

Mental Health



In this fact sheet you can find:

- What is mental health?
- What is a sign I need help with my mental health?
- It's OK to reach out for help.
- What can help me to feel better?
- What causes mental health problems?
- Who gets mental health problems?
- Some names of mental health problems.



NSW Council for Intellectual Disability

What is mental health?

Mental health is about how you feel.

Feelings can change how you think and what you do.

When you feel good you can cope with your life.

You can do what you usually do.

When you don't feel good it gets harder to cope.

Everyone has feelings like these sometimes:

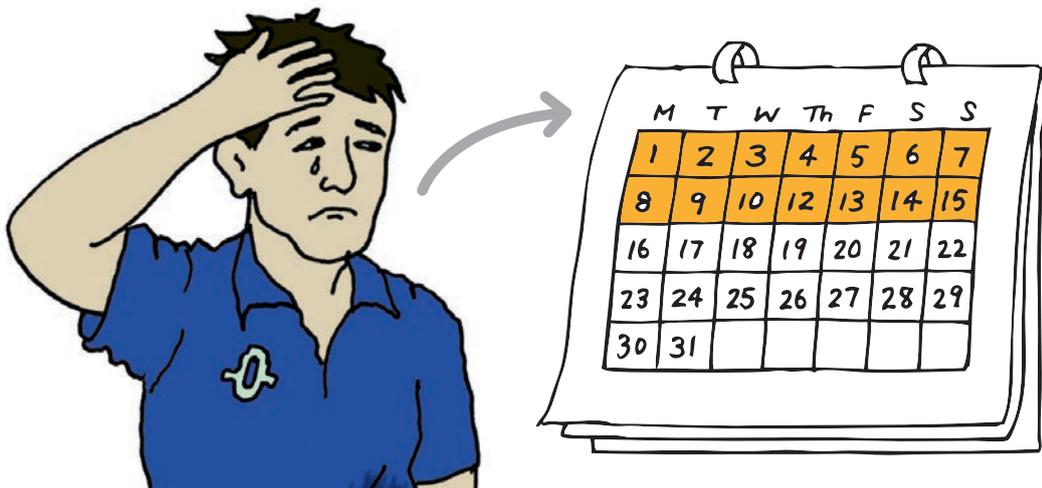
- Worried.
- Scared.
- Upset.
- Sad.
- Confused.
- Angry.

These feelings usually go away quickly. But if they last for 2 weeks or longer, or keep coming back, they can stop you coping.

This might mean you:

- Can't sleep.
- Don't feel like eating.
- Stop taking showers.
- Can't think straight.

This can be a mental health problem.



It's best to get help as soon as you can.
People can feel better if they get the right help.



What is a sign I need help with mental health?

A sign can be changes in what is normal for you.

This means changes that last for a long time. These changes make it harder for you to manage life.

