

CONSUMER & CARER ADVISORY COUNCIL

NEWSLETTER



Acknowledgement of Country

GV Health acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge their significant cultural heritage, their fundamental spiritual connection to Country, and value their contribution to a diverse community. We are proud to embrace the spirit of reconciliation, and learn more from the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community how best to improve their health, social and economic outcomes.

About the newsletter

Happy New Year! As we step into the brand new year of 2024, we extend our warmest wishes for happiness, health, and prosperity to all our readers and their loved ones. May this year bring you countless moments of joy, growth, and fulfillment.

Welcome to the first issue of CCAC's 2024! In this edition, we've prepared a diverse array of articles and resources to support both consumers and carers on their journey towards better mental health. In this fast-paced world, cultivating mindfulness is more important than ever. Our cover story explores the art of mindfulness, offering strategies, insights, and the many benefits it brings to our lives.

Discover an inspiring story of resilience and recovery in our "One Story at a Time" section, highlighting the strength and determination of individuals living with bipolar disorder.

Our Mental Health Education segment focuses on bipolar disorder, providing valuable information and resources to enhance understanding and support for those affected by this condition. For a quick self-assessment, we've included a link to the Bipolar Self-Test by the renowned Black Dog Institute. Check it out and gain valuable insights into your mental well-being.

Dive into our book review of 'Quiet: The Power of Introverts' by Susan Cain, exploring the strengths and unique qualities of introverts in an extroverted world. Stay informed with the latest developments in mental health research, as we bring you insights and updates on innovative studies and findings. Discover practical tips and strategies for finding happiness and well-being in our insightful article. Start the year with a positive mindset and the tools to achieve happiness.

Learn about the vital role played by the GV Public Health Unit in our community, ensuring the well-being of all its members. Get to know their services and mission in this informative piece. Explore a wide range of community resources, from support groups to counselling services, aimed at providing assistance and guidance to those seeking mental health support.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE :

- About the Newsletter
- Learning the Art of Mindfulness
- One story at a time!
- Mental Health Education
- Bipolar Self-Test
- Book Review: 'Quite; The Power of Introverts'
- Mental Health Research
- Want to be Happy This Year?
- What is GV Public Health Unit?
- Community Resources

