

How you can make 2019 the year of real change.

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Human beings, at their best, are resilient optimists.

Every year we promise ourselves this will be the one that's different.

We make resolutions – promises to ourselves and others – that we really will do something different this year. Something that changes our lives for the better.

Last year, according to the comparison website Finder, the most popular resolutions were to get fit, eat better, give up smoking or drinking (or both), learn something new and take that holiday you've been promising yourself. And while some of those may be repeat resolutions this year, thousands of people really will have changed their lives forever.

For many people, the opportunity to make plans or promises of a better life is taken away from them – by fear, violence, the stigma associated with mental illness, or by the struggle to survive without the security of a home.

At Ruah, we believe that we are all better off, as a community, as a society, if we are all connected. And we are all connected. We are all the same – with human hearts, in need of human connection and meaning in our lives.

People experiencing family and domestic violence, mental illness and homelessness come from all kinds of backgrounds. Some of these backgrounds are different to yours and mine but some of them, and perhaps many of them, are similar.

Where they find themselves at the end of 2018 is a result of circumstance and their individual experience to date – not because they chose or caused their current situation. But for advantages of birth or circumstance, we who enjoy the opportunity to make resolutions for change, promises to ourselves or to be optimistic about our future might be in that place too.

Where the homeless, those suffering mental illness or violence find themselves at the end of **2019** will also be a result of circumstance and experience – and everyone in our community has the opportunity to influence that.

This New Year, we are challenging you to ask one simple question and to then make one extra resolution; one extra promise to yourself and our community.

How might I make 2019 a better year?

Your answers are up to you of course but, when you're making that extra resolution and promise, you might like to borrow from our new *Top 10 New Year's Resolutions for 2019* – or send your ideas to connecting@ruah.org.au so we can share them too!



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Open Hearts. Bold Strides.

To make 2019 a better year, I'm going to:

1. See myself in a person without a home, someone with a mental illness and someone who might be experiencing family and domestic violence – a human heart like mine; a need for connection like mine.
2. Start a conversation – in my home, workplace or with my friends (and maybe all three) about what being mentally well means for me? Is there anything I'd be afraid to share about my own mental health?
3. Say hello to a person who is experiencing homelessness as I drop a coin in their hat. I'm going to ask their name and perhaps what brought them to the streets.
4. Let my mates know it's not okay to speak disrespectfully of their wives and girlfriends, constantly criticise them or make jokes at their expense – it's not funny now; nor has it ever been.
5. Check in regularly with friends or colleagues and ask if they're travelling okay in a way that lets them know I'm genuinely ready to listen.
6. Change the way I speak about people without a home, experiencing domestic violence or with a mental illness. They are each individual human beings and while they have a current circumstance in common, they are not one generic group.
7. Give what I can, when I can, to an organisation working to reconnect vulnerable people with the rest of their community and return the resilience and optimism that's been taken away.
8. Resist the urge to judge. I know it's easy. But I'm more aware than that.
9. Learn and appreciate more – about the root causes of domestic violence, the broad range of mental illnesses and the different pathways that lead people into homelessness.
10. Stay true and keep my 'extra resolution'; my promise to myself and the community.

If everyone makes one simple change in 2019, if everyone takes one step towards people from whom we would ordinarily take one step back, we will start to strengthen our connection with each other and that is the bedrock of a vibrant and flourishing community.

Together, we will make 2019 different. A year of real change.

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