

The Big 5

THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR
BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

JOURNAL

Name:





What can we do, each day, to improve our mental health?

Based on a program of clinical research spanning several years and using results from thousands of people, our MindSpot research team have pinpointed five key activities (actions) that are strongly linked to better mental health. We call these **The Big 5**.

Unfortunately, The Big 5 are often the things we stop doing when we feel stressed or sad. The good news is that by resuming The Big 5, people can improve their mental health.

Doing The Big 5 won't stop people experiencing tough times — but doing them often helps people stay mentally healthier and more resilient.

We hope The Big 5 Journal helps you on your journey to better mental health.

Regards and best wishes,

Nick

**Professor Nick Titov,
Executive Director, MindSpot**



The Big 5

THINGS YOU CAN DO FOR
BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

Our research with over 20,000 people has shown that five types of actions are strongly linked to good mental health.

We call these 'The Big 5' and we know that people who do them regularly each week are likely to have good mental health.

The Big 5 are things we can all do. They are the building blocks for good mental health and include:

1. Meaningful Activities



Meaningful Activities give us a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction or joy. They can be as simple as listening to a favourite song or watching a good show.

2. Healthy Thinking



Healthy Thinking means having realistic thoughts about ourselves, the world, and the future and treating ourselves with the same respect as we would treat a friend, particularly when things are difficult.

3. Goals and Plans



Goals and Plans help us to stay motivated and energised. They give us something to look forward to and stop us from dwelling on past problems.

4. Healthy Routines



Healthy Routines we do automatically, like our sleep routine, eating well or being active, are critical for good mental health. These actions set us up for the day.

5. Social Connections



Regular contact with people we love and respect, which may include our family, friends or tribe, help us to feel validated and give us a sense of belonging.



The Big 5 Research Program

The Big 5 used in this Journal is the result of six scientific studies with more than 20,000 people*.

We started our research program by asking 6,000 Australian adults how often they did different things each week. We also measured each person's mental health and satisfaction with life.

We found that five types of actions were strongly linked to mental health (that is, low symptoms of depression and anxiety, and high satisfaction with life) – we call these **The Big 5**.

We then studied another 15,000 people in Australia and 1,500 in Canada, and found the same results, the more people did The Big 5 the better their mental health.

In a randomised controlled trial with 250 Australians we then found that people who increased The Big 5 experienced significant improvements in their mental health.

Finally, we have also found that mental health worsens when people restrict The Big 5.

Key Messages

1. The Big 5 are essential for our mental health.
2. Not doing The Big 5 regularly is linked to poor mental health.
3. Doing The Big 5 regularly supports good mental health.



* You can find links to these studies by visiting:
mindspot.org.au/our-research



Ready to get started with The Big 5?



The Big 5 is a practical approach that can easily fit into our daily lives. The actions are simple and effective. Most of us are already doing The Big 5, we just might not be doing them enough.

Step 1: The Big 5 Self-Assessment Sheet

The Big 5 self-assessment sheet is a great starting point because it gets us thinking about how often we're doing these activities on a regular basis.

Self-Assessment Sheet. Date: _____

ACTIVITIES	EXAMPLES	HOW OFTEN DO YOU DO THESE ACTIVITIES?				
		Every day	3-4 times per week	1-2 times per week	1-2 times per month	Never
1. Meaningful Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask something to look forward to Ask something that was very satisfying to me 					
2. Healthy Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share a positive perspective on things Deal with feelings of frustration or disappointment in a healthy way Recognise negative self-talk 					
3. Goals and Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask something to help me live my "best" life Ask something to help me achieve my goals Ask something to improve or maintain the quality of my life 					
4. Healthy Routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stand to feel and stretch up at a regular time Have a healthy daily routine Exercise and get a healthy meal 					
5. Social Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend social and community events Have a meaningful conversation with someone Laugh about my day with a friend or family member 					

Step 2: The Big 5 Journal

The Big 5 journal is your very own personal journal. Track your weekly activities, set your own goals and note down your thoughts for the week.

