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WIC-K
Wellbeing Informed Care - Kimberley

WORKFORCE WELLBEING GUIDE:

A self-reflection and self-care resource for Aboriginal
Community Controlled Health Services in the Kimberley



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We pay our deepest respects to Traditional Owners across the Kimberley region and acknowledge their continuing connection to language, culture, and Country. We are grateful for the knowledge and wisdom of the Elders who came before us, those we have today, and those that are emerging.

This guide was written in Rubibi (Broome) on Yawuru Country and was developed by the Wellbeing Informed Care – Kimberley project team in collaboration with Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services, and the University of Western Australia (Rural Clinical School and the School of Indigenous Studies).

We would like to thank the Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) workers, Aboriginal Health Workers who contributed their time, knowledge and lived experience to the development of this guide.

WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE AND WHO IS IT FOR?

This guide is designed to provide the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) workforce in the Kimberley with information about wellbeing in the workplace. The guide focuses on the role of self-reflection and self-care in safeguarding and promoting worker wellbeing. It includes practical activities and resources that can be used in a range of settings, by individual workers, supervisors or managers. The information and activities provided in the guide are centred around a holistic understanding of wellbeing, in order to be broadly applicable to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers.

WHY IS SELF-REFLECTION AND SELF-CARE IMPORTANT?

Using self-reflection and self-care practices is important as they strengthen holistic health care service delivery, whilst also protecting the wellbeing and safety of ACCHS workers. Self-reflection and self-care practices can also support effective supervision and good team functioning.

Sometimes work can have a negative impact on people's wellbeing. This might be in response to workers:

- Hearing traumatic stories or seeing clients in distress or responding to traumatic incidents.
- Experiencing personal issues that make concentrating at work difficult.
- Experiencing challenges in balancing cultural or family obligations with work responsibilities.
- Feeling like no matter how hard they try, nothing they are doing is improving the lives of people in their community.
- Struggling with a particular task, or with their overall workload.
- Experiencing difficulties with another team member or manager.

Because of this, workers may feel overwhelmed, stressed, traumatised, or burnt out. Left unaddressed these feelings and experiences can lead to poor job satisfaction, poor work performance, frequent or prolonged absences and/or high worker turnover. These concepts are explained in more detail in **Appendix A**.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, or experience stress, burnout, or vicarious trauma at work it is important to chat to a trusted colleague, your manager, clinical supervisor or cultural mentor. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is also available for free and confidential counselling if you would rather talk to someone outside your organisation.

SELF-REFLECTION

Self-reflection is a process which involves stepping back and reviewing things that have happened in the past, while analysing our thoughts, feelings, behaviours and responses to work. It is also about planning, being creative, and doing things differently. Self-reflection requires self-awareness, curiosity, courage and commitment.

SELF-REFLECTION MODEL

DESCRIBE: THE SITUATION

Consider:

What do I understand about the current situation?

What assumptions am I making?

What are the underlying issues?

REFLECT: ON WHAT HAPPENED

Consider:

From whose point of view am I seeing the situation?

How do I test my assumptions?

Do I need to address any of the underlying issues?

What skills do I have, or need to develop?

ACT: DETERMINE HOW YOU WOULD RESPOND NEXT TIME/IN A SIMILAR SITUATION

Consider:

What strategies could I implement now?

What impact will this have on my work practice?

What impact will this have on my organisation?

What impact will this have on my relationships?

REVIEW: YOUR ACTIONS

Consider:

Is the situation resolved?

Is there something more I need to do?

How has there been change?

How have I shared the learning?

SELF-REFLECTION ACTIVITIES

The table below describes a selection of self-reflection activities which can be used for a range of purposes, across a number of settings. Details descriptions for each activity can be found in the Appendices section of this resource.

