



# Open Heart

STORIES TO EDUCATE, INSPIRE AND EMPOWER YOU TO LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE.

## KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN **SAFE ONLINE**

## **PAWS & EFFECT**

The Mental Health Benefits  
Of Having Pets In Our Lives

*Unhealthy  
Versus  
Healthy*  
**Anxiety**

**Counsellors:**  
The Missing Link

## ADJUSTING TO THE **CHALLENGES OF CHANGE**

## **GREEN THERAPY**

*The Healing Power of Gardening  
On Our Mental Wellbeing*

## NAVIGATING **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

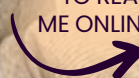


- FEATURE STORY -

## **Bill's Journey From Trauma To Triumph**

Learn how Bill transformed  
a near-death experience  
into a powerful story of  
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## EDITOR'S Welcome!

Open Heart Magazine is a FREE mental health publication. It is free because we believe all people should have access to the support and stories that resonate and validate them to ensure they can live their best life.

Our aim is to cultivate a nurturing environment where hearts are encouraged to open, stories find a voice, vulnerability is embraced, and connections thrive.

Through these narratives we hope to ignite inspiration and empowerment, fostering courage and resilience in our readers as they navigate life's journey, armed with an open heart and a toolbox of shared experiences to draw from. Happy reading!

- Amanda & Shawn

  JOIN THE CONVERSATION!

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Open Heart Magazine acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the lands where we gather and produce our content. We acknowledge the spirit and rich storytelling of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the world's oldest living culture and their enduring heritage. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging, and extend this respect across all lands where our magazine reaches. We are committed to acknowledging and celebrating the rich history and contributions of First Nations Peoples today and into the future.

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IMPORTANT: This magazine discusses topics that may be triggering for some readers. Reader discretion is advised. If you are struggling, please consider seeking support from a mental health professional.

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## Editor's Welcome

Welcome to the August edition of Open Heart Magazine! We are beyond excited to bring you another inspiring issue filled with stories and resources to support mental health and well-being.

We've had an incredible few months spreading the word about our mission. Since our first edition in February this year, we had the privilege of speaking on 91.7FM ABC Gold Coast Radio and 101FM Logan City Radio. It was such a fantastic experience to share our journey, discuss the importance of mental health, and highlight the amazing work our community is doing to support one another. We are truly grateful to each of these media outlets for giving us the time on their platform to speak about the importance of mental health and the conversations around it.

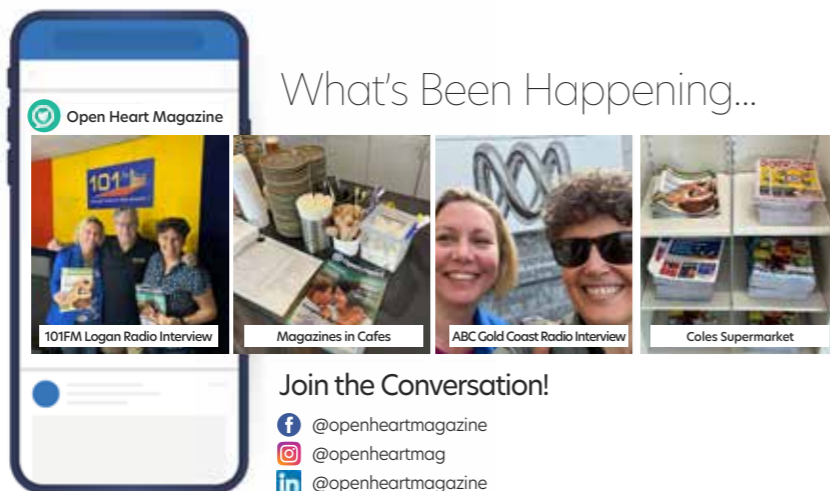
We're also thrilled to announce that Open Heart Magazine is now available at City of Gold Coast Community Centres and YMCA Queensland Community Centres. A huge thank you to these organisations for supporting mental health in our communities and ensuring people can freely access this valuable resource.

In this issue, you'll read about Bill's remarkable journey of resilience following his motorbike accident and how embracing his mental health has helped him come through a challenging time in his life, stronger than ever before.

We also feature an article exploring the therapeutic benefits of gardening and how getting amongst nature and growing your own food can significantly improve your mental health.

We unpack anxiety, exploring both the healthy and unhealthy types of anxiety with tips on how to manage it effectively.

### What's Been Happening...



And for those guardians, parents and grandparents out there - don't miss our guide on keeping teenagers safe online, with practical advice to navigating the digital world with your young people.

This magazine is a passion project for us and we are amazed at how supportive everyone is in helping us get our message out to the masses. We've heard so many incredible stories from the people we've met, and it's abundantly clear that there is a significant need for open discussions about mental health.

Speaking of which, if you have a story you would like to share or want to contribute to our magazine, we'd love to hear from you. Please reach out to us at [openheartmagazineau@gmail.com](mailto:openheartmagazineau@gmail.com).

We also want to thank our advertisers in this edition, Woods Law Group and Find Me A Lender. Their support is invaluable and enables us to bring this magazine to the community. We encourage more businesses to reach out to us regarding advertising to help support this free and important community resource. Your support helps us continue to provide valuable content and reach more people who need it.

Thank you again for being part of this journey with us and opening your heart to embracing mental health. Remember, this is your magazine and it's made for you, the reader. Let's keep the conversation going, support each other, and keep mental health a priority in our lives.

**Remember to keep an Open Heart. Happy reading!**

*Amanda & Shawn*

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# CHANGES CAN BE CHALLENGING

BY SHAWN MATTHEWS

When you think of change, do you get excited or are you ready to run and hide? As Lana Lang quotes, "Life is about change. Sometimes it's painful, sometimes it's beautiful. But most of the time it is both."

In the last four years, our lives have changed in so many ways, both throughout the world and in our own communities, that we start to question what is happening, what is our reality and how have our relationships been impacted by these changes?

Time and time again, I find myself in a Counselling session where I am hearing someone going through some form of grief because of changes happening in their life. This grief is a result of things like a change in where they live, financial changes, relationship changes or a loss of a relationship. It makes me wonder, how are we all coping with these changes we are constantly faced with?

