

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





# alcohol

**A lot of people don't see alcohol as a drug, but it's the most used and easily accessible drug in Australia.**



Alcohol is a depressant which means that it slows down the brain – it dulls the senses and affects the way you think, feel and act.

## Alcohol and peer pressure

It's normal to want to be part of a group and often drinking can be a big part of socialising. But if you don't want to drink, or have 'just one more', then that choice is yours. Deciding to drink alcohol should be on your terms.

If you choose to drink, it's important to get informed and drink as safely as possible.

It is important to remember that there is no safe way to use alcohol and it can impact on your developing brain and body.



## What does alcohol do?

As a general rule, alcohol can make you feel more confident and relaxed, slow down your reflexes and affect your balance and coordination.

Drinking too much can cause headaches, dizziness, nausea and vomiting. In some cases, people can pass out and may not remember what happened. They may do risky things that they wouldn't do while sober.

### How alcohol makes you feel depends on lots of things, like:

- your weight
- your health
- how regularly you drink
- how much you drink
- the strength of the drink
- what kind of mood you're in
- who you're drinking with.

The effects of alcohol can last for hours, even overnight, especially if you have drunk a lot. When it wears off you may feel tired, thirsty, headachy and sick. This usually won't last longer than a day.



## Alcohol and mental health

**Alcohol can have a big impact on our mental health. It's a depressant, so it slows your body down and changes the chemical makeup in your brain.**

**For example, it can change your:**

- mood
- energy levels
- sleeping patterns
- concentration
- memory.

Alcohol can also reduce inhibitions and impact on decision making. This can lead us to making decisions that we wouldn't normally make while sober.

**It's also linked with:**

- increased risk-taking
- increased aggression
- unsafe sex practices
- self harm and suicide in people who may already be going through a tough time
- binge drinking (drinking a lot in one session).

People who are experiencing a mental health difficulty may use alcohol to try and manage tough times or lift their mood. This might feel helpful in the short term however it can end up making us feel worse, and make things harder in the long run.

## Alcohol and physical health

Alcohol can impact on your physical health in a number of ways.

**Short term effects include:**

- difficulty sleeping
- lower immunity
- trouble concentrating
- difficulty getting motivated.

**Long term alcohol use can cause additional problems like:**

- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- brain damage
- liver disease as well as different kinds of cancers.



**If you're pregnant, drinking alcohol can lead to serious health problems for you and your baby.**

## Staying safer

**If you're going to drink alcohol, safer tips for you and your friends include:**

- setting a limit and sticking to it (there are apps that can help you)
- pre-arranging how you'll get home
- avoiding drinking alone
- eating before and while you're drinking
- pacing yourself – drink water between alcoholic drinks
- avoiding rounds/shouts
- avoiding mixing alcohol with other drugs (prescription or illegal)
- looking out for each other; don't leave anyone alone.



**Drink spiking: stay safe by always keeping an eye on your drink and not accepting any pre-opened drinks.**

## Benefits to reducing or stopping

**There are many benefits that can come from reducing or stopping alcohol use. These may include:**

- **more energy**
- **better sleep**
- **saving money**
- **better physical health**
- **improved mood**
- **improved engagement with work and study**
- **improved relationships.**



## Getting support

It can be tricky giving up drinking if you've been doing it for a long time and are dependent because your body has to get used to going without it. You might experience withdrawal symptoms including sweating, feeling sick, anxiety, irritability, problems sleeping, hallucinations, tremors and even seizures. Because of this, it's a good idea to speak to a GP to discuss the safest way to cut back on your drinking.

**For further information on cutting back on alcohol, or for safer partying tips, please see our website.**

If you're worried about your alcohol use, 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)**

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# understanding anger

**Everyone feels angry sometimes and feeling angry is OK. It can help get us through tough situations, help us understand ourselves better and can motivate us to change things we don't like about our life.**

Anger can become a problem when it begins to impact a person's daily life and causes them to react in a way that might hurt themselves or those around them (physically or emotionally).

If you feel angry a lot or have trouble controlling or expressing your anger, there are lots of things you can do to help manage this in a healthy way.

## Anger versus aggression

Anger can sometimes lead to people being aggressive or violent (e.g., physically, verbally) but they're not the same. Anger is a feeling, but aggression and violence are actions, and it's these actions that can lead to problems.



