

# Carer Chatter

## August 2022

**Bendigo Health Mental Health Services, Carer Support Team  
Newsletter for families and carers of people with mental illness**

Hello

The Commonwealth Games are a huge event that have been very exciting for everyone involved, and for the millions of people who have watched them. Many more people, who may not have watched the games, have kept up to date on the record tally and shared in the glory and joy when Australia won a medal. However, in the midst of all the excitement one of the athletes openly spoke about the mental health challenges that he faced.



This was not so easy or pleasant to watch or hear, but it was a vital thing for him to say. It can be easy to focus on people's achievements, and ignore or overlook the personal challenges they may face, not just because of the physical demands of what they do, but also the mental and emotional strain of training, competing, and being in the public spotlight. This is true not just of athletes and celebrities, but all of us.



The lesson in this is that just because someone may smile and lead a life that seems privileged, it doesn't mean they are exempt from mental health problems. Mental health is something that everyone has, and anyone can have mental health challenges no matter how good their life may seem from the outside. Protecting one's mental health is, and should be, a priority. This is a timely reminder for us all to think about the impact that words can have. Cruel and thoughtless words, gossip, and criticism can have long-lasting effects.

So too can kindness, friendship and support. We can all make sure our legacy is positive by choosing to speak kindly to and about others, and also to and about ourselves.

*Words can hurt, but they can also heal.*

If you are having problems with your mental health, don't be afraid to acknowledge it and ask for help and support.

Best wishes from Faye, Fiona and Kelly

# Self-care questions

Carers can get so busy just doing things and looking after others that they forget to focus on their own needs, health and wellbeing. It is important to check in with yourself regularly. This can help you become more self-aware, and ensure your own health and well-being isn't being neglected. Get into the habit of asking yourself these questions at least once a week.

## Do I ...



- Exercise regularly?
- Spend time in nature?
- Eat healthy, satisfying meals?
- Laugh often?
- Allow myself to cry?
- Ask for help when I need it?
- Get enough sleep, rest and relaxation?
- Say no sometimes?
- Make time to see people that matter to me?
- Drink enough water?
- Take steps to minimise stress in my life?
- Make and keep preventive and necessary medical and dental appointments?
- Let others be the expert or in charge sometimes?
- Make time to do things that are important to me?
- Make time for self-reflection?
- Identify what is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life?
- Make my own dreams and needs a priority?
- Have relationships that feel loving and supportive?
- Read or listen to things that inspire me?
- Spend time alone?
- Notice things in my life that I am grateful for?
- Give myself love, praise and compassion?



# Save on Groceries

The cost of groceries has increased significantly in recent months. Cutting your grocery bills doesn't have to mean cutting the quality of what you eat. A few small tweaks to the way you shop might make a big difference.

**Plan ahead.** Having a weekly meal plan can help you think about what you really need to buy and help reduce wastage.

**Make a list and stick to it.** Whether you use a notebook or an app on your phone, having a list with you when you shop will save you money and time. Without one you may forget an item and make multiple trips to the supermarket, and you're more likely to make impulse buys while you're there.



**Eat less meat.** Meat can be very expensive and you only need a palm sized portion. Filling your plate with vegetables, and rice or pasta will save you money and improve your health. Lentils, eggs, nuts and fish are all great sources of protein and often much cheaper than meat. Your health and your wallet will thank you.

**Buy seasonal or frozen fruit and veg.** Produce that is in season is cheaper, and frozen is often much more cost effective because you can buy in bulk without worrying about it going bad before you use it all. It can be just as nutritious and tasty. Tinned lentils or veggies can also be a cost-effective addition to many meals.



**Cook extra.** Always make more than you need, then put your leftovers in the fridge or freezer so you've got another meal ready to go. This can be really handy for those nights when you might be tired or late. You can be creative with your leftovers too. Veggies you cook tonight can be used in a stir-fry, omelette, pie or patties tomorrow.

**Have a 'use it up day'.** Once a week go through your pantry and fridge and cook up anything that is nearing its use by date. Veggies can be used in a pot of soup, fruits can be stewed or chopped into muffins, eggs can be baked into a quiche. All of these can then be frozen for future use. You might be surprised at just how much you actually have when you start looking at things differently. Even leftover wine can be frozen for cooking.

**Bulk buy non-perishables.** Things like pasta, rice, tissues, tinned foods, long-life milk and cleaning products can be bought in bulk when they're on sale if you have the space to store them. But don't go overboard! We saw how bad that can be during the 'toilet paper wars' of 2020. An extra one or two items in reserve may be useful, 100 packets of toilet paper is not.



# Family & Carer support groups

Bendigo Family, Friends & Carers Group: 5454 7612

Cohuna Mental Health Carers: 0407 316 183

Campaspe Mental Health Carers Group: 5482 0606

Castlemaine Mental Health Carers Group: 5454 7612

Family Drug Support: 1300 368 186

Heathcote Mental Health Carers Group: 5454 7612

Kids with Confidence: 5454 7612

Macedon Ranges/Gisborne - P.S. My Family Matters: 0475 269 965

Maryborough & Districts Mental Health Carers Support Group: 0428 378 583

Rochester: 0401 406 881

Wycheproof Carers: 0428 935 275

## Important phone numbers

Mental Health Carer Support Team:

5454 7612

Bendigo Health Psychiatric Triage Service:

1300 363 788

Carer Gateway: 1800 422 737

Carers Victoria: 1800 242 636

Family Drug Support helpline: 1300 368 186

Head to Help: 1800 595 212

Independent Mental Health Advocacy:

1300 947 820

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

Lifeline (24 hours): 13 11 14

Mensline: 1300 789 978

Mental Health Complaints Commissioner:

1800 246 054

Olinda St. Mental Health Resource Centre:

5454 7670

Talk it Out Helpline: 1300 022 946

The Mental Health Tribunal: 1800 242 703

## Useful internet sites

Bendigo Health

<https://www.bendigohealth.org.au/>

Beyond Blue

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

Carer Gateway

<http://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

Carers Victoria

<http://www.carersvictoria.org.au/>

Children of People with a Mental Illness

<http://www.copmi.net.au/>

Eating Disorders Victoria

<http://www.eatingdisorders.org.au>

Loddon Mallee Mental Health Carers Network

<http://www.lmmhcn.org.au/>

Mental Health Legal Centre

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

Wellways

<https://www.wellways.org/>

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