

1. How to help yourself

What is self help?

- Self help is **self-guided improvement**.
- Self help is a **goal and a strategy**. The goal at the end of the journey but also the journey.
- You can help yourself anytime whether you are **alone or in a group**.

So how do we achieve the motivation to help ourselves?

Talent, skills, opportunities and ideas will amount to nothing if we fail to create momentum.

- Momentum is drive and energy to move forward.
- Only **you** can create momentum, no one can do it for you.

Here are some **momentum-creating ideas that work**...if you work at it!

1. Be **prepared to take that first step**
 - It can be the hardest but most rewarding.
 - Helps if you **break the task down in to small bits**
 - Just focus on the first small bit.
2. **Consider the cost of not changing..**
 - **Visualise** yourself 10 years from now if you don't change.
 - Sometimes picturing what we don't want is enough to get us moving because it creates tension
 - Tension can create change.
3. **Gain clarity and certainty,**
 - Be clear about what you do and don't want.
 - **Take some time and space to think** about it.
 - Write it down helps to imprint it.
4. **Get excited,** it creates momentum because:
 - We take more chances when we are excited,
 - We make tough decisions and push boundaries.
 - Endorphins are released thru excitement & exercise.
 - Endorphins help give us a sense of wellbeing.
 - **So if your goal doesn't give you some excitement, you may need to choose another.**
5. **Set some milestones and tell someone about it,** this will help you stick to your commitment. Accountability!

How do you achieve momentum when you are feeling down and depressed?

- The answer is baby steps...if you couldn't get out of bed yesterday because it was a really bad day, well getting out of bed for half a day the next day is a great step.
- Realistic little goals! Remember to break large tasks into small ones.

Some other ideas for helping yourself are:

1. Engage in some sort of exercise. **Compartmentalise into 10 minutes** per day maybe a few minutes per day.
2. **2 minutes of high intensity.** We spend 2 minutes brushing our teeth, why can't we spend two minutes engaging in some high intensity activity.
3. Try to **be with other people** and to confide in someone; it is usually better than being alone and secretive.
4. **Postpone important decisions.** Before deciding to make significant transition-change jobs, get married or divorced-discuss it with others who know you well and have a more objective view of your situation.
5. **Do not expect to 'snap out of' a depression.** But do expect to feel a little better day by day.
6. Let your **family and friends help you.**

Prevention is better than the cure

- **When we are well, this is a good time to learn the new coping** skills. When we are in a well-phase that is a great time to adapt new coping skills or prevention strategies:
- We should all **teach our children coping** skills at a young age. Self help is not natural, automatic, instinctive, easy..it takes effort and momentum.
- You need to practice thinking of **self-help as being applicable to all parts of your life**, i.e. *helpful all the time* with serious problems, minor concerns, and self-improvements of all kinds.
- **Self-help is for preventing as well as solving problems.** Know the major methods for coping *before the trouble strikes*.

In a group:

Some of you attend a self help support group where you can **help yourself by helping others in similar situations** to you. This help is based on:

- **Experiential knowledge:**
 - That means that people talk about their experiences, what worked for them and what didn't.

- Much wisdom shared in these experiences.
 - Finding commonalities and exchanging ideas on problem solving.
 - This support and help is not usually based on professional help.
- **Emotional support**, people have an opportunity to talk and to be listened to.
- **A sense of belonging**, most people want to belong to something whether it's a family or an organisation, it also gives a sense of purpose and helps reduce isolation.
- **Great place to verbalise our goals.**
- Some groups work on **behaviour changing** topics such as ACT (Acceptance Commitment Therapy) or CBT. (Change the way you think and behave).
- Many Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups focus on the holistic health and wellbeing.
- activities of craft or music or dance
 - business building or skill/English improvement
 - being productive is very important to wellbeing

2. Why communities should help themselves

Self help occurs individually or in groups or in a community.

This community knows exactly what that means after going through the floods.

- An example of this community self-helping is **after the floods** people poured out of their houses to go and help others which also helped themselves by the good feelings it gave them.
- One local Toowoomba initiative that I do know about is a group of people came together in Toowoomba and collected household goods to redistribute to the people affected. This is a good example of a self-help community.
- **People can, will, should and do collaborate** to solve community problems.
- **Self-help builds a stronger sense of community** and a foundation for future collaboration.

- It emphasizes that a **community can achieve greater self-determination** within economical constraints or times of disaster.
 - **Without a commitment to self-help, a community** may exist as a place, an organization, or an interest group but be lacking the capacity building strategy. So it doesn't go anywhere.
 - Community self help is a style of **planning, decision making, and problem solving.**
- In community development practice which is my role at SHQ, it is important that the **solution to community problems is sought first within the community**, and its resources and capabilities.
- Community development workers help mobilise the strength within self help communities like this one, but not to impose our ideas on a community.

3. What does self help Qld do?

- SHQ is a **non-profit community organisation** that has contact with over 800 self help support groups throughout Qld. That is support groups of medical problems, genetic and for mental health support groups.
- They act as a **clearing house** for info for these support groups.
- They keep a **data base of groups** all around Qld.
- They **raise awareness** within support groups.
- They **receive government grants** to run projects like the Mercury Rising Project that gave your groups 2 small grants.
- If a new group needs **information** on how to start a group or needs advice about whether to incorporate or not, our coordinator can help.