

Hi. What can we help you with today?  
**I'm a young person -  
and I'm looking for information -  
about mental ill-health -**

Go

# headspace fact sheet toolkit

We're here  
to help



the facts:  
tips for a healthy headspace



**headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

# tips for a healthy headspace

**A healthy headspace allows us to live our lives in a productive and meaningful way.**



We can work, study, feel connected to others, be involved in activities in our community and bounce back when life's changes and challenges come along.



## How can I boost my mental health?

There are a number of things you can do to look after and maintain your mental health and wellbeing. These include:

### Stay Active

Staying active can help you sleep better, manage stress and boost your mood.

The key to getting active is finding something you like to do. Whether it's going to the gym, kicking a ball around with a friend, or going for a walk – make sure it's something you enjoy, that way you're more likely to stick with it. Start with small, manageable goals. Asking a friend to join you can help with motivation.

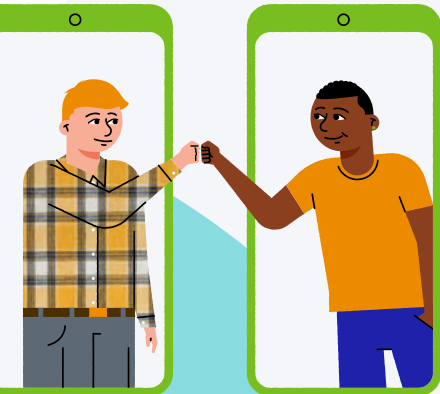
### Create connections

Spending time with family, friends (including pets), your mob and people in your community can help strengthen your mental health and wellbeing. You can try things like:

- volunteer work
- hobbies
- clubs or committees
- sports.



**Finding a safe online community can also help you feel connected and meet new people.**



## Get in to life

Keep doing the stuff you love to do and the things that are important to you. It can help keep the fun in your life, give you a sense of purpose, boost your confidence and help you connect with others.

Some of these things, such as skating, reading or playing the guitar, might just be for fun, but other things like work or study can give you other skills and can help to give your life meaning.

## Eat well

Eating well can improve your mood, energy levels, and your health and wellbeing. Eat nutritious food (like veggies, fruit and whole grains) and drink plenty of water to give your body and brain all the power it needs to function well. Sometimes we turn to snacks that aren't nutritious when we're stressed, so it's a good idea to develop coping strategies that aren't related to food for these times (e.g., relaxation activities).

## Get enough sleep

Getting good quality sleep can give you more energy, improve your concentration, and helps protect your mental health and wellbeing. But getting a good night's sleep isn't always easy – some tips:

- turn off screens at least an hour before bedtime
- try relaxation exercises
- have a bedtime routine
- avoid caffeine at least six hours before you go to bed.
- limit the use of alcohol and other drugs
- avoid napping during the day.

Keep doing the stuff you love to do and the things that are important to you.



## Cut back on alcohol and other drugs

Cutting down on the amount of alcohol and other drugs that you take, or avoiding alcohol and other drugs altogether, can help you sleep better, feel better, and keep a healthy headspace.

Even though alcohol and other drugs may make you feel good in the short term, they can impact your mental health and make you feel much worse in the long run.

## Getting support

**There are lots of ways to look after your headspace.**

**Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health.**

If you've tried some of these strategies for some time without improving despite your efforts, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, teacher, Elder, counsellor or health service.

## Learn skills for tough times

**Taking time to think about how you handle tough times is really important. Sometimes the things we do naturally can help, and sometimes they don't.**

**Build your options for handling tough times, they'll come in handy now and into the future. Things like:**

- using art, music or journalling to express yourself
- spending time in nature
- writing down your triggers/what you find difficult
- setting some small goals, and seeing them through
- practising being kind to yourself
- meditating or doing relaxation exercises.



**If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)**

**If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.**

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government.

 **headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation





the facts:  
**tips for a healthy headspace**



**headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

# get into life

**Achieving small tasks and doing things you enjoy can make you feel good. It can boost your confidence and lift your mood – helping you keep a healthy headspace.**

The activities you do can have a big impact on your headspace. When you spend time doing things you enjoy (or used to enjoy), it can give you relief from tough times, and build some fun in your life. Likewise, when you set and complete small tasks (like homework, staying active or giving back to your community) it can help to create a sense of accomplishment and meaning.

