

Walk with Me.

Leaders Guide



What is Walk with Me?

Walk with Me is a program of check-in walk and talks designed to create connection and overcome isolation and the associated feelings of anxiety and loneliness. It has been developed by the ADF for drug action teams (DAT) and their families and friends.

The walks can either be completed virtually using meeting technologies such as Zoom or in local parks

adhering to the relevant physical distancing or lockdown rules in place in each location.

A library of topics has been created by the ADF and as the leader, you choose a suitable topic for your walk and send the details to your group/s with the date and time of the walk and what you want participants to do.

Who is it for?

Walk with Me is a simple way for people across the community to connect with others to manage their loneliness and feelings of isolation or anxiety.

People from all age groups and abilities are welcome to join. It is recommended separate groups be run if you have a wide range of people in your DAT membership. If the walk is targeted at a specific cultural group or community, it is suggested walks be organised by leaders or elders from this community.

For example, you could have the following groups

- Young people 12-17-years
- Young adults 18-30-years
- Adults with children
- Seniors 65+
- Specific communities eg. migrant families from a particular cultural background

People from all age groups and abilities are welcome to join.





Why walking?

A good walk can do wonders for your mental wellbeing.

It improves self-perception and self-esteem, mood and sleep quality, and it reduces stress, anxiety and fatigue. Physically active people have up to a 30% reduced risk of becoming depressed and staying active helps those who are depressed recover.¹

Just 30 minutes every day can increase cardiovascular fitness, strengthen bones, reduce excess body fat and boost muscle power and endurance. It can also reduce the risk of developing conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers. Unlike some other forms of exercise walking is free and does not require any special equipment or training.²

Why virtual?

With physical distancing rules still in place across Australia some of your members will not feel comfortable meeting up in public places. By using a virtual platform people can still participate in the conversations either while walking alone or from the comfort of their home. It also means people with mobility issues can participate without barriers to inclusion.



1. Walking for Health
2. [Betterhealth.vic.gov.au](https://betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

How does Walk with Me work?

Frequency

As a leader, you will need to decide how often you would like to schedule a walk - this can be weekly or fortnightly. However, there is no reason that once the group is set up people cannot connect outside the scheduled walks if they would like to continue a discussion. It is recommended up to an hour be allocated for each walk bearing in mind any limitations of your virtual platform of choice.

Virtual v physical walks

Whether you choose a virtual walk or a physical walk is up to you. Things to consider may include:

- The needs of the CDAT members
- Any physical distancing and lockdown rules
- Which option works best for the people in your community

Platforms that may work for virtual walks include:

- Zoom
- Skype
- Google hangouts
- FaceTime (for iPhone, iPad and MAC)
- Facebook Messenger
- WhatsApp
- Phone calls

We recommend Zoom although you may wish to talk to your community or one of the ADF staff about what will work best for your group.



About Zoom:

Zoom is a cloud-based video conferencing service you can use to virtually meet with others - either by video, audio, or both, all while conducting live chats - and it lets you record those sessions to view later. It is free to download and allows you 45 minutes 'talk' time in each session. Zoom can be used on smartphones, tablets, and computers. More at <https://zoom.us/>

Location considerations

For physical walks choose a safe venue such as the local park or walking track. We recommend choosing a walk in your community that is around other members of the public with landmarks and points of conversation like play areas, garden beds, trees, ponds, important sites in your community, etc. as this may create further topics in your conversation. It also helps people feel safe if there are other people around. Remember to ensure participants follow current health regulations around any physical distancing rules in place.

Some safety considerations for physical walks:

- Collect contact details for each participant (so you can check in later)
- Check in with participants after their walk
- Ensure leaders have Working with Children Checks if participants are aged 12-17 years
- Only walk in areas safe for pedestrians
- If it is evening stay in well-lit locations
- Consider reflective clothing if it is evening or early morning
- Wear suitable shoes for the terrain
- Avoid the midday sun and recommend sunscreen and wearing a hat
- Take water to stay hydrated

How do I recruit people to join a Walk with Me session?

