

# YOUR GUIDE TO



*Helping us live proud, strong and connected*

Coordinated by GLCS WA as part of the One Life Western Australian Suicide Prevention Strategy

# about this guide

Each year in Western Australia, over 200 people die by suicide and an even greater number harm themselves in suicide attempts. It is estimated that more Australians die by suicide than motor vehicle accidents each year.

Suicide is a complex issue but, like wearing a seatbelt or sticking to the speed limit, there are small things we can all do to improve the safety and wellbeing of ourselves and others.

The booklet explores the way we can all become Living Proud Champions in order to make a difference to the lives of people in the LGBTI\* community.

\* LGBTI: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender and intersex people, and other sexuality, sex and/or gender diverse people, regardless of their term of self-identification.

Copies of this booklet can be obtained by contacting GLCS on (08) 9486 9855 or online at [www.glcs.org.au](http://www.glcs.org.au).

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## *acknowledgements*

The Living Proud Community Action Plan (CAP) was developed and implemented with the ongoing support and contributions of the Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention, One Life, GLCS, Living Proud committee, community members, partners and stakeholders.

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# about living proud

With the aim of improving the mental health and wellbeing of all Western Australians, the State Government launched the One Life Western Australian Suicide Prevention Strategy to address the unacceptably high suicide rate in Western Australia, committing \$13 million to implement the Strategy from 2009 – 2013.

The LGBTI population has been identified as a specific target group within the One Life WA Suicide Prevention Strategy. Due to the impacts of discrimination, LGBTI people are estimated to be at 3.5 to 14 times higher risk of suicide than non-LGBTI people (Suicide Prevention Australia Position Statement, 2009).

In late 2011, Gay and Lesbian Community Services (GLCS) WA undertook consultation with LGBTI community organisations, groups and individuals in order to develop a targeted community action plan, which was launched as Living Proud in July 2012.

The Living Proud community action plan involved a range of activities aimed at:

- » increasing awareness and knowledge about LGBTI suicide prevention;
- » improving LGBTI community connection and social support, and;
- » decreasing discrimination experienced within the LGBTI community.

Some of these activities included: suicide intervention skills and awareness training, community events, personal development and arts workshops, diversity forums, community fitness sessions, a safe space audit for community groups, developing the Living Proud website and accompanying resources, and more.

Our hope is that this is just the start of community action that will continue until everyone is living proud, strong, connected and safe.



# community champions

In this booklet, you'll find our Community Champions, sharing stories and quotes about what living proud means to them.

To make a real difference to our community, we need more people to become champions - people just like you! The Living Proud mascots will guide you through some of the things you can do to become a Living Proud Community Champion.

## connect + care



### Connect

explores some of the ways we can get involved with our community.

### Care

gives us some practical ideas for looking out for ourselves and the people around us.

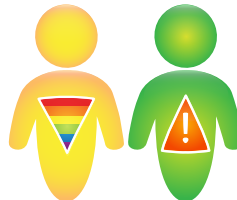
Life is not always easy. What helps is to be proud of who we are and the little things we achieve each day.

» Gavin

# community champions



## ally + aware



### Ally

knows that our community is stronger when we stand alongside each other.

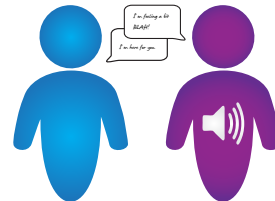
### Aware

has some helpful information to challenge myths and help keep someone safe.

Living proud is about being who you want to be and not letting others put you down because of it.

» Karron

## support + share



### Support

offers us information, advice and resources for helping someone we care about.

### Share

wants us all to feel safe to speak out and to be heard.





## connect + care

Connecting with and caring for the people around you is an important part of living proud. Humans are social creatures and the need to belong is hardwired into us. For many LGBTI people, "invisibility" and the fear of discrimination or rejection can make it harder to find people to connect with. Whether or not you identify with the LGBTI community, there are people around you with whom you can connect and who care. We all have differences, but every one of us is part of the bigger community in which we live. Whether you volunteer your time and skills or simply offer a listening ear, caring about others is something that can benefit not only others, but ourselves as well.