*Anger can sometimes feel intense and overwhelming, but it doesn't necessarily lead to violent or aggressive behaviour.*

## Why might I feel angry?

**Anger can be our way of expressing or responding to a range of other feelings like:**

- frustration
- embarrassment
- guilt or shame
- jealousy
- grief and loss
- hurt or sadness
- feeling unable to control a situation
- feeling threatened or frightened
- feeling unfairly treated
- feeling misunderstood or not listened to
- feeling a loss of connection to family, community or country.

## Signs anger might be a problem include:

- feeling angry a lot of the time
- behaving aggressively/violently (verbally, physically)
- having trouble expressing anger
- feeling sad or upset because of getting angry
- using alcohol or other drugs to manage anger
- using aggression to get people to do something
- withdrawing from people or situations
- bottling things up
- regretting the things you did or said when you were angry.





## What else might be going on?

Difficulties with anger can be a sign that someone might be experiencing sadness, depression, isolation, discrimination, or another mental health difficulty.

## So what can I do to manage my anger in a healthy way?

### Understand your angry triggers and signs

#### Triggers

Think about what normally triggers your anger. It might be possible to avoid these situations, react differently when they happen, or you could let others know your triggers so they can help.

#### Signs

These might be things like feeling hot, fists or teeth clenching, tightening in the chest, faster heartbeat.

### Calm your reactions down

- slow your breathing – take deep breaths
- take a break and leave the situation
- use distractions – e.g., count slowly to 10, try push-ups or bounce a ball
- get into nature – pay attention to what you see, hear, smell and touch
- talk with someone you trust.

### Understand why you're feeling angry

#### Ask yourself questions like:

- Did someone do or say something that upset me?
- What other feelings are happening for me?
- Does the situation bring up bad memories?
- Try drawing your answers if that's better for you.

### Explore your solutions

Wait until you're feeling calm and safe and think of some other ways you can express your anger.

#### Ask yourself questions like:

- How can I explain the situation in a calm way?
- What might I suggest to a friend if they asked me for help in this situation?
- What have I seen other people do that helps them deal with anger?

## Getting support

There are plenty of ways to manage anger so that it doesn't get in the way of your daily life or impact other people.

Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health and to learn more about managing tough times.

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.

### Reach out to someone you trust

Your family and friends, a teacher or coach, your mob or Elders, might have ideas about how you can express your anger in healthy ways. Talking with them can be a great place to start.



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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# understanding anxiety

## What is anxiety?

### It's more than feeling stressed or worried.

Anxiety is something that we all experience from time to time. It's our body's way of preparing us to face challenging situations.

Sometimes anxiety can help us perform better by helping us feel alert and motivated.

Anxiety can come and go – but for some people, it can stick around for a long time, or occur in situations where you wouldn't normally expect to feel anxious. This can end up having a big impact on their daily lives.

When this happens, it might be time to do something about it.

## Signs and symptoms

### Everyone experiences anxiety differently, but there are some common signs and symptoms.

#### Physical signs can include:

- racing heart
- faster breathing
- feeling tense or having aches (especially neck, shoulders and back)
- sweating or feeling dizzy
- shaking
- 'butterflies' or feeling sick in the stomach.

#### Thoughts can include:

- worrying about things a lot of the time
- feeling like your worries are out of control
- having trouble concentrating and paying attention
- worries that seem out of proportion.

#### Other signs can include:

- being unable to relax
- avoiding people or places like school, uni or TAFE or parties and socialising
- withdrawing from family and friends
- feeling annoyed, irritated or restless
- difficulty getting to sleep at night or waking up a lot during the night.

## Common types of anxiety disorders

Anxiety disorders involve more than temporary worries or fears. People can experience different types of anxiety disorders, but it's important to know that they can all be treated.

### Generalised anxiety disorder

Some people may worry, and feel their worries are out of control about many areas of life (i.e., work, studies, health). They might feel tense and nervous most of the time, have trouble sleeping or find it hard to concentrate.

### Social anxiety disorder

Some people may experience intense anxiety in social situations because of fear of embarrassment or judgement. This may lead to avoiding situations where there are other people.

### Separation anxiety disorder

Some people experience intense fear about being away from loved ones or worry about them being hurt.

### Agoraphobia

Some people feel intense anxiety about being in particular environments outside the home. This can include public spaces, public transport, enclosed spaces or crowds.