## How do I get into life?

Doing stuff matters. But sometimes it can also be really hard to do, especially if you're going through a difficult time. Often when we're feeling flat or sad, doing things can be the last thing we want to do. For times like this, we have some ideas below that might help.

As you set and achieve even small tasks you will learn more about yourself, build confidence and improve your wellbeing.

The key is to focus on doing – even if you don't want to or feel like it.



**Doing stuff can help your headspace by:**



**Getting you out of a rut – if you're feeling flat.**



**Giving you a sense of achievement and purpose.**



**Building your confidence.**



**Lifting your energy.**



**Improving your motivation to achieve your goals. i.e., work, study, or staying active goals.**



# How can I get into life and do more?

Here are six strategies you could try.

## 1. Set small goals

Go for a walk or call a friend for a chat. It can be anything, the important thing is to set the goal and follow through.

## 2. Find activities you enjoy

If you're going through a hard time, you may not feel excited about doing anything. But think back – what did you used to enjoy? This can be a good place to start. It's a good idea to have a number of activities you can do, that way if one doesn't work out, you can try another.

## 3. Make a plan

When you think of an activity, make time for it. Look ahead at your week and block out some time.

## 4. Keep trying

Find ways to follow through with your scheduled activity, even when you don't feel like it. You may not feel like doing anything, so it might help to learn new ways to handle this. Try telling a friend what you're doing, this can help keep you on track.

## 5. Reflect

Once you begin achieving your goals, take some time to reflect on how it makes you feel. Did you enjoy it? Did you feel a sense of accomplishment? If you did, that's great. If not, that's OK. You could try something else.

## 6. Be kind to yourself

Maybe you could try a new hobby that you're not great at. Think of it as making time with yourself to learn and grow. Keep trying, be kind to yourself, and enjoy the learning journey.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government.

The headspace Clinical Reference Group have approved this clinical resource. Fact sheets are for general information only. They are not intended to be and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific medical or health advice. While every effort is taken to ensure the information is accurate, headspace makes no representations and gives no warranties that this information is correct, current, complete, reliable or suitable for any purpose. We disclaim all responsibility and liability for any direct or indirect loss, damage, cost or expense whatsoever in the use of or reliance upon this information. 03 October 2022



## Healthy habits

**When you're feeling low or stressed it's important to put healthy habits in place – to give yourself a better chance of coping with life's challenges.**

Doing stuff and achieving little things every day is an important healthy habit, but it's not the only one. Things like staying active, eating well, and spending time on your relationships are also important for good mental health.

## Getting support

**There are lots of ways to look after your headspace.**

**Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health.**

If you've tried some of these strategies for some time without improving, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service.





# learn skills for tough times

**Sometimes life can be hard. From relationship issues, to work and study stress, to simply feeling low – we all go through stressful and emotional periods. When this happens, our coping strategies kick in – things we've learnt over time to help us cope.**

We all have different ways of coping with things. Some people use healthy ways of coping – like journaling, meditation or talking with family or friends. But for many of us, the strategies we turn to can actually leave us feeling worse. We may stop doing things we enjoy, turn to alcohol and other drugs, or disconnect from family and friends.

## How does learning skills for tough times help?

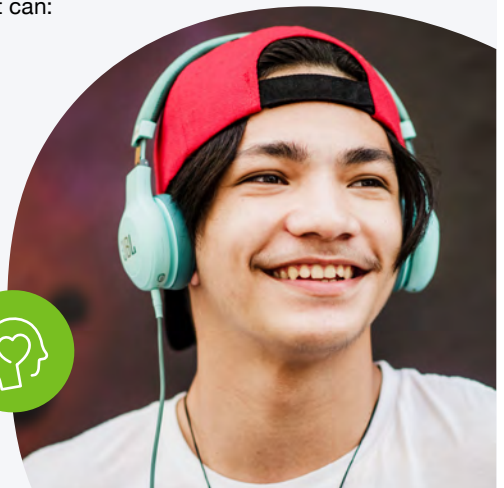
**Where should you start if you want to learn new ways to cope with tough times?**

Firstly, think about how you react to stress. Take time to understand what you do and why you do it. This builds your self awareness. It can also help you learn things about yourself that can help you handle tough times in the future. The more you understand yourself, the better you will be at applying positive strategies that work for you.

Here's how learning new and positive ways to handle tough times can help your headspace. It can:

- Improve your self-awareness
- Give you a sense of achievement
- Build your confidence
- Increase your energy levels
- Boost your mood
- Improve your motivation
- Allow you to identify strategies that might not be as helpful.

