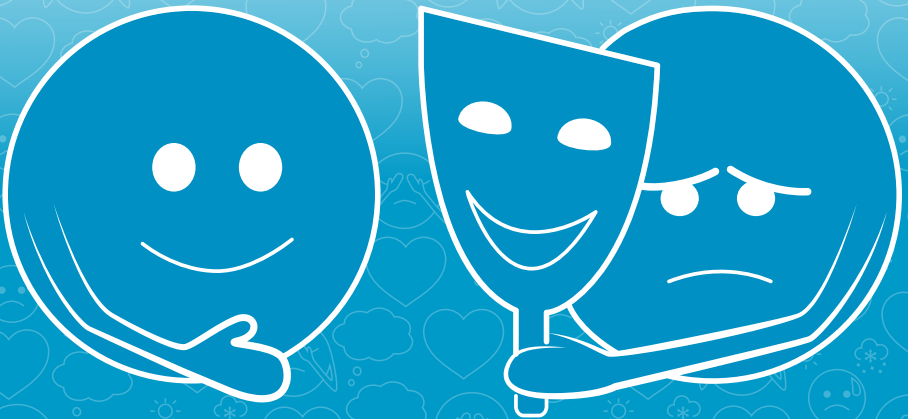




beyondblue
Depression. Anxiety.

Anxiety and depression in young people

What you need to know



SUICIDE AND CRISIS SUPPORT

If you, or someone you care about, is in crisis and you think immediate action is needed, call emergency services (triple zero – 000), contact your doctor or mental health crisis service, or go to your local hospital emergency department.

We would like to thank the blueVoices members who have contributed quotes to this resource. blueVoices is *beyondblue's* national reference group for people who have personal experience of anxiety and depression, or support someone who does.

The scenarios in this resource are fictional but have been based on real life situations.

For more information, or to register visit: www.beyondblue.org.au/bluevoices

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Welcome

Hi, welcome to our booklet about anxiety and depression. It's great that you've taken the time to have a look at this – we hope you find it useful.

We know everyone faces challenges in their life – that's normal, but for some young people, feelings of sadness and anxiety begin to interfere with their life. The feelings last for longer than a few weeks and they change the way a person spends their time. This can be anxiety or depression.

This booklet will help you understand more about anxiety and depression; what it looks like, how it affects people and importantly, the things you or a friend can do to begin to manage your feelings. While this booklet is about anxiety and depression, there are some handy tips on coping with difficult situations or feelings that you or a friend might find helpful.

This booklet does not have all the answers but it can guide you if you or a friend has issues with anxiety and depression. It can also help you feel confident to seek support from people around you when you need it.



More information is available at youthbeyondblue.com. If you think your parents or an adult close to you could do with a bit more information, you can suggest they read our parent booklet at parentsguide.beyondblue.org.au

Words of wisdom from young people



“I know it is very hard to seek help and reach out to someone, but doing that can prevent the problem escalating, just like it happened to me. The right help is needed in order to get better and the most important thing to remember is that it will ALWAYS get better. You may think it is the end of the world at the time, but believe me; things are going to look up. I am so glad to be alive today and you will be glad too one day. That’s a promise.”

Tianna, 19 years



“I would also definitely encourage them to talk to someone and share what they’re feeling because they need to let it out and know that they are not alone, that they are supported and that they are loved.”

Gemma, 20 years



“Depression is a challenge and it’s important to face it together with a strong and positive support network. It is important to accept the challenge it presents, seek help, and try to overcome the difficult times and focus on the positives in life, as every challenge conquered starts with the decision to try.”

Andrew, 18 years



“I promise that you are not alone. You deserve help, and it is your right to be heard, no matter who tells you otherwise – including your own fears.”

Hannah, 22 years

What is anxiety?

Who doesn't get anxious? In fact, sometimes anxiety can be helpful. It can help you avoid dangerous situations or perhaps motivate you to perform at your best, finish a project or study harder for an upcoming exam or presentation.

ON AVERAGE
1 IN 6



In Australia, one in six young people has anxiety so knowing what helps can really come in handy.¹

For some young people these anxious feelings become intense and overwhelming. The feelings begin to interfere with their life and it is hard to do what they need to do; like going to school and work. It can also affect how they get along with other people.

There are different types of anxiety but they all share some common symptoms. Some people experiencing anxiety also have depression.



“I had a lot of physical symptoms of anxiety such as a racing heart and turning red. I became anxious all the time and it was triggered by anything. I knew that I shouldn't be feeling this way, not enjoying anything and being so anxious and on edge all the time, so I eventually started to do some research on the internet about what might be going on for me.**”**

Jennifer, 23 years

What you might feel

If you are experiencing anxiety you might feel anxious, on edge or worried most of the time. Feeling overwhelmed, frightened or even panicked is also common.

You might also experience a range of physical symptoms when you are anxious like your heart racing, butterflies in the stomach, muscle tension, shaky hands or perhaps feeling nauseous.



“I felt anxious, stressed, out of breath and overwhelmed.”

Jessica, 22 years

What you might think

A common feature of anxiety conditions is to think about things a lot more than you would normally. You might also notice that what you are thinking about is unhelpful or perhaps even irrational or silly, but you are unable to stop these intense and sometimes overwhelming thoughts. This thinking tends to be repetitive and often negative, causing your feelings of anxiety or fear to get worse.

What you might do

Our natural instinct is to avoid situations that cause us anxiety or stress. When an anxiety condition develops, you might begin to avoid lots of things and/or whatever causes you to worry. It might be places, people or specific situations. Beginning to avoid things might mean

that you slowly spend less time with your friends. You might also begin to find going to school, university or work becomes challenging.

You may find it hard to sleep because of your constant thinking and worrying, leaving you tired and lacking in energy. Not enough sleep can often mean that it's harder to think clearly about things that are on your mind.



“I experienced uncontrollable strings of panic attacks, followed by days where I was simply unable to get out of bed or eat. It wasn't until I ran out of a university lecture in the midst of an intense panic attack that I decided to seek proper help.”

Ella, 22 years



What are the different types of anxiety?

Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)

A person feels anxious most days and worries about everyday situations, such as school, work, relationships or health, for a period of six months or more.

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)

A person experiences unwanted and intrusive thoughts and fears (obsessions) that leave them feeling really anxious. To manage these anxious thoughts they begin to do things or use rituals (compulsions) to cope. Even though they often know these thoughts are irrational, the obsessions return all the time and the compulsions are hard to resist. For example, a fear of germs can lead to constant washing of hands and clothes.

Panic disorder

A person has regular panic attacks for more than one month. The panic attacks are periods of intense fear or extreme anxiety that happen suddenly or when there is no sign of danger. Physical symptoms, like sweating, feeling short of breath, pounding heart, dry mouth, thinking that you're dying and losing control or are about to collapse are common in panic attacks.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

A person may experience difficulty relaxing, upsetting dreams or flashbacks, and avoidance of anything that reminds them of the event.

This can happen after experiencing a traumatic event, such as war, assault, accident or disaster.

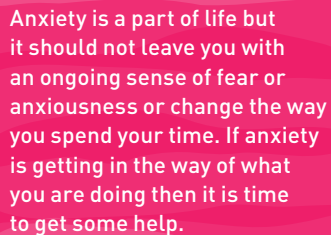
Social phobia

A person has an intense fear of being criticised, embarrassed or humiliated, even in everyday situations, such as speaking publicly, eating in public, being assertive at work or making small talk.

Specific phobias

A person feels anxious about a particular object or situation, like going near an animal, going to a social event, or receiving an injection, and will go to great lengths to avoid it. Some phobias include animals, insects, heights and blood.

Many people can experience more than one type of anxiety and may experience depression as well.



Anxiety is a part of life but it should not leave you with an ongoing sense of fear or anxiousness or change the way you spend your time. If anxiety is getting in the way of what you are doing then it is time to get some help.



MARTIN, 17 YEARS

“Anxiety; I never really knew what it was until my life got taken over by it. I had to go to the sick bay nearly every day, and then I had to go the doctor to make sure I did not have any medical problems.

The doctor told me about panic attacks but that was it ... so I just thought they would go away. They didn't. In fact I just got worse. I could not even sleep because I had so much going on in my head.

Mum tried to get me to a counsellor but really, who was she kidding? I wasn't going to see a counsellor. But then things at school got worse, I started failing, even my favourite subjects. Then one day one of my mates asked what drugs I was doing because I was so on edge all the time. That was a bit weird; my mates thought I was on drugs! So, I went back to the medical clinic, but this time I asked to see another doctor.

I got this guy who just sat and talked with me for well, ages. He asked me lots of questions about what I thought about and how I spent my time, how often I had panic attacks and then, he told me I had an anxiety condition.

It was good to hear that there was something that I could do about it. The doctor wrote me a Mental Health Plan so that I could see a psychologist for free and I saw her every week. We talked about why I was anxious and what triggered my panic attacks and then how my thinking affects how I feel. I had never thought about things like this before, but it made sense and it actually made a difference.

I sometimes wish I had taken my mum's advice a bit sooner though – things might not have got so bad. I needed help and until I got it I was miserable.”

