

# Looking after your child's mental health

**An Easy Read guide for parents and carers**



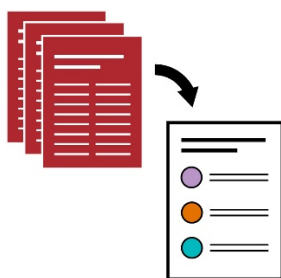
## How to use this guide



The Victorian Government Department of Education and Training wrote this guide. When you see the word 'we', it means the Department of Education and Training.



We have written this guide in an easy to read way. We use pictures to explain some ideas.



This Easy Read document is a summary of another document. This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the other document on our website at

**[www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/family-health/Pages/your-childs-wellbeing.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/family-health/Pages/your-childs-wellbeing.aspx)**



You can ask for help to read this guide.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.

## What's in this guide?

Your child's mental health	4
Notice changes in your child	5
Talk to your child	9
When your child talks to you	11
What if your child needs support?	12
You can get support too	14

# Your child's mental health



Your child's mental health affects how they:

- feel
- think
- behave
- relate to other people.



You know your child better than anyone.



But it can be hard to know the difference between what is something:

- you **should** worry about
- you **shouldn't** worry about.



There are things you can do to support:

- your child
- their mental health.

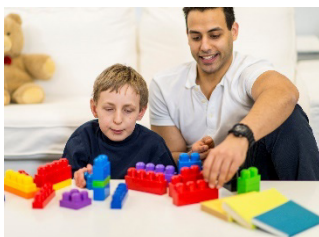


# Notice changes in your child

As your child grows up, it's normal to see changes in:



- their feelings and emotions



- what they do and how they behave



- the way they think.



You might notice signs that they need extra support.



Your child might show strong feelings of:

- fear
- worry
- anger
- sadness.

Your child might:



- be quiet and keep to themselves



- be low in energy



- have trouble sleeping



- eat much more or much less than they normally do



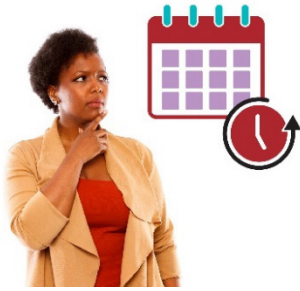
- have trouble focussing.



You might notice your child has a lot of negative:

- thoughts
- words.

## Some questions to think about



How long have the emotions and behaviour lasted?



If it's been more than 2 weeks, it might be time to find help.

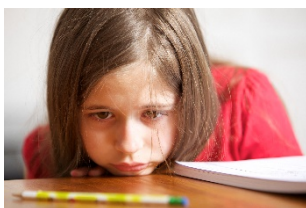


How strong are your child's feelings and emotions?

Are they there all the time?

Do they come and go?

How much do your child's feelings and emotions affect:



- their school work?



- their physical health?



- their relationships?



- how much they enjoy everyday activities?



# Talk to your child



It can be hard to talk to your child about their mental health.



You might worry about:

- upsetting your child
- making things worse.



What you say depends on:

- your child's age
- how much they understand.

Here are some things you might say.



"I've noticed you seem to have a lot on your mind lately.

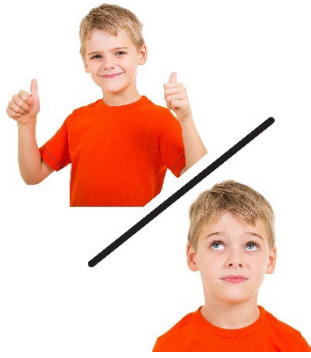
I'm happy to talk and listen.

Maybe I can help?"



"It seems like you haven't been yourself lately.

How are things?"



"It seems like you have been up and down lately.

How are things?"



"You seem worried.

What is happening for you?

We can work it out together."



"You seem sad.

What is happening for you?

We can work it out together."



"It's ok if you don't want to talk to me.

Maybe you could talk to another adult?

I will keep letting you know that I love you and I care about you."

## When your child talks to you



Your child might talk to you.

You should tell them:



- everything will be ok



- you're glad they are talking to you



- you agree that it can be hard to talk about:
  - personal thoughts
  - feelings and emotions.



Ask your child what they need from you.



Offer to help your child find:

- information
- support.

