

# Information for Parents and Carers



## » Mistakes happen «

Learn from mistakes – whether by you or the young person – to learn and keep moving forward. Having some conflict and then repairing the relationship is more important than avoiding doing anything because you fear upsetting the young person.

## What affects a young person's mental health?

There is no one “cause” for mental health concerns. Instead, it seems that a number of overlapping factors may increase the risk of a young person developing a mental health problem. These can include:

- **Biological factors** – family history of mental health problems
- **Adverse early life experiences** – abuse, neglect, death or a significant loss or trauma
- **Individual psychological factors** – self-esteem, coping skills or thinking style
- **Current circumstances** – stress from work or school, money problems or difficult personal relationships, or problems within your family
- **Serious illness or physical injury**
- **Drugs and alcohol** – use and experimentation.

## How to help the young person you are worried about

HELP

When someone in your family has a mental health problem:

- **Keep communication open**, show empathy and don't rush into judgements
- **Be available** without being intrusive or 'pushy'
- **Spend time with the person**. Take an interest in their activities and encourage them to talk about what's happening in their life
- **Take the person's feelings seriously**
- **Encourage and support positive friendships**
- **Encourage activities that promote mental health**, such as exercise, healthy eating, regular sleep, and doing things the person enjoys
- **Give positive feedback**
- **Let the person know that you love them**. They may not always admit it, but this is likely to be very important to them.

## How to find help

If you are worried about the health and safety of a young person:

- Talk openly and honestly with them, and let them know that you are concerned
- Reassure them that you will be there for them, and ask what they need from you
- Let them know that there is lots of help available
- Help find an appropriate service, such as a **headspace** centre ([headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)) and support them in attending
- Ask direct questions if you are concerned about suicide. For example, have you been thinking about death? Have you thought about ending your life?
- Help them build a support network
- Look after yourself as well. Get some support by talking to someone you trust, and seek professional help for yourself if you need it.

## Some important things to remember about young people

- **Young people need a sense of belonging**, connectedness to their family, friends and community, and to make a meaningful contribution
- **Firm and consistent boundaries** are essential, but try to involve the young person in negotiating acceptable 'rules'
- **A balance between self-responsibility and support** helps a 'child' grow to an 'adult'
- **Young people need to do things differently** from their parents and become individuals in their own right
- **Teenagers and young adults often question everything** their families say and do
- **Try to stay confident in yourself**, but also be open to learning



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For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)



# Information for Parents and Carers



## Changes in young people

**Young people can go through many different changes as they grow up. Raising sensitive issues and resolving problems that arise along the way can be challenging for them.**

It can often be hard as a parent to know the difference between normal behaviour, such as

occasional moodiness and irritability, and an emerging mental health problem.

If a young person develops a mental health problem it is important that they get support from both their family and friends and health professionals.



★  
The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you better understand mental health and what you can do to support young people who might be going through a tough time.  
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## Mental health and mental health problems in young people

**Good mental health is about being able to work and study to your full potential, cope with day-to-day life stresses, be involved in your community and live life in a free and satisfying way.**

A young person who has good mental health has good emotional and social wellbeing and the capacity to cope with change and challenges.

Feeling down, tense, angry, anxious or moody are all normal emotions for young people, but when these feelings persist for long periods of time, or if they begin to interfere with their daily life, they may be part of a mental health problem. Mental health problems can also influence how young people think and their ability to function in their everyday activities, whether at school, at work or in relationships.

If you think you know a young person whose mental health is getting in the way of their daily life, it is important to let them know you are there to support them.



## Warning signs

Most parents can tell when something is out of the ordinary, but there are also signs that suggest a young person might be experiencing a mental health problem. These are new, noticeable and persistent changes in the young person, lasting at least a few weeks, including:

Not enjoying, or not wanting to be involved in things that they would normally enjoy

Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns

Being easily irritated or angry for no reason

Their performance at school, TAFE, university or work is not as good as it should be or as it once was

Involving themselves in risky behaviour that they would usually avoid, like taking drugs or drinking too much alcohol

Experiencing difficulties with their concentration

Seeming unusually stressed, worried, down or crying for no reason

Expressing negative, distressing, bizarre or unusual thoughts



# How headspace can help



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## headspace is here to help

**headspace centres across Australia provide face-to-face information, support and services to young people, aged 12 to 25 years, and their families and friends.**

headspace can help you with:



### Mental health and wellbeing

headspace can help if you're experiencing significant changes in thoughts, feelings and/or behaviour, if you're being bullied, hurt or harassed or just not feeling yourself.