Common symptoms of anxiety

FEELINGS



- overwhelmed
- fear (particularly when having to face certain objects, situations or events)
- worried about physical symptoms (e.g. fearing there is an undiagnosed medical problem)
- dread (e.g. that something bad is going to happen)
- constantly tense, nervous or on edge
- uncontrollable or overwhelming panic.

THOUGHTS



- "I'm going crazy."
- "I can't control myself."
- "I'm about to die."
- "People are judging me."
- having upsetting dreams or flashbacks of a traumatic event
- finding it hard to stop worrying
- unwanted or intrusive thoughts.

BEHAVIOUR



- withdrawing from, avoiding, or enduring with fear, objects or situations which cause anxiety
- urges to perform certain rituals in a bid to relieve anxiety
- not being assertive (i.e. avoiding eye contact)
- difficulty making decisions
- being startled easily.

PHYSICAL



- increased heart rate/racing heart
- shortness of breath
- vomiting, nausea or pain in the stomach
- muscle tension and pain (e.g. sore back or jaw)
- feeling detached from your physical self or surroundings
- having trouble sleeping (e.g. difficulty falling or staying asleep or restless sleep)
- sweating, shaking
- dizzy, lightheaded or faint
- numbness or tingling
- hot or cold flushes
- difficulty concentrating.



GRACE, 13 YEARS

“When I was 13 things changed for me. I was always a little nervous, maybe shy, but when I turned 13 I just did not want to be around other people anymore.

I spent lunchtimes alone in the library; I didn't hang around after school, and what I think I noticed most was my overwhelming fear of my basketball matches. Sometimes I felt so scared that my hands would shake and get all sweaty, my face would turn red and my heart ... I thought I was going to have a heart attack.

It was my coach who started talking to me about what was going on. My dad had not noticed my problems because he was working so hard, and I did not tell him because, well, I did not want to worry him. My coach ended up suggesting to my dad that I start doing a relaxation program. She gave me one on

a CD and then I found a few other things online. They really helped but I found it so hard to not think about things, well to stop worrying about things.

I secretly spoke to the school welfare teacher and she talked about what had happened with my friends. I realised that maybe I had made things bigger in my head than they really were, but I could not stop. The teacher spoke with my dad and he took me to headspace. We had the first appointment together and then I went back each week. Dad came in for five minutes at the end of each session to find out if there was anything else that he could do to help. I thought dad was too busy to help me, but it turns out that once he knew, he made extra effort to support me.”

What is depression?

Feeling sad, irritable and grumpy are normal emotions. Just like happy, excited and relaxed.

For some young people with depression, their feelings of sadness and unhappiness are long-lasting. Depression affects how they think, how they feel and what they do. These feelings last for weeks, months or even longer.

There are different types of depression but they all share some common symptoms. Some people experiencing depression also have anxiety.

1 IN 4



16-24 YEARS OLD

Depression is common, with one in 16 young people aged 16-24 living with depression each year.¹

What you might feel

You might feel irritable, sad and stressed most of the time. Or you might get more angry than usual and feel restless, unable to relax or stop thinking about what is on your mind. Other feelings that you might experience include feeling guilty, worthless, frustrated, unhappy, indecisive, disappointed and miserable.



“I became very ‘numb’ to the world around me and became ambivalent about every aspect of my life. My mood began to spiral downwards and unlike the natural patterns of it improving over time, it seemed to either stay that way or deteriorate further.”

Karla, 21 years



“I withdrew from my family and friends and found myself frustrated, angry, overwhelmed, anxious and really sad. I just couldn’t stop crying. I didn’t care anymore about my school work or other interests.”

Kate, 25 years

What you might think

You might be having many negative thoughts about yourself, the people around you or your home environment. It is not uncommon to worry about how your depression is affecting the people you care about or that you are a failure and that nothing good will ever happen to you. Often these really intense feelings can even leave you thinking that life is not worth living.

Some of the other common things that you worry about might include:

- | **Friendships** — being part of the group or feeling rejected or bullied, supporting someone who is also struggling to find enjoyment in life.
- | **Intimate relationships** — wanting to be in a relationship or trying to make a relationship work.
- | **Academic performance** — managing school or university workloads, preparing for exams, setting unrealistic expectations for what you will achieve at school or university.
- | **Work pressures** — learning a new job, meeting employer expectations.
- | **Financial difficulties** — having enough money for study and personal commitments.
- | **Family stresses** — family conflict or a family break up.
- | **Loss and grief** — the loss of someone close, moving house or changing schools, the end of a relationship.
- | **Negative experiences around personal identity** — discrimination and the fear of it, internalised stigma or bottling up negative feelings about your identity (for example about sexuality, gender identity),

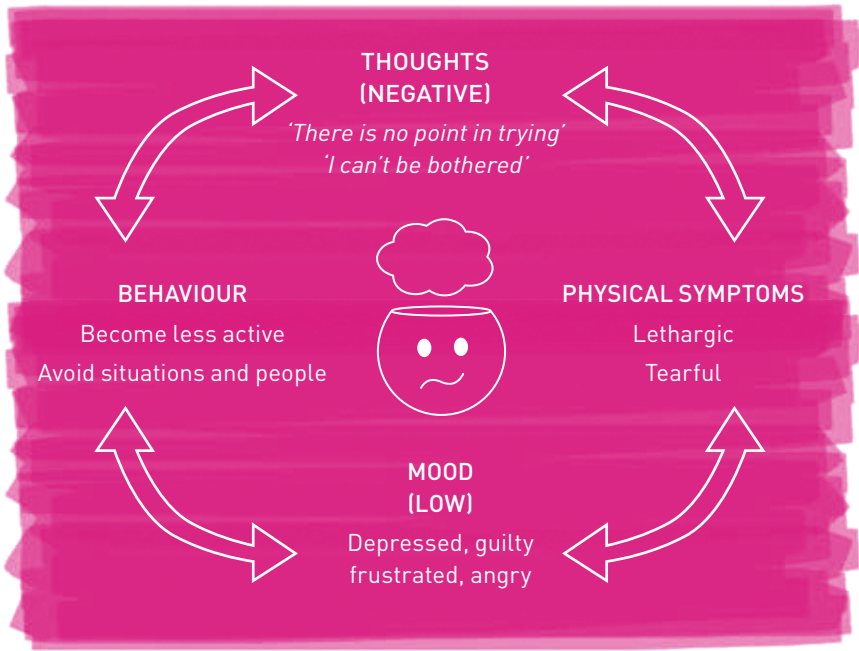
and negative family/friendship experiences when coming out.

- | **Negative experiences related to your family's cultural heritage, language or religion** — being discriminated against or fearing it, being ignored and avoiding places and situations.

Depression also affects your ability to concentrate and consider situations clearly.

The way you think affects the way you feel so if your thinking is negative, your feelings are likely to be negative too. If you feel sad and depressed you are also more likely to think about things in negative ways. It can be an unhelpful cycle. Recovery can help you see and cope with things differently.





What you might do

Negative thinking and feelings of sadness and worthlessness can mean you lose interest in the things you usually enjoy. The things you are meant to be doing like school, work, university, even hanging out with friends, can all feel like a huge stress or chore.

You might feel constantly tired whether you sleep or not. There can also be changes in how you eat; you might lose your appetite or perhaps eat more as a way to feel better.



“I experienced lethargy, lack of motivation, a decrease in activity, but mainly, a sense of emptiness. It was as though I was a sink and any sort of happiness or energy just drained out. I felt completely helpless and empty.”

Jessica, 17 years



“I found that things that I used to enjoy or find some sort of positive feeling in doing had no impact on my low mood which led to eventual discontinuation and interest. My appetite and ability to sleep both diminished very quickly and this only added to my low mood.”

Karla, 21 years

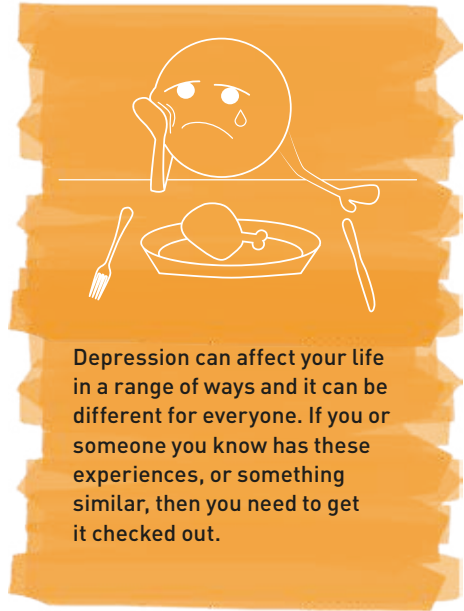


“A lot of people just don’t seem to get that while they might be joking it can actually really upset you. You lose all this self-worth.

For a period of time I didn’t want to go out, I didn’t want to go to school, I didn’t want to wake up, I just wanted to stay in my bedroom. I just wanted to stay asleep in my little cocoon.

I sort of withdrew socially and people didn’t seem to get why, which led to further alienation from others. I just guess I stopped being who I was and just became sort of this body walking around pretending to be a person.”

