

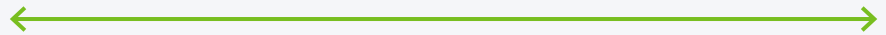
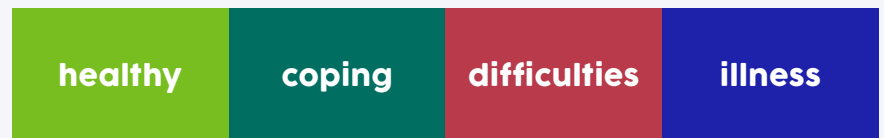


what are mental health difficulties and when to seek help

What are mental health difficulties?

You may have heard the phrase 'mental health difficulties' used before. It's helpful to think about mental health on a spectrum from mentally healthy to mental illness. Everyone sits somewhere on this spectrum, and where you are can change from day-to-day or week-to-week, depending on lots of things.

Let's explore the mental health spectrum:



Healthy

This means 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.

Difficulties

This is where people might feel like they aren't doing so well.

Coping

This is when people feel some pressure but are doing OK.

Mental illness

This is a broad term that refers to a group of conditions like anxiety, depression or others. These can significantly affect how a person feels, thinks, what they do and how they interact with others. Almost half the population will experience a mental illness at some point in their lives.



By finding the right support and strategies, things can get better.

Understanding mental health difficulties

Everyone can experience mental health difficulties from time to time. During these times people might notice their sleep, mood, motivation or energy are not going as well as they would like.

If these experiences last a few weeks or more, and are starting to affect things like relationships, or work and study, it's a sign that you might be heading towards the difficulties area of the spectrum.

If you've noticed these sorts of changes, it's important to look after yourself, learn a bit more about what's happening for you, and get support from family and friends.



Contributors to mental health difficulties

Things such as:

Current circumstances

- such as stress at school, uni, TAFE or work
- money problems
- difficult personal relationships
- problems within your family.

Difficult life experiences

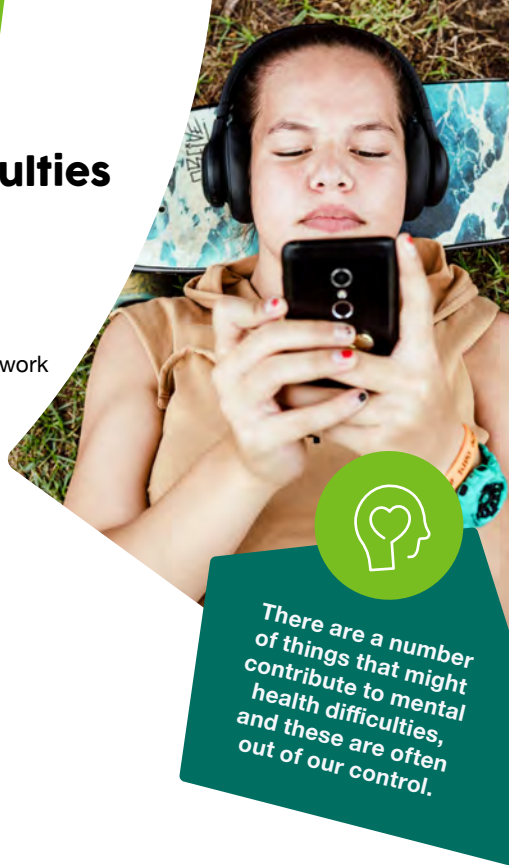
- abuse
- neglect
- the loss of someone close to you.

Individual factors

- coping skills
- thinking styles.

Biological factors

- family history of mental health difficulties.



Looking after your mental health

There are a number of things you can do to look after and maintain your mental health and wellbeing. As a start, include the tips for a healthy headspace into your everyday routine. This will leave you more prepared to cope with the challenges you face in your everyday life.

These include:

- get into life
- create connections
- learn skills for tough times
- eat well
- stay active
- get enough sleep
- cut back on alcohol and other drugs.



How do I know if I'm experiencing a mental health difficulty?

Signs and symptoms of mental health difficulties:

- not enjoying, or not wanting to be involved in things that you would normally enjoy
- feeling sad or 'down', or crying more often
- changes in appetite, eating, or sleeping patterns
- being easily irritated or having more problems with family and friends
- finding that you aren't performing at school, TAFE, uni or work like you used to
- being involved in risky behaviour that you would usually avoid, like taking drugs or drinking too much alcohol, or depending on these substances to feel 'normal'
- having trouble concentrating or remembering things
- having negative, distressing, bizarre or unusual thoughts
- feeling unusually stressed or worried
- feeling like things have changed or aren't quite right.