### General health

headspace has youth friendly general practitioners (GPs) and health nurses who can help with any physical health issues. A GP can also help you with issues related to contraception, sexual health, drug or alcohol use, relationship problems or feeling down or upset.



### Alcohol and other drug services

If drugs and alcohol are starting to affect things that matter to you, like your mental health, wellbeing or friendships, headspace can help.



### Work, school and study

headspace work and study specialists can help you if you're struggling at school, unsure what course you want to do, need a hand writing a resume, or if you are searching for a job.

Online and telephone support is also available through **eheadspace**.  
(There is more information about **eheadspace** over the page.)

## headspace centres



headspace centres help you to access the type of health worker you need. This could be a GP, psychologist, social worker, alcohol and drug worker, counsellor, vocational worker or youth worker. A number of centres also have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, welfare workers and family therapists.

You can visit a headspace centre no matter how big or small your problem may seem.

## Making an appointment at headspace

It's as simple as phoning or emailing your nearest headspace centre to find a time that suits you. You can also ask a friend, teacher, parent, other family member, health worker or community agency to contact headspace for you.

Your local headspace centre might also have a 'drop in' service where you can visit anytime in their visiting hours. Call your nearest headspace centre or check out **headspace.org.au** to find out more about what services are available.



## Aged between 12-25 years?

headspace can help if you:

Are feeling down, stressed or can't stop worrying

Don't feel like yourself anymore

Can't deal with school/uni/work or are finding it difficult to concentrate

Are feeling sick or worried about your health

Have questions about, or want to cut down on alcohol or other drug use

Want to talk about sexuality, gender identity or relationships

Are having difficulties with your family or friends

Have sexual health issues or want information about contraception

Are being bullied, hurt or harassed

Are worried about work or study or if you're having money trouble

Need someone to talk to.

Getting support can help you to keep you on track at school, study or work, and in your personal and family relationships. The sooner you get help the sooner things can begin to improve for you.



# How headspace can help



## Your first appointment at headspace

Appointments at a **headspace** centre can vary in length but are usually 50 minutes to an hour.

It's okay to feel nervous about getting help for the first time. It can be helpful to bring along a family member, carer or friend to help support you.

You'll probably be asked a lot of questions on your first visit. This is to make sure that

all the important issues are covered, and to help develop the best solution for you. As you get to know and trust your **headspace** worker you will probably find that talking about what is going on gets easier.

The appointment is your time. Feel free to ask questions about anything that's on your mind so the **headspace** worker can help you find the best

solution, or find the information that you need. It also helps the **headspace** worker to understand what is worrying you.



## Cost

Services at a **headspace** centre are either free, or have a low cost. You can ask if there is a cost when you make your appointment.

Some services require you to have a referral from a doctor. But don't worry; **headspace** can help you with this as well.

All **eheadspace** services are free but if you call from your mobile your usual call charges apply.

## eheadspace

If you don't have a **headspace** centre nearby or you don't feel ready to visit a centre, **eheadspace** provides confidential online and telephone support 7 days a week.

To access **eheadspace** for the first time all you need to do is register at [eheadspace.org.au](http://eheadspace.org.au) or phone **1800 650 890**. You will need to provide some information like your email address, postcode and age. **eheadspace** sessions are generally for 30-60 minutes.



If you are receiving support from a **headspace** centre or another service, **headspace** may ask your permission to speak with your worker to ensure **eheadspace** is providing the best possible support.

## Getting the help that's right for you

When you talk with a **headspace** worker it's important that you feel safe and comfortable – **headspace** will do its best to make sure this happens.

If you do not think your **headspace** visits are working out it is important to ask yourself why. There could be a few reasons: it might be because it is hard to talk

about what's on your mind, or it might be that you and your worker are not the right fit. Either way, don't give up. Talk to your worker about how you are feeling and together you can find a way forward.

