

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



understanding bullying

Bullying is not just playing around or harmless fun. Bullying happens when someone has (or thinks they have) more power than someone else.

This could be:

- power in numbers
- being older or stronger
- being popular
- being in the majority.

Bullying can increase the risk of developing mental health problems for everyone involved, particularly those experiencing the bullying. It can take place anywhere like at home, work, school, TAFE/uni, online or over the phone.



Bullying is not OK, it's not simply 'a normal part of growing up', it's never the person being bullied's fault, and help is always available.



Different forms of bullying

- **Verbal** (e.g., putting someone down or threatening to cause harm).
- **Physical** (e.g., contact that hurts someone or breaks their things).
- **Social** (e.g., spreading rumours, excluding someone, embarrassing someone in public).
- **Cyberbullying** (e.g., sending harmful messages, pictures or making comments on social networking sites. This type of bullying can be anonymous and posted online where it can be seen by lots of people. And it can go on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so people don't get a rest from it).

Bullying can also be done secretly, like doing or saying something behind someone's back. This type of bullying can be harder to see, but it's no less damaging.

Why might bullying happen?

There are many reasons why someone might use bullying behaviour. People who bully may have experienced bullying, trauma or violence themselves. It's still important to remember though, this doesn't make it OK.

People might use bullying because they feel peer pressure, and are trying to feel more secure, more powerful, 'look cool' in front of others, or feel better about themselves. This may be their way of coping if they haven't learnt healthier ways to cope or aren't getting the support they need. Bullying behaviour can also happen because of jealousy, lack of knowledge, fear or misunderstanding.

Bullying is very complex. A person might use bullying behaviour, be a bystander, and/or experience bullying. It can depend on who is around and what the situation is. Each of these roles can have a negative impact on mental health and can make experiencing mental health problems more likely.

What are the effects of bullying?

Anyone who has experienced bullying knows how upsetting it is. People who experience bullying might feel:

- alone
- unsafe
- afraid
- stressed
- humiliated
- angry
- ashamed
- rejected.

Sometimes a person might feel that there is no escape and may do things to 'fit in', like changing their appearance or acting differently. They may believe some of the awful things said about them, which can impact their sense of self. Sometimes they might want to hurt others, or themselves, because of it.

Being bullied can affect a person's performance at school, uni, TAFE or

work, and can continue to affect them through their life adulthood.

Experiencing bullying can also increase the risk that someone will develop depression and anxiety in the future, and it can increase the risk of self-harm, suicidal thinking and suicide.

Bullying can be traumatic, especially when carried out or ignored by others, as having supportive relationships are really important in everyone's life.

Young people report one of the worst parts of bullying is feeling like they're going through it alone, which is why it's so important to support anyone going through a tough time/help them access support or reach out if you're having a hard time yourself.

What can you do about bullying?

Face to face

- Stay calm. Try focusing on your breathing as a way to stay calm. Staying calm and not showing that you are overwhelmed can help you to feel better.
- Don't fight back, as this can make the situation worse, get yourself hurt or blamed for starting the trouble.
- Try to ignore the bullying by calmly turning and walking away. If the person doing the bullying tries to stop or block you, try to be firm and clear. Having friends to stand with you or walk you away is a great idea in these moments.
- Try to avoid the person who is bullying you or ask a friend to stay with you when they're around.
- Tell a trusted adult what has happened straight away. They can support you and help you find ways to get the bullying to stop.
- Get some more information. Schools, universities, TAFEs and workplaces have anti-bullying policies that can help you to find out what you can do.

Cyberbullying

- Report any bullying to the site where it is occurring. All social media platforms have a reporting system. It's anonymous, straightforward and depending on what you've reported, there's a chance it could get taken down quickly.
- Keep everything that is sent to you with screenshots, whether they're nasty comments, pictures or messages – try to get a permanent copy of it. This is so you can show these to someone you trust later on.
- Contact the eSafety Commissioner, if after 48 hours the image or content has not been removed by the site, or if you're feeling afraid or threatened.
- Talk to people you trust. Let them know how you're feeling and that you need their support.
- Ask your friends to stand up for you by challenging the bullying in low-risk ways.
- Talk to your parents, carer, teacher or another trusted adult about what's happening. When families and schools work together, this is the best way to address it.
- Block the person or people from being able to contact you and change your privacy settings to protect what you post on social media.
- Delete your current online account and start a new one if the bullying is persistent and ongoing. Only give your new details to trusted friends.



Remember, it's unlikely that everyone agrees with the person bullying, even if they don't say something to support you. They might be afraid of getting involved or could be ignoring the person bullying as a way of not joining in. It's important that everyone feels comfortable standing up for one another in ways that won't put them at risk.

What is a bystander?

Someone who sees or knows about the bullying is called a bystander. It can feel difficult to step in, but a bystander can have a big effect on whether the bullying continues or not. It can also help someone who has been targeted see they have people who support them.

What can I do if I'm a bystander?

Try not to support the bullying by looking on and doing nothing, laughing at the person being bullied or by 'liking' or sharing hurtful photos or posts online.

If you feel safe, step in and speak up in an assertive but not an aggressive way. Show the person that you're there for them by spending time chatting with them and helping them to walk away from the situation. Remind the person being bullied there is always help available.

It's important to think carefully about your safety before you try to stop the bullying. If you can't safely take action yourself, report it to a trusted adult and let them know you want to remain anonymous.

Getting support

If you're being bullied, it's a good idea to build your supports and know you're not alone. Building a support network of family, friends, Elders, staff from school or work and/or mental health professionals is important to getting support and putting a stop to bullying as quickly as possible.

See our website for more information about bullying and how to support your mental wellbeing – headspace.org.au



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.

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

 **headspace**
National Youth Mental Health Foundation



maintaining healthy gaming

Gaming can be a positive and enjoyable activity. It can help us connect with others, feel a sense of belonging and provide opportunities to learn new skills.