Marlee, 16 years



Depression can affect your life in a range of ways and it can be different for everyone. If you or someone you know has these experiences, or something similar, then you need to get it checked out.



RISHAV, 20 YEARS

“I was an apprentice mechanic and I didn’t talk much with my mates about how I felt. We talked footy, engines and car racing. But slowly I lost interest in all that. I did not want to talk, I drank more beer, I stopped talking and I didn’t laugh much. Things were getting pretty bad with my girlfriend too. And then I started getting angry.

When things went wrong at work I started to swear about it and sometimes even hit things. My boss noticed and pulled me into his office. He said that he had noticed my mood changes and was worried about me; he wondered whether I was depressed. But what did a mechanic know about depression?

After a couple more outbursts at work my boss told me that unless I got help

he would have to let me go. So I didn’t have much choice.

I went and saw a youth counsellor at the Tafe I went to. It felt like a waste of time for a while but my job was on the line so I kept going. I was depressed; my boss was right. I got better but it took a while.

I got back to footy, I even captained the reserves. And I started building my own car. I think this project really helped me too – it kept me busy and it was great to see it coming together. And of course, when I could drive it, anywhere, anytime, it was amazing. That’s what saved me from depression, my car, my boss and my counsellor.”

Common symptoms of depression

FEELINGS



- overwhelmed
- guilty
- irritable
- frustrated
- lacking in confidence.
- unhappy
- indecisive
- disappointed
- miserable
- sad.

THOUGHTS



- "I'm a failure."
- "It's my fault."
- "Nothing good ever happens to me."
- "I'm worthless."
- "Life's not worth living."
- "People would be better off without me."

BEHAVIOUR



- not going out anymore
- not getting things done at work/ school
- withdrawing from close family and friends
- relying on alcohol and sedatives
- not doing usual enjoyable activities
- unable to concentrate.

PHYSICAL



- tired all the time
- sick and run down
- headaches and muscle pains
- churning stomach
- sleep problems
- loss or change of appetite
- significant weight loss or gain.



JANAYA, 21 YEARS

“When I was 16 my dad got very sick and he passed away a few months later. I was really close to my dad so this was a tough time for me and my family. My mum and dad had split up a few years before dad got sick so not only did I have to support my mum and four brothers and sisters deal with their grief, I also helped out my dad’s new partner and children. I tried to stay strong for my family but I found myself getting really moody and lost motivation to do my school work.

I was lucky that I went to a good school that had lots of Aboriginal kids and the student counsellors were really interested and supportive of our culture. One of the counsellors kept an eye on me and one day when we were yarnning she asked how I was feeling and I just cracked and let all of the sadness I had been carrying for me and my family out. She helped me work out ways to support my family as well as look after myself too.

When I finished school and started working at a local community organisation I did not deal well with some of the ‘politics’. I tried not to get involved but it was difficult.

I started feeling really angry, could not concentrate at work and found it hard to sleep as my head wouldn’t stop thinking.

My sisters noticed I was struggling and booked me an appointment to go and talk to a psychologist at the Aboriginal Health Service. Two of my sisters came with me for the first few appointments which helped me feel safe. I have been seeing the psychologist for a year and I cannot believe how much better I feel from talking and understanding my feelings and where they come from.

She has helped me see that as a young Aboriginal woman I wear many ‘hats’ juggling my family, community, work, cultural and mainstream life, and helped me learn ways to balance this. About six months ago I wrote a list of all the things in my life that were making me feel crap and one by one I have dealt with these issues. I also developed goals for myself. If I feel like I am getting depressed I look at these lists and feel proud of how far I have come. I could not have gotten to where I am today without my family, they keep me strong.”

Why do people develop anxiety or depression?

There is no simple answer; it's different for everyone. For most people there is a combination of reasons.

For some young people, anxiety or depression develops after a stressful life event. It might begin with some feelings of sadness, distress or anxiety, but over time the symptoms become more intense and begin to affect friendships, relationships and everyday life.

- | a history of depression or anxiety in close family members, including when families have faced traumatic events for generations
- | stressful life events
- | personality and coping style
- | history of physical illness or disability
- | drug and alcohol use
- | childhood experiences, such as lack of care or abuse
- | family poverty
- | learning and other school difficulties
- | recent events in the person's life, such as being a victim of crime, death or serious illness in the family, having an accident, bullying or victimisation
- | parents separating or getting divorced



- | being in a minority group that's disadvantaged socially (such as a sexual minority and gender diverse group, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, refugee, homeless, youth in criminal justice system)
- | lack of a close, confiding relationship with someone
- | premenstrual changes in hormone levels
- | caring for a person with a long-term disability
- | the side-effects of certain medications or drugs.

A young person having one, or even a few, of these factors in their life doesn't mean they'll necessarily develop anxiety or depression – the positive things in their life can protect against this. But generally, the more of these factors a young person has, the more likely it is they'll develop anxiety or depression.

Young people of refugee and migrant backgrounds may experience additional stresses related to moving countries and living in a different culture. This does not mean that someone with these experiences will develop anxiety or depression, but they are more likely to

develop these conditions sometime in their life.

Using drugs and alcohol can lead to anxiety or depression, and if you are already experiencing anxiety or depression, drugs and alcohol don't help. They often make the symptoms much worse.

In 2004 over one in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people lived in families that had experienced seven or more stressful events over a period of 12 months², which increased their chances of anxiety and depression. Experiences of racism and discrimination can impact a person's wellbeing. Information from Kids Helpline revealed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were much more likely to experience bullying at school than other students.²

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families may also experience grief and loss associated with a history of discriminatory policies and practices leading to transgenerational trauma. Transgenerational trauma is transferred from the first generation of people who have experienced the trauma directly in the past, to their children and future generations.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) young people may also experience additional stresses that increase their chances of developing anxiety and depression. In particular, when young people come out or question either their sexuality or gender identity. Negative reactions, discrimination and lack of support from family and friends can also increase their risk. For bisexual young people there may be additional discrimination from both the broader community and from within LGBTI communities.

Whatever the cause, we know a lot about recovering from anxiety and depression, in particular what helps. Recovery may take a little time, different people may need different types of help, but by approaching it like any other condition and getting the help you need, you can recover.

Recovering from anxiety and depression

With the right treatment and support you can recover from anxiety and depression. There are a range of things that you can do, both practically and psychologically, to help improve your mental health and wellbeing.

Some of the helpful ingredients for recovery include:

- | the support and understanding of your family and friends
- | a health professional to support you while you work out the best ways to cope with how you're feeling
- | keeping physically healthy
- | managing the stress in your life
- | strong connections with cultural heritage and community.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, having strong connections with cultural heritage, family and community may be particularly important.



“Acceptance has been the most important part of recovery. Acknowledging the fact that I have limits but am not limited because of my illness has allowed me to embrace my emotions and allow them to be present, instead of trying to quell them out of denial.”

Ella, 22 years



The recovery process can be different for everyone; it's all about finding out what works best for you. But you do not have to work this out alone. With the help of your friends, family and perhaps a health professional, you can find the support you need.

During your recovery you might find yourself thinking about how anxiety or depression has changed your life. You might also find there are times when you feel angry that you have anxiety or depression or that it seems unfair. These are common reactions. You never expected to experience anxiety or depression so accepting your condition can be overwhelming in itself.

There are situations or events that can make your symptoms worse or increase the chance of you having another episode of anxiety or depression.

These triggers may include family and relationship problems, financial



“Often many triggers, little things in life that brought it back. The memories would be enough to set me off. Learning to control these reactions to certain stimuli is the hardest part to recovering from PTSD.”

Georgina, 17 years

difficulties, a change in living arrangements, employment issues, drug and alcohol use and other medical problems. Coping with your anxiety or depression is easier when you find ways to limit the stress and manage tricky situations.



GARY, 16 YEARS

“When I was 16 I was depressed. I slept all the time, ate heaps and was always down. I did not want to spend time with friends and I just played video games and watched sport on television. I did not feel like there was much to live for. Dad got worried so he took me to talk with a counsellor at the local youth services. I did not like it much but I went, listened and maybe grunted now and then.

Nothing changed much though and I just thought that was it; that was what my life was going to be like. But Dad kept taking me to different people. It was boring but I couldn't be bothered fighting him about it. Then I met Nolan – he was a counsellor but he seemed pretty normal, unlike the other ones. He talked a lot about basketball and I was happy to talk about sport instead of me. He talked about how basketball teams work, how they practice and how the

coach helps them achieve their goals. Then he suggested that I needed to be the coach for my brain; to teach my brain some new skills for thinking and practice them every day.

The more I practised the better I would get. He also suggested that I needed to find a new strategy for coping with my bad thoughts – I needed to work on my defence. Finally someone was making sense.

Nolan got me to see the doctor too and I started on some medication. Then things started to turn around and I realised Dad was right to keep pushing. He knew that things could be different and just kept pushing until I found the right help. I guess in some ways you could say that he was what kept me alive because for a while there I didn't really care.”

