

People share their stories of mental health recovery in work and life

panorama

Monthly Issue March 2025 #96C



Ready to Change:
Everything Worth
Doing is Difficult

Is Comfort
Bad for You?

Being in the Driver's
Seat in Your Own
Recovery

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About us

Flourish Australia is committed to walking beside people with a lived experience of mental health issues as they progress along their recovery journeys. We passionately believe in mental health recovery, and are committed to providing the best possible support and encouragement to people so they can achieve their recovery goals. We offer this help across all 70+ of our services in New South Wales, Southern Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and Victoria.

Contact Flourish Australia!

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flourishaustralia.org.au

Chair: Prof Elizabeth More AM
Chief Executive Officer: Mark Orr AM
Chief Development Officer: Peter Neilson

About Panorama

Founded in 1996 in one of Flourish Australia's predecessor organisations (PRA), Panorama has grown to become a lifestyle magazine dedicated to informing and encouraging the recovery journey of readers. Panorama is written, designed and produced almost entirely by people with a lived experience of mental health issues.

The faces behind Panorama...



Warren Heggarty



Grant Everett

Subscriptions, questions, feedback, praise, curses?

You can ALWAYS email us at...
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Prefer snail mail?

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Disclaimer

Panorama's content is not intended as a substitute for the advice of any specialised or qualified professional. The views expressed herein are those of the authors, not necessarily of Flourish Australia, or any associated enterprises, their staff, management, employees, or service recipients

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Photo Warren Heggarty

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Contributors include...

Michael Wren was part of a team presenting on the revolutionary DRIV-R app. Michael is a lived experience advocate, working with Flourish Australia's Research Advisory Committee, Community Advisory Council, and Social Citizenship Think Tank.

Monom de Plume has found ways to get through the hardest times...with the right support.

Evan has made enormous life changes after many lost decades.

Peter Farrugia is Flourish Australia's Training Specialist

Contributions are welcome!

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WE PROVIDE PRACTICAL

Care for Carers



Flourish Australia is committed to working closely with families and carers in their important role of supporting people close to them with a lived experience of a mental health issue.

Using a family inclusive approach, we work directly and in partnership with specialist organisations to provide support and education services for families and carers.

A list of helpful resources and Carer organisations for family and carers can be found on our website:
flourishaustralia.org.au/family-and-carers

SCAN QR TO FIND OUT MORE



IN PANORAMA MARCH 2025

If you missed Mental Health Month in October, don't worry, you can relive some of it in March Panorama!

Flourish Australia in Young NSW staged a major event for Mental Health Month called "Rock for Recovery" (pictured, left). Not only was there a "Battle of the bands" but bike and car enthusiasts also put on a motor show!

We also hear recovery stories from Evan and Lisa because, remember, Panorama is not just a magazine, it is a TOOL FOR RECOVERY. You'll find tips on setting boundaries, safety and even the dangers of too much comfort!

Finally we look at how learning basic movement skills (running, jumping, throwing, catching, batting, bowling) can help you gain greater physical confidence.

Editor



Spread Hope...
Your Mental Health Journey
will Inspire Others!



Did you know that sharing your own mental health recovery story can spread hope and inspiration?

Don't worry if you're not a writer – that's where we jump in! At Panorama, every story is valued! We're constantly on the lookout for stories from those living with mental

health issues. But hey, family members and caregivers, your stories matter too! Not sure where to begin? Send us a message, we would love to hear from you!

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or Call: 1300 779 270**



ROCK FOR RECOVERY

HUNDREDS ATTEND BATTLE OF THE BANDS FOR THE MINDS OF YOUNG

By Warren Heggarty

Flourish Australia's Young service was determined to put their South Western Slopes town on the map this Mental Health Month. From their local weekly music group grew the germ of an idea - a battle of the bands - that went on to become Rock for Recovery on the 28th of October 2024.

The organisers from Young faced challenges from a rival, as nearby Parkes already had a radio telescope and an annual Elvis Festival. This meant Young needed a big show of its own to stand out. So not only was Rock for Recovery a battle of the bands, but it was also a classic car and bike show to boot! And what show would be complete

without face painting, a jumping castle, lucky dips, Information stalls and prizes for the best musical performances? Local member of Parliament Steph Cook MLA also attended to give a Mental Health Month speech.

"This event is good for the town," said Casey Wilton, Flourish Australia Team Coordinator at Young, who was undaunted by the enormous amount of organisation required. She was assisted by her colleagues Maestro Ed Layton, Donna and Jess.

The music group at the Young service meet once a week to try their hand at guitars, drums and even the odd harmonica, and their core participants include Scott McGregor, Scott Lattin, Steven

Parker, Trent Ryan, Harley Aird, Paul Blundell, and others. Peer Worker Ed Layton has a band of his own with the not-so-unlikely name "Black Dog Blues."