*Developing your own strategies that work for you can help build your resilience, your self-awareness and your confidence.*



## Ideas for how you can handle tough times:

- Journal – write a story or music
- Connect with country, family or friends, or your mob
- Express your feelings through artwork, song, and dance
- Write down your triggers or what you find difficult
- Schedule in regular catch ups with family and friends
- Do a digital detox or reduce screen time
- Spend time in nature – go for a swim, go fishing with friends, play sport
- Practise being kind to yourself
- Listen to things that make you feel happy, like a podcast or your favourite song
- Try meditation/relaxation exercises
- Try some breathing exercises
- Stay dead, strong and proud of who you are!



# How do I develop my own coping strategies?

Here are seven strategies you could use.

**1.**

## Notice what you do when you are going through a tough time.

Everyone copes with tough times in different ways. Noticing how you handle tough times is the first step towards changing things that aren't working for you. Pausing for a few seconds gives you the power to choose how you'd like to act, rather than reacting without thinking.

**2.**

## Reflect

Are your current coping strategies helpful? Thinking about this is not easy to do and can take some practice. To help, try these questions:

- Is the way I respond to tough times helpful, or not?
- How are my thoughts or feelings influencing what I do?
- Why do I respond in that way?
- How could I approach these challenges differently?

**3.**

## Start sooner rather than later

Try to build your coping strategies as soon as you notice you're having a rocky time.

**4.**

## Make it work for you

Your strategies might be very different to someone else, and that's OK! Everyone is different.

**5.**

## Get support

It can help to let those closest to you know your new coping strategies. That way, when you're distressed, and if you're not thinking clearly, they can support you with your new plan.

**6.**

## Notice the benefits

A lot of growth can come from how we manage the challenges that life throws at us. Noticing the benefits will help motivate you to continue trying new ways. Plus, it will help build your resilience!

**7.**

## Be kind to yourself

Trying out new skills can be tough and it's normal to have ups and downs. Remember it's a process and you learn something every time you try again.

## Getting support

There are lots of ways to look after your headspace.

Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health.

If you've tried some of these strategies for some time without improving despite your efforts, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government.

 **headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation





the facts:  
tips for a healthy headspace



**headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

# eat well

## Food and your mood

Eating well can help give you more energy, sleep better, improve your concentration and keep a healthy headspace.

## How can eating well improve our headspace?

When we think about improving our mental health, we might not think about changing the food we eat, but research tells us there's a strong link between what we eat and how we feel.

It can:



Help us get a better night's sleep



Give us more energy



Improve our concentration – this can help with things like work and study



Make us less likely to crave foods with high levels of sugar, salt or fat.

Cooking can also help us relax, de-stress and understand more about the food we're eating.





## So how can I eat well?

We know that some foods are very good for our mental health and others can cause us to feel flat or tired.

Eating well for your headspace includes eating a balanced, variety of foods such as:

- colourful fruits and vegetable varieties (if you struggle with some vegetables, stick to the ones you love and try to give the other vegetables a go too)
- high fibre foods (like wholegrain cereals and bread, beans, chickpeas, lentils and nuts)
- fermented foods (i.e., unsweetened yoghurt)
- omega 3 oils (i.e., olive oil, fish – tinned is fine)
- protein (a variety of protein choices are good, but try and limit red meat to max 3-4 times per week).

Eating well matters, but if you're having a tough time, this can make it harder.

We know eating well can also be impacted by a lot of things like living arrangements, money and relationships.

Things that can help:

- Set yourself small goals that are easy to stick to. You could start by including fruit or yoghurt as your afternoon snack. Start small while you build your confidence.
- Sometimes how we're feeling affects what or how we eat; so it's good to develop your own coping strategies for these times that aren't related to food. Things like staying active, catching up with family or friends, or relaxation activities.
- Team up with a few friends and make batches of meals to share. This takes the pressure off making a meal everyday and will help keep costs lower.
- Buy in bulk or buy from the markets – often markets have cheaper fresh food at the end of the day.
- Supermarkets also reduce prices at the end of the day and have daily specials.
- Connect with your community and see if local community centres or cultural groups have cooking groups you can connect with.
- And always be kind to yourself – celebrate your wins, both big and small. They can help give you the confidence and motivation to keep going.

Remind yourself that eating well isn't always easy and can be full of ups and downs – be kind to yourself while you try out new things.



