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## For parents and carers

# Wellbeing support for students during the school holidays

This guide provides tips and resources for parents, carers and families to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in their care during the school holidays. This includes services to reach out to if more support is needed.

## Actions that support positive mental health

- Exercise boosts mood and mental health – make it fun!
- Eating healthily to improve mood
- Prioritise sleep to support mental and emotional wellbeing
- Explore relaxation techniques and coping strategies
- Stay in touch and catch up with friends and loved ones
- Make time to do things they enjoy
- Practice positive self-talk – and remember they are not alone
- Seek professional help if needed.<sup>1</sup>

The Department have developed wellbeing activities and conversation starters for parents and carers of [primary school-aged children](#) and [secondary school-aged children](#).

Feeling it: mindfulness resources and activities for senior secondary students: Smiling Mind gives tips on self care, understanding and managing emotions, being mindful, being kind to yourself, navigating uncertainty and preparing for change.

## Signs a child or young person may need mental health support

In some cases, these actions will not be enough to support positive mental health.

Keep an eye out and seek professional help for changes that last two or more weeks such as:

- Loss of interest or involvement in activities normally enjoyed
- Feeling 'low', unusually stressed or worried
- Ordinary things get harder
- Being easily irritated or angry
- Taking more dangerous risks, like using alcohol or drugs
- Withdrawal or feeling overwhelmed
- Difficulties with concentration and motivation
- Having a lot of negative thoughts
- Changing in sleeping and eating.<sup>2 3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> headspace – a parents guide to school issues and stress <https://headspace.org.au/friends-and-family/parents-guide-tips-for-managing-stress-and-problems-at-school/>

<sup>2</sup> headspace 'mental health and you' poster <https://headspace.org.au/assets/Uploads/Mental-Health-Posters-mqpdf.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> headspace – how to talk to your children about mental health <https://headspace.org.au/dads/>

## Young people supporting each other

Young people are **most likely to turn to each other for support** before seeking out an adult or service provider.

Young people can support each other by:

- contacting 000 if a friend needs urgent assistance or is at risk of harming themselves or others
- reaching out to a friend, offering support and letting them know you care
- letting their friend know they may need to tell a trusted adult about their concerns.

Having these types of conversations can be difficult for young people. Information for young people on how to support a friend is available on the headspace website: [How to help a friend going through a tough time](#)

## Mental health support

- **Your local GP**
- [headspace Counselling](#): Victorian Government secondary school students including those who have just finished schooling can access counselling services from headspace. During the holidays, students can self-refer by calling their local headspace centre. Students can self-refer by calling their [local headspace centre](#).
- **eheadspace**, online and phone counselling for young people aged 12 to 25 and their families: 1800 650 890 [www.headspace.org.au/eheadspace](http://www.headspace.org.au/eheadspace)
- **Kids Helpline**, online and phone counselling for young people aged 5 to 25: 1800 551 800 [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)
- **Lifeline**, crisis support and suicide prevention for all Australians: 13 11 14 [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- **Beyond Blue**, online and phone support service for individuals experiencing depression and anxiety and their families: 1300 224 636 [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) (including [translated resources to help parents and families support young people's mental health](#)).
- **Head to Help**, digital mental health resources from Australian organisations: 1800 595 212 [www.headtohelp.org.au/](http://www.headtohelp.org.au/)
- **Suicide Call Back Service**, online, phone and video counselling for anyone affected by suicidal thoughts: 1300 659 467 [www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)
- **contacting 000** if you are in an emergency, or at immediate risk of harm to yourself or others.

## Family violence support and resources

- **Safe Steps**, support for anyone in Victoria who is experiencing or afraid of family violence: 1800 015 188 [www.safesteps.org.au](http://www.safesteps.org.au)
- **1800RESPECT**, sexual assault, domestic family violence counselling service (including [information in 28 different languages](#)): 1800 737 732 [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)
- **What's okay at home**, a domestic violence resources centre: [www.woah.org.au](http://www.woah.org.au)
- [Family violence support](#)

## Self-harm and suicide prevention resources

- [Getting a mental health care plan](#) (ReachOut)
- [What you need to know about self-harm](#) (headspace)
- [How to help when someone is suicidal](#) (SANE Australia)

## Mental health resources

- [Mental Health Toolkit](#): contains resources for students, parents and carers to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in their care including:
- [Raising Learners Podcast Series](#): providing expert advice/information to parents/carers on topics including how to keep your child safe online.
- [Understanding mental health – fact sheet](#) (Orygen)
- [Learn how to handle tough times](#) (headspace)
- [Get into life \(to keep your headspace healthy\)](#) (headspace)
- [Supporting your young person during the holidays](#) (headspace)