

A Guide for Parents – Supporting your child’s mental health



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Acknowledgments

Generally the back of the cover page has details about who the article has been written for and who should be acknowledged as a contributor.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed.

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We are committed to cultivating inclusive environments for staff, consumers and carers and celebrate, value and include people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.



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Almost
45%
of Australians will
experience mental illness
at some point in their
lifetime

One in five
Australians
aged 16–85
experience a mental
illness in any given year



Youth and mental health¹

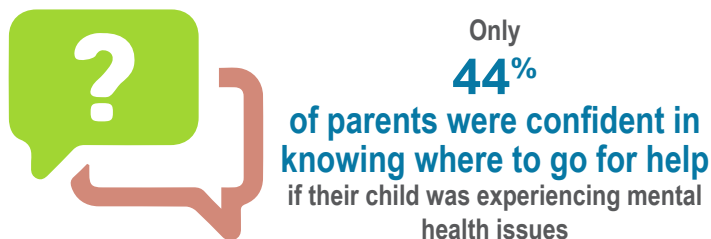
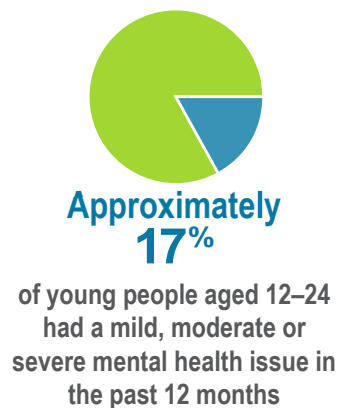
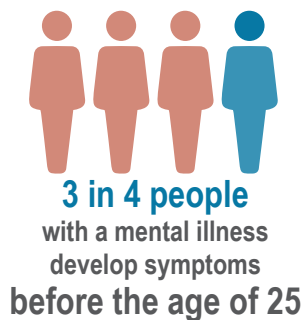


Mental health is part of everybody's life. It is as much a part of your overall health as physical health. Being a young person can be tough – there is so much to learn and a lot of changes to deal with particularly around the transition to independent adulthood. Adolescence is often the time when signs and symptoms of mental illness can start to appear.

While it is normal for young people to feel sad, stressed, angry or anxious at times, when these feelings don't go away and start to have an impact on day to day life, this is when extra help and support may be needed. Mental health issues and illness can range in terms of how it is experienced by a young person and the degree of seriousness. Everyone's experiences are different. In Australia, one in six young people (16–25 years) have anxiety and around one in four young people live with depression. If someone you know shows signs of these conditions, getting help early is important for their recovery.

Prevention and early intervention of the early signs of mental health issues are especially important for children and young people to prevent or reduce the progression of mental illness later in life.

Important statistics for parents²



¹ Mental Health Commission. *Youth and mental health*. www.mhc.wa.gov.au/your-health-and-wellbeing/youth/

² Mental Health Commission. *Youth and mental health*. www.mhc.wa.gov.au/your-health-and-wellbeing/youth/



When should I be worried?³



These quick questions can give you an indication of how worried you need to be:

- Have you noticed a change in behaviour?
- Is this change across multiple settings (e.g. home, school, work)?
- Is this behaviour occurring frequently?
- Has this been going on for more than two weeks?
- Is this change impacting on the young person's day to day life (e.g. school work, relationships)?

The more times you answered 'yes' to these questions, the more you should consider discussing these behavioural changes with your child and/or a health professional.

If you have immediate concerns for their safety, you should call 000 or take them to the local hospital Emergency Department.



3 Headspace Parenting Guide



Talking, listening and understanding



TALKING

- Ask open-ended questions.
- Acknowledge their feelings and be careful not to offer advice too quickly.
- Don't be afraid to ask how they are feeling and to talk about what is going on.
- Ask questions – *but not too many!*
- If the young person doesn't want to talk to you about what's going on don't take it personally. Let them know you are ready to listen whenever they want to talk.
- If you are not sure what to say, do a little research. Read more about anxiety or depression so that you feel more comfortable talking about it.
- Talking is not always what the young person feels like doing. Consider sending a supportive message via text, Facebook or other social messaging services, or just write a note.
- Let the young person know if you've noticed a change in their behaviour and appearance.

- Be an attentive listener.
- Sit in a relaxed position and use appropriate eye contact.
- They may not want to talk, but your interest shows them that you are willing to talk about their mental health.



LISTENING



UNDERSTANDING

- Read up on anxiety and depression. The more you know the better equipped you will be to help the young person.
- Be sure not to suggest that they just '*cheer up*' or '*pull yourself together*'.
- Encourage the young person to learn more about anxiety and depression and provide some useful website links.

Be helpful

Encourage them to get help.

Reassure them that help is available.