## What if your child needs support?



If you are worried about your child's mental health, you can talk to your child's school.



Your child's school can help you find out about the supports we offer.



If you are worried about your child's mental health, you can also talk to your family doctor.

There are services your child can use to get mental health support.



Kids Helpline is for children and young people aged from 5 to 25.

Kids Helpline offers:

- phone support

**1800 551 800**

- online support

**[www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)**





Kids Helpline is:

- free
- open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



headspace is for young people aged 12 to 25 years old.

headspace offers:



- phone support

**1800 650 890**



- online support

**[www.eheadspace.org.au](http://www.eheadspace.org.au)**



ReachOut offers online mental health support for:

- young people
- parents and carers.



**[www.au.reachout.com](http://www.au.reachout.com)**



## You can get support too



You might need support too.



There are services, information and tools to help you.

### Services



Parentline is a phone service for parents and carers of children from birth to 18 years old.



**13 22 89**



**[www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/services-for-parents/Pages/parentline.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/services-for-parents/Pages/parentline.aspx)**



Lifeline is a phone service everyone can use.



Lifeline helps anyone who needs support with their mental health.



**13 11 14**



Lifeline is:

- free
- open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Beyond Blue has:



- a phone service you can use
- tools and resources to look after your mental health.



**1300 22 46 36**



**[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)**

## Information



raisingchildren.net.au

You can get information from the Raising Children Network about:



0 - 8

- mental health and wellbeing for children 0 to 8 years old



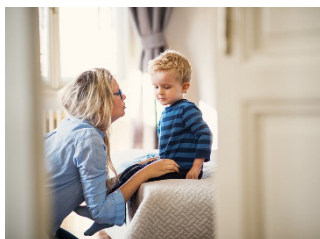
**[www.raisingchildren.net.au/for-professionals/mental-healthresources/parent-mental-health-and-wellbeing](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au/for-professionals/mental-healthresources/parent-mental-health-and-wellbeing)**



- mental health and wellbeing for teens



**[www.raisingchildren.net.au/for-professionals/mental-health-resources/teen-mental-health-and-wellbeing](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au/for-professionals/mental-health-resources/teen-mental-health-and-wellbeing)**



- how you can talk to your child about their mental health.



**[www.raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/mental-health-physical-health/stress-anxiety-depression/depression](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au/pre-teens/mental-health-physical-health/stress-anxiety-depression/depression)**



headspace has information about how to:



- support a family member
- have a healthy headspace
- understand teenagers and how they change as they grow up
- start talking to your child.



**[www.headspace.org.au/friends-and-family/health-and-wellbeing/](http://www.headspace.org.au/friends-and-family/health-and-wellbeing/)**



ReachOut has information to help your child with:



- their mental health and wellbeing
- everyday problems
- connecting with others
- communicating.



**[www.parents.au.reachout.com/self-help-content](http://www.parents.au.reachout.com/self-help-content)**



Black Dog Institute has information and advice about:

- when to get help
- where to get help
- mental health conditions
- support groups.



[www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/getting-help](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/getting-help)



Safe Minds has a mental health tip sheet for families.



[www.deecd.tech-savvy.com.au/pluginfile.php/419/mod\\_resource/content/6/Inquire%20Tip%20Sheet%20%28for%20families%29.pdf](http://www.deecd.tech-savvy.com.au/pluginfile.php/419/mod_resource/content/6/Inquire%20Tip%20Sheet%20%28for%20families%29.pdf)



ReachOut has information about talking to teenagers on their website.



[www.parents.au.reachout.com/skills-to-build/wellbeing/things-to-try-coping-skills-and-resilience/how-to-have-a-great-conversation](http://www.parents.au.reachout.com/skills-to-build/wellbeing/things-to-try-coping-skills-and-resilience/how-to-have-a-great-conversation)



## Tools



Beyond Blue has a mental health checklist for children from 4 to 16 years old.



It asks questions about how your child has been:

- thinking
- feeling
- behaving.



It can help you decide if your child needs professional support.



**[www.healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/  
age-6-12/mental-health-conditions-in-  
children/child-mental-health-checklist](http://www.healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/age-6-12/mental-health-conditions-in-children/child-mental-health-checklist)**



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