

13 Reasons Why, season 4

Discussion guide for young people



13 Reason Why is a fictional drama series that tackles real-life issues experienced by young people, including sexual assault, homophobia, child abuse, suicide, termination of pregnancy and more.

Filmed in a candid and sometimes explicit manner the show may resonate with you and your friends because of experiences you've had at your own school or in your daily life.

headspace developed the following information that may be helpful for viewers of the show and the wider community. The information included aims to make you aware of some of the themes covered in the series, as well as give you information to choose whether it's right for you to watch. There is also information to support you to look after yourself and your friends, where to seek help, as well as how to have conversations with your friends and families about the issues addressed in the series.



Important points to remember

- It's likely a lot of people will be talking about the series. It's important to be respectful and informed. The information included here can help to keep people safe and connected.
- Some people may be distressed by some of the themes in the series, while others are not. This will depend on individual life experiences and current circumstances. It is important to be respectful of other people's experience.
- Remember, this is TV, dramatized for viewer engagement, designed to entertain. The characters and events may not be realistic representations for every viewer.

Tips for watching the show safely

- If you are likely to be affected by any of the themes covered in the show, it is important to consider whether you watch it. You might choose not to, which is ok. Reading about some of the themes in the show can help you decide.
- If you choose to watch, you could make a plan to look after yourself. This might be with the support of family and friends. Letting them know what you might struggle with, and how they can help is likely to be useful.
- Your support plan could include self-care options such as:
 - take breaks between episodes
 - check in with family and friends between episodes
 - get information from reputable sources about the themes covered in the show.
- Take time to look after yourself. Some self-care tips include:
 - prioritising sleep
 - eating well
 - staying active
 - maintaining close relationships with family and friends
 - learning ways to handle hard times (journaling, listening to music, quiet time out, relaxation)
 - reducing alcohol and other drug use
 - keep on doing the things in your life that are fun and important to you.



suicide

- Suicide is a complex issue with many contributing factors, including individual personality characteristics, coping styles, life history of experiences, current circumstances, support networks, and mental health difficulties.
- Unfortunately, thinking about suicide is more common than it should be. Despite this, it is still a serious sign that things are not ok. If you are experiencing suicidal thinking it is important to share this with a trusted adult.
- Thoughts of suicide can occur when life circumstances have been difficult and stressful, such as after a major loss or traumatic event.
- Some young people have thoughts of suicide when life seems unbearable and they want to end their pain. Most young people who have thoughts of suicide may not want to die, they just can't imagine another way out of what they are going through.
- It's important to know that young people can and DO get through these times in their lives. Most young people who've had thoughts of suicide find a way to work through them. With effective treatment, social support and time, many who have tried to end, or considered ending their lives can go on to live full, meaningful and productive lives.
- If you are experiencing thoughts of suicide, it's important that you seek support. It takes a lot of courage to reach out, getting help can make a big difference to how quickly you can overcome these thoughts and get back on track with your life. Reach out to a trusted family member, carer, teacher, friend, an Elder, or a professional service.
- Seeking support helps. It helps people to understand:
 - how to stay safe
 - what things contribute to suicidal thinking
 - how to manage and overcome the things that contribute to suicidal thinking
 - how to manage suicidal thinking
 - what to do when things get really tough
 - how to create a life with meaning, purpose and fulfilment.
- Remember that thoughts about suicide are changeable. You don't need to act on thoughts about suicide. Like all thoughts, they can be challenged and they can come and go. It can be hard, but with practise you can learn how to react differently to them. For example, you can remind yourself that they are just thoughts and you don't need to act on them.