Once you have decided the frequency and the type of walk you will organise, you will need to recruit participants and choose the topics for discussion at each meeting.

The Walk with Me Leader Toolkit is available from the **Community Hub** and includes:

- Templates for invitation and follow up reminder emails that you can send to your members
- A template to record the names and phone numbers/email addresses for each participant so you can get in touch with them after the Walks and for safety.
- Ideas for content/topics

- Templates for recording who attends
- Media release templates for promoting Walk with Me in your local media.

The ADF will support the Walk with Me program with social media posts and local media stories, so let us know when milestones are achieved so we can continue to drive new participants into the program.

It is okay if members do not want to attend every event. Some topics will not appeal to everyone so your members can opt in and out as they wish.



How do I access the content for Walk with Me?

The ADF has created a library of topics for the walks and we will work with you to add new topics to the list. There are a range of topic areas to choose from and they are located on the **website**. The topics are provided as inspiration for discussions, there are no right answers and each conversation will be different.

The topics include:

- Happiness (e.g. happy place)
- Resilience (e.g. how to fail)
- Loneliness (e.g. the pineapple project)
- Vulnerability (e.g. Unlocking us)
- Curiosity (e.g. getting curious with JVN)
- Personal Stories (e.g. Conversations ABC, Desert Island Discs, Grounded by Louis Theroux)
- Relationships (e.g. Love Stories)
- Anxiety & mental health (e.g. Matt Haig)
- Learning (e.g. 5 x 5, Stuff you need to know)
- Film & Movies (e.g. The Rewatchables)
- Comedy (e.g. A bit of this, a bit of that by Becky Lucas)



How do I **set up a walk?**

For each session, the following steps need to occur:

- 1** Choose a topic from the library and email the link to your participants
- 2** Participants then view, listen or read the material and come along prepared to discuss about what they liked, what they have been thinking about the topic and what they have learned
- 3** Be prepared to lead the walk and encourage participants if you have set up a group rather than individual sessions
- 4** After each walk session you will need to:
 - a. email the participants to share the key themes discussed
 - b. check in to make sure everyone got home safely
 - c. promote the next walk and the topic
 - d. encourage your participants to share their experience on Facebook



Competition

To keep people engaged with the program, local competitions will be run. These will be based on the number of walks your members participate in – the aim being to create some friendly rivalry between CDATs across NSW. Certificates will be awarded for milestone achievements – 5 Walks, 10 Walks, 25 Walks and so on.

Record Keeping

You will need to keep a record of:

- the number of people who attend each walk
- number of people who do not show up
- the topics you choose
- any feedback you receive on the topics and or the discussion
- how many walks each person attends (for the competitions)



Connecting walkers to mental health and other support services

If you find yourself in a conversation with a participant who would benefit from professional assistance, please refer them onto one of the following services:

Lifeline

24-hour telephone counselling service.

Phone: 13 11 14

Mensline Australia

A dedicated service for men with relationship and family concerns. **Phone: 1300 78 99 78**

Relationships Australia

Relationships Australia is a leading provider of relationship support services for individuals, families and communities. **Phone: 1300 364 277**

1800 Respect

A confidential service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Provides support for: people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, sexual assault, domestic or family violence and their friends, families, and support workers/professionals.

Phone 1800 737 732

beyondblue

Information and referral to relevant services for depression and anxiety related matters.

Phone: 1300 22 46 36

Headspace

Headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation - helps young people who are going through a tough time. <http://www.headspace.org.au>

Alcohol and Drug Foundation Information Service

ADF provides access to relevant, accurate and evidence-based information to assist people to make informed decisions relating to drug use, understand the consequences of drug use and participate in drug prevention efforts. **Phone: 1300 85 85 84**

National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline (ADIS)

Phone: 1800 250 015 - automatically redirects the caller to the ADIS in the state or territory you are calling from.

Whether you are having issues with alcohol or other drugs, are concerned about someone else's alcohol or other drug use, or just have general questions about alcohol or other drugs, you can call ADIS any time of the day or week for support, information, counselling and referral to services in NSW.

Who do I contact for more details?

For more information you can visit the ADF/DAT **Community Hub**