## Healthy habits

When you're feeling low or stressed, it's important to put healthy habits in place – to give yourself a better chance of coping with life's challenges.

Eating well is an important healthy habit, but it's not the only one. Things like staying active, getting enough sleep, doing things every day and spending time on your relationships are also important for good mental health.

## Getting support

There are lots of ways to look after your headspace.

Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health.

If you've tried some of these strategies for some time without improving despite your efforts, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government.

 **headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation



# create connections

## Feeling connected to others is super important.

Healthy connections are important for your mental health. Spending time with people you care about, and who care about you, can help you feel supported.

Putting time into your connections can help you feel good, boost your energy and help you keep a healthy headspace.

We know connections with others aren't always easy. Finding a new connection can often be scary. And if you're experiencing mental health difficulties you may feel like disconnecting from people, rather than reaching out.

But here's the thing – the more you work on your connections to others, the stronger they get.



Strong connections can give you support when you need it and provide a sense of belonging and community.

## How do connections boost your mental health?

When you spend time connecting with and supporting others, your wellbeing can improve too!

Here's how working on your connections can improve your headspace:



Boosts your energy



Improves your sense of belonging



Helps you relax



Helps you feel supported including at workplaces, TAFE, school or uni.



# How do I look after my relationships/connections?

- Every connection can bring you different benefits, so try to keep a variety of people in your life, such as friends from work or school, teachers, parents, people who have similar interests and more.
- Communication is important. When you're open with people, they're likely to be more open with you – which can help strengthen your connection.
- Socialising and keeping in contact can sometimes be hard. Occasionally you may feel left out or not all agree. Just remember, it's normal to feel this way sometimes.
- Setting safe and respectful boundaries helps you let other people know how you'd like to be treated.
- Your relationship with yourself is an important relationship too. Take time to look after yourself and recharge. When you look after yourself, it can teach you how to look after others as well.



Focus on positive connections that make you feel good about yourself. Those where you support each other and where you feel you can be yourself.

## Types of connections

There are many different types of connections to explore such as:

### Friends

Grow a friendship by doing something together or for them.

### Family

Reach out to a family member and have a yarn or organise a family catch up.

### Work mates

Share something positive with a work colleague (e.g., something you value about them or their work).

### Romantic relationships

Spend time with your partner finding common interests or connecting through activities.

### Cultural

Link in with local community events, cultural camps and yarnning circles.

### Country

Maintain strong connections to country where you can.

### Community

Get involved in your local community as a volunteer or at events.

### Animals

Visit an animal park, care for a pet or spend time with your own or someone else's pet.

### Support people or service

Take the first step and reach out to a support person when in need.

### You (yourself)

Take time out to spend with yourself, looking after yourself by filling your own cup back up.



## Getting support

There are lots of ways to look after your headspace.

Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health.

If you've tried some of these strategies for some time without improving, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government.

 **headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation





the facts:  
tips for a healthy headspace



**headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

# stay active

**Staying active is super important in keeping a healthy headspace and it can help improve our mood. It's often when we're stressed out or low that getting active can help the most.**

The key to getting active is to find something you like to do. This can mean different activities to different people. It can also be a good way to connect with others who are also trying to stay active, and this can help with motivation.



## How do I stay active?

Staying active is anything that gets your body moving and increases your heart rate.

Activities like walking, playing sport, yoga, dancing or swimming all help release stress and can give you a better chance of improving your mental health and wellbeing.

Getting active can improve both our physical and mental health.



## There are so many benefits to staying active

It can:

- help you sleep better
- improve your concentration
- raise your energy levels
- improve your confidence
- boost your mood
- release stress
- lower anxiety.



## Some tips to get started

Changing habits can be hard, remember to be kind to yourself while you're trying out new things.

### Start small

Start by setting small goals; you will most likely achieve them, and this can help you to feel more motivated.

### Keep track

Monitor your progress and track the benefits after you're active. Notice how this made you feel. This can help you see the connections between how moving more helps you feel better.

### Do what you enjoy

Whether you enjoy working hard for short periods of time, or prefer swimming at the beach, it will be a lot easier to stick to it if you're having fun!

### Make the time (even when you're busy)

When you're busy and stressed, staying active can be the first thing you stop. But prioritising physical activity can help you through the tough times.

