headspace
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

welcome to headspace

we're here for families and friends

welcome to headspace

headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year olds. Each year, headspace helps thousands of young people access vital support through our headspace services in communities across Australia, our online and phone counselling services, our vocational services, and our presence in schools.

headspace is a family and friends inclusive service.

We believe that you play an important role in your young person's journey to better wellbeing. We also understand that family and friendships can take many different forms, including:

"Being involved in the professional care of my son allowed me to have a better understanding of the support he was receiving, what my role was and how we could work together in his best interests.

My son found it difficult to open up to clinicians therefore my involvement in the sessions and plans for supporting him, with his permission, allowed him to trust that he was going to get the help he needed"

– Kim, Parent

All types of families:

- nuclear
- extended
- blended
- single-parent
- heterosexual
- same-sex couples.

All types of care-givers:

- parents
- partners
- foster carers
- grandparents
- god-parents
- adoptive parents
- other family members
- guardians.

Significant others:

- friends
- teachers
- mentors
- kinship sibling relations
- spiritual care leaders.

We know from research that involving families in a young person's care can lead to better health outcomes. Wherever possible, we will support and create meaningful opportunities for you to directly participate in our services.

How you can be involved will depend on many things – including your young person's age, life experience and their feelings about family involvement.

We encourage family and friends involvement and respect the privacy and confidentiality of young people.

This pack will introduce you to our service where you can find further information and support for you and your young person.

everyone is welcome at headspace

how we can help

Many things contribute to someone's mental health. That's why, at headspace, we provide information, support and services across four key areas which may affect a young person's health and wellbeing:

Good mental health is a state of wellbeing where you feel able to work and study, feel connected to others, be involved in activities in your community and 'bounce back' when life's changes and challenges come along.

Mental health

We can help young people if they're:

- feeling down, stressed or worried
- experiencing relationship problems or difficulties with their family or friends
- wanting to talk about sexuality or gender identity
- just not feeling like themselves, or if they've noticed changes in their thoughts, feelings or behaviour.

Physical and sexual health

Many headspace centres have youth-friendly doctors and nurses who can assist young people with:

- any physical health issues
- contraception and sexual health advice.

If the nearest headspace centre doesn't have a doctor or nurse, they can still recommend a youth-friendly doctor in your area.

Work, school and study

We can help young people if they're:

- struggling at school or work and feeling anxious or stressed
- unsure of what course they want to do
- needing a hand writing a resume
- searching for a job.

Alcohol and other drugs

Alcohol and other drugs can affect things that matter to young people, and also to their emotional, physical and mental health. It can impact on their work, their study and the relationships in their lives.
If a young person is having a hard time stopping, or cutting back, we can
support them with:

- developing a plan to tackle their challenges
- connecting with supports, including professional help like GPs and counsellors
- identifying triggers, and provide them with tools and advice on how to avoid them.

Do you need urgent help?

We are not an emergency service.

If someone is hurt, you are worried about someone's safety, or you need immediate support please call 000 (Ambulance, Police, Fire Brigade) or present to your closest emergency department.

If someone you know is having thoughts about suicide, thoughts or urges to self harm, or self harming behaviour, contact the following National 24/7 crisis services:

Lifeline:

13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service:

1300 659 467 or suicidecallbackservice.org.au

beyondblue:

1300 224 636 or beyondblue.org.au

which service is right for my young person?

We have many resources on our website (headspace.org.au) to help you take care of your young person's health and wellbeing.

If they've been using these resources for some time without improvement it's important to get the support of a professional.

Here's a list of our services to help you work out what might be right for them.

headspace centres

headspace centres provide face-to-face information, support and intervention (where appropriate) to young people aged 12–25 for anything affecting their health and wellbeing.

Support may be offered across any of the headspace four service areas (read about these areas on page 4).

Many headspace services also offer group support/programs in addition to individual support.

To find out about the services that are available or to make an appointment on behalf of your young person you can call, email or drop into your local headspace centre.

eheadspace

eheadspace is a national online and phone support service for people aged 12–25, their families and friends. eheadspace is staffed by experienced and qualified youth mental health professionals.

