

Relationships: Connecting with Others

What is it about?

This week's session is about something that has a big impact on our wellbeing: having a social life. Here we mean much more than just going out. We are talking about connecting with other people.

Having a social life can include:

- Meeting people who share your interests
- Meeting people that you like and who like you
- Spending time with people, getting to know each other and becoming friends

The workshops we've done so far are about knowing and liking ourselves better. This work of getting to know and like ourselves better is good preparation for finding and creating friendships that enhance our wellbeing.

What is friendship?

What does it mean to be friends with someone? Everyone thinks about friendship in different ways, and has different experiences of friendship. Here are some common ideas about what friendship means that might be useful to think about:

- Some people think of being in a friendship as being at 'home'. Within a friendship, it means both of you being able to relax, take your shoes off, kick back and just be yourselves.
- Some people think that real friendship is what happens when people know each other inside out, know what makes each other vulnerable, and what each needs to feel better.

This is about developing trust with someone, and being able to rely on each other.

- Some people think that friendship means being listened to and accepted on a deep level, simply for who they are. This means not having to prove yourself or be judged.
- Some people (most people) also think that friendship means having fun together!

One of the most important aspects of friendship is that it's a two-way street. This means that in order to have a lasting friendship, we must be willing to give to our friends as much as they give to us. Give support, give acceptance, give care and make sure the other person is having fun!

Many people think that this give-and-take quality is one of the things that makes any friendship or relationship work over time.

Healthy friendships

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Healthy friendships

Just like any kind of relationships, friendships can be both healthy and unhealthy. That is, they can be good for our wellbeing, or they can make us feel bad. Healthy friendships include the kinds of qualities described above: they are non-judgemental, two-way, caring and accepting.

Unhealthy friendships can undermine our wellbeing and our self-esteem. Some characteristics of friendships that we can see as unhealthy include:

- When we feel pressured to be or act a certain way, rather than being able to be ourselves
- When friendships aren't equal, for example if one person does all the 'giving' or supporting, and the other person mostly just 'takes'
- When we feel 'unsafe' with a friend, for example feeling that they might do or say something to hurt our feelings. This is when we can't really trust or rely on someone.

Barriers and solutions

This workshop involves discussing some important questions about having a social life.

What are some of the qualities of a friendship you would like to have?

How can you be this kind of friend to someone?

What are some things that make it hard to do this?

Together, we will consider some ideas about what might help with these difficulties.

Involving friends and family in your efforts to enhance your wellbeing

In this workshop we also encourage you to think about the benefits of involving the people around you in your efforts to enhance your life. We provide a set of strategies that you can choose from.

Some ideas are:

- We can provide a pamphlet about Power On
- Members of the Power On team can talk one on one to those close to you about Power on
- Or we could talk with those who are important to you about Power on in a workshop

For more information

Ring the Power On Team at Women's Health West on 9689 9588 or look us up online at www.whwest.org.au



women's health west
Power On!
peer education program for women
who have experienced a mental illness