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FAITH TALK

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MY STORY

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Journeying through depression with God by my side

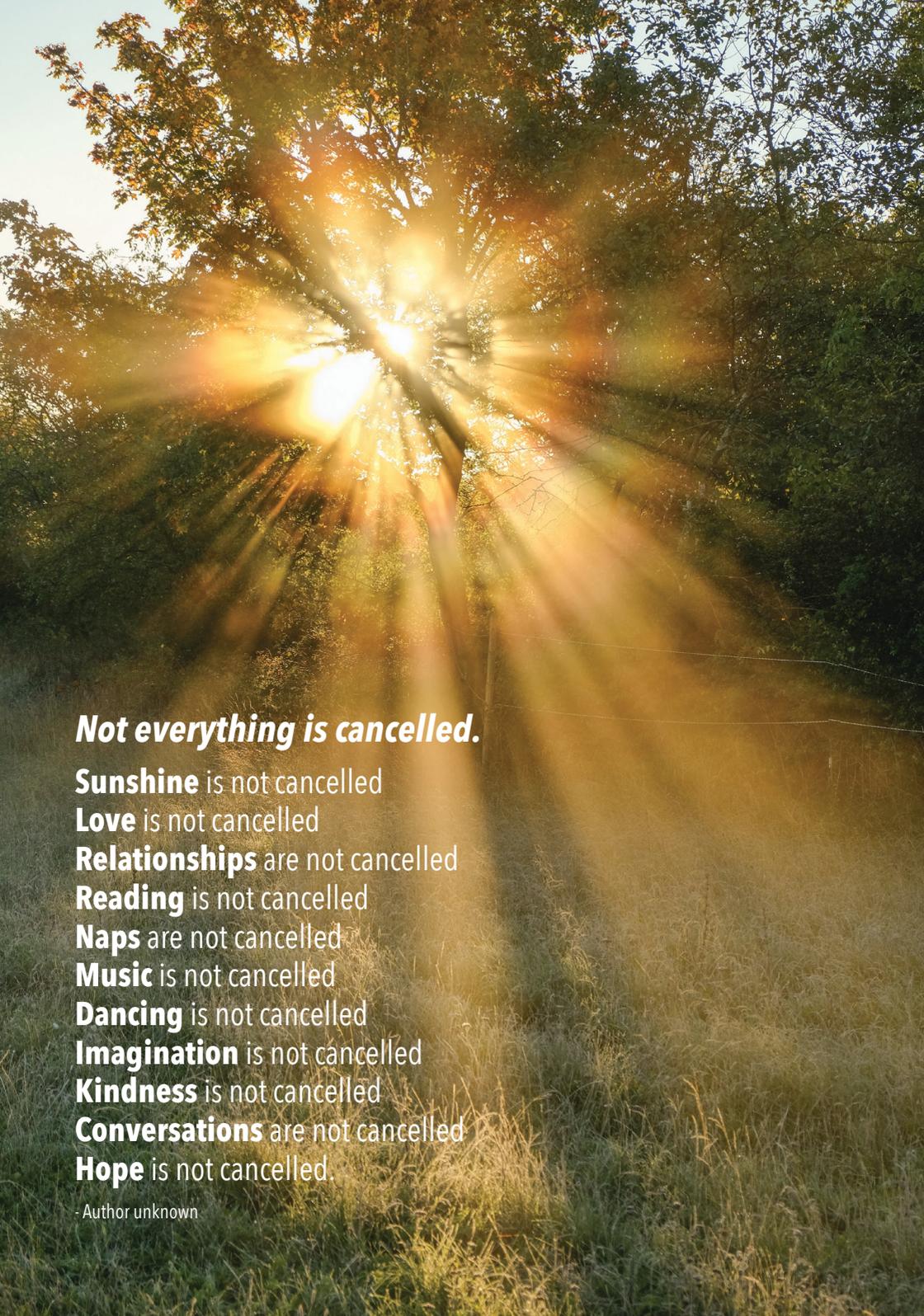
NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH MONTH



SALVOS

MAGAZINE



A photograph of a large tree with sunlight streaming through its branches, creating a bright, golden glow. The sun is positioned in the upper center, with rays of light radiating outwards. The background is filled with dense green foliage, and the foreground shows a field of tall grasses. The overall mood is warm and hopeful.

Not everything is cancelled.