Local store M&M's Music Studio is a big supporter of the Young music group, and their generosity allowed the hiring of a stage and sound equipment at very reasonable rates. Other generous local businesses include the South West Slopes Bank, who put up \$3,400 to make the day a success. Thanks to all this help, the local PCYC Netball Courts were transformed into the site of the first ever Rock for Recovery.

The competition was comprised of three bands and four solo acts. The honours went to "Engine Light," a band from Temora High School who covered some Nirvana and White Stripes as well as playing some original material. The pièce de résistance was when the guitarist played his axe behind his head in the style of Jimi Hendrix! Hall of fame material there! Move over, Silverchair. Runner up was singer/guitarist Juicy Lane who sang country-style ballads with what Casey agreed was, "The most beautiful voice."

The winner's names were even engraved on a trophy. Now THAT is a way of becoming part of rock history!

Vehicle exhibitors included the Young Heritage Motor Club and the Yass Chapter of the Sacred Syndicate Motorcycle Club. There were about 40 classic cars and 30 classic bikes. The annual Black Dog Ride also had a stall of their own, and they want to make an appearance at this event every year.

The \$2 raffle made \$420 for people who are homeless, which Casey says will go towards blankets, pillows and cooking utensils.

There are already people jostling to be on the organising committee for next year, so keep your ears open, it's going to be big!

ABOVE (L/R): Steven Parker, Harley Aird, Paul Blundell, Ed Layton (Peer Worker), Jessica Lavis (Mental Health Worker), Donna McGuire (Mental Health Worker) and Casey Wilton (Team Coordinator). Photo Warren Heggarty

BOUNDARIES: SAYING NO

ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR MENTAL & EMOTIONAL SELF-CARE

By Warren Heggarty



People pleasers, listen up! You can't please all of the people all of the time. In fact, our efforts to be liked and to feel useful to other people can actually make us overwhelmed, and then we really won't be very useful.

What you need is BOUNDARIES. In all of our relationships, including work, home and friends, poor boundaries may lead to resentment, hurt, anger, and burnout.

According to The Resilience Centre, "Personal boundaries are guidelines, rules or limits that a person creates to identify reasonable, safe and permissible ways for other people to behave towards them and how they will respond when someone passes those limits." (Soghomonian, 2019)

"Boundaries help us take care of ourselves by giving us permission to say NO to things, to not take everything on. Boundaries draw a clear line around what is OK for us and what is not."

We sometimes add some extra words to the NO to emphasise that we are not saying NO to be nasty, but "excuses" are not necessary.

1. No, thanks.
Simple and direct is best. Anything too elaborate may signal that you have some doubt, and this may encourage the other person to persist!
2. Sounds nice, but I'm not available.
3. I'm sorry, but I can't help you at this time.
4. I'm not available at the moment, maybe next time.
5. Unfortunately, this is not something I can do right now.
6. I really appreciate you asking me, but I can't commit to that right now,
7. Sorry, but I can't make it, maybe another time.
8. Thanks for thinking of me, but I can't.
9. That's a great idea, but I can't participate right now.
10. I have a lot on my plate right now, so I can't take this on.
11. I need to step back and focus on my (other) responsibilities.
12. Wish I could help, but I'm maxed out right now.
13. I've got a lot going on right now, so I have to say no.
14. No can do, I'm afraid. Got too much on my plate as is. (Calm.com)

Some people find the above sentences really difficult. Why?

We are people pleasers - often at the expense of ourselves. When we prioritise ourselves we feel (wrongly) as though we have let someone down. No one likes losing the approval of others, but ask yourself: Will saying "NO" really lead to losing approval?

We fear conflict so much we prefer to back down and lose rather than to stand up for ourselves.

We dislike guilty feelings so much that we give in to demands unrelated to what we are really guilty of.

When we don't value and respect our own time or needs, it is like we are a raw bundle of nerves unable to deflect even the most annoying or exploitative request. We need to get over this. You don't HAVE to do things if you don't want to.

We people pleasers need to practice being honest, firm and direct. We are often inclined to weaken our NOs (even when we manage to utter them) with ifs and buts. This will not help.

I bet the person inviting you would actually feel bad if they found out you had agreed to something you disliked just because you felt obliged to them. Think about it!

ABOVE: It's not selfish to culture good mental and emotional health by saying "No" when you need to. Photo by Yamu_Jay from Pixabay

www.calm.com/blog/how-to-say-no-nicely

www.theresiliencecentre.com.au/2019/09/23/boundaries-why-are-they-important/



Ready To Change

Everything Worth Doing is Difficult

By Evan

After decades of using drugs to self-medicate my trauma, I've finally turned my life around. I've gotten clean, started getting really honest with a therapist, and connected with community services that support me in all areas of my life.

It's been a battle to get to where I am now, and a big part of turning my life around has been seeing a psychologist who specialises in helping people who have been through very bad experiences. If I hadn't experienced trauma, I don't think I would have had any interest in drugs in the first place. I used to be near the top of my class in school, and I might have gone far in life if I'd kept studying.

