

Activation Guide

The tools and resources to easily set up an event to raise awareness about mental health and have some fun. Together we can all play a role in Mental Health Month!



About Mental Health Month



Each October, WayAhead runs Mental Health Month in NSW which gives all of us the opportunity to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing. 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. It is also a time where we can focus on growing our knowledge around how to care for our own mental health, as well as what we can do to seek help. This year there is a new theme for Mental Health Month developed by WayAhead in collaboration with the community and other organisations using research and lived-experience experts. This year's theme is...

We all have a role to play



This year's theme is about connecting with people around you and coming together as a community. We are looking at all the different roles that organisations, communities, groups and individuals play in creating better mental health for all. Whether it's taking time to care for yourself, caring for someone close to you, supporting your community to be more mental health aware, or being a mental health ally. Making a world free from mental health stigma, and more inclusive for people who are going through tough times takes all of us!



Resources

New fact sheets, posters and informational resources will be developed and released this year. Be sure to order your free resources suitable for your event.

Orders open on the 3rd of July!

Share your success

Please tag us in your Mental Health Month social media posts! @wayaheadmentalhealth

Be sure to add your event to our calendar of events.

[Submit an Event | Mental Health Month \(wayahead.org.au\)](https://wayahead.org.au)



Community Champion



Community Champions connect their community with Mental Health Month. As a community champion you will be supporting community engagement and positive mental health. This may be within your local area, sports team, club or cultural group, or even within a hobby or special interest group.

Here are some ways you could be a Mental Health Month Community Champion:

RUN A SERVICE EXPO

Provide your community with an opportunity to engage, learn and find support services to support their wellbeing. Invite local services providers and professionals to be a part of a locally run exhibition event.

Checklist:

1. **Find a venue** - a local park, community hall or service provider
2. **Collaborate with local service providers** - Connect with a wide variety of service providers that your community will benefit from including WayAhead resources and directory services
3. **Connect with local council** - Seek support for advertising, venue or monetary assistance
4. **Advertise** - Add your event details to our poster and share with local council, schools, libraries or groups
5. **Event logistics** - Plan and find support for registrations, equipment needed, food supply, set up/pack down, etc.
6. **Think about access** - Plan a range of options to help people access the event, this might include a courtesy bus, Auslan and/or community language interpreters, quiet spaces, and accessible amenities
7. **Champion the event** - Have fun and keep promoting mental health awareness at the event

Bonus: find a local provider/ individuals/ carer with lived experience to tell an inspiring story of recovery to the community.

SET UP A BBQ

Organise a Mental Health Month BBQ to engage your community on the roles they can play this Mental Health Month. Boost your event with a skill or activity that the community would love.

Checklist:

1. **Date & location** - Choose a date and location suitable for most of the community you are hoping to attend. Including creating a backup weather plan
2. **Budget** - Determine a budget and whether you want to set up tickets, donation-based food or a free event
3. **Menu** - Source local, feasible, dietary friendly catering options – think about partnering with local grocer/ restaurant
4. **Invitations** - Promote your event to the target community or advertise to the broader community through the local newspaper and flyers
5. **Entertainment & set-up** - Plan for some entertainment, music and/or decorations as well as practical things like tables, chairs and serving utensils
6. **Think about access** - Plan a range of options to help people access the event, this might include a courtesy bus, Auslan and/or community language interpreters, quiet spaces, and accessible amenities
7. **Champion the event** - Create a safe, inclusive space to raise awareness around mental health and connect as a community

Bonus: Add an activity that promotes wellbeing by partnering with another community champion. This may be an art therapy class or yoga flow!

School Superstar



School Superstars bring Mental Health Month to their school. Whether you are a student or staff member, schools are a great place to promote mental health and wellbeing. Your activity could assist in creating a supportive environment, reducing bullying and/or increasing a sense of belonging.

Here are some ways you could be a Mental Health Month School Superstar:

ORGANISE A MORNING TEA

A mental health morning tea is a great way to gather students and start a conversation in a non-confrontational way. Use this time to create a greater understanding of the importance of mental health on our overall wellbeing, ability to cope with stress, interactions with others and decision making.