CONTACT US :
AZIZ.BHATTI@GVHEALTH.ORG.AU

PHONE: 03 58 32 2111
MOBILE: 0448 283 596

2024

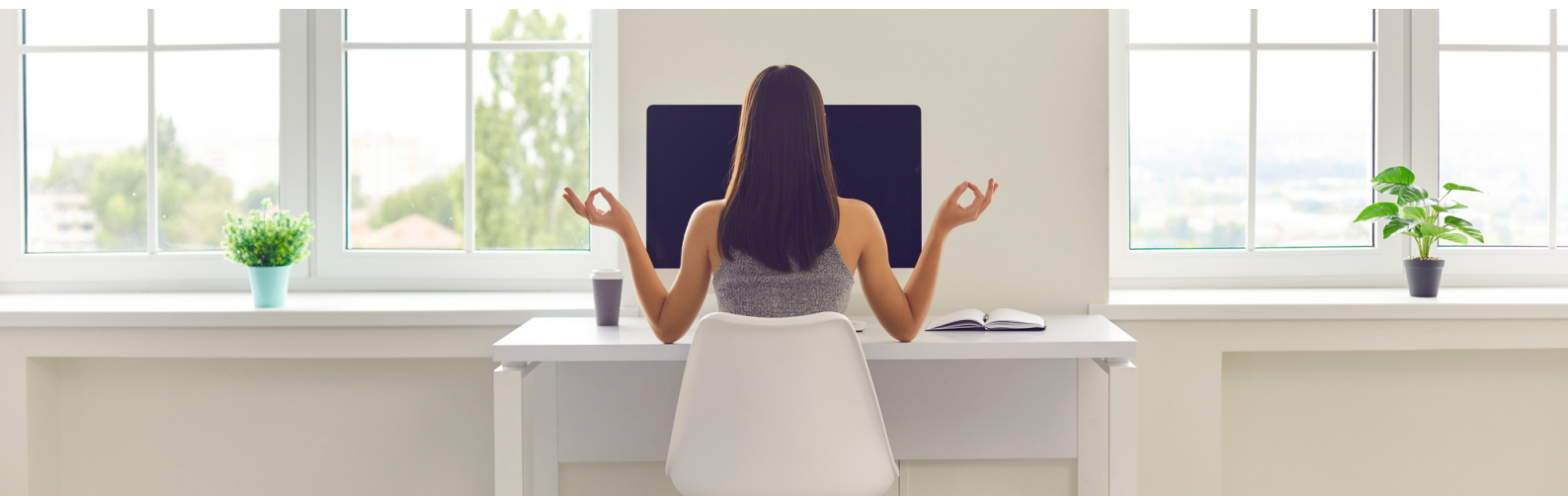


LEARNING THE ART OF MINDFULNESS

In the fast-paced and often chaotic world we live in, the art of mindfulness has become increasingly important as a means of finding balance and serenity in our lives. Mindfulness is not just a passing trend; it is a powerful practice that can positively impact our mental, emotional, and physical well-being. In this article, we will explore what mindfulness is, why it is important, the benefits it offers, and how it can be a valuable tool for us and the people around us.

Understanding Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of being fully present in the moment, paying deliberate and non-judgmental attention to our thoughts, emotions, sensations, and surroundings. It involves cultivating awareness of our thoughts and feelings without trying to change them or react to them immediately. This practice originates from ancient Buddhist traditions but has gained widespread recognition and adoption in contemporary psychology and wellness practices.



Strategies for Cultivating Mindfulness

Meditation: One of the most common and effective ways to develop mindfulness is through meditation. Find a quiet space, sit comfortably, and focus your attention on your breath, a specific sensation, or a mantra. When your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your chosen point of focus without judgment.

Body Scan: Lie down or sit in a comfortable position and slowly scan your body from head to toe, paying attention to any areas of tension or discomfort. This technique helps you connect with your body and recognize physical sensations.

Mindful Breathing: Pay close attention to your breath as it moves in and out of your body. Observe the rhythm and sensations of each breath without trying to control it. This simple practice can be done anywhere, anytime, and is an excellent way to anchor yourself in the present moment.

Mindful Eating: Take your time to savor the flavors, textures, and smells of your food. Chew slowly and pay attention to the act of eating. This not only enhances your enjoyment of food but also promotes mindful awareness.

Nature Walks: Spend time in nature and immerse yourself in the sights, sounds, and smells of the natural world. Nature walks can be a rejuvenating way to practice mindfulness and reduce stress.

Yoga: Yoga combines physical postures, breath control, and meditation to promote mindfulness and flexibility. Regular practice can help you become more attuned to your body and mind.

Why Mindfulness Is Important

1. Stress Reduction: Stress is a prevalent and often debilitating aspect of modern life. Mindfulness has been extensively studied and proven to reduce stress levels. By training your mind to stay in the present moment, you can prevent rumination about past regrets or future anxieties, which are significant contributors to stress.

2. Improved Mental Health: Mindfulness can be a valuable tool in managing and improving mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety. It helps individuals become more aware of their thoughts and feelings, allowing them to respond more skillfully to challenging emotions and negative thought patterns.

3. Enhanced Emotional Regulation: Mindfulness promotes emotional intelligence by encouraging individuals to acknowledge their emotions without judgment. This self-awareness enables better regulation of emotions, leading to healthier relationships and a more balanced emotional state.

4. Increased Focus and Productivity:

In a world filled with distractions, the ability to concentrate on the task at hand is a precious skill. Mindfulness practices can enhance your ability to focus, increase attention span, and boost productivity.

5. Greater Well-Being:

By cultivating mindfulness, you can experience a greater sense of well-being and contentment in your life. You become more attuned to the simple pleasures of existence and less preoccupied with external pressures.