We humans are very capable of adapting to changing circumstances. This has been proved through evolution of our species over the many thousands of years on this earth. When we are facing change in our lives today, area that can hold us back are our self-doubt, the uncertainty we hold of our ability to adapt, and the belief we have that we cannot get through it in a healthy way.

**"...areas that can hold us back are our self-doubt, the uncertainty we hold of our ability to adapt, and the belief we have that we cannot get through it in a healthy way."**

It's true - change can be highly uncomfortable. It requires stepping outside of your comfort zone and accepting something new into your life. Each person's comfort level with change varies greatly and is based on their own personal experiences, their personality, and even their current circumstances.

Some people thrive on the novelty of change and adapt easily to it, while others find change unsettling and very challenging. Recognising and respecting these differences for each person is important, as it allows us to support each other through life transitions and navigate these changes more effectively.

**Here are 4 tips to assist you with changes in your life:**

**Embrace the Uncertainty:**

Acknowledge that change often brings uncertainty, and that's okay. Instead of resisting or fearing the unknown, try to embrace it as an opportunity for growth and learning. Cultivate a mindset of curiosity and openness to new possibilities.

**Focus on What You Can Control:**

While some aspects of change may be beyond your control, focus on what you can influence. Identify the areas where you have agency and take proactive steps to manage them. This might involve setting achievable goals, developing new skills, or seeking support from others.

**Practice Self-Compassion:**

Be kind to yourself during times of change. Understand that it's normal to feel a range of emotions, including discomfort, fear, or even excitement. Treat yourself with compassion and patience as you navigate through the transition. Practice self-care activities that help you stay grounded and resilient.

**Seek Support:**

Don't hesitate to reach out to friends, family, or colleagues for support. Share your thoughts and feelings with trusted individuals who can offer perspective, encouragement, or practical advice. Joining support groups or seeking guidance from mentors can also provide valuable insights and reassurance during times of change.

Changes are challenging and can be exciting as well. It is how you look at the changes that make all the difference. When you go through changes in your life your behaviour can change, so on that thought, what behaviour can you change today to make the change in your environment less stressful and easier to move through?

**Remember, you don't have to navigate change alone, there is support, you just need to ask.**

# THE BENEFITS OF Green Therapy

## How Gardening Nurtures Your Mental Health

BY JULIA SCHAFFER



To think I spent years and years avoiding gardening. In fact I think back in time as I watched my Mother in the garden spending all those hours on her hands and knees, in the blazing sun, pulling weeds, digging, cultivating, and sore and sorry for herself at the end of the day, I secretly thought she was a bit eccentric!

But now I get it! I totally understand the passion of gardening, it's become my solace, a place to spend five minutes a day just to chill, to a weekend full of adventure. My garden fills me daily with contentment, a true gift to all my senses but most importantly my mental health.

On certain days a waft of the heady scent of rosemary drifts in on a breeze while I am working from home. My sense of smell is indulged as I walk through the garden. When I venture out I run my hand over each herb in turn, scrunching the leaves and burying my nose in my palm to breathe in the fragrance of Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme (sing with me...), Oregano and Lemongrass. When I dig, the fresh earth smells rich and dare I say "earthy". When my husband mows the grass smells fresh and makes me sneeze.

I lift the lid on the worm farm and I hear the squirming of hundreds of slithering creatures squelching through the decaying fruit, veg and paper. Birds chirping, my dog barking at birds chirping and me yelling at my dog to stop barking at birds chirping. Sitting at my cute green table, nicknamed the "beer garden" by our neighbour, quiet overtakes me and peace reigns supreme.

If you have contemplated a garden of your own but not yet made the leap, I'd like to share with you five reasons why you should go forth and cultivate to improve your mental health.

When you plunge your hands into the soil and feel happy there is a tangible reason for that. It's a little organism called *mycobaccilium vaccae* which enters your blood stream and releases that "happy pill" serotonin which is a natural antidepressant and helps to strengthen the immune system. Whilst I don't advocate gardening without gloves particularly if you are pulling weeds or in and around rocks where spiders, snakes and other pests can lurk, planting a little seed in luscious soil or pulling up delicious carrots can be done sans gloves to get a good and healthy dose of earthy goodness.

I don't know about you but when I spy the first fruit of the season or the purple bulge of a new beetroot pushing through the soil I feel excited! There is a reason why this happens too. It's called the "Harvest High" and this can be attributed to a rush of dopamine that your brain produces that can come from the sight, smell or even the action of picking new fruits and vegetables.

When you think about it, our heritage as hunter gatherers was all about harvest, in fact we couldn't have lived without it, so it makes sense that our brain rewards us for growing things to feed ourselves and our tribe.

Don't be off put by the prospect of having to cultivate acres of food, you need only grow a patio lemon, potted tomato or tray of greens to experience this same feeling.

The garden is a place to switch off. For me the obvious sense that pervades is the calming sight of my garden. It's location is just outside the window of the place where I spend most of my week working. The view a palette of various green and yellow hues, calming, cool colours which seem to bring a sense of peace to my mood.

When I am at my most hectic and chance to glance out to glimpse a peewee swoop on an unsuspecting insect, a breeze ruffling the lettuce leaves, or a brand new mauve flower the promise of an eggplant to come somehow the frazzle becomes slightly less frazzling.

We all know that being physically active gives our brains something to focus on and can be a positive coping strategy for depression and anxiety. When we dig holes to plant trees, carry bags of mulch or soil, squat to place a seedling in the ground and bend (at the knees) to pick up a heavy pot we are exercising loads of muscles that we wouldn't use unless we frequent the gym, and boy do we feel it the next day!

**"When you think about it, our heritage as hunter-gatherers was all about harvest, in fact we couldn't have lived without it, so it makes sense that our brain rewards us for growing things to feed ourselves and our tribe."**

So the physicality of gardening provides not only physical but mental health benefits. If you don't have sufficient space to have a large garden to give you the best workout than why not join a community garden which will not only allow you to exercise your body but also increase your social circle and allow you to interact with like minded people.

Growing fruit and vegetables grounds us and reconnects us with where our food comes from. It is also a healthy way to nourish your family, knowing that no pesticides were used, no GMOs, no nasties, and we know that a healthy diet plays a role in overall mental health.

Also, my own research has shown that a child will eat more of the veggies on their plate when they have had a hand in growing them. An added benefit is that if you have an abundance you can share with your friends, family, school and local community.

