  
**Tools for Keeping Connected**

## Open Arms

*Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling* offers self-help tools on their website ([**www.openarms.gov.au**](http://www.openarms.gov.au)). Two of these are particularly relevant to this years’ theme of Keep Connected. These tools can be printed and used at your VHW event.

#### Tool 1: Social Connections

One self-help tool provided by Open Arms is *Social Connections* which guides users through a series of prompts to help recognise their existing social connections and identify goals to fill gaps. The tool then compiles these goals into an action plan document for users. The tool can be found at: [**https://www.openarms.gov.au/get-support/self-help-tools/show-all-tools/behaviours/social-connections**](https://www.openarms.gov.au/get-support/self-help-tools/show-all-tools/behaviours/social-connections)

Alternatively, event organisers can use the below excerpts of the first stages of the tool to prompt conversations about social connections.

#### Tool 2: Enjoyable and rewarding activities

Another self-help tool provided by Open Arms is *Enjoyable and rewarding activities* which provides users with a list to identify possible activities of interest. The tool then prompts the user to create an action plan for these activities and compiles this information into a document. The tool can be found at: [**https://www.openarms.gov.au/get-support/self-help-tools/show-all-tools/behaviours/enjoyable-and-rewarding-activities**](https://www.openarms.gov.au/get-support/self-help-tools/show-all-tools/behaviours/enjoyable-and-rewarding-activities)

Alternatively, event organisers can use the activities list included below to prompt conversations about social connections through enjoyable and rewarding activities.

##### **Open Arms – Social Connections Map**

There are many ways to connect with other people. Completing the map will help you recognize the important connections you already have, and fill in any gaps.

**People I can share my experiences with:**

**People to spend time with:**

**Important relationships I’d like to strengthen:**

**People who can help with advice:**

**People who can help with practical things:**

**People who I can support and help:**

Social connections could include:

* **family and friends**: husband or wife, partner, friends, parents, kids
* **community**: neighbours, colleagues, community organisations
* **professional supports**: GP, psychologist, counsellor or social worker
* **defence community**: ex-service organisations, ADF supports such as medical, welfare or division officer or your ADF chain of command

##### **Open Arms – Social Connection Goals**

There are lots of activities you can do to help strengthen your social connections. Select up to three activities you would like to do over the next week.

ask someone for advice

attend a lecture or talk

buy someone a gift

do some DIY

do some gardening

do a group training session

do some volunteer work

fix up a community building

go camping

go fishing

go for a drive

go for a walk

go for a run or ride

go swimming

go to a gig

go to a health club or gym

go to a party

go to the beach

go to the movies

go to a sports match

have a BBQ or picnic

help in a fundraiser

invite someone for a catch up

meet someone for coffee/lunch

join a club

kick a football or play tennis

learn a hobby

look after a friend's children

plan a trip

play card games

prepare a new or special meal

send someone an email or text

talk to a professional

talk on the phone or Skype

talk to someone about recent experiences

try out a new sport or activity

visit someone who is unwell or alone

walk the dog

try out a new bar or restaurant

##### **Open Arms – Enjoyable and Rewarding Activities List**

There are lots of options for getting active. Select up to three of these activities to focus on over the next week.

buy something for yourself

card games

catch up with someone

coffee/lunch with someone

concert, gig or show

clean the car

create a budget

decorate the house

draw or paint

drive somewhere new

DIY jobs

fishing

fundraising

gardening

go to the beach

go camping

group training session

join a club

have a BBQ or picnic

health club or gym

hiking or bush walking

indoor climbing wall

interesting lecture or talk

kick a football around

learn a hobby

listen to music

movies

new sport or activity

pay the bills

play an instrument

prepare a new or special meal

plan a trip

read a book or the paper

run or bike ride

swim in ocean or pool

surfing, paddle boarding or kayaking

team sport

train for a marathon or triathlon

visit someone unwell

volunteer work

try out a new bar or restaurant

walk the dog

walk

watch a sports match

weight training

weekly shop

work course or qualification