In the past, therapy didn't work for me because I was only half committed at best, and still using a lot of drugs. I wasn't letting the therapist in, as I wasn't ready to be helped, and they can only work on what you tell them.

I used to be very sceptical, even sarcastic, about therapy. What did these people know? Sure, they've gone to Uni and read a lot of books, but that didn't convince me that they actually understood me.

I've been experiencing real results with this therapist for months now, and I'm still clean to this day.

Of course, talk is cheap, and anyone can say anything. I know I need to keep working hard to stay clean, and that's a long-term commitment that will last the rest of my life. I'm

aware that I need to end my pattern of addiction entirely for this process to work.

I found once you get clean, your empathy comes back, and you'll finally understand the hurt you've caused because of your addiction. You'll see what you've become due to drug use, and you won't like it. It's horrible to face all you've done wrong, and I've been feeling a lot of guilt and accountability. I know I can't change my past, but I can recognise my mistakes and be better now and in the future.

Nowadays when I think I'm going to say something or do something I'll regret, I will simply remove myself from the situation. I always wanted the last word, and this led to a lot of my problems. Taking a few minutes

away can create a completely different headspace.

I'm taking life day by day. I'm still alive, so there's still hope.

The Right Support

I've been accessing support with Flourish Australia since August 2024. I originally got in contact with Sarah from their Penrith service, and she invited me to come visit the Lithgow service to have a chat with her and Marissa, who became my support worker. The service from Flourish Australia has been excellent, even if it's just having a chat when I need it.

Marissa started accompanying me to an organisation called Nana's Touch. They do all kinds of things, like running a soup kitchen on Wednesday nights and \$5 hampers on Fridays, to help the community. They do a lot of good work. They also have a Men's Group on Fridays. I've been getting to know the people who run that, and now that I'm comfortable there, some weeks I go on my own without Marissa.

Marissa has also supported me to explore what community services are available in my area, things I'd find helpful, like subsidies with my electricity bill.

One of my drugs of choice made me lose my mind. I thought there'd been a nuclear war and Saddam Hussein was the Prime Minister of Australia, and that I had telepathy and could talk to people through the television. I really lost touch with reality for years.

Some drugs can give you incredible highs, but also the most terrible depression. You get delusions of grandeur, but when you come down it's the lowest of the low. At one point this led to me not wanting to be here anymore, but I was also scared of killing myself. I ended up in hospital getting my stomach pumped.

It made me feel that the people looking out for me were plotting against me, that they were just pretending to like me so they can use me and hurt me. You feel unlikable, and you'll push everyone away. Friends, family.

Drug addiction takes everything and leaves you with nothing. It's all false. All it does is fry your brain. You're living in a delusion.

Lost Years

People on drugs get so caught up in themselves. It's all about them, other people don't matter. You're the centre of the universe. You can do the worst things as an addict: lying to family, stealing from them, saying horrible things, like you're entitled to do whatever you want. Addiction leads to crime, to doing things you never expected to do in a million years.

Due to addiction I've pushed away everyone who ever cared about me, and I can see now that I must have been impossible to be around. And while drug use can be very isolating, it also leads you to mix with the wrong kinds of people. Take drugs out of the equation, and there's usually no actual relationship there. Friend or not, when addicts get desperate, they can be capable of anything.

You can try to hide your addiction, but it's just a cycle of regret and shame and depression, and people will eventually see through it.

Lessons From The School of Hard Knocks

People who conquer their addictions can use their stories, their experiences, to prevent others from going down that same road. I hope one day I can get myself together enough to use my own life an example for young people of what not to do.

If I'd known at the beginning what I know now, my life would have been completely different for sure.

LEFT: Evan attended the Lithgow service's open day for Mental Health Month, and had quite the story to share. Photo by Grant J Everett

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Dual Diagnosis

According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, around 50 percent of people with a mental health issue also use substances. This combination is called "dual diagnosis," and can greatly impact a person's ability to function. And don't forget substances such as marijuana or meth are known to trigger psychosis.

Flourish Australia offers a holistic approach, supporting people to identify their recovery goals. This can potentially include giving up substances. If somebody is a chronic user, we may refer them to appropriate support in their area.

Flourish Australia's Drug & Alcohol and Safe Work policies (provided in the Welcome Pack given to new participants at intake) prohibit being under the influence of substances at our services or when dealing with our workers.

Admitting you have a problem is the first step towards recovery. A dual diagnosis therapist is a good place to start, and support groups like Narcotics Anonymous can teach healthy coping strategies. With the right support, people can and do get better. However, this will involve building a new life where substance abuse no longer has a place. It can help to develop meaningful relationships, exercise regularly, use relaxation techniques, have healthy eating habits, and getting enough sleep. Do things that give you a sense of purpose, and avoid the people, places and things that trigger your urge to use.

Be patient, as recovery doesn't happen overnight. It's an ongoing process.

