



Children and teens

Common issues

Childhood and adolescence is a period of enormous change, for both young people and the people around them. Half of all chronic mental illness begins by the age of 14; three-quarters by the age of 24. Suicide is the leading cause of death amongst youth.

Risk factors

- Personal factors: perfectionism, low self-esteem, body image, sexuality, family and genetic history, traumatic events, childhood abuse, lack of sleep.
- School: work load and exams, pressure to fit in or look and behave a certain way, future career, bullying, pressure from parents (or self) to excel academically or athletically.



Risk factors (continued)

- **Drugs and Alcohol:** peer pressure, experimentation, addiction.
- **Social Media:** pressure to communicate and socialize, cyber bullying, information overload, exposure to inappropriate material, use of drugs and alcohol.
- **Family and environment:** conflict in the home, parents separate or divorce, relocation to a new school or city, death of someone close, love and relationships (or lack of), losing a job.



For Parents and Guardians

- Genuinely listen, without judgement or trying to fix the problem.
- Be truly present in the moment when a child asks for your attention.
- Talk about the real stuff such as “What’s the best part of your day?”
- Look out for warning signs: drop in grades, withdrawal, loss of self-esteem, irritability or angry outbursts, difficulty concentrating, bouts of crying, overeating or loss of appetite, insomnia, lack of energy, headaches or other physical symptoms, self-harm (hiding torso, arms, legs).
- Explore issues without overreacting.



For Parents and Guardians

- Steer your family toward a healthy lifestyle: eat healthy, exercise often, get enough sleep, spend time outdoors and attend checkups.
- Model “living in gratitude”. For example, at dinner time, ask each family member to share one good thing that happened to them that day.
- Set boundaries when technology is to be used or not used **and** model that behaviour.



Reach Out

- Do not put off getting help: talk to a school counselor, doctor or therapist if there is an issue of concern.
- Be open to treat the whole family if your child is in crisis.
- In most, if not all cases, dependent children are eligible and covered under the parent's [Employee Assistance Program](#) benefit and health insurance for ongoing care and treatment.
- Ask for an Employee Assistance Program mental health therapist that specialises in child and/or adolescent treatment and parenting issues.



Need more information?

- BeyondBlue:
www.youthbeyondblue.com/.
- Mental Health America:
www.mhahou.org/emotional-backpack-project/.
- Reach Out:
<https://about.au.reachout.com/what-we-do/helping-parents-help-teenagers/> and
<https://parents.au.reachout.com/>.
- Helplines Tip Sheet.