Week 1. Date: _____

ACTIONS	HOW BIG YOU DO ONE OF THEM ACTIVELY							HOW OFTEN YOU DO THEM ACTIVELY			NOTES
	W	T	W	T	F	S	S	1-2 times per week	1-2 times per month	Never	
1. Meaningful Activities											
2. Healthy Thinking											
3. Goals and Plans											
4. Healthy Routines											
5. Social Connections											

The Big 5

Self-Assessment Sheet.






The following Self-Assessment Sheet will help you to identify how often you do The Big 5.


Instructions:

- The Self-Assessment Sheet contains five types of activities, which are strongly linked to mental health.
- We have listed three examples for each of these areas.
- Tick the column which best matches how often you did this type of activity in the past week.
- If any of your answers are in the yellow or red section, check pages 15–19 to get some ideas about how you might do them more often.

Example:

Self-Assessment Sheet. Date: _____






ACTIVITIES	EXAMPLES	HOW OFTEN DID YOU DO THESE EACH WEEK?				
		Every day	5–6 times per week	3–4 times per week	1–2 times per week	Never
Meaningful Activities. 	I did something enjoyable					
	I had something to look forward to					
	I did something that was very satisfying to me					
Healthy Thinking. 	I kept a realistic perspective on things					
	I dealt with feelings of frustration or impatience in a healthy way					
	I treated myself with respect					
Goals and Plans. 	I did something to help me live my "ideal" life					
	I did something to help me achieve my goals					
	I did something to improve or maintain the quality of my life					
Healthy Routines. 	I went to bed and woke up at a regular time					
	I kept a healthy daily routine					
	I prepared and ate a healthy meal					
Social Connections. 	I socialised with positive people					
	I had a meaningful conversation with someone					
	I talked about my day with a friend or family member					

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Self-Assessment Sheet.

Date:

ACTIVITIES	EXAMPLES	HOW OFTEN DID YOU DO THESE EACH WEEK?				
		Every day	5–6 times per week	3–4 times per week	1–2 times per week	Never
Meaningful Activities. 	I did something enjoyable					
	I had something to look forward to					
	I did something that was very satisfying to me					
Healthy Thinking. 	I kept a realistic perspective on things					
	I dealt with feelings of frustration or impatience in a healthy way					
	I treated myself with respect					
Goals and Plans. 	I did something to help me live my “ideal” life					
	I did something to help me achieve my goals					
	I did something to improve or maintain the quality of my life					
Healthy Routines. 	I went to bed and woke up at a regular time					
	I kept a healthy daily routine					
	I prepared and ate a healthy meal					
Social Connections. 	I socialised with positive people					
	I had a meaningful conversation with someone					
	I talked about my day with a friend or family member					



Let's get thinking...

On the following pages, have a go at brainstorming some Big 5 activities that are specific to you before diving into The Big 5 journal. We've included some examples to help you get started.



Meaningful Activities.



These give us a sense of accomplishment, satisfaction or joy. They can be as simple as listening to a favourite song or watching a good show, and they are often fun and engaging.

- Read a book
- Go for a walk, run or go to the gym
- Listen to music or a podcast
- Work in the garden
- Watch a favourite show
- Cook a favourite meal

Some meaningful activities I do/would like to do are...



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Healthy Thinking.



This means having realistic thoughts about ourselves, the world, and the future. This also means keeping perspective and treating ourselves with respect, particularly when things are difficult.

- Be kind to yourself
- Reward yourself
- Keep a realistic perspective on things
- Challenge negative or unhelpful thoughts
- Allow yourself to be less than perfect
- Do not dwell on the worst-case scenario

I will practise healthy thinking by...



