



## What is Social & Emotional Wellbeing?

Aboriginal Health involves the physical, social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing of not only the individual but the whole community. Feeling unwell or having ill health can occur when something goes wrong in any one of these areas. Even though there are many things that can cause ill health, a person's surroundings (where they live, environment, violence etc) can make a person more at risk of developing problems with social and emotional wellbeing, mental health problems and mental illness.

Obviously the best outcome would be acknowledging that social and emotional wellbeing is everybody's business and that the community is enjoying a high level of this. This is where everybody in the community can feel good about the way they live and how they feel. The key factor in achieving this includes connectedness to family and community, control over one's environment and exercising power of choice.

### Social & Emotional Wellbeing problems

So what sort of problems can social & emotional wellbeing problems result from:

- Grief and Loss
- Trauma
- Domestic Violence
- Substance misuse / abuse
- Physical health problems (sickness)
- Family breakdown
- Family member in jail
- Racism
- Discrimination

These are just some factors that can influence the way a person thinks feels and responds to different situations. When situations like these occur Social & Emotional Wellbeing is disrupted and mental health problems and mental health illnesses can occur. When this occurs some people may be unable to function properly in their day to day life.

**'Mental Health Problem'** – is a broad term which describes conditions that may not be severe enough to be called a mental illness.

**'Mental Illness'** – Is a term used to describe major persistent changes in a person's thinking & feelings which disrupts the persons ability to carry out normal daily routines

# Things that can help keep people strong

There are a number of things that can help keep people in our community strong and this can include:

- A strong connection to family and children
- Bringing up children in an inclusive environment
- Knowing and valuing the importance of children and family
- Knowing and valuing cultural heritage and spirituality
- Feeling connected to land, culture, family and community

These are just some examples of how we can stay strong and these strengths have been known to help our communities to survive and withstand the devastating effects of colonisation.

## Where can I go for help?

Sometimes we face events in our lives that we are unable to handle ourselves or with help of family and friends and sometimes there are situations in our lives that might be too much for us to cope with. In these cases, there are options out there for you to take.

Some of these options can include:

- Counselling (Someone to yarn too)
- Behavioural and Lifestyle changes (Health Choices)
- See a doctor who might give you medication that can help

If you just want to have a yarn or if you would like to find out more information contact any of your local Community Mental Health or other services listed below.

The Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing Fact Sheet Series was designed by the Aboriginal Social & Emotional Wellbeing workers David Freeman & Brenda Freeman based at Campbelltown Community Mental Health Service February 2009.

The information provided was adapted from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health First Aid Training Manual and the SANE Australia website. [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)