Web-chat and phone support operates from 9am – 1am (AEST), every day of the year. All they need to do to access eheadspace is create an account at **headspace.org.au** (for web-chat or email support) or call 1800 650 890.

Work and Study

headspace Work and Study is an online and phone support service for people aged 15–25 years who need support with work or study. It is staffed by work and study specialists.

The service operates within business hours, and we will try and find an appointment time that works for your young person. Work and Study sessions usually take an hour.

To access the Work and Study service, all your young person needs to do is register at **headspace.org.au/workandstudy** (for web-chat and email) or phone 1800 810 794.

All Work and Study services are free, but if called from a mobile the usual call charges will apply.

Career Mentoring

Career Mentoring is an online and over the phone service that connects young people aged 18–25 with an industry mentor in their field of interest. Mentors work with young people to help them find, maintain and enjoy work.

Mentoring occurs every two weeks, for up to six months.

To register interest in Career Mentoring, your young person can visit **headspace.org.au/mentoring**

All Career Mentoring services are free. If a young person is connecting with their mentor by phone, they will be given a toll free number to call.

headspace Telehealth

In regional and rural areas, getting access to expert psychiatrists is difficult. headspace Telehealth addresses this by providing 12–25 year olds in these areas access to highly-skilled psychiatrists via video consultations.

The low cost service ensures young people get high quality mental health care, while continuing their treatment within their local community.

Read more about headspace Telehealth at **headspace.org.au/telehealth**

who provides services at headspace?

At headspace, your young person can meet with a range of workers, including:

- psychologists
- social workers
- occupational therapists
- mental health nurses
- doctors
- psychiatrists
- intake workers
- youth workers
- family workers
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers
- alcohol and other drug workers
- career and education workers
- support workers
- peer support workers
- and other health professionals.

These professionals work together to make it as easy as possible for you and your young person to get the help you need.

Each headspace centre caters for their local community, and may not have all of the workers listed here. Make sure to check with your headspace centre about what services they provide.

If they don't have the exact service you're looking for, they will be able to help recommend or suggest another service.

How long will an appointment take?

Appointments usually take around 45-50 minutes. Sessions with a doctor might be shorter. Your young person can confirm the length of their appointment when booking.

How much will an appointment cost?

Services at headspace are either free or have a low cost. This will be confirmed when an appointment is made.

Your young person may need a Medicare card to access free or low cost services. We can help them work out how to apply for a Medicare card or access your Medicare details.

If your young person needs further professional support, we may recommend they see a doctor to get a Mental Health Care Plan (MHCP). You can read more about Mental Health Care Plans at **healthdirect.gov.au/mental-health-care-plan**

common myths and facts about mental health difficulties

Myth

Family and friends can't help people with a mental health difficulty.

Fact

Family and friends, as well as the wider school, work and community network, play an important role in supporting young people recovering from mental health difficulties. Family and friends have an ongoing connection with the young person and can offer understanding and practical support that makes a big difference.

Myth

People don't recover from periods of mental ill-health.

Fact

Most people recover from mental ill-health. In fact, recovery is more likely than not. With the right treatment and support, people commonly return to wellness, as well as learn lifelong skills that help handle life's tough times if they occur in the future.

While some people can experience multiple episodes throughout their life, these learned skills can reduce the duration and severity of these periods, and increase someone's capacity to live the life they want during periods of illness.

Myth

Mental health difficulties are caused by genetics.

Fact

Mental health difficulties and mental ill-health are complex and can occur for different reasons. Things like grief, relationship break-ups, bullying, exams, family conflict – also called environmental factors – are some of the most common contributors to the onset of mental ill-health in young people.

While environmental factors can worsen any genetic vulnerability, they can also help. For example, a strong family support system can go a long way towards preventing onset of mental health difficulties.

what might happen if your young person visits a headspace centre?

at the first visit

The first time your young person visits headspace, they will:

1
Fill in a registration form

2
Complete a brief online survey

3
Talk to a headspace worker

4
Be given the opportunity to:

- share what's been impacting their wellbeing
- talk together about what goals they might want to work on.