Healthy gaming can help us have structure and routine in our lives and give us some beneficial downtime, relaxation and fun.

However, for a small number of young people, gaming can have an unhealthy impact on their everyday lives.

If you think your gaming is impacting on other areas of your life, there are lots of things you can do to get some balance back.



Signs of possible issues with gaming

Gaming can be a great way to help with stress. However, we know that increased or excessive time spent gaming can take time away from being able to do the things that keep you healthy and well. For example, you might find that you're spending less time than usual with people you care about. You might be less active than usual or find that you're having trouble with sleep, studies or work.



If you're experiencing some of the changes below, it might be a sign that gaming is starting to have an impact on your everyday life.

- feeling sad, irritable, anxious, frustrated or angry when you're not able to game
- changing sleep patterns or sleep difficulties (e.g., staying up late to game)
- getting angry or experiencing conflict with others over gaming
- other people expressing concern at the amount of time you spend gaming
- spending less time with family and friends outside of gaming
- spending large amounts of time thinking about gaming
- losing track of time and a loss of control over the time you spend gaming
- feeling physical pain or irritation, for example pain in your neck, wrists, or back, dry or red eyes
- eating meals while playing or skipping meals
- spending more money than you can afford on gaming
- using gaming as a way of avoiding the real world
- often feeling frustrated at losses
- unsuccessful attempts to quit gaming or cut back.

You might also notice changes to your life that don't appear directly related to your gaming such as:



Loss of interest in activities that you previously enjoyed.
Lowered self-esteem or self confidence.



Changes to eating habits.



Headaches/migraines.
Decreased personal hygiene.



Difficulties with studies or work.



Things you can do

It can help to check-in with yourself to see how your gaming is impacting on your life. Ask yourself questions like – is it a fun activity that's helping you feel good? Does your gaming support you to have a healthy life or take away from it? How's your balance with other activities? Are you feeling more or less connected with others?

There are lots of tips that can help keep your game time in balance. Time on screens can sneak up without you realising it. Here are some things that you could consider:

Treat it as a reward

Leave your gaming time for after your activities/jobs are done.

Decide in advance how much time you want to spend.

Set a timer or an alarm to give yourself a finish time.

Set up times in your day to be screen free.

Explore other hobbies and interests

Get up and move regularly. Doing some simple stretches can really help.

Make sleep a priority

Charge your devices outside of your room or leave them outside your bedroom. You'll reduce the temptation to be online instead of sleeping.



Getting support

If you find that your gaming is impacting on your relationships, mood, studies or work, reach out to someone you trust like a friend, family member, teacher, Elder, counsellor or health service. A general practitioner (GP) is another good place to start.

With the right support, most people are able to get back to enjoying the benefits that gaming can contribute to their lives.

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 – headspace.org.au/tips



If you're finding it hard to make changes, reach out for some support.



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.

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





dealing with relationship break ups

Relationships break up for lots of reasons and they are often out of our control.

Break ups can be tough, even when you know that it might have been what you needed. Some people feel as though their world has turned upside down and that things will never be good again, and others can feel relief and happiness. There's no right or wrong way to feel.

It's OK to feel whatever you're feeling, lots of people do. Be kind to yourself; it can take time to heal after the loss of a relationship.

Break up challenges

Everyone experiences break ups differently, but some things people might experience are:

- low energy
- restlessness
- loss of hope
- loss of appetite
- lower motivation
- sadness
- anger
- changes to sleep.

Some people might lose the friendships they made with or through their partner, and this can be really upsetting.

Whatever you're feeling now won't last forever, but it might take some time to recover.



Recognise there will be good days and not-so-good days and always be kind to yourself.



Some things to remember

- If you ended the relationship, it doesn't necessarily make the break up decision any easier.
- If someone ended the relationship with you it doesn't mean that there's anything wrong with you. Try not to take it personally because relationship break ups affect lots of people at different times in their lives.
- It's better not to be in a relationship than to be in an unhealthy or unsafe one – remember, you don't have to be in a relationship to feel happy.
- Many people feel upset or angry during this time. Always make sure you're safe in how you express your feelings.
- Try not to feel embarrassed or to worry about how the situation will look to others. Now is the time to focus on you.
- Try to see the positives in a break up. You can learn more about yourself and what you want in future relationships.
- Remember that with time and support you can get through a relationship break up.

Things that can help after a break up

It might be tempting to try and get over a break up quickly, but it can take a bit of time, work and support. It's OK not to feel OK.

After a break up it's a good idea to prioritise and support yourself:

Talk

Talk to trusted friends, family members, Elders or others who can support you.

Give yourself some space

You don't need to shut your ex out of your life but having a break from them can give you some healing space. Consider taking a break from them on social media too.

Keep busy

You might find yourself with too much free time on your hands, especially on weekends. Plan ahead and do things that you usually enjoy.

Take time out for you

Do things that you find relaxing, like watching a movie, listening to music, or getting into nature.



Try not to use alcohol and other drugs to deal with the pain

While they might help you feel better at first, the after-effects will leave you feeling much worse.

Give it time

Allow yourself time to cope with the change after a break up.

Sleep well

Set yourself up a sleep routine. Apps can help with this.

Stay active

It might feel like the last thing you want to do, but it's at times like this it can be the most helpful.

Eat well

Food nourishes our bodies and brains and can help with our mood.

Get into a routine

Having a routine can help with stress by making things predictable. They also make you more likely to do the tasks.



Spending time with supportive people can help get your mind off things and can help you see things from a different point of view.

Getting support

Relationship break ups can really hurt, however people usually work through them in time and without any serious problems.

If you're having a hard time moving on, or if you feel unsafe in any way, it's important to talk things through with someone you trust like a friend, family member, Elder, 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



understanding and maintaining healthy romantic relationships

Romantic relationships come in all shapes and sizes, and there's no single set of rules about what they should be.