SELF-REFLECTION ACTIVITY TYPE	WHERE TO USE THIS ACTIVITY			WHERE TO FIND THE RESOURCE
	SELF	PEER-TO- PEER OR WITH YOUR TEAM	SUPERVISION	
Self-awareness <i>Tree of life</i>	X	X	X	Appendix B
Mindfulness <i>Dadirri (deep listening)</i>	X	X	X	Appendix C
Wellbeing <i>AHCWA Wellbeing Wheel</i>	X	X	X	Appendix D
Boundary setting <i>Team discussion</i>		X		Appendix E
Managing stress <i>Growth model</i> <i>Psychosocial safety plan</i>	X		X	Appendix F
Allyship <i>Privilege walk</i>		X		Appendix G
Working together <i>Team strengths</i>		X		Appendix H

SELF-CARE

Self-care strategies are things that people do to unwind, relax, heal, empower themselves and connect to things that keep their mind, body, and spirit strong. Self-care can happen when we are self-reflecting and are able to recognise when and how to look after our self. We have used the Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) wheel as inspiration for the activities in this guide.

Source: Gee, G., Dudgeon, P., Schultz, C., Hart, A., & Kelly, K. (2014). In P. Dudgeon, Milroy, H, Walker, R. (Ed), Working together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing principles and practice



SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES

PHYSICAL	SPIRITUAL	EMOTIONAL	MENTAL
Healthy eating Drink water Getting enough sleep Exercise Go camping Go fishing Bush walking Get a massage Dance Hugging or touching someone (with consent) Star-gaze Walk in the moonlight Walk on the beach Play with your kids Play sport Listen to your body	Sing Meditate Walk in nature Trust your intuition Ask for inner guidance Reconnect with culture Go back to your birthplace Read Go places where you feel connected Learn about traditions Honour the past Talk with Elders Have quiet time Think about the people you love Connect with your inner self and inner qualities	Talk to yourself in a nurturing way Give yourself good messages Recognise your need for support Ask for what you need Talk with others about challenges Laugh, sing, make fun in a good way Join a support group Do some art Talk with a counsellor Read a good book Look for beauty in yourself and others Bubble bath, spa or sauna Have fresh flowers in the house	Learn to set boundaries Say 'no' when you need to Know that it is okay to think for yourself Compliment yourself Allow yourself to question information Change your mind Make new choices when you need to Encourage yourself Celebrate your achievements Be spontaneous Study new ideas Attend ceremonies

Source: Cox Z, Carlin E, Derry K, Cox AR, Ansey L, Cox D, Dudgeon P. (2022). Social and Emotional Wellbeing: A Welcome Guide for the Aboriginal Workforce. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.26182/z4gr-4975>



RESOURCES



SHARING OUR WAYS OF STAYING STRONG BOOKLET – ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WORKFORCE

This guide is packed full of self-reflection and self-care strategies to promote Aboriginal worker wellbeing in the health and human services sector.

<https://ahcsa.org.au/resources/AHC5328-Employees-Booklet-final.pdf>



LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF OUR WAY INFO SHEET

This quick, but comprehensive resource provides a visual reminder of self-care and wellbeing strategies, targeted at the Aboriginal workforce.

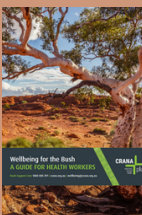
<https://www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/COVID-resources-page-3.pdf>



WORKER WELLBEING: WORKING DEADLY: A GUIDE FOR HEALTH WORKERS

Created for Aboriginal workers in the Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) sector, this resource speaks to strategies to identify and manage stress and burnout.

<https://nceta.flinders.edu.au/application/files/8715/0646/7793/W1.pdf>



WELLBEING FOR THE BUSH - A GUIDE FOR HEALTH WORKERS (CRANA+)

Supports self-reflection, self-care and wellbeing, with broad applicability to the ACCHS clinical workforce.

[https://s3.ap-s](https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/cranaplus-website-assets/files/mhwb22B1-WellbeingfortheBush_DigitalBooklet_Spreads_13.03.pdf)



APPENDICES



STRESS AND BURNOUT

Work-related stress can occur if what's expected of you at work is more than you feel you can manage. It may be caused by a heavy workload, conflict in your workplace, unsupportive workmates, or unresolved vicarious trauma.

