Mental Health



Introduction

Mental health is an integral part of our overall well-being, influencing how we think, feel, and act. This topic explores various facets of mental health, offering insight into common conditions, supportive resources, and avenues for seeking help. By fostering a deeper understanding and destigmatising mental health, individuals are better equipped to navigate their mental health journey and seek the necessary support for a balanced and fulfilling life.

There is support available in any way that suits you – online, over the phone or in person.

Mental health can mean many things

Everyone feels stressed, sad or unhappy from time to time. It's okay if you are feeling this way. Mental health conditions (sometimes called mental illness) are when you feel unwell for a long time. Mental health conditions can also be episodic. This means that the feelings can come and go.

Sometimes you might need some support. It can be a good idea to reach out to someone if you are:

- Feeling anxious or very worried for more than a couple of weeks,
- Feeling depressed or unhappy for more than a couple of weeks,
- If you feel like you can't control your emotions or reactions, or you are having severe mood swings that are causing problems in your relationships with friends and family,
- Having trouble sleeping or eating (either too much or too little),
- Feeling very quiet or withdrawn for more than a couple of weeks,
- Drinking a lot or using drugs to cope with stress or emotions,
- Feeling guilty, worthless, hopeless, or numb like nothing matters,
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared,
- Thinking of harming yourself or others,
- Noticing a change in your own behaviour or feelings, where something doesn't feel quite right.

You might be feeling this way sometimes or you could have been feeling like this for a long time. Feeling sad or stressed can sometimes be a normal part of life.

Headspace and eheadspace are not an emergency service so if you're in an emergency situation or need immediate assistance, contact mental health services, go to your local emergency department or call emergency services on 000. If you need to speak to someone urgently, call Lifeline 13 11 14 or Kids Helpline 1800 551 800.

Mental Health Care Plan

Your doctor can help you understand what you are feeling and give you

information about what support you can access to help you.

If your doctor recommends a Mental Health Care Plan, you will be able to see a mental health professional such as a psychologist or a social worker at a discounted rate with a Medicare rebate.

Mental Health Care Plan tips:

- Keep in mind that costs for psychologists and other allied health professionals vary, so make sure you ask the doctor to refer you to someone who is within your price range.
- Some psychologists bulk bill under Medicare or may offer cheaper visits for concession card holders.
- If you are a student or have a Health Care Card you may be eligible for extra support. Find out more about Medicare.
- A Mental Health Care Plan appointment might take a little longer than a normal doctor visit so when you book , ask for a longer appointment.

If you're having difficulty coping and would like support there are lots of options for you:

- You can go to Health Direct to find a doctor near you – select 'bulk billing' under 'Preferences' for a bulk billing doctor.
- You can visit your nearest headspace centre. headspace provide free or very low-cost services to help young people with mental health.
- headspace also have online options where you can talk to a mental health clinician or peer worker via eheadspace and on the online group chats or community forms.
- Medicare Mental Health Centres provide free, confidential mental health and wellbeing support for anyone in Australia.
- You can use online chat to talk privately with a trained health professional at Kids Helpline or Beyond Blue.
- You can visit Reach Out for videos, articles and resources to help with anything that's on your mind.
- Beyond Blue and HealthInfoNet have lists of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples health support services and community controlled health services.

- ACON have over the phone and online mental health support specifically focused on LGBTIQA+ young people.
- NSW Mental Health Line (1800 011 511) have 24 hour phone support with professionals who will answer your call about mental health concerns for you or someone you are concerned about and put you to contact with the right service.

Are you nervous about seeking professional help?

If you are worried or cautious about taking the first steps to seeking professional help, it can be helpful to talk to someone you trust before hand. Like a friend, a parent, or a youth worker or school counsellor.

Meeting up with a support person at a location that makes you feel more relaxed can also be helpful.

If you are having trouble getting the words out, you can also use creative ways to express how you feel – try writing it down, painting how you feel, or making some music.

If you're nervous about talking to someone – it can help to practice what you will say and how you will say it.

Reach Out have more information about how to talk to someone you trust.

Talking to someone who is experiencing a mental health condition

When you know someone who is experiencing a mental health condition you might be the person that they come to for help, or you might notice that a friend of family member is acting a bit differently.

You might be noticing differences in their behaviour, maybe they are sad or being withdrawn, or maybe they are being a bit more 'extra' (excitable) than usual.

You might want to be there for the person if you see these things or if they come

to speak to you about how they feel. It's important to remember that you should always encourage the person to seek professional help as well.

These organisations have more information on how to help a friend experiencing a mental health condition.

- Reach Out – How to ask a friend if they're okay
- Kids Helpline – My friend struggles with mental health
- headspace – Mental health for friends and family
- Medicare Mental Health – How to support someone | Medicare Mental Health
- You can also call Lifeline or Kids Helpline for advice.

Is your parent, guardian or carer experiencing mental health conditions?

If you think or you know that your parent, guardian or carer is experiencing mental health conditions, you can visit Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI).

COPMI have information and videos explaining what might be happening to your parent or guardian, how you can support them, and how to look after your own mental health.

Helping a friend who is having thoughts of suicide

If you have a friend who has talked to you about having thoughts of suicide or who is feeling suicidal, it's important to know that you can only help them by listening to them, being there for them and supporting them to reach out for professional help.

Suicidal thoughts are very serious and should not be ignored or brushed off as something they will 'get over'. You can encourage your friend and help them to access some professional support.

You could help them by being there with them when they call a support service like Kids Helpline or Lifeline or by helping them book a 'Mental Health Care Plan'

appointment and going with them to see a doctor.

Remember, this can be very hard for both of you and their feelings are not your fault, you also need to look after your own mental health.

You can also contact Kids Helpline or Lifeline to ask for advice on how you can best support your friend.

For more information on how to help someone who might be feeling suicidal:

- headspace – Understanding and dealing with suicide
- Reach Out – How to make a safety plan
- R U Ok? – How to have a conversation about suicide
- Kids Help Line – My friend is thinking about suicide
- Kids Help Line – Someone I know is thinking about suicide
- Connor and Oliver – Help to access support comic
- Sarah and Claire – Help to access support comic

Are you having thoughts of harming yourself?

If you are having thoughts about harming yourself, or if you know someone who is thinking about harming themselves, it's important to talk to someone.

This could be a friend, a family member, a counsellor, a youth worker or a doctor.

Remember you're not alone, it can be very scary but many people have experienced these thoughts and there is support available to help.

You can also visit these online services:

- Kids Helpline – I'm thinking about suicide
- Beyond Blue – Suicide Prevention
- Reach Out – 'I'd rather die' What to do if you're having suicidal thoughts
- Suicide Call Back Service – Feeling suicidal

> *If you're feeling overwhelmed and **need to speak with someone now**, you can call the services in the resources section below where a trained mental health professional can provide private and confidential support available 24/7.*

Mental Health support services and resources

If you’re overwhelmed and need immediate support, call the services listed below for 24/7 confidential assistance from a trained professional:

- Lifeline on 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800
- Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 (if you’re aged 15 years or older)
- NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511