suicide

- Create a safety plan that includes warning signs, reasons to live, names of people who love you, distractions and self-care activities and places you can go to be safe. Even if things start to look better, it can help to have a safety plan in place and to look out for your warning signs. Some useful resources to help you create a safety plan:
 - The Beyond Blue [safety plan](#) and [Beyond Now app](#)
 - [Menzie's Stay Strong Plan](#), specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.
- Self-care is about finding healthy activities that make you feel better and less stressed. Some activities might include breathing exercises, mindfulness, hanging out with people you love, getting outdoors or listening to music. It's really up to you as everyone is different. For more ideas about self-care activities, see our tips for a healthy headspace.
- Thoughts of suicide should always be taken seriously – it can sometimes be very difficult to recognize early warning signs, or to predict when someone is really struggling. Sometimes people will say something like 'I feel like a burden to everyone', or they may have recently experienced difficult life events. That's why it's important to regularly check in with people and to develop close relationships and support networks, as it can help reduce the risk of suicidal thinking taking over.
- Studies conducted in the [United States](#) and [Canada](#), following the release of 13 Reasons Why showed some increased risk in young people which these reports attributed to content included in series. It is unclear the cause of this increase but likely to be related to unsafe depiction and reporting of suicide.

If you, or someone you care about, are in crisis call triple zero (000). You can also go to your local hospital emergency department. Remember to stay with the person until they are able to access professional support.

If you're feeling overwhelmed and need to speak with someone now, contact:

- [Lifeline on 13 11 14](#)
- [the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 \(if you're aged 15 years or older\).](#)

More information

[Understanding suicide at headspace](#)

child abuse and neglect

- Child abuse and neglect is when someone under the age of 18 is harmed by an adult – a parent, caregiver or other adults. It can take a number of forms including:
 - physical abuse
 - emotional abuse
 - neglect
 - sexual abuse
 - exposure to family violence.
- Child abuse and neglect is a crime. It's never OK and it's never the fault of the person experiencing it.
- If you or someone you know would like professional advice on what steps to take next, consider contacting 1800respect.org.au – they can help you understand your options and support everyone involved.
- Not all young people respond in the same way after experiencing child abuse and neglect. People with a lived experience might go through a range of feelings. These might include:
 - shame
 - self-blame
 - sadness, confusion and low self-esteem
 - anger
 - fear
 - rage
 - powerlessness.
- And they might experience:
 - trauma symptoms
 - flashbacks and nightmares
 - denial that it happened
 - relationship issues
 - aggression and violence issues
 - difficulties at school or work.
- People who have experienced child abuse and neglect are also at higher risk of developing drug and alcohol issues, mental health difficulties and are at increased risk of self harm and suicide.
- With the right support, people who have experienced child abuse and neglect can recover and live full and meaningful lives.
- It can be very difficult to talk with others about this experience, or to reach out for support. If you're finding it hard, that is OK. It's important to try to seek support from someone you trust. A family member, close friend, school counsellor, an Elder, your GP, police or a professional service such as 1800respect.org.au
- It is important to seek help early. This can help to reduce the severity and duration of the impact of child abuse and neglect.

If a friend lets you know they have experienced child abuse and neglect, it can be hard to know how to respond. Below is a guide on how to respond.

Do:

- take them seriously
- listen to them, and believe what they say
- make sure they're safe. Support them to talk with a trusted adult, professional service or the police
- acknowledge that it must have been difficult for them to talk with you
- ask them what they need from you
- ask them what might be helpful in supporting them
- ask permission to check in with them again in the future
- if they are, or you are worried about their safety, let them know you need to talk to a trusted adult to keep them safe – even if they don't want you to. Ask them who they would like to tell, and see if they want to do this together. If no trusted adult is available this can be a professional service, such as 1800respect.org.au

Don't

- dismiss them, justify someone else's behaviour or judge them
- ignore them, or pretend it didn't happen
- listen and then not follow up or help them to get additional support
- tell them to cheer up, get over it or forget about it
- expect them to tell you everything
- talk to others about anything they've told you. Telling others must only be to a trusted adult or professional service about seeking support, and should be done in consultation with the person where possible.