Ask how you can help. Young people will want support at different times in different ways.



What to do when someone doesn't want help



You can feel a bit lost when someone close to you needs help but doesn't want to accept it.

Why people don't want help

If things are really getting to someone you care about, it's important to understand that making a decision to seek help can be a tough thing for them to do. Coming around to the realisation that they're going through a rough patch can be scary and difficult, so it's understandable that they may take some time before deciding to seek help.

How to be there for someone who isn't ready to seek help

If your offers of advice and support are being rejected, you may feel like you're powerless to do anything. But you can still be there for your friend; you might just need to take a different approach to the way you're supporting them.

Be available

Continue to be supportive. Listen when they need to talk.

Offer help

Give suggestions, if and when they reach out to you and ask for your advice.

Become informed

Do a bit of research into what help is available in your area that could be useful. That way, if they decide they're ready to seek help, you'll be able to give them some direction about who to go and see.

Talk to someone yourself

You need to look after yourself, too. It can be really frustrating, and make you feel helpless, if they won't let you help them. Talk through how you're feeling with someone you trust.

Set boundaries

You're not going to be able to be there for someone at every moment of every day. Set some limits on things you're willing and not willing to do – and stick to them!

Don't force the issue or put pressure on them

If you try to pressure or force someone to get help, it may come from a good place, but it can actually have the opposite effect to what you intend and could turn them off seeking help altogether.

If things are really serious

While, in most circumstances, it's a good idea to give a friend time to come around to the idea of seeking help, if you think someone is in danger or is at risk as a result of what's going on, it's important that you seek help immediately.

From: <https://au.reachout.com/articles/what-to-do-when-someone-doesnt-want-help> 



Services and supports for parents



You can visit your **General Practitioner (GP)** for support or referral for mental health issues.

To discuss concerns you may have about your child you can also seek advice from the following services:

Anglicare Parent and Youth Support Services

www.anglicarewa.org.au/get-help/parenting-support 

Anglicare provides a number of services to support parent and youth relationships across all ages. These including in-home support, mental health counselling and support for young parents.

Beyond Blue - Healthy Homes

<https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/healthy-homes> 

From improving resilience to coping with loss, Beyond Blue have put together a set of resources to help you work through issues and improve your family's wellbeing.

Beyond Blue - Parents guide

<https://parentsguide.beyondblue.org.au/> 

This online multimedia guide provides information for parents and guardians on anxiety and depression in young people. This resource aims to help parents understand anxiety and depression, how it affects young people, how you can help support young people through difficult times, and where you can find the right help.

Beacon

<https://beacon.telethonkids.org.au/> 


A cyber-safety educational app designed to keep parents and carer up to date with trusted, tailored information to keep their kids safe online.

Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

Emergency Telehealth Service (ETS)

CAMHS ETS provides urgent support to young people, families and carers and provides consultation and advice to health professionals. CAMHS ETS may also provide a tele-mental health assessment if required. This service is available by calling 1800 048 636 between 8am and 2.30am, seven days a week.

Centrecare Youth Support Service (CYSS)

www.centrecare.com.au/metro-services/youth-and-family-support-services-metropolitan/centrecare-youth-support-service-cyss 

Centrecare's Youth Support Service (CYSS) provides counselling, support and linkages within the community for young people aged 12–18 yrs and their families. This service is provided for young people living in the Joondalup region of Perth.

A CYSS worker will visit you in the community, your home, school or a place of your choosing to provide support.



Centre for Clinical Interventions (Western Australia)

www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Overview 

Evidence based information and tools to support mental wellbeing

Child and Youth Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Services in Western Australia

www.mhc.wa.gov.au/your-health-and-wellbeing/youth/ 

This page contains a link to a downloadable PDF Directory of state funded child and youth mental health and AOD services across the entire state WA.

DBTeen: Mental wellbeing skills groups for young people and families

www.lifelinewa.org.au/Services/DBTeen 

Lifeline WA provides 12-week DBTeen skills groups which cover the following key components:

- Mindfulness skills: staying focused on the present moment without having to react.
- Distress tolerance skills: coping with distressing situations and painful emotions without making things worse.
- Walking the Middle Path skills: balancing ways of thinking and behaving to improve flexibility in responding to common family dilemmas.
- Emotion regulation skills: developing skills to use when faced with intense and painful emotions.
- Interpersonal effectiveness skills: communicating your needs and wants, improving relationships, and building self-respect in relationships.

Young people aged 14-18 who are experiencing difficulties managing their emotions and behaviours are eligible for this program.

Derbarl Yerrigan Aboriginal Health Service (DYHS)

www.dyhs.org.au/services/counselling/ 

Whilst the primary client group is individual adults, DYHS also work with children, adolescents and families and are able to provide couple therapy, developmental assessment, and carer support.