Benefits of Mindfulness for Ourselves

Enhanced Self-Awareness: Mindfulness allows us to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves, our thought patterns, and our reactions to various situations. This self-awareness can lead to personal growth and a stronger sense of identity.

Improved Relationships: Being present and fully engaged in our interactions with others can significantly improve the quality of our relationships. Mindfulness helps us listen more attentively, empathize more deeply, and communicate more effectively.

Better Physical Health: The benefits of mindfulness extend beyond the mind. Research suggests that mindfulness practices can lead to lower blood pressure, improved sleep, and better overall physical health.

Greater Resilience: Mindfulness equips us with the tools to cope with life's challenges more gracefully. It enhances our ability to bounce back from setbacks and adapt to change.

Reduced Reactivity: Instead of reacting impulsively to stressors, mindfulness encourages a more measured response. This can prevent unnecessary conflicts and impulsive decisions.

Benefits of Mindfulness for Others

Enhanced Empathy: Practicing mindfulness can make us more attuned to the emotions and experiences of others. This heightened empathy fosters more compassionate and understanding relationships.

Reduced Conflict: Mindfulness can de-escalate conflicts by helping individuals remain calm and non-reactive in challenging situations. This can lead to more harmonious interactions within families, workplaces, and communities.

Positive Role Modeling: When we embody mindfulness in our own lives, we serve as positive role models for those around us, inspiring them to consider mindfulness practices for themselves.

Supportive Communication: Mindfulness encourages active listening and thoughtful communication. By being fully present when someone is speaking, we can offer more meaningful and supportive responses.



How to Incorporate Mindfulness into Daily Life

Start Small: Begin with short mindfulness exercises, such as a few minutes of mindful breathing in the morning or during a break at work. Gradually increase the duration as you become more comfortable with the practice.

Create Rituals: Incorporate mindfulness into daily routines, like mindful eating during meals or a brief meditation session before bedtime.

Use Technology: There are numerous mindfulness apps and online resources available to guide you through meditation and mindfulness exercises. These can be helpful for beginners.

Mindful Reminders: Set reminders or cues throughout the day to bring your awareness back to the present moment. For example, every time you receive a notification on your phone, take a moment to check in with your breath.

Practice Patience: Be patient with yourself. Mindfulness is a skill that takes time to develop, and it's okay to have moments of distraction or restlessness. The key is to gently bring your focus back to the present whenever your mind wanders.

In Conclusion

Mindfulness is not just a trend or a passing fad; it is a powerful practice that can enhance our lives in numerous ways. By learning the art of mindfulness, we can reduce stress, improve our mental and emotional well-being, and cultivate healthier relationships with ourselves and others. The benefits of mindfulness extend beyond our individual selves to positively impact our communities and the world at large. So, take a deep breath, be present, and embark on a journey to discover the transformative power of mindfulness.

ONE STORY AT A TIME

"For me, staying well involves balance. A healthy social life is important, as well as doing fun things."

I have always had stuff going on in my head but had never seen it as a mental illness. I was suicidal at 18 and have had depression a lot throughout my life.

However, I thought what was going on in my head was going on in everybody's heads. I was just pushing through life and ignoring it.

I realized things weren't right when it all built up and pushed me over. I didn't have much family support at the time, limited contact with friends, and a complete lack of sleep. My mind was going nuts, thinking and over-thinking things. I even experienced hallucinations and delusions.

Once, I went for a drive and couldn't remember how long I was gone for. It made me scared to get out of my car and I was screaming. My neighbours tried to calm me down but they couldn't, so the police and ambulance came.

My first hospitalization was my turning point. I realized I'd had been experiencing both manic and depressive episodes. I was able to start realizing what was going on and what it was all about.

[Read more here.](#)



MENTAL HEALTH EDUCATION

Bipolar Disorder

What is Bipolar Disorder?

Bipolar disorder is a mental health disorder characterized by extreme highs and lows in mood and energy. While everyone experiences ups and downs, the severe shifts that happen in bipolar disorder can have a serious impact on a person's life. It is estimated that approximately 2.2% of Australians live with a form of bipolar disorder. One in 50 adult Australians experience bipolar disorder each year.

