



Stay Chatty SCHOOLS PROGRAM

positive mental health – everyone, everyday

Understanding and supporting youth mental health



Relationships Australia
TASMANIA



The Stay ChatTY Schools Program

The Schools Program, delivered with Relationships Australia Tasmania, uses evidence-based universal awareness training to have conversations about mental health and suicide with young people in a safe and constructive way.

The Program aims to:

- demonstrate that resilient people show their emotions, and that emotions are normal when going through a tough time
- increase young people's understanding of the importance of seeking help, and how to get help for themselves and their peers
- encourage young people to think about how they can look after their mental health in healthy ways.

Quick facts: Mental health and suicide

- Our mental health exists on a continuum from good to poor mental wellbeing. Young people move up and down the continuum every day, even more so than adults because of the changes happening in their brain.
- There is a problem when young people stay at the 'poor mental wellbeing' end of the continuum for long periods of time (more than 2 weeks) with more extreme behaviours that affect their ability to live daily life.
- Mental health issues are common in young people - more than 1 in 7 experience a mental illness.
- 75% of mental health issues start before age 24, and half before age 14.
- 90% of young people who die by suicide have a mental illness, and more than half have major depression.
- Suicide is the leading cause of death for 15 – 24 year olds.

Suicide is preventable and there are risks and warning signs that can help us prevent it.

Risk and protective factors for suicide

Suicide is very complex and we can't predict whether someone will die by suicide. Risk and protective factors help us understand who might be more likely to act on suicide thoughts, and who is less likely.

Risk factors	Protective factors
Impulsivity	Mental and physical health
Sensation-seeking tendencies	Resilience and ability to cope
Low self-esteem	Self-esteem
Bullying	Social and community support
Tipping points (e.g. breakup, divorce, death in the family, failing an exam, losing a job)	Engaged with school, social or community activities
Diagnosed mental illness	Trusted adults
Previous suicide attempt	Sense of belonging

Signs and symptoms of depression



Feeling **moody, irritable** or **teary**



Change in **sleeping patterns** (e.g. sleeping all the time or not at all)



Trouble **concentrating** or **making decisions**



Feeling **worthless** or **guilty**



Losing **interest** in things you/they used to enjoy



Withdrawing from **family** or **friends**

Suicide warning signs

Young people who are suicidal often show warning signs:

- Threatening to hurt themselves or take their lives (either directly "I wish I could go to sleep and never wake up" or indirectly "No one would care if I was gone").
- Looking for or talking about ways to take their life.
- Expressing that they feel hopeless or without purpose.
- Engaging in risky behaviours.
- Increasing drug or alcohol use.
- Withdrawing from family or friends or activities they use to enjoy.
- Abnormal sleep (e.g. not sleeping at all or sleeping all the time).
- Dramatic change in mood (e.g. sudden happiness after a long period of depression).
- Giving away possessions, saying goodbye or seeming to put their affairs in order.

How you can help - start the conversation

Talk about mental health

have regular conversations about their mental health and how they are doing. Find out what engages them and what things they like to do for self-care.

Talk about suicide

ask whether suicide is something they or their friends have ever thought about or had experiences with. Talking about suicide won't plant the idea in their head, but will let them know they can talk to you about it.

Ask if they have any stressors

in their life and how they are managing.

Listen without judgement

let them talk freely without interruption and show them you are listening. Take what they are saying seriously and don't minimise their problems.

Let them know you are always available

to talk, and if they don't want to talk to you, they can talk to another trusted adult.



Learn about risk factors and warning signs

keep an eye out for changes in behaviours and keep conversations going so you know what's happening in their life.

Talk to the grade coordinator

or home group teacher about how the young person is going at school. If you have concerns, get the school staff to monitor them and let you know how things are going after a week.

Know what the supports are

at school and in the community, and how you can access them.

Build protective factors

at home, at school and in the community.

How you can help - manage risk situations

If a young person is extremely down, distressed or in crisis, have the conversation and link to the right support.

Stay calm

Get them talking

ask open-ended questions to better understand their situation and figure out how serious it is.

"How long have you been feeling this way?"

"Has anything happened recently that has made you feel worse?"

Listen without judgement

let them talk freely without interruption and show them you are listening. Take what they are saying seriously and don't minimise the problem.

"I can see this is really worrying for you"

"I may not know how you feel, but I do want to help you get through this"

Be direct

ask whether they've thought about suicide, and whether they've thought about how they would do it. Reassure them help is out there and they will not feel like this forever.

"Have you thought about killing yourself?"

"Have you thought about how you would do it?"

Don't make promises you can't keep

don't promise that everything will be ok or that you will keep what they've told you a secret. Be honest about the fact that this is a serious problem and you need extra support to help them.

Engage them in the process

mental health issues can make young people feel like they have no control. Give them back some control by keeping them involved in the process by coming up with a plan together.

Keep them safe

come up with a safety plan together that includes healthy coping strategies for when they feel really down, resources and people they can draw on, professional supports they might access, and timeframes to check back in and reassess.

Get professional help

School

Contact the school social worker or school psychologist.

Mental health professionals

Mental health professionals include counsellors, therapists, social workers, psychologists, GPs and psychiatrists. Services can be accessed in-person through appointments, via telephone or online.

If you decide to seek support outside of school, let the school know so support staff and the counsellor can work together.

In-person	Telephone	Online
Talk to your GP who can give you a referral for a mental health plan to see a psychologist or psychiatrist near you.	beyondblue 1300 224 636 Mental Health Helpline 1800 332 388	headspace e-help 9am – 1am www.eheadspace.org.au
Relationships Australia Tasmania offers services for young people and families www.tas.relationships.org.au/services	Lifeline 13 11 14	beyondblue e-help 3pm – 1am https://online.beyondblue.org.au/Webmodules/chat/InitialInformation.aspx
headspace Hobart, Launceston, Devonport provide services for young people ages 12 – 25 www.headspace.org.au/headspace-centres/	Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800	Suicide Call Back service online and video chat support www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/

Emergency department

If you think the young person is an immediate threat to themselves, take them to the emergency department. Don't leave them alone and head to the ED if they have:

- expressed an intent to die
- a plan and means to carry it out
- characteristic impulsive or aggressive behaviour

Find out more

www.headspace.org.au/friends-and-family/tips-for-a-healthy-headspace-for-family-and-friends/

Information about supporting young people to have positive mental health and manage difficult thoughts and feelings.

www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask

Information about starting conversations about mental health.

www.headspace.org.au/dads/

Information for parents about starting conversations about mental health with their kids.

www.youthbeyondblue.com/understand-what's-going-on/suicide-prevention

Information about understanding and responding to suicide in young people.

www.conversationsmatter.com.au

Resources for families and communities on how to have conversations about suicide.



Find us on:



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