**"No life is a waste. The only time we waste is the time we spend thinking we're alone"**  
- Mitch Albom, author



## WHY CONNECT?

Both LGBTI and wider communities are full of vibrant and active community groups and organisations. Some of the benefits of joining a group or volunteering are:

- » meeting new people with similar interests or beliefs;
- » expanding your social, professional and support networks;
- » learning new skills and gaining experience;
- » improving your health and wellbeing; and
- » working together to achieve common goals.

For an extensive list of groups and organisations:

- » Out in Perth [www.outinperth.com](http://www.outinperth.com)
- » Q-Pages [www.qpages.org.au](http://www.qpages.org.au)
- » Meetup [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)
- » Connect Groups [www.connectgroups.org.au](http://www.connectgroups.org.au)
- » Volunteering WA [www.volunteeringwa.org.au](http://www.volunteeringwa.org.au)

Think there's no group out there for you? Chances are someone else does too! Why not start your own?

Your local council and sports clubs will also have information on teams and groups in your area.



Living proud means connecting our community so that no one will feel alone, helping those who are struggling and standing together to fight for equality.

» Karen



# connect + care

## WAYS TO SHOW SOMEONE YOU CARE:

- ☐ Reach out if you think your friend might be struggling.
- ☐ Practise listening patiently and without judgement.
- ☐ Help them with a chore or task you know they hate.
- ☐ Go for a drive or walk together - sometimes the lack of eye contact helps us open up and talk more freely.
- ☐ Spend time reminiscing about good times you've shared, and make plans for the future.
- ☐ Prepare a meal together.
- ☐ Write an email or letter to a friend.
- ☐ Make an effort to invite and include them in social events.
- ☐ Compliment someone on something they've done well.
- ☐ Offer them a hug.
- ☐ Get involved in a hobby or interest you know they enjoy, or take them to try something new.



## WAYS TO CARE FOR YOURSELF:

- ☐ Go for a walk or spend some time relaxing outdoors.
- ☐ Do something you enjoy but rarely get to do.
- ☐ Prepare a healthy meal.
- ☐ Catch up with a friend you haven't spoken to in a while.
- ☐ Laugh at something silly.
- ☐ Listen to music that makes you want to dance.
- ☐ Don't be afraid to say no.
- ☐ Go to bed an hour earlier than usual.
- ☐ Write a list of life goals and make a step, no matter how small, towards achieving one of them.
- ☐ Cuddle your pet (or borrow someone else's!)
- ☐ Switch off your phone, TV or computer for a technology break.
- ☐ Watch your favourite movie.
- ☐ Cross off something on your to do list that you'll probably never get around to doing.
- ☐ Look up at the stars for a different sense of perspective.
- ☐ Think of something positive about yourself.
- ☐ Get up early and watch a sunrise.
- ☐ Breathe deeply.
- ☐ Try a new hobby or sport.
- ☐ Have a warm shower or bath.
- ☐ Write in a journal.
- ☐ Accept help from others.

Add your ideas here:

- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_



# LIVING PROUD...

...is about standing up for ourselves and each other; whether it's fighting for equal rights, standing tall when people try to underestimate you, or just staying strong from day to day.

» Farda

...means creating space for all of us, connecting and conquering oppression and fear with love. It means that we get to have amazing lives regardless of the labels we choose or have chosen for us.

» Juanita



Friends, organisations, social groups are an important part of living life to the full. Connections with other people make the hugest difference!

» Graeme



Living proud means enjoying life being who you are.

» Tina

CONNECT  
CARE  
ALLY  
AWARE  
SUPPORT  
SHARE

Be a community champion.