### Specific phobias

Some people may experience a fear of a particular situation or object – like spiders or animals – that leads to a person avoiding that situation or object.

### Panic disorder

Some people experience repeated panic attacks and ongoing fears about having more panic attacks.



# Anxiety and depression

**Many young people experiencing an anxiety disorder may also experience symptoms of depression. This can make things much more confusing. If you think this is happening for you, it's important to reach out for support.**

## What can I do to manage anxiety?

There are things you can try to help manage your anxiety so that it doesn't get in the way of your daily life.

### Care for yourself

Managing anxiety starts with good self-care. Try to eat well, get enough sleep and stay active to help your overall mental health and wellbeing.

### Talk about it

It's a good idea to talk about how you're feeling – whether it's with a trusted family member, friends, a teacher, coach, your mob or Elders. They can support you, help you understand what's going on, help you stick to your self-care goals and get extra help if needed.

### Notice your thinking patterns

Being aware of how your thoughts can influence your anxiety is an important step towards managing it. It can help you understand what contributes to your anxiety and what your triggers are. This can help you to handle them differently and learn new ways to respond.

### Be aware of avoidance

It's normal to want to avoid situations that make you feel anxious. It might work in the short-term, but over time it can make your anxiety feel worse. This is because you don't get the opportunity to learn that the thing you fear may not happen or be as bad as you think.

Learn some skills to cope with anxiety, like helpful self-talk and relaxation, then gradually face the things you fear and put your skills into action. As you realise you can manage anxious situations, you'll become more confident and motivated to keep going.

### Try new breathing strategies

Lots of anxiety symptoms involve a cycle of physical sensations – pounding heart, shortness of breath, trembling and butterflies in the stomach. Working on slowing your breathing is a good way to try to interrupt that cycle. There are many apps that can help with this.

### Limit your use of alcohol and other drugs

While alcohol and other drugs might help you to feel good in the short term, they can make you feel much worse in the longer term.

## What are panic attacks?

Panic attacks can occur as part of any anxiety disorder, but not everyone will experience them. They are sudden rushes of intense anxiety or fear, together with frightening thoughts (e.g., 'I'm going to die', 'I can't breathe') and feelings (e.g., pounding heart, difficulty breathing).

Panic attacks can feel overwhelming, and usually last about 10 minutes. It's important to know these feelings pass.

## Getting support

**There are plenty of ways to manage your anxiety so that it doesn't get in the way of your daily life.**

**Check out the headspace website for tips on how to look after your mental health and to learn more about anxiety.**

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.



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# understanding bipolar

**Bipolar disorder is a type of mood disorder where people experience times of excessive low mood (a depressive episode) and high mood (a manic episode).**

These episodes affect the way people think, feel and act and this can interfere with all aspects of life like relationships, work or study and day-to-day living.

It's normal to experience a range of emotions in our lives. Emotions can be affected by the things going on around us e.g., with family or friends, stressful events, or sometimes by nothing at all. These ups and downs are common and generally don't cause too many problems. They can build our resilience and help us to learn how to manage difficult situations.

Bipolar disorder is different to general mood changes or anger outbursts. Mood changes associated with bipolar disorder are more extreme, last longer and have a significant impact on someone's ability to engage in their day-to-day activities.

*With support, people diagnosed with bipolar disorder can lead lives they want to live.*



## Symptoms and experiences

The experience of bipolar disorder is different for everyone. Some people will have one or two episodes and then never have another one, while others have several episodes close together. Many people diagnosed with bipolar disorder lead full productive lives and have years without symptoms between episodes.

## Bipolar episodes

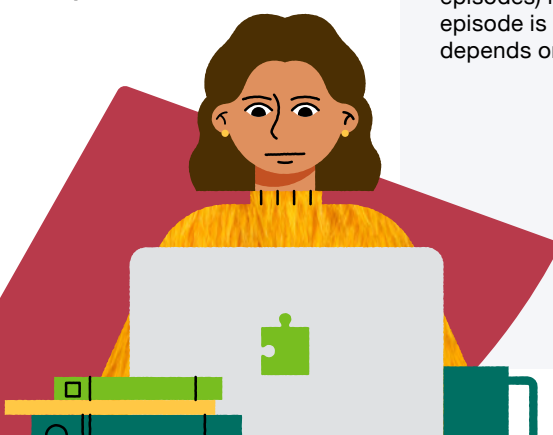
### What is a depressive episode?