Getting support

Taking that first step can be tough, but if you are experiencing mental health difficulties, it's important that you reach out to a trusted friend, family member, teacher, Elder, or counsellor to share what you are going through.

You can also get in touch with your GP, local headspace centre or use our online or phone-based service at headspace.org.au/eheadspace

If you ever feel unable to cope because of overwhelming or intense emotions, or if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, then ask for help immediately.



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

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.

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the facts:
getting help

getting help from a General Practitioner (GP)

What is a General Practitioner?

GPs are medical doctors that are trained to help you with physical or mental health concerns such as:

- sexual health and contraception
- alcohol and other drug use
- relationship issues
- your mood or worrying thoughts
- your sleep, appetite or ability to concentrate
- medical conditions, diagnosed or undiagnosed
- other physical or mental health concerns.

How do I find a GP?

You could:

- ask a friend, family member or someone you know for a recommendation
- drop into a medical centre in your local area and ask about their services
- ask your school, TAFE or uni (they sometimes have their own medical services)
- do a search on healthdirect.gov.au

If you're comfortable with your family GP, they can be a good place to start. Even if they know your family, a GP is still required to keep your information private. If you're worried about this, you should talk to them.

You can also contact your nearest headspace centre, they might have GPs and can also connect you with other health workers.



Medicare

If you're listed on a joint Medicare card, you can use it. The appointment may be listed on the Medicare record for that card – which means the card owner may be able to see that you've had an appointment. However, what you speak about is kept private.

If you're Australian and over 15 years of age you can get a Medicare card. For more information or to apply for your own card see servicesaustralia.gov.au/medicare.

If you're over 14 years of age, you're able to consent to simple health care treatments without involving a parent or guardian. Check out Youth Law Australia for more information.

How much will a GP cost?

Some GPs provide free ('bulk billed') appointments to young people and this is usually the case with headspace GPs. However, sometimes you might be charged a 'gap' fee (an extra cost). If you're worried about this, check when you book your appointment.

To be bulk billed, you'll need a Medicare card or know your Medicare number (reception will be able to help you with your number).



How to book an appointment

- Some GPs offer online bookings. Search for a GP on healthdirect.gov.au to help you find one. You could also phone or drop into a medical centre.
- You'll need to provide your contact information, but you don't need to explain what the issue is to reception.
- If you have more than two things to discuss, or want a mental health care plan, request a longer appointment.
- If you feel uncomfortable going by yourself, bring someone you trust.



What does an appointment look like?

- Standard appointments usually take between 10-15 minutes.
- First appointments with GPs at headspace centres are usually longer than a standard appointment. You might be seen by another health worker too – depending on what you want to speak about.
- The GP will ask a range of questions about your health and may want to do a physical check-up, like blood pressure, heart rate and temperature, or examine other parts of your body relevant to your issue.
- A GP can't do any sort of examination without explaining why it's necessary, what will happen and getting your permission.
- The GP will then discuss the concern with you and talk about what you can do next. Remember to ask your GP questions about your health concern so you know exactly what's going on. Try to be open and honest about your concerns and situation so that you can make a plan together.

Your right to privacy

By law, all GPs need to keep information about their patients private. This means they can't discuss your visit with anyone else, but there are a few exceptions. If a GP thinks you're likely to harm yourself or someone else, they have a responsibility to make sure you stay safe, so they may need to tell other people.

The only other time a doctor will release your information is if ordered to do so by a court, but this is rare.

If you want to know more about your rights to privacy and confidentiality, ask your GP to talk it through with you at any stage of your appointment.

It's OK if you don't understand something. Your GP is there to help you and has seen all sorts of issues. If you think you'll forget or feel too awkward, write down your concerns before the appointment and give this to your GP.



Getting support

No matter what physical or mental health issue you are experiencing, GPs are there to help you.

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.



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

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helping a friend going through a tough time

When a friend is going through a tough time, it can be hard to know what to do or say.

You might have noticed they:

- don't seem like themselves, or
- they're acting differently.

You might:

- let them know that you care
- ask them what you can do to support them
- let them know that you're there to help them.