Support from friends and family

There are lots of things that we can do to help ourselves cope better (see Chapter 8) but sometimes we also need help from other people; our friends, family, community, partners and workmates.

Our friends and family accepting us for who we are can help protect our mental health, especially during times that can be stressful, such as when a person is questioning their sexuality or gender, at the end of a relationship, during exams or after the death of someone you love.



“A strong support network of both friends and adults who I trusted and were positive influences, was one of the most important things to my recovery.”

Andrew, 18 years



“The support of my family has always been there. We have a pretty big family. When I say family, I don’t just mean the immediate family, my mum’s sisters, it’s also the cousins and aunties, and the uncles, and so it’s like really ... a really big family, that’s how we call ourselves family.”

Robbie, 25 years

Friends and family can:

- | provide practical support, like help with homework or large projects
- | listen and offer you support when you need it
- | help to identify stressful situations at school/university, home or work
- | help to find other ways to solve practical and emotional problems
- | keep an eye out for changes in how you feel, think and act.

Talking with friends and family

Sometimes it can be hard to talk about how you are feeling with your parents or close friends. But the truth is they want the best for you. They do not want to see you hurting.

Parents and friends will react in different ways. Some may be supportive and caring while others might have trouble understanding your experiences. It can be surprising to see how helpful people can be when you let them know what is going on. Others might feel frustrated because they don't know how to help or because they feel disappointed that they had not seen how unhappy or anxious you were. If their reaction is because they don't know much about anxiety and depression then you may be able to learn about it together. Talking about what is going on can really help.



“I would say you are never alone and you should never have to go through anxiety and or depression alone! Talk to your parents, teacher, student counsellor or a friend about what you are going through.”

Jessica, 22 years



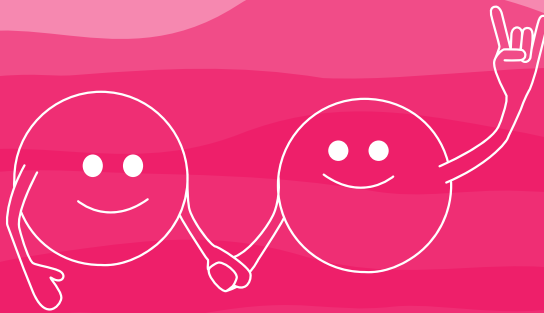
“Asking for support does not mean that you are a weak person; in fact, asking for help is a display of strength and courage and is the biggest step you can take in order to get that much closer to recovery.”

Karla, 21 years



“Sometimes getting a close family friend to talk to is easier than talking to your parents, because you never want to disappoint your parents and that's how I felt. Don't be ashamed to ask for help or take the help that is offered to you.”

Kate, 25 years



Getting support is not a sign of weakness or something to be embarrassed about. For many people, the sooner they start treatment, the quicker their anxiety and depression begins to improve.



KAREN, 25 YEARS

“I had been struggling with depression for a while but as well as that I was deciding when to come out. I had known for a long time that I liked other girls, I’d even secretly had a few short relationships, but no one else knew. It was a secret I had kept because I feared how people might react.

My parents were pretty old fashioned, school was a bit backward and I just didn’t know what people would say or do. But the fear was awful; I knew I couldn’t live like that so when I was 20 I came out. It was such a relief to be honest and true to myself. And perhaps what surprised me most was my parents. They were sad that I had not told them earlier, that I had been scared to tell them.

Nothing changed and everything changed at the same time. I know that sounds weird but my parents just loved me and supported me, like they always had but it was better because now

they were supporting me to be true to myself. A few friends deleted me from their Facebook page but my closest friends were not fazed at all, in fact, one of them said she knew but did not know how to talk with me about it. I have had some pretty tough experiences since then – some challenges at work mostly.

I have got involved in a few LGBTI events, which has been great fun and I have also made some great new friends that understand what I have been going through. And my depression, well it did not miraculously go away when I came out unfortunately, but it is improving.

When I started worrying less about how people would treat me I had more time to think about things with a bit more perspective and hopefulness. I still needed some support, and I found a great therapist at the local medical centre to help me through, but I am so much better now.”

Support from a health professional

Sometimes you need more than the help of your friends and family. Anxiety and depression are medical conditions and so treatment from a health professional is sometimes necessary. There are a range of health professionals available to support you while you recover from anxiety and depression.

Some of these include:

- | doctors
- | psychologists
- | psychiatrists
- | counsellors
- | mental health nurse practitioners
- | social workers in mental health
- | occupational therapists in mental health
- | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers.



“Professional help and a supportive environment were the main things in my recovery. It taught me how to prevent my depression becoming bad again and helped me with strategies to deal with my feelings and bad thoughts.”

Tianna, 19 years



The goals of treatment are generally to:

- | sort through how you are feeling and why
- | provide a different perspective
- | offer ideas about how you could approach the problem
- | link you in with other doctors or experts when necessary
- | stop the anxiety or depression from coming back
- | achieve your goals.



“When I went to go see a counsellor it was actually really refreshing. I walked out of it feeling a little bit better, because it was someone who didn't know me, who didn't know anything about my past, and had a completely different aspect of everything, which I would never have even thought about. The best advice that she gave me while I was down was to keep going to counselling.”

Robert, 25 years

The main treatment for anxiety and depression is psychological therapies (talking therapies). There are different treatment approaches used by health professionals but the ones known to be especially helpful to treat anxiety and depression are cognitive behavioural therapy, interpersonal therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy.

beyondblue's A guide to what works for depression in young people aims to help young people make informed choices by providing a summary of the evidence for different treatments. To download or order a copy, visit www.youthbeyondblue.com/whatworks

Finding a health professional

A good starting point when you need support is your local doctor. They can talk with you about what is happening in your life and your options for treatment and further support. They might continue to support you or they may suggest another health professional or support service to get involved.

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS CAN BE ACCESSED THROUGH:

- your local doctor
- community health centre
- public mental health services
- headspace centres
- private health clinics
- LGBTI organisations
- transcultural mental health centres
- migrant resource centres
- ethnic community councils
- Aboriginal community services
- multicultural youth services.

OR YOU COULD RING:

- *beyondblue* 1300 22 4636
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800.

Or ask your friends and family for their recommendations.

To find a mental health professional or GP in your area, visit www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/find-a-professional or phone the *beyondblue* Support Service on **1300 22 4636**.



“I have had a very mixed experience with health professionals and it is very important to find someone you feel comfortable with and that you trust and value their opinion.”

Ella, 22 years

The cost of getting help

Many services offered by your local doctor, health services, headspace or public youth mental health service are either free or paid for partly by the government under Medicare. To receive these services under Medicare for anxiety and depression your doctor will need to create a Mental Health Treatment Plan for you. This plan tells you who you should see, when to see them, and an idea about how much it will cost.

When contacting a health professional it's important to check it is covered by Medicare – what services and how many sessions. Some services also charge fees on top of the Medicare benefits but they may offer a discount for health care card holders or for those with special circumstances. Some services are also covered by private health insurance. By talking about the fees when you first contact the health professional you will be clear on what costs are involved.

Making contact

There are some youth services that offer a drop-in service but most work with an appointment system. By calling the health professional you can ask about how the service works and what

to expect when you attend. You can also ask when they have an appointment available and what you need to bring along, such as your Medicare card. If you feel uncomfortable contacting the health professional yourself you could ask your parents or a friend to help you. If you feel nervous about your first appointment you might think about taking someone with you for a bit of extra support. Just make sure that the health professional is OK with that, too.



“My doctor was amazing, I was so nervous I was shaking and felt like I was going to spew. Or faint. I cried as soon as I tried to speak. She was really calm and understanding, we talked for ages.”

Rebecca, 23 years

What to expect

The first appointment is usually the hardest because you don't know what to expect. It's not unusual to feel nervous about seeking support for the first time, and talking to a stranger about what's on your mind can be challenging.

Health professionals usually ask lots of questions when they first meet you. They will want to get to know you and begin to understand how you are feeling. It is important to talk honestly about what is going on — remembering that these are confidential conversations (see Chapter 7). If there are things that you are not ready to talk about, that's OK too. Just let the health professional know. They might come back to it again,

but by then you may feel like you're more able to talk about it.

Together with the health professional, you can work out what support you need and how often you will see them. As you improve you might find that you go less often or that you just go when you feel you need to. The health professional may also talk with you about whether you would like to involve anyone else in your treatment.

What if it doesn't feel like it is working?

If you don't think the sessions are working then talk to the health professional about it. Together you can work out why it is not working and how you might be able to make things more comfortable or helpful. Sometimes you might decide that you need to try to find a different health professional, and that's OK. No matter who you see, there may be times when you need to talk about difficult things so that you can learn how to cope with them better.

Recovery can take time and sometimes you might wonder if things will improve, but by checking in with your health professional and/or your family and friends you can refocus on your goals. It is also useful to have a look at how things have changed and what you have achieved – it is often more than you realise.



“My partner has been the greatest support to me, coming along with me to my appointments and sitting by me during times when harder, personal matters were discussed and I needed extra support.”

Georgina, 17 years



“It is important to remember that you don't have to stick with the first doctor or therapist you meet — you can shop around until you find one that works best for you!”

