

Signs and symptoms

If someone you care about doesn't seem like themselves, how can you tell if they're having a bad day or if it is something more serious? The following are some signs and symptoms to look for:

- feeling tired a lot of the time
- not enjoying things you used to love
- having trouble sleeping
- spending lots of time on your own
- finding it hard to think or concentrate
- feeling sad most of the time
- a major change in eating habits
- lack of energy
- a noticeable change in behaviour or appearance
- an increase in use of alcohol or other drugs

These signs and symptoms should only be used as a guide to check-in on someone you care about and to support them to get professional help. They should not be used to diagnose a mental health illness.

7 Areas

When your SEWB has become a problem it can affect you, your family and your community in one or more of the following areas.



Yarning about your social and emotional wellbeing

If you are feeling sad and need help, it is important to yarn to someone you trust. It can be hard to reach out to someone and talk about how you are feeling, but it is important to know that there is no shame in yarning about your SEWB when you are not feeling like yourself.

It can be even harder to ask for help. We often think that if we take one day at a time, that things might get better soon and our feelings will improve, but sometimes they don't.

You may also feel shame about asking for help, but there is always someone to talk to, even if you don't realise straight away. Think about who that might be; someone that you trust, that makes you feel safe and someone that won't judge you. This might be:

- your partner
- a family member
- an Elder in your community
- a close friend
- a work colleague
- a school teacher/counsellor
- your doctor
- a mental health counsellor/psychologist
- health worker

Remember, there is no shame in yarning about how you are feeling and/or seeking professional support.



Getting help and information



If you are thinking about improving your mental health, you might need some help or information. Sometimes people don't get help because they feel shame talking about their SEWB.

You can speak to your health worker, local doctor, a psychologist, counsellors or other health professional for support. They will not put you down or judge you. They will assist you to manage your symptoms. This can be a difficult time but your family, friends and other people in your community can also help you.

ABORIGINAL SUPPORT SYSTEM



For more information and help

Local Contact



Helpful contact numbers

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Beyond Blue / Youth Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636

Headspace – 1800 650 890

Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800

Rurallink – 1800 552 002

MensLine Australia – 1300 789 978

SANE Australia Helpline – 1800 18 7263

Wellways Helpline – 1300 111 400

QLife – 1800 184 527

Alcohol and Drug Support Line (ADSL) – 08 9442 5000 / 1800 198 024

Mental Health Emergency Response Line (MHERL) – 1300 555 788

Child Protection and Family Support Crisis Helpline (Crisis Care) – 08 9223 1111 / 1800 199 008

If there is an emergency call 000

For more information please go to our Strong Spirit Strong Mind Website <https://strongspiritstrongmind.com.au/>

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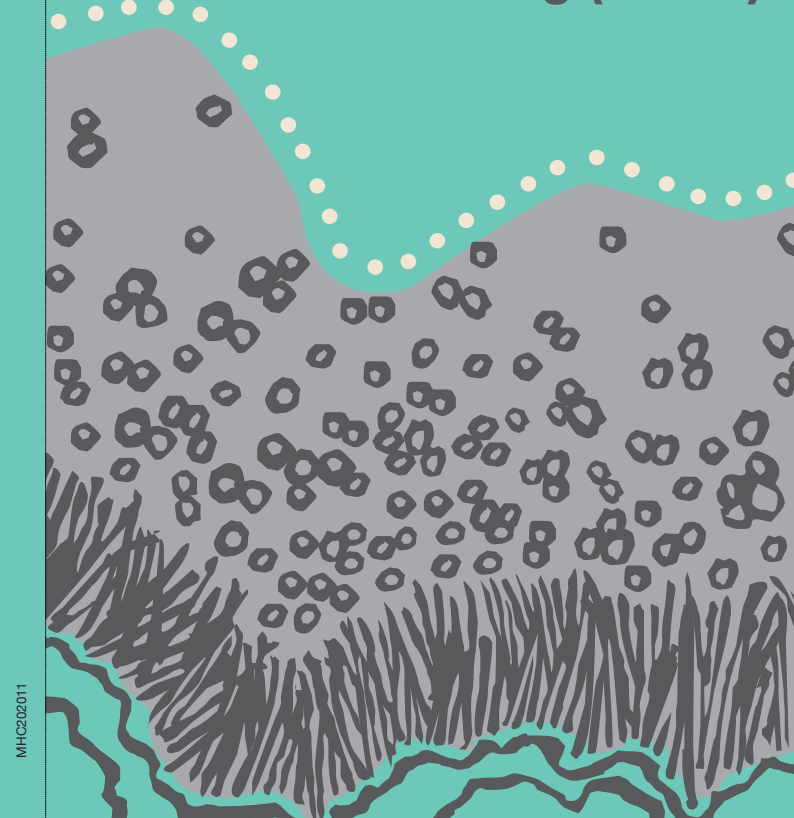
Artist: Barry McGuire (Mullark).
The Aboriginal Inner Spirit Model (Ngarlu Assessment Model) was developed by Joseph 'Nipper' Roe, who belonged to the Karajarri and Yawuru people.
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STRONG SPIRIT STRONG MIND