Scan this QR Code to read "Dual Diagnosis: Substance Abuse and Mental Health"





Being In The Driver's Seat In Your Own Recovery

By Michael Wren

Michael was very busy at TheMHS Conference 2024, as he presented talks on not one, but TWO separate papers! And for those of us with a lived experience, what Michael presented on could change the course of your recovery journey...

Driving

My first presentation at TheMHS Conference 2024 was about a new, co-designed app called "Driving My Own Mental Health Recovery," or DRIV-R for short, that is being developed by the University of Sydney with help from a number of testers who access Flourish Australia services.

DRIV-R is a simple phone app that supports people with a lived experience to identify what areas they may need to address to make the most of their recovery journey. DRIV-R can expand on and clarify anything you're unsure about, and it's designed to measure your progress over time. When you can look back on your progress to date,

it makes it easier to communicate to support workers exactly what you need now.

I was one of the testers for the DRIV-R App at the University of Sydney, working with a large team of academics and people with a lived experience, and I was able to draw on my recovery journey to understand where people were at. The app is still being developed, but I've personally used it in depth, and it's really, really good. During the workshops, I demonstrated how easy the app is to use, and with a little bit of instruction, people quickly learned how to operate it, allowing them to use it in their own time in their own space. If you're a little tech-savvy, it's even simpler to learn.

At these workshops, I always saw how respectful the University team were to everyone who took part in this research, and everyone testing the app reported feeling heard.

Staff are now being trained to support people in using the app, but in the beginning there was a concern that DRIV-R was yet ANOTHER thing they'd have to learn.

During the workshops, though, the staff quickly came to see the value in DRIV-R, as it makes it easier for service providers to understand people's recovery priorities.

Over time, DRIV-R will support mental health researchers and practitioners to critique their existing approaches, and extend the "co" in their "co-design" activities.

State of the NDIS

I also worked on a paper with Flourish Australia's Research Advisory Committee and the Community Advisory Council about the NDIS. As providing NDIS psychosocial support is a core component of Flourish Australia's services, my talk was relevant to anyone with a form of disability.

A recent independent review of the NDIS identified gaps across the sector, showing there's not always a good match between people's needs and the services available. Our team took a deep dive to see how these supports have changed since the introduction of the NDIS, the ongoing challenges, and the way forward. There's currently 250,000 people on the waiting list, with many badly needing support, so there's still a lot to be done for the NDIS to work as intended.

I saw a recent story about a person who was found ineligible for an NDIS plan he really needed, so they got A Current Affair involved. The next day, he was approved. No one should have to go to A Current Affair to get an NDIS plan approved! It should just be available to those who need it.

ABOVE: Michael Wren, presenting at TheMHS. Photo by Peter Farrugia

Sources

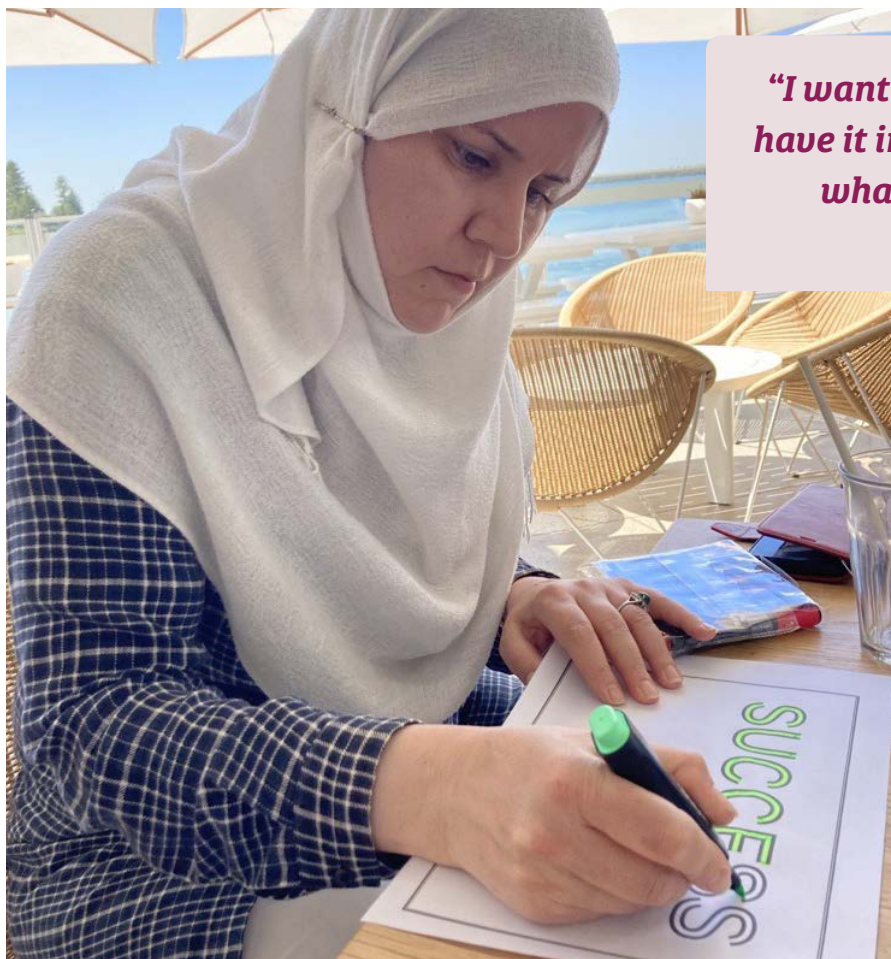
"Co-Design – The Research Process Of 'Finding Common Ground': Learning What Works."

