



Lakeside Rooms  
Suite 9 North Building  
Robina East Quays  
34-36 Glenferrie Dr  
Robina Q4226  
Ph: 07 55620466  
Fax: 07 55620499  
Email: [lakesiderooms@iinet.net.au](mailto:lakesiderooms@iinet.net.au)

# Resource Pack Three

Information for a  
young person  
at risk of self harm  
or suicidal behaviour

Compiled specifically for the  
Rapid Response Program



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# RRP CRISIS CARD

If In Crisis...

1) Have I tried a skill/ what will help me get through? Eg.

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2) Who can I call?

Cheerleaders-

Significant Other-

Family-

Professional-

Other-

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If Still In Crisis...

3) Remember: What Are My Reasons To Live?

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4) Call my Individual Therapist on \_\_\_\_\_  
Available \_\_\_\_\_

- 5) Leave my name and number at Lakeside IF I CAN wait, *OR*  
6) Call Suicide Support Service 1800 859 585  
7) Call ACTT 5667 2000 (after hours)  
8) Attend Gold Coast Hospital

## **USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS (Young Person)**

- My support person: \_\_\_\_\_ Ph \_\_\_\_\_
- Lifeline: 13 11 14 (24 Hrs)
- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 (24 Hrs)
- Online Counselling: [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)
- Suicide Support Services: 1800859585 (5pm-9am weekdays, 24hrs weekends)
- My Lakeside Counsellor \_\_\_\_\_ 5562 0466
- Child & Youth Mental Health Service: 56671714 (9am-5pm) 55370660 (after 5pm)  
Riverwalk Place, Level 1, Suite 13, 238 Robina Town Centre Drive, Robina

### **When I just want someone to talk to I can call...**

- My support person / Lifeline / Kids Helpline

### **When I am thinking about suicide, and coping strategies aren't working I first call...**

- My support person

### **If I need more help I can call...**

- Suicide Support Services / Lifeline/ Kids Helpline / My Lakeside Counsellor

### **If I have made an attempt, or strongly intend to, I will call...**

- Emergency Ambulance: 000
- Child & Youth Mental Health Service

### **...or I will get someone to take me to my nearest hospital Emergency Department**

- Gold Coast Hospital: 108 Nerang St, Southport 55198211 (24hrs)
- Robina Hospital: 2 Bayberry Lane, Robina 56686399 (24hrs)
- Tweed Hospital: Powell Street, Tweed Heads 55067416 (24hrs)

## Websites

**www.headspace.org.au** Support for young people with mental health and related problems

**www.somazone.com.au** Information about health and well-being issues

**www.reachout.com.au** Interactive forum for young people to access support and assistance

**www.youthbeyondblue.com** Information on depression, anxiety, and suicide prevention

**www.headroom.net.au** South Australian site with information / resources for young people, their family, and friends

For more help lines / online support, see the "More Information" sheet included in this pack

## **More information on phone help lines and websites for young people**

If you need to talk to someone, find more information or find out where you can go to see someone, the numbers and websites below may be helpful.

### **Lifeline**

- \* 13 11 14 (cost of a local call)
- \* [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

For urgent assistance call Lifeline 13 11 14 which is a 24-hour telephone counselling service.

The Lifeline Information Service ([www.lifeline.org.au/find\\_help/info\\_service](http://www.lifeline.org.au/find_help/info_service)) provides access to a variety of self-help tool kits with information about issues such as mental illness, depression, panic attacks, suicide prevention etc.

The Lifeline National Service Finder ([www.lifeline.org.au/find\\_help/service\\_finder](http://www.lifeline.org.au/find_help/service_finder)) is a comprehensive online national database of low-cost or free health and community services offered throughout Australia.

### **Kids Help Line**

- \* 1800 55 1800 (free call from land line)
- \* [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

Kids Help Line offers free confidential 24-hour telephone counselling services for 5 to 18 year olds in Australia. On the Kids Help Line site, you can email a counsellor or chat to one online between 3pm and 9pm Queensland time, Monday to Friday and 10am and 4pm Queensland time, Saturday.

### **Youth beyondblue info line**

- \* 1300 22 4636
- \* [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)

For the cost of a local call, the beyondblue info line provides callers with access to information and referral to relevant services for depression and anxiety-related matters.

### **headspace**

[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

Go to the website to find information, support and help near you. The National Youth Mental Health Foundation - offers a comprehensive website and one-stop-shop services that are youth-specific, and therefore youth-friendly. headspace employs a range of different health workers and programs with a focus on the needs of young people. These include; GPs, psychologists, alcohol and drug workers, as well as education and employment programs.

## **Orygen Youth Health**

[www.oyh.org.au](http://www.oyh.org.au)

Orygen Youth Health aims to ensure that young people are able to access high-quality mental health, and drug and alcohol services provided in friendly, accessible environments.

## **Reach Out!**

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

Reach Out! is a web-based service which aims to inspire young people to help themselves through tough times. The Reach Out! site has fact sheets and personal stories about a wide range of health and lifestyle issues, as well as profiles of famous people, an e-newsletter and a database where you can look for help in your area. Reach Out! is an initiative of the Inspire Foundation.