Jennifer, 23 years

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

Cognitive behavioural therapy is a psychological treatment, a 'talking therapy'. CBT helps you understand the link between your thoughts, feelings and behaviour. It helps you to understand how your problems began and what keeps them going. The goal of CBT is to help you learn a more balanced way of thinking. By approaching situations in a more balanced way you will hopefully be more able to solve problems that you are faced with and feel more in control of your life.

It's not always easy to learn new ways of thinking about things so it might take you a while to get the hang of it. With practice you will notice how helpful it is to understand the link between how you think and feel.



“CBT works really well for me and my health, and is particularly useful for considering negative feelings and thoughts objectively.”

Hannah, 22 years

What you think, feel and do are all connected. When you begin to understand this you can begin to take control of how you think, how you feel and what you do.

Interpersonal therapy (IPT)

Interpersonal therapy is another form of talking therapy. In IPT the focus is on your symptoms, how you develop and maintain relationships, your ability to communicate what you need from these relationships and how you can achieve your goals.



Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT)

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy involves learning a type of meditation called 'mindfulness meditation'. This meditation teaches people to focus on the very present moment, just noticing whatever they are experiencing, pleasant or unpleasant, without trying to change it. At first, this approach is used to focus on physical sensations like breathing, but later it is used to focus on feelings and thoughts. MBCT helps people to stop their mind wandering off into thoughts about the future or the past, or trying to avoid unpleasant thoughts and feelings.

Medication

If the depression is moderate to severe or other forms of treatment are not working, then your doctor might consider prescribing antidepressants. Antidepressant medication is also used to treat some anxiety conditions. All medications have possible side effects. The most common side effects with antidepressant medication used to treat anxiety and depression are nausea, headaches and drowsiness, which are usually mild and short-term. There is also a risk that antidepressants may increase suicidal thoughts and behaviours among young people, particularly in the



“They aren’t addictive, they aren’t ‘happy pills’ and I’m not goofy on them, they just help balance out my brain, so it’s just like everyone else’s.”

Rebecca, 23 years

first four weeks of treatment. Any young person treated with antidepressants for anxiety or depression should therefore be reviewed regularly when starting these medications.

The reality is everyone reacts differently to new medication. If a doctor suggests that you begin medication, they will talk with you about possible side effects before prescribing it. They will also see you regularly once you start taking the medication, to monitor any side effects. It is important that you don't miss these appointments, particularly in the first few weeks. Unlike other medications, it can take at least two to four weeks before you may begin to feel better. If the anxiety or depression is not improving, you may need to have the dose adjusted or an alternative medication may need to be considered.

If you decide to stop taking antidepressant medication, it's best to do so slowly, with supervision by your doctor and regular check-ups. It's important not to stop taking them suddenly, as this may cause an unpleasant 'withdrawal' reaction and make you feel worse. Symptoms can include unpleasant mood states, irritability, agitation, dizziness and confusion, which generally stop by themselves after a week or so.

While medication can be beneficial in treating severe anxiety and depression, research has also found that it can be useful to combine this with psychological therapy or 'talking therapies'. This can help you improve your coping skills, better understand your anxiety or depression, and work through any issues or stresses that you might be experiencing.



“I also accessed a lot of support online. Resources such as ReachOut.com really helped me understand what I was going through and provided me with a network of support.”

Jennifer, 23 years

Online or phone services

Sometimes the idea of talking with someone in person can be a bit scary, or you might just be having trouble finding a health professional near you, so online or phone services can be a great help.

beyondblue, Kids Helpline and Lifeline offer a 24-hour phone service that you can call to talk about how you are feeling. No matter what time, if you feel you need to chat about something, whether it's a big or small issue, then these services can help you. The phone counsellors might also encourage you to link in with a local health professional to ensure you have the support you need.

There are specific phone and web chat services run by and for LGBTI communities. QLife operates from 5.30pm to 10.30pm every day and you can talk with them about mental health, how to negotiate the medical system, relationships, isolation, coming out, people making assumptions about your gender identity and lots of other concerns.

Online counselling services are available to young people across Australia through services like Lifeline, Kids Helpline and eheadspace. You can talk with a health professional about what is going on and work on your recovery from your phone, computer or tablet.

They are there to help you cope with difficult times and experiences.

There are also online psychological programs available, such as moodgym and ecouch. These programs focus on how you think and how this makes you feel. They walk you through different activities to help you approach problems in a more realistic and helpful way. Once you log on to a program you can complete it when it suits you. Some programs also offer individual contact with a health professional as well. These programs are not the best option for you if your anxiety or depression is quite severe; that's when personal contact with a health professional is needed.



“Discovering sources such as *beyondblue*, Lifeline, Suicide Call Back Service, and post secret, helped me so much in my recovery.”

Georgina, 17 years

Hospital care

If you have severe and persistent anxiety and depression, a short stay in hospital may be required. Hospital care might also be provided if you are experiencing persistent thoughts of suicide and there are concerns about your safety. While in hospital you have access to a range of health programs and professionals to support your recovery. Many public mental health services have specific hospital units for young people. In general, hospital care is not provided over long periods; the aim is to get you home and ensure you have the support you need.

Confidentiality and health professionals

Talking about difficult thoughts, feelings or experiences is not always easy, especially if you are worried about who else might find out about what you have said.

Health professionals provide a confidential space for you to talk about what is on your mind and how you feel.

All health professionals are legally required to maintain your confidentiality unless:

- | you give permission for the information to be shared with others
- | you are at risk of hurting yourself or somebody else
- | the health professional needs to talk with another health professional about your care
- | they are required to by a court of law.

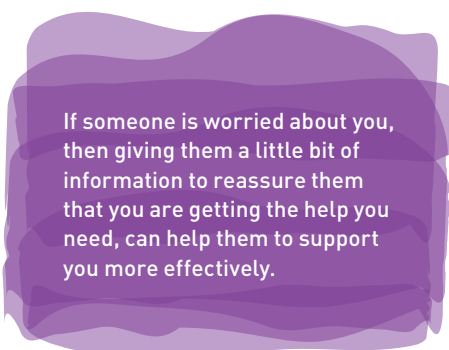
When you first meet with your health professional they will talk with you about confidentiality so that you fully understand your rights. If they don't begin by explaining this, ask them to explain it to you.

If you're under 16 years of age, the health professional may also talk with you about involving your parents in your treatment. This does not mean that your parents should hear the details of your conversations, but that it might be helpful for them to know a bit more about what is happening and how they can help you.



If you do not want to talk much with your parents, your family or your close friends/partner about what is going on but they are concerned, it can sometimes be helpful to:

- | Give general information about who you are seeing and why. "I am seeing a counsellor at the youth centre because I have been feeling pretty crap." This lets them know that you are getting the help you need without feeling you need to share the details.
- | Suggest that they meet your health professional to get some information about how counselling works and explain confidentiality.
- | Give them some ideas about how they can help you. Explain what you find useful and what you find annoying.
- | Give them some written information or website links to review to help them better understand anxiety and/or depression.



If someone is worried about you, then giving them a little bit of information to reassure them that you are getting the help you need, can help them to support you more effectively.

Confidentiality and Medicare

There are many services available for you to access through the Medicare system; these include doctors and mental health professionals. These services are free or partly paid for by the Federal government.

Having your own Medicare card or the number on the family card means you can access health services more easily. If you do not have a Medicare card then you will be expected to pay for any health services that you use.

If you are under 14, your parents can review their Medicare claims history to see what services you have used, when and who is offering the service. This does not provide any detail about the reason for your visit or the content of the sessions.

If you are older than 14, your parents can review their Medicare claims history to see what services you have used and when, but it does not show bulk billing claims or any details of the service.

If you're 15 or older, you can have your own Medicare card. Having your own card means that the information about your use of Medicare services (health services) remains confidential. Your parents are not able to review your contact with health services. To get your own Medicare card, you need to complete a Medicare Copy/Transfer Application form at www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/forms/3170 and attend a Medicare or DHS Service Centre with identification.

Strengthen your body, mind and relationships

Making healthy choices

Staying healthy is important for everyone but when you are not feeling well it is easy to let the basics such as eating, sleeping and keeping active slip. Having a healthy lifestyle helps to improve your energy levels, helps you think more clearly and helps build your confidence and overall sense of wellbeing. Setting yourself some small achievable goals is also really helpful to your recovery.



“I found a change in lifestyle and setting goals was a very productive exercise in helping me to recover as it allowed me to focus on positives in my life.”

Andrew, 18 years

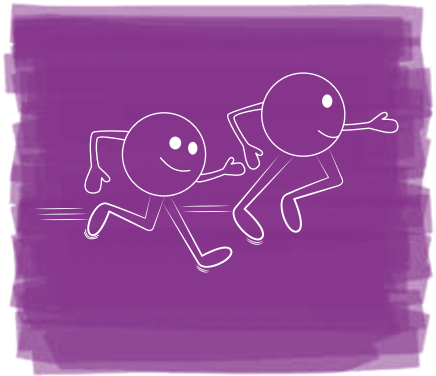
Healthy diet

What you eat not only affects your physical health; it affects your energy levels and the way you think and feel about yourself.