A depressive episode is a period of lowered mood, with changes in thinking and behaviour that usually last for at least two weeks. It has a significant impact on a person's day-to-day life.

Often a depressive episode (or episodes) happen before a manic episode is experienced, but it depends on the individual.

### Changes include:

- feeling in a low mood – sadness, irritability, tearfulness
- losing interest in enjoyable activities
- changes in appetite and weight – eating more or less than usual, gaining or losing weight rapidly
- changes in sleeping patterns – trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping much more than usual
- lowered energy and lack of motivation
- feelings of hopelessness and worthlessness
- poor concentration and memory problems
- thoughts about suicide.





## What is a manic episode?

A manic episode (also called mania) is a period of constant and unusually elevated ('high') or irritable mood and a noticeable increase in energy or activity.

This generally lasts at least one week and is very different from someone's normal state. It leads to a range of difficulties that have a big impact on a person's daily life.

When someone is having a manic episode, they may experience:

- Elevated mood. Feeling euphoric, 'high' or 'on top of the world', or very irritable.
- Less need for sleep. Sleeping very little without feeling tired.
- More energy, activity and drive. Having lots of projects or plans, always being 'on the go'.
- Racing thoughts and rapid speech. Thoughts speeding from topic to topic, speech that's difficult for others to follow.
- Being disinhibited. Engaging in high-risk behaviours that are out

of character, like sexual risk-taking, abusing alcohol or other drugs, or spending large amounts of money.

- Inflated self-esteem. Ranging from uncritical self-confidence to 'grandiose' beliefs (e.g., the person saying they have special powers or talents).
- Psychotic symptoms. E.g., hearing or seeing things that are not real (i.e., hallucinations) or having intensely strong beliefs about something that's not real (i.e., delusions). These usually match the person's elevated mood.

## What is a hypomanic episode?

A hypomanic episode is a milder form of mania that lasts for at least four days.

The symptoms are less severe and there are no psychotic symptoms. Hypomanic episodes may feel enjoyable (i.e., more confidence/elevated mood). Some individuals will manage to keep functioning without any significant difficulties, but others will progress to experience a full manic episode.

## Types of bipolar disorder

**A person with bipolar I disorder** will have had at least one episode of mania. Usually the mania is so severe that they will need admission to hospital to keep them safe. They'll usually have had depression at some time as well.

**A person with bipolar II disorder** will have had at least one episode of hypomania as well as at least one depressive episode. Depressive episodes can be severe and the instability of mood can cause a great amount of disruption to their lives.

**A person with cyclothymia** (or cyclothymic disorder) experiences changes in mood that are less severe than those in bipolar I or II. Although the symptoms may be less severe, it can have a significant impact on a person's functioning and can be challenging to manage.



**If someone is experiencing symptoms, it's important to take them seriously and ensure they access professional support.**

## Getting support

**A diagnosis from a health professional, a local general practitioner (GP) or a psychiatrist is important in getting the right treatment. Getting professional treatment early can help to limit the impact of bipolar disorder on the things you want to do in your life. Treatment can also reduce the risk that you will have challenges with your mood in the future.**

Your mental health practitioner will work with you and the important people in your life to help you understand your experiences and develop the most appropriate support plan.

A support plan often involves a combination of medication and psychological therapies. Your GP or psychiatrist can help you find a medication that works for you. Psychological therapies can help you to understand your mood patterns, manage difficult thoughts and feelings, and develop a plan to help minimise the impact bipolar disorder has on your life.

**These strategies usually include:**

- sleeping and eating well
- staying active
- learning to manage stress
- limiting use of alcohol and other drugs
- connecting with trusted friends, family, mob and supportive people in your life
- getting a good balance of rest and activities
- learning to recognise 'warning signs' that you may be becoming unwell.



**Approximately 2 in 100 people experience bipolar disorder sometime during their lives.**  
(Merikangas KR, 2011)<sup>1</sup>

1. Merikangas KR, et al. Prevalence and Correlates of Bipolar Spectrum Disorder in the World Mental Health Survey Initiative. Arch Gen Psychiatry. 2011;68(3):241-51.