If your young person feels comfortable, family members are welcome to attend.

after the first visit

If your young person chooses to continue at headspace, together we might work on goals they've identified as important to them. We would work together to plan the next steps which may include:

- access to a doctor and/or mental health nurse for physical or mental health difficulties
- study or vocational assistance with a work and study specialist
- sexual health information and support
- alcohol and other drugs assistance from an Alcohol and other Drug Support Worker
- referral to other agencies best suited to you and your family's needs. If your young person needs a referral from a doctor to access a particular service, we can arrange this
- mental health support, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), problem solving, supportive counselling and group therapy.

We take confidentiality, privacy and safety seriously. Read more about confidentiality and our duty of care on page 16.

how can I support my young person while they are waiting for an appointment?

We understand that wait times for appointments may vary. While your young person is waiting for an appointment, here are some ways you can support them:

"My daughter was very anxious about attending sessions without me. The headspace staff helped her feel more comfortable by allowing her to choose whether I was in the room or not.

I was always made to feel a part of the treatment plan, often seeking my input as to how best to work on different situations.

When my daughter eventually would have sessions on her own, I was still informed and a pivotal part of her recovery"

– Ann, Parent

Supporting their mental health

As a parent, carer or friend you can play an integral role in supporting your young person's mental health and wellbeing by:

- keeping communication open and show empathy for their experiences
- making yourself available whilst also allowing them their own space
- spending time with them
- taking an interest in their activities, and encourage them to talk about what's happening in their life
- taking their feelings seriously
- encouraging and supporting their friendships
- encouraging activities that promote mental health, such as exercise, good eating, regular sleep and doing things they enjoy
- giving positive feedback
- letting them know that you love them. They may not always admit it but this is likely to be very important to them.

Can I access headspace on behalf of my young person?

Whether or not your young person is ready to access our services for themselves, we encourage you to make contact with us and discuss ways we might engage your young person or how you can be supported to care for your young person.

If you would like to talk to a headspace professional, please call us. You may be booked into an appointment or offered support over the phone.

If your young person is engaged or is willing to engage with headspace, ask us about the support and involvement we offer to family and friends.

How can I contribute to headspace?

Family and friends' involvement in the delivery of our services is important to us. If you would like to provide input into how we engage with family and friends as a service, please speak to a headspace worker.

more ways to support

Family and friends involvement in care can help improve treatment outcomes for young people. Centres will vary in offering different ways to get involved and support a young person attending headspace. The level of involvement will be guided by the young person's wishes and the services available at your local headspace.

Types of involvement may include:

- supporting a young person to book and attend appointments, attending some sessions with the young person
- attending a psychoeducation or peer support session for family and friends
- having the option of checking in with the clinician if you have any concerns or issues.

Ask about options for the involvement of family and friends at your local centre.

Share the responsibility

If possible, share the responsibility of supporting your young person with other members of your family – it doesn't have to be solely your job. If it isn't possible in your immediate family, maybe there are people in your extended network of family and friends who can help.

The saying "it takes a village to raise a child" is about the power of a shared commitment to care and support a young person.

Share your experience with a supportive friend or family member but remember, you can always seek professional support if needed, such as your GP.

Accept care from others

Remember, your circle of family and friends is crucial to your own wellbeing. Identify the support people who care about your young person and you. Work out who you trust to talk with openly and honestly, knowing they won't judge or tell you what you should do. It can be helpful to talk with others who understand and have had similar experiences.

Being strong does not mean that you can't accept small acts of kindness or offers of support. It's OK to receive from others who want to give to you. A gift that gives you 'time out' or an opportunity to enjoy something you love can allow you to feel restored during what might be a tough time.

Don't let go of what grounds you

Sometimes the responsibility of supporting someone experiencing mental health challenges can leave you feeling there is little space for the things in life that give you pleasure.

If you experience a sense of belonging through connecting with people that share beliefs, traditions or similar passions, then it can be an act of self-care to continue or reclaim this activity.