"How The NDIS Changed Psychosocial Supports In Community Managed Organisations: Reflections From People Accessing Service"

Further reading

"How to Measure Your Recovery New App to Drive Better Outcomes," page 55 of the Winter Quarterly 2024

"The NDIS Review Final Report: Putting People with Disability Back at the Centre," page 38 of the Winter Quarterly 2024



“I want people to know that they have it inside of them to overcome whatever that life throws at them.” - Ensieh

A Whole New Outlook On Life

By Ensieh

Ensieh’s goals in connecting with Flourish Australia eighteen months ago were simple: she wanted to become happy, active, and make some friends.

When I started accessing services at Flourish Australia’s Marrickville service a year and a half ago, it was a big step towards my recovery. I was diagnosed with Bipolar disorder in 2010, and have experienced many episodes of mania and depression. I felt awful, and at times I was sick of being alive.

The Flourish Australia staff supported me to overcome my problems and create a better life by setting healthy routines, connecting with services that met my needs, and making other positive changes. The staff who supported me included Antoinette, Blanka, Blaire, Ed and

Kimi. They’re all very good listeners, and helped me to open new horizons to my life. I found them supportive and caring, which is important, as when you are sad, you need someone to sympathise with you. I loved having one-on-one support in a friendly environment.

I was also able to discuss my children with Antoinette, who taught me parenting techniques so I can do my best at looking after my kids. Antoinette has since become my role model, and I want to be a role model for my children in the same ways.

My favourite groups

I have learned a lot about how to connect with other people through Flourish Australia’s women’s group, and I also become good friends with the other ladies. I used to be very isolated, and now I’m not. I was

also able to listen to other people’s stories, and offer support of my own.

The other activities and groups at Flourish Australia were soothing, too, like the weekend group, which has also been great for my social life.

Achieving all my goals

I have achieved my original goals of feeling happy, being active, and making friends, and now I have made even bigger goals for my future. A major one was to start studying at TAFE. As Persian is my birth language, Antoinette supported me to enroll in an English certificate to improve my language skills. I’ve already made some new friends at that class!

I am 46 now, and I plan to be starting Business Management at University at the age of 50. I hope to be working in my dream field of Business Management by 55.

Changing my outlook

When I’m not feeling well nowadays, I can call a friend, go for a walk, sit in the sun, cook, shop, swim, pray, read or write. Going to beautiful places with beautiful people makes me really happy. And most of all, it makes me happy to be a mum to my children.

ABOVE: Ensieh, living life and achieving her goals! Photos by Antoinette Mascaro, Flourish Australia Mental Health Worker, Marrickville

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Finding the Will to GO ON

By Monom de Plume

I have been battling a host of physical and mental health issues for many years, but my parents, Lifeline and my Husky, Henry, have collectively gotten me through the toughest times. I've also had excellent results with Flourish Australia.

Flourish Australia helped me to walk straight when I was wobbly. When I first got in touch with them I didn't know how to properly articulate what I needed, only that I required help, and didn't know where to start. They connected me with a wonderful support worker named Bron from their Inverell service, and she started paying me home visits. I also have phone support when I need it.

Bron and I were in the same age group and had the same sense of humour. Bron didn't tell me what to do, she listened. When I was processing loss and grief, looking forward to her visits was a stabilising influence in my life. Having something to look forward to, even small things, can make a massive

difference. She told me from the beginning that she'll do things with me, but not for me.

Bron saw me on my good days and bad days. She helped me get stuff done, and made me feel like I was living a normal life. It was great having Bron take me to the shops, especially when I experience migraine seizures. Instead of happening in the pain centre of the brain, my migraines happen in the movement centre, paralysing me. They don't hurt, but they can make me talk gibberish, and it can appear as though I'm having a stroke. This can freak everyone out, as I can't physically tell passerbys that I will be okay, but with Bron reassuring them it's all under control, they don't get involved.

My rescue dog, Henry, is very gentle when he knows you're not a threat to me, and he's my carer during my seizures at home. During the first major migraine I had with Henry there he simply sniffed me, licked the back of my hand, and gently laid down beside me on the floor until the paralysis wore off.

