

connecting and communicating with your young person

**information for parents, carers and
community members supporting
young people**

Thank you for participating in this webinar.

We invite you to provide us with feedback on your experience through a short survey [here](#). Alternatively, you may also scan the following QR code to access the survey.



about headspace

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation provides tailored and holistic support to young people aged 12 to 25 years to navigate the big issues in life, their mental health, physical and sexual health, alcohol and other drugs issues, as well as work and study.

More than 75% of mental health disorders begin before the age of 25 (Kessler et al, 2005) and by working with young people at such a critical time in their lives, we aim to prevent a disorder from occurring or to reduce its severity.

headspace values collaboration. We work with schools, sporting clubs, local health services and communities. We provide resources for school communities, family and friends. We engage with the young person's world to support them along their journey towards adulthood.

headspace is available to young people through its local headspace centres that are located in 124 communities across Australia.^[1] Young people can come into a centre and connect face-to-face with professionals such as General Practitioners (GPs), psychologists, counsellors, occupational therapists, social workers and nurses who can support them. headspace centres have been designed with young people for young people. Centres provide a unique space where young people feel they can trust the support they receive from the professionals working in the service and that they genuinely have their interests at heart. The headspace centre network is supported by a national framework to ensure a young person can go into any centre anywhere in Australia and receive the same standards of high-quality care and support.

In addition to headspace centres, eheadspace connects young people to youth mental health professionals 365 days a year. eheadspace provides a free, secure and anonymous service for young people who cannot access help in person, or who prefer to interact online or over the phone.

[Click here to find your local headspace centre](#)

^[1] As at 31 August and inclusive of headspace centres, satellites and outposts

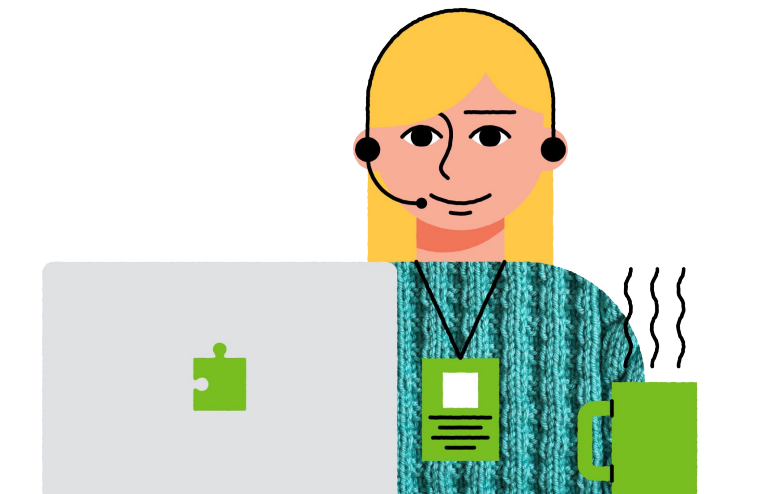
national supports

Support for young people:

- [headspace](#) National Youth Mental Health Foundation. Information and resources for young people, family and friends.
- [ehedspace](#): 1800 650 890 - available 9am – 1am, 7 days a week
- [ReachOut](#) Australia
- [Kids Helpline](#): 1800 55 1800 - available by phone, email or webchat, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Support for adults:

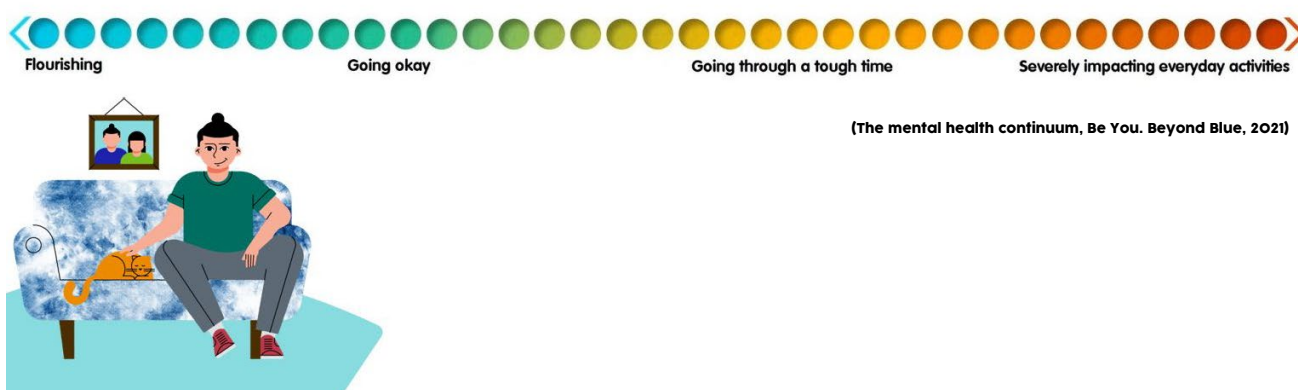
- [Lifeline](#): 13 11 14 - available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for crisis support
Lifeline Text: 0477 13 11 14 - available from 12pm to midnight (AEST)
[Lifeline Chat](#): available 7pm to midnight (AEST)
- [1800RESPECT](#) 1800 737 732. National sexual assault, domestic family violence counselling service – available by phone or online chat, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- [Beyond Blue](#): 1300 22 4636 - available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- [Beyond Blue](#): webchat is available 3pm – 12am (AEST), 7 days a week
- [eSafety Commissioner](#) Australia - <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>
- [MensLine Australia](#): 1300 78 99 78 – available by phone, online chat or video chat, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- [Butterfly](#): 1800 33 4673 - available 8am – midnight, 7 days a week via phone, online chat, email
- [QLife](#): 1800 184 527 - available 3pm – midnight, 7 days a week
- Police and Ambulance: 000
- [National Relay Service](#): 1300 555 727, chat call and captions call options available
- [National Translation and Interpreter Service](#)



what is mental health?