## **Reach Out! Central**

[www.reachoutcentral.com.au](http://www.reachoutcentral.com.au)

Designed specifically for young people, Reach Out Central (ROC) is an interactive program that's designed to help you explore how your thinking, behaviour and feelings all interact with each other, and to help you improve and learn new life skills.

## **The Inspire Foundation**

[www.inspire.org.au](http://www.inspire.org.au)

The Inspire Foundation combines technology with the direct involvement of young people to deliver innovative and practical online programs that prevent youth suicide and improve young people's mental health and wellbeing.

## **Somazone**

[www.somazone.com.au](http://www.somazone.com.au)

Somazone is a website that was developed by young people for young people, with the assistance of the Australian Drug Foundation (ADF). The website focuses on health and lifestyle issues such as mental health, drug- use, relationships and body image, with fact sheets, personal stories and advice on where to get help.

### **itsallright**

[www.itsallright.org](http://www.itsallright.org)

Itsallright.org is SANE's website for young people with a parent or friend affected by mental illness.

### **MoodGYM**

[www.moodgym.anu.edu.au](http://www.moodgym.anu.edu.au)

MoodGym is an online treatment program, where you can learn the Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) techniques that are used to prevent and treat depression.

### **depressioNet**

[www.depressionservices.org.au](http://www.depressionservices.org.au)

depressioNet is an independent resource for information, help and support. depressioNet offers a 24-hour email service to answer depression-related questions and help locate resources available in your area. There is also the opportunity to communicate with others via their chat room and message board.

### **The Black Dog Institute**

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

The Black Dog Institute website contains:

- expert information on depression and Bipolar Disorder
- information about causes and treatments
- online self-assessment tools
- a section on getting help for people experiencing depression and their carers
- a page on depression in teenagers and young adults:  
[www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/public/depression/inteenagersyoungadults.cfm](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/public/depression/inteenagersyoungadults.cfm)

### **Anxiety Network**

[www.anxietynetwork.com.au](http://www.anxietynetwork.com.au)

Anxiety Network Australia was established as an information, education and support resource for people all around Australia who live with anxiety disorders, their carers, relatives and health practitioners.



### **The Panic Anxiety Disorder Association (PADA)**

[www.panicanxietydisorder.org.au](http://www.panicanxietydisorder.org.au)

The PADA website provides non-clinical information about panic/anxiety attacks, the five main anxiety disorders, prevention, self-help strategies, treatment options and membership services. A printable order form is available for the purchase of books and tapes.

BluePages

### **www.bluepages.anu.edu.au**

For people living with depression, BluePages provides information about the illness and about its treatments (medical, psychological and alternative). It also has a bulletin board and a state-by-state list about where to get help.

Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria

### **Centre for Clinical Interventions**

- [www.cci.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au)

CCI has developed a number of resources for consumers, mental health practitioners, and doctors, many of which are freely available through this website..

### **www.eatingdisorders.org.au**

The Eating Disorders Foundation of Victoria is the primary source of support, information, community education and advocacy for people with eating disorders and their families in Victoria.

### **State-based Alcohol and Drug Information Services**

- \* ACT - (02) 6207 9977
- \* QLD - 1800 177 833
- \* NSW - 1800 422 599 or (02) 9361 8000
- \* NT - 1800 131 350
- \* SA - 1300 131 340 or (08) 8363 8618
- \* VIC - 1800 888 236
- \* TAS - 1800 811 994
- \* WA - 1800 198 024 or (08) 9442 5000

### **National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre**

[www.ncpic.org.au](http://www.ncpic.org.au)

Cannabis Information and Helpline

- \* 1800 30 40 50

### **Druginfo Clearinghouse**

- \* 1300 85 85 84

# Thinking about suicide



Thinking about suicide does not mean you are a bad person, or weak, or flawed. It doesn't even mean that you really want to die - it only means that you have more pain than you can cope with right now.

Remember, no problem lasts forever. Don't solve a temporary problem with a permanent solution. You are feeling this way for a reason, and there is help available, now and in the long term.

## 1 Steps to take if you are feeling suicidal

If you feel immediately suicidal and feel you can't hold on:

- Tell someone how you feel (e.g. partner, parent, adult son or daughter, friend, school counselor).
- Ask them to stay with you until you get help. Being with someone, even over the phone increases your safety.
- Contact a medical professional and tell them it is an emergency:
  - Call your local hospital and ask to speak to the Mental Health Team.
  - Go to your GP or hospital emergency. Wait there until you see a doctor.
  - Call 000 - the police or ambulance may be able to take you to hospital.
  - Call your doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, counselor or case worker.
  - Call an appropriate crisis Helpline – see front of the phone book.

## 2 With help you should start to feel better and be able to keep yourself safe. Until then, there are things you can do to relieve some of the pain and reduce the desire to end your life:

- Try to distance your thoughts and actions. Say to yourself, "I will wait 24 hours before I do anything." Even if it's just 24 hours.
- Put any items you may think about using to hurt yourself out of reach or ask a trusted friend to look after them.
- Do something that has brought you even a small amount of pleasure before, such as taking a walk, listening to music, taking a hot bath, watching a funny movie, reading or some slow deep breathing.
- Get together with others, even if you don't feel like it, to prevent isolation.
- Reduce drug or alcohol use. These can make it more likely that you may harm yourself, by making you more impulsive and increasing feelings of depression.
- Write about your thoughts and feelings. Remember to also write about the things in your life that you value and appreciate, no matter how small they may seem to you.