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health

www.embracementalhealth.org.au/ 

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health (the Embrace Project) is run by Mental Health Australia and provides a national focus on mental health and suicide prevention for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Head to Health

<https://headtohealth.gov.au/supporting-someone-else/supporting/children> 

The federal government resource hub for mental health. At this link you will find a number of websites and other information about supporting your child.

Healthy WA - Child Mental Health Service Guide – check this one

https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/J_M/Mental-illness-community-services-for-children-and-adolescents 

This website contains details on emergency youth support and how to access. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provides mental health programs to infants, children and young people. This includes community, specialised, and hospital-based programs. For young Aboriginal young people that need assistance CAMHS have an Aboriginal Mental Health team.



HelpingMinds - Providing Support To Adults & Families

<https://helpingminds.org.au/adults-families/> 

When someone in your family is affected by a mental illness the whole family is affected. Caring for someone living with mental illness can be confusing, frightening, exhausting and isolating. However, you do not have to go through it alone. HelpingMinds' free and confidential services can help support your whole family.

Mental Illness Fellowship Western Australia (MIFWA)

Support for youth - <https://www.mifwa.org.au/our-services/young-adults-support/> 

The MIFWA Early Intervention Recovery Program (EIRP) is for young people aged 16 to 30 years who have been diagnosed with a mental illness including first episode of psychosis.

Operating across the Perth Metropolitan area, the EIRP team support people to re-establish or maintain social, professional and educational networks.

Support for families - <https://www.mifwa.org.au/our-services/family-and-parent-support/> 

Parents who experience mental illness may doubt their capacity to manage and lead their family. MIFWA offer practical and moral support through experienced peer workers who are parents and apply their lived experience to develop respectful, trusting relationships, providing information and education.

Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre

<https://moorditjkoort.com.au/> 

Mental health and wellness programs supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the Rockingham and Kwinana area.

Multicultural Futures

<https://multiculturalfutures.org.au/services/mental-health-wellbeing/> 

Multicultural Futures help migrants and refugees. They work in partnership with government, community, and private practitioners to support individuals, carers, and families experiencing difficulties and concerns with mental health and emotional wellbeing to create life experiences that make a difference and enhance recovery.

Multicultural Services

<https://mscwa.com.au/our-programs/mental-health-services/> 

Multicultural Services provide professional mental health assessment, treatment and management; culturally and linguistically appropriate counselling; psycho-education and psychosocial intervention for individuals, families and youth.

Ngala Parenting Line

www.ngala.com.au/service/ngala-parenting-line-2/ 

1800 111 546

The Ngala Parenting Line is a free telephone support service for parents and caregivers of children aged 0 to 18 years who live in WA.

The Ngala website also offers several guides for each stage of your child's life at <https://www.ngala.com.au>

Parent and Family Drug Support Line

www.mhc.wa.gov.au/parentandfamilydrugsupportline 

(08) 9442 5050

The Parent and Family Drug Support Line is a confidential, non-judgemental telephone counselling, information and referral service for anyone concerned about a loved one's alcohol or drug use.



PFlag

www.pflagwa.org.au 

PFLAG stands for Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. PFLAG are a volunteer run, non-profit organisation in WA, providing a support system for families and friends of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI), along with education and advocacy in the community.

Relationships Australia

<https://multicultural futures.org.au/services/mental-health-wellbeing> 

Relationships Australia WA provides safe and confidential spaces to address behavioural, social, emotional and learning problems experienced by children, young people and their families.

In addition to their general services, which are open to everyone, Relationships Australia also has several programs specifically for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Their overall aim in service delivery is not to make the people fit the service, but to make the service fit the people.

Think Mental Health

www.thinkmentalhealthwa.com.au/supporting-others-mental-health/for-parents/families-under-pressure 

www.thinkmentalhealthwa.com.au/supporting-others-mental-health/for-parents 


The WA Government Think Mental Health website is home to the state's mental health campaign and features a number of tools and support materials. The site includes videos for parents on how to support the mental health of your children.

Well Mob Aboriginal Health Resource

<https://wellmob.org.au> 

Social, emotional and cultural wellbeing online resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

Yorgum Aboriginal Family Support Service

<https://yorgum.org.au/services/#family-support> 

Yorgum provides social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) services including culturally secure information, support and advice to Aboriginal communities particularly those affected by trauma, grief and loss, mental health challenges and at risk of self-harm.



Useful supports for your children



Aboriginal Youth Mental Health information

<https://strongspiritstrongmind.com.au> 

Strong Spirit Strong Mind Project focuses on young people aged 12 to 25 years and encourages these young Aboriginal people to develop the knowledge and attitudes to choose healthy lifestyles, promote healthy environments and create safer communities.

Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI)

www.copmi.net.au 

The COPMI national initiative promotes better outcomes for children and families where a parent experiences a mental illness. The website information complements online training courses developed by COPMI for professionals to support families either individually or through community services and programs.

Headspace

www.headspace.org.au 

Headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year olds, along with assistance in promoting young peoples' wellbeing. This covers four core areas:

- mental health
- physical health
- work and study support
- alcohol and other drug services.

Headspace services include:

- headspace centres (located in metropolitan and regional areas across Australia)
- eheadspace (online and phone counselling service)

Information and services for young people, their families and friends as well as health professionals can be accessed through this website.

Kids Helpline

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/> 

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800 is a free, 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25. The website includes information for parents and caregivers as well as young people. They also provide WebChat and email counselling.

QLife

<https://qlife.org.au> 

QLife provides anonymous and free LGBTI peer support and referral for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.



Youth Friendly Doctor

www.amawa.com.au/community/youth-friendly-doctors 

The Youth Friendly Doctor program was developed in consultation with doctors and other health professionals and increases the skills of GPs in several youth health issues:

- Connecting with Young People
- Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Sexual Health
- Mental Health
- Eating Disorders and Obesity

Youth Friendly Doctors can communicate more effectively with young people and break down many of the barriers young people face in health care. This website provides a list of Youth Friendly Doctors throughout WA.

ReachOut

<https://au.reachout.com> 

ReachOut is an Australian online mental health organisation for young people and their parents, providing practical support, tools and tips to help young people get through anything from everyday issues to tough times – and the information they offer parents makes it easier for them to help their teenagers, too.



Self-help digital tools



Black Dog Institute – Bite Back

www.biteback.org.au 

Bite Back helps young people build resilience in an interactive online environment.

Black Dog Institute – iBobbly App

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/digital-tools-apps/ibobbly> 

iBobbly is a free self-help app for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (aged 15 years old and over). It teaches young people ways to manage their thoughts and feelings.

Headspace – Meditation App

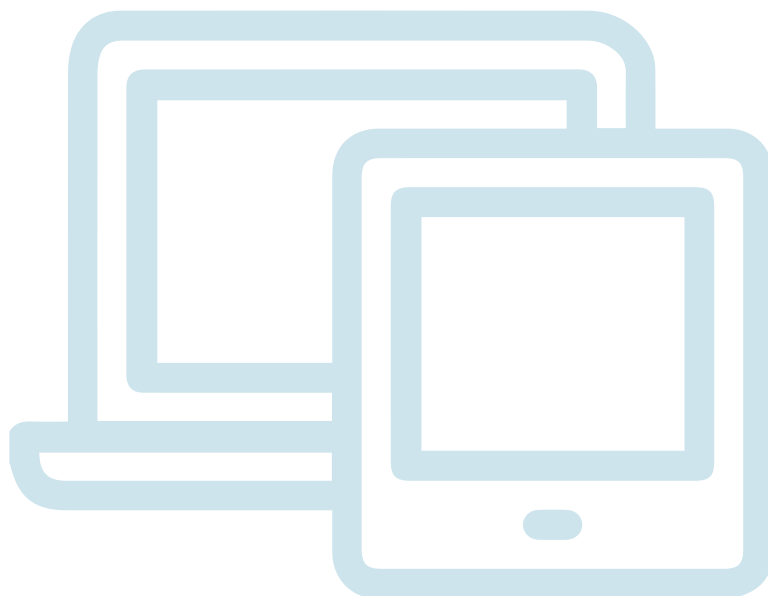
www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app 

Self-guided meditation app to teach meditation and mindfulness skills to help people stress less, focus more and sleep better.

Smiling Minds – Thrive Inside App

www.smilingmind.com.au/thrive-inside 

Thrive Inside app helps you stay calm, healthy, connected and foster good mental habits in the physical constraints of your home (the Thrive Inside app is found within the Smiling Minds free app).



Interactive platforms



For young people to share their experience and worries with someone (they do not replace professional advice):

Beyondblue and Youth Beyondblue - moderated online forums

www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/online-forums 

The Young People community is for those aged 12-25 to discuss life and wellbeing issues during tough times.

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/online-forums/staying-well/coping-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>

For those wanting to share or seek helpful support during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Kids Helpline - moderated online forums

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/my-circle> 

My Circle is a safe online peer support group for 13-25 years olds to support others going through similar challenges.

Reachout - moderated online forums

<https://forums.au.reachout.com> 

The Reachout community is a safe place for 14-25 years old to chat, connect and support each other.





www.neaminational.org.au

Providing mental health, homelessness and suicide prevention support
and working to strengthen local communities.

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