Yet there are some things that healthy relationships have in common – good communication, being respectful and supportive, and feeling safe and secure.

From something casual to a committed relationship, your safety and happiness should never be at risk.



Building your relationship

Healthy relationships can take time and effort. Here are some tips you can use to help build yours.

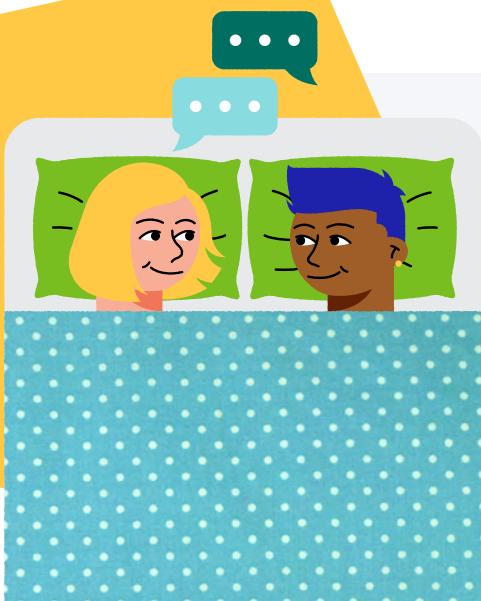


Treat each other as equals

Treating each other as equals helps keep relationships strong, safe and supportive.

It means everyone is:

- willing to compromise where appropriate
- experiencing equal give and take
- respecting each other's ideas, boundaries and choices
- working together to understand each other's needs.



Set boundaries

Setting boundaries is an important part of all relationships. They help to define the things, activities and behaviours that are needed to keep you happy and connected – they help you and your partner understand your limits.

Emotional boundaries

Emotional boundaries include sharing your feelings and your life stories. Do you want to get into details or take it slow and build trust along the way? They also include your need for space and time apart. It's a good idea to maintain your external friendships and hobbies and to encourage your partner to do the same.

Financial boundaries

Discussing financial boundaries helps you both be clear about how you want finances to work. Some people choose to share their money and others prefer to keep things separate. It really depends on what works best for you.

Communication

Healthy relationships include open and honest communication. Communicating well with your partner can strengthen your relationship and help you overcome any challenges.

Opening up to your partner can take trust, time and practice. Speaking up about what you think, feel and need is an important part of any relationship.

Being able to be ourselves is important, it helps us feel confident and understood. It builds trust in the relationship and helps both partners understand each other's likes and dislikes.

Physical and/or sexual boundaries

The key to physical and/or sexual boundaries is respect and consent. Consider the amount and type of any physical and/or sexual contact and what is OK for you.

Sexual consent is an ongoing and freely given agreement between people who are engaging in any sexual activity together. To learn more visit headspace.org.au/explore-topics/for-young-people/sexual-consent.

Digital boundaries

What are you OK with when it comes to sharing personal information or sexual content online or with other people? (e.g., posting details about the relationship; using each other's devices; sexting/nudes).

It's important to remember that your body is yours and any form of violence, intimidation or overstepping of your boundaries isn't acceptable and is not a part of healthy relationships.



Trust

Trust in relationships helps you feel safe and secure – it's important for both partners to trust and be trusted.

It can take time to build and earn trust though and it can be built in many ways such as:

- respecting boundaries
- being honest
- being there for your partner – not taking them for granted
- feeling physically and emotionally safe in the relationship
- admitting your mistakes
- resolving arguments respectfully.

Be a good listener

Listening is an important part of a healthy relationship. Everyone needs the opportunity to be heard, talk uninterrupted and be taken seriously.

Resolving conflict

It's OK to have different opinions – practise disagreeing and asserting yourself respectfully. Try to avoid personal attacks and instead focus on the issue. For example:

- try to see your partner's point of view
- be willing to compromise and come up with options you're willing to accept
- admit when you're in the wrong
- agree to disagree
- if it gets heated, agree to take some time and come back to the discussion later.

Getting support

No matter where you are on your relationship journey support is always available.

Reach out to a trusted friend, family member, teacher, Elder, counsellor or a support service like 1800RESPECT – 1800respect.org.au for relationship counselling and resources.

Check out our further tips and try an interactive activity on our website via the QR code below.



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.

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

 **headspace**
National Youth Mental Health Foundation



understanding sex and sexual health

Am I ready for sex?

If you're thinking about having sex you might feel nervous or excited. Even if it's not your first time, it's normal to experience a range of emotions.

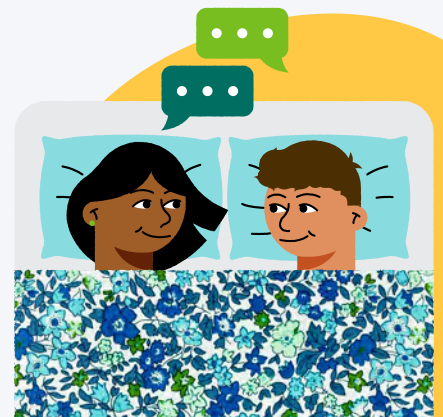
It's important that you feel confident and ready, so it might be helpful to ask yourself these questions:

- am I doing this because I want to?
- do I feel safe and respected?
- do I feel comfortable talking about sex, sexual health and contraception?
- do I feel comfortable having sex with someone not under the influence of alcohol or other drugs?
- do I know how to have sex safely?
- what is the law about sex in my state? (Check out Youth Law Australia – yla.org.au)
- have I discussed safe sex with my partner/s?

What is sexual consent?

Sexual consent is an ongoing and freely given agreement between people who are engaging in sexual activity together.