Finding ways to expand and appreciate these joys, no matter how small, is important to nurture your own mental health and wellbeing. Making a commitment to incorporate the simple pleasures in life can sustain you day-to-day and long term.

What lifts your spirit or gives you energy? Pets, the beach, running, singing, connecting with nature, meditation?

For more information and resources, head to our website at headspace.org.au/family

how can I support myself?

While supporting a young person experiencing mental health difficulties can be deeply rewarding, it can also have an impact on you – and it's essential to look after your own mental health and wellbeing.

Practicing self-care models healthy habits for the young person you are supporting, while also enhancing your capacity to effectively care for your young person.

Looking after yourself is not selfish

Parents and carers can experience poor physical health, social isolation, anxiety, depression and financial loss as a result of their caring role. You might be juggling many competing needs and feel pulled in different directions.

In addition to caring for a young person who is experiencing mental health challenges, you may be working, taking care of other children and maintaining a household. Parents and carers supporting their young person often feel they are being selfish if they attend to their own needs. This can result in denying important needs.

In the event of an emergency, passengers on a plane are advised to apply the oxygen mask to themselves first so that they can assist a fellow passenger.

Signs that your support role is impacting your wellbeing

Physical
tiredness, body aches, weight gain or loss, high blood pressure or other health challenges

Self-blame
the question "What did I do wrong?" getting in the way of feeling good about yourself as a parent or carer

Changed family relationships
the ripple effect of mental ill health across the whole family

Emotional
anxiety, sadness, teary, 'short fuse'

Work life
impacted if you are distracted, or need to take time off

Be kind to yourself

Often self-blame goes with the experience of being a parent or carer. Being realistic and having compassion for yourself is important, especially if the self-blame is 'kicking in' or if the expectations of yourself are too high.

Consider what it would be like if you had a friend in the same situation and how you might respond to them if they were being hard on themselves. You might encourage them and affirm their efforts instead. Self-talk can be powerful and these messages can help with accepting that you are not responsible for the challenges that your young person is facing.

Be informed

Supporting a young person who is struggling with mental health challenges can create worry and a huge feeling of responsibility. Learning about mental health and the impact on young people can give you knowledge, skills and optimism. This knowledge will equip you with the tools to support your young person.

In most cases, early intervention in mental health care has positive outcomes for young people. This news can give family and friends the hope that with support, their young person can come through a difficult time.

See page 20 for our seven healthy headspace tips

consent and confidentiality

Consent

headspace is a voluntary service. Health professionals can only provide treatment to young people who give consent. This is something we will ask a young person when they attend.

If the young person is under 18

A parent or legal guardian is the appropriate person to give consent to access our service. In some cases these young people can consent to treatment without parental permission.

If the young person is over 18

We will work with the young person to involve their family and friends in ways that they are comfortable with, and that are likely to be beneficial to the young person's wellbeing.

If you would like a copy of our Consent Policy, please speak to a headspace worker.