Sunshine is not cancelled

Love is not cancelled

Relationships are not cancelled

Reading is not cancelled

Naps are not cancelled

Music is not cancelled

Dancing is not cancelled

Imagination is not cancelled

Kindness is not cancelled

Conversations are not cancelled

Hope is not cancelled.

- Author unknown



The Salvation Army is about giving hope where it's needed most.

What is The Salvation Army?

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church.

Vision Statement

Wherever there is hardship or injustice, Salvos will live, love and fight alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus.

Mission Statement

The Salvation Army is a Christian movement dedicated to sharing the love of Jesus by:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice

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Press date 20 September 2021

Printed and published for The Salvation Army by Commissioner Robert Donaldson at Focus Print Group, Rowville, Victoria

Some photos in this magazine were taken prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.



salvosmagazine.org.au



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Overcoming cultural barriers

[09] News

Salvos oversee seasonal worker support

[10] Faith Talk

The best news you'll ever hear

Recovery and resilience

October is National Mental Health Month. The theme for this month is Mental Health: Post Pandemic Recovery Challenges and Resilience. As the pandemic continues to impact our lives and uncertainty about what the future will look like is ongoing, we certainly need resilience on a daily basis as we navigate the challenges this brings. And all that on top of whatever else we are dealing with in our lives.

In our feature, Keryn Coombes talks about her journey through depression and how she continues to manage her struggles, with God by her side. Barry Casey takes a similar approach in Faith Talk – focusing on the never-changing good news of Christmas, despite not knowing what that season will look like this year with travel, family and get-togethers.

If we focus on the hope that the birth of Jesus brings and the joy and peace that restores a weary, grieving and troubled world, we can work through whatever lies ahead. It doesn't mean the end of worries, fears, and challenges, but it gives us the strength and resilience to continue our journey.

Simone Worthing **Assistant Editor**

Even in the dark places

Journeying through depression with God by my side

WORDS KERYN COOMBES



I can't believe that after almost 20 years, I'm still talking about the moment I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression. Why can't I believe it? Because of the one question that bothered me the most amid all the thoughts and emotions that raged through my head during my battle with mental ill-health: "Why me?"

I could never understand why I was going through such a dark journey, battling to face each day and keep my head above water. Really, nothing tragic had happened in my life to reach that point. Here I was, going through a significant mental health battle, with no more than the usual stories of a young woman discovering herself through life's twists and turns.

I felt so hard done by – not because I wanted something tragic to happen to me, but because there seemed to be no explanation for this monster that was stealing my life away.

October is National Mental Health Month in Australia. An initiative of the Mental Health Foundation Australia (MHFA), the focus is on advocating for and raising awareness of the mental health issues faced by many Australians, while promoting better mental health for all. The theme of the month is Mental Health: Post Pandemic Recovery Challenges and Resilience. Below, Keryn Coombes shares her journey with anxiety and depression and how, although she still faces challenges with her mental health, it no longer rules her life.

LONG STRUGGLE

I have had anxiety and depression since the age of 18. This illness affected my life the most between the ages of 18 and 30. I suffered both mentally and physically, and this awful, terrifying existence ruled my whole life. I refused to take the recommended medication, and I was more terrified of depending on meds than the illness itself. I self-diagnosed every single life-threatening disease that exists, and I had real physical symptoms to match. I gave up doing almost everything I loved in church and social circles because fear was raging, and fear always won.

It's funny how we decide to turn to God when we are at our absolute lowest of lows. Yet in those desperate hours, when I wholeheartedly believed I was on the brink of death, I cried out to God and begged him to heal me. That's how it started. Every time I had a panic attack, I started to call on God. I would pray, asking him to draw me close to him and remove the fear. I became convinced that if I stayed as close to God as possible, fear would eventually flee.

I remember getting angry with God because I was tired of dealing with this darkness. I remember laughing with God when he continued to provide me with opportunities to stretch my confidence. I had begun walking in a constant relationship with him, sensing him working in my life.

I knew that God wanted more of my life in church ministry, but I made many plans to make sure that would never happen. Everything came to the surface as I reluctantly attended a youth camp as a leader. I was encouraged to offer full surrender in his presence as I sat completely broken and confused about why God had not released me from these agonising chains.

HEALING

I believe I was healed that night because mental ill-health no longer rules my life. It's not absent completely – I still have some battles. But I know God, I know myself, and I know my relationship with him is strong.