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# understanding depression

**The word depression is often used when people are talking about times when they're feeling sad or down.**

However, depression and feeling depressed is more than feeling sad. Depression is when feelings of sadness, emptiness and irritability last longer than two weeks, affect most parts of a person's daily life, and get in the way of them doing things that they normally enjoy.

There is no simple reason why depression happens. For some, a mix of events or challenges can end up

affecting how they feel, think and act. Things like constant stress, unhealthy relationships, discrimination, bullying or social isolation. For some it can be connected to family history, or individual coping styles, but sometimes there's no clear reason, and that can be frustrating to understand.



*The good news is that people experiencing depression can and do get better.*



## Signs and symptoms

Depression can be different for everyone, but there are some common signs and symptoms. These can include experiencing some of the following changes for more than two weeks:

### Changes to feelings or emotions

Like feeling sad, numb, empty, irritable, guilty or like everything is too hard.

### Physical changes

Like feeling tired most of the time, difficulty sleeping, changes in appetite or unexplained aches or pains.

### Changes to thoughts

Like having unhelpful thoughts, finding it hard to concentrate, or having thoughts of self harm or suicide.

### Behaviour changes

Like withdrawing from family or friends, losing interest in previously enjoyed activities, not getting things done or using more alcohol and other drugs.

Many people experience some of these symptoms at different times in their lives. What makes depression different is that the symptoms affect a person's daily life, and they don't tend to go away easily.

Sometimes people with depression experience other mental health challenges too, such as anxiety. Some may also use alcohol and other drugs, but these can make people feel much worse in the long term.



## Depression and the link between suicide and self harm

Some young people who experience depression self harm or experience thoughts of suicide. Self harm and thoughts about suicide are often ways of trying to cope with difficult emotions.

If you have thoughts of suicide or self harm it's really important to talk to someone you trust, such as a family member, friend, an Elder, teacher or counsellor.

You can also develop a safety plan yourself to help cope with feelings of distress and suicidal thoughts by using the BeyondNow app ([beyondblue.org.au/beyondnow](http://beyondblue.org.au/beyondnow)).

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

**12%**  
of young people aged 15-24 reported feeling depressed or are diagnosed with a depressive disorder (Lawrence et al 2015)<sup>2</sup>



## Getting support

**For some people, using these tips will be enough to manage their symptoms of depression. But if the depression has been going on for too long without improvement, it's important to get professional help. The sooner you get help, the sooner you can recover.**

## So what can I do?

**A part of depression means it can feel hard to find the energy or motivation to do these things. Sometimes it might feel like nothing will help. Try starting with one thing you know you can do, then slowly add things in step by step. This can build your confidence and help you feel like you're making progress.**



There are lots of things that you can do to improve how you feel and get better at managing tough times.



### Talk about it

It's a good idea to talk to someone that you trust about what's going on for you. Talking to others can help you feel understood and supported.

### Take care of yourself

Looking after our minds and bodies can help us with our general mental health and wellbeing. You can:

- eat well to improve your mood, energy levels and general health and wellbeing
- stay active to help boost your energy, manage stress and boost your mood
- limit your use of alcohol and other drugs.

### Get into life

Sometimes it can be difficult to do or think of enjoyable things when you're feeling low. It can take some extra effort but trying to do something that you used to enjoy, even if you don't feel like it can help lift your mood and energy.

### Learn skills for tough times

Learning new ways to manage the thoughts, feelings and physical sensations of depression can be helpful. Speaking to a mental health clinician is one way to explore these and learn new skills.



1. ABS. National Health Survey: first results, 2017–18 Australia. ABS cat. no. 4364.0.55.001. Canberra; 2018.

2. Lawrence D et al. The mental health of children and adolescents: Report on the Second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing [Internet]. 2015. Available from: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/the-mental-health-of-children-and-adolescents>



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# understanding disordered eating and eating disorders

## Disordered eating is when a person experiences an unhealthy relationship with food or eating.

Disordered eating can include skipping meals, binge eating, or following a strict diet. A person who experiences disordered eating may also try to 'make up' for breaking diets by exercising or vomiting.

Disordered eating habits and behaviours can lead to the development of an eating disorder. They can impact every aspect of a person's life.

## We can all experience unhealthy eating habits from time to time.

Unhealthy eating habits can come and go, but for some people, they can become a real problem. These behaviours, or extreme concerns about weight or how our body looks, are a sign that it's time to seek support.

