

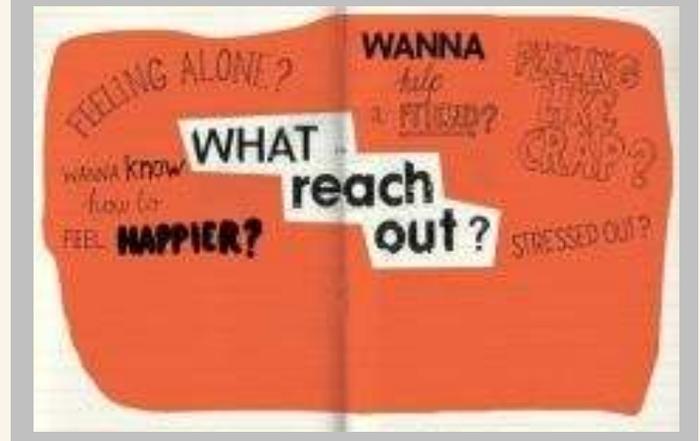
REACH OUT

AN INITIATIVE OF INSPIRE FOUNDATION

Reach Out! is a web-based service that builds skills and provides information and support to help improve young people's mental health and wellbeing. The service has been developed for young people aged 14 to 26 and aims to increase mental health literacy, resilience and help seeking

WHAT IS REACH OUT.COM

Reach Out is an Australian support service which was officially launched in 1998 after two years of preparation and fundraising. After his cousin's suicide, Jack Heath created the Inspire Foundation in 1996. It is a non-government organization funded by public cooperation partnerships and private body grants as well as donations. Reach Out is an initiative of the Inspire Foundation with its mission to "help millions of young people lead happier lives". The Reach Out campaigns has sponsorship from various individuals such as Pro surfer Luke Steadman and Catherine Freeman. The Inspire Foundation continues to operate Reach Out in parallel to its more recent ActNow site. Reach Out is a major element in the Inspire Foundation's Year 2010 vision of making "a global contribution to young people's mental health and wellbeing, with every young Australian aged 14-25 knowing, trusting and using Inspire's programs when they need to". The predominant target audience of the Reach Out initiative is the teenage and young adult ages from between 14 and 24. Three main objectives of Reach Out are to increase: mental health literacy, help seeking behaviour and resilience amongst young people aged 14-26 years. Reach Out splits its aims into three main sections – Find: provides articles, facts and personal stories on a variety of mental health issues. Explore: A self evaluation tool under development for young people to assess their feelings. Connect: An online space where the Reach Out user community can share their experiences and thoughts.



REACH OUT & HEALTH PROMOTION

Lifestyle and Behavioural Approach

Reach Out and the Inspire Foundation are involved in the promotion of health as a community group and non-profit organisation in Australia and other countries around the world. Health promotion in the lifestyle and behavioural approach involves providing relevant information for the community related to individual behaviour. Reach Out has achieved such health promotion standards in the instance of detailed fact sheets and stories, free information and support for persons affected or wanting to know more about topics such as mental health, sexual health, drugs and alcohol etc. For example, Reach Out's Mental Health Difficulties section has in depth resources about: anxiety, self-harm, depression, suicide and other disorders. Through Reach Out's use of personal stories available on the Reach Out website, it has used social marketing to impact upon individual's behaviours and to demonstrate empathy for the person in such circumstances.

Public Health Approach

Reach Out is regularly updated with current trends in youth culture and modern society. Inspire and Reach Out has adopted most of the World Health Organisation's principles in matters of health and health promotion including the 1986 Ottawa Charter. Reach Out recognises the different factors that impact health. For example, Reach Out has information for both people suffering from depression and suicidal feelings along with information for dealing with such people. Detailed advice and materials have been provided for areas including Managing Independence. Information about support services such as CentreLink, credit card and gambling help are readily available online and in person through Reach Out. A good instance where Reach Out has applied the public health approach is found the credit card and debt factsheet advising young people on financial issues and assistance services.



RO POSITIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES

Reach Out has over 200,000 unique visitors each month and over the past 12-13 years has accounted for nearly 8 million hits to its web services. A survey conducted in 2008 has found that most users accept and trust the resources offered by Reach Out. Several key areas in which Reach Out has achieved positive health outcomes are: Mental Health Literacy and Help Seeking Behaviours.

Mental Health Literacy

A majority of Reach Out users indicated that through the website they had learnt more about mental health issues overall wellbeing and as a result, they were better able to understand other peoples' experiences. The health literacy aspect of Reach Out led to increased knowledge of where to get help through professional doctors and services such as psychologists.

Help Seeking

As a result of visiting the Reach Out website over 4 people out of 5 discussed their circumstances with another person. Around 70% of all Reach Out users shared their experiences with a friend and half of all participants talked to a family member. A study and report into Reach Out users carried out in 2007-2008 found that there had been an increase of 33% in young people seeking professional assistance in relation to their mental health. Reach Out has also highlighted in its recent survey that the negative stereotype associated with issues such as mental health, has been substantially dropping over the past 5 years.

ADVERTISING STRATEGIES

As Reach Out targets predominately young people between the ages of 14 and 26, there is a wide range of communication tools accessible to this age group. Technology especially the internet is frequently used by young people and teenagers and through Reach Out being an online service; it has taken advantage of the vast audience available already on the internet. Reach Out has a blog, forum and community pages on its website: www.au.reachout.com. The Reachout.com forums aim to be safe space where young people are able to connect with other young people who have similar issues and discuss these issues in a positive way. Apart from its website, Reach Out also operates a Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ReachOutAUS. Currently Reach Out is using Facebook and competitions to promote its organisations and initiatives. Social media including social networking on Facebook and clips on YouTube www.youtube.com/user/ReachOutAus have allowed young people to connect with Reach Out services and information from their own homes within their comfort zones. Reach Out's use of web marketing such as Twitter http://twitter.com/Reachout_Aus has enabled it to be easily accessible to young people. Reach Out has plans to expand its advertising to television commercials if funds are adequate.

**REACH
OUT.COM**

Help yourself
Get the facts you need to help you get through tough times.

Help a mate
Learn about what you can do to help a mate in need.

Get connected
Join the community, write a blog, and get talking in the forums.

Inspire
Inspiring young people
AN INITIATIVE OF THE INSPIRE FOUNDATION