After two decades of suffering from mental ill-health, I know that God has given me a story for a reason. Without my suffering, I wouldn't know my God or even myself intimately. I wouldn't understand my purpose. I wouldn't relate to the suffering in my community, and I wouldn't have the compassion to walk alongside others.

I no longer ask, "Why me?" Instead, I say, "Use me", and see what God leads me to next. Even in the dark places, God has been so good to me. Who wouldn't spend their lives devoted to sharing that story?

Lieutenant Keryn Coombes is a Salvation Army officer (pastor) in Victoria.



Scan here for more on mental health.



Keryn is a Salvation Army officer (pastor) in Victoria, working with her husband, Aaron. Photo courtesy Colac Herald.

Dit leads by example in the CALD community

Overcoming cultural barriers to keep everyone safe

WORDS JESSICA MORRIS

When Captain Dit Chokeun came to Australia in 2005, he was ready to make a home for his family.

Fleeing South Sudan years earlier, Dit was struck by the individual way Aussies navigated life and conflict. After all, in Sudanese culture, community is everything.

Sixteen years later, Dit spends his days helping his South Sudanese brothers and sisters at The Salvation Army Brunswick Asylum Seeker and Refugee Service. As an assistant Salvation Army officer (pastor) at the Melbourne service, he helps this vulnerable community seek a home in Australia. But with half the country now in lockdown due to COVID-19, he sees clients impacted in a whole new way.

"We are a very, very open community. And [at the service] we are trying to show people how to cope with COVID-19 because we can't go more than five kilometres from our homes," he explains. "It's hard because, in our community, we are used to sitting together."

BRIDGING THE GAP

Every week, Dit and Major Karen Elkington, the service's manager, support hundreds of refugees and asylum seekers living in

Melbourne's northern and western suburbs. Their clients form a large part of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) community the government is working with to share information about the latest COVID-19 restrictions and vaccinations. That's where Dit, Karen and their team bridge the gap.

"People get really confused because they're getting information about what's happening overseas with their families [as well as through the Australian news]," explains Karen. "So, there's confusion mixed with poor mental health, like post-traumatic stress disorder and OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). And then you add in bad press about vaccinations in Australia, which concerns everybody – so the CALD community don't necessarily know if they can trust what is going on."

During the first lockdown, many clients locked themselves at home and compulsively cleaned – not even coming to receive support because they were scared it was illegal. Their overall health deteriorated, and families of up to 10 people struggled to live in one house. For a group of people already ineligible to receive any Centrelink payment, it was a nightmare.

Thankfully, things have begun to shift in the city's sixth lockdown. Open conversations and some bilingual education materials mean clients can be better informed about their rights and regulations. Plus, the staff at the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Service and community leaders lead by example. Dit received his second COVID-19 vaccination recently and wants to model the South Sudanese value of respecting authority to his people.

"In the Sudanese community, we always listen to the authorities. As leaders in the community, we encourage people to listen to the government," he said.



“

We are an open community. If you say hi, then I can call you. We will give you lots of food!

”



GENTLE CONVERSATIONS

The same premise goes for the Iranian community, which makes up more than 50 per cent of the service's clients. Karen, Major Colin Elkington (chaplain) and Kevin Amiri (ministry assistant) have all received their vaccinations. They prioritise gentle conversations with clients about how it benefits entire families. In doing so, they must overcome religious, cultural and language differences.

Meanwhile, they find that social stigma about refugees and asylum seekers makes their community feel ostracised and ineligible for support. And that's where the 'everyday Salvo' can make a difference.

"People think that refugees get a whole stack more than everyone else. A car, a house ... I don't know where that urban myth came from, but people still believe it. In reality, there is very limited support for our people," says Karen. "So, if you see someone from a culturally diverse background, smile behind your mask and say good morning!"

It's a simple way to recognise the image of God in another human. And Dit promises that you will be rewarded a hundredfold once lockdown is over and restrictions are eased. It's the Sudanese way!

"We are an open community," says Dit. "If you say hi, then I can call you. We will give you lots of food!"



Scan here for more on the need for community.

Captain Dit Chokeun received his second COVID-19 vaccination recently, leading the way for the South Sudanese and other members of the CALD community.

Help directory clicks into place in Tasmania

Help is just a click away in Tasmania after The Salvation Army and partner organisations created a centralised, free, online community service directory called FindHelpTAS.