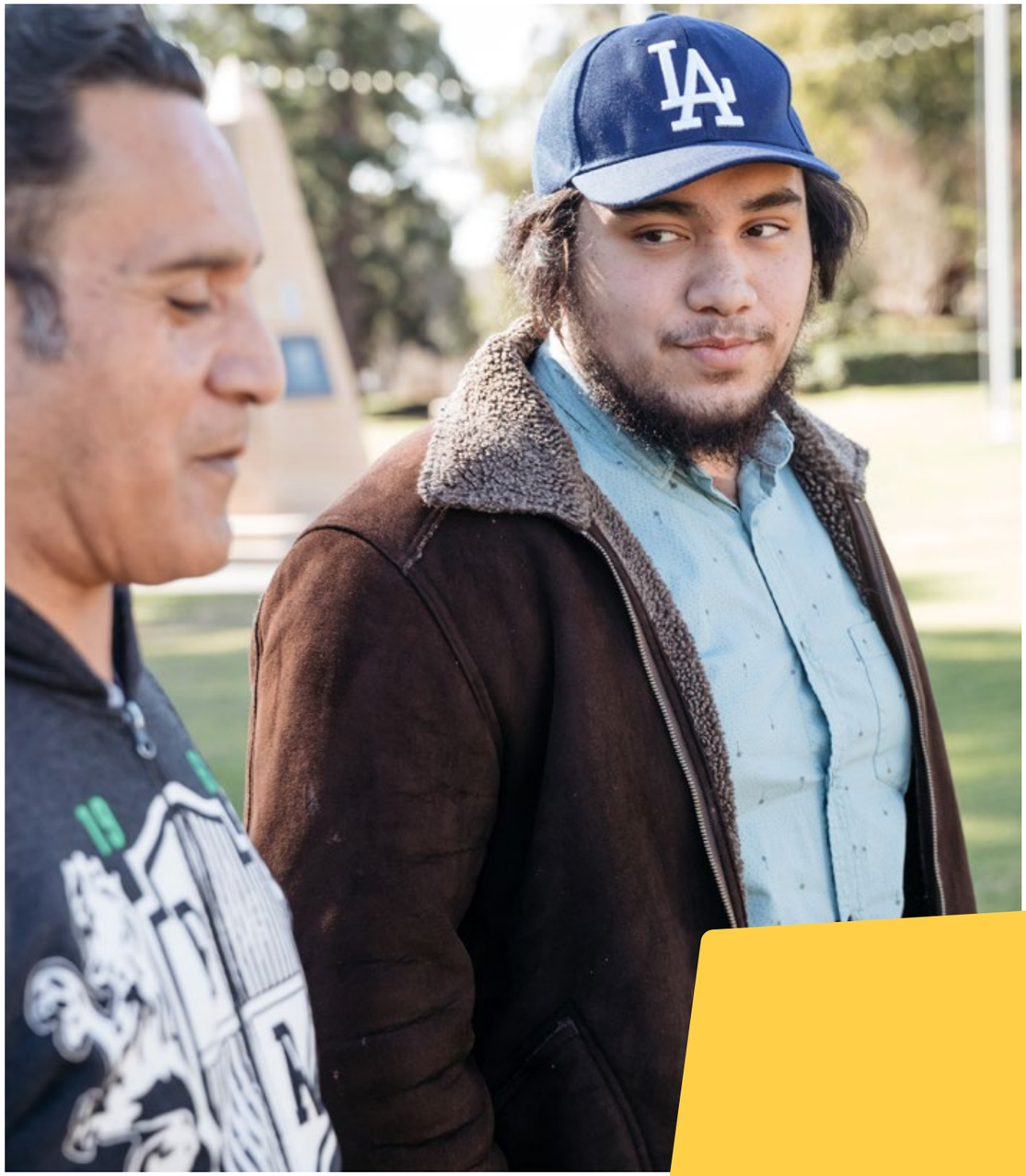
Confidentiality

When a young person talks to a headspace worker, nothing they say can be passed on to anyone else without their permission unless the young person:

1. is at risk of harming themselves or someone else
2. is at risk of being harmed by others
3. has committed a serious crime.

In these cases we will provide only necessary information to appropriate services or support people.

If you have any questions about confidentiality, please speak to a headspace worker.



“I was always made to feel a part of the treatment plan, often seeking my input as to how best to work on different situations.”

– **Ann,** Parent

Feedback

We appreciate all feedback (compliments, suggestions and complaints) about the services and care we provide to your young person. This feedback is used to make sure that young people accessing our services have the best possible experience.

You can provide feedback about your service experience in a number of ways, including:

- in person at our centre
- by phone
- via our headspace centre webpage.

Our contact details can be found on the cover. We take all feedback seriously and will do our best to respond to your feedback quickly.

Further information and support

The following agencies also provide information and support to family and friends caring for young people.