When you are experiencing work-related stress, you may find it hard to stop worrying. You might find it hard to concentrate on your work and struggle to sleep or eat well. You might also feel anxious or experience panic attacks. Many people who experience work related stress feel lonely and isolated, thinking they are the only ones 'not coping'.

Feelings of stress and overwhelm can be caused by psychosocial hazards in the workplace. Some examples of psychosocial hazards include: high workloads or unrealistic deadlines, unsafe working practices such as working alone, or in isolation for long periods, work life imbalance including afterhours work, interpersonal conflict such as bullying/harassment/workplace violence, ineffective leadership, poor communication, irregular or inadequate support/supervision, lack of control or autonomy over work processes/schedules/decision-making, insecurity about job stability and rapid organisational change. We invite you to become acquainted with your organisation's psychosocial hazard policies and procedures and ensure you are working in accordance with these guidelines.

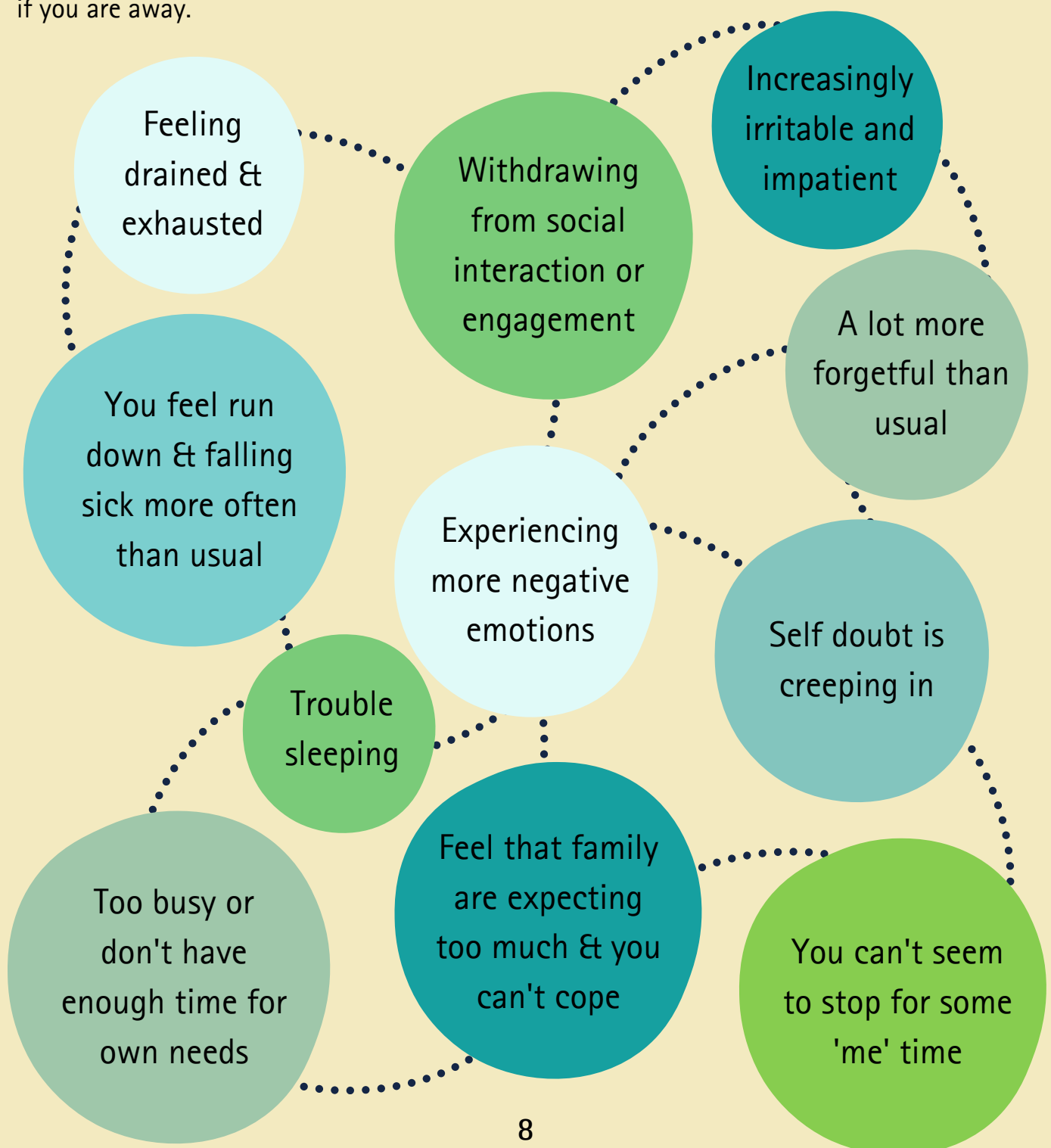
VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Vicarious trauma can occur when we witness trauma or engage in an empathetic way with others who have experienced trauma. When we empathise with others, our brains 'mirror' their emotional state. While this can be beneficial, as it allows us to understand and connect on a deep level, the risk is that we 'take on' other people's feelings, including their trauma, as if it were our own. Vicarious trauma can contribute to feeling overwhelmed.