Hoarding

It can be easy for the housework to get away from me, as I tick a lot of the boxes for hoarding, so every few years I go through a massive purge. It can be difficult to part with things, even if my urge to keep them makes no logical sense. Something that's been proven to help with hoarding is having a regular visitor, so Flourish Australia supports me with this, too.

NDIS

Prior to connecting with Flourish Australia, I was discouraged from applying for the NDIS after being told how hard it was to get and how a rejection could take months. I tried other ways to get help, but had no luck.

When Bill Shorten became the head of the NDIA I heard his National Press Club speech, and that gave me the hope to apply. I got my paperwork done through the NDIA over the phone, and it went through beautifully in the space of 2 hours. I'm terrible at forms, so the lady on the phone was an angel.

I contacted Lifeline to ask them about what organisations I could go to for help. There's so much support out there, but if you don't know about it or have somebody who does, it's difficult to find. Thankfully, Lifeline were the ones who put me onto Flourish Australia.

Things I Enjoy

I am a songwriter and a composer, and I've been told I'm decent at it. I've always felt my music is my priority, and I've sung in pubs and in church. One time I did a 40-minute set in Redcliffe Pub, and the only negative feedback was from the publican, as nobody had bought any drinks during my set because they were all listening to me! Though on the days when I have energy, I tend to spend it on doing the housework rather than my music.

I'm a bush kid, so I also find bushwalking in my local National Park particularly healing. Cicadas are one of the best sounds in the world, the sound of happiness.

Not Wanting To Be Here Anymore

I experience bad depression, but I am not obliged to allow a mental health issue to make my choices for me. Once I recognise my mind is going down that dark road, I'll do what I can to fix it. I might eat something, or talk to someone. Contacting my support networks really helps. In the past, when depression turned my world grey for long enough, a switch would go off and I'd start wanting to self-harm. Thankfully, I no longer get these feelings.

In the depths of misery, it's easy to believe my loved ones would be better off without me. Obviously, that is a WHOPPER of a lie, but in a state of exhaustion, you can lack the energy to dispute it. This makes my lived experience of chronic fatigue syndrome yet another serious obstacle, as it requires a lot of patience to live with. Insomnia is also one of my triggers, and I am convinced that many deaths by sleeping pills are the result of somebody with severe insomnia taking pill after pill night after night trying to sleep, and they just aren't working. Please look after your beloved insomniacs!

I also have a diagnosis of ADHD and Aspergers, so I have problems with concentrating (especially if something's boring) and I tend to go in circles a lot.

I recently turned 59, and my first suicidal ideation was at five. Even on days where I feel happy, I would still prefer not to be here anymore. What doesn't help is people using guilt trips on me. When I'm that close to the abyss, comparing my life to those who are worse off, or telling me I have no reason to want to die, doesn't help, as I know all this already. It only alienates me further.

We need to find the will to live in ourselves, as well as in others. Once I rang an intelligent friend to ask her why she wanted to live. I wasn't after anything philosophical, I just needed a reason to be safe on that day. She told me, "Well, I have three interesting books on my bedside table I want to finish, and a good meal planned for tonight." Her answer grounded me. She didn't want to die simply because she was

engaged in living, even though she had truckloads of pain like I did.

There are no answers I can give that will justify my urges not to be here anymore. But a curiosity for what happens next has given me the will to live, and the changing of seasons and new beginnings give me hope. Rather than seeing bad days as write-offs, though, now I see them as bridges to better ones.

ABOVE: Bron, Monom de Plume's first support person from Flourish Australia. Photo by Monom de Plume

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Safety From Suicide

By Peter Farrugia

Thinking about suicide is a normal experience for many, but we don't have to act on such thoughts. When we feel like this, finding hope or shifting our mindset can prove difficult.

If you think someone is at risk of taking their own life, it is important to be direct when you ask them, "Are you thinking about suicide?" If the answer is yes, this provides an opportunity to connect them with support to keep them safe.

When seeking a qualified professional to manage suicidal urges, a good starting point is your GP. They can create mental health plans, prescribe medication, and refer you to specialists like psychologists and therapists. Having connections with people who love and understand us can also provide a source of safety, like family, friends, colleagues, people in our faith communities, online friends or even pets.

Resilience is our capacity to cope, and we build resilience by overcoming hardship, threats, challenges, pain and adversity. Self-love, self-acceptance, self-esteem and self-compassion are all powerful attributes to tap into when we feel vulnerable.

Alternative therapies include mindfulness, meditation, self-help groups and physical activity. A balanced, healthy diet can support wellbeing, help us to think clearly, and establish creative ways of coping. Many cultures use healing practices like connecting to country and embracing their heritage.

Flourish Australia staff are trained in suicide prevention and intervention, so we invite you to reach out if you, or someone you know, could benefit from support. And don't forget Lifeline is always available on 13 11 14, and offers a confidential one-to-one text service on 0477 13 11 14.

Is Comfort Bad For You?

