

Mental Health & Wellbeing



Looking after your mental health and wellbeing

The purpose of this Toolkit

The impact of MRKH on your mental health and wellbeing should not be underestimated. Throughout our lives, many people will experience distress, shock, fear of rejection, isolation, feeling different and grieve their infertility.

This toolkit is designed to provide some resources which we hope are helpful in promoting good mental health and wellbeing.

Please seek advice from a physician or mental health professional if needed.

If you would like more information, please contact one of the following organisations.

Beyond Blue

 www.beyondblue.org.au

Black Dog Institute

 www.blackdog.org.au

Headspace - focuses on those aged 12-25 years

 (03) 9027 0100

 www.headspace.com.au

Lifeline

 13 11 14

 www.lifeline.org.au

Kids Helpline - focuses on those aged 5-25 years

 1800 55 1800

 www.kidshelpline.com.au

“The biggest impact of MRKH has been on my mental health. Through peer connection and support I have been able to heal: moving from isolation to empowerment.”



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation is a great way to relieve anxiety and stress in your body by having you slowly tense up your muscles and then gradually relax them again. This helps us to relax by making us focus on our muscles and how they feel when we relax them from a 'tensed up state.' When we practice progressive muscles relaxation regularly, it becomes a valuable tool we can use to help us relax and calm our body. It will also help us to be able to recognise when our body is experiencing tension and then be able to relax it.

How it Works

When our mind gets worried or anxious our muscles become tense and ready for action. We may also experience butterflies in our stomach, lightheadedness, chills or sweating and a variety of other body symptoms.

Progressive muscle relaxation can fade away the symptoms of the stress response and put us into a state of relaxation where our muscles are feeling relaxed and calm.

- + **Physical injuries.** If you have any injuries, or a history of physical problems that may cause muscle pain, always consult your doctor before you start.
- + **Select your surroundings.** Minimise the distraction to your five senses. This includes turning off the TV and radio, and using soft lighting.
- + **Make yourself comfortable.** Use a chair that comfortably seats your body, including your head. Wear loose clothing, and take off your shoes.

Instructions

- + Focus on the first target muscle group.
- + Take a slow, deep breath in and tense (squeeze) the muscle group.
- + Hold it for 5 to 10 seconds.
- + Suddenly and completely relax the muscle group while exhaling your breath.
- + Focus on the difference between the tensed muscle and relaxed muscle.
- + Relax for 10 to 20 seconds before you work on the next muscle group.
- + Once you are finished all of the muscle groups, count backwards from 5 to 1 to bring your focus back to the present.

Relaxing Your Muscle Groups

Be careful not to tense your muscles too hard. You should not feel any pain or cramping while completing this exercise.

MUSCLE GROUP	WHAT TO DO
Foot	Curl your toes downward
Lower leg and foot	Point your toes towards you
Entire leg	Squeeze thigh and calf muscles
Hand	Clench them
Entire arm	Draw your forearm up towards your shoulder and clench fist
Buttocks	Tighten by pulling your buttocks together
Stomach	Suck it into a tight knot
Chest	Take a deep breath and hold it for 5-10 seconds
Shoulders	Shrug them (raise towards your ears)
Neck	Press the back of your head against the floor or chair
Mouth	Press your lips together tightly
Eyes	Close your eyes as tightly as you can
Forehead	Wrinkle it into a deep frown



Make your own “Emotional Toolbox”

What is an emotional toolbox?

MRKH can bring up lots of different emotions for different people at different times. Some of these emotions can be difficult to cope with, so making an emotional toolbox is a way of preparing some things that make you feel safe and comforted during those times. It’s like a toolkit that you would use to fix things in your house; you might need different tools for different jobs. In an “emotional toolbox”, you can keep a lot of little things that bring you comfort when needed.

How do I make an emotional toolbox?

Good question... everyone’s toolbox will look a little different, so it’s a good idea to spend some time thinking about how you want yours to be. Try following the steps below to help!

Step 1: Choose your toolbox

You could buy a box you like or find an old shoebox and make it your own by designing it with gift wrap, paint, stickers, glitter... anything you like. You could choose a big box that you can keep at home in your room and make a mini version that you can take with you for whenever you may need it.

Step 2: Find things that bring you comfort

- + Make your own “Emotional Toolbox”
Notes with nice things people have said about you

- + Quotes that you find helpful
- + Notes that you have written to yourself
- + Some relaxation or mindfulness exercises (we’ve given you some in your pack)!
- + Calming pictures or paintings
- + Something soft to hold or cuddle
- + A poem that brings you comfort
- + Short stories that you have found helpful
- + Song lyrics
- + Anything else that brings you comfort

Step 3: Put it all together and try it out

It might take you a while to figure out the things that help and the things that don’t. Give different items a try and you can add things in and take them out until you have something that feels right for you.

Three-minute Breathing Space Exercise

© www.mindfulnessextended.com

This exercise can be done several times a day and teaches how to pay attention, on purpose, in each moment, and without judgment.

1.

AWARENESS

Bring yourself into the present moment by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture. If possible, close your eyes.

Then ask:

“What is my experience right now in thoughts in feelings and in bodily sensations?”

Acknowledge and register your experience, even if it is unwanted.

2.

GATHERING

Then, gently redirect full attention to breathing, to each inbreath and to each outbreath as they follow one after the other.

Your breath can function as an anchor to bring you into the present and help you tune into a state of awareness and stillness.

3.

EXPANDING

Expand the field of your awareness around your breathing, so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and facial expression. The breathing space provides a way to step out of automatic pilot mode and reconnect with the present moment. The key skill in using this technique is to maintain awareness in the moment.