BURNOUT SIGNS

Burnout is a state of extreme physical or emotional exhaustion. This exhaustion may also involve a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity. Burnout can be brought on by work-related stress, or the stress related to balancing your responsibilities at work, with your life outside work. The build up to burnout usually happens over a long period of time.

Burnout happens to a lot of people. If you are experiencing burnout, it does not mean you are weak, or no good at your job. It usually just means you need a break – and that's okay. Taking breaks, including time off work is an important way to safeguard your social and emotional wellbeing and mental health. It can be hard to take time off work if you have patients/clients or colleagues that rely on you, as you might worry about what will happen if you are away.



TREE OF LIFE

Take a sheet of A3 paper and some coloured markers or pencils. Draw the tree, including the 7 elements described below. Complete your drawing by reflecting on the questions given for each element.

Once you have finished your drawing, consider sharing it with a trusted peer, your cultural mentor, supervisor, or manager.



Imagine yourself as a tree...

Where you come from and your family:

ROOTS What roots do you have in your life? How important are these?

Your present life and day-to-day activities you engage in:

GROUND What is the ground like in your life? Is it fairly stable or often changing?
What influences you on a daily basis?

Your skills and abilities:

TRUNK What talents and coping skills do you have?
How important are these abilities to you? Do you value them in others?

Your hopes and goals:

BRANCHES How achievable do you feel your aspirations are?
Do you have hopes and wishes for other people in your life?

Important people in your life:

LEAVES Who plays an important role in your life?
What time of influence have they had? If they've helped, how?

Gifts from important people:

FRUIT Have these people provided you with a shoulder to cry on/support/compliments?
How have these gifts helped you?

Challenges:

STORMS Include everything from family conflict, mental health problems, lack of resources, loss of important people in your life etc.
What storms have you experienced in the past?
How did you manage with these?
What storms do you think there might be in the future?

MINDFULNESS

DADIRRI (DEEP INNER LISTENING)



"Dadirri recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us....when I experience dadirri, I am made whole again"

Born in the bush near Nauiyu (Daly River), Miriam Rose Ungunmerr is a member of the Ngangiwumirr language group from the Northern Territory. In this video she shares how the practice of Dadirri, or deep inner listening, can help you to tune in to self and others, as you connect to Country.

ACCESS THE VIDEO THROUGH THIS LINK:



Source: <https://www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au/> 1988 Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr. All Rights Reserved.



https://youtu.be/tow2tR_ezL8?feature=shared

WELLBEING

MY WELLNESS WHEEL

This resource has been created by the Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA), in collaboration with Healthways' Act Belong Commit initiative. It aligns to the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) Model of Care.

This resource has been designed to help workers check-in and set goals for themselves every four weeks. Workers can do this as a stand-alone activity, without oversight from supervisors and managers, or they may wish to take it into supervision, performance appraisals and other catch ups with management.

Use the wheel below to determine how you feel about each area of your life, use the key to colour in each section representing how you feel in each area.



