

Making Mindfulness Easier

A Mental Health App Review by our Clinical Team



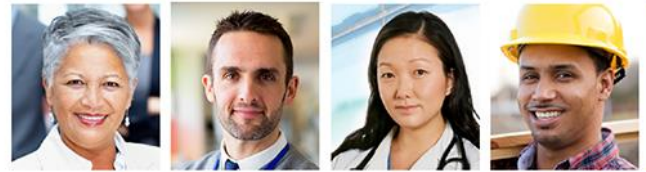
Calm Mind – Recommended (any audience)

This app focuses on four major categories of wellbeing.

1. **Wake/Sleep.** It includes a “smart” alarm clock which you place near your bed and monitors sound and motion during the night while you sleep. It then wakes you up close to a time you set when it detects you are in lighter sleep which according to the app is the best time for you to wake. For those who struggle with a restless mind at night, the app has some very good background sounds such as rain in the garden, a fire crackling or even the sound of air conditioning to allow the body and mind to focus and settle. The ability to track the quality of one’s sleep at night is actually very important to mental health as people are often unaware of their sleep quality. They may know more or less how many hours of sleep they had but may not know how peaceful or restless they were during those hours which would indicate whether they reached the deeper levels of sleep required for good mental health.
2. **Relax.** This is just a timed session which provides background sounds and helps you become more focused and mindful.
3. **Meditate.** The app has both guided (paid) and unguided (free) sessions and encourages the user to undertake a few meditation challenges. This is useful for those who enjoy being goal-directed and may energise people who are struggling with anxiety or depression into taking a health challenge to implement meditation which has proven to help increase serotonin levels.
4. **Breathing.** Teaches the user a few recommended breathing techniques and uses a timer for each “breathing session”.

The app and some of its basic features are free, however, the user has to pay for additional content.





Headspace – Highly Recommended (younger audience)

The Headspace app is geared more towards a younger age cohort and integrates social media into the app. It has a five-star rating on iTunes and has over 66 000 reviews. The app provides hundreds of guided meditations; which focus on several different topics with a new topic every day. The app also features sleep sounds; tutorial animations; a meditation progress tracker; and exercises that are designed for children. This is a highly recommended app for children and teenagers struggling with anxiety and/or depression.

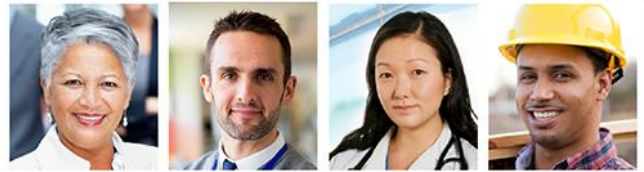
Unwinding Anxiety – Highly Recommended (older audience)

Unwinding Anxiety is a mental wellness app that aims to help the user control their anxiety. The app features daily exercises that the user can complete across 30 different modules. Other features include video and audio recordings for each lesson and an online journal where users can collect; analyse and manage their progress. The app uses evidence-based tools to help the individual if they are immediately experiencing stress or anxiety, cravings, strong emotions etc. This is where we see the greatest strength of apps in mental health as individuals will not always have someone to talk to or want to talk to someone in the moment of their stress, anxiety or depression but they are much more likely to privately engage with an app which can help them change their emotional state much quicker than booking or attending counselling. This is not to say it would replace counselling but would be a significant complementary tool. The goal of any good therapist should be not for clients to rely on them for their mental health and wellbeing but to provide them with the “tools” to help themselves and build their resiliency skills over time.

The free trial provides access to 4 video modules, behaviour change tools including a stress test and stress meter, daily mindfulness and guided meditations.

The app is intuitive and acknowledges that some may want to jump right into a technique or they may prefer to take it slowly and really understand their stress or anxiety. The app has been created by a clinical research scientist, neurologist and psychiatrist – Justin Brewer. He is also a practitioner with over 30 years of mindfulness experience. It also includes an online community and a live weekly discussion with the full version.





Headgear – Recommended (created by The Black Dog Institute)

This is an Australian created app which, from the outset, acknowledges that although the app has been proven to help wellbeing for those in a “working populations” it does not replace getting the right help and support from professionals. It is a mental fitness app that focuses on mental health. It features a mood tracker; a toolbox with breathing and thinking activities; and a 30-day challenge where the user completes daily mindfulness and behavioural exercises.

One useful proven technique which is included as is often used as part of a therapeutic process is to quickly jot down something that is currently bothering you and then either “dump” it or you “delay” it to a set time on a particular day and time when you will look at the thought in more detail. This can be a very useful adjunct to help people who are using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to take these delayed daily thoughts and then put them through the CBT process to help them gain a greater perspective on the stressful thought.

Other features include mood history which is a useful tool to keep track our daily, weekly and monthly moods, quote of the day and the ability to contact Beyond Blue for further support.

Daily Yoga – Recommended

Yoga is one of the few combined physical, mental and emotional tools which has consistently been proven over time (other than cardiovascular training) to increase mental health and wellbeing when practiced on a regular basis. The app is easy to use and provides 7 free short videos on basic yoga poses and breathing exercises. As with most of the apps, to access the full programme requires payment, this includes full access to the Yoga modules as well as others on staying healthy, losing weight and improving muscle tone. There are however additional free features such as articles on yoga tips and topics which are very useful for those wanting to understand Yoga practice in greater depth. It also includes a handy strength and flexibility test to assess where you are starting from which enables you to observe changes and improvements over time.

For more Information

For enquiries please call Newport and Wildman on **1800 650 204** or email admin@newportwildman.com

