

Growing —WELL—

A MENTAL STATE ASSESSMENT WEB-BASED APP



Being
Healthy



Being
Connected



Being
Satisfied



Being
Active



Being
Organised



Booklet

Activities Booklet

'This is not only a Mental State Examination (MSE) tool for professionals—it is also a self-assessment tool. Empowering people to actively engage with their own mental health is one of this app's greatest strengths.'



St Luke's
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Resources

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Welcome to *Growing Well* web-based app

Growing Well is a simple, versatile web-based app for assessing up to 50 aspects of our mental health and wellbeing. Using the universally-understood technique of scaling, this tool belongs in the hands of every mental health professional, social worker, counsellor, psychologist, and others who support the health and wellbeing of young people or adults. *Growing Well* is not only a Mental State Examination (MSE) tool for professionals—it is also a self-assessment tool. Empowering people to actively engage with their own mental health is one of this app's greatest strengths. Arising out of evidence-based research (see p. 5), the *Growing Well App* is built around five key indicators of mental health: Being Organised, Being Satisfied, Being Healthy, Being Connected and Being Active. This app also incorporates the renowned 'Five-Column' technique from strengths-based practice.

Features of the *Growing Well App*

- **Use** on computers, phones and tablets
- **Type** name, date and reference number (optional)
- **Consider** 5 domains of mental health: Being Organised; Being Satisfied; Being Healthy; Being Connected; and Being Active
- **Explore** each domain further using 10 simple statements—that's 50 aspects of our lives we can assess for mental wellbeing.
- **Slide** the scaling tool from 1-10 to rate how you are doing
- **Use** the 'Five-Column' technique to describe: The Issue; Future Picture; Strengths/Resources/Exceptions; Constraints; and Next Steps.
- **Record** your comments in the text box under each heading
- **Capture** snapshots of the conversation by saving as a PDF anytime
- **Share, print or clear** the record anytime
- **Attach and send** via email
- **Save** as a PDF directly into service folders and records.

Who is this app for?

This resource is for: mental health professionals, family workers, youth workers, counsellors, psychologists, hospitals, doctors, school nurses and wellbeing staff, life coaches, mentors, and anyone who wants to monitor their own mental health and wellbeing.

What is scaling?

Scaling is a simple, highly visual and easily understood way of measuring and evaluating anything. Look around and you will see scaling being used in countless ways every day. The side of a hospital might show a big temperature gauge to measure how fundraising is going for new equipment; a sign alerting people to bush fire conditions might show an arrow pointing to somewhere on an arc, a project management system might show a percentage of completion, and every student knows only too well the various scales used to measure success in an exam or course. The simplest scale, and one that is universally-understood, regardless of language or culture, is a line combined with a spread of numbers along its length. In the *Growing Well App*, we have used a numerical scale of 0-10.

How is scaling used in this app?

Because it is familiar and visual, scaling is a very accessible and effective tool for use in therapeutic work. Using a sliding scale from 0-10 *Growing Well* enables a person to assess where they are at with a range of very practical things like sleep, food, housing, relationships, risk-taking, thoughts, emotions, decision-making, balance, taking medication, making and keeping appointments, exercise, employment—even how we are doing managing boredom and our relationships with neighbours. Using a scale, a person can communicate, without the need for many words, how they are doing, where things are at, how far they've come, and how much further to go. Scaling can also be used for noticing what works, what helps and what hinders. It can help identify next steps and milestones along the way. It can measure the ups and downs and help us become more aware of our patterns and triggers. It can help a professional know how you did between appointments. When used in strengths-based, respectful and encouraging way, scaling can help build awareness, skill and motivation—key ingredients of sustainable change. (See page 6 for more on the strengths approach).



What are the 5 domains and the 10 statements in each?

On the home page of the app you will find buttons for the 5 domains. These are key areas or indicators of mental health. Click on each button to find the 10 statements in each domain and the scaling tool. That means this app has 50 different aspects of our lives that we can scale in terms of our wellbeing!



