

# Embracing Positive Choices

## Employee Health & Wellbeing Program

The wellbeing of staff and volunteers is paramount to a happy, healthy and productive organisation and as such, EPC is dedicated to providing a range of activities that will benefit both mental and physical health (and are also fun!). We have sought ideas and feedback from staff and are happy to continue to change and evolve the program as we go along. This is your program so get involved, keep healthy and feel free to provide feedback.



# Flow Through Yoga

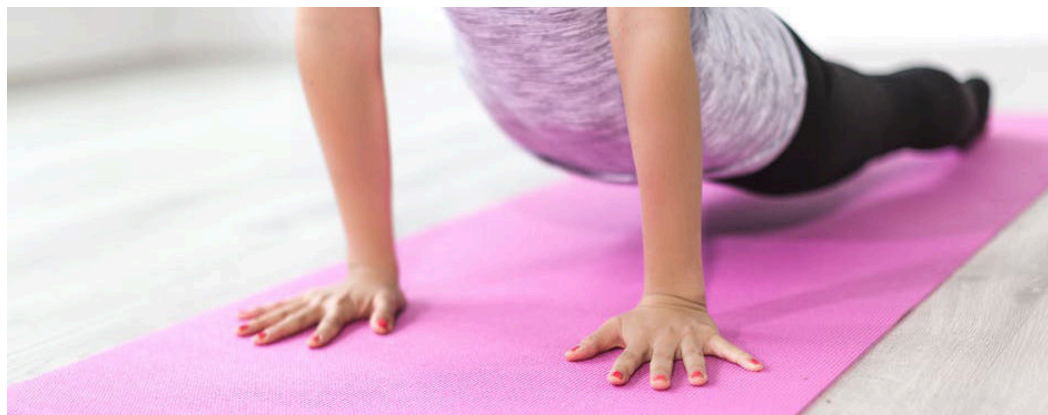
Yoga is an ancient Indian philosophy that dates back thousands of years. It was designed as a path to spiritual enlightenment, but in modern times, the physical aspects of yoga have found huge popularity as a gentle form of exercise and stress management. There are many different varieties of yoga, but each one essentially relies on structured poses (asanas) practiced with breath awareness.

Researchers have discovered that the regular practice of yoga may produce many health benefits, including increased fitness and normalisation of blood pressure. Yoga is a renowned antidote to stress. Over time, yoga practitioners report lower levels of stress, and increased feelings of happiness and wellbeing. This is because concentrating on the postures and the breath acts as a form of meditation.

The classical techniques of yoga date back more than 5,000 years. The practice of yoga encourages effort, intelligence, accuracy, thoroughness, commitment and dedication. The word yoga means 'to join or yoke together'. It brings your body and mind together, and is built on three main elements – exercise, breathing and meditation.

When practiced regularly, yoga can become a powerful and sophisticated discipline for achieving physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

**Please see the intranet for an updated list of dates, times and costs.**



# Exercise with No Regrets

Want to feel better, have more energy and even add years to your life? Just exercise. The health benefits of regular exercise and physical activity are hard to ignore. Everyone benefits from exercise, regardless of age, sex or physical ability. Need more convincing to get moving?

## **1. Exercise controls weight**

Exercise can help prevent excess weight gain or help maintain weight loss. When you engage in physical activity, you burn calories. The more intense the activity, the more calories you burn.

Regular trips to the gym are great, but don't worry if you can't find a large chunk of time to exercise every day. To reap the benefits of exercise, just get more active throughout your day — take the stairs instead of the elevator or rev up your household chores. Consistency is key.

## **2. Exercise combats health conditions and diseases**

Worried about heart disease? Hoping to prevent high blood pressure? No matter what your current weight, being active boosts high-density lipoprotein (HDL), or “good,” cholesterol and decreases unhealthy triglycerides. This one-two punch keeps your blood flowing smoothly, which decreases your risk of cardiovascular diseases. Regular exercise helps prevent or manage a wide range of health problems and concerns, including stroke, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, depression, a number of types of cancer, arthritis and falls.