Journaling

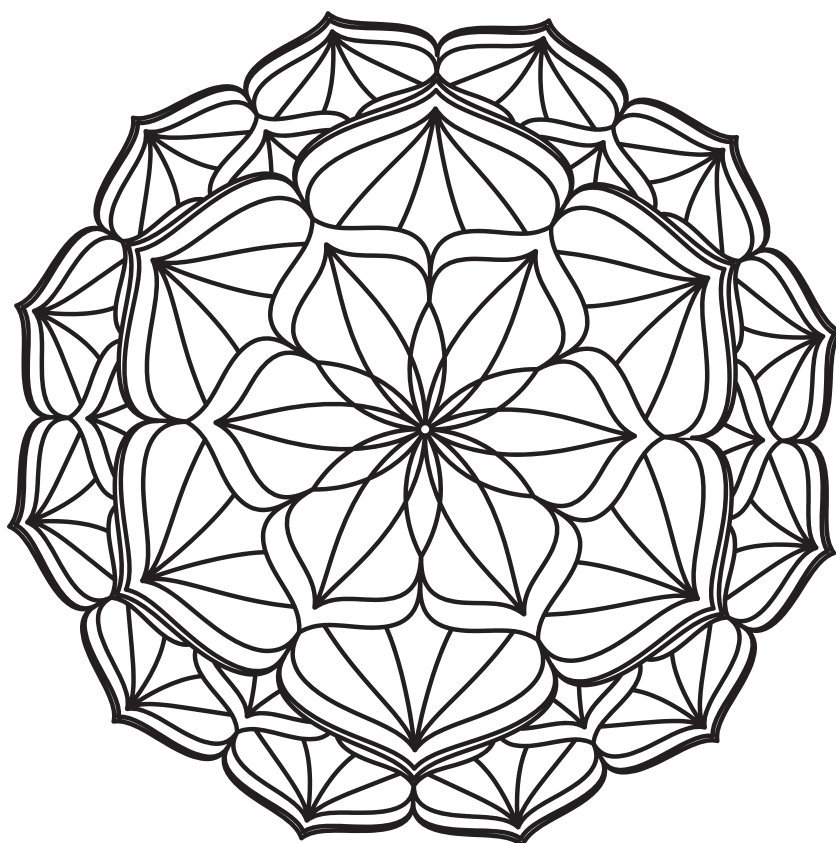
The task of putting pen to paper can be both liberating and cleansing – like talking to a dear friend over a cuppa – who loves you unconditionally and without judgement. Journaling can help you clarify your thoughts and feelings, reduce stress and solve problems more effectively. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- + Find a private place where you are comfortable and don't feel like you need to censor your writing.
- + Don't worry about spelling or punctuation - this process is for you!
- + Write freely but if you are stuck, it may be helpful to pick a theme for the day, week or month.
- + You may also like to consider a guided journaling app for your smartphone such as DiveThru.

Artistic Journaling

If writing isn't your thing artistic journaling might be worth a try.

Artistic journaling involves using art to capture and work through your thoughts. This can be through painting, drawing, mindfulness colouring books, sculpting or even cooking and gardening.








The Benefits of Peer Support & Connection

Connecting with other people who have had a similar experience to you can be incredibly powerful. Here are several peer support groups and Facebook forums you may consider looking at. These groups will connect you with other people just like you!

MRKH Australia

-  www.mrkhaustralia.org
-  info@mrkhaustralia.org




Beautiful You MRKH Foundation

-  www.beautifulyoumrkh.org
-  bymrkh@gmail.com

MRKH Connect

-  www.mrkhconnect.co.uk

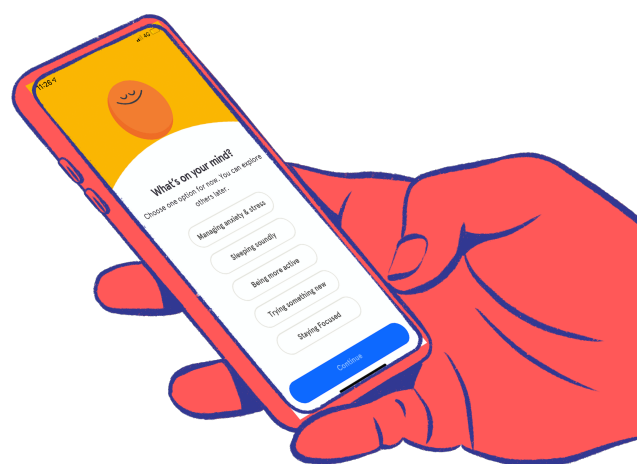
Facebook Groups

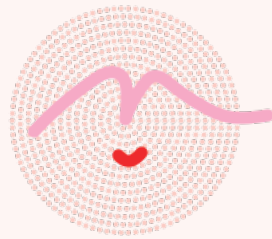
-  MRKH experiences, advice and support
-  MRKH Syndrome, Australia & New Zealand
-  MRKH support and awareness

Smartphone Apps

Smartphone apps are a popular and convenient way to keep on top of your mental health and wellbeing. Here are a few (free and paid) apps which you might find useful.

- + **Smiling Mind** - a unique tool developed by psychologists and educators to help bring balance to your life. Practice your daily meditation and mindfulness exercises from any device.
- + **CBT Thought Diary** - this app will help you evaluate, understand, and change your thoughts and feelings. You can use this app as a mood journal, a thought record journal, and a gratitude journal.
- + **Moodpath** - will help track your emotional state in relation to other areas in your life to detect patterns and identify areas that can improve through the use of a Mood Journal.





MRKH
AUSTRALIA

For more information please email:

info@mrkhaustralia.org

Or visit:

mrkhaustralia.org

Disclaimer

The information in this booklet is intended for information purposes only. This information is not meant to treat depression, anxiety or any other mental illness. If you are seeking a diagnosis or treatment for a mental illness, you should consult a physician or mental health professional.