Tara's story

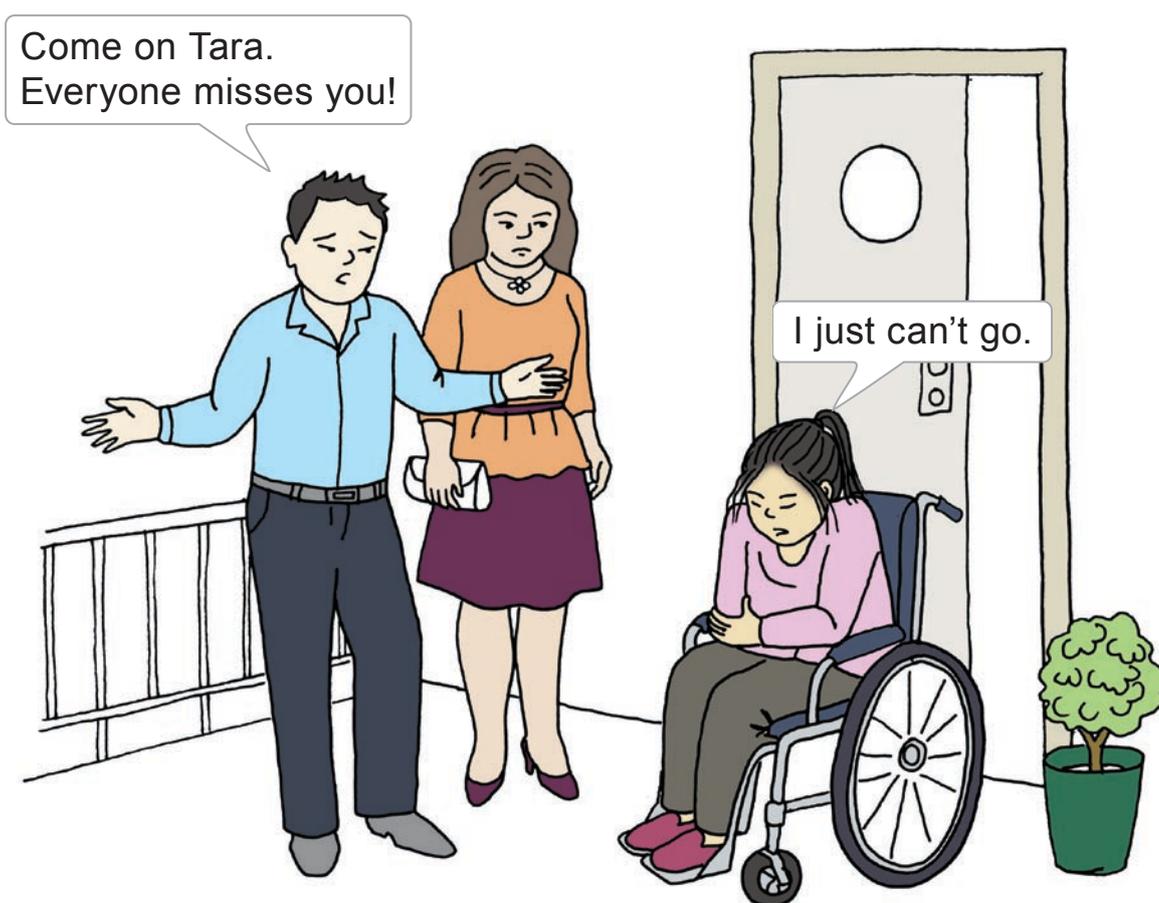
Tara loves singing karaoke at the club.

She goes every Saturday.

She hates to miss her chance to sing.



But Tara stops going to karaoke.
When friends come to pick her up, she says no.
Tara stops going out anywhere.
She stops talking to people.
She stops caring for herself.



- How you feel can change what you do.
- Sometimes changes come quickly.
- Sometimes changes come more slowly.
- Friends and family often notice the changes.

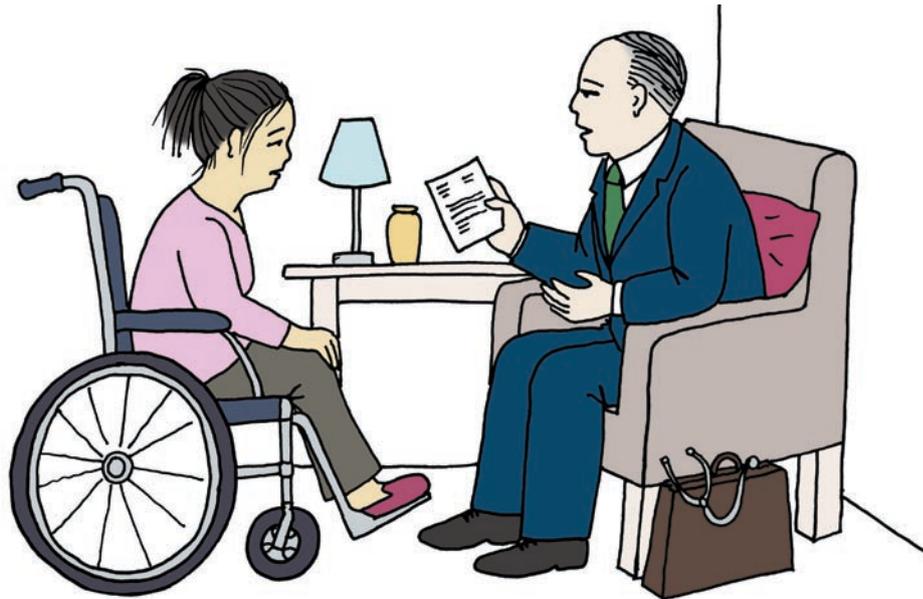
It's OK to reach out for help

Tara phoned her doctor. He came to visit her at home.

She told him how she was feeling.

He said Tara should go to a psychologist.

This is a person who knows a lot about mental health.



Choose a person in your life who you trust. Talk to them about how you feel. This person could be a:

- Friend
- Family member
- Doctor
- Telephone crisis line
- Case-worker
- Key-worker
- Community health centre
- Advocate



GP Mental Health Plan

Your doctor can make a plan with you to help you get better. Your doctor may say you need to see a mental health specialist. Medicare helps pay for this.

You must have a referral letter from your doctor.



What can help me to feel better?