## **3. Exercise improves mood**

Need an emotional lift? Or need to blow off some steam after a stressful day? A gym session or brisk 30-minute walk can help. Physical activity stimulates various brain chemicals that may leave you feeling happier and more relaxed. You may also feel better about your appearance & yourself when you exercise regularly, which can boost your confidence & improve your self-esteem.

## **4. Exercise boosts energy**

Winded by grocery shopping or household chores? Regular physical activity can improve your muscle strength and boost your endurance. Exercise delivers oxygen and nutrients to your tissues and helps your cardiovascular system work more efficiently. And when your heart and lung health improve, you have more energy to tackle daily chores.

**EPC has teamed up with No Regrets Personal Training studio which is just 300m from our office in Redland Road.**

**Please see the intranet for the list of dates, times and costs.**

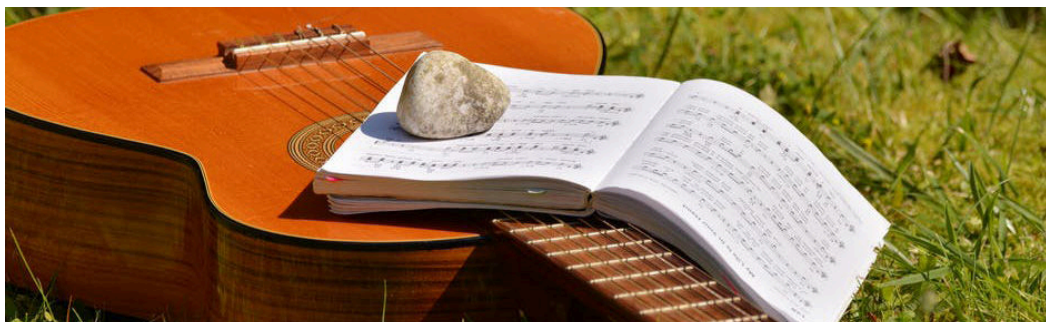
# Sirens of Song - EPC Choir

The act of singing together has many physical, mental and emotional benefits. Research into the physical and mental benefits of singing shows improvements in immunity and breath support, increased production of endorphins (hormones related to pleasure), oxytocin (hormone that increases trust and bonding, and decreases anxiety), along with decreases in cortisol (stress hormone).

Emotional benefits also include an increased sense of fun, morale and connection with others, emotional wellbeing, and self-expression.

The EPC Choir is run by Alison Mapleson (music therapist) and held every 2nd Wednesday from 5.00pm to 5.45pm at Mitcham.

**Please see the intranet for an updated list of dates and times.**



## Years of Service Awards

Each staff member will have a congratulations morning tea on or as close to their anniversary date as possible where they will be presented with a commemorative badge/pin by the CEO (or representative) and will also receive a certificate – presented at the Annual General Meeting.



# Evergreen Plant Collective

Recent research has shown that indoor plants significantly improve a whole range of aspects of our indoor environment. The benefits cover a spectrum from physically cleaner air to direct beneficial effects on psychological health, task performance, illness reduction and productivity.

These findings are important as in Australia over 80% of us live in urban areas and spend an amazing 90% of our time indoors, so the quality of the indoor environment is crucial to our wellbeing. Plants play a vital role in providing a pleasant and tranquil environment in which to move, work or relax. Indoor plants can also help health, wellbeing and productivity in the workplace. Evidence from scientific studies show that indoor plants reduce toxins in the air and from indoor products such as paint, plastics and carpets

## Research shows that indoor plants help to:

- Reduce noise
- Improve well being
- Improve indoor air quality
- Contribute to fulfilling at least 75% of Indoor Environmental Quality (IEQ) Criteria
- Improve productivity and performance
- Improve business image
- Reduce sick building syndrome
- Lower negative feelings
- Lower stress

This program involves the purchase and placement of plants in common areas such as on top of the tambours, in the kitchen and in waiting areas. If a staff member would like a plant at their desk or in their office (and they are able to make sufficient room) they may request a plant from the Evergreen Plant Collective by emailing [rpratt@epc.asn.au](mailto:rpratt@epc.asn.au).