## Confidentiality

When you talk to a **headspace** worker what you say is kept confidential. This means nothing you say can be passed on to anyone else without your permission however there are a few exceptions.

If **headspace** is seriously worried about your safety or the safety of someone else they must – by law – try to keep everyone safe.

This means they might have to share their concerns with someone else. Talk to your **headspace** worker about confidentiality to ensure you understand how it works.



If you need immediate medical attention, call **000** or call **Lifeline** on **13 11 14** or **Kids Helpline** on **1800 55 1800**.



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For more information, to find your nearest **headspace** centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)



# What is mental health?



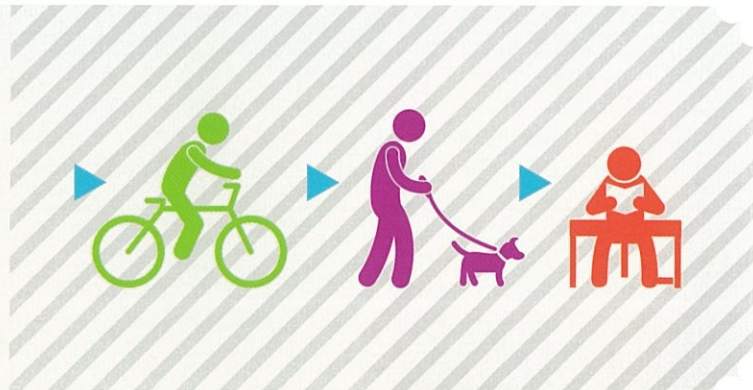
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## What is good mental health?

Good mental health is about being able to work and study to your full potential, cope with day-to-day life stresses, be involved in your community, and live your life in a free and satisfying way.

A person who has good mental health has good emotional and social wellbeing and the capacity to cope with change and challenges.



## Mental health problems

Feeling down, tense, angry or anxious are all normal emotions, but when these feelings persist for long periods of time they may be part of a mental health problem. Mental health problems can influence how you think and your ability to function in your everyday activities, whether at school, at work or in relationships.



It can be helpful to talk to someone about what's going on in your life if you have noticed a change in how you are feeling and thinking. This might include:

- Feeling things have changed or aren't quite right
- Changes in the way that you carry out your day-to-day life
- Not enjoying, or not wanting to be involved in things that you would normally enjoy
- Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns
- Being easily irritated or having problems with friends and family for no reason
- Finding your performance at school, TAFE, university or work is not as good as it used to be
- Being involved in risky behaviour that you would usually avoid, like taking drugs or drinking too much alcohol, or depending on these substances to feel "normal"
- Feeling sad or 'down' or crying for no apparent reason
- Having trouble concentrating or remembering things
- Having negative, distressing, bizarre or unusual thoughts
- Feeling unusually stressed or worried.

If you feel your mental health is getting in the way of your daily life it is important to

.....  
**get support  
and to ask  
for help.**  
.....

You could visit your local general practitioner (GP) or **headspace** centre.





# What is mental health?



## Causes of mental health problems

A number of overlapping factors may increase your risk of developing a mental health problem. These can include:



### Early life experiences:

abuse, neglect, or the loss of someone close to you



### Individual factors:

level of self-esteem, coping skills and thinking styles



### Current circumstances:

stress at school or work, money problems, difficult personal relationships, or problems within your family



### Biological factors:

family history of mental health problems

## Looking after your mental health

There are a number of things you can do to look after and maintain your mental health and wellbeing. For example, many people cope with stress by getting involved with sports, exercising, meditating, or practising yoga or relaxation techniques. Others express themselves through art, such as poetry, writing or music. What you eat might also affect your mood – a well-balanced diet will help keep you both physically and mentally healthy.



For more tips on looking after your mental health visit **headspace.org.au** to download the 'Tips for a healthy **headspace**' fact sheet.



If you are concerned about your own or a friend's mental health and wellbeing, **headspace** is a great place to go for help. Getting support can help you keep on track at school, study or work, and in your personal and family relationships. The sooner you get help the sooner things can begin to improve for you.

**headspace** is for young people aged 12-25 and can help you or a friend with mental health and wellbeing, general health, alcohol and other drug services, and issues at work, school and study.



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