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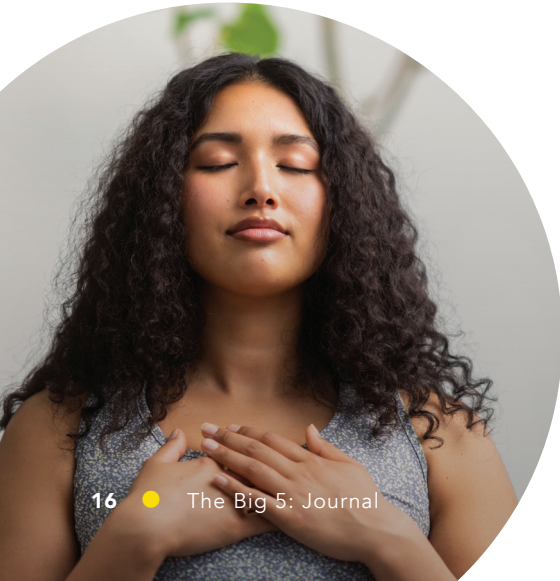
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Goals and Plans.



Having a goal or a plan helps us stay motivated and energised. Goals give us something to look forward to and stop us from dwelling on past problems.

- Clean or organise your home
- Set simple goals for each week
- Check-in on your goals regularly
- Plan a day-trip or holiday
- Write a list of your long-term goals

Some goals and plans I've set for myself are...



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4 Healthy Routines.



Routines we do automatically like our sleep routine, eating well or being active, are critical for good mental health. These actions set us up for the day.

- Set a regular sleep/wake time
- Spend time outside each day
- Drink lots of water
- Set a simple, daily routine
- Maintain work-time and home-time boundaries
- Take regular breaks during your work

I always try to... 

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5 Social Connections.



Regular contact with people we love and respect, which may include our family, friends or tribe, help us to feel validated and give us a sense of belonging.

- Call/text someone you miss
- Spend time with someone you care about
- Watch a show with someone
- Have coffee/meal with someone
- Help a friend with something
- Organise a group social activity

I keep/would like to keep connected by... 

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The Big 5

Journal.

The Big 5 Journal is a simple way to help you to do The Big 5.

Instructions:

- Use The Big 5 Journal to plan and keep track of your daily actions.
- Take a few minutes to write down some of the actions under the first column. For extra ideas, see pages 15–19.
- Place a tick for each day you did one of The Big 5 actions.
- At the end of the week, tally your total and write the total under the Green, Yellow or Red box.
- You can use the notes section to write down challenges you faced that week, goals for the following week or how you were feeling.

Example:






Week 1. Date:

ACTIONS	WHEN DID YOU DO ONE OF THESE ACTIVITIES?							TALLY OF ACTIVITIES			NOTES
	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	5-7 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	0-2 TIMES	
1. Meaningful Activities											
2. Healthy Thinking											
3. Goals and Plans											
4. Healthy Routines											
5. Social Connections											

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Week 1.

Date:

ACTIONS	WHEN DID YOU DO ONE OF THESE ACTIVITIES?							TALLY OF ACTIVITIES			NOTES
	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	5-7 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	0-2 TIMES	
 1. Meaningful Activities											
 2. Healthy Thinking											
 3. Goals and Plans											
 4. Healthy Routines											
 5. Social Connections											

Week 2.

Date:

ACTIONS	WHEN DID YOU DO ONE OF THESE ACTIVITIES?							TALLY OF ACTIVITIES			NOTES
	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	5-7 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	0-2 TIMES	
 1. Meaningful Activities											
 2. Healthy Thinking											
 3. Goals and Plans											
 4. Healthy Routines											
 5. Social Connections											

Well done!

You've been following The Big 5 for two weeks. Let's **take a moment to reflect** on what you've achieved and **set some new goals**.

IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS:

I have really enjoyed:



I have started to:



IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS:

I would like to:








My goals are:





Week 3.






Date:

ACTIONS	WHEN DID YOU DO ONE OF THESE ACTIVITIES?							TALLY OF ACTIVITIES			NOTES
	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	5-7 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	0-2 TIMES	
 1. Meaningful Activities											
 2. Healthy Thinking											
 3. Goals and Plans											
 4. Healthy Routines											
 5. Social Connections											








Week 4.