Plants are supplied by EPC and purchased from a nursery that specialise in indoor office plants where growth will be slow, bugs eliminated and they will have the highest health benefit possible. Care of the plants will be fully taken care of by two wonderful volunteers who will visit weekly ensuring plants are trimmed, watered, fed and looked after appropriately – no need for you to do anything!



# Mental Health Support

EPC provides an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or counselling service that is free to staff through LifeWorks.

## **What does the EAP mean for you?**

Your Employee Assistance Program allows you to feel comfortable knowing that you or your immediate family members can confidentially discuss any work or personal issues that are an inevitable part of life.

## **What can the EAP assist you with?**

LifeWorks will help you to identify, explore and manage any issues impacting your life, which can include:

- Conflict and communication
- Maximising performance
- Depression, anxiety and stress
- Relationship and marital problems
- Children or family member concerns
- Grief and bereavement
- Elder care issues
- Addictions
- Career path issues
- Retirement
- Work life balance
- Work stress

## **EPC also provides access to the LifeWorks site called Livewell.**

This site is a member resource designed to help you to enhance your positive mental health, resiliency and work life balance. It provides confidential access to professional care, self-help programs, interactive tools and educational resources to help with life's changes and challenges.

## **Through Livewell, you can also:**

- Request an EAP appointment - this allows employees and their families to use an online service without having to call our National Contact Centre.
- Access our extensive eLibrary - online factsheets and programs that provide guidance, advice and information on health and wellbeing topics with links to additional resources.
- Use our Health and Wellbeing calculators - to help individuals stay healthy.
- Self-screen for potential issues - to privately self-screen for issues such as anxiety.
- Email a LifeWorks clinician - their Ask the Psychologist service provides another flexible way to interact with our counsellors.
- Use our question and answer facility, email@ssist - to access EAP-related information.
- Access Manager Hotline
- Access Ask the Expert - an email-based assistance service that provides professional advice on specific legal, finance or mortgage issues. Please note that some Ask the Expert services are charged out as part of the EAP.

## Accessing Livewell

To access Livewell log on to [www.livewell.optum.com](http://www.livewell.optum.com) and type in your company access code. **Access Code: Easternp**

The Livewell website has monthly updates and themed online help workshops, webinars and fact sheets – these will be emailed to all staff as they come out and will be posted on the company intranet.

## Head to Health

Head to Health is the result of an extensive co-design process between the Australian Department of Health, people and families with a lived experience of mental health issues, as well as mental health organisations, service providers, health professionals, and the Australian public.

Head to Health contains around 370 mental health services and resources funded by the Australian Government and staff are encouraged to use these resources in conjunction with the LifeWorks resources. Please visit <https://headtohealth.gov.au/about-us> to have a look at the great services offered here.

# Reflections Group

Join our reflections group, a nonjudgmental space of reflection and wisdom sharing to nourish our hearts, minds and spirits, enriching and giving deeper meaning to our personal and professional lives.

Throughout life we learn from so many people. We are exposed to the great ideas of others, but we are not as often asked to seek the wisdom within ourselves. To hear the wisdom of others, is a gift to you. To share your wisdom with others, is a gift to them.

Each fortnight, one member will volunteer to provide an interesting wisdom sharing activity or presentation that facilitates discussion.

**Please see the intranet for an updated list of dates and times.**

# Flu & Pertussis Vaccines

EPC provides and highly encourages all staff and volunteers to have a flu vaccine and an optional pertussis vaccine every year. Information regarding each of these can be found on the EPC Intranet and they are provided free to all, you just need to register your time and day once you receive your email notification which is sent out each year prior to the flu season starting.