- | Eat regular meals and a variety of healthy foods including plenty of vegetables, fruit and cereals (like bread, rice and pasta), some lean meat, chicken or fish and dairy

products (milk, yoghurt, cheese). It's a good idea to avoid fatty foods and foods with lots of sugar in them.

- | Have healthy snacks to nibble on in the day rather than junk food.
- | Drink lots of water.



Keep active

Being physically active improves your strength, fitness and confidence. Keeping active can help you to sleep better while also improving your ability to manage intense emotions, like anger or fear.

- | Keep active. Find something you enjoy doing and make an effort to do it regularly, such as team sports, going to the local gym, walking the dog, swimming, running, surfing and dancing.

- | Exercise at a pace that is right for you. It can be helpful to start slowly and build up.
- | Consider exercising with a friend to make it more fun and to help you stay motivated.

Reduce stress

There are some simple things that you can learn to do to cope better with stress.

- | Avoid making big decisions when stressed. Big decisions need your focus and attention and an ability to weigh up your options. Leave these decisions until you are feeling better and thinking more clearly. Often the decisions you make when you are stressed you can regret later.
- | Connect with people at cultural and community events to help to feel a sense of belonging.
- | Talk openly with your friends and family about how you feel, any problems that develop and how you can cope with these. Bottling up concerns makes you feel much worse.
- | Learn to relax. This might be listening to music or going for a run, or you might benefit from meditating, or doing guided relaxation. Some sample relaxation programs can be found at www.smilingmind.com.au
- | Get organised. Plan when you will do your work/study/jobs to ensure you have time get it all done.

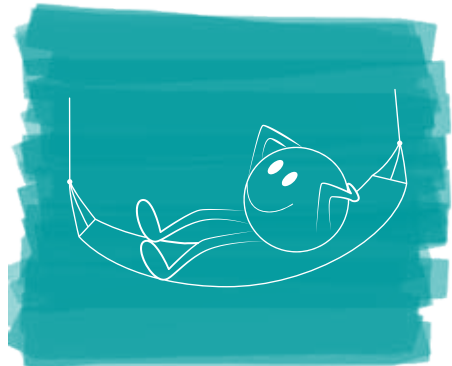
RELAX BY LEARNING TO CONTROL YOUR BREATHING

1. Gently breathe in and hold your breath for five seconds
2. Breathe out counting to five, then breathe in and out slowly, through your nose, counting to three with each breath in and out
3. Breathe this way for about 10 breaths then start at step 1 again until you are calm
4. Practise this when you are not anxious so that you can use it quickly when you feel your anxiety increasing



“I found hobbies and relaxing really help.”

Kate, 25 years



Avoid or limit drug and alcohol use

Drug use has negative effects on how you feel and what you think – even if the short-term effects are appealing.

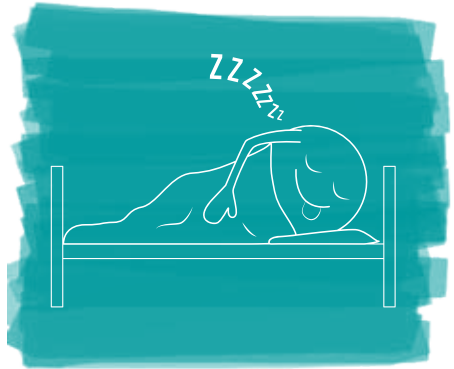
- | Avoid or limit your drug and alcohol use.
- | Be careful mixing medication, drugs and alcohol. Your medication may not work as well if it is mixed with other drugs. There might also be some other dangers when mixing your medication with drugs and alcohol.
- | Consider what else you can do when you feel like using drugs or alcohol; do something you enjoy, call a friend to talk about it, go for a run or listen to music.
- | Hang out with friends who do not drink alcohol or use drugs.
- | Think about whether you need help with changing your drug and alcohol use. Drug and alcohol counsellors are available to see face-to-face or you can contact them by phone to talk about your use. There are also self-help groups available.
- | If you are going to continue drinking and using drugs, consider how you can do this more safely; don't use alone, use in a safe place and perhaps use a bit less. Health professionals and doctors can advise you on minimising the risks related to using drugs and alcohol.

Develop a regular sleeping pattern

Sleep is important for our bodies to recover and recharge. Without it, it can be hard to concentrate and remember things. Without sleep you will also have

problems with your energy levels. To develop a regular sleeping pattern it is useful to:

- | get up at the same time each morning
- | avoid too much caffeine or alcohol late in the afternoon
- | write your worries down before going to bed so you can work on some solutions the next day
- | do something relaxing for about 30 minutes before going to bed
- | avoid naps in the day
- | get up after 15-20 minutes if you can't sleep rather than staying in bed feeling restless. Return to bed when you feel more relaxed and sleepy
- | get active every day.



Hobbies, work, school and university

Having things to do that are both interesting and rewarding can significantly improve your mood. Keeping linked in with work, university and school also provides you with a sense of purpose and confidence.

These activities also offer connections with others that you can enjoy or rely on when stressed.

- | Maintain your interests; you might spend less time on them in the short term and then gradually do more as you feel better.
- | Get involved in something that you enjoy, find rewarding or challenging.
- | If your current workload is stressful consider asking for some assistance.
- | Develop good study plans and work habits:
 - create a quiet and comfortable study area
 - use a diary to write down everything you need to do
 - avoid distractions from emails, phone calls, messages etc.
- | Be realistic about what you can achieve and if things do not go to plan, talk to someone about it.



Keeping physically active and doing things that you enjoy helps to break the cycle of anxiety and depression.



“Support from my friends and family was really important.”

Jennifer, 23 years

Strengthening relationships

Friends, family and your community are a really important part of your health and wellbeing. These relationships are a great source of fun and support but they can also be stressful at times. When thinking about the relationships in your life, some things to think about include:

- | talk about any relationship difficulties with people you trust
- | remember that all relationships have ups and downs, so try not to let difficult times get you down
- | talk it through with your friend or family member
- | think about who you want to spend time with:
 - who do you enjoy spending time with?
 - who can you talk problems through with comfortably?
 - who has similar interests and pastimes?



“I went to a function, it was my first function after I came out, it was an [Aboriginal] community one. All the boys were there. One of my cousins came up to me and he said ‘I don’t care who you are, who you sleep with, you’re still Rob, and you’re still our boy’. That just means the world when you hear that because you know that they are there for you no matter what but to actually hear it is really something else.”

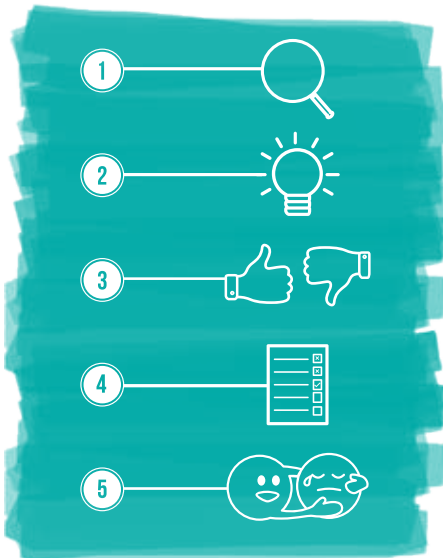
Robert, 25 years

Working through problems

Everyone faces problems in life, some are simple and easily sorted out while others feel overwhelming. Developing your skills in problem-solving helps you approach the problems that you face day-to-day.

The steps of problem-solving are:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Think of a few different ways that you could try to solve the problem.
3. Think about the pros and cons of each option.
4. Choose one solution and give it a try — if that is not successful try one of your other options.
5. Consider asking a close friend or family member to help you with this when things are feeling overwhelming; they might have some other possible solutions that you had not thought about.



“The biggest thing has been realising that, in the end, it is up to me to work out how to control my mood. This means being able to recognise when I am going downhill, and doing something straight away to counter it. It is when you just accept that you feel terrible for no reason and don't try and fight it, that things get out of hand.”

Amie, 23 years

Recognising triggers and warning signs

Sometimes there are situations or events that leave you feeling worse than usual. Some of these might include:

- | family and relationship problems
- | financial difficulties
- | change in living arrangements
- | employment issues
- | drug and alcohol use
- | other medical problems.

Sometimes your symptoms can worsen gradually and small things about how you think or feel begin to change. These changes are like warning signs; they are letting you know that you might need to take some action, otherwise you might experience a worsening of your symptoms.

YOUR WARNING SIGNS

Being self-aware can help you identify early signs that there is a change in your mental health.

Examples of early warning signs may include:

- being over-tired
- having a hard time getting out of bed
- feeling irritable, stressed and teary
- missing deadlines or being late
- not wanting to spend time with friends
- not eating properly.

MAKE A PLAN FOR WHEN WARNING SIGNS APPEAR

Finding activities that help you take control or focus your thoughts can be helpful in keeping your symptoms from getting worse.

Examples of helpful activities may include:

- calling a friend
- exercising
- calling your counsellor
- getting creative
- yoga.