Date:

ACTIONS	WHEN DID YOU DO ONE OF THESE ACTIVITIES?							TALLY OF ACTIVITIES			NOTES
	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	5-7 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	0-2 TIMES	
 1. Meaningful Activities											
 2. Healthy Thinking											
 3. Goals and Plans											
 4. Healthy Routines											
 5. Social Connections											

Week 5.

Date:

ACTIONS	WHEN DID YOU DO ONE OF THESE ACTIVITIES?							TALLY OF ACTIVITIES			NOTES
	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	5-7 TIMES	3-4 TIMES	0-2 TIMES	
 1. Meaningful Activities											
 2. Healthy Thinking											
 3. Goals and Plans											
 4. Healthy Routines											
 5. Social Connections											

It's been **5 weeks** since you started **The Big 5 journey!**

Let's take a moment to **reflect on the past 5 weeks...**

What have you enjoyed doing in the last few weeks?



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Have you started doing activities that you didn't do before?



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Have you noticed that you've stopped doing activities you used to?



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You've reached the end of The Big 5 Journal!

We hope you have noticed an improvement in your mental health. We also hope that The Big 5 has become part of your daily and weekly routines.

We wish you all the best on your mental health journey!

Warm regards, Nick.

Professor Nick Titov and the MindSpot Team

If you would like to continue The Big 5 Journal, please reach out to MindSpot for another copy or simply download your electronic version from:

mindspot.org.au/info/the-big-five



About MindSpot

MindSpot is a free, digital psychology service for Australian adults.

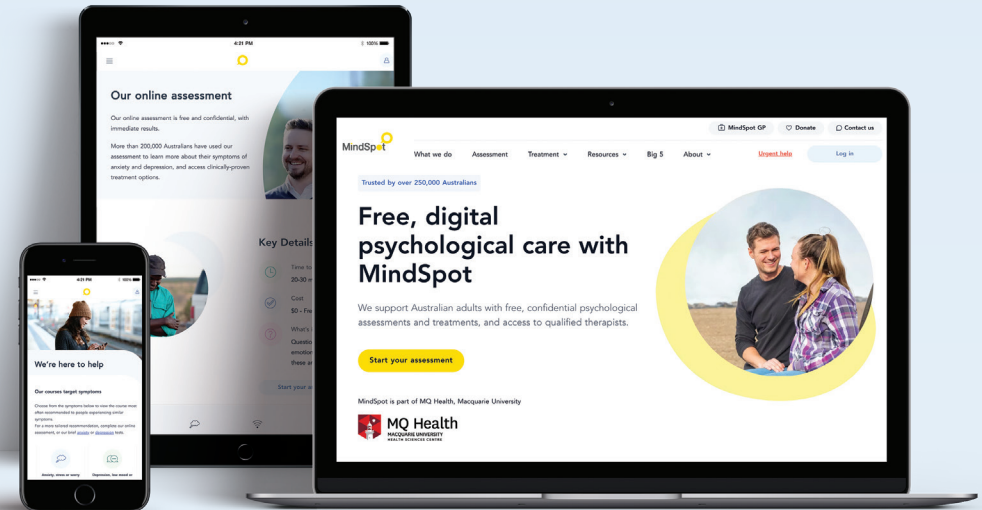
In 2012, MindSpot began with a simple goal: to ensure that every Australian could access high quality mental health care — when and where they need it.

Today, we proudly deliver psychological assessments and treatments to more than 30,000 Australians each year.

Our services include psychological assessment and treatments. We specialise in supporting people experiencing symptoms of anxiety, depression, OCD, PTSD, and chronic pain.

MindSpot is funded by the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care, and delivered by Macquarie University Health.

If you would like to learn more about MindSpot and our services, visit our website mindspot.org.au





If you would like to learn more about MindSpot, please contact us:

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Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care