

# Parent's Guide to Youth Mental Health



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We know that raising a child today can be a complex journey. Young people face unique challenges that can impact their mental health. This guide is a resource for parents and caregivers, offering practical advice and empathetic support. Ramsay Mental Health is committed to providing the care and guidance your family needs.

## Understanding Youth Mental Health

### Overview of Common Challenges

Young people often encounter mental health challenges, including:

- **Anxiety:** Persistent worry or fear that interferes with daily activities.
  - Example: If your young person wants to avoid social events perhaps due to fear of judgment, you can encourage gradual exposure to such situations, supporting them to brainstorm ways of managing anticipated difficult thoughts, feelings or situations in advance with you.
- **Depression:** Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or a lack of interest in activities.
  - Example: Encouraging a daily routine that includes enjoyable activities can help foster motivation and lift mood.
- **Peer Pressure:** The influence to conform to social expectations, often creating stress.
  - Example: Discussing real-life scenarios and role-playing responses can empower your young person to handle peer pressure.
- **Self-Esteem Issues:** Struggles with self-worth or confidence.
  - Example: You can regularly highlight your child's strengths and achievements to build self-confidence.
- **Academic Stress:** Pressure to perform well in school or meet high expectations.
  - Example: Helping to set manageable study schedules and celebrating progress rather than perfection can alleviate stress.

### Impact of Social Media and Technology

Social media and technology play a significant role in young people's lives. While they offer opportunities for connection and learning, they can also contribute to mental health challenges. Parents can support balanced technology use by:

- **Encouraging regular screen-free time.**
  - Example: Implementing family-wide screen-free hours during meals or before bedtime can help model healthy habits.
- **Promoting positive online interactions.**
  - Example: Discussing how to respond to negative online behaviour fosters emotional resilience.
- **Discussing the impact of social media on self-image.**
  - Example: Opening a conversation asking your teen about what they've noticed people tend to choose to post online versus what their real self/life is like can help your young person navigate the pressures of curated online content.

## Recognising Signs of Mental Health Issues

### Subtle Indicators of Mental Health Struggles

Parents should look for changes in:

- **Sleep Patterns:** Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping.
  - Example: Noticing a pattern of late-night social media use, sharing your concerns and asking for their input on how best to implement a bedtime routine that reduces screen time before bed.
- **Social Engagement:** Withdrawal from friends, family, or favourite activities.
  - Example: Encouraging low-pressure activities with close friends can help ease social withdrawal.
- **Mood:** Unexplained irritability, sadness, or anger.
  - Example: Keeping a diary to track mood changes can help identify triggers or patterns.
- **Eating Habits:** Noticeable changes in appetite or eating behaviours.
  - Example: Preparing and eating meals together can encourage a healthy relationship with food.

## When to Seek Help

Parents may feel uncertain about when professional intervention is necessary. Understanding when to seek help begins with recognising patterns of concern. Consider reaching out for support if your child displays:

- Prolonged and uncharacteristic mood changes (e.g. Persistent sadness, anxiety, or anger)
- Signs of self-harm or expressions of hopelessness
- Withdrawal from social connections and activities they once enjoyed
- Noticeable decline in academic performance or focus
- Physical complaints (e.g. Headaches, stomach-aches) without a medical explanation

## Introductory Steps for Parents

**Starting the process of seeking help can feel overwhelming. Here's how to begin:**

- **Start a Conversation:** Gently express your observations, such as, "I've noticed you've been feeling down lately. How can I support you?"
- **Gather Information:** Document your child's behaviours, feelings, and any patterns you've observed.
- **Reach Out for Guidance:** Consult with your child's school counsellor, family doctor, or a mental health professional for advice on next steps.
- **Explore Options:** Research local mental health services, such as Ramsay Mental Health's programs, to understand what's available.

## Tips for Open Communication

**Creating a Safe Space:** Foster an environment where your young person feels comfortable sharing their thoughts by:

- **Being approachable and non-judgmental.**
  - Example: Acknowledge their emotions without jumping to conclusions, such as saying, "I'm here to understand, not judge."
- **Validating their feelings.**
  - Example: Respond with phrases like, "It's okay to feel this way," to normalise their experiences.
- **Avoiding criticism or immediate solutions.**
  - Example: Instead of saying, "You should have done this differently," ask, "What do you think might help next time?"

## Conversation Starters

*Example: Starting with open-ended questions and balancing questions with empathetic or clarifying comments ensures your young person feels heard and not interrogated.*

**Initiate meaningful discussions with:**

- "I've noticed you've been quieter than usual lately. Is everything okay?"
- "How are you feeling about school or your friends right now?"
- "I'm here to listen if you want to talk about anything."
  - Example: Starting with open-ended questions ensures your young person feels heard and not interrogated.

## Listening Without Fixing

Focus on listening to understand rather than solve. Phrases like "That sounds really hard" or "I'm glad you shared this with me" can validate their experience. Example: Reflecting their words, such as, "It sounds like school has been overwhelming," shows empathy.

# Supporting Positive Mental Health Habits

## Encouraging Self-Care in Young People

Promote habits that support mental health, such as:

- Regular physical activity.
  - Example: Joining them for a walk or fitness class makes it a shared and enjoyable experience.
- Nutritious and balanced meals.
  - Example: Planning and cooking meals together teaches valuable skills and creates bonding time.
- Consistent and sufficient sleep routines.
  - Example: Creating a calming bedtime routine, like reading or meditation, can improve sleep quality.

## Mindfulness and Coping Tools

Introduce simple stress-management techniques:

- Grounding Exercises: Focus on the senses (e.g., “Name five things you can see”).
  - Example: Practicing this together during stressful moments reinforces its use.
- Journaling: Write about thoughts and feelings to process emotions.
  - Example: Suggesting prompts like, “What made you smile today?” can make journaling more approachable.

## Building Resilience

Help your young person develop resilience by:

- Setting realistic, achievable goals.
  - Example: Breaking larger tasks into smaller steps helps build confidence through accomplishments.
- Encouraging persistence through challenges.
  - Example: Sharing stories of personal perseverance can inspire them to keep going.
- Celebrating successes, no matter how small.
  - Example: Acknowledging effort with simple rewards or affirmations reinforces positive behaviour.

## Knowing When and How to Seek Professional Help

Navigating the decision to seek professional help for your child can feel daunting. Many parents worry about overreacting or misinterpreting their child’s behaviour. However, recognising the value of early intervention is critical. Seeking help is not a sign of failure but a proactive step towards supporting your child’s mental health.

## Exploring Treatment Options

### Ramsay Mental Health Services: Supporting Youth and Families

Taking the first step toward mental health care can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to face it alone. Ramsay Health Care, Australia's largest private mental health provider, is here to guide and support your family every step of the way.

Our services are designed to meet the unique needs of young people and their families, offering care tailored to different stages of life and levels of support.

### Everyday Support: Ramsay Psychology Telehealth Services

For children and teenagers facing challenges such as stress, school pressures, relationship concerns, or grief, our Ramsay Psychology Services provide a safe and supportive environment for one-on-one therapy.

- No referral required: Access care quickly and easily.
- Affordable support: With a Mental Health Treatment Plan, Medicare rebates are available for a number of sessions annually.
- Our psychologists are experienced in working with young people and their families, helping them navigate life's challenges together.

### Comprehensive Care: Ramsay Mental Health Clinics

For young people requiring more intensive support, Ramsay Mental Health Clinics offer specialised programs designed to address conditions such as:

- Anxiety and depression
- Addiction
- Eating disorders

We understand the importance of age-appropriate care. That's why select clinics provide dedicated youth programs (minimum age varies from one service to another). These programs offer:

- Group therapy and skills development
- Individualised support from psychiatrists, psychologists, and mental health nurses
- Family-inclusive approach to strengthen connections and promote understanding
- For those facing treatment-resistant conditions, advanced neurostimulation therapies may also be available

### Take the Next Step Together

If your teenager is struggling, or if you're concerned about their mental wellbeing, we're here to help. To learn more about our youth-focused services and how we can support your family, contact your nearest Ramsay Mental Health Clinic.

## Additional Resources

We understand that recovery is a difficult process and we want to make sure you have access to all the resources available to you. These services are here to help.

**If you or someone you know needs immediate help, please call: Emergency 000.**

### Mental Health

#### Lifeline (24 hr)

[lifeline.org.au](http://lifeline.org.au)

13 11 14

#### Suicide Call Back Service

[suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

1300 659 467

#### Beyond Blue

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

1300 224 636

#### Black Dog Institute

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

02 9382 2991

#### SANE Australia

[sane.org](http://sane.org)

1800 18 7263

#### Men's Helpline

[mensline.org.au](http://mensline.org.au)

1300 78 99 78

#### Grief Line

[griefline.org.au](http://griefline.org.au)

1300 845 745 (6am to midnight)

### Trauma and PTSD

#### Phoenix Centre

[phoenixaustralia.org](http://phoenixaustralia.org)

#### Blue Knot Foundation

[blueknot.org.au](http://blueknot.org.au)

1300 657 380

### Veterans & Their Families

#### Open Arms

[openarms.gov.au](http://openarms.gov.au)

1800 011 046

### Financial & Practical

#### Financial Counselling Australia

[financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au](http://financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au)

1800 007 007

#### Service Seeker

[serviceseeker.com.au](http://serviceseeker.com.au)

### Family and Sexual Violence

#### National Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Counselling Service

[1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au)

1800 737 732

#### Full Stop Australia

[fullstop.org.au](http://fullstop.org.au)

1800 385 578

#### Sexual Abuse & Redress Support Service (formerly Sexual Assault Counselling Australia)

1800 211 028

#### Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline (formerly Domestic Violence Impact Line)

1800 943 539

#### Rainbow Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline (formerly LGBTIQ+ Violence Service)

1800 497 212

#### Elder Abuse Help Line

[eapu.com.au/helpline](http://eapu.com.au/helpline)

1800 353 374

#### Men's Referral Service

[ntv.org.au/get-help](http://ntv.org.au/get-help)

1800 650 890

### Alcohol and Other Drugs

#### Drug Info & Advice Line

[adf.org.au](http://adf.org.au)

1300 85 85 84

#### Family Drug Support (24 hr)

[fds.org.au](http://fds.org.au)

1300 368 186

#### Al-Anon Family Groups

[al-anon.org.au](http://al-anon.org.au)

#### National AA Helpline

[aa.org.au](http://aa.org.au)

1300 22 22 22

#### Narcotics Anonymous

[na.org.au](http://na.org.au)

1300 652 820

#### SMART Recovery

[smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au](http://smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au)

### Eating Disorders

#### National Eating Disorders Collaboration

[nedc.com.au](http://nedc.com.au)

#### InsideOut (formerly Centre for Eating Disorders and Dietetics)

[insideoutinstitute.org.au/](http://insideoutinstitute.org.au/)

#### Butterfly Foundation

[butterfly.org.au](http://butterfly.org.au)

1800 33 4673

### Parenting and Relationships

#### Relationships Australia

[relationships.org.au](http://relationships.org.au)

1300 364 277

#### ReachOut Australia

[parents.au.reachout.org](http://parents.au.reachout.org)

### Young People

#### Children of Parents with a Mental Illness

[copmi.net.au](http://copmi.net.au)

#### Kids Help Line (5-25 year olds)

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

1800 55 1800 (24hrs)

#### Headspace (12-25 year olds)

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

1800 650 890

(9am-1am 7 days a week)

### Carers & Family Members

#### Carer Gateway

[carergateway.gov.au](http://carergateway.gov.au)

1800 422 737

#### Mental Health Carers Australia

[mentalhealthcarersaustralia.org.au](http://mentalhealthcarersaustralia.org.au)



Ramsay  
Mental Health

[ramsaymentalhealth.com.au](http://ramsaymentalhealth.com.au)

*People caring for people*