

LIVED EXPERIENCES HEARD.

REAL VOICES. REAL CHANGE.

**Mental Health & Lived
Experiences Toolkit 2026**

1–10 October 2026



WHY THESE DAYS MATTER

Connecting International Day of Older Persons and World Mental Health Day

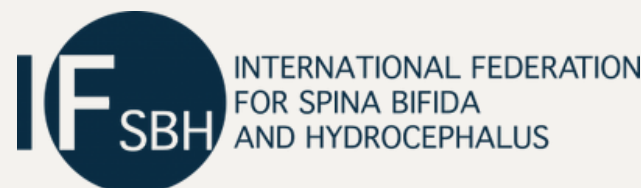
On 1 October, the world marks the **United Nations International Day of Older Persons**, established by the UN General Assembly in 1990. The day highlights the rights, dignity, wellbeing and participation of older persons.

On 10 October, we mark **World Mental Health Day**. In 2026, the theme is “Lived experiences heard: real voices, real change”, highlighting the importance of listening to people with lived experience and recognising their role in shaping mental health support and services.

For people living with spina bifida and hydrocephalus (SBH), these observances create an opportunity to listen to experiences of mental health and wellbeing across the lifespan and to consider how lived experience can contribute to meaningful change.

Lived experiences heard. Real voices. Real change.

- 1 OCT · International Day of Older Persons
- 8 OCT · IF Webinar
- 10 OCT · World Mental Health Day



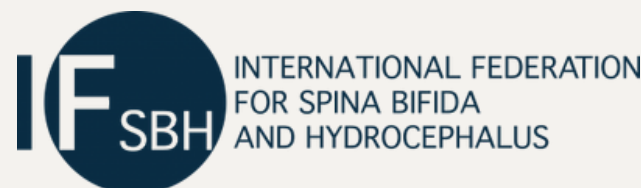
ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN

Living with SBH is a lifelong experience and needs, experiences and wellbeing can change throughout life.

This October, IF brings together the International Day of Older Persons and World Mental Health Day to put lived experience at the centre of the conversation.

The campaign brings together:

- **Living Experiences:** Personal stories from the global SBH community.
- **Webinar on 8 October:** A global conversation about mental health and wellbeing across the lifespan.
- **Our campaign message:** Lived experiences heard. Real voices. Real change.



JOIN THE CAMPAIGN



EXPLORE

Discover the new collection of lived experiences from people living with SBH.

→ **EXPLORE** the catalogue.



REFLECT

Start a conversation. What does mental wellbeing mean to you as part of the SBH community?

→ **USE** the conversation starters in this toolkit to get started.



CONNECT

Join the IF webinar Connected Across the Lifespan – Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Global SBH Community.

→ **REGISTER** for the webinar.



SHARE

Help amplify the campaign.

→ **SHARE** the catalogue, webinar and campaign messages with your members, networks and community.



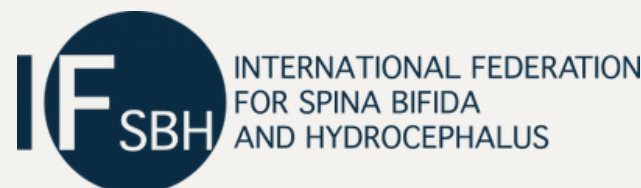
INTRODUCING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES CATALOGUE

What does it mean to live with spina bifida and hydrocephalus?
There is no single answer.

This new collection from the IF Adult Working Group brings together personal stories from people living with SBH, sharing different experiences, perspectives and moments across life.

These stories invite us to listen, learn and start conversations about what living with SBH can look like across the lifespan.

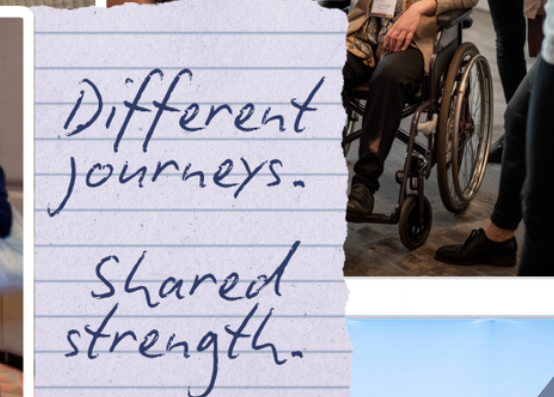
 **Explore the catalogue** and help share the voices. Lived experiences deserve to be heard.