Checklist:

1. **Plan the event** - Including time, location, invites & budget
2. **Request permission** - Ask your school for permission and support to run your event
3. **Invite guests** - Make a list of teachers, parents, students you would like to invite and spread the word e.g. Email, flyer, poster, newsletter
4. **Assign roles** - Find volunteers to help run the event and assign them a task e.g. Table set up, catering, photos
5. **Set up** - Decorate the space with Mental Health Month posters and relevant information. Remember practical things like chairs & tables as well as inviting aesthetics like tablecloths and flowers
6. **Run the event** - Encourage people to continue to engage in Mental Health Month and find their role(s) to play



GUIDE A MINDFULNESS WALK IN SCHOOL GROUNDS

This low budget and low resource option is a great way to take a break and stay present in the moment. Mindfulness is a helpful practice to develop awareness, cultivate focus, reduce stress and improve overall wellbeing.

Mindful walking guide:

- Find a quiet place to begin and take a few deep breaths, notice where you feel tension in the body and try let go of the tension
- Start walking slowly and see what you can notice around you e.g. Smells, textures, sounds, temperature
- As you continue to walk, focus on your breath. Inhaling through the nose, noticing how it feels and slowly exhaling through the mouth
- Notice how your body feels when you walk, where your feet contact the ground
- Pause and take in more of your surroundings wherever you like on your walk
- Finish your walk in stillness, taking a few deep breaths, and notice if there is any difference in the way you feel from the beginning. You may feel lighter, calmer or more focused



Workplace Wonder

Workplace Wonders activate their workplaces to grow awareness and engage their colleagues in Mental Health Month.

Workplaces that promote mental health can create a more supportive environment with employee's wellbeing and increase job satisfaction. Workplace wellbeing is important not just for the individual but the company, as it may enhance employer reputation aiding in attracting and retaining talent while assisting in fulfilling the legal and ethical considerations for businesses to support a mentally healthy workplace.


Here are some ways you could be a Mental Health Month Workplace Wonder:



LUNCH AND LEARN

This is a great opportunity to engage your employees in education around mental health, raise awareness and decrease stigma. This can be facilitated by internal staff or sourcing an external expert in the field, an individual or carer with lived experience.

Topics to consider:

- Common disorder definitions, signs and symptoms
 - How to talk to a friend or colleague you may think needs some mental health support
 - Strategies to maintain good mental health and cope in times of high stress
 - Resilience and burnout
 - Information around employee rights, benefits and support services
 - Safe sharing of someone's experience with mental ill-health and the strategies they have been using in their recovery
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WELLBEING CHECK IN

A wellbeing check-in is a great way to identify and address factors that may be negatively impacting employee wellbeing. Listening to and addressing employee concerns can increase the sense of employee support and value, which can lead to decreased absenteeism and improved engagement.

Wellbeing check:

- Define your objectives - e.g. To measure the effectiveness of current wellbeing initiatives or to gauge overall wellbeing?
- Develop your survey - e.g. How supported do you feel by your manager?
- Distribute your survey - e.g. Via email, during a team meeting or on the intranet
- Analyse results & take action

Education Bonus: add a monthly mental health stigma fact to your wellbeing check



Incredible Individuals

Incredible Individuals are people who know they need to prioritise their own mental health. Mental Health Month is here for you to engage in as much or as little as suits you. This is a great time to connect with other people that may be going through a similar experience and explore new ways to support your mental health.