## 3 Most suicidal thoughts have an underlying cause such as mental illness (e.g. depression), a trauma or life issues. These can be very treatable with medications, counseling, and support or a combination of these. Remember people do get through this -- even people who feel as badly as you feel now. So get help now, you can survive. Call the SANE Freecall Helpline on 1800 18 SANE (7263), Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm for information on mental illness and for referrals to support agencies in your community.

### How do I find out more?

SANE Australia also produces a range of easy-to-read publications and multimedia resources on mental illness. For more information about this topic see:

- *The SANE Guide to Staying Alive* - Provides practical step-by-step hints and advice for dealing with suicidal thoughts and behaviour when there is mental illness.
- *The SANE Guide to Depression* - Helps people diagnosed with depression and their family and friends by explaining what it means to have depression, the treatments available and what a person can do to help themselves.
- *The SANE Guide for Consumers* - Provides practical suggestions on ways you can look after yourself, explains what words like 'diagnosis' and 'treatment' actually mean and describes how treatment and medication can help you.

### Where to call for help

- Immediate assistance  
Police: 000  
Local hospital Psychiatric Emergency Team
- Telephone counselling  
Lifeline: 13 11 14  
Suicide Callback Service: 1300 659 467  
Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800
- Information and referral.  
SANE Helpline 1800 18 SANE (7263),  
9-5 weekdays EST. Request free InfoPack 24 hours.

Use the Order Form which came with this Factsheet or visit the SANE Bookshop at [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)

## Know the thoughts and outsmart them

Suicidal thoughts come in waves. The thoughts will reach a peak and then subside - usually over a few hours



The thoughts try to stay hidden. They discourage you from sharing them with friends and family.

They isolate you.

Often, the thoughts peak at night.

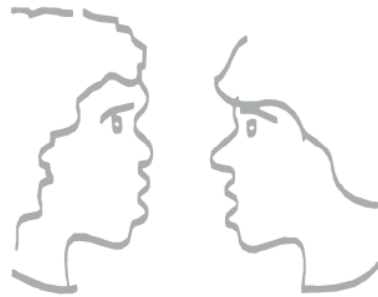
They will try and trick you into the idea that there is no future

***Worst of all, they try and trick you into the idea that the family would be better off without you. This is never the case.***

## To beat the thoughts and stay alive

When you feel them coming on, be with other people.

People rarely suicide in company. Break the silence and talk.



If you are alone, use the phone. Ring a friend, family member or counselling service.



## Be aware

Avoid alcohol and illegal drugs. These will often feed negative thoughts that can make you feel sad or bad.



Remove anything in the house that could make it easy to suicide if the thoughts have their way.



## The depression will pass

Sooner or later you will get out of this hole and wonder how these thoughts ever got such a strong grip on you.

## Getting stronger

Over time, with help, you will get back your old strength. This strength will put the suicidal thoughts in their place.

But it takes times. Having survival skills buys us time to work on turning things round.



## Generating Hope

*Table 11.1* Places to Go If You Are Feeling Suicidal and Need to Get Out

- A mall
- A coffee shop
- A restaurant
- A busy park (during the daytime)
- The beach
- The library
- A community center
- A fitness center
- A university's student union building
- The zoo
- A friend's home
- A neighbor's home
- A family member's home

*Table 11.2* Reasons for Living /  
Reasons Not to Commit Suicide

- Beliefs that you will ultimately be able to make your life better and solve your problems in other ways
- Concerns that you could hurt your family by killing yourself
- Concerns that you would hurt your children, partner, friends, pets, or others whom you care about if you killed yourself
- Fears of dying
- Fears of failing in your suicide attempt and being worse off as a result (being paralyzed, damaging your body, and having medical problems like chronic pain, for example)
- Fears of pain
- Moral or religious objections to suicide
- Fears of disapproval from other people
- Fears of something terrible happening to you (like going to hell) if you were to kill yourself

(Chapman & Gratz, 2007).



**Table 6.1 Some Reasons You Might  
Be Engaging in Self-Harm and Suicide  
Attempts and How to Deal with Them**

To escape from my emotions or to make myself feel better

- How else can I make myself feel better?
- Can I just ride this out until it goes away?

To feel something—anything

- What else can I do to be able to feel something intensely without causing harm to my body?

To make others better off

- If I feel like a burden on other people, what can I do to reduce this burden?
- Is there anything I can do to take some demands away from the people I care about?

To punish myself

- What am I punishing myself for?
- What would be a better way of reaching my goals?

To communicate to or influence other people

- What do I want to communicate to other people?
- What do I want them to know or understand?
- What can I do to get the message across without harming myself?
- Whom can I ask for advice about this? (Choose a really good communicator.)

Other reasons



## Fact sheet 24

# I am feeling suicidal

**If you think you might harm yourself, seek help immediately.**

- Call 000 (police, ambulance, fire);
- Call Lifeline 13 11 14;
- Get someone to take you to your local hospital emergency department.