The full resource can be found [HERE!](#)



BOUNDARY SETTING



Establishing clear, consistent boundaries is essential to self-care and worker wellbeing. Boundaries also help to guide your work with patients/clients. By setting boundaries, ensuring others understand them, and applying them consistently, you can help to keep yourself and others safe and well. Talking about boundaries and working through the 'grey' areas should be an important part of team discussions and supervision.

By engaging in this activity workers can gain a deeper understanding of their boundaries, share experiences and challenges, and develop practical strategies for promoting their well-being in the workplace.

INTRODUCTION AND ICE BREAKER

Begin the activity with an icebreaker to help participants feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences. For example, ask each participant to share one thing they do to prioritise their well-being outside of work.

UNDERSTANDING BOUNDARIES

Discuss the concept of boundaries in the workplace. What are boundaries, and why are they important for maintaining safety and well-being at work? Encourage participants to share examples of healthy boundaries they have set in their own work environments.

CHALLENGES FACED BY WORKERS

Explore the specific challenges faced by Aboriginal, remote, or other workers in creating, communicating, and maintaining boundaries. Discuss the cultural, social, and other factors that may impact on boundary setting.

IDENTIFYING THE FACTORS WHICH CHALLENGE THESE BOUNDARIES

Prompt participants to identify common factors which they may encounter in their work this may include balancing responsibilities between personal and professional roles.

PERSONAL REFLECTION AND SHARING

Provide time for participants to reflect on their own experiences with boundary setting in the workplace. Encourage them to share any challenges they have faced in setting boundaries and how they have navigated these situations. Are there specific cultural considerations that Aboriginal workers need to take into account?

STRATEGIES FOR SETTING BOUNDARIES

Brainstorm and discuss practical strategies for setting and maintaining boundaries in various workplace scenarios. This could include assertive communication techniques, role-playing exercises, cultural awareness training, and self-care practices.

SUPPORT SYSTEM AND RESOURCES

Identify support systems and resources available to workers for addressing boundary issues and seeking assistance when needed. This could include access to supervisors, peer support networks, cultural advisers, or external support services.

ACTION PLANNING

Encourage participants to develop personalised action plans for establishing and maintaining boundaries in their work. What specific steps will they take to implement the strategies discussed during the activity?

CLOSING AND REFLECTION

Conclude the activity by inviting participants to reflect on what they have learned and how they will apply this knowledge in their work. Encourage them to continue supporting each other in maintaining healthy boundaries and prioritising their well-being.</

MANAGING STRESS

GROWTH MODEL

Use this activity if you are distressed or triggered by something that has happened. It can help you think clearly and might guide you in next steps.



G **Ground Yourself:** Feel your feet on the floor, shoes off, feet on the grass, sip water, healthy snacks to regulate blood sugars. Rhythmic physical activities and movements support self-regulation and grounding. At home: music, movement, singing, humming, foot bath, regular aerobic movement increases the 'feel-good' natural endorphins.

R **Release:** Release your breath. Sometimes we hold our breath when we are stressed, distressed or triggered, breathe out.

O **Observe:** Observe your breath. Notice your breath and your chest rising on the inhale, dropping on the exhale. Focus on gently breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth to settle your heart rate. See the quality of your breath, noticing if it's short, sharp, longer on the inhale, coolness on the inhale, warmth on the exhale? Begin to create an equal inhale/exhale. A longer exhale can help bring calm and relax quite well.

W **Witness:** Witness the changes in your body as you focus on your breathing. Physical sensations like warmth, tingling energy, areas of expansion and enlivening (inhale), release and softening (exhale). Take the inhale to parts of your body where you might feel tension, for example visualise sending your breath to your tight shoulder muscles, or blurry head, jittery stomach, clenched jaw, then taking a long sigh on the exhale to release these tensions with the breath.

T **Talk:** Talk to someone safe about your experience, or write about it, draw it or perhaps notice a symbol that represents your experience, a tree, clouds, flower, rains, sand, earth, shells etc.

H **Healing:** Healing is possible. Imagine areas of your body or life that could grow into healing, picture colours of cells regenerating, begin the day with some gentle breathing activities as above, use kind language towards yourself, go to sleep observing your breath as a calm healing time.