Contrary to how it is sometimes used in conversation, a diagnosis of bipolar disorder does not mean a person is highly emotional but rather refers to someone who experiences extended periods of mood and energy that are excessively high and or/irritable to sad and hopeless, with periods of normal mood in between.

It typically begins in adolescence or early adulthood and continues throughout life. It is often not recognized as an illness and people who have it may suffer needlessly for years. Bipolar disorder can be extremely distressing and disruptive for those who have this disease, their spouses, family members, friends, and employers. Although there is no known cure, bipolar disorder is treatable, and recovery is possible. Individuals with bipolar disorder can and do have successful relationships and meaningful jobs. The combination of medication, therapy, healthy lifestyle, and support helps the vast majority of people return to productive, fulfilling lives.



Causes:

- Although a specific genetic link to bipolar disorder has not been pin pointed, research shows that bipolar disorder tends to run in families.
- People may inherit a tendency to develop the illness, which can then be triggered by environmental factors such as distressing life events.
- Brain development, structure and chemicals called neurotransmitters, which act as messengers between nerve cells, are also thought to play a role in the development of bipolar disorder.

Symptoms:

Bipolar disorder is often difficult to recognize and diagnose. It causes a person to have a high level of energy, unrealistically expansive thoughts or ideas, and impulsive or reckless behavior. These symptoms may feel good to a person, which may lead to denial that there is a problem. Another reason bipolar disorder is difficult to diagnose is that its symptoms may appear to be part of another illness or attributed to other problems such as substance abuse, poor school performance, or trouble in the workplace. Symptoms of bipolar disorder fall into two categories: mania and depression.

Types of bipolar disorder:

There are a number of different types of bipolar and related disorders.

Bipolar I disorder: People with bipolar I disorder typically experience:

- one or more manic episodes (extreme highs) lasting at least one week, as well as
- depressive episodes

With bipolar I disorder, episodes of mania are severe enough to interfere with day-to-day life. Depressive episodes are often more frequent and longer-lasting than mania.

Bipolar II disorder: People with bipolar II disorder typically experience both hypomanic and depressive episodes. A person with hypomania will experience similar symptoms to someone with mania, but less intensely. Hypomania associated with bipolar II lasts only a few days (rather at least one week of mania, as with bipolar I). Although bipolar II disorder has less severe symptoms than bipolar I disorder, it can be chronic (ongoing).

Depressive episodes are often more frequent and longer-lasting than hypomania.

Cyclothymic disorder: Cyclothymic disorder is characterised by persistent and unpredictable changes in mood. The highs and lows are much less extreme than for bipolar I and II disorder, with a number of symptoms of hypomanic and depressive episodes, but not enough to meet criteria for either.

Mixed episodes: Some people experience 'mixed episodes' – where they can feel some of the signs and symptoms of both depression and mania or hypomania.

Bipolar disorder – mania: Common symptoms of mania associated with bipolar disorder include:

- feeling extremely euphoric ('high') or energetic
- going without sleep
- thinking and speaking quickly
- reckless behaviour, such as overspending
- participating in unsafe sexual activity
- aggression
- irritability
- grandiose, unrealistic plans.
- The symptoms of hypomania are the same as those for mania, but less severe and of shorter duration (lasting 4 days or longer). During manic or hypomanic episodes, symptoms are present for most of the day, nearly every day.

Bipolar disorder – depression: Common symptoms of depression associated with bipolar disorder include:

- withdrawal from people and activities
- feelings of sadness and hopelessness
- lack of appetite and weight loss
- feeling anxious or guilty without reason
- difficulty concentrating
- suicidal thoughts and behavior.

Bipolar disorder – psychosis: People with bipolar disorder who are experiencing an episode of mania may also have symptoms of psychosis, including delusions and hallucinations.

