



Family Update - Week 6

Friday 20 August 2021

Dear Hurlstone students and families,

Life has changed for all of us due to COVID-19 restrictions. With the NSW Premier's announcement today that stay-at-home rules have been extended for Greater Sydney until at least 30 September, we are faced with the reality of learning from home for the entirety of Term 3.

We know that this news coupled with reports of rising numbers of COVID cases in our state can further add to feelings of uncertainty and overwhelm that we have all experienced in recent times. We have also seen our school community show incredible resilience, creativity and compassion for one another's wellbeing in this time, and this is cause for great pride and hope for the future on the other side of lockdown.

We understand the extended lockdown will add extra complexity for families, both within the Greater Sydney region and those living in the regions. A range of supports are available to help families deal with their immediate crisis situation including vouchers for household goods, groceries and transport. Some of these supports are listed below:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Salvation Army | Families can call the Salvation Army Assessment Line 1300 371 288 to be assessed for assistance and if eligible a Gift Card will be mailed to their address. |
| 777 Movement Ltd | Visit website 777movement.org.au to complete simple form which helps this organisation put together hampers tailored to the needs of individual families. |
| Anglicare | Families needing emergency assistance can access low cost food hampers, clothing and food from the Mobile Community Pantries by calling 1300 111 278 . Other emergency assistance is available remotely, including e-cards and brokerage. |

There are also a number of food services operating across LGAs such as Turbans 4 Australia, CORE Community Services, Golden Manna Ltd, Heaven on Earth, St Vincent de Paul, Loaves and Fishes Restaurant (formerly Liverpool Community Kitchen and Hub), Mission Australia and the Exodus Mobile Food Van.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can help to connect you with these organisations. All requests will be treated confidentially.

Wellbeing resources

Headspace has released *Supporting young people impacted by COVID-19: Information for parents and carers* and *Tips to get back into life during COVID-19*, included at the end of this letter. We hope these will prove useful to you in the weeks ahead.

HSC updates

The Year 12 assessment block starts next Thursday with a flexible model of online assessment. We wish our students well as they prepare for these tasks and remind all Year 12 students to refer to the task notification that was sent to them on 11 August as well as the *Year 12 Frequently Asked Questions* document that will be released shortly to support students with any questions and technical issues they may encounter.

NESA has announced a number of changes to the 2021 HSC timetable but have stated that their planning is still continuing for HSC exams to proceed from 19 October in a COVID-safe way, in line with Health advice. For more information, refer to the [HSC exam advice](#) section on the NESA website.

Post school destination planning: connecting with universities, industry, and career opportunities

Our Careers Adviser Ms Keegan (robyn.keegan@det.nsw.edu.au) is available to support students and parents with future planning. Students are encouraged to check their NSW Department of Education email each day as they are regularly sent information and opportunities. The content is clearly indicated in the subject of the email so it is easy to decide which emails are relevant to students' needs.

Relevant year groups have received information and opportunities including:

- University application guide and updates from UAC (University Admissions Centre)
- University Early Entry, Scholarships, Online Open Days and Access Programs
- Answers to frequently asked questions about Subject Selection
- Career, Industry and University webinars
- Online experiences and competitions
- Career Newsletters

Recommended resources for students and parents include:

- [JobJump](http://jobjump.com.au): jobjump.com.au (user name: Hurlstone Agricultural High School, password: stone)
- [Good Universities Guide](http://gooduniversitiesguide.com.au): gooduniversitiesguide.com.au
- UAC: www.uac.edu.au
- Year 12: <https://www.uac.edu.au/assets/documents/uac-guide/uac-guide-2021-22.pdf>
- Year 11: <https://www.uac.edu.au/assets/documents/year-11-and-12/steps-to-uni-year-11-12.pdf>
- Year 10: <https://www.uac.edu.au/assets/documents/year-10/year-10-booklet-2024.pdf>

Stay COVID safe

The NSW Government has announced that people ages 16 – 39 living in areas of concern can now access priority vaccination appointments. Please note that this initiative is delivered by NSW Health and not the school. For more information: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccination-nsw/priority-covid-19-vaccination-booking-for-16>.

Should anyone in your home be impacted by a positive COVID-19 result, please let the school know. We want to support you and your children and keep our school community safe and well.

We are so appreciative of the messages of support for staff received each day. We have a wonderfully supportive, creative and connected school community. Together we will get through these challenging times.

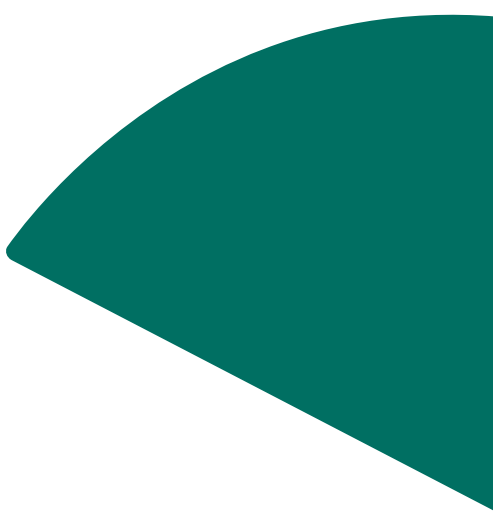
Stay safe and keep well.

Kind regards,

Christine Castle, Principal and the Senior Executive
Hurlstone Agricultural High School

supporting young people impacted by COVID-19

information for parents and carers





Thank you for participating in this webinar.

We invite you to provide us with feedback on your experience through a short survey [here](#).

about headspace

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation provides tailored and holistic support to young people aged 12 to 25 years to navigate the big issues in life, their mental health, physical and sexual health, alcohol and other drugs issues, as well as work and study.