**If you have suicidal thoughts, don't try to manage on your own.**

This fact sheet provides some ways to help you cope if you are feeling suicidal.

## Understanding suicidal thoughts

Remember that thoughts about suicide are just that – thoughts. You don't need to act on them. They won't last forever, and often they pass very quickly. Many people who have had serious thoughts of suicide have said that they felt completely different only hours later. It is normal to feel overwhelmed and distressed during difficult times or when it seems that things will never improve – it happens to many people.

There are many ways that you can keep yourself safe and work through tough times.

## Things you can do to keep yourself safe

<b>Seek help early</b>	Talk to a family member or friend, see your local doctor, or ring a telephone counselling service.
<b>Postpone any decision to end your life</b>	Many people find that if they postpone big decisions for just 24 hours, things improve, they feel better able to cope and they find the support they need.
<b>Talk to someone</b>	Find someone you can trust to talk to: family, friends, a colleague, teacher or minister. 24-hour telephone counselling lines allow you to talk anonymously to a trained counsellor.
<b>Avoid being alone (especially at night)</b>	Stay with a family member or friend or have someone stay with you until your thoughts of suicide decrease.
<b>Develop a safety plan</b>	Come up with a plan that you can put into action at any time, for example have a friend or family member agree that you will call them when you are feeling overwhelmed or upset.
<b>Avoid drugs and alcohol when you are feeling down</b>	Many drugs are depressants and can make you feel worse, they don't help to solve problems and can make you do things you wouldn't normally do.
<b>Set yourself small goals to help you move forward and feel in control</b>	Set goals even on an hour-by-hour or day-by-day basis – write them down and cross them off as you achieve them.
<b>Write down your feelings</b>	You might keep a journal, write poetry or simply jot down your feelings. This can help you to understand yourself better and help you to think about alternative solutions to problems.
<b>Stay healthy - try to get enough exercise and eat well</b>	Exercising can help you to feel better by releasing hormones (endorphins) into your brain. Eating well will help you to feel energetic and better able to manage difficult life events.
<b>See your local doctor or a specialist to discuss support or treatment</b>	Discuss your suicidal thoughts and feelings with your doctor, talk about ways to keep yourself safe, and make sure you receive the best treatment and care.
<b>See a mental health professional</b>	Psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors and other health professionals are trained to deal with issues relating to suicide, mental illness and wellbeing. You can find them in the Yellow Pages or visit your GP or contact a crisis line for information.



## Finding help in your local area

If you're feeling suicidal, getting help early can help you cope with the situation and avoid things getting worse.

After you recover from a crisis, you need to do all you can to make sure it doesn't happen again.

There are a number of sources of support in your local area.

If the first place or person you contact can't help, or doesn't meet your needs, try another.

**General practitioners** – look for one in the Yellow Pages, or contact your local community health centre.

**Community health centres** – these are listed in the White Pages.

**Psychiatrists** – If you feel you would benefit from seeing a psychiatrist, you must first see your GP for a referral and to discuss your treatment options.

**Psychologists** – you can find these through your GP, community health centre, the Yellow Pages or the Australian Psychological Society (APS). The APS provides a referral service on 1800 333 497 or visit their website at [www.psychology.org.au](http://www.psychology.org.au)

**Counsellors and psychotherapists** – you can find these through your GP, community health centre, the Yellow Pages or the Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia Inc (PACFA). PACFA have a national register of individual counsellors and psychotherapists available to the public. See their website at [www.pacfa.org.au](http://www.pacfa.org.au)

## Crisis help lines

**Lifeline** – 24 hour crisis counselling available across Australia: Ph: 13 11 14; [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

**Kids Help Line** – 24 hour telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25: Ph: 1800 551 800; [www.kidshelponline.com.au](http://www.kidshelponline.com.au)

**Mensline Australia** – 24 hour professional counselling service for men: Ph: 1300 78 99 78; [www.menslineaus.org.au](http://www.menslineaus.org.au)

**Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service (VVCS)** – nationwide counselling and group programs for Australian veterans, peacekeepers and their families: Ph: 1800 011 046; [www.dva.gov.au/health/vvcs](http://www.dva.gov.au/health/vvcs)

**Salvo Care Line (Salvation Army)** – offers a crisis counselling service available throughout Australia: visit [www.salvos.org.au](http://www.salvos.org.au) for the number in your state.

**SuicideLine (VIC)** – Confidential telephone counselling, support and referral available 24 hours a day, seven days a week throughout Victoria for the cost of a local call: Ph: 1300 651 251; [www.suicideline.org.au](http://www.suicideline.org.au)

**Crisis Care** – Gay and Lesbian Counselling and Community Services of Australia provides information and links to counselling services for gay and lesbian people throughout Australia: Ph: 1800 18 45 27 (see the website for numbers in your state/territory); [www.glccs.org.au](http://www.glccs.org.au)

*NOTE: Many of these services also offer interpreter services for those people who speak English as a second language.*

## Other places to get help

**headspace** – A mental health website for young people: [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

**SANE Helpline** – offers a wide range of information on mental illness and suicide prevention: Ph: 1800 18 SANE (7236); [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)

**Suicide Call Back Service** – a free national telephone support service for people at risk of suicide, their carers and those bereaved by suicide: Ph: 1300 659 467.