Being Healthy



I stay healthy by:

- eating well • sleeping well • thinking clearly • noticing change
- asking for help when I need it • having an emergency plan
- understanding my medication • maintaining my medication
- managing unwelcome thoughts • maintaining balance in my life



Being Connected

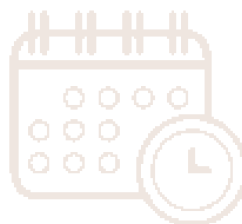


I am comfortable in my relationships with:

- people I live with • my family • my neighbours • my friends • people I see regularly
- people who share my interests and values • key professionals • people who understand me
- people who trust me • people I trust



Being Organised



I am organised in:

- making appointments • keeping appointments • managing my money
- achieving what I want • my daily living tasks • my work • my leisure activities
- looking after myself • getting around • planning ahead

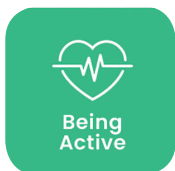


Being Satisfied



I am satisfied with:

- myself • my friendships • my ability to change • my ability to make decisions
- how I stay safe • how I take risks • where I live
- my sense of purpose and meaning • my goals in life • the progress I am making



Being Active



I stay active by:

- exercising my body • exercising my mind • being creative • doing things by myself
- doing things with others • managing boredom • managing loneliness
- managing my feelings • learning new things • doing things I enjoy

What is the evidence base for this app?

Margaret Brooks and Phil Eddy, mental health professionals and former managers from St Luke's Anglicare (now part of Anglicare Victoria), initiated a collaborative, strengths-based research project with La Trobe University (in Bendigo, Australia) called the 'Mental Health Recovery Project' from August 2001 to August 2002, with the oversight of a critical reference group including clients, carers, clinicians and the then Department of Human Services. The project report was completed by Fiona Gardner, Jennifer Lehmann and Grace Brown with research assistance from Caitlyn Lehmann. Key indicators of mental health emerged consistently from the literature, focus groups and activities associated with the research project. Russell Deal, creative director of St Luke's Innovative Resources at the time, led the publishing team in translating this research into the domains and statements that appear in the *Growing Well* cards, pads and app.

What is ‘strengths-based, solution-focused’ practice?

Strengths-based practice is built on the understanding that everyone has strengths and resources, and by building on these we are better able to grow, learn and tackle difficulties. At the heart of this approach is ‘power-with’ rather than a top-down, prescriptive, ‘power-over’ relationship with people delivering services. Solution-focused practitioners believe that positive change is more likely to arise out of focussing on where we are heading rather than on problems and deficits. In this approach, the conversation also explores what is going well, what is happening when the problem is absent or less dominant, and what the person values and wants. For a comprehensive text on the strengths approach, see [*The Strengths Approach*](#) by Wayne McCashen, published by St Luke’s Innovative Resources in 2017.

As well as scaling, what is the ‘Five-Column tool’ used in this app?

One of the simplest yet most effective tools to emerge out of the strengths approach is the ‘Five-Column’ technique. This tool is incorporated into the app using the following five headings (with a text box beneath each one) to record notes:

Issue – What is happening?

Future picture – Hopes and goals

Strengths, resources & exceptions — to the problem

Constraints – What gets in the way?

Next Steps — Where to from here?

You can choose to focus on any of the domains or statements that seem particularly relevant to the mental health and wellbeing of the person using the tool. The Five-Column tool guides you to ask about what is happening now in this area, how the person would ideally like things to be, what strengths and resources might help, what’s getting in the way and what the next steps are. This five-step process provides a guide for the conversation. In this way, greater clarity and next steps can begin to emerge. Using the app you can save as a PDF with the person’s name and date. You can email the PDF to the person or to your office, or save directly into service files. You can also revisit the column tool at any time to scale again, compare and see what has changed. In this way a record of the work can be created.

What should I consider before using this app with others?

As a strengths-based mental health assessment tool, *Growing Well* should only be used with the consent of the person who will be using it. Here are some questions to consider:

- How comfortable is the person with technology? Are they familiar and comfortable using an app?
- Will the person be using the app themselves or will they be using it when they are with the practitioner?
- If the person is comfortable using electronic devices, and has a suitable device of their own, have you considered setting up a subscription for them so they can access the app at home?
- Whether the app is being used in a professional office setting, at a café meeting, or at home, is the physical environment comfortable, private and safe?
- Can the conversation proceed at the person's pace?
- What is the person's concentration span like?
- Do they have the confidence to ask for a break or to end the session, if they want to?
- Can the person progress through the app in their own way?
- Can they decide which domains and topics they want to talk about and in what sequence?
- Can the person do their own recording in the text boxes?
- When might they do this by themselves, and when might it be done with a carer or worker present?
- Is it ever appropriate for a professional to complete the scales without the person being present?
- When is it appropriate to challenge someone's perception, reframe or offer an alternative opinion?
- How frequently should the *Growing Well App* be used?
- If the person is using the app at home, will the person save and keep their own *Growing Well* record?
- Will they email it to the professional or agency?
- If the practitioner is using the app with the person during sessions, will they email or print files to the person so they have a personal copy?
- What are the most useful questions to ask at the end of using the *Growing Well App*?
- How will you evaluate what worked and what you might want to do differently?

