



headspace

National Youth Mental Health Foundation

supporting pre-service educators

University Support Program
information pack



introduction

The headspace Schools & Communities University Support Program provides training and education opportunities to Australian universities to build their capacity and confidence to engage in conversations about mental health and wellbeing.

The university setting is a unique setting in many ways. Many individuals are often going through various transitions as they adapt to new environments, new ways of learning, new cultures and a host of everyday stresses that can threaten to impact their mental health and wellbeing.

Professional placements are an important and valuable part of the university training for pre-service educators and can be greatly enhanced by having a positive experience. Targeted support from placement supervisors to prioritise mental health and wellbeing can support pre-service educators to confidently absorb the practice-based learning and challenges that may present, increasing the likelihood of a positive placement experience.

Building the capacity and confidence of university education placement supervisors to engage in conversations with students about their mental health and wellbeing will give students the best possible chance to learn and thrive on their pathway to becoming an educator.

There can be a range of enablers and barriers to engaging in mental health and wellbeing conversations in university settings. We ask you to be mindful of those barriers and take the opportunities, whenever you can, to promote messages of help-seeking and pathways to support. For a pre-service educator preparing to go on a professional placement some of these difficulties can be exacerbated by the time commitment, location, and length of the professional placement.

Factors impacting mental health and wellbeing in the university setting:

- Upheaval and adjustment from previous living and learning environments
- Academic pressure to succeed
- Living away from familiar support networks
- Psychosocial stressors (cost of living, relationship issues, work pressures etc)

Barriers to help-seeking for university students:

- Stigma around mental health difficulties
- Cultural and religious beliefs and practises
- Language barriers
- Lack of awareness around supports available at the university, and in the community
- Privacy concerns
- Fear of academic repercussions

engaging in conversations about mental health and wellbeing

headspace, in partnership with Universities Australia developed the Real Talk Framework as a strategy for initiating conversations with those showing signs of a mental health concern. The framework also provides university staff with some considerations on how to offer support.

The Real Talk Framework is a conversational approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing in Australian universities that encourages people to notice the signs that may indicate someone is experiencing a mental health difficulty, to inquire about what you have noticed, and provide timely, and appropriate pathways to support when mental health difficulties arise. The conversation approach of notice, inquire, and provide is an approach that can support you in your role of supporting pre-service educators prepare for their educational placements.

To learn more about the **notice**, **inquire**, and **provide** framework, you can attend an online session facilitated by the headspace University Support Program, or reach out to one of our Consultants to explore the possibility of organising bespoke sessions for your faculty.

How you can help

- Engage in a conversation that **notices** when someone may be experiencing a mental health difficulty, **inquires** about what you have noticed, and **provides** appropriate support.
- Share help-seeking messages wherever possible (slides in lectures, email signatures and regular reminders of wellbeing supports available)
- Role model prioritising self-care practices and encourage students to activate their own self-care strategies

Combined, these approaches aim to increase awareness of the things that each of us can do to nurture our own mental health and wellbeing.



Be You

Be You is the national mental health and wellbeing in education initiative for learning communities in Australia delivered by Beyond Blue in collaboration with Early Childhood Australia and headspace.

The initiative supports pre-service students transitioning from study to the workplace by building a common language and shared understanding about mental health and wellbeing.



Supporting students to prepare for professional placement

Be You's tools and resources that support students during their placement include:

- Professional learning to build students' mental health and wellbeing literacy
- Fact sheets that provide evidence-informed information on a range of topics
- Wellbeing tools and resources designed to support a pre-service student while studying and undertaking placements



Ways to engage with Be You

- [Sign up](#) for a Be You account and explore the website
- Download the [Be You Pre-service educator handbook](#) for an overview of how Be You can support students' studies, placement and future career
- Develop a [Be You Wellbeing Plan](#) to build strategies to support and promote mental health and wellbeing practices

For more information visit beyou.edu.au



With delivery partners



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critical incidents

If pre-service educators are exposed to a suicide or other critical incident during placement, this can pose additional challenges. These challenges can be exacerbated by the dual role they occupy as both university students and school staff. While universities ([Responding to suicide: a toolkit for Australian Universities](#)) and schools ([Be You Suicide Response](#)) both have supports they can access in response, these supports may not always include specific consideration of the needs of pre-service educators.

Things to discuss with pre-service educators:

- The possibility of a critical incident occurring while they are on placement
- Being aware of any relevant policies and processes at their host school, including whether the school has a suicide postvention plan
- What supports they will be able to access. Sometimes pre-service educators may not be covered by a school's EAP and alternative supports will need to be identified
- How to ensure timely and appropriate communication in the event of a critical incident. How will they let their placement supervisor know? How will their on-site supervisor pass on any important meetings or communications?