- Consent to any sexual act needs to be stated clearly – don't just assume they're into it.
- Setting physical/sexual boundaries means continuously checking in with each other about what is and isn't OK. If someone consents to one sexual act, it doesn't mean they consent to another. Ongoing communication is one of the key steps to consent.
- People can change their minds anytime. If you feel uncomfortable at any stage, it's perfectly OK to let the other person know that you want to slow down or stop.
- Alcohol and other drugs can impact our ability to give consent, say no to sexual activity or recognise when someone isn't giving consent. It can be helpful to limit alcohol and other drug use before sexual activity.
- Discussing and agreeing on contraception and actions to prevent sexually transmitted infections is another way you can practise consent.
- The age that someone can consent to any kind of sexual activity varies slightly between states and territories in Australia. Check out Youth Law Australia for more information about the age of consent in your state and territory.



What is sexual health?

Good sexual health requires a respectful and positive attitude around the decisions you make about sexual activity. It's also about having the right information so you can enjoy yourself and help prevent things like sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancies.

What is sexuality?

For many people, sexuality is an important part of who we are, what we feel and how we respond to others. It's about how we see our identity and express ourselves romantically and sexually. It's important to remember that your identity is your right. The way you want to describe it, and who you share that with, is completely up to you.

A person may identify as:

- gay
- lesbian
- bisexual
- heterosexual
- pansexual
- queer
- asexual
- something else (or not yet sure).

If you have any questions about your sexuality you might like to talk to someone you trust, like a friend, family member, Elder, teacher or counsellor.



What are Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)?

STIs can get passed on during sexual contact (kissing, touching, oral, anal and vaginal) through blood, saliva, semen or vaginal fluids. Not all types are treatable. While medical treatment can treat some STIs, it may only help relieve symptoms for others.

Some STIs include:

- chlamydia
- gonorrhoea
- herpes/cold sores
- genital warts
- hepatitis
- HIV.

Some symptoms of STIs include:


- unusual and/or smelly discharge
- pain during urination/sex
- sores, blisters, ulcers, warts or rashes
- pain in the scrotum or testicles
- some STIs can lead to infertility if left untreated.

Other times, signs or symptoms of having an STI are not obvious – a person can have an STI without knowing it. The best way to detect an STI is to get tested. This can be done through a doctor or at a sexual health clinic.

Using barrier protection like condoms, diaphragms and dental dams are methods that can reduce the risk of most STIs, but they need to be used correctly.

Being able to communicate openly about sexual health stuff is important.

For more on STIs, check out HealthDirect's articles (healthdirect.gov.au).

 Check out the headspace website for more information about sex and relationships.



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

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

Practising safe sex

Practising safe sex decreases our chances of being exposed to an STI. Remember though, nothing is ever 100% risk free.

Sexual activity between people who have vaginas has a lower risk of STI transmission, but lower risk doesn't mean there's no risk at all. Similarly, anal sex (regardless of gender identity or sexuality) has a higher chance of resulting in an STI but using condoms correctly can dramatically reduce that risk.

Preventing HIV

As well as using condoms, there are specific things that you can take before or after sex to reduce the chance of getting HIV from a partner. Talk to your GP or a sexual health nurse for more information. Some headspace centres have GPs – check with yours.

Contraception

There are different forms of contraception, that when used properly, can be very effective at preventing unwanted pregnancy.

Types of contraception include:

- contraceptive pill
- condoms
- diaphragms
- contraceptive injections
- contraceptive implants (e.g., Implanon, IUD)

There are other forms of contraception. Speak to your GP or trusted medical professional about these options.

Condoms are the only form of contraception that can protect against both pregnancy and STIs.

Contraception is not 100% effective.

There's always a very small chance of pregnancy. Using hormonal contraceptive (the pill) and a condom is the safest option to prevent unplanned pregnancy.

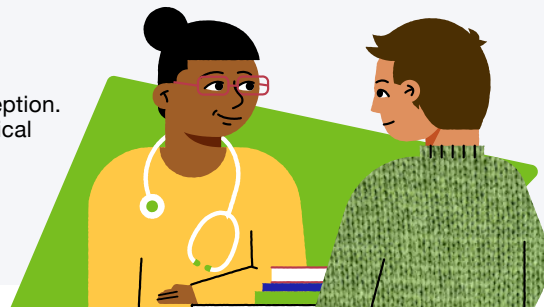
If you're worried you may be pregnant, because you recently had unprotected sex, you can speak to a chemist/health professional about the emergency contraceptive pill (ECP). This is sometimes called the 'morning after pill'. It's important to take it as soon as possible after you had unprotected sex.

Getting tested

If you're sexually active, it's recommended that you get tested for STIs every 6–12 months, when you change partners, or when you show symptoms. This can be done as part of a routine visit to the general practitioner (GP), a sexual health clinic, or at a headspace centre.

It can sometimes help to talk it through with someone first. You may want to get advice from someone you trust, like a friend, family member, Elder, teacher or counsellor.

Your GP can also give you information to help you maintain your sexual health.



Talking to your partner/s about sexual health

This is a really important step in looking after your sexual health.

Discuss whether you or they:

- have had an STI before, and whether it has been treated
- have had a sexual health check and when
- are in agreement about safe sex practices, like types of protection and contraception.

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



understanding sexual consent

Romantic and sexual relationships come in all shapes and sizes. Yet there are some things that healthy relationships have in common; they are built on respect, clear boundaries and consent.



Why is it important?

Asking for and giving sexual consent is one way we can maintain healthy relationships and make sure everyone's feeling safe, comfortable, respected, and that no-one is breaking the law. The older we get the more common sexual and romantic relationships can become so it's important to get this right.

What is sexual consent?

Sexual consent is an ongoing and freely given agreement between people who are engaging in sexual activity together. It involves paying attention to what they're saying (or not saying), their body language and their facial expressions.

What does consent look like?

- you and your partner are excited, happy and eager to engage in sexual contact
- no-one is forced, pressured or manipulated into any kind of sexual contact
- anyone can change their mind, stop at any moment or choose not to engage any further
- everyone is fully conscious – no one is asleep or drowsy
- no-one is so affected by alcohol or other drugs that they can't make safe or informed choices
- everyone must agree upon choices regarding safe sex e.g., using condoms and other contraception
- consent applies only to the sexual act you're doing at the one time, in that very moment. Just because someone consents to kissing, doesn't mean they consent to someone touching their body.

i Consent doesn't have to be awkward – just ask! And the other person can choose to agree or not.