**Toughin' it out** – survival skills brochure for dealing with suicidal thoughts (Kirinaran): [www.kirinaran.com](http://www.kirinaran.com)





# DEALING WITH STRESS

**When we talk about being stressed, it usually means we're tense about something that's happening in our lives. Some stress can be a good thing. It can help us get motivated to get things done. But too much stress – and how much is too much varies from person to person – can lead to other problems for some people, including depression.**

## WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a normal part of daily life. It's a natural physical and mental response that is designed to help you cope effectively with emergencies. Among other things, stress makes your body produce chemicals that raise your heart rate and blood pressure and increase mental focus. This helps you to perform well in a challenging situation over a short period of time.

The problems from stress happen when stress is regular and doesn't let up. The chemicals the body releases can build up and cause changes that damage your physical and mental health.

## WHAT CAUSES A PERSON TO FEEL STRESSED?

There are lots of different causes for stress. Things that affect one person may not be a problem for someone else. The important thing is to work out what's troubling you.

Stress can come from different areas of your life. There may be problems at home with your family, such as your parents splitting up or one of your parents having a new baby. Some people may have trouble with violence at home, or with physical or sexual abuse.

School can also be a cause of stress. Many young people worry about schoolwork and exams or about how they get on with other students. As well as wanting to do well for themselves, they may feel that they have to meet family expectations, and that they're expected to do as well as friends or siblings. They may be keen to do well in their schoolwork, but have other problems like being bullied or falling out with friends. Or they may have other responsibilities that take their time, such as caring for a sick sibling or parent, or needing to work as well as going to school.

**Drinking alcohol and taking drugs can also cause stress.**

## HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE STRESSED?

Most people, whether they are young or old, get stressed sometimes. Stress can be caused by a lot of different things, but common causes in young people are to do with school, work, family or relationships. Whatever the cause, the results are usually the same.

Common mental health symptoms include:

- feeling angry or irritable
- feeling anxious
- being moody and easily frustrated
- feeling like crying regularly
- having low self esteem or lacking confidence
- feeling restless all the time
- having trouble concentrating.

Common physical symptoms include:

- feeling sick in the stomach
- having constipation or diarrhoea
- having stomach aches and/or headaches
- having problems sleeping
- feeling constantly tired
- sweating a lot
- having cramps or twitches
- feeling dizzy or fainting
- eating too much or too little
- using drugs or smoking.

Visit: [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)

Info line: **1300 22 4636**

*beyondblue: the national depression initiative*



## WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

There are some simple tips to help you reduce and deal with stress in your life.

### SORT OUT RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

Stress in relationships – whether this is with a partner, friends, your teachers, your parents or other important people in your life – is a major cause of depression. You might want to talk to a counsellor or someone who can help you to work things out.

### KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Everybody feels stressed sometimes – something may be happening in your life such as starting a new job or school, arguments with family, friends or a partner, or you may be worrying about schoolwork or an upcoming exam.
- If stress is excessive and never lets up, it can take a big toll on you, causing many different symptoms.
- Stress is not the same as depression – but for some people, being stressed for a long time can end up leading to depression.

### TAKE TIME OUT

Don't spend too much time worrying about things that are stressing you out. Take some time to do something distracting or something you enjoy, such as going out with friends, going to the gym or a yoga class, listening to music, playing sport or watching a movie.

### KEEP THINGS BALANCED

Try to make sure you have a balance in your day between work and doing the things that you enjoy. This might mean learning to say 'no' more often so that you don't take on new things that will add to your to-do list, or your stress levels.

### GET ORGANISED

Organise your time so your homework and assignments are not left to the last minute and avoid studying until late at night.

### EXERCISE

Physical activity such as swimming, walking, yoga, cycling, dancing or going to the gym can help reduce the tension in your muscles and your mind. Try to do some exercise every day, even if it's just walking around the block.

### RELAXATION EXERCISES

Exercises that slow your breathing and relax your muscles can help with stress. Slow breathing (three seconds in, three seconds out) for five minutes can be a useful short-term coping strategy for when you're feeling stressed. Relaxing your muscles might help with aches and pains, fatigue, headaches and difficulty breathing. Try sitting in a comfortable and quiet room, then tense each group of muscles for 10 seconds and relax them for 10 seconds.

- There are ways of reducing and managing stress. In the meantime, try not to spend too much time worrying about the things that are causing you stress.
- You don't have to manage stress on your own – it's a good idea to talk to someone (e.g. teacher, school counsellor, doctor, other adult you can trust) about how you are feeling.

### WHERE TO GET HELP

- Don't wait for stress to get so bad that you start feeling depressed or helpless. Try to work out what is troubling you and then talk to someone who can help.
- If schoolwork or exams seem overwhelming, talk to a teacher or school counsellor.
- If you have a health concern that is causing you stress – maybe you think you might be pregnant or you are worried about your drug use – then speak to a doctor.
- If you are having relationship, friendship or family problems, talk to an adult you can trust.