Hands in the earth, its cool and soft, the rough bark on the tree stump where my weather station sits catching and measuring rainfall, gauging the temperature and showing which way the wind is blowing. My garden provides a feast for the senses, a garden of joy, a place of peace, my happy place. My new favourite saying is **"Gardening is like therapy and you get tomatoes!"**

So if I can encourage you, don't live your life without planting a seed, watering it and watching it burst up through the soil, produce two leaves then four, a flower, a fruit, pick it, smell it and eat it. There's nothing like gardening for the benefits it brings in health, happiness and mental peace.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Julia Schaffer** is an eco-friendly advocate, inspires Australians to lead sustainable lifestyles. Her passion project educates others on reducing their footprint through zero waste practices, home cooking, DIY projects, and urban gardening. Julia believes there's a way to bring eco into every room.

# THE ROAD FROM TRAUMA TO TRIUMPH

The inspiring journey of Bill, a 44-year-old who survived a motorbike accident in 2021, showcases the power of the human spirit. After confronting and overcoming significant mental health challenges, Bill emerged stronger and more resilient than ever.

**His story is a powerful testament to resilience and how a commitment to mental health can lead to a thriving life.**



## The Day My Life Changed Forever

On October 16, 2021, at exactly 10:20 a.m., my life changed forever. As I was riding my motorbike home from work in Southport on the Gold Coast, a truck hit me and I went straight up into the air and came straight back down onto the road. The impact hit me like a bomb with all the air being punched out of my lungs.

As I flew above the road, time slowed, and I was still completely conscious. It was when I was falling and about to come crashing down onto the road, a flood of thoughts were racing through my mind. I remember surrendering myself to God, hoping that whatever happened, my family would know how much I loved them.

Once I hit the ground, I remember still being conscious, gasping for air. I managed to gain control of my breathing and found that miraculously, I hadn't hit my head on the road. After what felt like an eternity (but was likely only about 30 seconds), a stranger who had witnessed the event, ran to my side. They told me they had seen the entire thing, and I was lucid enough to ask the stranger to request the truck driver leave his details before he left.

It was at this time, I heard the sirens of emergency vehicles fill the air. A police officer arrived to where I lay and asked me what had happened. In my usual jovial manner, I responded, "I thought this would be a good place to wait for a mate." He smiled and said, "Nice one." He then asked if I was okay and I replied, "I was just hit by a truck, but I think I'm alright."

The ambulance arrived, and the paramedics rushed to assess my condition as I was lying on the road. This is when I began to lose clarity and consciousness. The paramedics gave me the infamous green whistle for the pain and put a neck brace on me before sliding me onto the stretcher. The next thing I remember, I was being rushed to the hospital as a 'Red Blanket Emergency', meaning I was a number one priority on arrival with 'all hands needed'.

My injuries included a collapsed lung, multiple rib fractures, a shattered pelvis, a mangled right arm with no bones holding it together from just below the bicep to the forearm, a small break in my left hand, and a completely lacerated kidney and liver.

When I finally arrived at hospital, I was immediately put into an induced coma.

## The Coma

The five-week coma was surreal, feeling more like reality. In my mind, I woke up alone in my Broadbeach apartment. The streets outside were dark and empty. I decided to drive to Tweed Heads and ended up at a local pub. Inside, patrons greeted me like an old friend. A man who resembled a friend who had passed away handed me a beer, saying, "You'll go once this beer is finished." As I drank, the glass kept refilling, and we talked about my life before the accident.

Two weeks into my coma, I nearly died. It was during this time my mind took me to a dark place back in Melbourne, reliving past mistakes. A man told me, "If you want to get out of here, you have to start making peace with everything." As my condition improved, I found I had returned to the Tweed Heads pub, reconciling my past and talking with my friend again. When my beer finally finished, my friend told me it was time to leave.

As I opened the door to leave the pub, everything went white, and I heard hospital machines beeping. I had finally woken up.