Here are some ways you could be a Mental Health Month Incredible Individual:

PARTICIPATE IN MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Attend Mental Health Month event:

- Check out our calendar of [events](#)
- Find a Mental Health Month event that looks interesting and accessible to you
- Engage with your community in a way that is beneficial for your mental health

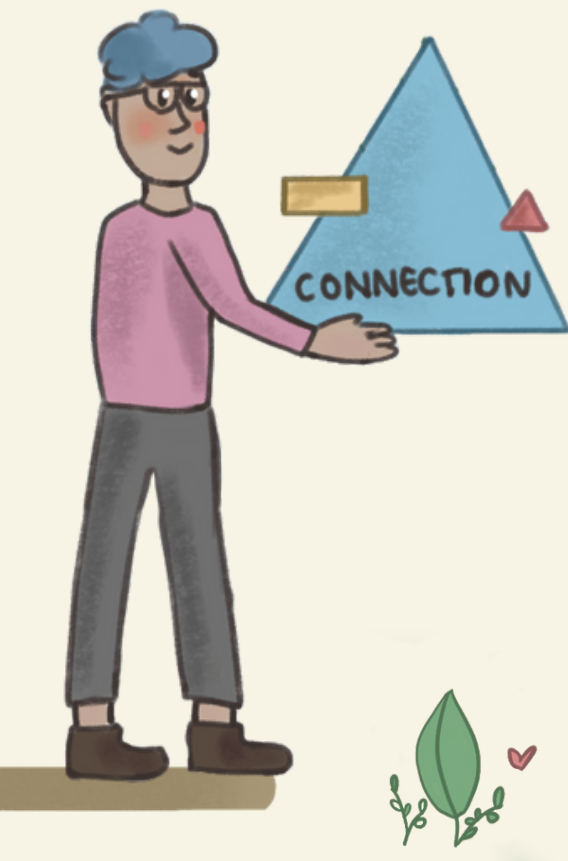
You might like to attend with someone else – a friend or family member for example – who can help you get there and can be supportive.



CONNECT WITH A PEER WORKER

Peer Worker support:

- **What is a Peer Worker?** - Someone with lived experience of mental health challenges who has received specific training to support others in their recovery journey
- **How to find a Peer Worker?** - You can find them through mental health organisations, support groups or mental health clinics. Your local Primary Health Network and Local Health District may be able to connect you with Peer Workers in your area. WayAhead runs a number of peer-led anxiety support groups, you can learn more [here](#) or at [SANE Australia](#)
- **What support can I expect?** - Depending on the type of peer support you access, you might collaborate on a recovery plan including strategies to cope with symptoms, building a supportive network and setting achievable goals
- **What is required from me?** - Together it is important to develop a trusting relationship, be open and honest about experiences and feelings and attend regular sessions





Amazing Ally

Amazing Allies are Mental Health Month supporters that can listen and provide encouragement to individuals who may be experiencing mental ill-health. They also play a key role in the community by actively decreasing stigma, shame and prejudice by understanding and advocating for individuals with lived experience.



Here are some ways you could be a Mental Health Month Amazing Ally:

SAFE SHARING SPACE

Encourage and create a connection with someone to be able to share their story. You are not a professional or there to provide advice, but an Amazing Ally.

- **Set boundaries** - Set clear guidelines for yourself and others to create a safe sharing space, acknowledging you do not have to have all the answers
- **Active listening** - Avoid distractions and focus on the individual. Create a sense of connection by acknowledging and empathising with what the person is sharing with you
- **Non-judgement** - Do not judge behaviour that may seem abnormal to you. Do not provide advice about choices one makes – that may seem judgemental
- **Normalise seeking help** - If you are comfortable, you can share your own experience of seeking help and the importance of support in mental health
- **Resource & refer** - Provide resources and refer to evidence-based research, health websites and support services, like [WayAhead](#)



ADVOCATE & SHARE

Advocacy is an ongoing effort and requires us all to continually educate and challenge ourselves and others. Allyship can take many forms and varies in scope and impact, and together we are working for a more just, equal society, supportive of mental health.

- **Expand your knowledge** - There's always more to learn when it comes to mental health. Seek out resources and information created by people with lived experiences, personal stories, and allyship resources. The WayAhead Amazing Ally pack was developed by people with lived experience, and can be found [here](#). The NSW Mental Health Commission also has a collection of [lived experience stories](#). To learn more about de-stigmatising mental health check out [Mental – The podcast to destigmatize mental health](#)
- **Educate your community** - Post Mental Health Month posters and resources around your workplace, home, community. Use your social platform to share WayAhead's stigma busting social campaign
- **Challenge stigma** - Challenge stereotypes and stigma by openly discussing issues and sharing personal stories. Speak up if you see someone being mistreated because of their mental health
- **Encourage access to mental health services** - Promote and engage with mental health services. Support organisations that provide mental health services
- **Policy advocacy** - Contact elected representatives to promote mental health care and support. Advocate for representatives supporting mental health care and support

Things We Can All Do

NOMINATE SOMEONE OR A PROJECT FOR A MENTAL HEALTH AWARD

Do you know someone or a group who is making positive impacts in the mental health space? Nominating them for a Mental Health Matters Award is a great way to help support their amazing work and spread their message.