National agencies

Agency	Contact details	About
Beyond Blue	beyondblue.org.au 1300 224 636	Supporting someone with depression or anxiety Online chat & 24/7 phone support
Black Dog Institute	blackdoginstitute.org.au	Supporting someone with depression or bipolar disorder
Carers Australia	carersaustralia.com.au	Carer counselling, advice, advocacy, education and training
QLife	qlife.org.au 1800 184 527	Supporting people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex, queer or questioning (LGBTIQQ) Online chat & phone support
Reachout	reachout.com	Information about supporting young people with mental health difficulties
Sane Australia	sane.org 1800 18 (SANE) 7263	Information about helping someone experiencing a mental health crisis Online chat & phone support

What if English is your second language?

headspace services are provided in English. In some cases interpreters can be arranged in advance to support your young person, or family and friends by communicating with a headspace worker during a session.

For more information on mental health in a language other than English, please speak to a headspace worker or visit Mental Health in Multicultural Australia at **mhima.org.au.**

seven ways to support a young person's healthy headspace

Just like physical fitness, mental fitness requires regular effort. This can be challenging to maintain. Family and friends can support a young person by providing them with the tools to live their lives in a positive and meaningful way.

Good mental health encourages young people to positively engage in work, study and social activities. Good mental health can help them:

- think flexibly
- problem-solve
- manage day-to-day stress
- feel connected to others
- be resilient when things go wrong.

1. get into life

Doing things that are enjoyable and provide a sense of purpose is essential to good mental health. This includes fun activities, work or study.

Encourage your young person to get involved in activities that give them a sense of accomplishment. This can boost their confidence and provide opportunities to connect with others.

As a support person, modelling 'getting into life' yourself can help make it feel more achievable for your young person.

2. learn skills for a tough time

It is important to take the time to think and talk about how to handle tough times. Encourage your young person to build a range of strategies for handling tough times and let them know these will come in handy now and in the future.

Different strategies work for different people. You can model going through a tough time by talking openly about how you are handling it.

3. create connections

Relationships with friends, family (pets included) and others are essential to young peoples' mental health and wellbeing, and offer a sense of belonging.

Young people will naturally focus on friends, but still need family. Encourage your young person to have meaningful connections with friends while also finding ways to spend time together.

If 'one-on-one' activities feel too intense, then joint activities with other friends or family members can be an enjoyable way to reconnect.

One of the most effective ways family and friends can support young people to look after their mental health is to model healthy habits. It's a good idea to practise some of these tips yourself.

4. eat well

Eating well fuels the body and energy levels and can improve a person's mood, general health and wellbeing.

Together with your young person, create a list of favourite nutritious meals and snacks, or invite your young person to join you at the supermarket, choose food and help cook meals.

We also need to drink plenty of water, and good hydration supports clear thinking and concentration. A good quality drink bottle might encourage your young person to keep their hydration up.

5. stay active

Staying active is critical to physical health, mental agility and mood regulation.

If your young person isn't into sport or exercise then activities like dancing, yoga, walking the dog, cycling or walking to a friend's house are other ways of integrating physical activity into everyday life.

As a support person, you can encourage an active lifestyle in your young person by also staying active yourself.

6. get enough sleep

Sleep is vital for young people and their mental health. During adolescence, the 'body clock' changes and young people are more likely to stay awake late at night and sleep into the morning.

You can help by encouraging regular 'winding down' activities before bed and supporting a regular routine in the morning.

Help your young person create a bedroom environment that is free of TV, devices and lights so that sleep will come more easily.

7. cut back on alcohol and other drugs

Family and friends play an important role in supporting healthy decision making when it comes to alcohol and other drugs. Talk openly with your young person about alcohol and other drugs, including ways they can minimise risks.

It's better to delay the age a young person starts drinking for as long as possible. Be prepared to talk about alcohol-use early and throughout adolescence and early adulthood.

The best way to send a message about alcohol is for family members to model responsible drinking behaviour.

notes

headspace services operate across Australia, in metro, regional and rural areas, supporting young Australians and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.

headspace would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing services that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate and inclusive.

headspace is committed to embracing diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination in the provision of health services. headspace welcomes all people irrespective of ethnicity, lifestyle choice, faith, sexual orientation and gender identity.

For more details about headspace visit headspace.org.au

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