Disordered eating often begins with dieting or over-exercising, but lots of other factors can increase the risk that this may develop into an eating disorder.

These include:

- **individual factors** – such as believing you're not good enough, wanting to do things perfectly all the time, or having an unrealistic perception of what their body looks like or should look like
- **family factors** – like a family history of eating disorders
- **outside factors** – like the influence of the media and social pressures to look a certain way
- **life factors** – certain stressors like exams, work, relationships and feeling overwhelmed.

**Eating disorders are a serious health issue, damaging and at times even life-threatening. If you're having problems with disordered eating or body image, it's important to seek professional support. The sooner you ask for help, the faster your recovery will be.**

## What are the symptoms and warning signs?

The most common signs of disordered eating are:

### Changes in behaviour

- using food as a way to manage or express emotions
- repetitive or obsessive dieting
- binge eating.

### Changes in thoughts and feelings

- thinking and talking about food, weight and body appearance a lot of the time
- feeling out of control in relation to eating patterns
- worrying about places that involve food, eating, eating in front of others
- preoccupation with exercise or body building
- feeling guilt and or shame about eating patterns
- fearing gaining weight
- difficulty concentrating.

### Changes in the body

- often feeling tired and low in energy.



People will experience these symptoms differently. It's important to seek professional support to make sense of them. Talking to a GP (General Practitioner) or someone that you trust – like a trusted family member, friend, Elder, or counsellor – can help.



# Common types of eating disorders

An eating disorder is a diagnosed type of disordered eating. People with any body type can experience eating disorders. Eating disorders don't always affect body weight.

## Anorexia nervosa

Anorexia nervosa is when a person experiences all of the following:

- getting less energy (food) than their body requires to maintain health
- having an intense fear of gaining weight
- seeing their body size or shape in a distorted and disturbed way.

People experiencing anorexia nervosa also have weight loss and/or are underweight.

There are two types of anorexia nervosa:

- **restrictive** – not eating enough and/or exercising a lot more than food intake
- **binge-purge** – eating (sometimes to excess) and then through some method removing that food (e.g., vomiting or laxatives).

Many people may change between these types.

## Bulimia nervosa

Bulimia nervosa involves a cycle of binge eating (eating a large amount of food quickly, in a way that feels uncontrolled), followed by actions to get rid of the food eaten.

People experiencing bulimia nervosa usually have strong feelings of distress, guilt and shame about these experiences, and are often very critical of their body.

## Binge eating disorder

Binge eating disorder involves repeated episodes of binge eating, often with a sense of loss of control while eating.

## Avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder

A person may avoid eating certain foods based on the sensory characteristics such as the smell, appearance or texture. This can lead to issues with nutrition and physical health.

## Other specific feeding or eating disorders

An eating disorder that significantly impacts a person's life but doesn't meet the full criteria for one of the other types of eating disorders.

# Self-help tips to support recovery

Alongside professional help, if you think you may be developing signs of unhealthy eating habits, there are many things that you can do to help get on top of things.

## Seek support from people you trust

Knowing that you're not alone on your recovery journey can be really powerful. Reach out for support from a trusted friend, family member, Elder, school counsellor, or others who have experienced an eating disorder in online support groups, like The Butterfly Foundation and the InsideOut Institute.

## Try to be open about your feelings

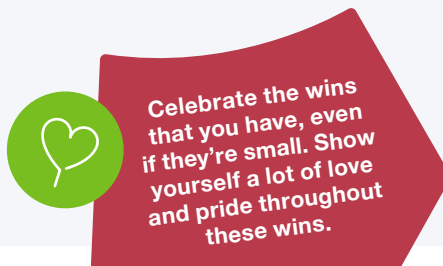
These might include feelings of anger, fear, exhaustion, guilt, shame – they're all part of being human. Being open and honest about these feelings with supportive people can help to remind you that you're not alone, and to find self-acceptance.

## Reconnect with who you are

Disordered eating can be tough and at times you might forget there is more to you than these challenges. Reconnecting with the other parts of you can help to build up your identity 'outside' of the disorder.

## Be kind to yourself

Recovery is a journey. It can take some time and it can feel exhausting, so try not to be hard on yourself if things aren't going smoothly. Keep a journal to record your achievements and successes along the way. When you hit a rough patch, looking back at this journal can help keep your energy and motivation up.