PSYCHOSOCIAL SAFETY PLAN

Use this resource to help you manage the impact of psychosocial hazards in the workplace, alongside stresses and worries from outside, that may be impacting your work or wellbeing.

After you have completed this activity be sure to reach out to a trusted colleague, your cultural mentor, supervisor, manager, Human Resource (HR) Department or EAP service.

BRIEF PSYCHOSOCIAL SAFETY PLAN FOR WORKERS IN ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED HEALTH SERVICES

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

WHAT ARE PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS?

Check out my organisation's policy and procedures if I am not sure what this means.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

Use the policy to identify the current psychosocial challenges I experience in, and outside work.

WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS?

Identify existing strengths and protective factors within myself, my workplace and my community.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Identify any issues which may be challenging my work-life balance.

SIGNS OF STRESS, VICARIOUS TRAUMA OR BURNOUT:

Use this resource to identify any signs of stress, vicarious trauma or burnout.

WRITE OR DRAW YOUR ANSWERS IN HERE

WHAT DOES MY ORGANISATION'S POLICY AND PROCEDURES SAY?

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

MY STRENGTHS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS ARE:

AT WORK:

IN COMMUNITY:

HOW CAN I DRAW ON THESE FACTORS TO KEEP ME SAFE AND WELL?

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

AVAILABLE SUPPORTS:

Identify the supports available to me, such as:

- Flexible working arrangements
- HR
- Leave arrangements
- EAP
- Supervision
- Peer support networks
- Cultural healing
- Family/friends

WHAT SUPPORTS CAN I ACCESS?**HOW WILL I KEEP MYSELF SAFE?**

In this section list the actions you will take in the short (next 24hrs), medium (following week) and, long term (following month and ongoing).

WHO DO I NEED TO TALK TO?

In this section include people in and outside work (family, friends, trusted peers, my cultural mentor, supervisor, manager, the Human Resources (HR) Department, the EAP provider etc.)

ACTIONS AND WHO WILL DO THEM:

In this section break down in detail who will do what, by when. Detail the management plan using specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) goals. Examples might include contacting available supports and scheduling regular check ins with my cultural mentor, supervisor, manager or HR Department.

MANAGEMENT PLAN AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES:**DATE OF MEETING TO REVIEW THE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND IDENTIFY ANY UNMET OUTCOMES:**

Book a meeting with your manager within the next 1-4 weeks. Add the date and any other comments below.

SIGNED (WORKER): _____

SIGNED (MANAGER): _____

DATE: _____

DATE: _____



ALLYSHIP



Allyship is important because it helps foster an inclusive, and culturally secure approach to care. Learn more about the concept of imperfect allyship [here](#).

A privilege walk is designed to help participants understand and reflect on the concept of privilege and its effects on individuals and society. During a privilege walk, participants physically move forward or backward in response to a series of statements or prompts that highlight various forms of privilege and disadvantage.

Privilege walks promote awareness, empathy, and dialogue about systemic inequality and oppression. It's important for facilitators to create a safe and supportive environment for participants, as privilege walks can evoke strong emotions and highlight sensitive issues related to identity and power dynamics. Additionally, facilitators should be prepared to address any discomfort or challenges that arise during the activity and ensure that participants feel heard and respected throughout the process.

STEPS IN A PRIVILEGE WALK

- 1 Setup:** Participants stand in a line or a circle, facing a designated starting point.
- 2 Instructions:** The facilitator reads a series of statements or prompts aloud. These statements often address factors such as cultural identity, gender, socioeconomic status, ability, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity.
- 3 Movement:** After each statement, participants are instructed to take a step forward or backward based on whether they identify with the statement or have experienced the privilege or disadvantage described. For example, a statement like "If you have never been discriminated against because of your cultural identity, take a step forward" would prompt individuals who have not experienced racial discrimination to move forward, while those who have experienced discrimination would remain in place or move backward.
- 4 Reflection:** Throughout the activity, participants may reflect silently or discuss their thoughts and feelings with others as they observe the movement of their peers and consider their own position in relation to privilege and disadvantage.
- 5 Debrief:** After the privilege walk is completed, the facilitator leads a debriefing session to process the experience. Participants may share their reactions, insights, and observations, discussing how the activity made them feel, what they learned about privilege, and how privilege affects individuals and communities.