HOW 'HORMETIC STRESSORS' WORK

By Warren Heggarty

The short answer is 'yes' and according to exercise physiologist Paul Taylor, comfort may be killing a lot of us. This is because our bodies are MEANT to experience certain levels of stress and discomfort to allow them to work at their best! This paradoxical idea is called "Hormesis."

Taylor is a former Navy helicopter pilot who became an Exercise Physiologist and Neuroscientist. He has written the book, "Death by comfort: How modern life is killing us and what we can do about it." (McKay & McKay, 2024) (Taylor, 2022).

You have probably noticed that most of us dedicate our entire lives to comfort and convenience. You may also have noticed that over the years as life (for most of us) has become steadily more comfortable and convenient, people have become steadily less fit and healthy. Among people with mental health issues, "metabolic syndrome," which helps keep our life expectancy much lower than the general population, is associated with both our lifestyle and our medication.

Taylor explains that the human genome (that is, the way human

beings are designed and our ideal operating conditions) has not really changed for 45,000 years or more. Our ancestors did seven to ten times more physical activity than most of us, which is more in line with what our genome presupposes. (McKay & McKay, 2024)

Such a lifestyle requires physical stress and exposure to substances that are "bad for us" and that in high doses might even kill us! To be able to "switch on" our ability to tolerate ingredients in certain foods, we need to be exposed to them first. Think of food allergies.

Enter the modern world, and while our genome is still the same, we are stretched out on a comfy couch watching Netflix eating chicken nuggets. This puts our bodies out of tune.

"Living with air conditioning," Taylor tells us, "is reducing or ability to cope with temperature variation." Look at pictures of how the local Tourist Board of Tierra Del Fuego tells visitors to dress, compared to how the Yahgan people of Tierra Del Fuego used to dress (QR Codes below).

This is a subantarctic climate, in which they lived and worked with almost no clothing and no permanent dwellings! (Instituto Fuegino de Turismo)

Hormesis suggests that there is an ideal range of exposure to stress and toxins that is best for us. Take the rays from the Sun. We know that too much exposure to sunlight makes us more prone to potentially lethal illnesses like melanoma, but we also know that a LACK of exposure interferes with our ideal Vitamin D. At the end of the day, people who learn to deal with "sub-lethal" physical stressors do better with psychological stressors.

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ABOVE: An old photo of the Yuhgan people, an ancient tribe. Photo From Warren



NOW IS NOT A GOOD TIME *I'm having a CRISIS!*

By Warren Heggarty

Preventing Suicide

See related story
on WISPC on page 9
of the November
2024 issue.

Suicide prevention is something that can reduce the need for a later 'intervention' by others during a crisis. For a person to armour themselves against suicide, they need to examine themselves, ask questions and change things. This cannot properly be done in a crisis. We all make better decisions when we are in a calm situation and our "grey matter" can work best.

Within the context of repeated crises - which call for a particular kind of intervention - a person is less likely to learn how to help themselves to not have another suicide crisis. So they are prone to going through it all again.

Besides, if a person thinks that they have some compelling reasons to die, what good is a crisis intervention? Such ideas that persist outside of a crisis need to be met by even more compelling reasons NOT to perform suicide.

"Suicide awareness" and "suicide prevention" are no longer dark, taboo topics that are hidden from public discourse. Even companies have suicide prevention plans for their employees. Writing in the business magazine *Forbes*, Bernie Wong says this:

"... having a crisis management plan in place is important, but a crisis

plan alone is like putting a bandage on a gaping wound. Some estimates say that up to 87% of suicide victims had been previously diagnosed with a mental health condition. However, it takes 10 years on average from when a person first experiences symptoms of a mental health condition to when they seek care — a 10-year window for prevention." (Wong, 2019) (Note: Figures reflect the American situation).

So there would appear to be a ten year "window of opportunity" during which a person might be empowered to think of ways OTHER than suicide to manage their unsatisfactory situations and their overwhelming emotions. If we leave it until a Triple 0 emergency or Lifeline crisis develops, we may well save the day, but we remain vulnerable to a repeat at a later date.

The person who is prone to suicidal thinking are themselves the ideal one to head this off. We need to provide support to people during this "non-crisis" time because the issue of suicide can then be faced in a calmer and more balanced way.

Nor is the answer necessarily found in medicine. Bertolete (2004) says, "It is remarkable that the introduction, by the middle of the 20th Century, of effective medication for the control of major mental disorders associated with suicide (e.g., depression and schizophrenia) has brought no significant reduction in national

suicide rates in those countries where the medication was widely used."