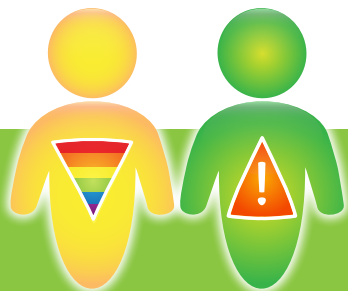
“living proud is feeling part  
of a connected and supporting  
community across  
all generations”

» Jude



“living proud is being  
happy and wholesome in  
mind and body”

» Paul



ally + aware

Being LGBTI itself doesn't put you at more risk of suicide, but the negative attitudes, prejudice and discrimination present in society contribute to factors that increase our risk, like isolation and stigma that prevents us from accessing help.

The LGBTI community is one that has banded together many times in the past to fight discrimination, overcome adversity and be there for each other. We are stronger when we stand together, and safer when we look out for one another.

**"Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak;  
courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen"**  
- Winston Churchill

ally + aware 

### BEING AN ALLY:

We all have the right to feel safe and accepted, regardless of our sexuality, sex, gender, age, impairment or disability, culture, language, religion, socioeconomic or other status.

- » Our community is diverse and stereotypes are limiting - challenge assumptions and educate yourself as much as possible.
- » Discrimination hurts everyone, not just those directly experiencing it. Stand up against discrimination whenever you can.
- » Use inclusive language, including correct names and pronouns. If you're not sure, ask respectfully.
- » Respect other people's privacy. Be careful not to 'out' someone or offer personal information about them to someone else.

If you think you're being discriminated against, you can contact the Equal Opportunity Commission on 9216 3900 or at [www.eoc.wa.gov.au](http://www.eoc.wa.gov.au)



Living proud is that step beyond accepting to embracing everything that you are. Being a part of a community that celebrates diversity and differences has been a huge part of that journey for me.

» Savannah





# ally + aware

## MYTHS ABOUT SUICIDE

Suicide can be a taboo topic in society. As a result, there is a lot of misinformation on the subject. Here are some of the most common myths surrounding suicide:

### MYTH: Talking openly about suicide increases the risk.

Suicide isn't something we find easy to talk about. Often, people feeling suicidal don't want to worry or burden anyone with how they feel and so they don't discuss it. Raising the issue sensitively and asking directly about suicide gives the person at risk permission to speak about their distress, and shows the person that you care.

### MYTH: People who threaten suicide are just attention seeking and shouldn't be taken seriously.

People who die by suicide have often told someone beforehand that they do not feel life is worth living or that they have no future. Some may have actually said they want to die. While it's possible that someone might talk about suicide as a way of getting the attention they need, this can also be a cry for help. It's vitally important to take anybody who talks about feeling suicidal seriously.

### MYTH: You have to be mentally ill to think about suicide.

A person can have a mental illness and never think about suicide, just as a person can think about suicide and never have had a mental illness. Although suicide is a more common way to die for people who have major depression or schizophrenia than it is for the general population, the relationship between mental illness and suicide is complex. Anyone can have thoughts of suicide.

MYTH: If a person is serious about killing themselves, there is nothing you can do.



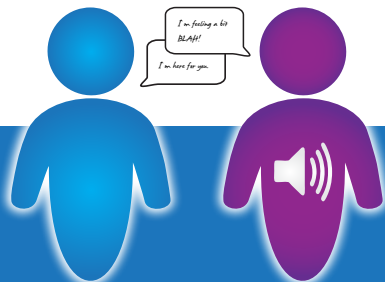
The majority of people who feel suicidal do not actually want to die; they just do not want to live the life they have. Often, feeling actively suicidal is temporary, even if someone has been feeling low, anxious or struggling to cope for a long period of time. This is why getting the right kind of support at the right time is so important. Anyone can help someone at risk of suicide by linking them in with help or support services - see the support + share section in this booklet for more information.