PROMPTS:

- If you have never had to worry about where your next meal will come from, take a step forward.
- If you attended a private school or received private tutoring, take a step forward.
- If you have never been afraid to walk alone at night because of your gender, take a step forward.
- If you have a physical or mental disability that has caused you to face discrimination, take a step backward.
- If you have ever been denied a job or promotion because of your cultural identity, take a step backward.
- If you have ever felt uncomfortable expressing your religious beliefs in public, take a step backward.
- If English is your first language, take a step forward.
- If you have ever felt pressured to change aspects of your identity to fit in, take a step backward.
- If you have ever been denied access to healthcare because of your socioeconomic status, take a step backward.
- If you have never been questioned or detained by law enforcement because of your cultural identity take a step forward.

Individual allies can also complete an online version of the privilege walk here: <https://www.evoves.com.au/the-privilege-walk/>

WORKING TOGETHER

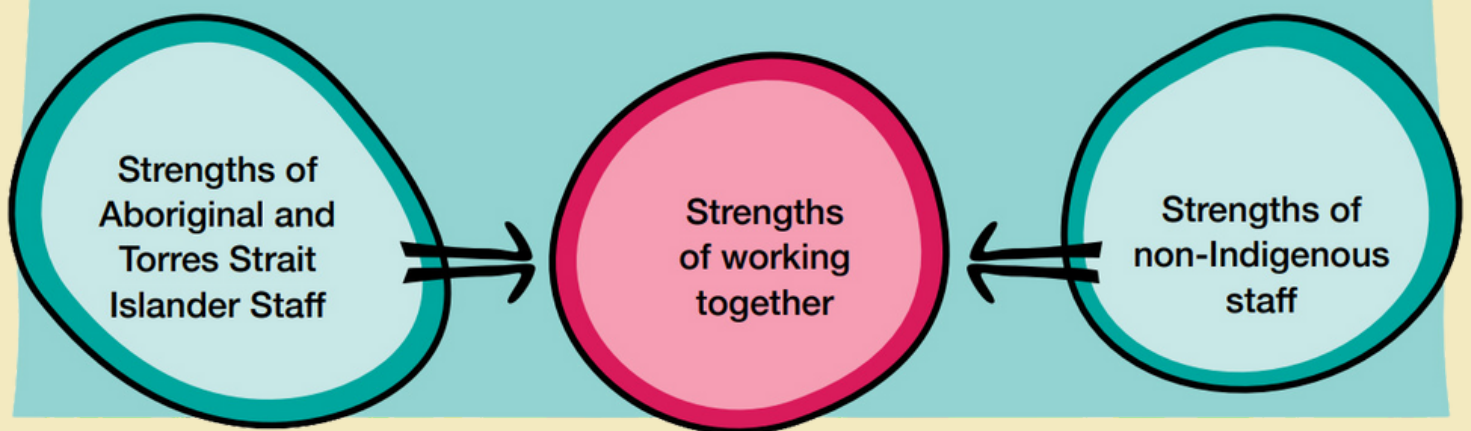
TEAM STRENGTHS

The ACCHS workforce is comprised of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers, from a range of disciplines. Working in cross-cultural, interdisciplinary teams can be rewarding. It requires deep listening, understanding, respect and cultural security. Cultural security is enhanced when Aboriginal workers feel valued for their cultural knowledge, community connections, and commitment to improving the lives of their patients/clients. Use the following activity to explore the strengths of your team.

STRENGTHS OF OUR STAFF TEAM

This activity can be undertaken as a discussion among members of a cross-cultural staff team to explore the strengths of all staff members and how those strengths can be best combined to support strong practice.

You could use a process where each staff member reflects and then names some of their key strengths and where they see their strengths are complemented by the strengths of other team members.



Source: adapted from https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/11_2016/snaicc_stronger_safer_together_report.pdf