

BY

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Picture: Kerry Edwards

etter life

program allows the employment of suburban-based supporters like Mr Horlin, who fuel motivation levels and smooth the pathway to the gym, and also involves walking groups, quit-smoking support sessions and has set up link-ups to local GPs to ensure lifestyle risk factors are identified and addressed. An important key strength has also been the creation of a mentor program, bringing in those with a past history of mental illness to show how they made changes for the better.

Mr Horlin said he was proud of Derryn's achievements and how quickly he had transformed from a long-term cycle of letting his fitness level "just slide" to being one of the fitter guys in the gym.

"This is an amazing success story," Mr Horlin said. "He now keeps up with me and I box three times a week and run."

Such progress had been possible due to the support of gyms in the Rockingham area, such as Aqua Jetty, Curves and Kwinana Recquatic Centre, and Ruah Community Services, June O'Connor Centre and Jacaranda House.

HealthRight — UWA School of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences Community, Culture and Mental Health Unit — 9433 0329, [www.HealthRight.org.au](http://www.HealthRight.org.au).

## Back from depths

Affecting one in five people, depression covers a group of illnesses characterised by excessive or long-term depressed mood. The most severe form of clinical depression is called a depressive episode, which can come on without apparent cause although, in some cases, a distressing event might trigger it. A person becomes low-spirited, no longer enjoys life and suffers disturbed sleep patterns. They also may lose their appetite, shed weight, have low energy levels and find it hard to concentrate. Feelings of guilt are common and hopelessness and despair can lead to thoughts of suicide. (Source: ARAFMI)

Kay Merrin's depression built up over the years, culminating in drinking binges that would last for a week or more.

"The final one was eight bottles of Jim Beam over six days with no food," she said. "I had a blood alcohol reading so high the doctors said I should be dead or in a coma or at least unconscious."

Looking back at her life, the 52-year-old, of Claremont, finds it hard to pinpoint exactly when the depression set in. She remembers as an eight-year-old needing counselling after the death of her father, then several bad teenage years resulted in an overdose of medication.

Diagnosed with depression in the late 1980s, the drinking began when her mother fell ill and she realised she was about to lose another parent. Then the binge drinking set in.

Luckily for her, three things happened that set her on the path to recovery. When she lost her job because of her drinking, her former boss put her in contact with the Palmerston drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre, a supportive neighbour put her on to a good GP in staggering distance of her house and Graylands Hospital introduced her to art. She went on to win an art prize in a competition.

"Then I realised I was not hopeless and I started liking myself again," she said. "I felt more confident and found an inner strength I didn't know I had."

Advice on depression: [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au).



Self-worth: Kay Merrin is on the road to recovery. Picture: Guy Magowan



Fallout: Helen takes time to unwind for her own health. Picture: Dione Davidson

## FAMILIES LEARNING TO COPE

Perth mother Helen witnessed suffering in mind and body when her 38-year-old son was diagnosed with schizophrenia 10 years ago.

Holding down a highly paid professional job and an incredibly fit gymnast with a toned physique, he went on to be plagued by extreme anxiety and had psychotic symptoms of persecution, believing everyone was plotting against him. He could not sleep at night, lost the desire to exercise, had erratic eating patterns and put on weight.

While he was still able to keep on working, he lost much of his independence, could not pay bills or handle money and needed to be re-taught basic living skills.

She stepped in as mothers do, to help protect his health. She ensured he found an empathetic GP, who had experience tackling mental health issues in his own family, booked her son into a sleep clinic, took steps to reduce his high stress levels and his high risk of developing diabetes, made sure there was always a relative on-hand to call on in case of a crisis. She then laid down a pathway to recovery.

"As my husband and I get older the stress is constant, with regular phone calls to help him deal with a situation," the 64-year-old woman said.

"For a while, I even put my own health on hold. But then I realised it was important to find my own time. His life is slowly rebuilding and he is now in the recovery stage," she said. "We have even been able to go away on a holiday."

The GPs on Beyondblue's Find a Doctor list have completed additional mental health training at a basic Level 1 or more advanced Level 2 through a Commonwealth Government initiative called the Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care Program.

All your care contacts under one roof

## Care Necessities for people caring

**Taking a break**  
Commonwealth Carer RESPITE  
**1800 059 059**

**Support for carers**  
CARERS WA  
**1300 CARERS (1300 227 377)**

**Links to care services**  
Commonwealth CARELINK  
**1800 052 222**

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centres are an Australian Government Initiative



PTW6395-1710

**Rights of Carers of People with Mental Illness Forum, October 22, 1-3pm, WA Health Theatre, 189 Royal Street, East Perth. Bookings: 9222 4099 or mental.health.reception@health.wa.gov.au**

## HOW TO OVERCOME SNORING; SLEEP APNOEA; FIBROMYALGIA; EXCESSIVE TIREDNESS

ARE you interested in an experienced Coach for health and well being?

✓ Only 20 places are available for people who are committed to discover the road to their sense of health and well being. Understanding your OWN Biochemical screening is the key! We provide this key

✓ Professional combination of mainstream and complementary medicine is being applied.

Remove the guessing game

✓ Who should apply? People who snore, have sleep apnoea, fibromyalgia, excessive tiredness. People who want to know, based upon the biochemical screening, which nutrients would support their body.

✓ Stop snoring usually within 2 months

✓ Metabolic treatment of fibromyalgia

✓ Choice of Program packages available

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Email: [brainlongevity@iinet.net.au](mailto:brainlongevity@iinet.net.au)  
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[www.a-holistic-healthcoach-approach.com](http://www.a-holistic-healthcoach-approach.com)



Helena Ederveen (AACNEM) & Medical Associates

## Do you suffer from Ménière's Disease? FREE SEMINAR

Attend our free education seminar and learn more about Ménière's Disease and the treatment options available.

Speakers at the seminar include:

\* Dr Stephen Rodrigues, ENT Surgeon

\* Ms Lynn Polson OAM, MSGV

\* A patient with Ménière's Disease

Date - Wednesday 7th November 2007

Time - 7.00pm to 8.30pm

Venue - Perth Convention Exhibition Centre Meeting Room 1, 21 Mounts Bay Road, Perth

Attendance is free however seating is limited.

To register contact:

Amy Fletcher on Toll Free 1800 368 368

If you are unable to attend and wish to receive an information pack, please contact the number above.