



Belong for health and happiness

Having strong social connections with friends, family and the wider community is an essential ingredient of a productive and fulfilling life.

In fact, we often define ourselves through membership of our family, school or workplace; through our sporting interests and our involvement in community events. Feeling part of something – even something like a football crowd or rock concert audience – boosts our mood and makes us feel good about ourselves and glad to be alive.

There are many ways to increase our sense of belonging. It is all about joining in and connecting with others.

Stay connected

Keep in touch with friends, family, colleagues and the wider community. A chat in a queue, going to the movies with a friend or catching up with old friends on Facebook are all good for our mental health and sense of wellbeing.

People who surround themselves with other people are happier, more productive and get more out of life!

Get involved

When was the last time you attended a community festival, school fair, theatre production or local sporting event? Getting involved in local events is a great way to feel part of the community, meet like-minded people and perhaps discover a new interest. Community events and festivals promote cooperation, build a sense of community spirit and pride, help to shape a sense of community identity, promote awareness of local issues, reduce social isolation and promote economic and social development. You will also be supporting your fellow community members, which will make them feel good too!

Organisers and participants of community events experience added benefits – developing leadership skills, forming friendships, learning new skills and further boosting their sense of belonging.

It is now widely recognised that community events and festivals bind people together and improve the quality of life of local residents. Make a resolution today to get more involved in the community in which you live!

I get by with a little help from my friends

Everybody faces challenging times of mental and emotional distress. Having friends to talk things over with and a network of people to rely on, makes us feel valued, stronger and more capable of dealing with the challenges we face in our lives. If you have something that is troubling you, seek help from family, friends and other networks you are involved in.



Join a club

Being a member of a club provides a chance to turn a favourite hobby or new interest into an opportunity to meet new people, learn new skills, and keep mentally agile.

There are a range of clubs across the state to suit a wide variety of interests. Some examples of clubs you might like to join include:

- Book clubs
- Caravanning clubs
- Choir or music groups
- Scrabble, Bridge or Chess groups
- Theatre or arts groups
- Boating or sailing clubs
- Nature and conservation groups
- Painting or craft groups
- Sports clubs (e.g. cycling, swimming, dancing, walking group)

If you already belong to a club you can encourage others to become involved by inviting friends or family to your next club gathering.

How to find clubs in your area

Can assist with...	Contact details	Website
Locate a sport or recreation club in your local area by using the 'Find a Club' tool on the Department of Sport and Recreation website or phone the office.	P: (08) 9492 9700	www.dsr.wa.gov.au
Browse the community directory on the Western Australian Local Government Association website to link in with your local community services and activities or phone your local council.		www.walga.asn.au
Visit the Act-Belong-Commit website to discover more ideas on how you can get involved in your local community, or call us.	P: (08) 9266 3788	www.actbelongcommit.org.au

act

Say 'hi' to your neighbour, chat to the bus driver, smile at strangers, re-connect with old acquaintances and keep up friendships.

belong

Join a choir, a bridge club or sailing club. Attend a community festival and get more involved in a local events.

commit

Enrol in a hobby course; volunteer for your club or help out at an animal refuge.

"Belonging to a group is like medicine for the soul"

- Baumeister, R. F., Leary, M. R. 1995, 'The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation', *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol 117, No. 3. pp 497-529
- Delamere, Thomas A. (1997). 'Development of Scale Items to Measure the Social Impact of Community Festivals', *Journal of Applied Recreation Research* 22:4, pp. 293-315.