### Set a routine

Plan ahead and make staying active a part of your routine. Be organised, e.g., have your workout bag ready at the door, set reminders on your calendar or phone and setting an alarm can help you stick to your goals.



It can help to add the activity into the routine you already have (e.g., walking part or all of the way to school, TAFE, uni, or work).



## Healthy habits

**When you're feeling low or going through a tough time it's important to put healthy habits in place to give yourself a better chance of coping with life's challenges.**

Staying active is an important healthy habit, but it's not the only one. Things like sleep, eating well, and spending time on your relationships are also important for good mental health.

## Getting support

**There are lots of ways to look after your headspace.**

**Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health.**

If you've tried some of these strategies for some time without improving, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service.



**If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)**

**If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.**

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government.

 **headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation



# get enough sleep

**Getting the right amount of quality sleep can give you more energy, improve concentration, make you less likely to crave snacks that aren't nutritious, and you guessed it, keep a healthy headspace.**

If you're having a tough time, sleeping can be one of the first things that's affected.

Have you noticed when you get good quality sleep it's often easier to manage your emotions? This can help you deal with any stress, including relationships, and work and study difficulties. It can also help reduce the risk of mental health challenges in the future.

## So how much is enough?

If you're aged between 12-17 then 8 to 10 hours sleep is ideal, and 18-25 year olds should try to get 7 to 9 hours. Keep in mind that different people need slightly different amounts of sleep.

You might not know how much sleep you get, so it can be a good idea to record it in a sleep app or journal and notice whether your sleep impacts things like your mood and energy levels, or anything else you might notice.



Quality sleep is like a super power!

## Why it might be difficult to get a good night's sleep?

We all experience poor sleep from time to time – exams, job interviews, work stress, relationship concerns can keep us up worrying.

It's common to find it hard to get good quality sleep. It can be impacted by many things like the food you eat, using alcohol or other drugs, feeling worried or anxious, and even using your screen before bed.

The good news is there are things you can do to help you get those quality zzz's.





# So how can we get better sleep?

Changing habits can be hard, be kind to yourself while you're trying new things. You don't have to do everything at once, set yourself a small goal, choose something that's easier for you to do, then add other things in later. Achieving your goals can help build your confidence.



For many people, quality sleep can be hard to get, so don't be too tough on yourself as you try different things. You'll get there... you're learning. Be kind to yourself.

- At least an hour before bed, turn off games, YouTube, social media and any notifications. Try a movie, book or watch TV instead (not in the bedroom though!).
- Use the blue light filter on your phone and lower the brightness at night.
- If you find it hard to wind down, try a mindfulness exercise; you might try a mindfulness app.
- Try to sleep the same amount every night. An extra hour, every now and then, is fine – any more can confuse your body clock. Falling asleep one hour earlier is better than sleeping in one hour later.
- If you need to get up during the night, try to avoid turning on bright lights and hop back into bed quickly.
- Avoid caffeine at least six hours before you go to bed.
- Limit the use of alcohol and other drugs.
- If you can, avoid napping during the day.
- Leave your devices outside your bedroom.



## Healthy habits

**When you're feeling low or stressed, it's important to put healthy habits in place to give yourself a better chance of coping with life's challenges.**

Sleeping well is an important healthy habit, but it's not the only one. Things like staying active, eating well, doing things every day and spending time on your relationships are also important for good mental health.

## Getting support

**There are lots of ways to look after your headspace.**

**Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health.**

If you've tried some of these strategies for some time without improving despite your efforts, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service.



**If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)**

**If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.**

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government.





# cut back on alcohol and other drugs

**Cutting back on alcohol and other drugs can help clear your mind, improve your energy, and boost your motivation. This can also help keep a healthy headspace.**

Alcohol and other drugs can seem like a normal part of life for many people. We totally get it – it can be fun, lift your mood and boost your confidence. In the longer term though, the after-effects can leave you feeling worse than before.

## Some of the unexpected results of alcohol and other drugs can be:

- changes to anxiety and thoughts
- changes to mood
- impacts on relationships
- doing stuff can feel harder.



*If you're experiencing this, it's a good idea to think about whether your alcohol or other drug use is playing a part.*



## How does cutting back on alcohol and other drugs help?

Cutting back on alcohol and other drugs can be one of the most important things you can do for your headspace – however, it isn't always easy. It can help to think about the positives reducing your use can have.

These are things like:

- keeping your mind alert
- having more energy
- improving your sleep
- improving your relationships
- improving your engagement with work or study.

