



PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday, 11 August 2020

Mo Sister asks Aussies to step in to 'Soul Socks' for men's mental health

THE 'Soul Socks' initiative is a sister's loving tribute to her brother Andy, a young man who died by suicide in 2017. Her bright Mo-themed socks are also a reminder - and a prompt - to encourage all Australians, to check in regularly on the mental health of their friends, loved ones and colleagues.

The not-for-profit fundraising initiative kicked off last year with 100 per cent of money raised, being donated directly to Movember to help fund life-saving research. Movember is committed to tackling the crisis in men's mental health through its investment in [early intervention and prevention programs](#).

Mobart Mo Sister, Dr Katie Bourke's 'Soul Socks' raised \$16,000 in 2019. This year 'Soul Socks' is aiming to increase sales by 150 per cent, which equates to a massive \$40,000.

The Movember community ambassador's aim - in a nutshell - is to help bring awareness to the mental health struggles facing men, every day.

Katie and her family were devastated by the loss of their brother, son and mate. The Melbourne-based psychiatrist is determined to honour Andy's memory (he loved fun, colourful socks) while ensuring other families are protected from a similar, tragic outcome.

"My family and I struggle with the loss of Andy every day. Too many families globally have also had to suffer the pain and anguish of losing a loved one to suicide. Every suicide is one too many, and something must be done."

While Katie will always consider Hobart to be home, she currently lives in Melbourne where she also works as a psychiatrist.

Along with many of her peers, Katie is becoming increasingly concerned about the impact the coronavirus pandemic is having on people's mental health.

"The ongoing restrictions in place across Victoria will have an even greater impact on our already high unemployment rate, and increase the social isolation experienced by so many. We

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know that social isolation and loneliness is associated with poorer mental health outcomes, and that unemployment can increase someone's risk of anxiety, depression and suicide," she said.

"The pandemic is collectively changing our world view on what is important to us. Small things we previously took for granted, like giving a loved one a hug, are now on hold. But staying socially connected despite being physically apart is more important than ever" Katie said.

Figures recently released by Movember, exploring the impact of COVID-19 on social connections, revealed that over half (52%) of Australian men say no one has asked them if they are okay during the pandemic. Almost a third (29%) of men surveyed had not checked in with friends or family to find out how they were doing during the crisis.

Movember's Global Director Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Brendan Maher said of the initiative: "Katie has come up with a fantastic way to get people talking about men's mental health. 2020 has been a difficult year and we're not through it yet.

"The funds raised will be directly channeled into programs aimed at improving men's mental health outcomes and preventing the tragedy of suicide," he said.

With the economic impact of the pandemic, Katie initially felt uncomfortable asking people to purchase the socks this year. However, as it became clear the pandemic was having an impact on our mental wellbeing, coupled with feedback from friends who wanted to help, Katie decided that 'Soul Socks' 2020, should go ahead.

"Soul Socks' is about having fun, supporting a good cause and connecting with those who may be having a tough time. The socks can be an icebreaker to honest conversations. And gifting socks is a great way to let someone know you are thinking about them," she explained.

"There is another advantage of gifting socks, too. Research suggests giving to others, a term known as prosocial spending, may even improve one's own well-being!"

It's a win-win.

ENDS

How to support 'Soul Socks'

To purchase Soul Socks from August 11, go to: soulsocks.com.au.

Instagram: [@soulsocks](https://www.instagram.com/soulsocks) [#soulsocks](https://www.instagram.com/soulsocks)

Donate: [Katie's Movember Fundraising Page](#).

About Soul Socks:

Conversations starters about mental health & wellbeing through proudly wearing socks.

Soul Socks 2020 mission:



- Drive men's mental health awareness
- Reduce stigma associated with mental illness and distress
- Provide an avenue for hope for those suffering or those who have lost a loved one to suicide
- Raise \$40,000 for the 2020 Movember Campaign through the sale of Soul Socks

Crisis support can be found at Lifeline: (13 11 14 and [lifeline.org.au](https://www.lifeline.org.au))

Note for editors:

Extra support numbers: Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636; Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467.

Research:

i SRC conducted a survey through an online panel with 5,737 people aged 18 or older across the UK, US, Canada and Australia (approximately 1,430 respondents in each country). This included 809 men in the UK, 804 men in the US, 794 men in Canada and 806 men in Australia. Response quotas were set based on age, region and gender and the final data were weighted to reflect the profiles of each country. Fieldwork ran from 22nd April – 4th May 2020.

About Movember

Movember is the leading charity changing the face of men's health on a global scale. The charity raises funds to deliver innovative, breakthrough research and support programs that enable men to live happier, healthier and longer lives. Committed to disrupting the status quo, millions have joined the movement, helping fund over 1,250 projects focusing on mental health and suicide prevention, prostate cancer and testicular cancer.

In addition to tackling key health issues faced by men, Movember is working to encourage men to stay healthy in all areas of their life, with a focus on men staying socially connected and becoming more open to discussing their health and significant moments in their lives. The charity's vision is to have an everlasting impact on the face of men's health. To donate or learn more, please visit [movember.com](https://www.movember.com)