## BEING AWARE:

Although everyone is different, there are some common things we can look out for that might indicate someone is at risk of suicide. If someone you know:

- » says or does things that indicate an intention to leave or die, like giving away possessions, saying goodbyes or writing a will;
- » talks or writes about death or suicide, particularly when this is out of character;
- » says they have no reason for living or have no purpose in life;
- » displays dramatic changes in mood, such as sudden feelings of happiness after a long period of sadness or depression;
- » expresses feelings of hopelessness, rage, anger or revenge;
- » increases their use of alcohol/other drugs;
- » withdraws from friends, family and the community; and/or
- » complains of problems sleeping (too much/too little), losing/gaining weight, headaches, exhaustion or unbearable pain.

...or does anything else that makes you think they might be considering suicide, **talk to them about your concerns** as soon as possible. If you believe someone is at immediate risk of suicide or harming someone else, do not leave them alone - call 000 or go to your nearest emergency department. Always consider your safety first.



## support + share

It can be hard to ask for help, particularly when we need it the most. We might think that no one cares, or that no one will understand. We might worry that we're going to be a burden on the people we care about. Always remember, you're not alone. There are people who care, who will understand and who can help. If you can't find the right support the first time, keep trying. All of these resources can also be used by people concerned about or supporting someone else.

GLCS WA Telephone Counselling  
9420 7201 (7pm - 10pm weeknights)  
[www.glcs.org.au](http://www.glcs.org.au)

Q-Life  
1800 184 527  
[www qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au)

Lifeline  
13 11 14 (available 24/7)  
[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

Kids Helpline (ages 5 - 25)  
1800 55 1800 (available 24/7)  
[www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

Suicide Callback Service (available 24/7)  
1300 659 467  
[www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

Samaritans Helpline (available 24/7)  
(08) 9381 5555 or  
1800 198 313 (country toll free)

Crisis Care Helpline (available 24/7)  
(08) 9223 1111 or  
1800 199 008 (country toll free)

The Compassionate Friends  
(08) 9486 8711  
[www.compassionatefriendswa.org.au](http://www.compassionatefriendswa.org.au)

## support + share



### REACHING OUT:

There are lots of ways you can start a conversation with someone you're concerned about. The actual words you say often aren't as important as the way you say them. Being genuine, being yourself and being willing to listen without judgement can go a long way towards showing someone you care and want to understand.

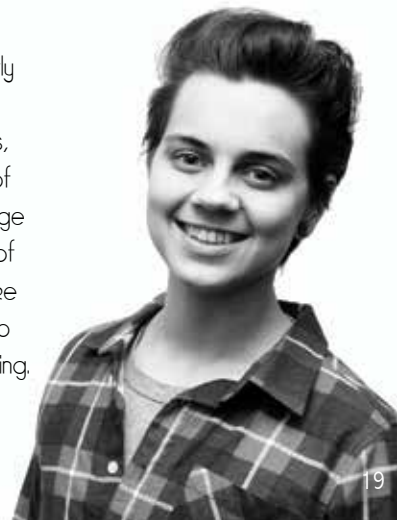
"You haven't seemed yourself lately. I'm worried about you. Can we talk about it?"

"I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel, but I care about you and want to help."

"I'm here for you. What can I do to support you?"

Living proud is being honestly and unashamedly yourself. It's knowing that sometimes, even just existing is a form of resistance and a way to change the world. It's embracing all of you - even the bits you dislike - because they all add up to make an incredible human being.

» Mikey





# support + share

## WHEN YOU'RE CARING FOR OTHERS:

Helping the people we care about can be tough, especially when it's longer term. Even though we might feel like the person we're caring for is our only priority, it's really important that we look after ourselves to prevent burnout. Some things you can do are to:

- » Look after your own health and wellbeing.
- » Set boundaries and know the limits to what you are willing and able to do. No one can be everything to one person, and that's ok.
- » Never promise to keep a secret if a life is at risk. Trust can always be healed, but only if the person is alive.
- » Ask for help if you need it. Seeking support doesn't mean you're letting the person you care about down - rather, it means that you'll be better equipped to help.
- » Remember that even though you can offer support, you are not responsible for the actions or behaviour of someone you care about. If they are not willing to help themselves, it is not your fault.