Treatments:

A combination of medication, therapy, lifestyle changes, and support from family, friends and peers help individuals with bipolar disorder to stabilize their mood and to live the lives they want. Finding the treatment plan that works best for a person is critical for recovery.

Medication: Common medications used in treating bipolar disorder are lithium, anticonvulsants, and mood stabilizers. Other medications used include antipsychotics, benzodiazepines, and beta-blockers. As with all medications, medications used to treat bipolar disorder can have mild to serious side effects so it is important to talk with your doctors about how you are feeling.

Therapy: Both group and individual therapy can be helpful in bipolar disorder. Common types of therapy used are Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and family-focused therapies.

Lifestyle changes: Healthy lifestyles changes can be an important part of overall recovery. This includes: sticking to a regular sleep schedule; reducing consumption of alcohol, caffeine, and similar substances; and exercising regularly. Some may use meditation, mind-body practices, and spirituality as resources as well.

Support: Support and self-help groups are invaluable resources for learning coping skills, feeling accepted, and avoiding social isolation. In addition to in-person support groups and drop-in centers, there are many online communities where individuals can also find support. Additional support can be provided through employment, housing, and psychosocial rehabilitation programs.



References:

- <https://www.sane.org/information-and-resources/facts-and-guides/bipolar-disorder>
- <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/mental-health/depression/types-of-depression>
- <https://psychology.org.au/for-the-public/psychology-topics/bipolar-disorder>
- <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/bipolar-disorder/causes/>
- <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/bipolar-disorder/>
- <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/bipolar-disorder>
- https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/1-facts_figures.pdf
- <https://www.bipolaraustralia.org.au/bipolar-information>
- <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/bipolar-disorder>
- <https://mhanational.org/conditions/bipolar-disorder>



“

"Bipolar disorder can be a great teacher. It's a challenge, but it can set you up to be able to do almost anything else in your life." - Carrie Fisher

"Having bipolar disorder doesn't mean you are broken, it means you are strong and brave for battling your mind every single day." - Unknown

"Living with bipolar disorder is like living with a roller coaster in your brain. Trying to explain how you feel is like trying to catch a shadow." - Anonymous

”

BOOK REVIEW

QUIET: THE POWER OF INTROVERTS IN A WORLD THAT CAN'T STOP TALKING, BY SUSAN CAIN

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER - Experience the book that started the Quiet Movement and revolutionized how the world sees introverts--and how introverts see themselves--by offering validation, inclusion, and inspiration. "Superbly researched, deeply insightful, and a fascinating read, Quiet is an indispensable resource for anyone who wants to understand the gifts of the introverted half of the population."--Gretchen Rubin, author of The Happiness Project. ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR--People, O: The Oprah Magazine, Christian Science Monitor, Inc., Library Journal, Kirkus Reviews

At least one-third of the people we know are introverts. They are the ones who prefer listening to speaking; who innovate and create but dislike self-promotion; who favor working on their own over working in teams. It is to introverts--Rosa Parks, Chopin, Dr. Seuss, Steve Wozniak--that we owe many of the great contributions to society.

In Quiet, Susan Cain argues that we dramatically undervalue introverts and shows how much we lose in doing so. She charts the rise of the Extrovert Ideal throughout the twentieth century and explores how deeply it has come to permeate our culture. She also introduces us to successful introverts--from a witty, high-octane public speaker who recharges in solitude after his talks, to a record-breaking salesman who quietly taps into the power of questions. Passionately argued, impeccably researched, and filled with indelible stories of real people, Quiet has the power to permanently change how we see introverts and, equally important, how they see themselves.

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

4 MILLION COPIES SOLD WORLDWIDE

The Power
of Introverts in a
World That Can't
Stop Talking

Quiet

SUSAN CAIN



MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH



headspace
National Youth Mental Health Foundation



review of integrated care in youth mental health

[Read the full report here](#)

WANT TO BE HAPPIER THIS YEAR?