It is useful to get to know your warning signs so that you can be prepared, respond promptly and take control or focus your thoughts, helping to keep your symptoms from getting worse.



“Find one person that you trust that you can turn to no matter what and whenever you aren't sure if you are well, ask them if they have noticed any changes in your mood.”

Jessica, 17 years

Setbacks

Recovery can take time and most people have ups and downs in the process. It's important to have realistic expectations about your recovery; how long it might take and how you might feel during this time. So when things don't go to plan, see them as a challenge that you need to overcome rather than a sign that you cannot recover.

A few things to remember about recovery:

- | Setbacks are normal, they can be disappointing but there is no need for blame or hopelessness.
- | Focus on achievements and what skills have been gained.
- | Setbacks can be an opportunity to try managing symptoms or stresses in a different way.



BRAD, 23 YEARS

“I really thought I had beaten my anxiety. I had got back to work, to football, even to dating a little, but then, right out of the blue, it all came back. My fears got worse. My thoughts started to race. I was devastated. I had worked so hard to get the symptoms under control. My doctor had warned me that I might experience some obstacles but I don't think I believed her. Or maybe I just did not want to believe her. So I went back to headspace. It did not take as long to recover this time because I knew what

worked; it was all about my thinking and my beliefs about what was happening around me. Then I also realised that the symptoms didn't just come from nowhere. They had started after I had a few dates with someone I really liked. My head jumped ahead and began to think 'what if' instead of just enjoying the time together. I hope I have it under control now, but next time someone says it can be useful to be prepared for setbacks I might take more notice.”

Some other things to think about

There are a range of issues that affect how we think, feel and behave. Symptoms of anxiety and depression can get worse when you are really stressed. Here are some ideas about how to handle stressful situations.

Family break up

Separation and/or divorce are pretty common and how it affects each family varies, but it can be a really challenging time. Some of the normal reactions to family break up include anger, helplessness, loss, grief, fear, worry, resentment and relief.

- | Talk openly with your parents about what is happening and why.
- | Let your parents know your opinion on living arrangements.
- | Spend time with both your parents separately so that you can build on your relationships.

- | Learn a bit more about coping with separation and divorce by talking to others with similar experiences, read websites and participate in forums or speak to a health professional.

Loss and grief

Losing someone you care about can be a painful experience; you can feel shock, sadness, anger and a sense of loneliness. It can sometimes feel like life without that person is impossible. Grieving can take time but there are a few things that you can do to cope with this very upsetting time.

- | Share how you are feeling. If you do not want to talk about it consider expressing your thoughts in other ways, write a poem or journal, or put notes and memories on your phone. You might also like to write a 'goodbye' letter to the person who died.
- | Remember that grief is normal and that it is OK to be sad. It will take time for the sense of sadness to lift.

- | Keep healthy – eat well and stay physically active.

The feelings of loss and grief can also be really strong when you lose something. It might be at the end of a relationship or friendship, or if you have to move away from the friend and family that you love.

If you have moved then keep in regular contact with your friends, get involved in your new community and create some space in your new home that makes you feel comfortable straight away.

If your feelings of sadness are because you have ended a relationship you might find it helpful to talk to someone, treat yourself to something nice, stick to a routine that involves a mix of fun, study/work and relaxation, and remind yourself that it can take a while to get over a relationship break up.

Bullying

Bullying can happen at school, university, work or on the sporting field. There are many ways that people can be bullied; verbally, physically, socially, psychologically and online (cyberbullying). It can leave you feeling alone, worthless, sad and angry, and if it continues over a long period of time it can lower your self-esteem.

- | Talk openly about what is happening and how it is making you feel with someone that you trust.
- | Consider how you might be able to approach the bullying.
- | Talk to the supportive adults around you; school welfare team, boss at work, family, friends or a health professional to ensure it does not create ongoing problems for you.



“In a world where there was no discrimination against sexuality or gender, I’d feel comfortable. I assume everyone would feel comfortable and there would be no fear in just being who you are. Everyone would just be happy. There wouldn’t be kids being kicked out of home, there wouldn’t be people at work too scared to talk about their home life at work, it would be a world without fear and a world where everyone felt love.”

Marlee, 16 years

Eating disorders

Eating disorders affect your physical health, the way you eat, how you look, feel, behave and interact with others. Symptoms of anxiety and depression are common with an eating disorder. Getting help quickly when an eating disorder develops makes a big difference to your recovery.

- | See a health professional, including a doctor, to talk about your eating behaviours and how you feel about yourself.
- | Try to stay involved in things that you enjoy, like hobbies and sport, even if you might do a little less of it for a while during your recovery.
- | Spend time with friends and family who are supportive.
- | Talk with someone who has recovered from an eating disorder.
- | Understand that recovery time is different for everyone.

Self-harm — knowing when to get help

Sometimes it can feel like life is just too hard and problems can seem overwhelming. Thoughts of self-harm are not uncommon but there are other things that you can do to cope with really distressing times.

It's important to sort out the underlying problem – whether it is anxiety, depression or something else. If you are hurting yourself or thinking about suicide you need to let someone know, and get some help to cope.

The term self-harm is used to describe what people do when they deliberately hurt or injure themselves, often as a way to cope with painful or intensely difficult feelings. Self-harm can include a range of self-injurious behaviours like cutting, burning or punching the body.



“For a long time I experienced a combination of constant lethargy and fatigue, feelings of emptiness, and the sense that a future for me was impossible and frequent thoughts of suicide.”

Hannah, 22 years

There are many reasons why young people harm themselves and for some young people it may be difficult to put the reasons into words. Many young people say that it provides relief from intense or overwhelming emotions, helps to focus their attention or make them feel alive again. These actions may provide temporary relief but they do not help to solve the problem underlying the young person's distress.



“I would look at myself and feel disgusted and I don't know why but cutting myself just felt like a logical thing to do. I'm extremely lucky that I found great support in my boyfriend. ... I was still very up and down but I wasn't self harming and the downs were not so low.”

Rebecca, 23 years

If you are deliberately harming yourself you need to get help; you don't have to deal with it alone. There are other ways to cope.

What to do

- | Talk about how you feel and why you self-harm. It can be hard to do this at first so try to find someone who understands, someone you trust. Some people may find it hard to hear about your self-harming, and some may feel stressed because they do not know how to help. Consider who in your family you could perhaps confide in, or maybe it is someone at school, university, at work or your local doctor or health professional. For tips on how to find a health professional near you see Chapter 6.
- | If talking to someone face-to-face seems too overwhelming, a first step might be to talk with Kids Helpline, Lifeline or eheadspace. They offer telephone and online counselling services.
- | It's important to take care of your injuries and if necessary, seek medical assistance through your local doctor or emergency department.

Self-harm might be your way for coping at the moment but with a bit of help and practice, you will find other ways to cope with these strong emotions.



“If you can't think straight or are having thoughts of self-harm, go straight to your doctor. It's not your fault and it's not your choice to be depressed. Your doctor can tell the difference between depression and just feeling down and they won't judge you for either.”

Rebecca, 23 years

For more information, visit www.youthbeyondblue.com/self-harm

Suicide prevention — what helps?

Feelings of despair and hopelessness are common in a young person with anxiety and depression. If you feel isolated and alone and have thoughts of suicide, then you need to let someone know that you need help.

If you or someone you care about is in crisis and you think immediate action is needed, call emergency services (Triple zero – 000), contact the services listed inside the back cover for assistance or go to your local hospital emergency department.



“Don’t ever, ever think that things won’t improve. Sometimes you will feel like this is it, and why would you want to stick around if you are going to feel this way for the rest of your life? But there is always tomorrow, and there is always a better day, and once you work out how to control your illness, you will start to enjoy life, and realise that when things are good, they are really, really good! You have to have some crap days to fully appreciate the good ones!”

Amie, 23 years

What to do?

Other helpful steps:

- | Postpone any decisions to end your life. Find a way to distract yourself. Give yourself time to get the support you need and find other ways to cope.
- | Remove anything in the house that you might use to harm yourself (you could give it to a trusted friend).
- | Talk to someone about what is happening. They might be able to help understand the distress you are feeling and may see alternative ways to solving or thinking about the problems. If you are having trouble talking to someone you know, phone a crisis line (*beyondblue*, Lifeline, Kids Helpline, Suicide Callback Service).
- | Remember that thoughts of suicide are just thoughts; you do not have to act on them. These thoughts might only last a few minutes and you might feel differently in a few hours.
- | Avoid being alone. Have someone near you until your thoughts of suicide decrease.
- | Make a safety plan. Think about who you can call, or what you can do next time you feel overwhelmed or upset. Websites like www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/learn/safety can help.

- | Set small goals. Set yourself some things to do on a day-to-day basis or even hour by hour if you need to. Reward yourself as you achieve small things.
- | Avoid drugs and alcohol as this may make you feel worse and may also make decision-making even harder.
- | Get help from a health professional (see Chapter 6).
- | Keep crisis line phone numbers handy in case you need to call. Make sure their numbers are already in your mobile phone or their web addresses for chat services are bookmarked.
- | Find an online mindfulness website that suits you, such as smilingmind.com.au; mindfulness can be a powerful tool in managing suicidal thoughts.
- | Try to get some physical exercise every day, no matter how hard it is to drag on those runners.