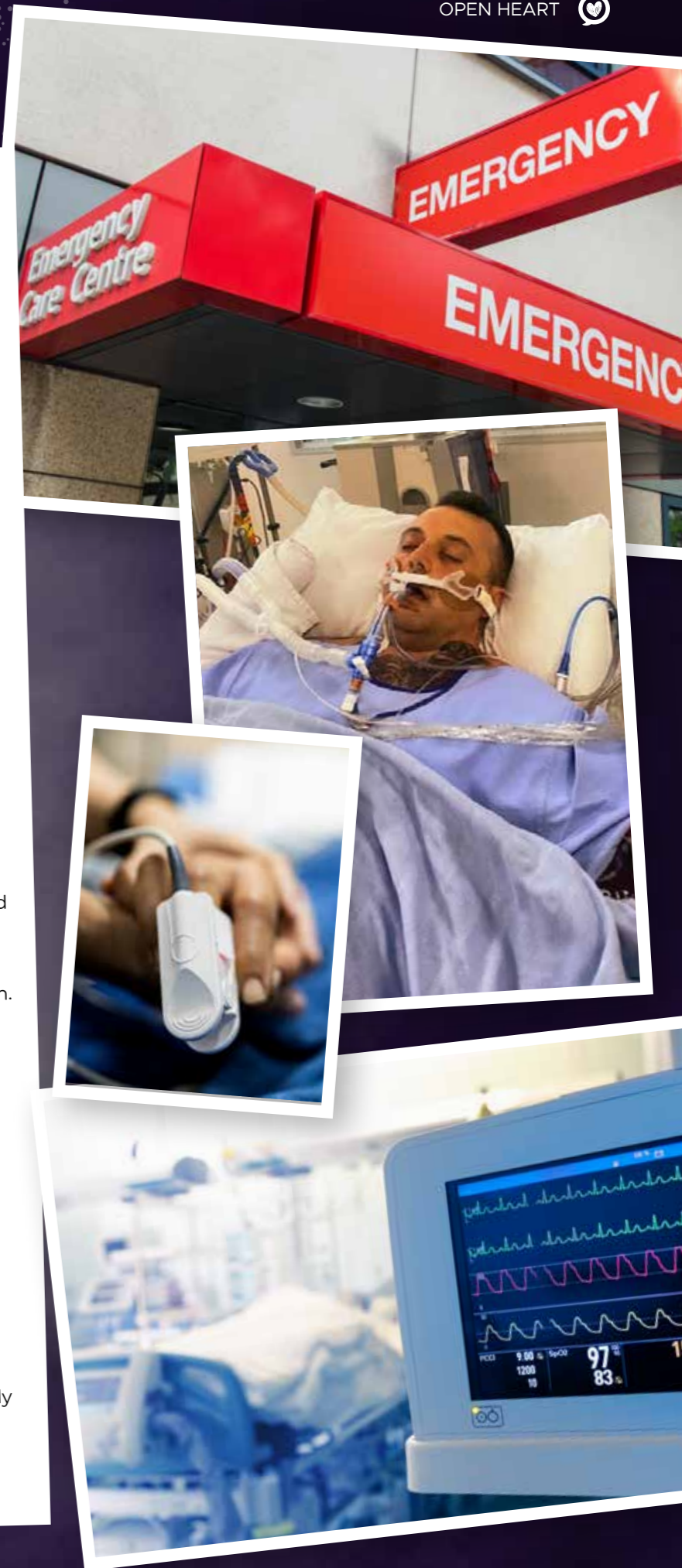
## Starting New

As I started to get my bearings, I was shocked to see a maze of tubes and wires coming out of my body, along with a tracheotomy and a long scar running down the length of my torso. To my surprise, I could also see the friend I was talking to from the pub in my coma, standing by my bedside. He remained there for the first week after I woke up, although no one else could see him.

One of the first doctors to see me said "You are a very lucky man." He explained that they didn't think I would make it. "You could have died twice," he said.

I had a team of doctors that had been treating me over the weeks and news travelled that I had finally woken up. When they arrived to see me, one of them asked me a series of questions including if I knew my name, where I was, what year it was, and if I remembered what had happened. I got three out of four answers right, but I couldn't remember the accident.

My family was also there with me in the hospital. I learnt that two weeks into my coma the medical staff phoned my mother urging her to fly to Queensland immediately to say goodbye, as they didn't expect me to survive. Upon arrival to the Gold Coast, she had needed quarantine before she could see me, and thankfully, I didn't die.



At the same time this was happening, my sister who also lived in Melbourne was having major complications in her pregnancy, which added more stress to the emotional load my mother had to carry. It seemed both her adult children were going through major health incidents at the same time in their lives and despite everything, mum managed to stay strong and support us both, for which we are both forever grateful for.

**My Journey Back to Me**

Once I had awoken from my coma, it was like I was hitting the reset button on my life. Nothing was the same as it was before the accident.

I had to learn to sit, stand, walk, talk, and then use my left hand as my dominant right hand as no longer functional and was being pieced back together. I had to start with the most basic of things such as reconnecting my brain to my body. The simple action of learning to move my legs and pick up a spoon were challenges I had to conquer daily. It was like being a newborn again, relearning all the five senses again: sight, touch, smell, sound, and taste.

A week or so after waking up from the coma, I discovered I was experiencing severe distress, and anxiety. Emotions I had never felt before. I was always a confident person who lived life to the full and now I was feeling scared, angry, confused, and disoriented. On one occasion I found myself yelling at the nurses and doctors and they had to call my mother into the surgery room to calm me down.

These emotions overwhelmed me for weeks until one day, in a moment of distress, I called my mother, desperate to understand why I felt this way. She responded with two words that changed the course of my recovery: "You're broken." She reassured me that it was normal to feel this way after such a life-changing experience. She explained that I likely had PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), which was causing my anxiety. She emphasised the importance of understanding the symptoms of PTSD for me to be able to move forward and begin the healing process.

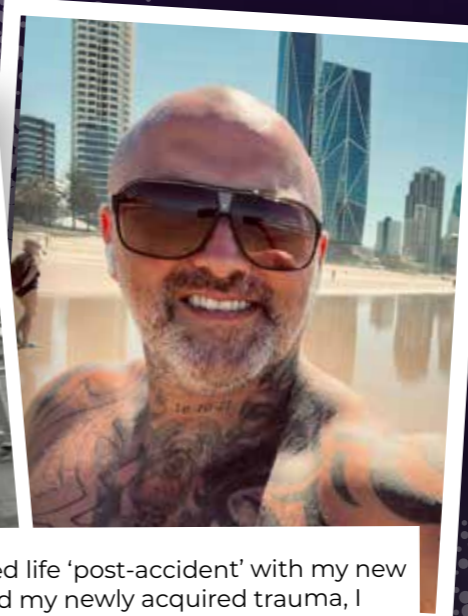
I started researching PTSD and anxiety online, watching videos, reading material, researching strategies, causes and treatments, and educating myself on these conditions. These resources helped me understand what I was feeling and how to best manage my emotions and mental health.

A significant turning point for me moving forward was when I expressed my fears and confusion during a meeting with my doctors and an occupational therapist (OT). My medical team understood why I would be fearful and confused and thanked me for speaking up. We agreed that the whole team would give me notice about upcoming appointments to give me time to process their plans before acting on them. This acknowledgment and new approach greatly helped me manage my anxiety and PTSD.

Once I was released from the hospital, I moved back to Melbourne to be closer to my family. I insisted on living alone to regain my independence and work towards getting my life back to, or as close to, normal as I could.

I had three more surgeries after leaving the hospital, bringing the total surgeries to 20, in less than two years.

During this time, I continued to work on my mental health alongside a range of psychologists and mental health practitioners. This process was an important part of my healing. Although, as it was during COVID, it proved difficult to find a therapist who wasn't treating patients who had COVID-related concerns, rather than severe trauma like mine.



As I re-entered life 'post-accident' with my new perspective and my newly acquired trauma, I continued my commitment to understanding and managing my anxiety and PTSD. I did this by reflecting on what triggered these feelings each time they came up for me. I would break down the events leading up to them, until I understood and identified the root cause. This self-analysis was time-consuming, but it was also incredibly rewarding, as it helped me regain control of my emotions, understand my mental health and gave me a roadmap to thriving in this new chapter of my life.

**Embracing The New Normal**

As I reflect on the accident and this life-changing experience, I feel incredibly blessed to be here today writing this story and am grateful for the life I live. Despite still experiencing anxiety and PTSD today, I've learned to embrace these challenges as opportunities to deepen my understanding of myself and build my resilience. I'm proud to be a part of the 'one-in-five' who experience mental health issues, and I refuse to be a victim of it.