## What to do if you think you experience disordered eating

Many people with disordered eating may feel that their experiences aren't bad enough, or they aren't 'thin enough' to need professional help.

No matter what a person weighs or how much or little they eat, anybody experiencing unhealthy eating patterns and distress about how they look should seek professional support.

**It's a good idea to try to find help sooner rather than later. The earlier you get support, the quicker you can start recovering.**



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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# understanding loneliness

**We can all feel lonely at different points in our lives. Loneliness is a feeling and like all feelings, it's trying to tell us something.**

Feeling lonely lets us know that we aren't feeling meaningfully connected enough with other people. It's trying to motivate us to do something different.

This doesn't necessarily mean having lots of people to hang out with, it's about meaningful connections – feeling understood and supported.

For some people, loneliness can feel overwhelming and can lead to feeling flat, sad and worried. Some people who experience loneliness might also experience anxiety or depression.

It's important to know that loneliness is not always the same as being alone. Some people can have little contact with others and not feel lonely at all, and some people who have many friends can feel lonely. Everyone is different.



## When might you feel lonely?

Feeling lonely can happen at any time. Big life changes such as relationship break-ups, the death of someone close to us, or moving somewhere new can increase the likelihood of us feeling lonely.

### Other things might include:

- starting new jobs, school, TAFE or uni
- living alone
- not feeling understood by others
- having little contact with others.



It can be hard to admit that we're feeling lonely. We might feel ashamed, embarrassed, or we might think it's our fault, but it's really common – we all feel lonely sometimes.



# Things you can do when you're feeling lonely

There are many things we can do to support ourselves that can help us connect with others:

## Acknowledge that you're feeling lonely

It's trying to encourage you to do something new. Understanding our emotions is an important step in trying something different.

## Create a routine

Include meaningful and enjoyable activities. Doing stuff is really important for our mental health and wellbeing.

## Be kind to yourself

Self-compassion helps gives us the strength to continue when we're faced with life's challenges.

## Some places to look

Meet Up ([www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)) has many groups both online and in-person; Facebook has online communities that you might be interested in; or you can create your own.

**headspace also hosts weekly Peer Support Chats discussions for young people by young people. See our website for more info.**



## Create connections

Connecting with others is an important part of being human. Healthy relationships can support us, give us a sense of belonging and improve our mental health and wellbeing.

Putting ourselves out there can feel scary though, but if we want things to change, we need to support ourselves and take action. When we face the things that challenge us, we start to build skills and gain confidence in our ability to cope.

## Grow a relationship

Friendships can take time and effort to grow. Reach out to someone you have something in common with, invite them out and base the activity around whatever you have in common.

## Join a group

Joining a group can help you meet new people that share your interests. There are many different types of groups you can join. These come in lots of shapes and forms. Some ideas you might explore include sporting, community, cultural, spiritual, recreational, creative and even online groups. Consider what you like doing, or try something new, and see if there's a group you can join.

## Volunteer

Volunteering can help us meet new people and give us a sense of purpose. Volunteering Australia ([www.volunteeringAustralia.org](http://www.volunteeringAustralia.org)) is a national body that helps match you with a volunteering opportunity.



# 54%

Approximately one in two young people feel a sense of loneliness. (headspace 2020)<sup>1</sup>.

## Look after yourself

No matter what's going on, it's a good idea to be kind to yourself and practice self-care. These are things like sleeping well, eating well, limit alcohol and other drugs, building skills for tough times and staying active.

## Getting support

Feelings of loneliness can come and go, but if we feel it constantly or it's affecting our ability to do things, it can be a sign that we need extra support. Reach out to a trusted friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, or a health service for support.

**Check out our website for other tips on looking after your mental health and wellbeing – [headspace.org.au/tips](http://headspace.org.au/tips)**

1. headspace. Loneliness over time: headspace National Youth Mental Health Survey 2020 [Internet]. 2020. Available from: [https://headspace.org.au/assets/HSP10869-Loneliness-Report\\_FA01.pdf](https://headspace.org.au/assets/HSP10869-Loneliness-Report_FA01.pdf)



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# understanding psychosis

**Psychosis is an experience where a person has difficulties interpreting the real world. They might see or hear things that other people can't or have unusual ideas or beliefs. This can affect their thoughts, feelings and behaviour.**

Psychosis is often frightening for the person going through it and misunderstood by those around them. However, it can be treated. Most people who experience psychosis make a good recovery and go on to lead healthy, productive lives.

