

Mental and physical health

Looking after your mental health is just as important as your physical health.



Being mentally healthy looks like:

- we can have positive relationships
- we can cope with stress
- we can be positive about the future.



But sometimes we struggle with our mental health. This can mean:

- feeling anxious
- feeling lonely or isolated
- feeling tired and sad

It's normal to feel like this from time to time. This may be caused by homesickness, work stress, being lonely and or even nothing at all. When this happens, you should talk to someone about how you feel. This helps us get thoughts out of our heads and helps us feel like we're not alone.

Here are some ideas about how to stay healthy mentally and how to talk to people when you need some support.



Things you can do every day to stay mentally healthy

Staying connected to friends, family, workmates and community is one of the best tools we can use to keep us mentally healthy.

CONNECTING WITH YOUR HOUSEMATES



Connect with your housemates by exercising together, learning songs on the guitar, arranging cultural performances, watching movies together and sharing a meal. You could organise a cultural night where everyone cooks a meal from their country.

CONNECTING WITH THE DIASPORA



Find out if there are any Pacific islander or Timorese people in your new community. Connecting with them can make you feel closer to your culture if you are homesick. Find these people by asking your employer, case worker or local council, or searching on Facebook.

CONNECTING WITH YOUR FAMILY AT HOME



Video call, message or make a family Facebook group to share photos and stories from your day.

CONNECTING WITH YOUR WORKMATES AND FRIENDS IN AUSTRALIA



Take lunch breaks, exercise together before or after work, or simply ask how your workmates are when you arrive at work each morning.

CONNECTING SPIRITUALLY



If you are religious, attending online or local church services, bible studies and prayer can help give direction and hope. Access a list of free, online church services in Australia and the Pacific here: <https://bit.ly/3i5prgl>. You can also find similar services in-language on YouTube or search for your church community back home on Facebook.

CONNECTING WITH NATURE



If you don't want to talk, connecting with nature, getting fresh air, silent meditation, reflection and taking a walk can help your mental wellbeing.



Exercise and eating well

MOVING YOUR BODY

Your body and mind are connected, which is why using your body can make you feel better mentally. There are tips on how to get active in the 'physical health' section below.

EATING WELL

Food and water fuel our body. Real fruit, vegetables, meat and water are better fuel than fast food and takeaway as they have more nutrients. This means they can give us more energy for work and life.



When you need to talk

TALK TO HOUSEMATES

If you feel like talking with people you live with, staying in your room won't start a conversation. Reach out to your housemates while you are cooking, going for a walk, shopping or having a coffee.

TALK TO YOUR EMPLOYER OR THE PACIFIC LABOUR FACILITY

Money, housing or work stress can impact your mental health. If you are struggling with these things, there are people to help you. Firstly, it is ok to talk to your employer, they are here to help you. If you do not feel comfortable with that, talk to your team leader, Liason Officer (LO), case worker if you have one, or call the PALM support service line at: 1800 51 51 31.

TALK TO A TRUSTED MEMBER OF YOUR NEW COMMUNITY

This could be someone from church, your sporting community, diaspora or new friends. There is nothing wrong with reaching out to people you have recently met.

CALL A FREE HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL

There is nothing wrong with talking to mental health care professionals. There are free services in Australia for this - you don't have to give your name or personal information, and no one will find out if you call them. For example, if you feel depressed or anxious you can call Beyond Blue and talk to someone about how you feel: 1300 22 4636.

If you struggle with English, you could ask a trusted person to join you on the call.

Phone contacts in an emergency

Emergency services 24/7
(for fire service, an ambulance or the police)
000

Lifeline 24/7
(suicide prevention or a crisis) 13 11 14 or
1300 659 467

PALM support service line 24/7
1800 51 51 31

Physical health



Exercise helps us stay healthy physically. Ideally, we need at least 30 minutes of activity on 5 or more days each week - if your job is already physical, you may already be doing this. There are many ways you can be active, and if you are not already, it's never too late to start.

Anything that you do to move your body can be good exercise!

SOME IDEAS ARE:

- walking with friends or housemates before/after work, instead of sitting in the house
- dancing
- even daily chores can count as activity – for example, cleaning or hanging out the washing.

For even more health benefits, try some higher intensity movement.

SOME IDEAS ARE:

- home workouts - there are many apps and YouTube videos you can access for free
- ask your employer about a local sports team that you can join - rugby union, league, soccer, volleyball and netball are popular in Australia
- swimming laps at your local pool or running.

If you prefer exercising in a group that's ok! Find a group of people and make it part of your routine. Choose an activity that you enjoy and that you feel comfortable with.



Remember: pushing yourself too much can cause muscle pain, so remember to warm up and stretch after you do any intense exercise.

