One in five Australians experience mental health issues each year.

Three million Australians are living with anxiety or depression.

Suicide is the leading cause of death among Australians aged between 15 and 44.

16% of Australians misuse pharmaceuticals or use illicit drugs.

Of those Australians who drink, over 37% do so at risky levels.

Help is available. And people who seek help, can, and do, recover.
If someone is in distress and you believe they are experiencing mental health, alcohol or other drug issues, these tips can help reduce anxiety and risk.

- Take them seriously, and be warm and non-judgemental.
- Give them your full attention and don’t interrupt when they are speaking.
- Summarise what they have said to show you are listening and to work out what type of help they need. For example, “it sounds like you are feeling XYZ and that you want/plan to XYZ. Have I understood correctly?”
- If they are on the phone, ask if they are safe, and if there is someone with them or close by that they can contact for support.
- Reassure them that there are solutions to problems and that things can get better. Tell them you would like to help them access support.
- Request their name, address and current location. If they are on the phone, write down their phone number if it’s available on caller ID. Also record the time and date.
- Discuss the options they have for seeking help and encourage them to make contact with the relevant support services.
- Don’t give opinions or advice, agree or disagree with what they are saying, or ask too many questions. Unless you are a qualified professional, you should only provide referral information.
- If you are able to, transfer them directly to a support service without having to hang up.
- If they refuse to get help and you believe it’s a crisis, tell them you are concerned about them and that you are going to contact the Mental Health Emergency Response Line or Rurallink for help. For example: “it sounds like things are difficult for you at the moment and I’m concerned for your wellbeing. I’m going to contact a support service and ask how they can help you.”
If approached in person by someone who is aggressive, or who is experiencing psychosis

If concerned for your own safety, remove yourself, and others, from the area immediately and call 000

- Discreetly call another member of staff to assist.
- Try to establish some rapport. Speak in a calm, even tone and use their name if you know it.
- Adopt an open, non-aggressive stance – feet hip-width apart, arms at sides and palms facing outwards. Don’t rush into sudden actions and never approach them from behind without warning.
- Stay at least an arm’s length away from them and give them room to breathe. Do not touch them.
- Tell them what you are about to do before you do it – never leave them to guess your intentions. Speak clearly and make one point at a time. Do not overload them with information and don’t use jargon.

- Give them time to think before responding to any questions. Consider stepping back to provide a non-verbal cue of no pressure.
- Continue to reassure them about what is happening, but do not be patronising.
- Do not try to contradict or reason logically against a delusion. Discrediting their reality could aggravate them.
- Try to negotiate realistic options to resolve the situation. For example: “I want to help and we can talk about this, but I am having trouble understanding you while you are shouting”.
- Explain your position and what you are obliged to do to assist. For example: “I’m concerned about you and want to keep you safe, so I am going to call the police to come and check you are ok.”
Set boundaries. Inform them what your role can and can’t do.

Warn them that abusive behaviour is not okay, and that you are within your rights to terminate their call or walk away if they continue to be abusive. Examples:

“Can you try and lower your voice a bit please. I’m finding it hard to make out what you are saying.”

“I want to help you, but if you continue raising your voice I will have to end this call.”

“I’m not able to continue to listen to you because you are swearing/yelling and I’m going to hang up now. Feel free to call back when you are ready to speak to me without swearing/yelling and I will happily help you then.”

You may benefit from a debriefing session after involvement in a crisis situation. This involves discussing responses to the incident, and emotional, physiological and behavioural reactions. A debrief is usually done with your supervisor or line manager.

Don’t be afraid to ask for help yourself.

Remember that you are not responsible for the situation or for saving anyone.
Urgent mental health assistance

Mental Health Emergency Response Line (MHERL)
For anyone involved in a mental health emergency in the community – both members of the public and health professionals. Callers referred to acute response teams
Metro: 1300 555 788 (24/7)
Peel: 1800 676 822 (24/7)
TTY: 1800 720 101 (24/7)

Rurallink
Specialist after-hours mental health telephone service for rural communities in Western Australia
1800 552 002 (after hours and weekends. At other times, contact a local mental health service)
TTY: 1800 720 101

Alcohol and other drugs support

Alcohol and Drug Support Line
For anyone concerned about their own or another person’s alcohol or drug use
08 9442 5000 (24/7)
Country callers: 1800 198 024 (24/7)
www.mhc.wa.gov.au/alcoholanddrugsupportline

Meth Helpline
Confidential counselling and support for anyone concerned about their own or another person’s meth use
1800 874 878 (24/7)
www.mhc.wa.gov.au/methhelpline

Parent and Family Drug Support Line
For anyone concerned about a loved one’s alcohol or drug use
08 9442 5050 (24/7)
Country callers: 1800 653 203 (24/7)
www.mhc.wa.gov.au/parentandfamilydrugsupportline

Where to get help in Western Australia

Life threatening emergencies: Call 000
Threats to self or others – ask for Police and tell them if it’s a mental health issue
In the case of physical harm – ask for an ambulance

Wungening Aboriginal Corporation
Aboriginal alcohol and drug referral service that provides culturally appropriate services
08 9221 1411 (business hours)
www.aads.org.au

Mental health support

Beyondblue
24/7 free counselling
1300 224 636 (24/7)
www.beyondblue.org.au

Lifeline
In a crisis situation
13 11 14 (24/7)
www.lifelinewa.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service
Free telephone, video and online counselling for people 15 years and over, from professional counsellors with specialist skills. Is especially suited to people who are geographically or emotionally isolated
1300 659 467 (24/7)
www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
Additional support

1800RESPECT
National sexual assault, domestic family violence counselling service
1800 737 732 (24/7)
www.1800respect.org.au

Crisis Care Helpline
For urgent assistance with child welfare, domestic violence, homelessness and other crisis situations
08 9223 1111 (24/7)
Country callers: 1800 199 008
Translating and interpreting service: 13 14 50
www.dcp.wa.gov.au/crisisandemergency

Derbarl Yerrigan Health Service Inc.
Health and medical support for Aboriginal people, including counselling
08 9421 3888 (Mon to Fri: 8:30am – 7pm; Sat: 8:30am – 12pm)
www.dyhs.org.au

General Practitioners (GPs) can connect people to mental health and alcohol and other drug treatment and recovery resources

Headspace
Support for young adults aged 12 – 25, and their families. Four core areas: mental health, physical health, work and study support, and alcohol and other drug services
eheadspace: 1800 650 890 (7 days: 9am – 12:30am EST). Telephone and web chat.
www.headspace.org.au
(details of local headspace centres)

Kids Helpline
Free qualified counselling service for kids and young people aged five to 25
1800 551 800 (24/7)
https://kidshelpline.com.au

MensLine Australia
Support and information for Australian men with family and relationship concerns
1300 78 99 78 (24/7)
https://mensline.org.au

QLife
Counselling and referral service for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and/or intersex (LGBTI)
1800 184 527 (7 days: 3pm – 12am)
https://qlife.org.au

Wellways Helpline
A peer-led national helpline staffed by trained volunteers with personal experience of mental health issues. Mental health information, support and referrals, for people experiencing mental health issues and their family and friends
1300 111 500 (Mon to Fri: 9am – 9pm EST)
www.wellways.org/helpline

Details of further mental health, alcohol or other drug support services can be found at www.mhc.wa.gov.au/gettinghelp