Throughout this journey, I never once asked, "Why me?"

Instead, I always thought, "I'm glad it was me." This mindset has provided me with a knowledge and power to become the person I aspire to be and living my best life.

I have realised that my mental health is just as important as regaining my physical health. It has been just as crucial as all the physical, surgical and medical treatments in my recovery.

In sharing my story, I hope to inspire others facing similar challenges. Life can change in an instant, but with the right mindset, support, and education, you can overcome the most daunting obstacles and thrive.

For me on a personal note, my faith in God also played a crucial role in guiding me through this journey. I have realised that mental health challenges can be a catalyst for profound personal growth. By accepting and understanding these challenges, we can all work towards a healthier, more fulfilling life.

**"I have realised that mental health challenges can be a catalyst for profound personal growth. By accepting and understanding these challenges, we can all work towards a healthier, more fulfilling life."**

To anyone who is struggling and reading this, know that you are not alone. Connect to your community, talk to your friends and family and mental health professionals. Remember that your journey, no matter how difficult, can lead to a deeper understanding of yourself and a more resilient future and ultimately, a life that is more fulfilling for you.

As I reflect on this experience, there is one quote that has been particularly meaningful to me is, "Sometimes God chooses us for the hardest roads so we come out better and stronger and smiling at the other end." That has certainly been the case for me!



# Paws and Effect

BY AMANDA HARGREAVES

## How Household Pets Can Boost Our Mental Health

There's something magical about the way our furry friends can turn a rough day into a tail-wagging good time. Dogs and cats, in particular, have an uncanny ability to lift our spirits and provide comfort when we need it most. But it's not just our imagination; science backs up the benefits of having pets for our mental health.

**Let's dive into why our canine and feline companions are more than just cute faces - they're our mental health champions.**



### DOGS: Our Loyal Sidekicks

Dogs are known for their loyalty and unwavering affection. Whether they're greeting you with enthusiastic tail wags or snuggling up next to you on the couch, dogs provide a sense of companionship that can alleviate feelings of loneliness and depression.

According to the RSPCA, about 40% of Australian households own a dog. Here's why that's great news:

**Exercise and Fresh Air:** Dog owners are more likely to engage in regular physical activity. Walking the dog ensures that you're getting outside, which is beneficial for both physical and mental health.

**Social Interaction:** Taking your dog for a walk can lead to social interactions with other pet owners, fostering a sense of community and reducing feelings of isolation.

**Stress Reduction:** Studies have shown that spending just 15-30 minutes with your dog can lower stress levels by increasing serotonin and dopamine, the "feel-good" chemicals in the brain.

### CATS: Our Purring Therapists

Cats might have a reputation for being aloof, but any cat owner will tell you that their feline friends can be incredibly affectionate and comforting. The soft purr of a cat has a calming effect that can help reduce anxiety and create a peaceful environment.



In Australia, around 29% of households have a cat, and here's why that's beneficial:

**Lower Blood Pressure:** Petting a cat can help reduce blood pressure and promote relaxation.

**Sense of Purpose:** Taking care of a cat provides a routine and a sense of purpose, which can be particularly beneficial for those dealing with depression.

**Therapeutic Purring:** The act of purring can help heal and reduce stress. The vibrations of a cat's purr have been linked to lowering stress levels and even aiding in healing bones and tissues.

### Fun Stats from the RSPCA:

- **Companionship:** 62% of Australian pet owners say their pets help them feel less lonely.
- **Happiness:** 85% of dog owners report feeling happier after spending time with their dog.
- **Mental Health:** Over 70% of cat owners say their cats help them manage stress and anxiety.
- **Activity Levels:** Dog owners are 54% more likely to meet their recommended daily exercise levels.
- **Support:** 78% of pet owners say their pets provide them with emotional support during tough times.

So there you have it, our four-legged friends are more than just pets; they're integral to our mental well-being.

Whether it's the joyous bark of a dog or the soothing purr of a cat, these animals enrich our lives in countless ways. So, next time you cuddle your pet, remember - they're not just your best friend; they're your very own mental health booster!

# COUNSELLING: The Missing Link

BY DOREEN PATENALL



'Counselling' is a generic word and can be applied to areas such as legal, medical, educational, political and mental health. It was adopted by Mental Health Practitioners many years ago in Australia, however, the word 'counselling' does not have a defining connotation simply because the word indicates 'giving advice' and is generally misunderstood when we mention the profession of counselling.

Perhaps, it would be beneficial to explain what Counsellors don't do and this may give depth and credence this profession deserves.

Counsellors are not diagnosticians. While we learn about many mental health disorders and use resources like the DSM-5 to understand symptoms, we do not diagnose conditions. We are not pharmacologists either, although we study medications like antidepressants to understand their effects and potential drawbacks. Importantly, we do not tell clients (a term we prefer over 'patients') what to do with their lives.

So what do counsellors do? We listen to people's story and work with the person rather than the symptoms. We look at the functionality in an individual's life rather than dysfunctionality despite any mental or physical health challenges they might face. We explore belief systems which that may no longer serve them in the wider framework of their lives, and we keep expanding our knowledge around aspects of the individual's mental health; thus creating a better future for themselves and their families.

We tap into the client's unique resources, believing they know their own answers more than anyone else can ever glean, no matter what age.

We study psychological/psycho-therapeutic-based modalities, techniques and models to assist the person to either change their life path, or to remain on their life path to encounter and overcome often difficult circumstances hindering their achievements and ultimate fulfillment.



We are here-and-now adopting a long-term view of the client's future, rather than looking back, on their life journey.

**"We work in a therapeutic framework and totally respect the client we are working with, building on their authentic self and how they want to be in their world."**

These are well-known insights from theorists who trained in the medical/psychiatric realms and who shared their wisdom on the therapeutic relationship: Carl Rogers said (as Practitioners/Counsellors/Psychotherapists in relation to working with clients) "we are the co-travellers". Karl Jung maintained "we are the co-journeers". Sigmund Freud purported this phenomenon as "the talking cure" and that we, as practitioners, need to listen not only to the content of the story, but how the story is conveyed, to understand the true essence of its meaning, and how the story is told in order to find its truth.