What are some ways I can ask for consent?

Consent doesn't have to be awkward – just ask! And the other person can choose to agree or not. Like all agreements and conversations, we must also pay attention to someone's body language and tone of voice. If their facial expressions, body language (e.g., shrugging, arms crossed or avoiding kisses) or tone of voice don't add up with their answer, then you don't have consent. Remember, consent must be enthusiastic.

Asking for consent may sound like:

'Can I kiss you?'; 'Would you like me to touch you there?'; 'What else can I do for you?'

When you don't get consent:

Remember, if a person doesn't give consent, then you can't force or pressure them to change their mind. This means that everyone feels safe and respected, and that you don't break any laws.

What are some ways I can give my consent?

As well as asking for someone else's consent, it's important that you've given consent.

Showing your consent might sound like:

I really like that; can you keep doing it?

Yes. That sounds like a really nice idea.

Feel free to touch me here.

Showing that you don't consent might sound like:

No. I don't want to.

That's sweet of you, but I'd rather not.

That doesn't feel good for me anymore. Let's try something else.

What does the law say?

Age of consent

The age that someone can consent to any kind of sexual contact varies slightly between state and territories in Australia.



You can check which laws apply to your state or territory at yla.org.au

Sexting

There are also different laws around consent and sexting/sending nudes.



You can find out more at yla.org.au and navigate to the topic of sexting via the internet, phones and technology section.

Power and control

Not everyone can give sexual consent, even if they want to. This is because there must be equal levels of power and control between everyone involved. It can be hard to say no to sex if there is an unequal power balance.

Things that can influence our power in relation to someone else include:

- our age
- our relationship to the other person
- our ability to fully understand what someone is asking us to do
- their control in our lives – they might control the money, decide if you can see your family and friends, or tell you what to wear.

Some professions have rules that prevent certain people/occupations from engaging in sexual contact with young people. This is because they may be seen as providing care for and/or they have more power and control over the young person.

The following people can't engage in sexual contact with young people:

- direct family members
- anyone who is seen to care for young people e.g., teachers, tutors and coaches
- treating medical professionals e.g., doctors, psychologists and support workers
- anyone providing legal representation or advice to young people including lawyers and police officers.

Getting support

For more information on healthy relationships, check out our website.

If reading this resource has raised any concerns for you in relation to your own experiences, help is available:

Sexual assault information, support and helplines
healthdirect.gov.au/sexual-assault-and-rape

24-hour sexual assault counselling – fullstop.org.au

Relationship resources and counselling
1800RESPECT
1800respect.org.au



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.

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

 **headspace**
National Youth Mental Health Foundation



understanding gender identity

Gender identity is how you think and feel about your gender, how you show this to others, and how you want others to treat you.

About gender identity

The physical features you were born with (sex assigned at birth) don't necessarily define your gender. Although gender has traditionally been divided into 'male' and 'female', there are a diverse range of gender identities.

For example, you could identify with a gender that's different from the sex you were assigned at birth, such as:

- being assigned female at birth, but identifying as a male
- being assigned male at birth, but identifying as a female
- being born with both male and female sex characteristics and identifying as male, female, or another identity
- identifying somewhere between male and female
- recognising yourself as another gender identity.

Some people may not have a label for what they're experiencing and some might be exploring their gender identity, and that's OK too.

Young people who are gender diverse or don't identify with the gender they were assigned at birth can live exciting and fulfilling lives. However, a lack of understanding, acceptance, discrimination and transphobia can contribute to an increased risk of depression, anxiety, self harm and suicide.



Why might this be difficult to experience?

Some common experiences that can affect your wellbeing and increase your vulnerability to developing mental health difficulties are:

- feeling different from other people around you
- experiencing bullying about your gender identity, whether verbal, physical or online
- experiencing discrimination – being treated differently or excluded – because of your gender identity (this is against the law in Australia)
- feeling pressure to define or deny your feelings regarding your gender identity
- feeling unsupported or worried that your gender identity will not be accepted by family and friends, along with the possibility of being rejected or isolated
- feeling stressed and anxious in relation to the pressure to conform with your sex assigned at birth.



Feeling these pressures can be stressful, especially with any other stresses you might be experiencing in your life such as managing studies or work, job hunting, forming relationships or making sense of who you are and your place in the world.

Noticing the impact on your mental health

It can be hard to know if you're experiencing early signs of a mental health problem. Things to look out for include:

- changes in mood – feeling sadder, more anxious or more irritable
- changes in behaviour – being less talkative, becoming withdrawn or being more aggressive
- changes in relationships – falling out with friends or your partner, or conflict with family
- changes in appetite – eating more or less than usual, or losing or gaining weight without trying to
- changes in sleep patterns – sleeping more or less than usual
- changes in coping – feeling overwhelmed or tired of life
- changes in thinking – more negative thoughts, or thoughts of self harm or suicide.

If you have been experiencing any of these things for a long time, you might not see them as changes.



Getting the right support

While it's normal to occasionally experience some of these things, if you're finding it hard to cope and your social life, work or studies are being affected, then it's time to get support.

Getting support when problems develop can reduce the effects of mental health challenges and can help prevent more serious issues developing in the future.

Some transgender or gender diverse young people find it very hard to ask for help. This might be because of discrimination by health professionals in the past, worries about privacy, or difficulty talking to strangers about gender identity.

It's important to find someone you can trust to support you throughout your journey. This might be your general practitioner (GP) and/or other health professionals experienced in working with gender diverse young people. headspace can also help connect you with specialists for specific needs around gender transition if you decide to go down that path.

It can take time to find the health professional who is right for you, so don't give up if you don't find the

right person straight away. Remember that you don't have to discuss your gender identity if you don't feel comfortable or safe.