Aboriginal ways of reducing harm from mental health issues

Social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB)



MHC202011

ABORIGINAL INNER SPIRIT MODEL



Our Inner Spirit is the centre of our being and emotions.

When our spirit feels strong our mind feels strong.

When our spirit feels tangled our mind feels tangled.

Strong Inner Spirit is what keeps people healthy and keeps them connected together.

Strong Inner Spirit keeps our family strong, our community strong and our country alive.

What is social and emotional wellbeing?

Social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB), mental health and mental illness within an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander setting is very complex. SEWB recognises that connection to country, culture, spirit, family and community are very important and can impact on a person's wellbeing significantly.

Aboriginal culture is the oldest living culture in the world. Despite the impact of colonisation, Aboriginal people demonstrate strength, survival, coping skills and resilience.

For this reason, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prefer the holistic term of social and emotional wellbeing over the term 'mental health' as it is more focused on the strengths of a person.



What you can do to improve your social and emotional wellbeing?

It is really important that we take care of ourselves, so we can look after our families and communities. Think about some things that you can do that help you to relax, improve your wellbeing and help reduce your stress. Some suggestions to improve your SEWB are:

Self:

- connect with others – family, friends and community
- avoid drugs and alcohol
- go back to country
- have a full health check/assessment
- get a good night's sleep
- maintain a healthy diet and exercise regularly
- spend time with your pets
- get creative - listen to your favourite music, dance or do some painting
- have a yarn and ask for help – it's ok to ask for help from family, friends, an advocacy service, your doctor, a counsellor or helpline



Family:

- go fishing or camping
- have a cup of tea or a glass of water in a quiet place
- practice culture – cultural identity
- have a BBQ at the park



Community:

- join a women or men's group
- give back to community/ help others
- get involved in community social sports or clubs
- volunteer with community programs/events
- learn your local language

Supporting others

If someone you care about doesn't seem like themselves and you are worried, it is important to check-in with them.

How? – You can do this by calling, texting or visiting them.



Everyday activities can also provide an opportunity for a yarn; going for a walk or a drive, having a cuppa or preparing a meal together.

Be prepared, they may not want to talk to you straight away, but let them know that when they are ready that you'll be there to listen and support them. You can also check in on them regularly to show them that you care and to strengthen your support.

Picking the right environment for yarning with your loved one can help in making them feel safe and supported.

Carers – taking care of yourself

Caring for someone with a mental health issue can be challenging and sometimes quite lonely. As carers it is normal to feel a range of emotions and feelings including love, guilt, fear, exhaustion, sadness, helplessness, stress and grief.

As a carer we also need to take care of ourselves. This can include:

- yarning with family and friends or a health professional
- learn as much as you can about the mental health issue and strategies that may help
- take some time out for yourself
 - get some rest (ask friends or family for support so you can do some self-care)
 - exercise and maintain a healthy diet

Risk factors

There are many risk factors that can affect our SEWB.

- grief and loss
- relationship / family breakdown
- physical health problems
- discrimination / racism
- impacts of the Stolen Generations
- removal of children
- economic and social disadvantage (e.g. homelessness, and unemployment)
- unresolved trauma
- separation from culture and identity issues
- jail
- violence
- alcohol and drug use
- family history of mental health issues



Protective factors

There are also many protective factors that can support and strengthen our SEWB.

- strong support systems and healthy relationships (e.g. family, friends, partner, children and colleagues)
- having somewhere safe to sleep and getting enough sleep
- connection to land, culture, spirituality and ancestry
- a strong cultural identity
- access to affordable basic needs (housing, power, water, food, education and health services)
- access to bush medicine and traditional healers