They might not open up at first, but showing them you have their back can give your friend strength and hope. This also lets them know you're someone they can talk to if they do decide to open up later on.

Asking your friend if they need help can be hard, especially when you don't know what kind of help you can offer. Checking in can make a big difference to the person having a tough time.



What if my friend doesn't want any help?

For many people, reaching out for support can be really difficult. Some of your friends might need time and space.

Be patient with your friend. Don't judge them or get frustrated if they don't take you up on your offer of support. Remind them that you're there if they need you and give them time.

Sometimes you might need to involve someone else – like a trusted adult. If you do decide to tell someone, try to let your friend know that you're planning on doing this first and encourage them to get involved in the conversation.



What can I say to help my friend?

It can be hard to know how to start the conversation. Sometimes it can be as simple as, 'are you doing OK? I've noticed we haven't been in contact as much recently' – or mention what you've noticed that's different.

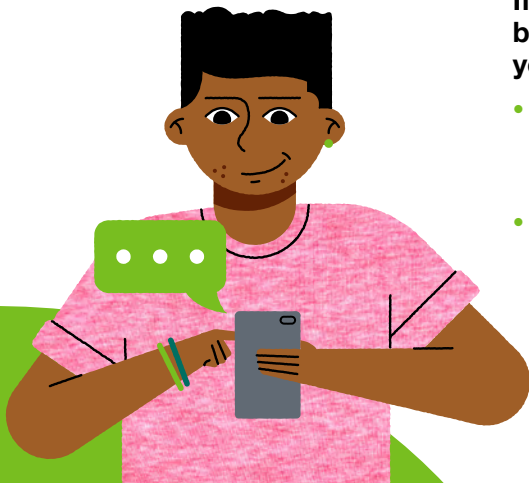
Some things to help you plan:

- Are you in a good headspace and ready to have the chat?
- Have you had a look at the headspace website to get a better understanding of what might be going on for them?
- Have you got enough time, and are you free from distractions?
- Have you chosen somewhere private?
- Have you found a time that's good for them to chat?

If it looks like your friend would benefit from additional support, you can say things like:

- 'Have you talked to anyone else about this? It's great you've talked to me, but it might be good to get advice and support from a health worker.'
- 'It doesn't have to be super intense and you can make choices about what you want to talk about.'

- 'A GP can help you with this stuff. You can find one that bulk-bills, so you don't have to pay. I can go along with you, if you want.'
- 'There are some great websites you can check out to get more information. Have you heard of headspace or ReachOut?'
- 'Did you know that you can get free and confidential support online or over the phone from places like eheadspace, Kids Helpline and Lifeline. All of these services are anonymous and can help you figure out what's going on for you and where to go for the right support.'
- 'I know you're not feeling great now, but with the right support, you can get through this. Lots of people do.'
- 'It's OK to feel this way and I'm here and have your back.' Let your friend know you believe their concern and let them know they're not alone.



Look after yourself

Supporting a friend through a tough time can be difficult, so it's important that you take care of yourself, too. You can check out our tips for a healthy headspace to look after yourself. These include:

- get into life
- create connections
- learn skills for tough times
- eat well
- stay active
- get enough sleep
- cut back on alcohol and other drugs.



Try to remember that you're their friend and not their counsellor. Be realistic about what you can and can't do. Set boundaries for yourself to make sure that you're doing the best thing for you, your friend and the friendship.

Getting support

If you need support, it's a good idea to reach out for extra help. A good place to start is a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service.

You can also contact a headspace centre or eheadspace if you would prefer to chat to someone online or over the phone.

If you or your friend need medical help right now contact 000.



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)

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mental health benefits of work and study

If you're having a tough time, getting into work and study might be the last thing on your mind, but it can really help your mental health.

Whether you're struggling to get out of bed or having a tough time in other ways, we're here for you. You don't have to wait until you feel 'ready' to get involved in work or study, we can support you wherever you're at.

Studies have shown that young people experiencing mental health difficulties can often work if they are given the support they need. And although returning to work and study may have its challenges, research suggests that it is likely to improve your progress towards good mental health and wellbeing.