A trusted friend, teacher, Elder or family member might also be able to recommend someone to talk to.



You can find tips for a healthy headspace on the headspace website if you're feeling stressed or having a hard time.

Remember that you're not alone and there are many young people exploring and questioning their gender identity. If you want to talk through any questions or concerns about your gender identity, or if you're having a hard time, there are people who can help and support you.

If you ever feel unable to cope because of intense emotions, or if you have thoughts of harming yourself, then ask for help immediately. Navigating your gender identity can be challenging at times, but it's important to remember that there are lots of people who can celebrate and support you as you learn more about yourself.

Getting support

Youth support services

qheadspace

Chat anonymously with other young people who identify as LGBTIQ+ and ask questions of our headspace queer peers. headspace.org.au/qheadspace

Qlife

Chat to a peer support volunteer over the phone or through web-chat every day from 3pm to midnight (all ages). qlife.org.au

Minus18

Have lots of resources about gender diversity for young people and their families. minus18.org.au

Kids Helpline

1800 55 1800 (5-25 years)
kidshelpline.com.au

SANE Australia

1800 187 263 (18+ years)
sane.org



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.

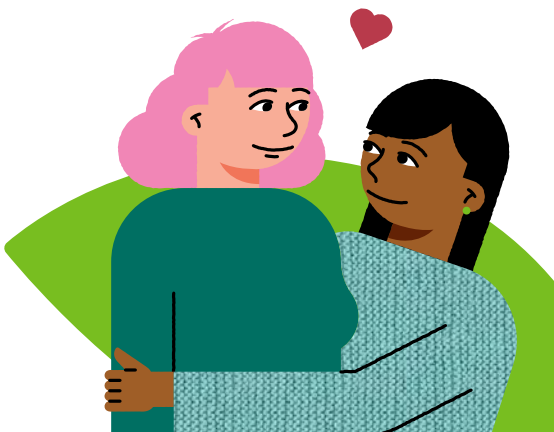
headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government.





understanding your sexuality and diverse sexual identity

Sexuality is about how you see your identity and express yourself romantically and sexually. There are lots of words people use to describe their sexuality, many of which are captured by the term **LGBTIQ+ (which also includes gender identity).**



What does **LGBTIQ+** mean?



Lesbian
Someone who identifies as a woman and is attracted to other people who identify as women.



Gay
Someone who is attracted to people who identify as the same gender.



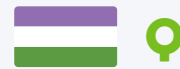
Bisexual
Someone who is attracted to people of the same gender and people of another gender. Bisexuality does not necessarily assume there are only two genders.



Transgender or trans people
Someone whose personal and gender identity is different from the one they were assigned at birth.



Intersex
Someone who is born with chromosomes, reproductive organs, or genitals that don't fit the narrow medical or social expectations of what it means to have a male or female body.



Queer
This term has many different meanings, but it has been reclaimed by many as a proud term to describe sexuality or gender that is anything other than cisgender and/or heterosexual.



Asexual
Someone who has low or no sexual attraction to any gender, but may have a romantic attraction towards another person.



+
This acknowledges there are many other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

What if I'm not sure of my sexuality?

It's common for young people to be unsure of their sexuality (exploring) or to experience fluid sexuality (when someone's sexuality changes over time). Some young people prefer to identify as queer, as it's broader and does not place someone into a category. Others might not like the idea of these terms and don't want to identify their sexuality at all and that's OK too.



It's important to remember that your identity is your right. The way you want to describe it, and who you share that with, is completely up to you.



How do I explain it to others?

Coming out or inviting others in

The idea of coming out or sharing your sexuality with others can feel really scary. Some people prefer to think of it as inviting others in rather than coming out. Some people, due to safety, might choose not to share their sexuality with certain people. Everyone's journey looks different, and everyone has the right to be treated with respect.

It's hard to know what other people will think or how they'll react when you talk to them about your sexuality. Unfortunately, it's not something you can control. Not all people will have a positive experience if they come out.

Here are some things to consider when discussing your sexuality with others:

- Have the conversation when/if you feel ready.
- It's up to you to choose who you want to tell and what you want to tell them.
- You may want to suss people out first – perhaps by asking them for their thoughts on an LGBTIQ+ topic, like a TV show with a queer character.
- Have the conversation when everyone is comfortable and relaxed in a place that is safe for you.
- Expect a range of reactions. People might surprise you.
- Give it time. Some people might respond better after they've thought about it for a while.
- Try to keep calm, even if the other person is not.
- If you need to call a time-out, have a plan in place. You could say something like, 'I still want to talk more about this, but we're too worked up at the moment'.
- Responses can range from tolerance, to acceptance, to celebration. There may be others who don't accept your sexual identity no matter how you share it or how much time goes by. This can be painful, especially if it's someone you love or respect. But remember, you don't need anyone's approval or permission to be yourself.

Dealing with discrimination

If you're being unfairly treated because of your sexuality, this is called discrimination. Although discrimination is illegal in Australia, many young people still experience unfair treatment. If you have been affected by discrimination or any of these negative experiences, it's important to reach out for support.

Taking care of yourself

People exploring their sexuality may be faced with challenges that can affect their mental health and wellbeing, such as:

- other people making them feel 'different'
- rejection/fear of rejection
- bullying
- discrimination such as homophobia, biphobia and/or transphobia (verbal or physical)
- feeling pressure to deny or change their sexuality
- worries about coming out to others
- feeling unsupported or misunderstood
- being excluded or left out at school, uni, TAFE, work or in the community
- a desire to suppress or avoid unwanted preferences.



If someone makes you feel badly about your sexuality, there are things you can do to take care of yourself.

Find a supportive community

It's important to remember that there is a strong LGBTIQ+ community to embrace and support you. Finding these communities can be tough, but be assured that they're out there! A simple Google search can help you find local support groups or online communities. Everyone deserves to have people who understand them, so it's useful to meet people with similar experiences to you.