Thirty Ideas For Using This App

Here are some suggestions to spark your imagination:

- Spend time showing the person through the app at a pace that works for them. Give them time to play and get to know the features, if they would like to do that.
- If appropriate, invite them to type in their name and date, click buttons, experiment with sliding the scales, make notes in the text boxes, navigate back to the home page. If it is not overwhelming for them, show them how to save and send.
- When you and the person are ready to begin using the app, look together once again at the 5 domains on the home page: Being Organised, Being Satisfied, Being Healthy, Being Connected and Being Active.
- Point out the different colours and symbols for each domain.
- Let them know that these are the areas of life that many people say are key indicators of mental health i.e. how we are feeling often shows up in these areas—sometimes before we even realise that our mental wellbeing is under pressure. You can ask questions such as:
 - When you are feeling well, which of these areas do you notice working in particular?
 - When things are not going so well, do you notice one of these areas being affected in particular? If so, what happens?
 - Would you like to focus on that domain a bit more now?
 - Or, is there another domain you would like to focus on right now?
 - Or, we can rotate around each of the domains, if you like.
- Once a domain is chosen as a place to begin—invite the person to click on the icon. The next screen will reveal the 10 statements in this domain. Read through the 10 statements together.
- Would you like to ‘have a go’ at scaling where you are at with each of the 10 statements? (Make sure the person knows there is no place they ‘should’ be on the scale. This is about noticing, being curious and getting to know ourselves so we can take care of our mental health more skillfully and get help when we need it.)
- Together, notice and discuss the scales that are lower and the ones that are higher.

- Which of the 10 statements are strong indicators of how you are doing?
- Which statements name things that come naturally to you?
- Which ones can you continue to do, even when you are unwell?
- Which ones do you find challenging, even when you are well?
- Do any become particularly difficult when you are unwell?
- Which scales do you notice going down first when your mental health is under pressure?
- Do some take a while to go down?
- Which ones go up first when you are becoming well again?
- Can you pick 2 or 3 that are high priorities for us to focus on at the moment?
- What causes the scale to go up or down in these areas of your life? For example, what is the effect of getting some rest, going to a family occasion, making an appointment, having to meet a deadline, stopping or starting medication.
- Which statements name things you are confident to work on by yourself and which ones could you use some help with?
- What might it take to move up a point or even half a point in these scales?
- What simple steps could you take today, tomorrow or next week?
- Go through each of the 5 domains and choose 2-5 statements from each that mean 'recovery' or 'being well' to you.
- Could you use these to help create a mental health plan?
- Any of the domains or statements can be used at any time for journalling, creative writing, making collages, drawing, painting, photography, researching quotes, song lyrics, creating music and so on.
- Ask the person to pick a domain they feel is particularly significant in their mental health. Invite them to scale all (or some) of the statements in this domain at regular intervals. If the person is able to use the app independently, you can set up a subscription for them so they can use it on their devices at home. They can scale the selected statements as often as they want—it could be daily, or once or twice a week, or before their next session with you. If the file is saved each time with the date (and if desired, brief notes in the text boxes), changes can be noticed over time, along with what made a difference either positively or negatively. The saved PDFs can be emailed at any time. In this way the person can share scales with the practitioner between sessions, if desired.

If for any reason the digital app is not suitable, please remember that *Growing Well* is also available as hard copy cards and tear-off pads.

Please see www.innovativeresources.org/resources/cardsets/GrowingWell



62 Collins Street Kangaroo Flat
Victoria 3555 Australia
p: + 61 3 5446 0500 f: +61 3 5447 2099
e: info@innovativeresources.org
w: innovativeresources.org

ABN: 97 397 067 466
Anglicare Victoria trading as St Luke's Innovative Resources

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St Luke's Innovative Resources acknowledges the Jaara people of Dja Dja Wurrung country, the traditional custodians of the land upon which our premises are located and where our resources are developed and published. We pay our respects to the elders—past, present and emerging—for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and other First Nations peoples. We must remember that underneath this earth, upon which we so firmly stand, this is, was and always will be, the traditional land of First Nations peoples.

Growing **—WELL—**

WEB BASED APP

Here is a simple, versatile tool for assessing mental health and wellbeing using the simple, universally-understood technique of scaling, and the 'Five Column' tool from strengths-based practice. *Growing Well* is not only a Mental State Examination (MSE) tool for professionals—it is also a self-assessment tool. Empowering people to actively engage with their own mental health is one of this tool's greatest strengths.

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