



support for families

to help young people navigate relationships

Secondary school can be a challenging time for young people making social connections.

Relationships can be complicated enough for adults. They can be even more complicated for young people when they are navigating different social groups. They have their relationships with classmates and friends, family members, as well as romantic partners.

Relationships can bring joy, but they can also bring challenges and stress that can negatively impact your young person's emotional and social wellbeing.

Sometimes these stressors can feel overwhelming. It's important that young people know that they don't have to wait to ask for help — that now is a good time to talk.

Having the support of family and friends can make a difference to a young person's life and their emotional wellbeing. For you, it means acknowledging when they're struggling emotionally, and what to do to support them.

This is where the headspace NIP it in the bud framework can help to resolve problems before they feel too overwhelming to manage. The NIP framework helps you to **Notice** changes in mood and behaviour, **Inquire** sensitively and competently and **Provide** information to help young people access the right support.



Notice

The first step is to notice changes in your young person's behaviour.

You may want to consider whether they're being affected by other things — like what's happening at school, interactions on social media, issues in the media etc.

If you have noticed changes in their behaviour, try to work out how long it might have gone on for. There might be other symptoms of emerging mental wellbeing concerns that they may need extra support for.

Signs to look out for:

- Noticeable changes in behaviour e.g. feelings of anger, sadness, lack of focus
- No longer enjoying things that interest them
- Easily irritated and having problems with friends e.g. withdrawal, acting out.



Inquire

This is your opportunity to find out what's going on. By asking questions and listening, you see what other support or action you may need to take. It's important to ask what the young person needs, rather than assume. Remember, listening can be just as powerful as offering solutions.

There's no perfect way to start a conversation about mental health. Find a time and place where everyone involved is feeling safe to talk about it.

You're trying to understand their experience so you're in a better place to help. Some ways to try having this conversation might be:

- "Hey, I've noticed you seem to have a lot on your mind at the moment. Do you want to talk about it?"

- "How are your friends at the moment, how have things been going with them?"
- A way to start a conversation could even just as an invitation to do something together. Then, you can try asking about things once you're doing the activity. Asking straight up could be too intense.

How to help:

1. Don't be judgmental, and actively listen
2. Choose an appropriate place and time, with the right people there
3. Be aware of your body language and theirs
4. Acknowledge their experience
5. Reflect and clarify the details
6. Give them reassurance and be hopeful
7. Normalise their experience, don't minimise it
8. Validate and encourage them to seek help (see next step: Provide)



Provide

It's about having a two-way conversation with your young person to help them decide what they might need at that time, and you as a family member helping them plan the steps to access it. Remember to respond in a way that shows you're there for them.

Based on what comes out of your conversation, you'll have a direction for what further support you may need.

Questions you could ask:

- "I'm hearing that X is really difficult at the moment, and I'm really glad you've come to me. I don't know a lot about X, but I'd really like to learn so that we can work through this together — how do you feel about that?"
- "I'd like to find a way that I can be helpful for you. Would that be OK for you?"
- "I'm not feeling very confident about the best way to help at the moment. Would it be OK if we called a service to help us figure out the best way forward?"
- "Would you like me to help you figure out ways — like learning some coping skills — that might help you?"



For more information on how to support your young person using the NIP it in the bud framework, visit headspace.org.au/nipinthebud