We work in a therapeutic framework and completely respect the client we are working with, building on their authentic self and how they want to be in their world. When we listen we consciously construct a collaborative relationship, with the aim of consistently growing confidence, competence and self-esteem for the individual.

We are, indeed, the 'missing link' between the medical profession and a person's daily functionality, and we are the 'missing link' between the challenges of life and melding back into family and society, and we provide solid support in the many losses people endure so the 'link' they need is no longer missing.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Doreen Patenall** is a Counsellor/Psychotherapist/Coach with a Master Degree in Counselling & Psychotherapy. She is a lecturer, clinical supervisor and a practitioner with 25 years' experience in this field. Doreen also has degrees in Family Dispute Resolution and Organisational Behaviour. She works with families, couples and individuals, as well as corporate teams and management.



# NAVIGATING Conflict Resolution

With Insight  
And Strategy

BY CATE JOLLEY, MEDIATOR

Conflict is part of being human. Neuroscience will inform you that parts of the brain are engaged and interconnect with the body with the different emotions invoked by conflict.

'Conflict resolution', is a relatively new term (compared to the origin of humanity and conflict) that describes the process of resolving conflict. It is also used, interchangeably, to describe the process of analysing conflict and of managing conflict.

Instead of seeing conflict resolution as a single outcome, it can be more useful to view it as a proactive approach to conflict. This approach can produce various outcomes, such as resolving, identifying, minimising, narrowing, tolerating, avoiding, or even supporting the conflict.

There are a range of disciplines and fields and many interventions that are used within the scope of conflict resolution. Counselling, coaching, investigating, legal, medical, mediation are all examples of different fields that deal with conflict with different processes, goals, outcomes and reasons.

As a practitioner in the field of conflict resolution I have so much to learn. Especially when seemingly, I remain entrenched and inadequate at eliminating conflict with and amongst my offspring.

As a mediator, I mediate conflict as an independent third party, engaged by two parties to assist facilitate ongoing conflict – whether it is family or workplace in nature.

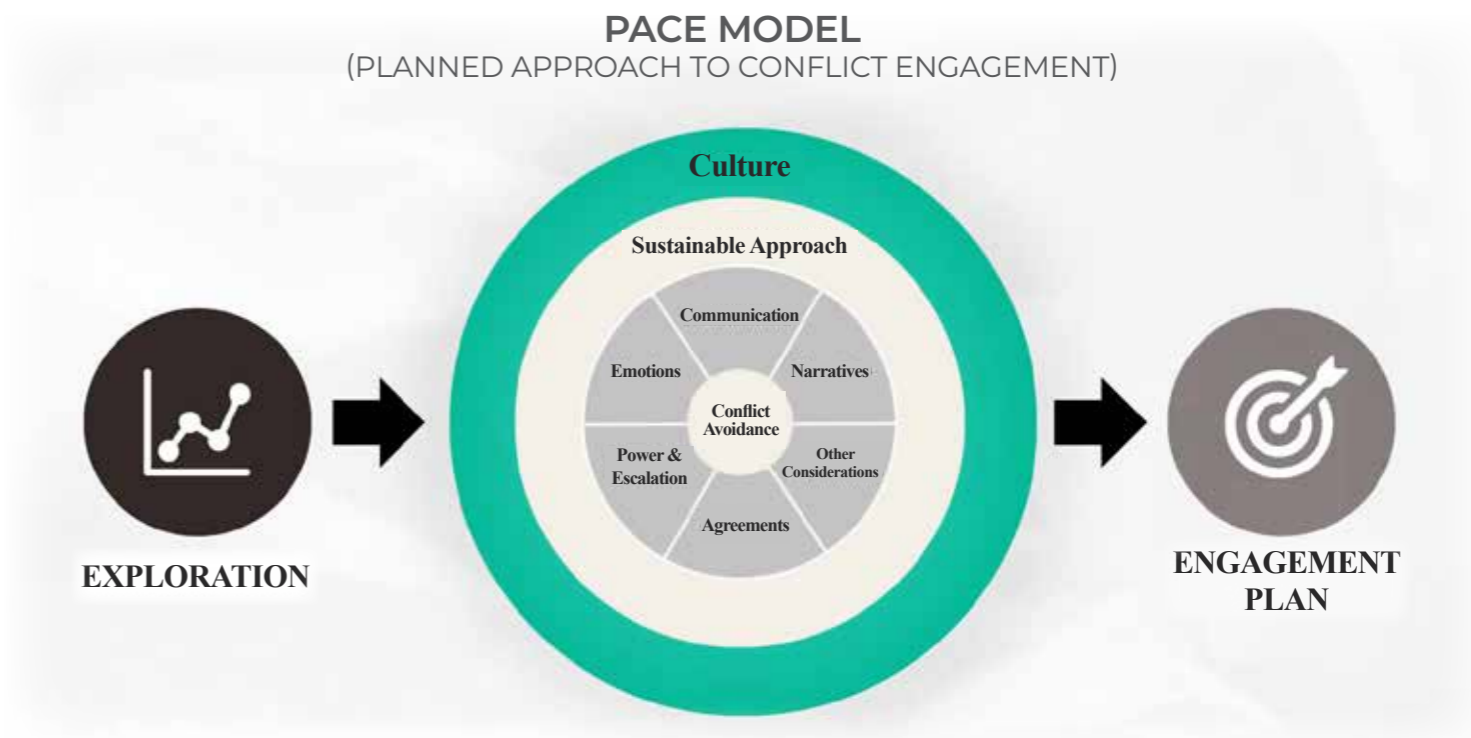
My independence is crucial to my ability to intervene and assist with conflict resolution.

Another integral part of my role as a mediator of conflict is to ensure I have support resources for areas of the conflict resolution that I am not engaged for – for example, a counsellor or a coach who each play a very different role with clients who are seeking support for conflict.

A common 'essential' for conflict resolution is that we all benefit from support – and often, not just one type of support, or intervention. Practitioners are trained to identify and engage conflict management/resolution support, including referrals as required to other specialty practitioners.