It's important to find what works for you. There is usually more than 1 thing. Here are the main things that can help:

Talking treatment

Talking treatment is often called counselling. It is talking with a psychologist or psychiatrist. **This is a safe place to talk.**



Tara goes to see Maggie every week. She starts to trust Maggie. Tara tells her about some really upsetting things. Maggie understands. Together they work out how to cope.



You can choose a man or a woman for talking treatment. It's important to talk to someone you feel OK with. Your doctor may help you find someone who suits you.



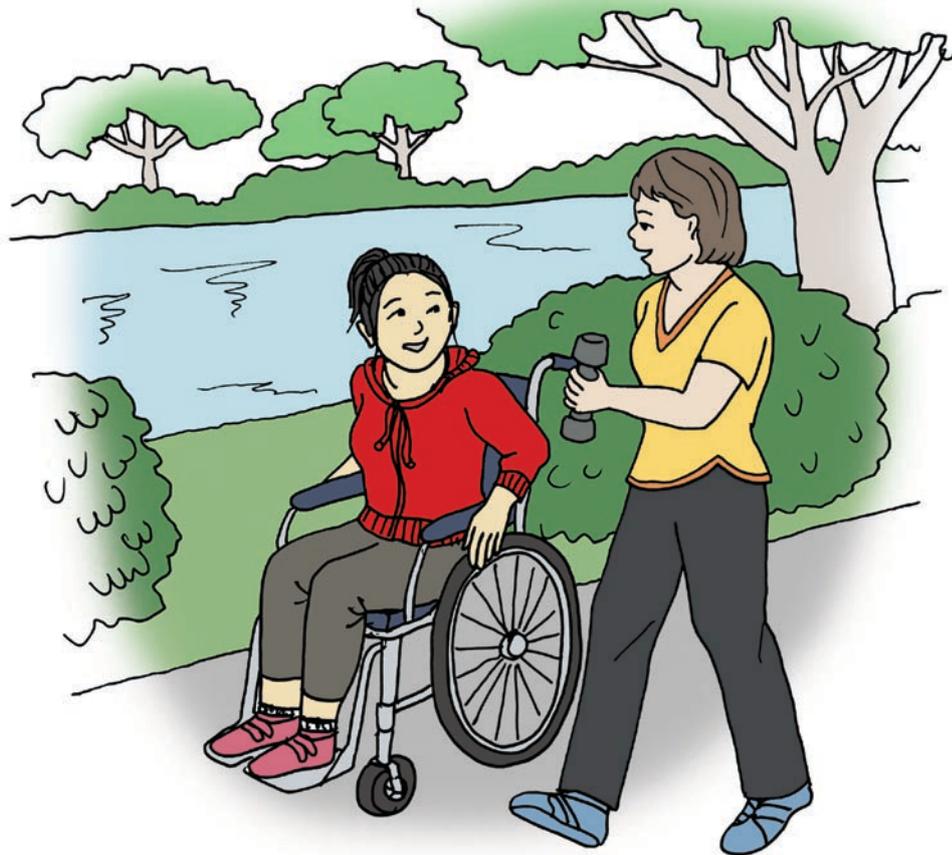
What can help me to feel better?

Getting active

Many people feel better with regular exercise.

It helps with feeling:

- More powerful and in control.
- Less angry, more calm.
- Less stressed, more calm.
- Less “down”, more “up”.
- Better about yourself.
- Less lonely, more part of things.



She asks Holly to be her exercise buddy.

They go out 3 mornings a week.



Start off with short, gentle exercise.
Build up slowly to being more active.

What can help me to feel better?

Support to make changes in your life

There can be things in your life that make you feel down.

It might be about how people treat you.

You might be bored or lonely.

I'm glad you brought this up. Please tell us what you mean.

I want to make my own choices! Ask me what I want.



Tara decides to work out a problem with her house-mates.

She calls a house meeting.

Her friend Julie comes to help Tara be strong.



- Solving problems can take time.
- Some things are easy to change.
- Some things are hard to change.
- You might need an advocate to help you speak up.

What can help me to feel better?

Taking medication (pills)

Not everyone needs medication to feel better.

Your doctor or psychiatrist might say it's a good idea for you.

They should help you find other things to try as well.

You should ask lots of questions about pills.

- What are they for?
- Why should I try them?
- What will they do?
- What could go wrong?
- How long do I have to take them?
- Are there other ways to feel better?



Tara's doctor said she needs pills for a few months.

Some people need to take pills for a much longer time.