# How can I reduce my alcohol and other drug use?

Start by working out how alcohol or other drugs are impacting your life.

## Ask yourself

'Have I been anxious or upset more than usual? Have I been losing motivation? Could this be related to my alcohol or other drug use?'

## Start slow

Set yourself a goal you think is achievable. You might want to start with a short break (try a few days, then a week, then a month).

## Be patient

It might take a while before you start to see positive changes.

## Stay healthy

When you cut back it's normal to feel a little off, so look after yourself – try to eat well, stay active, spend some time with people you care about and do things you enjoy.

- When an urge comes up try to sit with it. Recognise: 'OK, this usually happens before I drink or use other drugs, however this time I'm not going to act on it'. The more you do this, the easier it becomes.
- Let trusted family or friends know your plans so they can support you.
- It can be tough when your friends are using alcohol or other drugs when you're trying to cut back. Have a plan including things you could try if that situation comes up – have a non-alcoholic drink, go for a walk, don't go with them, let them know that you're cutting back.
- Don't be too hard on yourself. Whether you're cutting back or quitting, it's normal to have ups and downs. Remember it's a process and you learn something every time you try.



*If you have been using alcohol and other drugs for a period of time, or you need advice or support, it's a good idea to involve professional help such as a doctor or professional service such as headspace.*



## Healthy habits

**When you're feeling low or stressed, it's important to put healthy habits in place – to give yourself a better chance of coping with life's challenges.**

Limiting your alcohol and other drug use is an important healthy habit, but it's not the only one. Things like staying active, eating well, and spending time on your relationships are also important for good mental health.

## Getting support

**There are lots of ways to look after your headspace.**

**Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health.**

If you've tried some of these strategies for some time without improving, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service.



**If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)**

**If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.**

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government.







the facts:  
tips for a healthy headspace



headspace  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

# leaving secondary school – navigating big changes

Leaving secondary school can feel like a big deal. Some people find it exciting and full of opportunities while others feel stressed and overwhelmed, or a combination of these things. Even changes that you're looking forward to can cause some worries. Everyone responds differently to change. Whatever your reaction is, it's OK to feel this way.



The uncertainty that big changes bring can be challenging.

## What challenges and concerns might I experience?

The uncertainty that big changes bring can be challenging. Some common concerns that people experience with the change from secondary school can include:

- making friends in a new setting
- figuring out course structures or new workplace environments
- juggling commitments, such as work, family, friends and further study
- meeting different expectations and obligations (e.g., meeting deadlines)
- adapting to new living arrangements (e.g., moving out of home)
- wondering if you have made the right decisions
- managing finances and financial pressures
- experiencing new freedoms
- finding a new sense of identity and belonging
- feelings of grief or loss.

# What things can help?

**There are lots of things you can do to support yourself during these times. Learning some strategies can help you feel better prepared to cope with any worry or stress.**

- Stress is our body's way of reacting to change, there are things you can do to help you cope. Learn about stress and your early warning signs.
- Make a list of things you can do to support yourself. Things that you enjoy and that help you de-stress.
- Notice any unhelpful thoughts. Try talking about them with someone you trust or writing them down. Talking things through can help you feel supported.
- Accept that some things won't go to plan, but can give us opportunities for growth.
- Be kind to yourself. Change and uncertainty can be hard work.

**No matter what's going on in your life, it's a good idea to look after your headspace.**

**These are things like staying connected with family and friends, building your skills for tough times, staying active, getting enough sleep, eating well and cutting back on alcohol and other drugs. See our website for more tips ([headspace.org.au/tips](https://headspace.org.au/tips)).**



Talking things through can help you feel supported



## Practical tips

Preparing for change can help it feel more manageable. These are things like:



### Problem solving

Identify what's troubling you and name it. This helps you figure out what's in your control and find a possible solution. It also helps you let go of what's out of your control.



### Setting achievable goals

At times, your goals can seem big and overwhelming, breaking them down into manageable chunks can help you take those first steps.



### Creating a routine

Routines bring order and predictability to our lives. Remember to include activities that you enjoy.