[About the Awards | Mental Health Month](#)

APPLY FOR A SMALL GRANT

Have you already started planning a Mental Health Month event or project and need extra support? Apply for a small grant!

[Apply for a Grant | Mental Health Month October](#)

Need more information to help plan or apply? See our [Starter Kit!](#)

CHECK OUT MENTAL HEALTH MONTH EVENTS

Check out the variety of fun events around NSW and be sure to add your event to the calendar for the chance to be promoted on our socials, increase attendance numbers and message visibility.

[Submit an Event | Mental Health Month](#)

LEARN ABOUT STIGMA

Educating yourself not only empowers you in your everyday life but helps give you the tools to be an ally across all your roles.

[How to be a Mental Health Ally | Mental Health Month](#)

SHARING INFORMATION

Help spread well informed and impactful information about mental health awareness on your social media! Share our posts that you love and be sure to tag us in your wonderful events.

Follow, like, share!

RESOURCE ALLY

Show your support for Mental Health Month by displaying a poster in your workplace or adding our email signature.

[Downloadable posters, factsheets and shareables | Mental Health Month](#)



Safety Tips and Things to Consider

As we all play our roles in Mental Health Month we help to increase public awareness of mental health and wellbeing. Sometimes this increased awareness can bring up some difficult thoughts or feelings for some people. If you organise an event or project, people might approach you with varying levels of concern or distress. It's important to know how best to support them, and yourself, whilst respecting the boundaries of the event, the other person, and yourself.

BE PREPARED

It can be useful to have some information prepared that you can pass on to people who have questions you don't have answers to. Having information on-hand from local organisations can be useful for helping people determine what steps to take next. You can find information on where to get help on our [website](#) or you can search the [WayAhead Directory](#) for services in your area.

KNOW YOUR BOUNDARIES

Before the event, have a think about what your boundaries are. What do you feel confident talking about? What might you need more information or support with? When might you need to refer someone to another source of assistance? Be honest about your limitations and communicate them clearly. Remember, it's ok not to know everything yourself. Let others know if they are asking you for information or assistance that you can't immediately provide. Identify people that can support you if something comes up that is difficult or upsetting and let them know that they might need to do that for you on the day.

PRACTISE RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

Listen actively to what people are saying to you. It can help to repeat what they have said as a question to make sure you've heard them correctly. It can sometimes help to share your own experience – although you certainly don't have to – but often people just want to know that someone has heard their story. Active listening gives others a real sense that their story is important. If someone is talking with you about their mental health, they trust you to be understanding and non-judgemental. Avoid making judgements about behaviour that may seem unusual to you or giving advice about choices like diet or substance use – this advice can feel like a judgement. It can be helpful to ask if someone would like advice before offering it. A simple question like "would you like some advice, or would you prefer me to just listen?" can be really effective in creating a safe conversation. Respect that people are entitled to determine their own course of action. It is up to them what they do with the information available to them.

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAM

Remember that looking after yourself and your team is just as important as looking after others. Consider getting together before the event to have a chat about your plan and after the event to talk about how you think things went and to celebrate. Keep an eye out for each other on the day. Don't forget to make time to congratulate everyone involved (including yourself).

Information is from the Mental Health Month Event [Starter Kit](#)



**WAYAHEAD ACKNOWLEDGES
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TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF
THIS LAND AND PAY RESPECTS
TO ELDERS BOTH PAST AND
PRESENT**

**MENTAL
HEALTH
MONTH
OCTOBER**

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

WayAhead