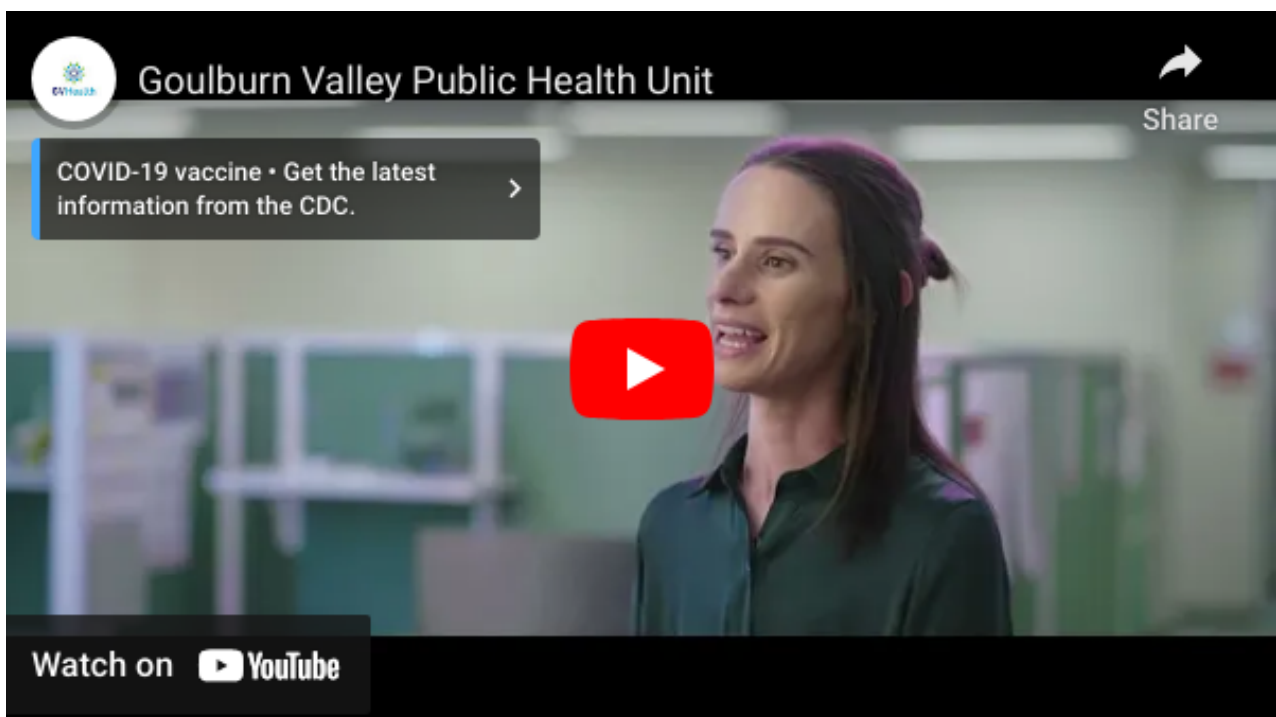
Timeless Wisdom Revisited

17 Therapists share their new year's resolutions - and how they'll make them stick.

[Read more here.](#)



WHAT IS GV PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT?



5 Key Areas Of GVPHU

- Health Protection**
Public Health Officers, Infection Prevention Control, Clinical Nurse Consultants, Medical Leads
- Intelligence Systems & Digital Innovation**
Epidemiologists, Data Analysts
- Public Health Integrated Planning And Programs**
Promoting health & wellbeing on the community level
- Engagement, Communications & Capacity Development**
Community engagement, design specialists, communications and planning
- Emergency Management**
Supporting response to emergencies

SURVIVE THE HEAT

Heat kills more Australians than any other natural disaster



DRINK WATER

Even if you don't feel thirsty, drink water. Take a bottle with you always.



HOT CARS KILL

Never leave kids, older people or pets in cars. The temperature inside a parked car can double within minutes.



KEEP COOL

Seek out air-conditioned buildings, draw your blinds, use a fan, take cool showers and dress in light and loose clothing made from natural fabrics.



PLAN AHEAD

Schedule activities in the coolest part of the day and avoid exercising in the heat. If you must go out, wear a hat and sunscreen and take a bottle of water with you.