**LOOK**

for the signs of depression



**TALK**

about what's going on



**LISTEN**

to your friends' experiences



**SEEK HELP**

together!

### MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

You can speak to trained counsellors by phoning these 24-hour telephone counselling services:

**Lifeline 13 11 14** (cost of a local call)

**Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800** (freecall)

Information and support is also available from the following websites:

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

Information on depression, anxiety and how to help a friend

**headspace** [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)  
Information, support and help near you

**Reach Out!** [www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)  
Information and support for young people going through tough times

The websites below can help you to find health services in your area. They list services that are either free of charge or low cost:

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If you or a friend want to communicate with someone via email or online, Kids Help Line offers confidential, non-judgemental, emotional support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**SOURCES** This fact sheet is based on the following sources:

- **beyondblue** [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com) • **Reach Out!** [www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)
- Great Ormond Street Hospital, London [www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk](http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk)

Visit: **[www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)**

Info line: **1300 22 4636**

*beyondblue: the national depression initiative*





## Relaxation - Reach Out.com

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### Relaxation can help put things into perspective

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Relaxation is so important for mental health and wellbeing. Everyone needs some time out to themselves to do something they enjoy. It is easy to forget to make time for yourself when things get stressful. Sometimes we are just so pre-occupied that days can go by without doing anything for ourselves.

Many forms of relaxation, like walking or sitting quietly, are very simple and easy to do. Others, like yoga or meditation, require some training or discipline. Going fishing or playing sport can be a great way of relaxing. You might want to write a list of other things you find relaxing.

Read through this list of suggestions. Put aside some time in the day and try some out to see which ones you find relaxing:

- go for a walk
- take time to notice the things around you
- listen to some music you really like
- go fishing
- sit quietly in a park and look at the things around you
- play your favourite sport
- take a bath - lie back, shut out everything else and relax
- go to a movie or watch a video
- visit a friend
- go for a swim
- do a puzzle
- read a book
- learn yoga or meditation.

### Breathing techniques

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When you are anxious, your breathing can be quick and shallow, which reduces the amount of oxygen going to your organs. Learning how to breathe efficiently can help reduce some of the physiological symptoms of anxiety.

To become aware of your breathing place one hand on your upper chest and one on your stomach. Take a breath and let your stomach swell forwards as you breathe in, and fall back gently as you breathe out.

Try to get a steady rhythm going, take the same depth of breath each time. Your hand on your chest should have little or no movement. Try and take the same depth of breath each time you breathe in.

When you feel comfortable with this technique, try to slow your breathing rate down by putting a short pause after you have exhaled and before you breathe in again.

Initially, it may feel as though you are not getting enough air in, but with regular practice this slower rate will soon start to feel comfortable.

It can help to imagine that you are blowing up a big balloon in your stomach when you breathe in, and then when you breathe out that balloon will deflate. This exercise helps you to breathe more oxygen into your stomach rather than restricting the amount of oxygen by breathing into your chest.

You can find out more about breathing exercises through learning Yoga, Pilates and Tai Chi.

- This content was created in Australia.
- Last updated 17 Jun 09

## Comments

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Log in (<http://www.reachout.com/entry/login>) to join the conversation. Join Reach Out (<http://www.reachout.com/register>) .

**misty**

10 days ago

Thanks for the good ideas for relaxation. :)

(<http://au.reachout.com/find/articles/working-through-it-myself>)

(<http://au.reachout.com/find/articles/working-through-it-myself>) (<http://au.reachout.com/find/articles/working-through-it-myself>)



# GETTING THE SLEEP YOU NEED



**A good night's sleep is important for maintaining good health. Sleeping problems are common and can leave you feeling irritable and without energy. If this goes on for too long, you may end up feeling anxious or depressed. But there are a number of things you can do to improve your sleep so your mind and body can recharge from the day's activities.**

## HOW MUCH SLEEP DO WE NEED?

Sleep is important for all of us, to help our bodies recover and recharge. Being alert and active during the day helps us to get a good night's sleep. It's also important to get into regular patterns of sleep and physical activity.

Most people need between five to nine hours sleep a night but, when it comes down to it, it's not the total

length of sleep that really matters. It's how good the sleep is for your body and whether you're getting what the doctors call 'deep sleep' or 'dream sleep'. Deep sleep usually occurs during the first five hours of the night. So if you only sleep four or five hours, you'll get as much deep sleep as someone who's sleeping for eight to ten hours. Over the life cycle, it's normal for us to sleep less, and our sleep becomes more broken by brief awakenings.

Problems getting to sleep, waking early or not being able to sleep throughout the night can affect your general well-being. As well as feeling tired, you may feel irritable, have no energy and find it hard to concentrate or to remember things. This can lead to other problems such as difficulty with schoolwork. You may also find you get sick more easily, have aches or pains or have difficulty recovering from depression.

**If you continually feel tired all the time, are spending more time in bed, sleeping badly or for less time, napping during the day or have cut down on physical activities, you're probably not getting enough sleep.**

## TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP

### When you wake up in the morning:

- get out of bed; don't try to go back to sleep
- try to get up at about the same time each morning, perhaps around 7am to 7.30am
- go outside into the fresh air and do something active.