## Reasons you should be vaccinated:

- The Flu is highly contagious
- Flu vaccination protects you & those you are in contact with from getting the Flu from you
- Flu can cause serious illness and being vaccinated is important to protect you
- Experts estimate that influenza in Australia causes more than 18,000 hospitalisations and 300,000 GP consultations per year.
- Studies have shown that influenza can survive for:
  - o An hour or more in the air in enclosed environments
  - o More than 8 hours on hard surfaces such as stainless steel and plastic
  - o Up to 15 minutes if transferred from tissues to hands
  - o Up to 5 minutes after transfer from the environmental surfaces
  - o One of the hardest things about stopping the spread of the flu is that people can be contagious a day before experiencing any symptoms

**When you receive your yearly email, book in, and keep yourself and those around you healthy.**





# Better Read than Dead

Reading has many benefits and a book can serve more than one useful purpose at the same time. It is a form of relaxation while at the same time it can stimulate your mind, reading can help you to feel better, books can be our teachers, mentors and supply us with inspiration.

You can learn and better your life just by reading a book, authors and good writers can take you to places and imaginary worlds where no other form of entertainment or technology can rival.

If you want to expand your consciousness and your awareness of reality, then reading is still the best way of achieving this.

**All staff are invited to bring in a book or books they have read and no longer want and swap with a book or books from the Better Read than Dead bookshelf in the staff kitchen. Please only bring in books that are in good condition and that will be of interest to others.**



## Staff Training

EPC recognises that the nature of our work (visiting clients in their homes), can bring about a certain amount of risk. Whilst some risks can be eliminated, others cannot and we can only mitigate and prepare ourselves as best we can. EPC is dedicated to providing its employees with as many tools as possible to keep them safe. Besides physical tools such as personal alarms, staff training will also be provided in the following areas:

- Dealing with aggressive behaviour
- Resilience training

This training will have some online components and some face to face training which will form part of forum days and will take place once per year for each team.

We are happy to add to this list and provide other training as requested by employees, so if you have a request or an idea for training please email the Manager HR and Communications.

# Salary Sacrificing - Maxxia

EPC uses a company called Maxxia to handle all of our employees' Salary Sacrificing needs. Please read the information below supplied by Maxxia and feel free to contact them if you need further information. Then enjoy the benefits of your extra cash!

## **Salary packaging is the smart way to maximise your income**

Salary packaging allows you to pay for expenses with money from your salary before tax is taken out. And it's permitted by the ATO.

## **How salary packaging works**

Normally tax is taken from your salary before you spend it. You then pay all your expenses and are left with the remainder.

With salary packaging, your employer pays you the same salary - but instead of paying all your expenses after you're taxed, you pay for selected expenses before you're taxed. Expenses you would be paying anyway.

So you could pay less tax and end up with more spending money.

## **What does it cost?**

We manage your salary packaging account in exchange for an administration fee, as agreed with your employer.

Additional charges may apply for some additional benefits, such as a novated lease, venue hire and Meal Entertainment.

Fees are paid out of your pre-tax dollars, and:

- Do not contribute towards any capping limit
- Do not attract FBT.

You can refer to our Salary Packaging Information Booklet for more information about fees.

## **Types of expenses you could salary package**

Expenses may include car repayments, work-related laptops, tablet computers and sometimes, mortgage and rent payments.

The types of expenses you could salary package depend on:

- Your employer
- The industry you work in.

Find out more about the types of expenses you could salary package.

**Call Maxxia on 1300 123 123.**

# Music Assisted Relaxation and Mindfulness

Declutter your brain: Self-care through relaxation and mindfulness.

All EPC staff and volunteers are invited to a fortnightly 20-minute session (as part of your lunch break ) led by Alison Mapleson (music therapist).

The session will aim to incorporate a variety of experiential self-care strategies and exercises, including music assisted relaxation and other mindfulness experiences. Come along to this session as a once-off or continuously, without the need for RSVP, though please arrive on time due to the experiential nature of the exercises.

**Please see the intranet for an updated list of dates and times.**



## Feedback

Do you have any feedback on our Embracing Positive Choices Health and Wellbeing program?

Do you have a great new idea that could be introduced?

We'd love to hear from you!  
Email Rebecca Pratt, Learning, Development and Communications Coordinator

[rpratt@epc.asn.au](mailto:rpratt@epc.asn.au)

Thank you.