Getting support

If you're finding it hard to cope or your social, work or studies are being affected, it's time to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor or health service.

Look after your mental health and wellbeing by:

- visiting the headspace website for tips for healthy headspace (headspace.org.au/tips)
- connecting with the LGBTIQ+ community through social groups and online communities
- checking out online support services, such as Qlife or ReachOut
- connecting with qheadspace: chat anonymously with other young people who identify as LGBTIQ+ and ask questions of our headspace queer peers (12-25 years).



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.

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

 **headspace**
National Youth Mental Health Foundation



understanding grief

Grief is what happens when you lose someone or something important to you.

Grief is personal and everyone grieves differently. Our culture, gender, age, past experiences of loss, and belief systems can shape the way we grieve.



It's normal to feel a range of emotions after you experience loss, but that doesn't make it easy.



What is grief?

Grief is a normal and natural response to loss and it can affect many parts of our lives.



Changes to feelings

You might feel some or all of these things:

- shock
- disbelief
- pain
- sadness
- longing
- anger
- resentment
- regret
- guilt (about the past, or about being happy in the future)
- abandonment
- anxiety
- worry.

Changes to thoughts

It can be hard not to think about the loss all the time. You might notice your mind wander and have trouble focusing.

Some people find it hard to care as much about things. It can feel like nothing matters. Some people might think that the world doesn't make sense anymore, and they can't figure out their place in it.

Changes in your body

Our mind and body are closely connected, so grief can have a big impact on our bodies too, such as:

- headaches
- body aches
- weight changes
- changes to your sleep
- changes to eating or appetite
- tiredness
- feeling sick or run down.

Changes in what you do

It can be hard to find the energy to keep up with day-to-day life. Some people might not want to see their family and friends or do things they used to enjoy. Other people find that keeping busy helps them to get through the day.

How long will this go on for?

It's hard to know how long grief will last because everyone is different. However, it's important to know that eventually, things will get easier.

It might be helpful to think of grief like the ocean. Sometimes the power of the ocean is so strong you can feel out of control. Other times it feels manageable, and you can drift along with the waves.

What can I do to help with my grief?

Grief, and everything that can come with it, can be really intense. If you've experienced loss there are things you can do.

Healthy habits

Try to eat well, cut back on alcohol and other drugs and get a good night's sleep. Setting yourself small, easier goals can help keep up your motivation.

Get into life

Doing stuff can be one of the best ways to help life improve, even when you might not feel like doing anything. Find something that works for you like playing or listening to music, walking, hanging out with family or friends or watching movies.

What else should I look out for?

Grief isn't depression. However, it's important to know that grief can leave you vulnerable to experiencing depression in the future. If you're not sure what's happening for you, it can be helpful to reach out for support.

During tough times, some people can turn to alcohol or other drugs to try to get through the pain. This might feel helpful at the time however it can create other problems in the long run.



Find something that works for you like playing or listening to music, walking, hanging out with family or friends or watching movies.

Take it easy on yourself

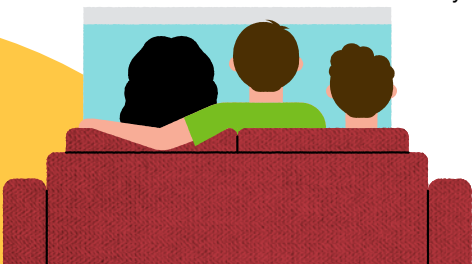
Being kind to yourself is always a good idea, but it's even more important when you're having a tough time. Remind yourself that grief hurts, it's hard and it takes time to heal. Feeling confused, overwhelmed, angry (or anything else) and being upset is OK.

Talk about it

Though it can be hard reaching out to others, it can help you feel supported and less alone. Whether you're speaking to a trusted friend, family member, teacher, Elder or a counsellor, it's up to you what you feel comfortable sharing. You might just want to say you're having a tough time.

Getting support

If you're finding it hard to cope and your normal activities like your social life, work or studies are being affected, then it's a good idea to ask for professional support.



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



maintaining a healthy headspace during the bushfire season

The timing and duration of bushfire danger seasons vary across different regions in Australia.



The threat of bushfires can directly affect people living in high-risk areas. It's also normal to have reactions if you live further away and are indirectly affected (e.g., by media exposure or hearing from others).

People respond in very different ways to the bushfire season and it can be a tough time. There is no 'right' response and reactions can change over time. Some people may not feel impacted by the bushfire season and that's OK too.



Taking positive action and anticipating your emotional reactions during the bushfire season can be helpful for your wellbeing during and after this time.

What might I feel?

Some common experiences people have during bushfire season include:

- Feeling overlooked because information is often directed at adults.
- Feeling stressed or overwhelmed by the threat of bushfires or even the memories and experiences associated with past bushfires.
- Feeling distressed by things that remind us of previous bushfires (e.g., smells, sounds, images or even anniversaries).
- Having work, school, studies or relationships disrupted.
- Feeling fearful, anxious or worried.
- Wanting to avoid thinking about memories of previous bushfires. This might feel helpful, but this can make things feel worse in the long run.
- Feelings of shock, anger, confusion, helplessness and sadness.



Tips to maintain a healthy headspace during bushfire season

Talk to others

Talking to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher or counsellor about any concerns and feelings you are having can be helpful. Talking to your family is also a good opportunity to ask questions you might have about your family's plans in an emergency.

Get involved

If you feel able to, you might want to get involved in preparation activities. Talking to your parents and family members about what steps you can take to prepare for an emergency can help you feel calmer and more in control. It's important to focus on one step at a time. This could include packing an emergency kit or helping your parents prepare the house. Talking to your family about what to do if you are separated during an emergency can also help you feel prepared.

Connect with others

Keeping in contact with friends, family, and neighbours, especially during days with a high risk for bushfires, can help you feel connected. You might feel like participating in community activities – even those that aren't about the bushfires. Getting connected with people who are reassuring and comforting, and who allow you to be you, can help you get through tough times.