LIVING WITH SBH Stories of Lived Experiences

IF INTERNATIONAL ADULT WORKING GROUP SBH

2026 EDITION



START A CONVERSATION

Make space for lived experience. Mental health can be difficult to talk about. A simple question can be a good place to start.

Ask your community

- What does mental wellbeing mean to you as part of the SBH community?
- Has your experience of mental health changed at different stages of life?
- What helps you feel supported?
- What makes it easier or harder to talk about mental health?
- What would you like others to better understand about your experience?

Ask your organisation

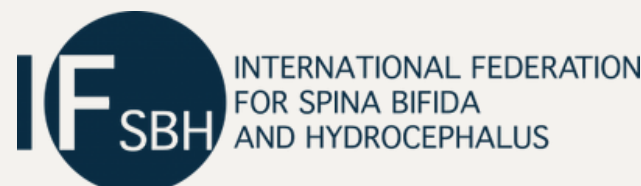
- Are people comfortable talking about mental health?
- What barriers make it difficult to access support?
- Are mental health resources accessible to people with SBH?
- Whose experiences or voices are missing?
- What is one change that could make support better?

One question to take with you

What is the biggest barrier to talking about mental health in your country or culture?

Use this question in a meeting, online discussion, social media post or community activity.

Listen without judgement.
Respect privacy. Share only
what you are comfortable
sharing.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Connected Across the Lifespan Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Global SBH Community



Lived experiences heard. Real voices. Real change

How can we better understand and support mental health and wellbeing across the lifespan? Join IF for a global conversation bringing together different lived experiences from the SBH community.

What to expect:

- **Personal experiences:** Hear directly from people living with SBH.
- **Open conversation:** Explore barriers, support and mental wellbeing across different life stages.
- **Global perspectives:** Connect experiences from different countries and cultures.

REGISTER FOR THE WEBINAR.



SHARE THE CAMPAIGN

You can support the campaign by sharing the catalogue, webinar and campaign messages with your community by using the below ready-to-use messages.



Living with SBH Stories of Lived Experiences

What does it mean to live with spina bifida and hydrocephalus? There is no single answer.

Explore stories from people living with SBH and discover different perspectives on life, wellbeing and lived experience.

Read the catalogue → [LINK](#)

*#LivedExperience #RealVoicesRealChange
#SpinaBifida #Hydrocephalus #SBH*



Join the conversation.

On 8 October, IF brings together voices from the global SBH community to talk about mental health and wellbeing across the lifespan.

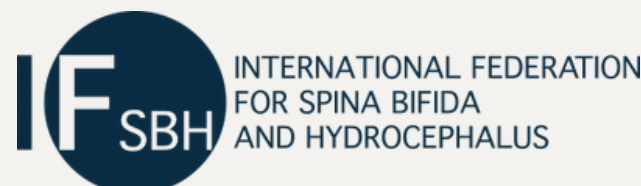
 *Connected Across the Lifespan: Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Global SBH Community*

8 October 2026 · 14:00 Brussels time · Online

Register → [\[LINK\]](#)

*#WorldMentalHealthDay #IDOP2026 #LivedExperience #SpinaBifida
#Hydrocephalus #SBH*

Click on the images to download the campaign materials.



TAKE PART

Make the campaign part of your community

There is no single way to get involved. Choose what works for you, your organisation or your community.

- **Explore**: Read Living with SBH – Stories of Lived Experience.
- **Share**: Download and share the campaign visuals and messages.
- **Start a conversation**: Ask your community about mental health and lived experience.
- **Join the webinar**: 8 October 2026 · 14:00 Brussels time · Online
- **Amplify voices**: Share a story, reflection, quote or activity from your community.
- **Keep the conversation going**: Connect the campaign with World Mental Health Day on 10 October and World Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Day on 25 October.



TAKE PART

Useful links

- **Catalogue:** [Living with SBH – Stories of Lived Experiences.](#)
- **Join IF Webinars:**
 - [Connected Across the Lifespan: Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Global SBH Community.](#)
 - [WSBHD26](#)
- **Learn more**
 - [World Mental Health Day.](#)
 - [World Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Day.](#)
 - [31st International Conference on Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus](#)



LIVED EXPERIENCES HEARD.

REAL VOICES. REAL CHANGE.

Explore. Listen. Share. Connect.

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INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION
FOR SPINA BIFIDA
AND HYDROCEPHALUS

