

## Overview

Mindset for Life is a program to help people to think about their own retirement and what will make it interesting and fulfilling into the future. The program targets people in the years leading up to, and immediately following, retirement or other similar later-life transition.

Built on a peer-learning model, participants consider their own wellbeing, mindset, habits and social networks and use narrative techniques, guided discussion and a range of self-guided tools to make positive changes through this strengths-based program.

The full Mindset for Life program includes an optional Introductory session (1.5 hours), and three peer-led sessions, each lasting three hours. Groups are generally convened by trained volunteer peers who have already completed Mindset for Life for themselves and undertaken training to become a peer convenor.

Mindset for Life is designed to be run by local organisations who are connected to older citizens, particularly Local Councils, not for profits or community groups that have the infrastructure to support volunteer-led programs. *Think Human*, one of the founding partners, offers implementation support to host agencies, including:

- initial delivery of the program by *Think Human* trained convenors
- training of your own peer convenors to deliver the program in your agency or local community
- coaching support for your new convenors from *Think Human* trained convenors
- implementation support for your agency from *Think Human* staff, to be able to role the program out in to your older members or citizens

Mindset for Life was developed in South Australia in 2018 by The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, Think Human and Port Adelaide Enfield Council in partnership with people in the process of retiring. The program is supported by SA Health's Office for Ageing Well.

## Why Mindset for Life?

Mindset for Life delivers on the priorities of the South Australian State Ageing Plan. Key priority one, Health, Wellbeing and Security, identifies the importance of older people growing wellbeing, establishing new community connections and making informed decisions about their own lives, actively linking personal wellbeing with ongoing social



and economic engagement with society. Mindset for Life actively promotes and builds capacity and intentional decision-making in these key focus areas, with measurement tools incorporated to evaluate impact.

Mindset for Life responds to a gap in current offerings for people around retirement. While retirement planning is available, its focus tends to be on the financial aspects of retirement and fails to address finding purpose and meaning in life post retirement. In general, existing offerings promote things to do: volunteering, community action, social clubs and formal learning. However, knowing what to do is difficult if you don't know what you're looking for or how to apply existing skills and experiences in the context of retirement, many of which may have been built in a formal work setting.

Research from The Institute of Economic Affairs in the UK suggests that retirement can have a short-term positive impact on health and wellbeing but over time the net impact can be negative, with the chances of suffering from clinical depression post retirement increasing by about 40% and of having at least one diagnosed physical illness by 60%.<sup>1</sup> Mindset for Life focuses on that stage post-retirement where the initial positive impact (the honeymoon period) is diminishing and people are facing greater uncertainty and clarity about their retirement journey<sup>2</sup>.

Further research from the UK reviewing transition courses in later life highlighted six interdependent aspects that participants identified as being important in helping them achieve their outcomes, which are key elements of the Mindset For Life Model, as outlined overleaf.

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| Space and Time   | dedicated time where they could reflect on the changes, challenges, and opportunities ahead.   |
| Facilitation   | to create the safe space, support the discussions and facilitate productive reflection.  |
| Provocation  | scenarios, case studies and discussion points that encouraged participants to think about different situations and to think differently about them.  |
| Reframing  | presenting later life as a life stage with positive opportunities, challenging stereotypes about ageing and encouraging participants to take control of their future.                      |
| Tools and techniques   | providing a range of practical tools and frameworks to enable reflection, thinking differently, decision-making and planning, for example, goal-setting tools, wheel of life, mindfulness. |
| Group process  | sharing experiences and hearing different perspectives from people in the 'same boat'.   |
| source: Evaluation of Transition in Later Life Pilot Projects, 2017. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch) & Centre for Ageing Better |  |

<sup>1</sup> Work Longer, Live Healthier: The relationship between economic activity, health and government policy. Institute of Economic Affairs, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> *The Sociology of Retirement*, 1976. Dr. Robert C. Atchley, American Institute of Financial Gerontology

## Key characteristics

### **Mindset for Life is peer-led**

Anecdotal evidence suggests that people in the retirement phase connecting with each other and discussing their experiences, feelings, hopes and fears has been the most valued part of Mindset for Life. While the model is supported by 'theory input' via short videos, the program is underpinned by peer interactions with leadership from a peer convenor, someone who has gone through the program already.