FindHelpTAS is a comprehensive database listing contact details for a variety of services. These include those associated with COVID-19, emergency services, family and domestic violence, and misuse of alcohol and other drugs.

Pioneered by the Tasmanian Council of Social Service Inc, the Salvos partnered with Anglicare Tasmania, Hobart City Mission, Mission Australia, and Bapcare to create the



self-funded database. Users simply select one of 18 categories, such as Aboriginal Services, Housing or Mental Health, and find a service provider in their vicinity.

For more information, go to FindHelpTAS.org.au

– Jessica Morris

Norway street soccer program goes behind bars

The Salvos in Norway have kicked off a new outreach initiative by taking its street soccer program behind bars.

Major Yury Zelentsov, the Salvos Director of Prison Ministries in Norway, said 'gatefotball' [Norwegian for street soccer] was officially launched at Kongsvinger Prison, 95km north-east of the capital, Oslo.

Street soccer has been a popular Salvos outreach program for many years. Yury said it had been "a well-tryed project" within the Army's Addiction Rehabilitation Services since 1980, and it was "a natural next step" to take it into the prison system.

The pitch installed in the prison was about 22m long by 16m wide, which was smaller than a standard street soccer pitch due to limited space.

Once the outreach is established, a prison team will be allowed outside once a week to



Action from last year's National Street Soccer Championships in Norway, hosted by the Salvos.

use the Salvos' community pitch to train and play against other community teams.

Yury said the goal was that released inmates would be introduced to a local street soccer team to "continue with their rehabilitation".

There are more than 20 Army-run street soccer teams for men and women across the country. The Army has also been responsible for the national team since 2005, and in 2017 hosted the Homeless World Cup in Oslo.

– Darryl Whitecross

Salvos oversee seasonal worker program

Many of the thousands of seasonal workers, who pour into Australia from the Pacific islands each year to work principally in the agriculture sector, struggle with the culture, language and isolation while they are here.

Earlier this year, the Salvos won the tender to deliver the Community Connections for Seasonal Workers Program, which aims to improve the welfare of those workers by linking them with churches, community groups, activities, and other support networks.

The national coordinator is Gregory Makutu, a veteran and recipient of a New Zealand Queen's Service Medal [similar to Australia's OAM], for his work among veterans and Maoris living in Australia.

Gregory described the initiative as "huge", with between 7000 and 8000 workers being supported throughout the year.

He said the program would provide specific support to workers, help them connect with



Gregory Makutu is coordinating Community Connections for the national Seasonal Workers Program.

the communities in which they worked and "advance cultural understanding with the wider population".

Gregory said many seasonal workers, who were required to spend time in quarantine when they arrived, could find themselves without appropriate clothing for Australian conditions and could have difficulty understanding Australian laws and customs. Community support initiatives were being developed to remedy those situations.

– Darryl Whitecross

Housing support for young people opens in ACT

Deputy Chief Minister Yvette Berry and Salvation Army Oasis ACT Manager Andrew Rich recently officially opened Scullin House in the district of Belconnen.

Scullin House is the third property from a partnership between Oasis ACT and Belconnen Salvos, providing opportunities for young people to access independent housing options.

The service promotes support for young people moving to independence. It provides a safety net that enables young people to build essential skills and confidence in a safe and supported environment.

– Faye Michelson



Deputy Chief Minister Yvette Berry and Oasis ACT manager Andrew Rich open Scullin House.

The best news you may ever hear

Hopes rising for a 'normal' Christmas

WORDS BARRY CASEY



It has been a long wait. People have been so patient, believing that things can only get better and that change will come, but the COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll. The separation from family and loved ones has, for many, been overwhelming. How long can we keep living like this? How long will it be before we can return in some form to the normality we have always known – and taken for granted?

Amidst the ambiguity, uncertainty and feelings of isolation, frustration, and even despair for some people, we suddenly and unexpectedly hear words of hope. Words we have been longing to hear – *'things may return to normal by Christmas'*.

Stop for a moment to take that in. Put aside all the sentimental images of Christmases past – the trimmings, shopping, gift-wrapping and parties – as good as they all are – and consider this: state borders reopen, being able to travel freely with no need of having to go into mandatory isolation and, most importantly,

families who have been separated for so long being reunited once again – no matter where they live across this vast nation. It all seems too good to be true but bring it on! Let the planning begin. We wait in anticipation and hope for Christmas 2021.