### During the day:

- don't nap
- if you're worrying about things during the night, set aside some time for problem-solving during the day
- try to be physically active
- avoid caffeine drinks (like coffee, strong tea, cola or energy drinks) after 4pm and try not to have more than two cups of these drinks each day.

### Before going to bed:

- avoid going to bed too early and try to go at a regular time, say 10pm to 10.30pm
- make sure you are not hungry and have been to the toilet
- avoid drinking alcohol or smoking
- allow yourself time to wind down – if you are working or studying, stop at least 30 minutes before bedtime and do something relaxing (e.g. have a warm shower or bath).

### While you sleep:

- try to make your bedroom quiet, dim and cool
- avoid too many blankets and electric blankets.



## WHAT CAUSES SLEEP PROBLEMS?

There are lots of things that can cause sleeping problems. Some of these are temporary like the effects of medications (such as pain and cold relievers), stimulants (such as coffee or tobacco), excitement or jet lag. Others, like illness, pain or stress, can last for longer periods of time and change sleeping patterns.

Usually a more regular sleeping pattern returns as the illness or the stressful situation passes. But if this doesn't happen, it can lead to worry about getting to sleep, which makes the problem even worse and creates a vicious cycle. Continuing tiredness and low energy levels can also contribute to the development of depression.

Depression can also be a cause of sleeping problems. Some of the sleeping problems that are common with depression are trouble getting to sleep, poor quality sleep, less sleep, waking often during the night or waking very early in the morning and being unable to get back to sleep.

## SOLVING LONG-TERM SLEEP PROBLEMS

For some people, sleeping problems may last for weeks, months or even years. Here are some steps that can help you to break the cycle of feeling anxious and restless in bed.

1. Eliminate the things that may be stopping you from sleeping such as alcohol or coffee (see above).
2. Get up if you can't sleep after trying for 15 to 20 minutes. Staying in bed when you're feeling restless and anxious is unlikely to result in sleep.
3. Do something quiet and distracting, for example play cards, read, knit or have a warm bath. If your mind is very active or you can't stop worrying, it may be helpful to concentrate on something else, such as doing a crossword or Sudoku puzzle, or watching television. However, choose something boring to do, not stimulating. By distracting yourself from your worries, you may find it easier to wind down and become sleepy.
4. Go back to bed when you feel more relaxed and sleepy.
5. If you're still awake after a further 15 to 20 minutes, get out of bed again. Repeat this process until you fall asleep shortly after returning to bed.



### KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Going to bed at the same time each night and getting up at the same time each morning can help your body clock get into rhythm and make sleeping feel more natural.
- If you have a lot of things on your mind, try to process the day's thoughts and feelings and let go of them before you go to bed. If it helps, write things down during the day or talk about them with someone you trust.
- If you've been feeling down for a couple of weeks and also been unable to sleep, it may be a good idea to talk to a family friend, counsellor or doctor about how you are feeling.



## LOOK

for the signs of depression



## TALK

about what's going on



## LISTEN

to your friends' experiences



## SEEK HELP

together!

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- beyondblue [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com) and [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Visit: [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)

Info line: **1300 22 4636**

beyondblue: the national depression initiative





Keeping active is a good way to help prevent or manage mild to moderate depression and anxiety. Getting started or motivated to exercise and staying active can be difficult for people with depression.

### HOW DOES EXERCISE HELP WITH DEPRESSION?

There are many views as to how exercise helps people with depression. Exercise may block negative thoughts or distract people from daily worries. If a person exercises with others, exercise may increase social contact.

Compared to people without depression, depressed people generally have lower fitness levels. Increased fitness may lift mood.

Exercise may bring about changes in brain chemistry which improve mood.<sup>1</sup>

### IS IT EFFECTIVE IN HELPING DEPRESSION?

A number of studies have found that exercise helps depression. Jogging, weightlifting, walking, stationary cycling and resistance training (pushing or pulling weights with arms and legs) have all been found to be helpful in preventing or treating mild to moderate depression. In older people, exercise has been found to be as helpful as antidepressant medication or social contact in treating depression.<sup>1</sup>

The benefits that can be attained from exercise depend on the amount of exercise that is undertaken. One study<sup>2</sup> has reported that total energy expenditure is a key factor in the remission of depression, leading the authors to recommend that individuals should be encouraged to achieve at least the minimum recommended levels of energy expenditure of 30 minutes or more of moderate intensity physical activity on most and preferably all, days of the week.<sup>3</sup>

### WHY IS KEEPING ACTIVE IMPORTANT?

Keeping active can help a person stay *physically* fit and *mentally* healthy. Research shows that keeping active can:

- help lift mood
- help people get a good night's sleep
- increase energy levels
- help block negative thoughts and/or distract people from daily worries
- help people feel less alone if they exercise or socialise with others
- increase well-being.

### KEEPING ACTIVE

People with severe depression may find it hard to do simple things such as getting up and dressed in the morning. They may also find it difficult to become motivated or stick to a plan.

#### Tips to get started

##### Start simple

It's important to increase activity levels gradually. Start by planning simple daily activities such as shopping, driving, gardening, writing letters or completing simple household tasks. Completing these activities can increase a person's self-confidence and build the motivation needed to take on more energetic activities.

##### Do what is enjoyable

People with depression often lose interest and pleasure in doing things they once enjoyed. This loss of pleasure and enjoyment in life can make symptoms worse. To reverse this negative cycle, plan activities that are enjoyable, interesting, relaxing or satisfying. These activities are important in overcoming depression. At first, they may not feel as enjoyable as before, but with persistence, the pleasure should eventually return.

<sup>1</sup> Jorm AF, Christensen H, Griffiths KM, Korten AE, Rodgers B. *Help for depression: What works (and what doesn't)*. Centre for Mental Health Research: Canberra, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Dunn AL, Trivedi MH, Kampert JB, et al. Exercise treatment for depression: efficacy and dose response. *AM J Prev Med*. Jan 2005; 28(1):1-8.

<sup>3</sup> Pate RR, Pratt M, Blair SN, et al. Physical activity and public health. A recommendation from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and the American College of Sports Medicine. *Jama*. Feb 1 1995; 273(5):402-407.



## FACT SHEET 8

### Include other people

People with depression often don't feel like socialising with others. However, spending time alone can make a person feel cut off from the world, making it harder to recover. That's why it's important to participate in activities with family members and close friends – and to accept social invitations, even though it's the last thing the person may want to do. Keeping connected with people helps increase levels of well-being, confidence and opportunities to participate in physical activities.

### Make a plan

Planning a routine can help people to become more active. Make sure some form of exercise is scheduled each day. Try to stick to the plan as closely as possible, but be flexible. If an activity runs overtime or cannot be completed, shorten or skip it and move onto the next one at the appointed time.

Ideas for activities to include in a personal schedule:

#### Keep fit

- Go for a walk
- Ride a bike
- Do some gardening
- Go bushwalking
- Go to the gym
- Go swimming

#### Entertain yourself

- Read a newspaper/book/magazine
- Write a letter/email
- Surf the internet
- Play a solo card game
- Do a crossword or sudoku

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			



### Socialise

- Invite a friend around for coffee
- Organise a video evening
- Visit a neighbour
- Phone a friend for a chat
- Take children and/or pets to the playground or park

### Pamper yourself

- Have a bubble bath
- Buy some flowers
- Lie on the beach and read a book

### Around the house

- Cook something new
- Listen to music/radio
- Do some gardening
- Play in the backyard with children or pets

### Away from home

- Visit a friend or family member
- Join a club
- Go to a market
- Visit a museum
- Visit an art gallery
- Visit the library
- Go to a movie.

Opposite is a blank table for you to practise scheduling your activities.

## WHO CAN HELP WITH ACTIVITY PLANS?

While there are many things that can be done to help people become active, some people may need help to get moving and stay on track. There are many organisations and people in the community who can help.

### General Practitioner

A doctor who is a General Practitioner (GP) will be able to provide advice and information about depression and exercise. He/she will also be able give referrals to a qualified exercise physiologist, covered under Medicare.

### Exercise Physiologists

Exercise physiologists are health professionals who have graduated from a certified university course in exercise science and provide services relating to health, fitness and exercise. People who have ongoing health conditions are now able to access services from exercise physiologists at subsidised rates through Medicare. For more information visit [www.medicareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au)

### Council Recreation Centres

Many councils offer free or cheap sport and recreation facilities such as swimming pools, walking circuits, tennis courts and skating ramps. Check with the local council to see what's available in the area.

### Gymnasiums/Sports Clubs

Like recreation centres, gyms don't all have the same facilities, but most offer a range of classes including aerobics and Pilates, have equipment such as rowing and walking machines and many have swimming pools. Gyms often have instructors who can develop personal fitness plans and help with the motivation needed to stick with it!

### Community Centres/Neighbourhood Houses

Community centres or neighbourhood houses host a variety of groups which focus on staying active and have affordable membership fees. These may include aerobics, yoga, tai chi, dancing and walking groups. For information on how to find community centres or neighbourhood houses, contact the local council or mental health information or awareness agency.





### MORE INFORMATION

#### ***beyondblue: the national depression initiative***

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

Information on depression, anxiety and related alcohol and drug problems, available treatments and where to get help

#### ***beyondblue info line 1300 22 4636***

Information on depression, anxiety and related drug and alcohol problems, available treatments and referral only (local call)

**[www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)**

*beyondblue's* website for young people – information on depression and how to help a friend

#### **Go For Your Life**

**[www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au](http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au)**

Information on how to become active and stay healthy

#### **Australian Association of Exercise Sports Science**

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

Information on exercise physiologist services and how to find an exercise physiologist

#### **SANE Australia**

**1800 187 263 or [www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)**

Information and referral on a range of mental health issues, including living healthily

#### **Kinect Australia**

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

Information on fitness

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Depression and anxiety are manageable. With the right treatment most people recover from depression and/or anxiety.
- Keeping active can help manage or prevent mild to moderate depression.
- There are many things a person can do to keep active, at little or no cost.
- Help and information is available for people with depression who want to keep active.
- Up to five visits to an exercise physiologist are now covered under Medicare if the person has a referral from a GP.