**Conflict specialists are trained to:**

- Broaden scope: identify what is going on, the nature, and how the roles interact over time
- Time: Consider the changes and impact over the dimension of time
- Map the dynamics
- Consider the complexities
- Reflect on changes to key roles and relationships
- Reflect on parties' focus, needs, desires and outcomes



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**“A common ‘essential’ for conflict resolution is that we all benefit from support – and often, not just one type of support, or intervention.”**

In my ongoing pursuit for learning I have recently learnt of the PACE model (shown above), which I share as an example of how some practitioners approach such an integral issue in all of our lives. PACE (Planned Approach to Conflict Engagement) deals with conflict avoidance. Avoiding conflict is a very common way of dealing with conflict.

A planned approach to conflict avoidance would include exploring: why are parties avoiding, how are parties avoiding, what are the core issues (rather than the symptoms) and what strategic approach will best support the client and the conflict.

PACE prompts conflict practitioners to help explore the story with clients and help how to identify how to focus on strategic engagement.

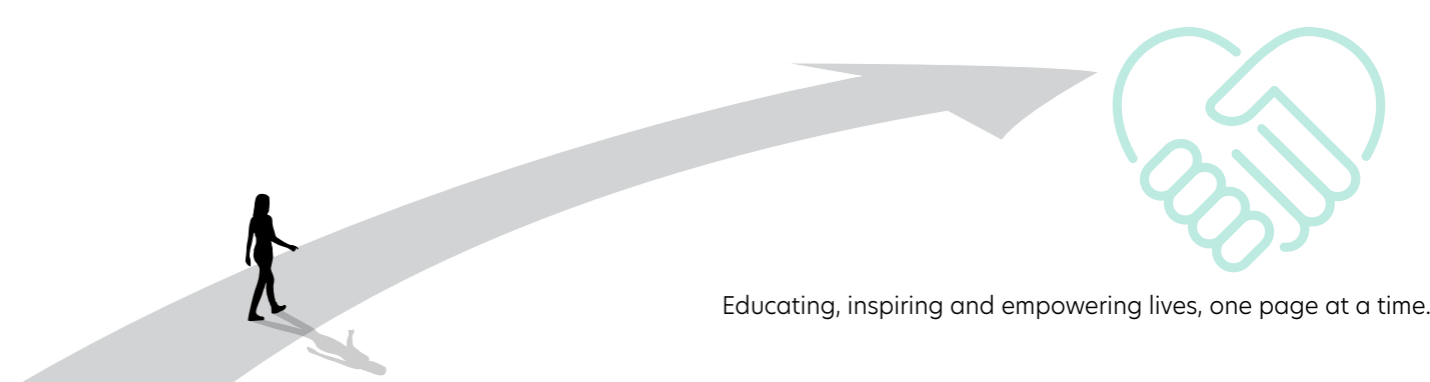
**These prompts include:**

- Communication
- Emotions
- Narrative
- Power & escalation
- Agreements
- Other considerations
- Sustainability
- Culture

The role of a conflict specialist is as varied as the causes and reasons for conflict. An experienced and skilled conflict specialist will identify which kind of conflict practitioner will help your goals best and steer you accordingly.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Cate Jolley** has navigated a diverse career around her family including four teenagers and numerous pets, applying her legal, commerce and dispute resolution studies, as a solicitor, property investor, CEO, governance advisor, mediator and facilitator. She now pursues mediation and conflict resolution, collaborating with individuals, organisations and colleagues to help difficult conversations and reduce court associated time and money. When she isn't helping difficult conversations, Cate enjoys writing, ocean swimming, pet play - and of course time with her beloved teenagers.



# A GUIDE FOR PARENTS: Keeping Children & Teenagers Safe Online

BY AMANDA HARGREAVES

In today's digital age, ensuring the online safety of teenagers has become more difficult and a critical concern for parents. Here are some helpful tips to support you in navigating the digital world with the young people in your life.

With the prevalence of smartphones, tablets, and laptops, teens are more connected than ever, but this connectivity also brings potential risks. Here are some practical tips to help parents safeguard their teens' online experiences while fostering responsible and mindful digital habits.

### 1. Establish Tech-Free Zones and Times

Creating boundaries around technology use is essential. Designate specific times when phones, tablets, and laptops must be put away, such as during family meal times, during homework, at social events and at bedtime. Implementing a "no phones at the dinner table" rule encourages face-to-face interactions and helps teens develop healthy, balanced tech habits.

### 2. Develop a 'Responsible Use of Tech' Agreement

Work with your teen to create a 'Responsible Use of Tech' agreement. This agreement could outline the expectations and responsibilities associated with owning and using digital devices. Topics to cover might include appropriate online behaviour, respecting others' privacy, and understanding the potential consequences of their digital actions. By involving your teen in this process, you encourage them to take ownership of their online conduct.

### 3. Use Tech Monitoring Apps

Tech monitoring apps can help create transparency between parents and teens while young people learn to safely navigate the internet and communicate online. These apps allow parents to monitor online activity, set usage limits, and block inappropriate content. While it's important to respect your teen's privacy, using these tools can open up important conversations about online safety and digital responsibility. There are a range of apps available online or ask other parents what apps they use and what works best for them.

### 4. Encourage Conversations About Digital Footprints

Educate your teen about the concept of a digital footprint—the inevitable trail of data they leave behind whenever they use the internet and that nothing is ever private online. Discuss the importance of being mindful and respectful about what they post, share, and comment on. Remind them not to take or share photos or videos of others without their permission, as this can violate privacy, cause emotional distress for the other people involved, and lead to serious or legal repercussions.

### 5. Promote Mindful Online Interactions

Encourage your teen to think critically about their online interactions. Teach them to recognise and avoid cyberbullying, and to report any inappropriate behavior they encounter. Foster an environment where your teen feels comfortable discussing their online experiences and any concerns they may have.

### 6. Set a Good Example

Model good digital habits yourself. Show your teen how to balance screen time with other activities, respect others' privacy, and engage in positive online interactions. By demonstrating responsible tech use, you provide a powerful example for your teen to follow.

### 7. Keep Communication Open

Finally, maintain open lines of communication with your teen. Regularly discuss their online activities and interests, and listen to their concerns without judgment. This ongoing dialogue helps build trust and ensures that your teen feels supported as they navigate the digital world.

By implementing these practical tips, parents can help their teens stay safe online while promoting responsible and mindful digital habits. Remember, the goal is not to control your teen's online experience but to guide and support them in making smart, respectful choices in the digital age.