grief

- Grief happens after experiencing loss. There are many types of loss, such as a loss of a relationship through break-up, a family unit through separation, virginity or sexual freedom; loss of social standing; loss of a friendship group through bullying or rumours, or the loss of a loved one.
- The grief that happens after loss is different for everyone. It can be different in duration and intensity. Commonly it is incredibly painful. There are many ways a person can experience grief:
 - how you feel: shock, disbelief, numbness, pain, intense sadness, anger, resentment, regret, guilt, abandonment, anxiety or worry
 - what you think: Thinking about all of the details of the loss, imagining a different future or past, having flashbacks or re-experiencing episodes, thinking that things don't matter any more, or you don't care, having trouble concentrating or remembering things
 - what you do: Some people find themselves doing a lot to keep busy, while others stop doing a lot of the things they normally do.
- If these things are happening for you, the first thing to know is that's ok. Grief can be a difficult time. Here are some things that can be useful in the grieving process:
 - be ok with feeling down. Find someone you trust to share these feelings with
 - try to maintain as many of the routine parts of life as you can, e.g. school or work or study, keeping in touch with friends or family
 - take some time to prioritise looking after yourself. This can include: working on keeping good sleep habits, trying to eat well, getting some exercise, maintaining any hobbies, connecting with family and friends
 - connect with people you trust. Share what you're going through. Being heard and understood can help to navigate the really hard times. You might need to keep persisting if you don't have any luck first time.
- If the impact of grief includes the following, it might be time to reach out:
 - ongoing major sleep troubles
 - ongoing withdrawal from school or study, or major academic troubles
 - hopelessness about the future
 - relationship troubles or conflict with friends and family
 - doing things out of character; such as increased or more unpredictable use of alcohol and other drugs, or sexual behaviour.

gun violence

- Incidents of mass violence are rare in Australia because guns are not as accessible here as in the US, but scenes relating to gun violence can still be impactful. If you are distressed, you can:
 - stop watching
 - check in with a family member or friend and seek support
 - get some information from reputable sources.



drug use

- If you are with someone and you're worried they may have overdosed call 000 immediately for medical support. You won't get in to trouble for asking for help.
- If you're distressed by the overdose scene or if it brings up memories of past difficulties, take a break. It is important to do things to look after yourself, such as:
 - be close to supportive family and friends
 - have some time by yourself in a safe place
 - listen to music
 - go for a walk.
- If you're not confident with the strategies above, it's important to stay with people you trust and who care about you. Let them know you're struggling, and make a plan together to get through these hard times. Some will be short term, and others might be longer term, like seeking professional support. headspace offers support if you're concerned about your alcohol and/or other drug use.
- If you're concerned about a friend who's using drugs, having conversations with them about drug use is important. If these conversations are guided by the following principles they're most likely to be useful:
 - they come from a place of care and wanting the best for your friend
 - they're based on trust
 - you try to keep them safe and look out for them
 - you try to understand why drug use is important to them
 - you're patient with them
 - you support them to make any changes they want to make. It's ok to start small
 - you support them to get professional support if they ask
 - if they have a setback, you're there to support them. They will be disappointed too, so don't be too hard on them
 - there are opportunities to look at the impact of drug use (e.g. is it stopping them from being the person they want to be, or are they missing out on things that are important to them?)
 - there are opportunities to look at the benefits of reducing or cutting out drug use (e.g. increased mood, concentration, energy, motivation, sleep, relationships).
- This is a lot to ask of a friend. Sometimes it may get too much for you, and you may need a break to look after yourself, which is ok. It is important to prioritize self care.
- If you are worried about your drug use and want to reduce, it can be important to build a network of people who can support you through this, e.g. family, friends, GP or professional support services. It's best to get professional support while detoxing if you can.

where to get help

**For immediate help contact:
triple zero (000) if it is an emergency**

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

Additional youth support services include:

headspace: visit headspace.org.au to find your
nearest centre or call eheadspace on 1800 650 890

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 kidshelpline.com.au

ReachOut: reachout.com

SANE Australia: 1800 187 263 sane.org



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.



headspace centres and 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.