
Mental Health Association NSW

WayAhead - Mental Health Association NSW (WayAhead) is a community-based organisation and registered charity that has worked since 1932 to address stigma and to promote mental health and wellbeing through education, support and advocacy in NSW. Our vision is a society that understands, values, and actively supports the best possible mental health and wellbeing.

Our programs include:

- Mental health promotion, including coordinating Mental Health Month in NSW
- Workplace Health Promotion Network, working to improve employee wellbeing
- Anxiety support and self-help groups – for more information, please visit **www.understandinganxiety.org.au**
- Small Steps, providing education to teachers and parents about anxiety in children
- A mental health information and referral service and database **www.wayahead.org.au** or call **1300 794 991**