## What are the symptoms of psychosis?

### Changed behaviour

Behaving differently from how they usually do. For example, extremely active or having little energy; laughing when things don't seem funny or becoming angry or upset without any obvious reason.

### Changed emotions

Feeling strange and cut off from the world; feeling less emotion or showing less emotion than those around them.

### Confused thinking

Everyday thoughts can become confused, making sentences unclear or hard to understand. It can be hard to concentrate, follow a conversation or remember things. Thoughts can seem to speed up or slow down.

### False beliefs (delusions)

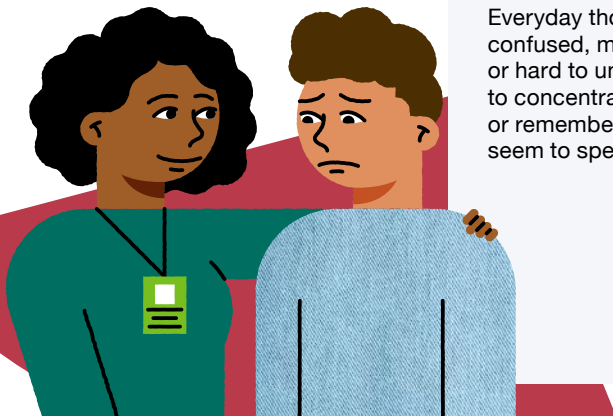
Strong beliefs in things that aren't real to other people. Such as, believing that they're being followed, that someone is trying to harm them, or that they're getting secret messages (e.g., from a TV). This can be very scary for the person.

### Hallucinations

Hearing or seeing something that isn't there. Sometimes other senses like touch, smell or taste can also be affected.



These symptoms are different for everyone. They might not be there all the time, can have different causes and can change over time.



## What causes psychosis?

Like lots of mental health difficulties, psychosis is caused by a combination of different things. Things like genetics (inherited from parents) and a history of tough times (like trauma and childhood experiences) can make a person more vulnerable to psychosis.

Things people are exposed to in life (or 'stressors') can also feed into psychosis. They include:



Alcohol and other drug use



Grief and loss



Difficult times with family or friends



Problems at school, uni, TAFE or work



## Where psychosis can occur

Experiencing psychotic symptoms doesn't necessarily mean that someone has a psychotic illness. More than three quarters of psychotic experiences don't progress to an illness.

Many people think that people experiencing psychosis have schizophrenia. But there are lots of other disorders that have psychotic symptoms, including:

- brief psychotic disorder
- schizophrenia
- substance/medication-induced psychotic disorder
- bipolar disorder
- major depression with psychotic features
- delusional disorder.

Because symptoms can change over time, the type of disorder often changes too. Sometimes people are diagnosed with one thing, and then later the diagnosis is changed or removed.

## Getting support

**Psychosis can be frightening, confusing and disruptive – it's important to know that help is available and with the right support most people get better.**

If you think you're experiencing symptoms of psychosis, it's a good idea to seek help as soon as possible.

The earlier you get help, the better the results can be and the quicker your recovery.

General Practitioners (GPs) and clinicians at your local mental health service will be able to provide the help you need.

## Recovering from psychosis

**The recovery journey is different for everyone, and it can be an ongoing process. It's not just about getting rid of the symptoms – it's about learning to enjoy life while managing the tough times when they happen.**

**There can be ups and downs during recovery. People can sometimes feel like they're not getting better – it's important to be patient. Recovery takes time, support, and effort.**

### How is it treated?

**Treatments for psychosis usually include:**

- education about psychosis
- medicine
- counselling
- support from family, friends, community and/or mob
- practical support, like helping the person get back to studies or work.

### What does recovery involve?

**Recovery may involve:**

- learning how to build and maintain a healthy headspace – things like staying active, connecting with others, sleeping and eating well, and cutting back on alcohol and other drugs
- getting back a sense of control
- learning to manage symptoms so they have less of an impact on day-to-day life
- learning how to have supportive relationships
- going to school, uni, TAFE or work
- learning to be more independent.

When recovering from psychosis, it's important to manage other stressors in life. Learning ways to cope with stress and tough times can help manage symptoms of psychosis.



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