For more information visit www.youthbeyondblue.com/understand-what's-going-on/suicide-prevention



AMELIA, 17 YEARS

“School was not going well, my parent’s divorced, dad came out as gay and mum had depression. Life for me at 17 was pretty tough. I got so depressed sometimes I thought about suicide. My arms had the signs of someone who was overwhelmed. What changed for me among all this? I had a great sister who kept me sane, talking to me late into the night when I cried over my boyfriend’s nasty comments. My dad, well, I knew he cared and loved me. He even talked with me about my self-harm and staying safe. My friends stood by me and they didn’t judge me; we would spend time just hanging out together. My sister kept pushing me to get help and my aunt sent me links to online counselling services for over a year. Finally I thought I would give it a go. I was not sure what it would be like or if it would work but I didn’t want to

be depressed. I wanted things to be different. My counsellor said that he would help me to get a new perspective on things; that I needed to find ways to calm the really overwhelming feelings that I got caught up in. He said that this might take me a while and he was right. I am better now. I am cutting less but I still have more to sort out. I have learnt a lot about myself and why I perhaps ended up like this; unable to cope. I have a therapist that I see at the local clinic now. The online stuff was really helpful but for me to get better I had to start talking it through in person and facing up to what was going on. I have to work pretty hard to keep on top of things but I am hoping one day that happiness comes a bit more easily; that all this hard work will mean that I can live life rather than simply stay alive.”

Looking after a friend

If you are worried about a friend having anxiety or depression it can be hard to know what to do. There are four key things that can help you support your friend.

LOOK

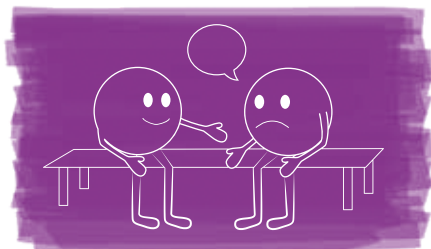


Sometimes it can be hard to know if your friend is going through a rough patch or whether there might be something more serious going on like anxiety or depression. You might notice that they are not hanging out with their friends as much anymore or are always tired and feeling down. They might be snappier or perhaps look a mess. When you notice these changes check in with your friend to see if they're OK.

LISTEN



Sitting and quietly listening is the next step. Don't rush to offer advice. Let them know you are there for them and that you want to help where you can. If they don't want to talk about it, make sure you respect that. Let them know you are worried and that you are happy to listen when they want to talk, or suggest other people. By listening and responding in a non-judgmental and reassuring manner, you are helping in a major way.



“Depression is a challenge and it's important to face it together with a strong and positive support network.”

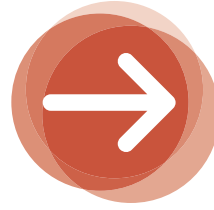
Andrew, 18 years

TALK



Knowing what to say can sometimes be difficult if you are worried about your friend. You might not be sure how to start a conversation with them about it or maybe you might be worried about saying the wrong thing. You could say things like "I've noticed that you seem a bit down lately", or perhaps, "You seem like you are really down, and not yourself. I really want to help you. Is there anything I can do?" Showing that you are willing to listen to what is going on can be really supportive for your friend. You don't need to have all the answers to be helpful.

SEEK HELP



Encourage your friend to get some help. They might want to start by talking with their family about what has been going on or they may prefer to talk with someone they do not know, like a doctor or health professional (see Chapter 6 for more ideas). You could help them to find and arrange an appointment with a health professional; you might even offer to go with them to their first appointment to help them feel more relaxed about it. If they don't feel comfortable with the first health professional then you could help them find another.

The important part of helping your friend is to understand that you are there to offer support, but it is up to your friend to decide how they are going to get it. If your friend does not want help, then be patient. Perhaps remind them of their options now and then, but try not to pressure them. If you are worried about their safety or that they are going to hurt themselves somehow, then you need to let someone else know.

THE PEOPLE AND PLACES THAT CAN HELP INCLUDE:

- family
- trusted adult friends
- school teachers or counsellors
- university health team
- local doctor
- headspace and other young mental health services
- youthbeyondblue.com
- Kids Helpline
- Lifeline
- ReachOut.com

Speak up if your friend is suicidal

If your friend is joking or talking about suicide, giving possessions away or saying goodbye, it's important to do something. You might tell their parents, partner, a trusted adult or contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467. Even if you promised not to tell, what's most important is that your friend needs your support. You can talk with them another time about why you had to get them help.

It is not always possible to know when someone is thinking about suicide but some of the possible warning signs include:

- | talking or writing about death or about feeling trapped with no way out
- | feeling hopeless and withdrawing from family, friends and the community
- | increasing drug and alcohol use
- | giving away personal possessions, doing dangerous, life threatening things, having delusions or hallucinations
- | regularly self-harming
- | significant change in mood.

The only way to know for sure is to ask directly, for example "You've been really down lately and you haven't been coming out for weeks, I'm wondering how bad things are for you? I'm wondering if they might be so bad that you are thinking about killing yourself?"



Looking after yourself

Supporting a friend who has anxiety or depression can be tiring and sometimes stressful. Make sure you do some things for yourself that top you up and that you enjoy. If you begin to feel overwhelmed about the situation find someone that you can confide in. It can also help to:



- | Learn more about anxiety or depression and how you can support your friend.
- | Understand that sometimes people say things that are hurtful and strange, especially when they are not feeling well, so try not to take it personally. Make sure you have other friends or family taking care of you. Your feelings are important and need to be respected, too.
- | Take time out to ensure that you also have a chance to rest and recover. Feeling fresh means you're more able to cope with the daily challenges.
- | Feel supported. Sometimes it can be helpful to talk about things with your own family and support people. You do not have to reveal private information about your friend, just talk about how you are feeling and why.

Resources for young people

People who have an anxiety condition or who are depressed may be at risk of suicide and if so, they need urgent help. If you or someone you care about is in crisis and you think immediate action is needed, call Emergency Services (triple zero – 000), contact the services listed below for assistance or go to your local hospital emergency department.

beyondblue

www.youthbeyondblue.com

 Email or
 chat online at

www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

beyondblue's website for young people aged 12 to 25. If you need to talk to someone, get more information or find out where you can go to see someone, contact the *beyondblue* Support Service.

Kids Helpline

www.kidshelp.com.au

1800 551 800

A free, private and confidential telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between five and 25.

Lifeline

www.lifeline.org.au

13 11 14

A free, online, phone and face-to-face crisis support and suicide prevention service, providing counselling, information and referral. This is a confidential telephone crisis support service available 24/7 from a landline, payphone or mobile.

Suicide Call Back Service

www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

1300 659 467

A free, nationwide professional telephone and online counselling service for anyone affected by suicide.

headspace

www.headspace.org.au

Provides support to young people aged 12 to 25 who are going through a tough time, including anxiety, depression, bullying and body image.

eheadspace

www.eheadspace.org.au

1800 650 890

A confidential, free and secure space where young people aged 12 to 25 or their family can chat, email or speak on the phone with a qualified mental health professional for young people.

BiteBack

www.biteback.org.au

A space where you can discover ways to amplify the good stuff in your life. You can share real and personal stories with others, check out videos, blogs and interviews of interesting people, track your mental health and get your teeth into a bunch of activities.

Reach Out

www.reachout.com

An online youth mental health service that helps young people with information, support and stories on everything from finding motivation to getting through really tough times.

QLife

www.qlife.org.au

1800 184 527

A phone and web chat service managed by and for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and intersex communities. This service provides a place to talk about mental health, negotiating the medical system, relationships, isolation, coming out, people making assumptions about a person's gender and a whole range of other concerns.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should contact their local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation or Aboriginal Health Worker at their local health service. Find out more at www.naccho.org.au/about/naccho-affiliates

Multicultural Youth Centres

There are a number of multicultural youth centres and services across Australia. They may operate as a Multicultural Youth Service as in the ACT www.mys.org.au or as a state-wide organisation such as the Centre for Multicultural Youth www.cmy.net.au in Victoria and Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE) www.ice.org.au in Sydney. Local services and centres can also operate through local councils, non-government organisations and health services.

For emergency appointments you can contact your local doctor. You can find a GP in your area who has had extra training in mental health by visiting www.beyondblue.org.au/find-a-professional or phone the *beyondblue* Support Service on 1300 22 4636.

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- ¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008). 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results (4326.0). Canberra: ABS
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beyondblue


Depression. Anxiety.

Where to find more information

beyondblue

www.beyondblue.org.au

Learn more about anxiety, depression and suicide prevention, or talk through your concerns with our Support Service. Our trained mental health professionals will listen, provide information, advice and brief counselling, and point you in the right direction so you can seek further support.

 1300 22 4636

 Email or  chat to us online at www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

Head to Health

headtohealth.gov.au

Head to Health can help you find free and low-cost, trusted online and phone mental health resources.



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