Of course, these words of hope come with conditions and an escape clause. At least 70 per cent of the nation needs to be fully vaccinated, and all states must agree to adhere to the national exit plan, but I want to be the optimist. I want to see the glass half-full, so I choose to wait in expectation of what could be this Christmas – families sitting around the same table, together again, surrounded by love, joy and the sounds of laughter.

HOPE AND EXPECTATION

It seems like history is repeating itself. It sounds like such a familiar story of hope and expectation. A story that is many centuries old, and the one that brings us back to that very first Christmas. And it all began with words of hope and expectation for a people

who had been waiting and longing to hear them: "I have come to bring you good news, the most joyous news the world has ever heard! For today, in Bethlehem a rescuer was born for you. He is the Lord, the Messiah" (Luke chapter 2, verses 10-11 *The Passion Translation* of the Bible).

Amidst challenging and trying times for a nation, this was news that was almost too good to be true. The birth of this child, God's Son, would restore to the world not just a nation but a sense of hope when hope had been all but lost. It would bring an overwhelming joy that they would find difficult to contain. And it would provide them with a deep inner peace knowing that life would never be the same. No wonder the angelic messenger said it would be the "most joyous news the world has ever heard".

As hopes begin to rise, I cannot guarantee that life will return to 'normal' by Christmas. But this I can be certain of – the message of Christmas has not changed from that very first

Christmas morning until now. In so many ways, we need to hear it and take it in more this year than perhaps we have ever done before. It is a message of hope, joy and peace. It is not dependent on what we do or do not do. It has no escape clause. It is unconditional! And it is God's gift to you. Embrace it, unwrap it and claim it, and Christmas 2021 may just be the beginning of life as you have never experienced it before.

Now isn't that the most joyous news you have heard for a long time!

Major Barry Casey is the Spiritual Life Development Secretary for The Salvation Army Australia.



Scan here for more on finding meaning.



'A bit of a lifesaver'

Removing stigma and shame from financial struggle

WORDS NAOMI SINGLEHURST

In Australia, over three million people are living below the poverty line. That's one in eight people. As we approach Anti-Poverty Week – 17-23 October – the Salvos are encouraging those doing it tough to reach out for help. Financial hardship can happen to anyone at any time, and accessing support early is important for a positive outcome.

Over the next three weeks, *Salvos Magazine* will feature the stories of those who have accessed the Salvos Moneycare and Doorways (emergency relief) services and the difference it has made in their lives.

A single father of four, Joseph was proud that he had worked his whole life to support his family. He had driven taxis for many years in Brisbane and often worked a second job. His children were now young adults working hard to buy their own homes.

At home one day, Joseph heard gunfire from a nearby house and, worried about local kids, went to investigate. The 61-year-old was shot twice. A long hospitalisation followed, and before long, Joseph had developed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Joseph's life changed abruptly. He had to stop work, juggle his physical and emotional health issues, and pay his living expenses on a vastly reduced income.

According to Tony Devlin, who leads The Salvation Army Moneycare free financial counselling service, an unexpected event can financially and emotionally "turn a person's world around very quickly".

"It could be an employment issue, a health issue, deaths in the family, relationship breakdown, family and domestic violence," he says. "Around 90 per cent of community members who contact Moneycare have experienced the type of unexpected life event that could happen to anyone, at any time."

DEBT AND ANXIETY

For Joseph, it wasn't long before bills started to pile up and the mailbox filled with letters from creditors. As the pressure increased, Joseph says his anger and anxiety grew.

His daughter eventually made him an appointment to see a Salvation Army Moneycare free financial counsellor, who immediately began working to ease Joseph's financial burden. This included 'hardship provision' for his loan and working on payment plans for his expenses.

For the past nine years, Joseph has continued to make regular Moneycare appointments to



Scan here for more information on Salvation Army Financial Services.

Joseph with his first financial counsellor, Jenny, who helped Joseph organise his budget.

help him stay on track with his budgeting. He says just the knowledge that someone is “in his corner” means a great deal.

“Jenny [Joseph’s first financial counsellor] really helped me budget,” he explains. “She showed me how to push money into certain places and organise payments directly from my pension. When Jenny moved out of the role, Sue came along and she has also helped me out a [great deal] since.

“Without the help to budget ... I might have lost my house. Also, if the bills build up, I start getting PTSD issues again. So ... I think it has been a bit of a lifesaver.”