Things for education placement supervisors to consider:

- Keeping up to date with university pathways to access wellbeing and academic supports if needed
- Any current university or faculty policies or procedures around responding to critical incidents and how these apply to students on placement
- Identifying your own support pathways if needed

If you are working with a pre-service educator who has been exposed to suicide during their placement, contact the University Support Program team for further consultation (universitysupport@headspace.org.au)



managing your own self-care and wellbeing

Self-care allows us to recharge our mental, emotional, and physical energy. It enables us to maintain a sharper focus, make better decisions, and communicate effectively. Practicing self-care sets a powerful example for our students and colleagues, demonstrating that a balanced life is attainable and essential.

Explore our suggestions for supporting mental health and wellbeing.



1. Get into life

Set a goal or task you want to achieve for the day. Try some new hobbies and keep doing the things you love as best you can.



2. Learn skills for a tough time

Try journaling, breathing exercises, mental health apps, a fresh routine, or a digital detox.



3. Create connections

Connection is key to wellbeing. Catch up with friends, join a club, try a team sport, or explore safe online communities to build relationships and feel connected.



4. Eat well

Limit unhealthy snacks and focus on non-food coping strategies. Nourish your body with fruits, veggies, high-fibre foods.



5. Stay active

Staying active improves sleep, reduces stress, and boosts mood. Take breaks to exercise—hit the gym, kick a ball, or go for a walk.



6. Get enough sleep

Aim for 8 hours of sleep. Go to bed and wake up at the same time, and switch off electronics 30-60 minutes before bed.

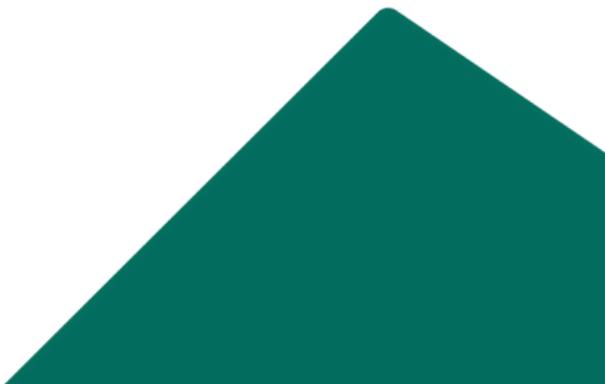


7. Cut back on alcohol and other drugs

Be mindful of alcohol and drug use. Try to take a break, start small and build up. Swap drinks for herbal tea, water, or smoothies.

Learn more about the 7 tips for a healthy headspace [here](#).

mental health supports

- headspace: 1800 650 890 (3pm-10pm daily) - Online support and counselling for young people aged 12 to 25
 - Lifeline: 13 11 14 – available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for crisis support
 - Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 – available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
 - Suicide Call Back Service: nationwide service for people aged 18+ affected by suicide
 - Mensline Australia: 1300 78 99 78 free telephone and online counselling to Australian men, 24 hours a week, 7 days a week
 - 13 YARN: support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. Call 13 YARN or 13 92 76
 - QLife: phone counselling for LGBTQIA+ community. 1800 184 527 3pm-midnight 7 days a week and online webchat
 - eSafety Commissioner: for reporting of online and image-based abuse
 - 1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732 – available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling
 - Embrace Multicultural Mental Health support: supports and service for culturally and linguistically diverse Australians, refugees and migrants
 - National Translation and Interpreter Service: provides access to phone and on-site interpreting services in over 150 languages – 131 450 (for immediate phone interpreting)
 - Standby: supporting anyone who has been bereaved or impacted by suicide. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – 1300 727247
 - Thirili (Indigenous Suicide Postvention Services): 1800 805 801
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resources and links

Real talk framework	universitiesaustralia.edu.au/publication/real-talk-framework
Real talk sessions via Eventbrite	eventbrite.com.au/cc/real-talk-a-conversational-approach-2469689
Responding to suicide: A toolkit for Australian universities	universitiesaustralia.edu.au/publication/responding-to-suicide-a-toolkit-for-australian-universities
headspace tips for a healthy headspace	headspace.org.au/tips
Be You pre-service educator handbook	beyou.edu.au/get-started/pre-service-educators
Be You sign up - register for an account	beyou.edu.au/get-started/educators
Be You suicide response	beyou.edu.au/resources/suicide-prevention-and-response/suicide-response
Be You wellbeing plan	beyou.edu.au/get-started/pre-service-educators





headspace centres and services operate across Australia, in metro, regional and rural areas, supporting young Australians and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.



headspace would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and emerging and are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing services that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate and inclusive.



headspace is committed to embracing diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination in the provision of health services. headspace welcomes all people irrespective of ethnicity, lifestyle choice, faith, sexual orientation and gender identity.

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



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