There are lots of reasons why we might stop or find it hard to start working or studying, such as:

- feeling inexperienced or unprepared to enter the workforce or to go to university or TAFE
- having had a negative experience in the past
- experiencing mental health difficulties or stress in your personal life
- having other responsibilities such as caring for someone else
- having a disability or physical health concerns
- COVID-19 impacts
- being unsure of where to start or what options are available
- time off school or lack of any career advice at school.

Studies have shown that the longer you are not working or studying, the harder it can be to get back into it. Sometimes we face tough times or things happen that impact our confidence or ability to work or study. When this happens it's easy to withdraw or get stuck in a rut that feels hard to get out of.

On the other hand, working or studying can play a really positive role in our lives. It can help you feel more confident, empowered and connected. It's about building a routine, setting yourself goals and working to achieve them. Getting into work and study can be the best thing you do for your wellbeing.

Working or studying can play a really positive role in our lives. It can help you feel more confident, empowered and connected.

'Don't hesitate in waiting to be at a specific stage of readiness. The team started with me from what I felt was rock bottom for me and within 3 months I made progress I never thought I would. I went on to continue doing these things because I had a team that did and still does believe in me and what I want to do.'

Young person from headspace Work & Study Online



Here are some examples of how work and study can help you to build your confidence and even give you a boost in other areas of life.

If you're finding it hard to get into work or study remembering these things might help you stay motivated.

Keep learning new skills

Through working or studying, you can build an understanding of your strengths and values, learn skills to help you negotiate, problem solve and communicate. Work and study can also help you to develop skills that are useful in other areas of your life, such as managing stress, anxiety, and difficult situations.

Making connections

Working or studying can help you stay connected with people, places, and routines. Being connected with others can help you overcome challenges and see things from a new perspective. Getting into work or study is a great way to meet like-minded people who may even have similar interests and passions. With time, you can often build a group of people who care about you, and you will learn a lot along the way.

Build confidence and self-esteem

Through work and study, you can develop skills, practise strategies that support good mental health, and grow your confidence in new and challenging situations or environments. Learning new skills and overcoming challenges can build a sense of accomplishment as well as confidence and self-esteem in all areas of your life.

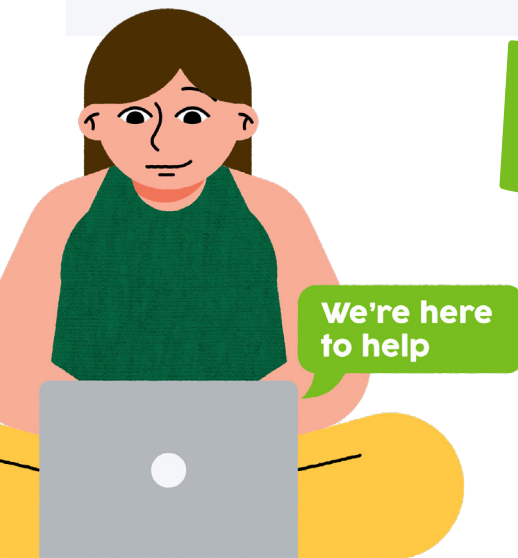
Learn how to cope through tough times

Any skill can be learned through practice, and resilience is no different. Feeling confident and knowing how to manage setbacks can have a positive impact on your mental health and wellbeing. You can build resilience by coping and learning from tough times. What you learn you can often take into other parts of your life, not just work.



Make it matter

Work and study can give us a structured and routine environment, which can really help you stay motivated and engaged, and something to feel proud of. Motivating yourself is hard! But working towards something that really matters to you can be really empowering and inspiring. We suggest taking some time to consider your values and why they matter to you – then doing the same with your company's values. A job or study environment will often feel more 'right' when these values align and it's easier to connect your purpose to your work.



Getting support

The headspace Work & Study programs are tailored to your needs and can support you in developing the skills and confidence to reach your work or study goals.

It's totally free and we have options for you to participate online via webchat, video chat or phone, as well as face to face at over 50 of our headspace centres.

“It was really helpful to have both [supports]. I started out with work and study support and when we realised I also needed other support we teamed up with mental health [support]. [We] all worked together towards my goals in study, future work, and mental health issues including anxiety and depression inside and outside of the learning/workplaces. Having both teams meant I didn't have to drop one area to focus on another and in a way where having both wasn't ever overwhelming.”

Young person from headspace Work & Study Online

For more information on mental health benefits and work and study support scan the QR code:



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).