### **Mindset for Life responds to a critical point in the retirement journey**

Participants who seem to benefit most from Mindset for Life are those who are wondering what's next, curious about possibility but unclear what to do or how to structure a retirement that inspires them. Many experience disillusionment and a sense of confusion and uncertainty about where to turn for inspiration, advice or support.

### **Mindset for Life works best at a local level**

Unlike other opportunities that exist for personal growth and learning, Mindset for Life is not primarily about building knowledge but is a catalyst for action. It is most effective where people can tap into local opportunities and create local networks that inspire and support them to reimagine a vibrant and challenging future

### **Mindset for Life works best when driven by agencies with ongoing connection with older people.**

Designed in partnership with local government and older people, Mindset for Life is one piece in the puzzle of designing and navigating a successful retirement. The Program encourages self reflection and personal planning, with the local agency supporting this process by facilitating access to ongoing opportunities to connect, grow, contribute and learn.

## Hosting Mindset for life

Mindset for Life is usually hosted by a local organisation or agency with facilitation by a volunteer peer convenor who has already been through the program. However, the Delivery Toolkit can also be used by a group of individuals meeting independently or by other agencies or interest groups.

Host agencies may choose to run the full program for the first time in a number of ways:



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- Work with another agency that already hosts Mindset for Life (for example a neighbouring Council) or with the Mindset for Life team to access implementation support and trained and experienced peer convenors to launch your local program.
- Identify potential peer convenors from an existing volunteer team and support them to attend a Mindset for Life program through another agency (e.g. neighbouring Council) to gain the required experience to deliver Mindset for Life.
- Work with the Mindset for Life team at Think Human to train up a staff convenor, then recruit subsequent peer convenors from the first participating cohort.

Think Human can offer a range of support packages to help you implement and embed Mindset for Life in your organisation or community. Typical support offers and costs are outlined in the appendix; however, we are happy to tailor a support package to your needs, so please get in touch to discuss your needs. Please note that in-person support is only available within Australia.

## Benefits to host agencies

Running Mindset for Life offers host agencies:

- Increased agency amongst people around retirement to take control of their decision-making and planning for the social and purpose-driven aspects of retirement
- Increased social connection for older adults in your communities and organisations
- Identification of older people's skills and experiences that can support an understanding of who to invite into contributing roles within your communities and organisations
- Increase in self-reported levels of wellbeing amongst older people participating in the program through identification of personally meaningful roles
- A pathway to enable older people to undertake personal reflection and preparation prior to approaching your agencies to volunteer and contribute.

## Role of host agency

The role of a host agency is to oversee the successful running of Mindset for Life and support the volunteer peer convenor(s), who host the sessions. The host agency is responsible for all logistical aspects of Mindset for Life. All resources, templates and checklists are provided in the Mindset for Life toolkit.

In the case where an agency only wishes to host Mindset for Life Information sessions, the commitment is only to publicise the sessions to relevant communities, take registrations and provide venue and catering.

The complete Mindset for Life model, including resources, checklists and guidance material, is available online at no cost to host agencies upon registration. The host agency can download all that is required to promote and host a program in their area. Mindset for Life is designed to be run by peer convenors, volunteers who have already done the program themselves and want to support others like them to go through the sessions as a peer group. The host agency is responsible for resourcing and supporting the volunteer convenor in their role.

## For more information

To have an informal discussion about Mindset for Life and how it could benefit your community or organisation please contact:

Melanie Lambert, Director of Think Human & co-developer of the Mindset for Life program  
melanie@thinkhuman.com.au  
0466 544098



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