This might be because the medication is not so targeted that it can eliminate specific thoughts - which is surely a good thing. Rather, the answer lies in the person being permitted to think whatever thoughts they will, yet learn how to live with overwhelming emotions. This is because such emotions are a normal part of life. Some people, perhaps unfairly, experience more than their share. Ultimately, however, eliminating the negative will backfire. As evolutionary biologist Brett Weinstein says:

"Negative emotions and sensations are products of adaptive evolution, every bit as much as positive ones. Blocking the ability to suffer from them is a profoundly self-destructive act." (Weinstein, 2024)

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ABOVE: Recovery needs deep roots to be sustainable. Photo Klimkin from Pixabay



PHYSICAL SKILLS

The Basic Moves

By Warren Heggarty



To take full advantage of the benefits to your mental health that physical exercise brings, make sure you get the basic motor skills down pat. Jumping, running, catching, throwing, kicking, lifting and other basic actions seem to be missing from a lot of people's lives these days. You can change that.

Basic skills you need for sport include...

- Balancing
- Running
- Throwing
- Catching
- Kicking
- Hitting
- Dodging
- Hopping
- Galloping
- Skipping
- Jumping (vertical)
- Leaping (horizontal)

These can all be managed without any specialised equipment. When you apply them to sport (or dancing) you get variations. "Hitting" becomes batting in cricket and swinging in golf. You hit forehand or backhand in tennis and even then you have a single hand or double hand shot.

You can buy a packet of tennis balls from the Two Dollar shop and practice bouncing, catching, throwing up and catching, throwing against a wall and kicking.

With a partner you can play catch. Throwing a ball to another person, then catching it when they throw it back is something that kids used to do without prompting, leading to many hours of fun. You would be surprised how much laughter it brings. Plus you give your legs a workout and improve hand/eye coordination. If you do it in the street, you need to be careful not to get run over. There you go, another useful

skill! But you can't do it while you are watching Netflix: you have to keep your eye on the ball and the cars..

Basic motor skills, once developed, will open the door more widely to team and competitive sport. You may not feel like doing that now, but when you develop skills and fitness you will want to show off with all your friends. Who knows, you might get REALLY good and do yourself an injury!

Seriously, Mr Roberts was a rugby coach at my school (which was notoriously good at it) and he even did the odd international. He assured us boys that the human body is incredibly strong and resilient, and challenged us to put aside our fear of being tackled on the parched and cracked dustbowl of Birrong Park. I know what you are thinking: that's why I took up golf...

Golf is a good example of a sport that can be played by older people.

The Ins and Outs of PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Its main point of exertion is walking. You walk about ten kilometres playing nine holes. Walking with a purpose through nature is definitely good for you. If that is too far to walk, you can practice and build your way up.

Gold shots are divided into Drives, Chips and Putts. A Drive is basically hitting as far as you can, so you learn to judge distances. Different club numbers will allow you to fine tune the distance. Eventually you learn that brute force is no match for grace. With Chip shots you are more concerned with accuracy - the trick here is the opposite of driving. Don't hit it too far! Putting moves up to another level of accuracy. Here, you really have to understand how the ball will roll across the green.

There is a sport out there for you, and to prime you for it, we will look at the basic skills here in a nerdy, bookish sort of way. This info is distilled from the Senior High School PDHD and PE curriculum in Queensland. (Atomi, 2019) The top table might help you think about the different ways we can classify actions from discreet movements to strategies. The bottom row compares fine motor skills with gross motor skills.

If you were thinking, "Hang on, scoring a goal in netball uses arms and shoulders which are LARGE muscles," you'd be right. Most actions are in between Fine and Gross or Closed and Open. It is a continuum. This leads us to our final classification of actions: in the lower table, which looks at actions in the dimension of time.

To read more about "Physical Education: Motor Skills," scan this QR Code.



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ABOVE: Soccer players practicing shooting: It's a serial motor program in a closed environment, but it's more fun if you don't worry about that! Photo by Warren Heggarty

CLASSIFICATION OF BASIC PHYSICAL ACTIONS

MOTOR SKILL	MOTOR PROGRAM
The ability to carry out a discrete physical action such as gripping a ball.	A combination of a series of skills that make up a complex action. For example hitting a ball consists of at least four motor skills; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Grip 2. Stance 3. Placement 4. Follow through
CLOSED ENVIRONMENT SKILL	OPEN ENVIRONMENT SKILL
A technique or strategy carried out within a relatively controlled environment that has few variable factors; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penalty Goal Kick • Bowling at 10-pins 	A technique or strategy carried out in an environment with lots of variables, such as other opposing players, wind, water, mud; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sailing is VERY OPEN • Netball game is MODERATELY OPEN
FINE MOTOR SKILLS	GROSS MOTOR SKILLS
Use small muscle groups and often take a long time to perfect; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting at Golf • Standing Goal in Netball 	Use large muscle groups; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running with the ball • Scoring a try

THREE WAY CLASSIFICATION OF ACTIONS

DISCRETE	SERIAL	CONTINUOUS
A single action which has a beginning and end point; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throw a ball • Kick a ball • Golf swing 	A combination of movements in a specific sequence; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay up in Basketball 	Repetitive and ongoing; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going for a run

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- Make friends
- Connect with their communities
- Sort out day-to-day issues
- Find a place to live
- Stay healthy
- And much more

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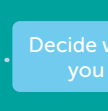
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