Practise calming techniques

Some people might want to practise techniques to help them feel calm. This can include breathing exercises. Find a quiet place, close your eyes and slow your breathing. Try to focus your attention on your breath. It can help to count your breaths as you go (e.g., 'one' for every inhale and 'two' for every exhale). You might also want to use apps or websites that help with regulating your breath.

Be aware of your media exposure

Although many people want to keep up-to-date with what's happening, being around too much bushfire news can feel overwhelming. If you notice that the news is making you feel anxious or stressed, take a break if it's safe to do so (e.g., set yourself limits for media use, manage your app notifications, or unfollow pages or accounts that make you feel uncomfortable).

Look after yourself when you support others

During the bushfire season, your family members may be busier than before and you might spend more time looking after others. Some young people might feel responsible for others' wellbeing. You can help others by being calm and listening to their worries. You can link younger family members with a trusted adult or a service who can help them.

Some young people may also feel overwhelmed or guilty if they feel they can't meet the needs of others. It's important to look after your own wellbeing and to talk to other family members about how you're feeling.

Have hope

Remind yourself of the steps your community has taken to prepare for the bushfire season or to recover from it. Thinking of how your community has successfully dealt with difficult situations in the past can help you feel hopeful. Some people might like to explore ways of getting involved with bushfire preparedness or the repair and recovery of their community. This can help give a sense of hope. It's also OK if you don't feel ready for that.

Do enjoyable things

While it's important to be prepared for an emergency, it's also important to look after your headspace by doing things that create good feelings. If there's no immediate danger, this can include making plans, seeing family and friends, engaging in hobbies, or relaxing.

Getting support

It's normal to experience a variety of reactions to the bushfire season. This doesn't mean you'll have ongoing problems. For some people, using these tips will be enough to manage the social and emotional impact that can come during bushfire season. If you're noticing a significant impact on your emotions, your daily activities or you're not finding any improvement, it's important to get professional help.



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



how to cope with the stress of natural disasters

It's common to need support after being in or witnessing an event that may be traumatic, such as bushfires, flooding, cyclones or drought.

It's important to find the right type of support for you, as everyone will be affected differently.

There are specific things that are likely to be helpful in the days and weeks following a natural disaster. As time passes in the months after, the types of things that are likely to be helpful will be a bit different.

It can help to talk with a trusted adult about getting the right sort of help if it all feels a bit much.

Tips for the initial days and weeks after a natural disaster

In the days and weeks after a disaster, it is important to do things that make you feel physically and emotionally safe.

It can help to:

- Find ways to connect with others, especially those who help you feel OK and support your wellbeing.
- Do things that make you feel calm and grounded. Try doing things you enjoy and include these in your routine.
- Explore ways to get involved with repair and recovery of your community. This can help give you a sense of hope and connect you with others which is important to recovery.
- Be mindful of exposure to traumatic information through stories and traditional and social media. It can be helpful to take regular breaks from the 24-hour news cycle.

(Hobfoll et al, 2007)¹



Try to avoid or limit alcohol and other drugs.

Tips for the shorter and longer term after a natural disaster

- Acknowledge that it was a tough time. You may have been impacted by the disaster in other ways (e.g., through media, or losing a loved one). It's OK to remind yourself that the events were out of your control.
- Be patient with yourself. It can take time to make sense of what happened. It's OK to need someone to remind you that you're safe.
- It's OK to start small. It's important to keep up any regular routines or activities. This could be daily activities, like attending school, work, sports or catching up with friends. It could be planning your day and trying to stick to that.
- It's normal to feel like you want to help the recovery process. You might like to look for ways you can contribute to help yourself and others to rebuild. It's also OK if this doesn't feel right just yet.
- Be aware of the triggers that remind you how you felt during or after the disaster. This could include particular sounds, smells, or images.
- Practise being calm. You might try deep breathing or relaxation exercises. Rest and comfort will also help you to feel calm.
- Connect with others. Being with people who understand you and are calm can help you maintain calmness as well.
- Avoid getting into situations that are unsafe and avoid taking big risks.
- Try to eat nutritious food. Eating well can help with your mood, sleep, physical health and wellbeing.



In the weeks, months, and years after being impacted by a natural disaster there are things you can do that can help.



Common reactions to a natural disaster

Natural disasters can be hard to cope with. People can respond in very different ways, which can also change over time. Some people might feel OK immediately after the disaster but become overwhelmed later.

After a natural disaster people can experience:

- fear and anxiety
- grief and loss
- difficulty concentrating, remembering things, or describing what happened
- anger and confusion
- sadness and emptiness
- denial
- guilt
- shock.

Other challenges

Following a natural disaster, other areas of life can be impacted, these may include; **relationships with others, worrying about others, having to take care of siblings, wanting to be alone, sleep, appetite, and possibly alcohol or other drug use.**

These can be normal reactions and natural coping responses. It's helpful to try to address these early, to prevent them from becoming ongoing issues. If they're starting to impact on your life, reach out for support.



How to look after yourself during a tough time?

After a traumatic event it's even more important than usual to focus on eating and sleeping well and staying active.

It can help to:

- have a routine
- allow yourself some 'worry time'
- set some realistic goals
- limit alcohol and other drug use
- use your strengths and connect with others.

People do recover from the impacts of natural disasters

Most people who experience traumatic events are able to recover. Some people may need to access professional support to navigate ongoing challenges.



Getting support

Very strong emotions normally start to settle by about six weeks after the disaster. If you have trouble with your emotions or with your usual daily activities after this time, then think about getting some professional help.

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

1. Hobfall et al. Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention: Empirical evidence. 2007; 70(4):283-315 (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5668133_Five_Essential_Elements_of_Immediate_and_Mid-Term_Mass_Trauma_Intervention_Empirical_Evidence)



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.