Mental health is defined as “a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”² So rather than it being about ‘what’s the problem?’ it’s really about ‘what’s going well?’

the mental health continuum



Mental health isn't a fixed state. Mental health can be thought of as sitting on a continuum that we all move along, all the time, depending on how things are going for us in our lives.

Most young people sit at the *Flourishing* end of the mental health continuum, most of the time. However, you may have noticed during COVID-19, some young people showed changes in their relationships, their behaviour and learning that significantly impacted their daily activities, and this might suggest they may be in, or are moving towards, the far-right side of the continuum.

The [mental health continuum](#) demonstrates a stepped care approach to supporting young people. Having productive conversations with young people as they move along the continuum, such as how they can maintain their mental wellness, rather than wait until it impacts on their functioning, can be an example of this.

So, what the continuum looks like in real life, for a young person during COVID-19 and what conversations can be helpful?

[2] World Health Organization (2005)



noticing mental health difficulties in young people

As a parent it may be difficult to differentiate between normal adolescent moods and behaviours as opposed to more serious mental health difficulties. Already young people face many challenges that can affect their mental health and wellbeing. The extent to which they affect young people and impact their wellbeing can vary greatly. Some of these challenges may be the result of:

- The developing brain
- Personality and temperament
- Social media
- Bullying
- Relationships and sexuality
- Pressures of school, study and career
- Transition and changes
- Friends, peers & belonging

To determine whether our young person is facing mental health difficulties, we may be noticing behaviours, thoughts, feelings and emotions that are lasting longer than would be deemed normal and increasing in severity.


You may be noticing:

- Feelings such as anger, sadness, fear
- An increase in stress and anxiety
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Decrease in motivation, attention or caring
- Easily irritated or annoyed
- Isolating from friends, peers or family
- Disengagement from school or activities previously enjoyed
- Turning to alcohol or drugs or other unhelpful strategies to cope
- Engaging in self harm
- Feeling worthless, hopeless or despondent about the future

Things to think about:

- How is your young person functioning day to day?
- Do you think these changes are developmentally appropriate?
- How long have you any changes to your young person?

When we have noticed changes that we believe are now impacting other aspects of our young person's life and everyday functioning, then we want to be able to open up a conversation with them in order to connect and communicate effective ways of seeking help if required.



starting the conversation

There's no perfect way to start a conversation about mental health – so it's ok if you're finding it hard. It can help to find a time and place where everyone involved is feeling safe to talk about it. When asking, it can help to be specific about things you've noticed. And remember, you're asking to understand.

Finding ways to connect

- Driving in the car
- Going for a walk
- Shooting some hoops
- Playing a video game
- Preparing a meal

Connecting through conversation

- Listen to hear...not just respond
- Validate what they feel
- Leave behind the judgement
- Pick your battles

and remember....you don't have to have all the answers



Ideas for starting a conversation

- “Hey buddy, you seem pretty stressed lately, is there anything you want to have a chat about?”
- “I haven't seen you hanging around your mates lately. Is everything ok?”
- “I hear what you are saying. It sounds like things have been really tough.”
- “Thanks for the chat. I care about how you feel and what you are going through”.

Moving forward together

- “It sounds like things are a bit stressful at the moment. What do you think we can do to make things better?”
- “I'm not sure what is the best thing to do right now. Would it be ok if we called someone and asked them what they think?”
- “What are some of the things we know we can do each day to help our wellbeing?”

seven tips for a healthy headspace

There are small steps that you and your family can take to support your family's mental health.

1. Get into life

Set a goal or task that you want to achieve for the day - it can be something small like making your bed, going for a walk or calling a friend. Try some new hobbies and keep doing the things you love as best you can like reading, drawing or exercising.



2. Learn skills for a tough time

It might be helpful to learn new coping skills to maintain and improve wellbeing. Try journaling thoughts and feelings, practise some breathing exercises, explore mental health apps or websites, create a new routine, or take a digital detox.

3. Create connections

When we can't physically connect with friends and loved ones, there are so many other ways to stay connected. Try connecting by video chat or phone with friends and family. Online video and board games can also be used to connect with others.



4. Eat well

Minimise unhealthy snacks. It's good to develop coping strategies that are not related to food. Be sure to nourish your body with things like: fruits and veggies, foods high in fibre, fermented foods like unsweetened yoghurt, olive oil, and fish.

5. Stay active

Try doing an online fitness program or a yoga class, challenge your friends to a push-up challenge, get outside for fresh air or have a living room dance party – all great free ways to keep up physical and mental health.



6. Get enough sleep

Try to stick with a sleep routine. Go to bed and wake up at the same time as much as possible and aim for at least 8 hours of sleep a night. Switch off from electronics 30-60 mins before bed.

7. Cut back on alcohol and other drugs

Be mindful of your use of alcohol and other drugs. Try a short break – start with a few days and then try a week, consider alternatives like herbal tea, water or a smoothie, and find new activities to keep you engaged.