Over the past few years, Joseph has become a regular face at his local Salvos, attending a men’s group as well as his Moneycare appointments. He is much happier and says even his children have noticed the change in him.

NOT ALONE

Poverty and hardship can affect anyone. Research shows that nearly eight in 10 of those seeking assistance from Moneycare

did not experience difficulties with financial literacy. Yet, these individuals faced financial problems that were often unexpected or beyond their control.

“Financial hardship and poverty are not things that people easily talk about,” says Tony. “They are often hidden. For example, people will quite often talk about relationships and other things but won’t say, ‘I don’t have enough money to do the grocery shopping today’, or ‘I don’t have enough money to pay the rent’. It is often the last thing that people reach out to others about.”

Tony says that normalising such conversations may encourage community members to seek help earlier from family, friends and services such as Moneycare.

“We know that people come to Moneycare in particular, often when it has developed into a real crisis. Then there are often less options to deal with the issues. If people had come and seen us earlier, it would be a whole lot easier for everyone. That is why it is important to demystify financial issues.”

Ice cream cones



PHOTO: ANDREA REDFORD

Ingredients

2 large egg whites, ½ cup sugar, 3 tbsps milk, ½ tsp vanilla, 30g melted butter, ¾ cup plain flour, pinch salt, butter (extra), ice cream, chocolate and sprinkles to decorate (optional).

Method

- Whisk egg whites, sugar, milk, vanilla and melted butter. Sift flour over the mixture, add the salt and stir through until batter is smooth.
- Heat a small amount of butter in a non-stick frypan over medium-low heat.
- Drop about 1½ tablespoons of batter into the pan and swirl the mixture until it is a thin and even disc around 12cm in diameter.
- Cook for 4 to 5 minutes until base is set. Flip and cook for another 1 or 2 minutes.
- Remove from the pan. Roll into a cone shape while it is still hot. Gently push the seam together to help it set and seal. Cool completely.
- Once cool, you can serve ice cream in the cones. Or dip rim in melted chocolate and add sprinkles.

FUNNY THINGS KIDS SAY



My six-year-old was watching me pour Draino down the bathroom sink. "What's that for?" he asked. "It dissolves whatever 'gunk' is clogging up the sink," I told him. He went quiet for a moment. "Even the screwdrivers down there?" he asked? "The wha ...?"

My five-year-old asked me where poo came from, so I gave him what I thought was a simple and age-appropriate explanation. He looked at me in stunned silence and then asked, "And Tigger?"



SIGNING IN



Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Difficulty: **Very Hard**

	2			9	4		1	6
	4							5
				1	7		8	
				3			6	9
		9	4		1	5		
4	3			5				
	8		1	2				
7							3	
5	9		8	7			4	

Tum-Tum

On which page of this week's *Salvos Magazine* is Tum-Tum hiding?



Bible byte

And know that the peace of God (a peace that is beyond any and all of our human understanding) will stand watch over your hearts and minds in Jesus, the Anointed One. Philipians chapter 4, verse 7 *The Voice* translation

Quiz answers: 1. 4-10 October. 2. Celebrating Women in Space. 3. 65. 4. 1969. 5. 150.48 million km. 6. Approx. 800 years. **Tum-Tum:** is hiding on page 7.



PHOTO: NASA

Quick quiz

1. When is World Space Week?
2. What is the theme for 2021?
3. How many women are among the 566 who have travelled into space?
4. In which year did a human first step onto the moon?
5. Approximately how far is the earth from the sun?
6. If you could fly a plane to Pluto, how long would it take?

DID YOU KNOW?

The sunsets on Mars appear to be blue.

Teeth are the only part of the human body that can't repair itself.

'New car' scent is the smell of dozens of chemicals.

Pineapple works as a natural meat tenderiser.

3	2	8	5	8	4	7	1	6
1	4	7	6	8	2	3	5	9
9	5	1	7	3	8	4	6	2
2	5	1	7	3	8	4	6	2
8	7	9	4	6	1	2	3	5
4	3	6	2	5	9	8	7	1
6	8	4	1	2	3	5	7	9
7	1	2	9	6	5	4	8	3
5	9	3	7	8	1	6	4	2

Some of the most comforting words in the universe are 'me too'. That moment when you find out that your struggle is also someone else's struggle, that you're not alone, and that others have been down the same road."

- Author Unknown

October is
**National Mental
Health Month**
mhfa.org.au/



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