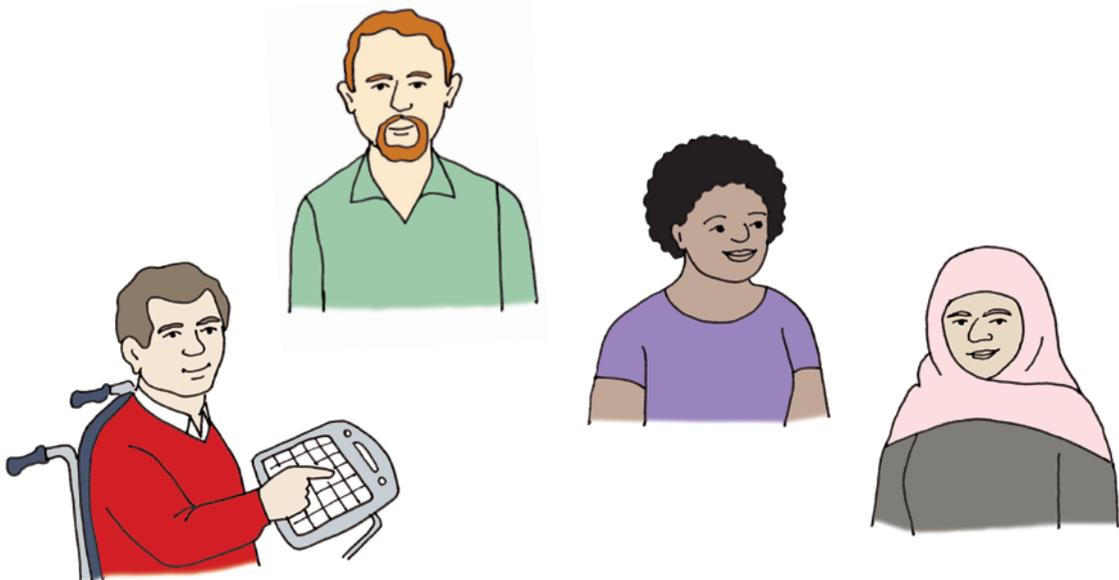
- Always tell your doctor if you feel bad after taking pills.
- Always check with your doctor before stopping or starting pills.
- You may need to try another kind of pill.
It can take time to find the right pill for you.

What can cause mental health problems?

- Too much stress.
- Difficult life experiences.
- Not knowing how to cope with your feelings.
- Family history of mental health problems.
- Grief.
- Medical reasons.
- Feeling lonely.

Who gets mental health problems?

Lots of people have a mental health problem at some time in their lives.



Intellectual disability and mental health problems are not the same!

All people need some support to have good mental health.

Some names of mental health problems

A doctor, psychologist or psychiatrist asks lots of questions about

- A person's feelings.
- About changes in what is normal for them.

They will try to find out the right info about the person.

Then they might put a name to what the person is going through.

This can help to get the right mental health care.

Depression

Schizophrenia

Psychosis

Anxiety

Bi-polar disorder

If you want to find out more about these mental health problems, you can

- Go to the websites on our links page.
- Ask your doctor for more info.



What do I know now?

I can take charge of my mental health when:

- ✓ I know what mental health is.
- ✓ I take notice of changes in my feelings and actions.
- ✓ I reach out for support to get better.
- ✓ I try new things to help me get well again.
- ✓ I ask lots of questions about medication.
- ✓ I know what might cause me to be unwell.
- ✓ I know that all kinds of people can become unwell.
- ✓ I know where to get some more info.



Australian websites

Info about Depression, anxiety and counselling:

www.bridgingproject.org.au/documents/depression_V3.pdf

www.bridgingproject.org.au/documents/anxiety_v3.pdf

www.bridgingproject.org.au/documents/counsellingV2.pdf

United Kingdom (UK) websites

These info sheets come from another country.

What they say about health might be a bit different in Australia.

Show your doctor the info to check that it is right for you.

Looking after your mental health

http://www.easyhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/looking_after_your_mental_health.pdf

What is mental health?

www.oneforum.com/Mental_Heal.36.0.html

Ideas for getting active

<http://tiny.cc/smnu5>

Info about medications

[http://www.easyhealth.org.uk/categories/medicines-\(leaflets\)](http://www.easyhealth.org.uk/categories/medicines-(leaflets))

How are you today?

<http://www.easyhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/How%20are%20you%20today.pdf>



Remember

This fact sheet is not the same as advice from a doctor. It has information that might be useful to you.

This fact sheet does not know about:

- Your special needs
- Your health problems
- Or what is right for you.

Don't just rely on this fact sheet.

You should always talk to your doctor about your health.

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