CHECK IN ON OTHERS

Look after those most at risk in the heat – your neighbour living alone, older people, the young, people with a medical condition and don't forget your pets.

SURVIVE THE HEAT
Visit betterhealth.vic.gov.au

For more information visit the Better Health Channel.
Call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24
or see your doctor if you are unwell.
In an emergency, call 000.



sam news

Shepparton Art Museum

[Read more here.](#)

THE ARNDT COLLECTION



FROM ONE WORLD
TO ANOTHER

Beci Orpin
**MUSH/
ROOM**

16 September 2023 – March 2024



Dance Me
to the
End of
Love

18 March 2023
– 11 February 2024



Ellen Lee

Landscape; of sight, of sound
21 October 2023 – 28 January 2024



Emma Coulter

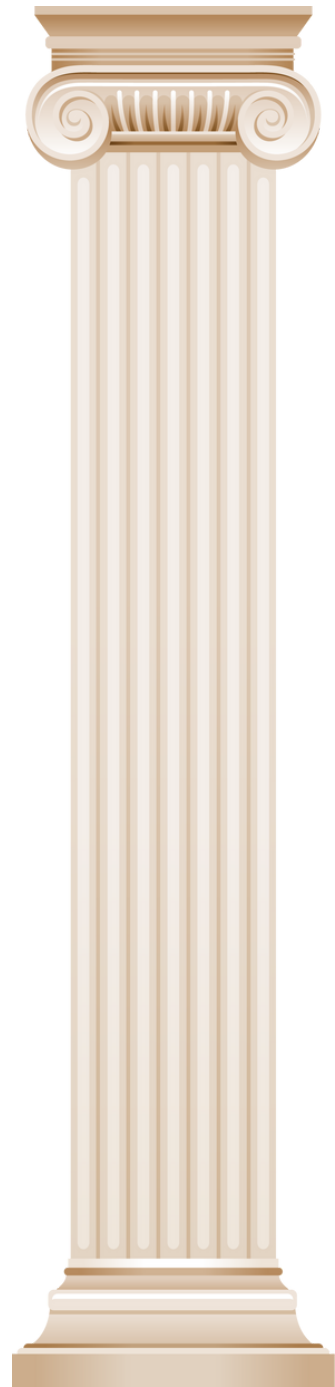
spatial deconstruction #30
(social fabric)

19 August 2023 – 6 May 2024



(human) in nature

16 December 2023 – May 2024



GREATER SHEPPARTON

GREAT THINGS HAPPEN HERE



[Read more here.](#)

Jan 2024



**The Culture Collective -
Turkish Month -
Traditional Dancing**
12 JAN 2024 @ 6:00PM TO
7:30PM



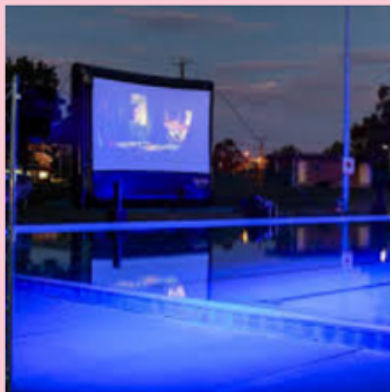
International Dairy Week
13 - 18 JAN 2024



**Tatura's Food Truck
Festival**
13 JAN 2024 @ 4:00PM TO
9:00PM



**School Holiday Movie
Afternoon at Shepparton
Library**
16 JAN 2024 @ 2:30PM TO
4:30PM



Cinema Pop Up
18 - 20 JAN 2024



Playful Parenting
15 JAN 2024 @ 10:00AM TO
11:15AM

Contact us:

We value your feedback and questions. If you have any inquiries, suggestions, or simply want to connect with us, please feel free to reach out. You can contact us through the following channels:

AZIZ.BHATTI@GVHEALTH.ORG.AU
SENIOR CONSUMER CONSULTANT
PHONE: 03 58 32 2111
MOBILE: 0448 283 596