

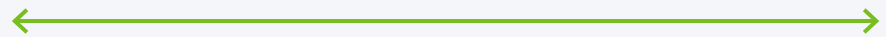
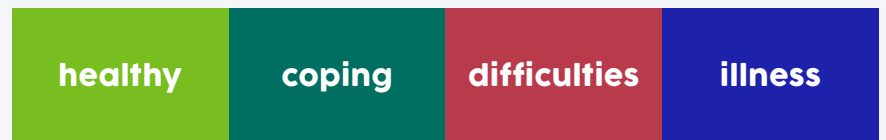


what are mental health difficulties and when to seek help

What are mental health difficulties?

You may have heard the phrase 'mental health difficulties' used before. It's helpful to think about mental health on a spectrum from mentally healthy to mental illness. Everyone sits somewhere on this spectrum, and where you are can change from day-to-day or week-to-week, depending on lots of things.

Let's explore the mental health spectrum:



Healthy

This means you feel able to work and study, feel connected to others, be involved in activities in your community and 'bounce back' when life's changes and challenges come along.

Difficulties

This is where people might feel like they aren't doing so well.

Coping

This is when people feel some pressure but are doing OK.

Mental illness

This is a broad term that refers to a group of conditions like anxiety, depression or others. These can significantly affect how a person feels, thinks, what they do and how they interact with others. Almost half the population will experience a mental illness at some point in their lives.



By finding the right support and strategies, things can get better.

Understanding mental health difficulties

Everyone can experience mental health difficulties from time to time. During these times people might notice their sleep, mood, motivation or energy are not going as well as they would like.

If you've noticed these sorts of changes, it's important to look after yourself, learn a bit more about what's happening for you, and get support from family and friends.

If these experiences last a few weeks or more, and are starting to affect things like relationships, or work and study, it's a sign that you might be heading towards the difficulties area of the spectrum.



Contributors to mental health difficulties

Things such as:

Current circumstances

- such as stress at school, uni, TAFE or work
- money problems
- difficult personal relationships
- problems within your family.

Difficult life experiences

- abuse
- neglect
- the loss of someone close to you.

Individual factors

- coping skills
- thinking styles.

Biological factors

- family history of mental health difficulties.



Looking after your mental health

There are a number of things you can do to look after and maintain your mental health and wellbeing. As a start, include the tips for a healthy headspace into your everyday routine. This will leave you more prepared to cope with the challenges you face in your everyday life.

These include:

- get into life
- create connections
- learn skills for tough times
- eat well
- stay active
- get enough sleep
- cut back on alcohol and other drugs.



How do I know if I'm experiencing a mental health difficulty?

Signs and symptoms of mental health difficulties:

- not enjoying, or not wanting to be involved in things that you would normally enjoy
- feeling sad or 'down', or crying more often
- changes in appetite, eating, or sleeping patterns
- being easily irritated or having more problems with family and friends
- finding that you aren't performing at school, TAFE, uni or work like you used to
- being involved in risky behaviour that you would usually avoid, like taking drugs or drinking too much alcohol, or depending on these substances to feel 'normal'
- having trouble concentrating or remembering things
- having negative, distressing, bizarre or unusual thoughts
- feeling unusually stressed or worried
- feeling like things have changed or aren't quite right.

Getting support

Taking that first step can be tough, but if you are experiencing mental health difficulties, it's important that you reach out to a trusted friend, family member, teacher, Elder, or counsellor to share what you are going through.

You can also get in touch with your GP, local headspace centre or use our online or phone-based service at headspace.org.au/eheadspace

If you ever feel unable to cope because of overwhelming or intense emotions, or if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, then ask for help immediately.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit headspace.org.au

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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