## COPING WITH LOSS:

Feelings of loss and grief are normal human responses and can accompany any change in life, like coming out, relationship breakdown or losing a loved one. Losing a loved one to suicide can result in intensified grief due to the sudden nature of the death and the many questions that are left unanswered, like "why?" and "is there anything I could have done?" Make sure you give yourself the time and space you need to grieve. There is no set time limit or right way to grieve - do what feels right for you - but know that you don't have to go through it alone. See the support services on page 18 of this booklet for more information.



## WAYS TO SHARE:

Stigma can be a huge barrier to accessing support. When we [share our stories](#) with others, we realise that we're not alone in our experiences. We can learn a lot by [sharing our knowledge and skills](#) and remembering that everyone has something to offer. Sometimes the most helpful thing we can do is sit and listen. [Sharing your feelings](#) with someone you trust can help lighten the load - after all, a burden shared is a burden halved. [Sharing your time](#) can be a delicate balance - but can also be as simple as having a cup of tea with a friend or volunteering for a cause you feel good about. And by [sharing our passion, energy and commitment](#), our community has an even greater resource of strength to draw from.



When things are tough and I need reminding of what living proud means I find strength in two lines from the Desiderata. "You are a child of the Universe, no less than the trees and the stars, and you have a right to be here", and "Whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the Universe is unfolding as it should".

» Steve



## information + resources

### *support*

GLCS WA  
9420 7201 (7pm - 10pm weeknights)  
[www.glcs.org.au](http://www.glcs.org.au)  
Q-Life  
[www.qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au)  
1800 184 527

### *for young people*

Kids Helpline  
1800 55 1800 (24 hours)  
[www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

Freedom Centre  
[www.freedom.org.au](http://www.freedom.org.au)

Reachout  
[au.reachout.com](http://au.reachout.com)

Headspace  
[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

### *information*

Living Proud  
[www.livingproud.org.au](http://www.livingproud.org.au)

Beyond Blue  
[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

One Life  
[www.onelifewa.com.au](http://www.onelifewa.com.au)

Living Is For Everyone (LIFE)  
[www.livingisforeveryone.com.au](http://www.livingisforeveryone.com.au)

Suicide Prevention Australia  
[www.suicidepreventionaust.org](http://www.suicidepreventionaust.org)

National LGBTI Health Alliance  
[www.lgbthealth.org.au](http://www.lgbthealth.org.au)

### *training*

Living Works Education  
[www.livingworks.com.au](http://www.livingworks.com.au)

## NEED HELP NOW?



Anyone can have thoughts of suicide at any time in their life. When these thoughts are overwhelming, it can be hard to see things clearly. If you are feeling suicidal, it's important that you take immediate steps to keep yourself safe.

- » Postpone any decision to end your life. While it may feel like you have to act now on your thoughts of suicide, try to postpone that decision as far as possible. Many people report that by postponing a decision to die, they found that their life did change. They were able to get the support they needed and could move on to a better, happier place.
- » Tell someone how you feel and, if possible, have them stay with you until you get help.
- » Avoid alcohol and drugs, as they can make you feel worse.
- » Contact a health professional and tell them you are feeling suicidal and need urgent assistance.
- » Call one of the numbers on this page.

## HELP IS AVAILABLE

For immediate crisis intervention when a life may be in danger, call the police on 000 or go to your local emergency department. For free, confidential and non-judgmental crisis support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, call:

Lifeline	13 11 14
Suicide Callback Service	1300 659 467
Kids Helpline	1800 55 1800

For more services, see page 18 or go to [www.livingproud.org.au/support](http://www.livingproud.org.au/support)



[www.livingproud.org.au](http://www.livingproud.org.au)