### Websites with information

#### eSafety Commissioner

[esafety.gov.au](http://esafety.gov.au)  
The eSafety Commissioner provides a wealth of resources and information for parents, educators, and young people on online safety. The site offers tips, guides, and strategies for managing online risks and promoting safe online behaviour.

#### Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC)

[cyber.gov.au](http://cyber.gov.au)  
The ACSC's Stay Smart Online program provides advice on protecting personal and financial information online. It includes resources for parents to help their children navigate the internet safely.

#### Raising Children Network

[raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)  
This comprehensive parenting resource includes sections on internet safety, cyberbullying, and managing screen time. It provides practical advice and strategies for parents to support their children's online activities.

#### ThinkUKnow

[thinkuknow.org.au](http://thinkuknow.org.au)  
ThinkUKnow is an internet safety program that provides resources for parents, carers, and teachers. It offers information on how to stay safe online, how to report suspicious activities, and how to talk to children about internet safety.



### Monitoring Apps and Resources:

#### Parental Control Now

[parentalcontrolnow.org](http://parentalcontrolnow.org)  
Parental Control Now offers comprehensive guides and reviews on the best parental control apps and software. It helps parents monitor and manage their children's online activities, ensuring a safer digital experience. The website provides insights into features, pricing, and effectiveness of various tools.

#### Safe on Social

[safeonsocial.com/parents-free-resources](http://safeonsocial.com/parents-free-resources)  
Safe on Social provides free downloadable resources and tools to help parents understand social media and its potential risks. It offers advice on the best apps for monitoring children's online activity and ensuring their safety.



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BY SHAWN MATTHEWS

# Unhealthy Anxiety VS

## What Is 'Unhealthy Anxiety'?

Unhealthy anxiety is when a person's thoughts become debilitating. It is when a person feels threatened. It can hinder your social interactions, your work performance and interactions and your daily tasks. Rumination is when people get stuck in their thoughts and ruminate over what they did or should have done.

For example, I have a client that ruminates about her upbringing and telling herself and me that her mother was not mothering and was neglectful, therefore it is hard for her to believe in herself and her ability to move forward in life. She finds it a challenge to let it go. A person's circumstances and experiences have a huge part to play in how they see the world and how they navigate it.

When people ruminate or dwell on something, they often isolate themselves. They struggle to break free from the cycle of negative thoughts and feel trapped in their circumstances. This sense of helplessness was particularly pronounced during COVID-19, making it heartbreaking to witness and hear about in sessions.

Unhealthy anxiety can be categorised into several anxiety disorders, including:

- **Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD):** Characterised by excessive, uncontrollable worry about various aspects of life.
- **Panic Disorder:** Involves recurrent panic attacks, which are sudden periods of intense fear and physical symptoms.
- **Social Anxiety Disorder:** Intense fear of social situations and being judged or embarrassed in front of others.
- **Specific Phobias:** Excessive fear of a specific object, situation, or activity.
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD):** Involves persistent, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and repetitive behaviours (compulsions) performed to reduce anxiety.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** Anxiety and flashbacks triggered by experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event.

## When to Seek Help

If you or someone you know is experiencing unhealthy anxiety, it's important to seek professional help. Consider reaching out to a mental health professional if:

- Anxiety is interfering with daily life and functioning.
- Avoidance behaviours are limiting your activities and social interactions.
- Physical symptoms of anxiety are persistent and distressing.
- Intrusive thoughts and excessive worry are difficult to control.
- There is a significant impact on work, school, or relationships.

Unhealthy anxiety is a serious condition that goes beyond normal, situational anxiety. It involves excessive worry, chronic symptoms, physical manifestations, and impaired functioning. Recognising the signs of unhealthy anxiety and seeking professional help can lead to effective management and improved quality of life. Remember, it's important to address anxiety early to prevent it from becoming more severe and disruptive.



**“Unhealthy anxiety is a serious condition that goes beyond normal, situational anxiety. It involves excessive worry, chronic symptoms, physical manifestations, and impaired functioning.”**

# Healthy Anxiety

## What is 'Healthy Anxiety'?

Anxiety drives us to become motivated and get things done! When a person worries about something, they can have this feeling and it can take up to 60 minutes to pass. (Psychology Today)

For example, one of my clients is studying biology and the day before, she says to herself, “Maybe I don't know enough”, “I need to study more or learn more” I use a modality called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, to look at her thoughts, feelings and behaviours on this topic. Something I asked her was “How do you know this is true for you? And What is the proof and disproof of your thoughts on this? When we explore these areas, she slowly looks at and gains perspective that she is only having self-doubts about this exam. Her proof has been that she passed and did well on her exam and she couldn't find any disproof. As a result, her anxiety passed within minutes.

**“Far from being inherently negative, anxiety can play a crucial role in keeping us motivated, alert, and aware of our surroundings.”**

Anxiety is a universal experience that everyone encounters at various points in their lives. It is a normal and often necessary response to uncertainty, challenges, and potential threats. Far from being inherently negative, anxiety can play a crucial role in keeping us motivated, alert, and aware of our surroundings.



## Here are some ways to embrace anxiety and manage it:

- **Acknowledge Your Anxiety:** Accept that feeling anxious is a natural response to certain situations. Acknowledge your anxiety without judgment and remind yourself that it is a temporary state.
- **Use Anxiety as a Tool:** Channel your anxious energy into productive activities. Use it as a signal to prepare, plan, and act. For example, if you're anxious about a project at work, break it down into smaller tasks and start tackling them one by one.
- **Practice Self-Care:** Engage in self-care practices that help manage anxiety levels, such as regular exercise, healthy eating, adequate sleep, and mindfulness techniques.
- **Seek Support:** If your anxiety feels overwhelming or persistent, consider talking to a friend, family member, or mental health professional. Sometimes sharing your concerns and getting an outside perspective can be incredibly helpful.

“Yes, things could go abominably wrong in a heartbeat, but most likely, that won't happen. Instead of stewing in rumination, healthy anxious people focus on solutions.” (Psychology Today, 2020)

Remember, it's perfectly normal to feel anxious in certain situations. Rather than viewing anxiety as purely negative, recognise its role in helping you stay motivated and prepared.

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- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/anxiety-zen/202008/how-healthy-anxious-people-harness-anxiety>
- Dr Ramani - Med circle <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4E2Jzm1raw>



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