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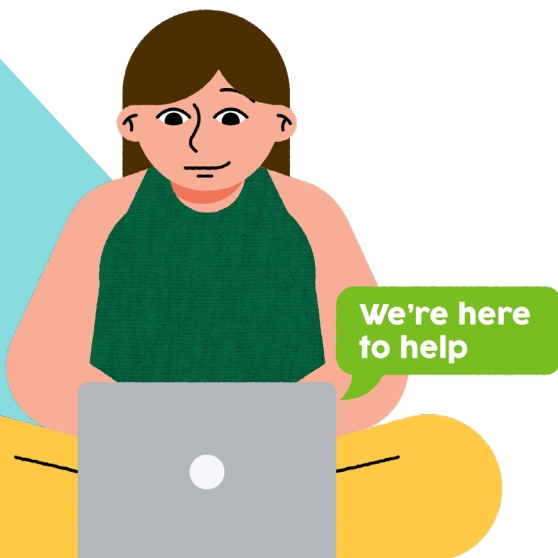
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which Work & Study service is right for a young person?

headspace offers three Work & Study services; one in person service at participating headspace centres and two online services, Work & Study Online and Career Mentoring.

All services are designed to help young people reach their work and/or study goals. Each service has its unique benefits. Thinking about what a young person is looking for and the mode of support that best suits them will help determine which service will be most suitable.



Did you know

-  Work and Study is an important part of a young person's recovery, not a product of it.
-  1 in 4 young people aged 17-25 who attend headspace centres are not engaged in Work or Study. Participating in work and study support can help improve outcomes for young people.
-  Working or studying can provide structure and routine for young people and this can help them get back into life.
-  For Work & Study Online and Career Mentoring services, a young person doesn't have to be engaged in clinical support to participate.
-  Young people can be referred to a service at any time during their support journey, they can also be referred to the online services while on a centre's wait list.
-  Participating in one of these services does not impact a young person's ability to then utilise another headspace Work & Study service.

For more information visit the Vocational Service hub on ourspace or visit headspace.org.au/workandstudy

Work & Study Centres

Offered in 50 headspace centres and based on the internationally recognised Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model. Work & Study support is provided to young people in tandem with clinical support at the centre. Young people will receive tailored support from a Work & Study Specialist with established relationships with employers and education providers in their community.

Work & Study Online

Young people will connect with a Work & Study Specialist online to get tailored support and advice to reach their work and study goals. Whether a young person is figuring out what kind of job they want, looking for a new job, course, or need help with their current work or study situation, we can help get them to where they want to be.

Career Mentoring

Young people will be matched online with a working professional, volunteering to share their career journey and industry insights. Together they can explore available opportunities and pathways, build the young person's professional network, discuss what work is like day-to-day and kick start their career.

Age	12-25	15-25	18-25
Session type	In-person, at a participating centre or in the local community	Online through video call and webchat or over the phone	Online through video call
Session length	30 minutes - 1 hour (weekly or fortnightly)	30 minutes - 1 hour (weekly or fortnightly)	30 minutes - 1 hour (generally fortnightly)
Program length	No time limit to this program	Approximately 3 months	Up to 6 months
Post placement or post service support available	Yes, young people can continue to receive support once they have found a job.	Yes, young people can continue to receive support once they have found a job or enrolled in study.	Mentors and young people may continue to stay in touch after the 6 months, however the relationship is no longer facilitated by headspace.
Mental health support during service	Yes – a young person must be engaged with a mental health worker at the centre throughout their time in the service or have had at least one appointment with an intake worker.	The Work & Study Online service has a small team of clinicians available to support a young person if they need, however it is not mandatory to be engaged in mental health support to access the service.	Not available in Career Mentoring service, however available through other headspace services.
First Nations Work & Study Specialist available	Depending on centre	Yes, First Nations young people can request support from a First Nations Specialist if they wish.	Not available
Work and Study goal required	Not necessarily, a Work & Study Specialist can help a young person figure out their goals and how to reach them, if a goal isn't already clear.	Not necessarily, a Work & Study Specialist can help a young person figure out their goals and how to reach them, if a goal isn't already clear.	To match a young person with a mentor, the young person needs to have an idea of the industry or career goals they are looking to pursue.
Referral Pathway	Intake worker or clinician at headspace centre refers young person to the service.	Young person can self-refer on the website, or centre staff can use centre referral portal to refer.	Young person can self-refer through the headspace website.