## Getting support

**Big changes can be stressful and we all need support sometimes. Reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor or a health service for support.**

If you're aged between 15-25, headspace Work and Study can help you navigate your way through work or study and support you to transition from school to work or further study. It's free and online via webchat, video, email or phone. [headspace.org.au/workandstudy](https://headspace.org.au/workandstudy)



**If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://headspace.org.au)**

**If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.**

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government.





the facts:  
tips for a healthy headspace



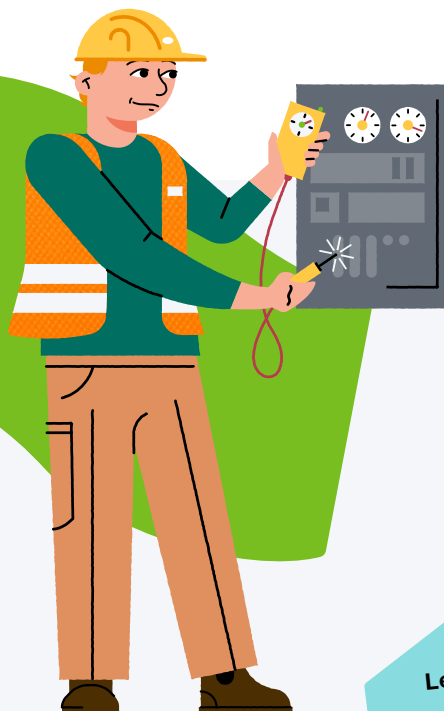
headspace  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

# understanding your options after leaving school

**It can be challenging deciding what to do next when you leave school. You've been in school for many years and now it's time to take a step into the next stage of your life.**

If you left school early or didn't get the results you wanted and/or are confused about what to do next, you're not alone – these are common experiences for lots of young people.

To help you navigate your next steps, we've compiled a list of options for you to consider.



## TAFE and uni – alternative pathways

The traditional pathway from school to uni is not the only way. Most TAFEs and universities offer other pathways to get into courses.

There are many options and each TAFE/uni will have different pathways, so check their websites. They will be happy to work with you to map out an ideal pathway to your dream course.

### Useful website:

#### Course Seeker

A tool to easily search and compare thousands of courses from different institutions across Australia.

[courseseeker.edu.au](http://courseseeker.edu.au)

Find a study pathway that suits your individual needs



## Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships allow you to earn money while you learn a trade and work towards an accredited qualification. They can be full-time, part-time or school-based, and are available to anyone of working age.

Apprenticeships are usually for 3-4 years.

### Useful websites:

#### Australian Apprenticeships Pathways

A range of tools and resources to assist students researching apprenticeship and traineeship career pathways.

[aapathways.com.au](http://aapathways.com.au)

#### Apprenticeships Support

Find out more about apprenticeships and search opportunities.

[apprenticeshipsupport.com.au](http://apprenticeshipsupport.com.au)

Learn a trade and gain a qualification while you earn money.





## Traineeships

### Learn and study on the job

Traineeships are usually 1-2 years and are similar to apprenticeships. However, they provide on the job training in a wide range of occupations. Organisations usually list traineeships on their careers' page or via job search platforms like SEEK.

#### Useful website:

**SEEK**  
[seek.com.au](http://seek.com.au)



## Volunteer

### Build your network, gain experience

Volunteering can be a great way to gain real-world experience, meet new people and get a foot in the door. If you're curious about a particular industry or interested in an organisation, volunteering can help you build transferable skills and get industry experience.

There are many opportunities available in Australia and overseas. However, if you know an organisation you would like to volunteer for, it's worth contacting them directly and outlining your interest.

#### Useful websites:

**SEEK Volunteer**  
Australia's largest source of volunteer opportunities  
[volunteer.com.au](http://volunteer.com.au)

**Australian Volunteers**  
Search volunteer opportunities in Australia and abroad  
[australianvolunteers.com](http://australianvolunteers.com)

## Take a gap year

A gap year is a year off academic study and is often taken after you finish secondary school. It's a way to think about your journey so far and what to do next – you could travel, work and/or volunteer.

It can also be a great way to try something totally different, meet new people and experience a new culture. There are organisations that can do this for you, or you can plan it yourself.

#### Useful website:

**Year 13**  
Have a good list of gap year providers  
[year13.com.au/explore/travel](http://year13.com.au/explore/travel)



Meet new friends,  
experience other  
cultures, learn  
new skills

## Getting support

If you're still unsure about what's next, headspace Work and Study can help – [headspace.org.au/workandstudy](http://headspace.org.au/workandstudy)

Our service is tailored to your needs and can support you in developing the skills and confidence to reach your work or study goals.

It's free and online – using webchat, video, email, or phone.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government.

 **headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation