

# TOPIC 2

## Adolescence — changes and challenges

### 2.1 Overview

#### 2.1.1 Introduction

This topic explores the many physical, social and emotional changes and challenges of adolescence such as puberty, peer and family issues, school and work pressures, and loss and grief.

You will explore the importance of peer and family relationships, positive self-talk and resilience in coping with these changes and challenges.

The value of accessing and assessing health services as sources of information and support when dealing with changes and challenges will also be explored.

Finally, it's important to be aware of the decisions we make and the skills we have in promoting good physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing for ourselves and others.

Everyone experiences changes during adolescence.



#### **on** Resources

 eLesson: Adolescence — changes and challenges (eles-2943)

 Digital doc: Key terms glossary (doc-29236)

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What are the changes and challenges of adolescence?

What skills and strategies can be used to manage the changes and challenges of adolescence?

#### SYLLABUS OUTCOMES

A student:

- examines and evaluates strategies to manage current and future challenges (PD4-1)
- examines and demonstrates the role help-seeking strategies and behaviours play in supporting themselves and others (PD4-2)
- demonstrates self-management skills to effectively manage complex situations. (PD4-9)

## 2.2 The challenges of adolescence

The process of physical, emotional and social change that we experience during adolescence brings with it many challenges. In this subtopic you will explore some of these challenges and expectations, and learn how to cope with them in a positive way.

### 2.2.1 Changes and decisions

Adolescence is a time of big change and big changes take time. You will be faced with lots of decisions throughout adolescence and these decisions may have a significant impact on your future life. Adolescence has always been a complicated stage of development but today's rapid information and communication technology makes it even more complex. You need to be strong, creative, resourceful and hopeful to deal with the challenges you will face. Seek advice from someone you trust and approach the challenges with a positive attitude.

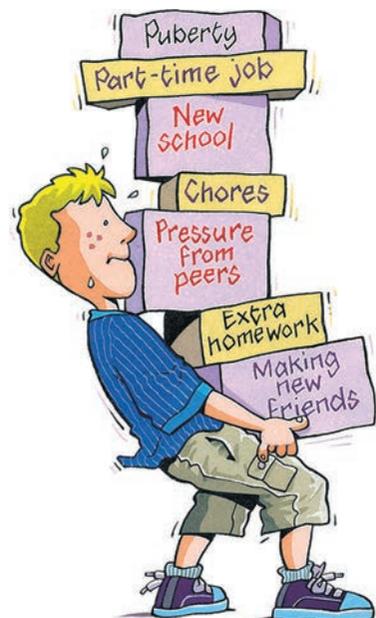
Adolescence can bring many challenges and new experiences.



Adolescence is a time of tremendous growth and potential but it may also be a time of considerable risk. Five key elements will help guide you through this time of change.

1. *Organisation.* Prioritise, plan and set goals to maintain life balance.
2. *Communication.* Maintain open and honest communication lines with your parents, carers, teachers, peers, coaches and other significant trusted adults.
3. *Respect.* Have respect for the people in your life, and especially for yourself.
4. *Taking care of your health.* Your body is growing and changing significantly and that requires you to look after it with good nutrition, exercise and rest.
5. *Not being afraid to ask for help.* There are many people and organisations who can help you navigate the challenges of adolescence. These include your parents, carers, school counsellors, teachers and other trusted adults, and organisations such as headspace, Kids Helpline and ReachOut.

The juggling act during adolescence



 Weblink: headspace

Weblink: Kids Helpline

Weblink: ReachOut

## 2.2.2 Roles and responsibilities

Adolescence is like an apprenticeship — it is the time when you learn how to be an adult. This learning process will involve new situations and challenges that you have not previously experienced. Dealing with these changes is part of the apprenticeship, and learning to make good decisions and knowing where to find support will help you cope with the challenges ahead. Some examples of the changes and challenges that most young people face during adolescence are:

- dealing with the physical changes that emerge during puberty
- managing the heightened emotions that emerge during puberty
- going to a new school
- making new friends and trying to fit into a peer group
- studying even more and being under pressure to achieve in senior studies
- having more responsibility at home, such as doing more chores or taking care of younger brothers or sisters
- making decisions about future study and work
- dealing with negative peer pressure
- experiencing relationship breakdown
- experiencing conflict with parents.

For some young people, the challenges can be even greater, such as:

- caring for a sick parent or family member
- becoming a young parent
- moving to another country and adapting to a new culture and a different language
- experiencing family breakdown, parents divorcing and living between two households
- coping with significant health problems.

### DID YOU KNOW?

When everyone in the family is involved in creating the family rules and negotiating the consequences for breaking them, this helps everyone to understand and accept the rules. Family rules help you to feel safe and secure.

## 2.2.3 Future roles and responsibilities

As you go through adolescence and mature into a young adult, the roles and responsibilities you face will change. You will be expected to make important decisions and take more and more responsibility for your life. As a student, you will be faced with decisions and responsibilities related to your health and future, such as:

- choosing senior subjects
- balancing social time with study time
- choosing a career path
- studying further at a tertiary institution
- choosing whether or not to be sexually active
- being physically active
- your first job
- learning to drive.

As a young adult, the challenges and responsibilities will be different again, such as:

- moving out of home
- committing to a partner
- coping with further study
- earning a wage to pay the rent, bills, and so on
- choosing whether to travel
- making significant purchases, such as a car.

To explore these issues further, complete the **How do I feel about the challenges in my life?** and **Dealing with future challenges** worksheets in the Resources tab.

The decisions you make in the future may provide even greater changes and challenges.



### on Resources

 Digital doc: Worksheet 2.1 How do I feel about the challenges in my life? (doc-29183)

Digital doc: Worksheet 2.2 Dealing with future challenges (doc-29184)

## 2.2.4 Fears and feelings

As you experience one or more of the challenges outlined in section 2.2.2, you most likely will be faced with a range of feelings and may have fears about meeting these challenges. This is quite normal. It may be that you are feeling scared or that you do not fit in, that you cannot cope with the situation you are faced with, or you may worry that you will fail. These are common fears and feelings. When you are faced with a challenge it is important that you recognise what you are capable of, what you need to do to work through the challenge and to whom you can turn for support and advice.

## 2.2.5 Skills and strategies for managing responsibilities

Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by the demands placed on you? Do you feel you are not coping and that you do not know what to do about it? These feelings are not uncommon, especially when you have lots of things to deal with at once, such as starting a new school, doing homework and learning study skills, doing chores at home, meeting sport commitments, fitting in social time with friends and being able to manage your time effectively.

When faced with changes that are challenging, it is best to have a range of strategies to help you cope. It is important to be aware that a strategy may be useful in one situation but not in another, so think about which one will be most helpful to you.

Juggling the changes and challenges of adolescence requires good decision making, planning and seeking help when you need it.



Below are some more ideas that can help you to manage the changing roles and responsibilities of adolescence.

- Talk to your parents or teachers about your concerns and ask them to help you devise strategies to manage these challenges.
- Plan for the outcome you want rather than just letting the situation happen.
- Prioritise — look at what is important, what needs to be done straight away and what you can do over a period of time.
- Ask others for advice.
- Talk to a counsellor.
- Think positively about how the situation will turn out.
- Relax by doing things you like, such as going for a bike ride, playing on the computer, going shopping, walking the dog, drawing, painting, writing or listening to music.
- Be realistic in what you can and cannot manage, and then set goals.
- Make sure you look after your health — eat nutritious foods, exercise regularly and get enough sleep.
- Ask for help if you need it.

Walking the dog and exercising can provide a way to cope with challenges.



### 2.2.6 Positive self-talk and help-seeking strategies

The key to coping with problems or difficult situations may often be the way we think about them. **Self-talk** is our inner voice, the voice in our mind that says things that we don't necessarily say out loud. It's the 'commentator' in our head. Self-talk can have a powerful influence on the way we feel about ourselves in certain situations. Your thoughts can directly affect your emotions.

Using positive self-talk in unfamiliar or new situations, such as meeting someone for the first time, can help us feel in control and build our confidence. If you give yourself positive feedback more often, you will likely feel more confident about yourself. You can improve your state of mind by changing your thought patterns. Negative self-talk should be acknowledged and addressed appropriately to improve your self-confidence in situations that you are concerned about. Positive self-talk involves saying things to yourself that are positive while also being realistic. Learn to be compassionate with yourself. Next time you put yourself down, ask yourself this question, 'Would I say this to a friend?' If the answer is no, then why are you saying it to yourself?

Using positive self-talk improves confidence and relationships with others.



Self-talk usually happens without us realising. Identifying the negative or irrational thoughts can help provide confidence to deal with new situations or simply to make us feel better. Positive self-talk can empower you to try new and challenging things and not be afraid of failure.

Effective help-seeking strategies involve being able to go to someone for guidance and assistance when you are worried, unhappy or have a problem. You generally feel supported, safer and cared for when you share your concerns. It is important to think about the people you would talk to if you needed support in different circumstances. There are two main types of help seeking:

- informal help seeking from family and friends
- formal help seeking from professional sources.

Find the most appropriate person to talk to and express to this person how you are feeling so they can support you effectively.

## 2.2 Activities

### Express yourself

1. Use your creativity to draw, paint, sculpt or act to express all the feelings you have about the challenges of adolescence.

### Emoticons journal/chart

2. Before you can deal with your emotions appropriately, you must learn to recognise what causes them.
  - (a) Develop a journal/chart to record your emotions. You may like to indicate your emotions with the use of an emoji or emoticon. Record the activities/events that cause those emotions to occur. Include all the information that will help you determine if there is a pattern to when certain emotions occur. Be sure to also rate each activity/event as high, medium or low in relation to the intensity of the emotion.
  - (b) Now that you have identified your emotions and the various events that lead to them, think of and note down some appropriate ways to deal with your emotions in different situations.

### Skills for managing change

3. Use the **ReachOut: How to manage your time** and **ReachOut: study hacks** weblinks in the Resources tab to complete the following activities.
  - (a) How can you implement strategies to manage your time more effectively?
  - (b) How can you implement some study hack strategies to study more efficiently?

### LifeCharge app

4. Use the **LifeCharge** weblink in the Resources tab to journal your emotions. LifeCharge is a simple journaling app that allows you to log positive and negative events throughout the day, while providing each entry with a rating on a three-point scale. The aim is to provide an easy way for people to track their day for perspective and reflection.

### Positive self-talk

5. Using the **ReachOut: 3 ways to talk yourself up** weblink in the Resources tab, explore ways to implement positive self-talk. Present the information in a brochure that can be provided to students in schools.



### Resources



**Weblink:** ReachOut: How to manage your time

**Weblink:** ReachOut: Study hacks

**Weblink:** LifeCharge

**Weblink:** ReachOut: 3 ways to talk yourself up

## 2.2 Check and challenge

### Explain

1. Predict and describe at least five challenges that you will face in the future as a young adult.

### Evaluate

2. (a) Identify the challenges young people face when they go from primary school to high school.  
(b) Describe how you have or would respond to and cope with these challenges.

### Elaborate

3. Identify changes that have already occurred in your life. Choose one and describe how you dealt with its challenges.

## 2.3 Dealing with loss and grief

Although there are many things to be gained during adolescence, it is possible that you will experience loss as well. These losses can be very difficult to deal with. In this subtopic you will learn the skills needed to deal with loss.

### 2.3.1 Loss and grief

As we experience change in our lives, we may encounter **loss**. The death of someone we love or care for is a major loss in our lives. Other losses that many people experience in their lives include:

- the end of a close relationship
- moving away from friends or family
- parents getting divorced
- finding out someone we love is seriously ill
- moving to another country
- moving schools
- losing something that is very important to us, such as our job
- the death of a pet.

A natural response to loss is **grief**. How we experience grief is different for everyone. **Grieving** is a healthy process that allows us to fully appreciate the importance of what was lost.

Grieving is a process that happens over a period of time. The length of this time is different for each of us according to individual characteristics, the extent, nature and significance of the loss, and what support we have around us. It is important to understand that not all losses result in negative effects. Moving to a new school, for example, may provide more opportunities, such as better sports facilities, more choice in the school curriculum and new friendships.

Dealing with loss can be a difficult challenge.



#### HEALTH FACT

Ignoring emotional pain will not make it go away, and it is untrue to say that you must feel strong in the face of loss. The healthiest way to deal with loss is to allow yourself to feel the pain the loss has caused, including feeling scared, lonely and sad.

## 2.3.2 Responding to loss and grief

People can experience a range of emotions when they grieve, such as sadness, disbelief, relief, anger or anguish. Although we will all grieve in our own way, there is a general pattern to the grieving process. At first, you may feel disbelief, shock or confusion and may struggle to accept the loss.

When we experience a major loss, such as when a loved one dies, it may take quite some time for it to sink in. Some people feel at their lowest point three to four months after the loss. This is a time when they need their friends and family to support them and help them get through the pain and confusion. As time passes, the feelings of grief will begin to lessen. There will be good and bad days but gradually the healing process will start and life will seem much better.

Responses to loss may differ between boys and girls due to the effect on behaviour of gender stereotypes and cultural differences. Stereotypical views such as 'real' men don't cry or show their emotions but girls are expected to be emotional, may influence our feelings about our own unique experience of grief. It is important to remember that experiencing an emotional and/or physical response to grief is normal. Allowing yourself to grieve is a healthy first step in moving on from your loss. Can you think of other things you can do to make yourself feel better?

## 2.3.3 Learning to cope

You will learn that feelings of loss and grief are difficult to deal with and can be quite intense. It may be a very painful experience, particularly if you lose someone you are close to. You may feel many emotions at this time, such as sadness, anger, shock and loneliness. Everybody copes with the grieving process differently and it is important to recognise and appreciate that everyone needs to deal with it in their own way.

The grieving process can take time. It would be great if there was a magical wand that could make you feel better during these periods, but unfortunately there isn't. There are things you can do, however, to help you cope more easily. Support service beyondblue suggests the following strategies:

- Allow yourself time to cry.
- Take time out.
- Say goodbye.
- Talk about it.
- Stay healthy.

Some strategies to help you cope with loss



## 2.3 Activities

### Understanding reactions to grief

1. In groups of four, discuss how it would feel and how you might react if:
  - (a) your favourite pet died
  - (b) you and your family emigrated to a country where a different language is spoken
  - (c) your closest friend moved away.
2. As a group, devise a list of positive strategies that would help you cope with the situations proposed in activity 1.

3. As a class, draw a mind map to present all the positive strategies and discuss why they would be helpful for someone experiencing loss.
4. Discuss differences between the ways boys and girls react to loss. Identify reasons why such differences might exist.
5. Complete the **Understanding loss and grief** worksheet in the Resources tab to further examine responses to change.

### Smiling Mind

6. Smiling Mind is a modern meditation tool for young people. It is a unique web and app-based program developed by a team of psychologists with expertise in youth and adolescent therapy. Smiling Mind is a simple tool that gives you a sense of calm, clarity and contentment using the practice of mindfulness. It gives you the chance to reflect and be aware of your emotions. This can be helpful during difficult times but is also a very healthy self-care tool to include into your daily routine.

Use the **Smiling Mind** weblink in the Resources tab to explore the benefits of mindfulness as a positive way to deal with changes and challenges.

### Resources

 **Digital doc:** Worksheet 2.3 Understanding loss and grief (doc-29185)

 **Weblink:** Loss and grief

**Weblink:** Smiling Mind

## 2.3 Check and challenge

### Explain

1. List five types of experience that can lead to a grief reaction.
2. Identify three positive strategies you could adopt to help you cope with loss.
3. Identify three positive strategies you could adopt to support and assist others in coping with loss.

### Elaborate

4. Is loss always a negative experience?
5. What advice would you give someone who has just suffered a major loss in their life?
6. List and research three different health support services that adolescents could use to help them deal with the grieving process.

## 2.4 Managing changes and challenges

We all experience difficult times in our lives. How we manage those challenges determines our future and affects the type of person we become. In this subtopic you will explore what it means to be resilient and learn strategies for becoming more resilient.

### 2.4.1 Characteristics of a resilient person

Some people are able to manage the challenges of life, remaining positive no matter what. These people are resilient. Children and young people are usually resilient. This is because they typically have resources such as friends and family to support them in difficult times. However, there are some young people, just as there

are adults, who need extra help and support to manage life's challenges. Is there someone you can turn to when you face challenging times in your life?

People who are **resilient** have a number of common characteristics. They:

- feel a sense of belonging and connection to a person, group or place, such as their family or school
- are confident
- have a positive outlook on life
- have good problem-solving skills
- have a positive sense of self
- have positive and effective coping skills
- are able to estimate their abilities and limitations
- seek help when they need it
- usually have experienced some success in their life.

Resilient people are able to 'bounce back' in hard times.



### HEALTH FACT

Research shows that there are a number of **protective factors** that promote resilience in young people. Two of the most significant protective factors are having a loving and supportive family, and belonging to a peer group.

Young people and adults need certain skills to deal with change and challenges. Skills such as problem solving, conflict resolution, communication, interaction and planning enhance a person's resilience by allowing them to deal effectively with problems and challenging situations.

## 2.4.2 Developing resilience

You can improve the way you manage change and challenges in your life. To do this, you must work at developing the skills needed to deal with change and be conscious of your abilities and responses to situations.

- *Develop skills to help you with problem solving and positive communication.* When faced with a challenge, think about what you can do to manage it. Talk to people who have experienced similar situations, who you trust and who can help you find ways to solve problems.
- *Be realistic.* This means identifying what you are capable of managing and realising when you don't have the skills to deal with situations. Be honest about what you can cope with, and believe in your capacity to cope.
- *Self-monitor.* Keep a check on your emotions, what you are feeling and how you are reacting to situations. If you find that you feel stressed or your emotions are out of control, take time out. Get your thoughts and feelings together before you deal with a stressful situation.
- *Develop a sense of belonging and connectedness.* People are better equipped to deal with change and challenges if they feel supported or they feel they belong to a network. Young people who feel connected to their family, peers or school often feel supported and can cope more easily with change.

Don't try to deal with problems while you are angry or upset.



- *Maintain a positive attitude.* By visualising yourself handling stressful situations in a positive way, you are more likely to cope with life's challenges. Choosing to be positive about your life and your future is an important factor in overcoming hard times. Sometimes this isn't easy, especially when you feel everything is going wrong and you can't make things better. Look for the positive things and concentrate on these.
- *Engage in positive self-talk.* What you say to yourself in challenging and difficult situations can influence how you feel about the situation. Learning how to reframe your thinking to focus on more positive thoughts can influence the way you respond to challenges and help you to be more optimistic.

### 2.4.3 Overcoming challenging situations

During adolescence you will face different situations, each providing their own challenge. It is important to have help-seeking strategies to assist in managing and overcoming these challenges. Some examples of challenging situations include ending a relationship, feeling overwhelmed and grieving or dealing with the loss of someone close.

- *Ending a relationship.* This is often a challenging situation for young people and is associated with different emotions such as sadness and anxiety.
- *Feeling overwhelmed.* This feeling can often result from school work or family pressures and can often lead to anxiety and stress.
- *Grieving or dealing with the loss of someone close.* This creates feelings of distress and sadness and help-seeking strategies are essential to help you through the process.

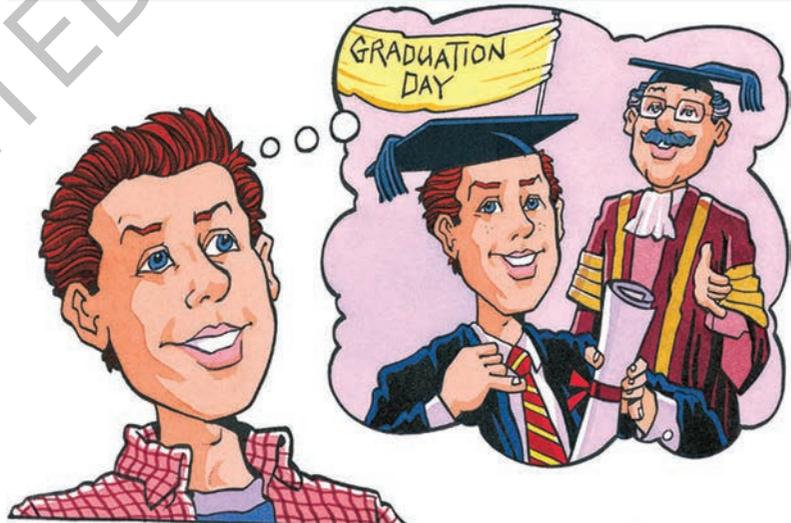
#### Help-seeking strategies

Help-seeking strategies are important during challenging times, to assist you cope and move through the challenge in a positive manner.

Examples of help-seeking strategies for the situations above include:

- *ending a relationship* — talking to someone such as a family member or friend, giving yourself time to heal, taking up a new hobby or physical activity, being out in nature, keeping a journal to write down your thoughts and feelings
- *feeling overwhelmed* — talking to someone such as a friend or family member, making a list and prioritising tasks, being organised, asking for help to complete tasks to reduce your workload
- *grieving or dealing with the loss of someone close* — allowing yourself time to heal, talking to someone such as family member, friend or counsellor, doing meditation, keeping a journal, participating in physical activity, contacting a helpline such as Kids Helpline.

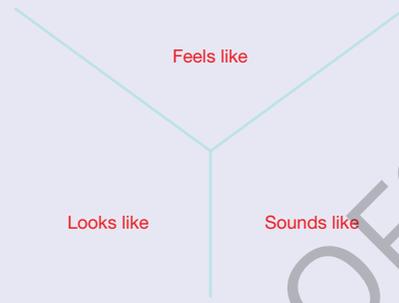
People who visualise themselves positively dealing with challenges are more likely to do this when confronted with a challenge.



## 2.4 Activities

### Characteristics of a resilient person

- (a) Draw a Y-chart, such as the one on the right, to describe what you think a resilient person might be like.
- (b) Share your Y-chart with a partner and discuss your responses.
- (c) With your partner, identify people such as sporting figures or family members who you think are resilient and discuss why you think they are.
- (d) Complete the **Bouncing back** worksheet in the Resources tab to look further at what makes a resilient person and developing strategies to build resilience.



### Dealing with change

- (a) Identify a past situation that required you to adapt to change (for example, changing schools, moving house or losing a pet).
- (b) Describe the challenges you faced when dealing with the change.
- (c) Identify personal characteristics and skills that helped you deal with the change.
- (d) Evaluate your response to the change. Do you think you could have done anything differently?

### Resources

 Digital doc: Worksheet 2.4 Bouncing back (doc-29186)

## 2.4 Check and challenge

### Explain

- Describe the characteristics of a resilient person.
- Why is it important for young people to be resilient?

### Elaborate

- How can you improve your ability to deal effectively with change and challenges in your life?
- Identify strategies for helping others to be resilient.

### Evaluate

- Evaluate your ability to bounce back in hard times.
- Self-monitoring is one way to help you be resilient in times of stress. Identify strategies that you use, or could use, to manage your emotions in times of stress (for example, talking to a close friend). Explain why these strategies would be effective for you.

## 2.5 Peer connections

Good friends are great to have. They support you when you are feeling down or need help. In this subtopic you will explore the importance of friendships and how positive or negative peer interactions can affect your sense of self.

### 2.5.1 Being connected

As you go through adolescence, you will form close relationships with some of your peers, especially those at your school. You may become part of a peer group where you have a number of friends who you trust and confide in.

## 2.5.2 Who am I connected to?

School is a place where strong connections to other people can be made. Adolescents spend a lot of time at school and may see their teachers more than their parents.

Going to class and learning the curriculum is just one aspect of school life. There are many other meaningful aspects, such as:

- socialising with friends
- attending excursions and camps
- being recognised for doing your best
- having opportunities to improve yourself
- having access to both informal and formal help and support
- developing relationships that extend beyond school
- playing sport
- expressing creativity through art, drama and music
- being encouraged to form opinions
- having a structured environment in which expectations are clear
- having a wide choice of activities.

Friends provide support by respecting each other.



### HEALTH FACT

In a 2017 survey, young people indicated that when it comes to seeking help with important personal issues, most would talk to their friends (84.4 per cent), a parent (77.7 per cent) or another relative or family friend (61.3 per cent).

Being accepted by peers is important for most young people; however, some young people do not feel connected to their peers. They may be bullied or made to feel different and not be included in peer activities. For these people, life can be unpleasant. It is important to remember that we are all individuals and are all different — no-one should be excluded or made to feel unhappy. You can help your peers to feel connected by treating them with respect and by offering them your support.

## 2.5.3 Finding it hard to connect

Have you ever met someone you have thought you would like to get to know and become their friend? Have you ever felt that you just do not fit in or that your peers do not like you? Most people will experience such thoughts and feelings at some stage in their lives. There are many reasons why young people do not feel connected.

- They feel that having opinions or beliefs that differ from their peers' can cause conflict.
- They feel school is too hard, no-one cares and they cannot achieve their goals.
- They feel school is unsafe because they are bullied and harassed by their peers.
- They feel different from their peers.
- They feel they are not good at anything and they are a failure.
- They feel no-one understands them, cares about them or is interested in who they are.
- They feel they have no control over what is happening in their lives.

Getting involved at school will help you make connections.



When young people experience feelings of being disconnected, they are at a greater risk of harm and may start to feel depressed. Being connected to someone can help young people when they feel this way. You can offer them your support by simply talking to them; listen attentively and not judging them. If the problem is particularly difficult, you can still give your support by helping them find an adult or help service that can offer advice.

## on Resources

 Digital doc: Worksheet 2.5 Identifying connections (doc-29187)

## 2.5 Activities

### Making connections

1. As a class, form two concentric circles — an inner circle and an outer circle facing each other. Follow these instructions:
  - (a) Introduce yourself to the person you are facing and tell them three things about yourself.
  - (b) The inner circle moves two places to the left to face someone new. Introduce yourself to the person you are facing and identify three things you have in common.
  - (c) The inner circle moves two places to the left. Introduce yourself to the person you are facing and tell them who you would most want to be and why.
  - (d) The inner circle moves two places to the left. Introduce yourself to the person you are facing and share your favourite holiday destination and explain why it is your favourite.

2. Think about how it felt sharing things about yourself with your peers and answer the following questions.
  - (a) Did you find sharing with your peers easy or hard? Explain why.
  - (b) What can you do to try to connect more with your peers?
  - (c) What can you do as a member of this class to help others to feel connected?

### The ideal school for me!

3. Form groups of three or four. You have been given the job of designing and promoting a new secondary college called Ideal SC. This school needs to be a place where every student feels safe, supported and happy. Use a computer and the following steps to design Ideal SC.
  - (a) Develop a school motto or advertising slogan to promote Ideal SC.
  - (b) Draw a plan of the school grounds (include buildings, sports facilities, seating, gardens, eating areas and any other significant features).
  - (c) Identify subjects that should be included in the academic curriculum. Justify your selections.
  - (d) Develop a school code of conduct that addresses the behaviour of both staff and students. You may wish to include fair discipline guidelines for breaching school rules.
  - (e) Identify other activities/programs that should be offered to students, such as sport, dance or social justice initiatives. Justify your selections.
4. As a class, share your answers for activity 3. Compile a list of the characteristics that Ideal SC would need to have for every student to feel safe, supported and happy. Discuss why each characteristic would promote a student's sense of connectedness to the school. Then answer the following questions.
  - (a) Which characteristics are most important to you? Explain why these characteristics would help you feel supported and connected to your school.
  - (b) What can you do to make school a safe and happy place for every student? Use desktop publishing to create a poster to display your strategies.

## 2.5 Check and challenge

### Explain

1. Why might some students not feel connected to their peers?

### Elaborate

2. Identify five activities at your school that promote a sense of belonging.

### Evaluate

3. What can you do to help your peers if they find it hard to make connections?

## 2.6 Family connections

Think about the people you feel most comfortable with, who care about you and who help you when you need it. These are the people to whom you are connected. In this subtopic you will learn about the importance of your family as a source of support, advice and help.

### 2.6.1 The importance of family

For young people who are struggling to cope with the changes and challenges of adolescence, being connected to family is very important. Young people who feel connected are often more resilient. A strong connection with family is one of the protective factors present in the lives of resilient young people.

What do adolescents talk about when thinking of families? Use the **Teens talk about family** weblink in the Resources tab to watch a video about teens talking about their families.

Families come in all shapes and sizes and provide love and support.



## on Resources

 Weblink: Teens talk about family

### 2.6.2 My family

Families come in many different forms. ‘Family’ might mean your parents, siblings and other blood relatives, or might be family friends, guardians or community elders. No matter who they are, family members can provide love, support and security. Unfortunately, some young people do not feel connected to their parents or family. There are many reasons for a breakdown in family relationships and these can often leave young people feeling disconnected. It is important to develop connections with other people who care about you, such as friends, teachers and other adults, so that there is always someone there to offer support.

As you grow older, you may find your beliefs and opinions change and are different to those of your family. The most important thing to remember if this happens is to respect other people’s rights to have different beliefs, values and attitudes; this is part of **emotional maturity**.

#### HEALTH FACT

Ninety-four per cent of callers to Kids Helpline nominate a family member as their greatest role model, with nearly three-quarters of callers nominating their mum or dad as the person they most admire.

### 2.6.3 Getting connected

It can be difficult to take steps to begin or improve our connections with other people, especially our families. We can feel nervous or anxious about starting a conversation and trying to get closer to them. But the things we gain — friendship, someone to talk to and confide in, someone to do things with and support when we need it — are well worth the effort. The sense of belonging we feel when we develop close relationships with the people in our family can be a critical factor in helping us through hard times. As we move towards becoming more independent our relationships with family and friends may change. For example, we may see more of our friends than our family, particularly when moving out of home. Moving in with a partner and spending more time with them may mean less time spent with family and friends. As we mature we become more responsible for ourselves, rather than relying on our family. This does not mean that our family won’t be there for us; however, as we become more independent, the role they play may change.

It is important to keep in mind that there are many things you can do to strengthen the relationships you already have, which will help you towards independence. Some strategies to get you connected are:

- Spend time with your parents. Talk to them about your day.
- Invite your family to get involved in school activities, like helping with your homework, or coming along to sporting competitions or school plays.
- Offer your help when it is needed, such as helping around the house.
- Take up a hobby you can share with your family, like photography or bushwalking.
- Ask your family to help you make new connections.

Can you think of others?

There are many people who can provide support.



## 2.6 Activities

### My family tree

1. A family tree is a way of mapping the connections in your family. Use the diagram below as a guide to help you create your own family tree. Include family members such as stepmother and stepbrother. For each member of your family, list their full name (including their middle name if you know it) and three interesting facts you know about them. Take your completed family tree home and discuss the facts you wrote down with your family. Ask for their help with any names or facts you could not remember.

You may also like to use the **Global connections** weblink in the Resources tab to find out how many people in the world have your surname.

Grandmother  
Likes yellow roses  
Good singer  
Worked as a nurse

Grandfather

Grandmother

Grandfather

Aunt

Uncle

Aunt

Uncle

Mother

Father

Brother-in-law

Sister

Me

Brother

Sister-in-law

Niece

Nephew

### Making connections with my family

2. Collect some photos of families from newspapers or magazines, or bring in photos of your own family to help you answer the following.
  - (a) In small groups, discuss:
    - i. what the word 'family' means
    - ii. how families differ
    - iii. what role families should play in the lives of young people.

- (b) Think about your family and what they mean to you.
- i. Identify one person in your family to whom you feel a strong connection. What makes you feel connected to this person?
  - ii. What are the things you like most about your parent(s) or carer(s)?
  - iii. Why is your family important to you?

## Resources

 **Weblink:** Global connections

## 2.6 Check and challenge

### Explain

1. What does it mean to be connected?
2. What is the most important thing to remember when your opinion is different to that of your parents or family?
3. List three ways you can improve your connections with your family.

### Elaborate

4. Why do you think family relationships can sometimes break down?

### Evaluate

5. (a) How do you respond when your opinion is different to that of your parents or family members?  
(b) Do you think your response is likely to improve your connections with your family? If not, how can you improve your response?

## 2.7 Support networks

An important part of planning to keep safe is identifying people you trust and who can help and support you when you need it. These people form your support network.

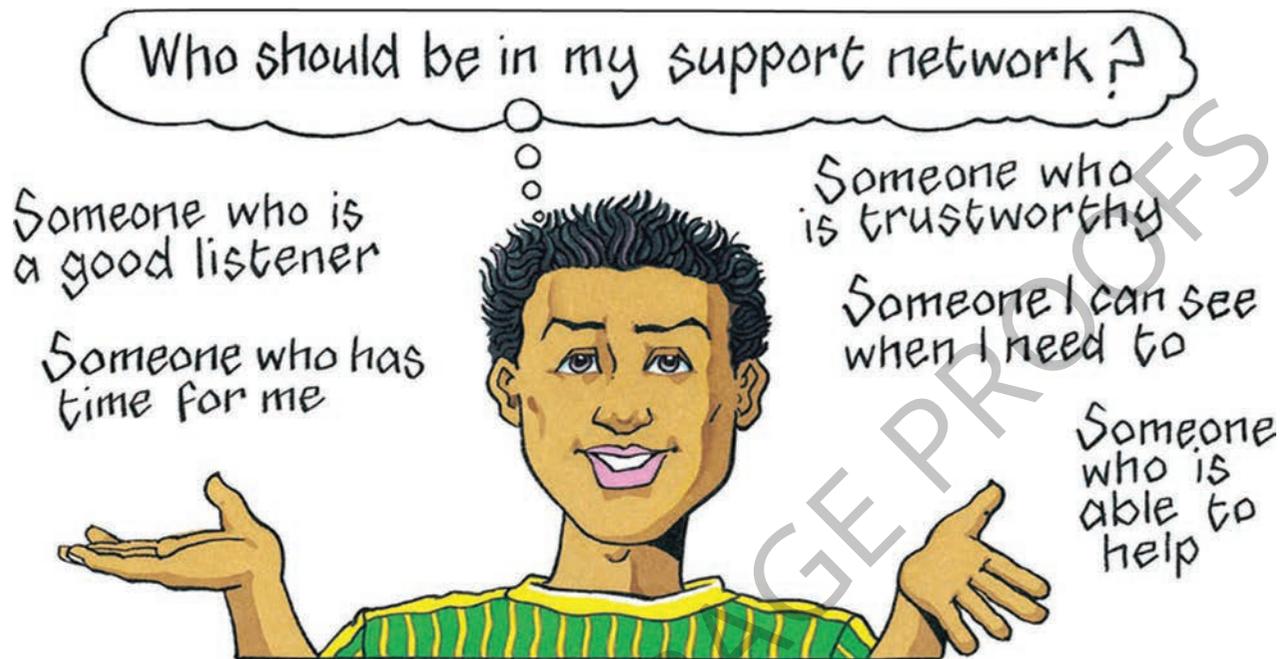
### 2.7.1 A sense of belonging

‘A sense of belonging is seen as a basic human need. It involves feeling valued, needed and accepted by others. For young people, feeling connected to positive peers and adults is protective against a range of adverse health and behavioural outcomes. To lack a sense of belonging is associated with a higher incidence of mental illness and emotional distress amongst adolescents.’

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

No matter who you are, there will be times in your life when things seem too hard or you don't know what to do to resolve a conflict or get out of an unsafe situation. Developing a support network is important so you have people around you to support you when you need it.

Support networks should include people you can trust and who can help you.



### 2.7.2 Why is having support important?

Having a **support network** of people you trust and who are willing and capable of helping you can make a big difference in your life. The benefits of support include:

- having someone to listen to you
- being able to share your thoughts and feelings
- having another person's opinion to help you sort out your own thoughts and feelings
- having access to advice to help you solve your problems
- having someone to help you find experts such as counsellors or youth workers.

Other instances of when support networks are important are when either you, or someone you care about, are in an unsafe or difficult situation, for example, situations involving bullying, mental health concerns, drug use, relationship or family and domestic violence.

Often in these situations, it is not easy for us or others to seek help. There are quite often barriers to seeking help including:

- lack of awareness about the dangers of the situation
- being unsure of who to contact in these situations
- lack of support networks available
- being worried about social stigma of getting help.

Strategies to overcome these barriers include becoming educated about the dangers of certain situations and the particular health effects, such as those associated with domestic violence. Other strategies include creating a support list of people to contact when faced with an unsafe or difficult situation, for example, family, friends or external supports such as counsellors. As well as individual support networks of family and friends, there are many external organisations available such as ReachOut and Kids Helpline.

Seeking help should also be seen as a sign of confidence and strength as you are taking action to protect your health and safety, which is important in maintaining your overall wellbeing. In today's society it is far more acceptable to receive help when experiencing a difficult time, rather than keeping such feelings bottled up.

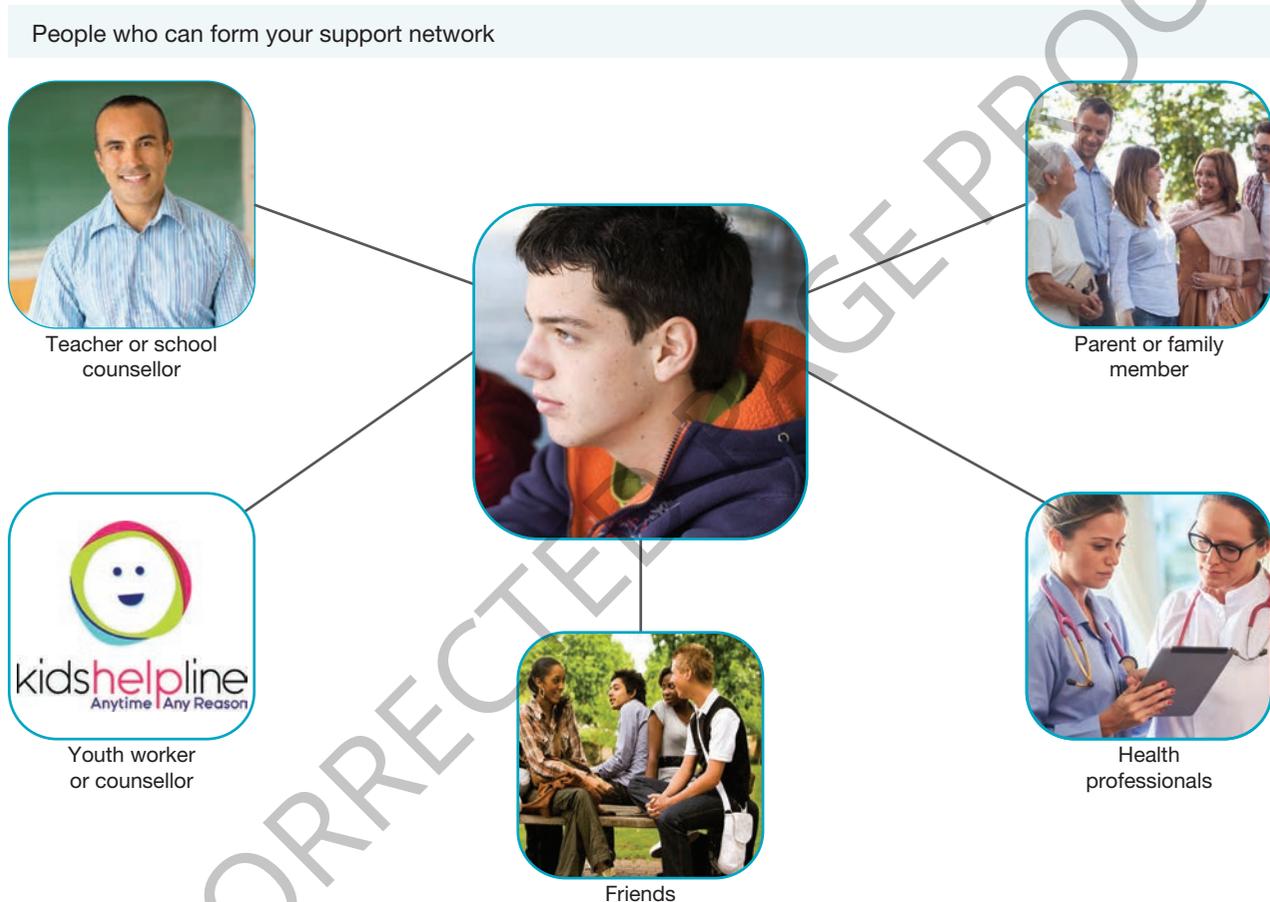
## 2.7.3 Establishing a support network

When you are thinking about who to include in your individual support network, you should ask yourself the following questions.

- Are they accessible to you?
- Are they trustworthy?
- Are they good listeners?
- Will they have time to assist you?

If they do not have these characteristics, it would be better to find another person who does have them.

It is a good idea to include adults in your support network because they will be able to provide support that may be different from that of your friends. People you may want to include in your support network are shown in the figure below.



## 2.7.4 Getting support for yourself and others

Sometimes, it is not easy to find the support you need at the time when you need it most. It may be helpful to confide in a friend so you can help each other find the right support.

Identifying the right person to seek help from or the right service to go to will depend on the situation. If you or a friend needs help, think about who might be the best person or service to provide that support. If you are not sure about what external support services are available in your local area, you could:

- use the internet
- ask a teacher or your school counsellor
- look in the telephone book for youth services
- call Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800)
- ask your doctor
- call or go to a youth health service and ask for advice.

## 2.7 Activities

### Support network

1. (a) Identify a support person, such as a parent, friend or teacher.  
(b) List the qualities they have as a support person for you: for example, honesty, trustworthiness, wisdom.  
(c) For what type of circumstance would you access them as a support person: for example, in a disagreement with a friend or a cyberbullying issue?

### Website investigation

2. In pairs, research one of the following websites, assigned by your teacher, and answer the subsequent questions.
  - Kids Helpline
  - ReachOut
  - beyondblue
  - Black Dog Institute
  - Smiling Mind
  - (a) What health information does the website provide?
  - (b) What resources and services does the website provide?
  - (c) How effective is this website in assisting adolescents with managing change and transitions? Provide examples.

## 2.7 Check and challenge

### Explain

1. What are support networks and why are they important?
2. What factors should you consider when choosing people to be in your support network?

### Elaborate

3. How could you help a friend obtain support?

### Evaluate

4. Where could you seek advice if you had a problem or were in a potentially unsafe situation?
5. Using your answers from question 4, create a flow chart using drawings or pictures to illustrate your support network.

## 2.8 Accessing health information, resources and services

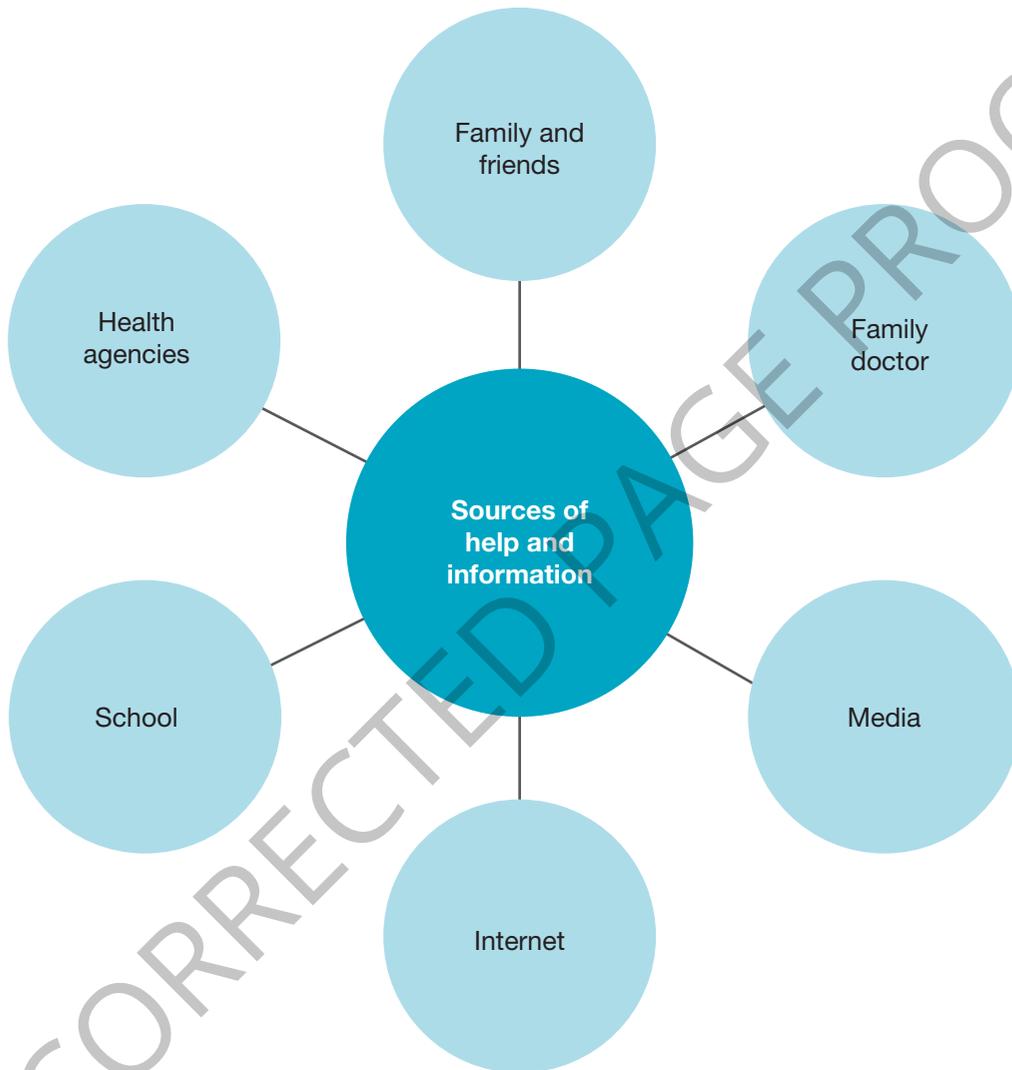
Dealing with changes and challenges can be difficult for young people but for our health and wellbeing it's important to deal with these in positive way. Accessing health information, resources and services is important to support us in effectively managing changes and transitions.

### 2.8.1 Be informed

Being informed about health information, resources and services can help us deal with changes and transitions such as times of stress. But how do we know whether information is accurate and how do we act on it appropriately?

## 2.8.2 Consumer health

Accessing **health information** and finding the right answers can sometimes be quite a challenge for us as **health consumers**. The most important aspect of consumer health is being able to evaluate and act correctly on health information. There is a large range of health resources and services available; although many are safe, others, such as ‘miracle cures’ or rapid weight-loss diets, can damage our health. Who, then, do we believe?



## 2.8.3 Family and friends

Our family and friends are often helpful and convenient sources of health information as they have our best interests at heart and are easy to talk to. Older family members might be able to refer us to general services, such as doctors and dentists, and can usually help us with minor injuries. However, they may not have expertise on specific health matters, such as weight-loss programs and depression. Similarly, our friends may be able to empathise but lack the expertise to treat the problem. The most important role our family and friends can play is to help us understand the problem, seek out sources of help and evaluate information.

## 2.8.4 School

Your school network is an excellent resource, as it includes your Health teachers, counsellors and other staff who have a good understanding of adolescent problems, reliable information, and available products and services. The Health lesson can be a good place for discussion of general health issues. You should feel free to discuss any questions you may have, either as a class or with your teacher, who can provide guidance on where to find further information if needed. You might be surprised how many others in your class have been pondering the same question!

## 2.8.5 Health agencies

Many **health resources** and **health services** are available from **health agencies**. Health agencies include hospitals, doctors, pharmacists and organisations such as Meals on Wheels, St John Ambulance Australia and Nutrition Australia. Agencies answer our calls, give advice, provide pamphlets and generally work to improve the health of all Australians. It is up to each of us, however, to make health choices that are in our best interests. How well we do this depends on our judgement and decision-making ability.

Changes and challenges in adolescence can create stress and lead to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. There are many health agencies that help young people deal with changes and challenges. These agencies include ReachOut, Kids Helpline and beyondblue.

Meals on Wheels provides hot meals to elderly and disabled people in the community.



School-Link and Healthy Kids are NSW Government initiatives aiming to improve the health and wellbeing of NSW students by providing mental health, physical activity and healthy eating guidance and support.



### on Resources

 Weblink: School-Link

Weblink: Healthy Kids — eat well, get active

## 2.8.6 The internet

The internet is now the most extensive of all sources of health information, providing access to a large range of health products, suggestions, information and advice. It should be noted, however, that many internet sources may not be reliable and can even provide harmful advice. You should be very cautious when using unrecognised internet sources for health-related information. Some of the best websites for health information are shown in table 2.1. These are available as weblinks in the Resources tab for you to check out for yourself.

**TABLE 2.1** Health-related online information and support services

Support for alcohol and drug dependence	Support for nutrition
Better Health Channel Binge drinking Alcohol and Drug Foundation Safe night out Australian Drug Information Network Youth Support + Advocacy Service (YSAS) Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia	Cancer Council Nutrition Australia National Heart Foundation NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Healthdirect Australia Health Departments in each state or territory Australian Sports Commission
Support for physical activity	Support for safety
Australian Sports Commission Physical Activity Australia TeensHealth Department of Health Smartplay	Red Cross St John Ambulance State Emergency Services Salvation Army
Support for mental health	Support for relationships and sexual health
Lifeline Youth beyondblue Black Dog Institute KidsMatter MindMatters headspace Head to Health	Kids Helpline NSW Rape Crisis ehheadspace Family Planning NSW MensLine Relationships Australia ReachOut

### Resources

 Weblink: Health information

## 2.8.7 Media

The media is very influential both in promoting health products and communicating health messages. We see some television commercials promoting healthy food and others publicising junk food. Most magazines and newspapers advertise health products, promote new diets, include features such as ‘health tips for the week’ and sometimes include entire health sections. Often these health articles address issues relevant to young people, such as sexuality, relationships, skin problems and weight control. Usually the information is reliable as it has been written or checked by people in the medical profession. However, we should be aware that just because health advice appears in print, it does not mean that it is totally reliable and correct. It also may not be the appropriate answer to our own problem and should be considered as general advice only.

## 2.8.8 Family doctor

The family doctor is probably the most reliable source of general health information and advice. General practitioners (GPs) are highly qualified and deal with health problems every day. They are aware of new products and are trustworthy in their evaluation of the latest health information. Always feel free to discuss any health concerns with them. Tell them what you have read and the advice you have already received, then listen carefully to their assessment of your concerns.

## HEALTH FACT

Generally, you can make an appointment with your family doctor without needing to bring one of your parents along, regardless of your age; however, if your GP feels that your parents should be present, they may advise you of this. You are able to consent to your own medical treatment without consulting your parents once you turn 16 or once you turn 14 if your GP believes you are fit to do so.

### 2.8.9 Supporting others who need help

Everyone can go through a challenging time. As we grow up we experience different circumstances or conditions that require support from others. Issues such as mental or emotional health, relationships, sexual health, alcohol and drug use, family matters and nutrition can all test our ability to cope and remain positive. Other challenges may involve the changing nature of relationships, including breaking off relationships and moving forward with relationships. An ongoing health condition can also bring associated feelings of anxiety and stress. We should never underestimate the impact that providing support to others can have. It can make the difference between someone feeling they are coping versus not coping.

Sometimes it can be obvious that others need our support because they will ask for it, or we might sense something is wrong or different and enquire if everything is okay. There is a range of ways in which we can support others. These involve communication, social-emotional support and practical actions.

Empathy is a vital part of showing support for others in a challenging situation.



### Communication skills to support others

If you recognise that someone else needs help, it is not always easy to know what to do. A positive way to start is through good communication and showing support. This involves strategies such as showing empathy, listening attentively and reminding others of their character strengths, skills and abilities. Using values such as respect, compassion and integrity in our communication can show others that we are genuine. Sometimes it's as simple as starting a conversation. Sometimes the conversation can be the solution.

Persuading friends to seek assistance early is a good step towards helping them resolve a problem before it potentially gets worse. Do you know how to motivate a friend in need of help to take positive action? The following communication techniques can be used to persuade someone to seek help.

Step	What you should do	What you could say
<b>Step 1</b> <b>Start a conversation</b>	Choose somewhere private or quiet.	<i>What's up? How you going? Haven't seen you for a while. Is everything okay?</i>
<b>Step 2</b> <b>Listen without judgement</b>	Guide the conversation by acknowledging you understand the problem.	<i>How long have you been feeling like this? How has it made you feel?</i>
<b>Step 3</b> <b>Acknowledge the problem and encourage action</b>	Sum up the issue and ask what they are considering doing. Encourage them to take the first step. Assist them in finding useful online resources.	<i>What do you think you should do? Have you considered seeing a doctor or teacher to discuss?</i>
<b>Step 4</b> <b>Follow up</b>	Ensure that you get back to them soon on how things went.	<i>Did you get a chance to make an appointment? What were some possible solutions? Did you find the information useful?</i>
<b>Step 5</b> <b>What if they don't want to talk?</b>	Communicate your concern for them and that you would like to help because you care about them. Don't criticise them for not 'opening up'.	<i>I'll catch up next time to see how you are going. Would you prefer to talk with someone else?</i>

### Social-emotional support

Positive emotions are contagious. If we express positive emotions it is likely that other people will also be affected positively. Humour and laughter are positive emotions that can help to relieve stress. It doesn't necessarily have to involve telling jokes, it is more about looking for humour in difficult situations. Sometimes if a person isn't feeling positive about their own situation, by helping others it can make them feel more positive about themselves.

Random acts of kindness go a long way to bringing about positive feelings. This means going out of your way to be kind or to help someone. It could be as simple as saying to someone that they look nice today, helping them carry their heavy sports bag or letting them into the canteen line ahead of you. Another more structured way of helping others is to be involved in service activities at your school or in community-based programs.

### Problem solving for support

Using problem-solving strategies can help you to think through solutions and take action when supporting others. For example, if a classmate has a parent who periodically suffers from a mental health condition, how could you work to support them? They may require assistance with additional home tasks or may need to find new recipes to help making meals at home. Putting yourself in the shoes of others, thinking about their situation and the full range of possibilities to assist them is an important way of offering support.

### Seeking additional support

Sometimes you don't know when you need support. You might think it's 'normal' to always be stressed. Finding ways of recognising emotions ensures that you don't become trapped in negative mood states of anxiety or depression. It also helps to have a good support network — family, friends, teachers, coaches, counsellors and others — who can help you in times of need. Engaging the support of others and sharing strategies for dealing with emotions is a constructive way of managing your emotions through challenging times. As a friend, offering to accompany someone to seek further support from a teacher or school counsellor may offer reassurance and help them to take this important step.

Acts of kindness can contribute to positive feelings.



## 2.8 Activities

### Inside health

1. Allocate each of the following questions to a small group. Discuss each question and report back to the class. Summarise the responses on the board.
  - (a) What persuaded you to purchase or use the last headache tablet that you took? How did you know the medication was safe? Would you choose this brand again?
  - (b) What made you choose the doctor you go to? Are things explained to you fully when you visit?
  - (c) Do you regularly read a website or magazine health article? If you do, why do you find it interesting? How do you know the information is correct? Do you use it to diagnose or treat your own problems?
  - (d) Do you know or have you heard of people who are sexually active at a very young age? Are there health risks? Are there reliable sources that young people can talk to confidentially if they have problems of this nature? Where do you find this information?

### The family doctor

2. Imagine you are a local general practitioner. Consider the following.
  - What are the types of concerns that young people might ask you about? List five examples.
  - Why is it important for you to stay informed about the latest health services and products?
  - A 13-year-old girl comes in complaining that she always feels tired and never has any energy. She tells you that she spends a lot of time watching television and playing video games, and you notice she is overweight. What advice would you give her? What health services might you recommend to her?
  - A 14-year old boy comes to you to ask some questions about dealing with the anxiety he is feeling as a result of changing schools. Use the **Seeking help for anxiety** weblink in the Resources tab to gather reliable information about anxiety and develop an information sheet for him.

### Seeking help

3. Work in groups and use the **ReachOut: communication skills** weblink in the Resources tab. For each of the following situations, role play how you would use communication techniques to encourage someone to seek help.
  - Mental health concerns, for example, depression
  - Drug use
  - Relationship or family domestic violence

### Resources

-  **Weblink:** Seeking help for anxiety
-  **Weblink:** Reachout: communication skills

## 2.8 Check and challenge

### Explain

1. What are the main sources of health information?
2. Why must we treat the things we read in the print media as only general advice?
3. What is the most important role of friends and family in helping you access health information?

### Elaborate

4. What are four concerns you could talk to your family doctor about?

### Evaluate

5. Which two sources of health information do you think are the most reliable? Why?

## 2.9 Review

### 2.9.1 Summary

- Although adolescence brings about many changes and challenges, these can present us with positive opportunities.
- Developing a range of coping strategies and a support network helps you to deal with change in a positive way.
- Planning for your future by setting goals, managing your time, identifying potential barriers and devising strategies to overcome them can assist you to deal with future challenges.
- It is important to allow ourselves to grieve and feel sad, scared or lonely after we suffer a loss.
- Learning strategies to handle your emotions during a time of emotional upheaval is important to maintain positive relationships with others.
- Using positive self-talk in unfamiliar or new situations can help us feel in control and build our confidence.
- Being resilient helps people remain positive in life.
- The time needed to reach emotional maturity will vary among young people. Some signs of emotional maturity include controlling impulses, managing stress, knowing your feelings and why you are experiencing them, and expressing yourself appropriately.
- By learning some coping strategies to protect and look after yourself in the face of adversity you can enhance your resilience.
- Having a supportive network of friends and family will give you the comfort of knowing that you can access some valuable help in a time of need and celebrate accomplishments together.
- Being connected or having a sense of belonging to a place or people will help you deal with challenges in your life.
- You have the ability to support others and help them feel like they are connected.
- The most important aspect of consumer health is being able to evaluate and act appropriately on health information.
- Often, the most important role your family and friends can play is to help you understand the problem, seek out sources of help and evaluate information.
- Your school network includes your Health teachers, counsellors and other staff who have a good understanding of adolescent problems, reliable information and knowledge of available products and services.
- The internet is the largest source of health information but also contains some unreliable and even harmful advice. You must carefully evaluate information found on the internet.
- The family doctor is probably the most reliable source of health information and advice available to you.
- Most of the health choices that people need to make are in relation to the resources available, the services needed and the people to contact.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What are the changes and challenges of adolescence?

What skills and strategies can be used to manage the changes and challenges of adolescence?

**Evaluate your initial response to the essential questions after having studied this topic.**

## 2.9.2 Key terms

**emotional maturity** being able to recognise and respect differences in opinion, beliefs and values without becoming angry or upset

**grief** the response we have to a significant loss in our lives

**grieving** the process we go through in coming to terms with changes that are happening in our lives, and learning to cope with the gaps that the loss has created

**health agencies** organisations that assist in health matters by providing services, products and information

**health consumers** people who buy health products or use health services

**health information** knowledge about a health product or service you may need, want, buy or receive

**health resources** include items designed to improve one's health, such as toothpaste, sunscreen or vitamins

**health services** something that helps people maintain or improve their health, for example, ambulance services, internet advice or health care hotlines

**loss** temporarily or permanently losing touch with someone we are close to, or something important to us

**protective factors** factors that protect children and young people from difficult or harmful events

**resilient** possessing the ability to 'bounce back' when things get tough

**self-talk** the internal statements we use relating to/describing our self

**support network** a group of people you trust and can talk to when you need help

## 2.9 Check and challenge

To answer questions online and to receive **immediate feedback** and **sample responses** for every question, go to your learnON title at [www.jacplus.com.au](http://www.jacplus.com.au) *Note:* Question numbers may vary slightly.

Key terms quiz 

Multiple choice quiz 

### Check your understanding

1. List three skills and strategies for managing changes and challenges in adolescence.
2. How can you be more resilient?
3. Why are connectedness and a sense of belonging important in young people's lives?
4. List five ways you can get connected.
5. What skills do young people need to make positive decisions about their health?
6. List two ways you can support others when they are having a challenging time.
7. Who is an excellent source of health information at your school?
8. List four of the best websites containing health information.
9. Who is the most reliable source of health information and advice available to you?

## Resources

 Digital doc: Worksheet 2.6 Key terms quiz (doc-29188)

 Digital doc: Worksheet 2.7 Multiple choice quiz (doc-29189)

 Digital doc: Key terms glossary (doc-29236)