More than 75% of mental health disorders begin before the age of 25 (Kessler et al, 2005) and by working with young people at such a critical time in their lives, we aim to prevent a disorder from occurring or to reduce its severity.

headspace values collaboration. We work with schools, sporting clubs, local health services and communities. We provide resources for school communities, family and friends. We engage with the young person's world to support them along their journey towards adulthood.

headspace is available to young people through its local headspace centres that are located in 124 communities across Australia.^[1] Young people can come into a centre and connect face-to-face with professionals such as General Practitioners (GPs), psychologists, counsellors, occupational therapists, social workers and nurses who can support them. headspace centres have been designed with young people for young people. Centres provide a unique space where young people feel they can trust the support they receive from the professionals working in the service and that they genuinely have their interests at heart. The headspace centre network is supported by a national framework to ensure a young person can go into any centre anywhere in Australia and receive the same standards of high-quality care and support.

In addition to headspace centres, eheadspace connects young people to youth mental health professionals 365 days a year. eheadspace provides a free, secure and anonymous service for young people who cannot access help in person, or who prefer to interact online or over the phone.

To find your local headspace centre, click the link below:

[Find a centre - Australia wide | headspace](#)

^[1] As at 20 September and inclusive of headspace centres, satellites and outposts

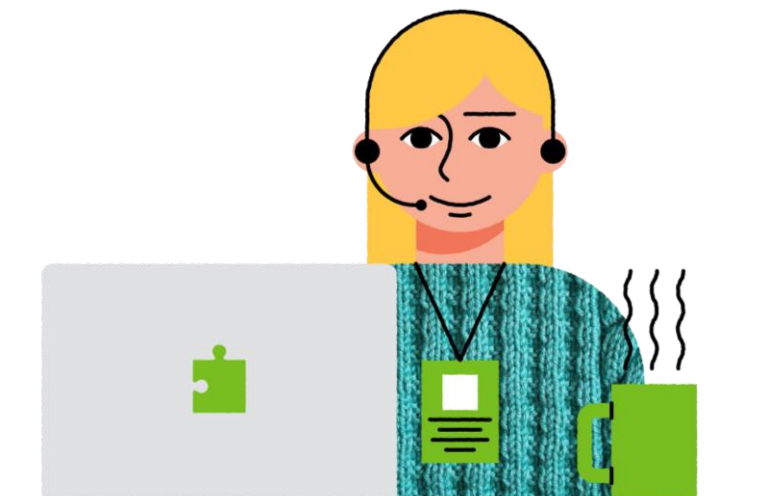
national supports

Support for young people:

- [headspace](#) National Youth Mental Health Foundation. Information and resources for young people, family and friends.
- [ehedspace](#): 1800 650 890 - available 9am – 1am, 7 days a week
- [ReachOut](#) Australia
- [Kids Helpline](#): 1800 55 1800 - available by phone, email or webchat, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Support for adults:

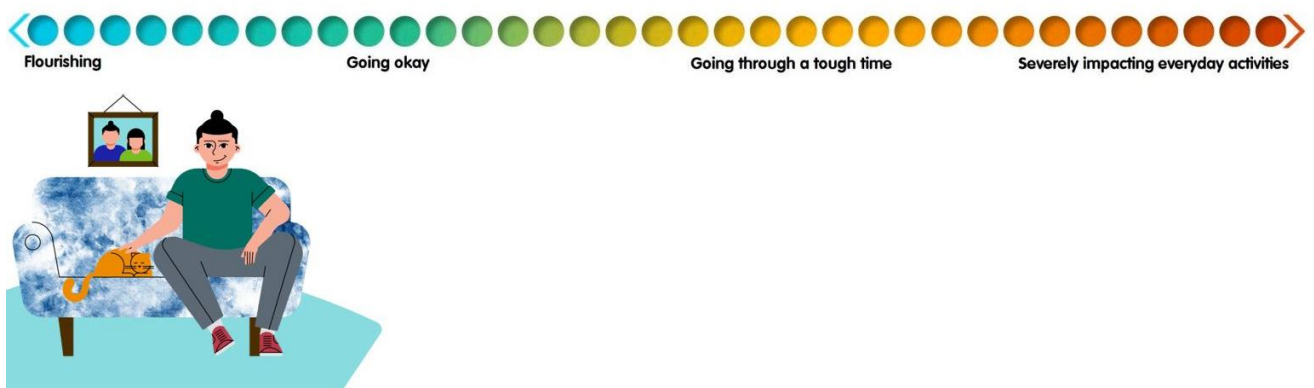
- [Lifeline](#): 13 11 14 - available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for crisis support
Lifeline Text: 0477 13 11 14 - available from 12pm to midnight (AEST)
[Lifeline Chat](#): available 7pm to midnight (AEST)
- [1800RESPECT](#) 1800 737 732. National sexual assault, domestic family violence counselling service – available by phone or online chat, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- [Beyond Blue](#): 1300 22 4636 - available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- [Beyond Blue](#): webchat is available 3pm – 12am (AEST), 7 days a week
- [eSafety Commissioner](#) Australia - <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>
- [MensLine Australia](#): 1300 78 99 78 – available by phone, online chat or video chat, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- [Butterfly](#): 1800 33 4673 - available 8am – midnight, 7 days a week via phone, online chat, email
- [QLife](#): 1800 184 527 - available 3pm – midnight, 7 days a week
- Police and Ambulance: 000
- [National Relay Service](#): 1300 555 727, chat call and captions call options available
- [National Translation and Interpreter Service](#)



what is mental health?

Mental health is defined as “a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”² So rather than it being about ‘what’s the problem?’ it’s really about ‘what’s going well?’

the mental health continuum



Mental health isn’t a fixed state. Mental health can be thought of as sitting on continuum that we all move along, all the time, depending on how things are going for us in our lives.

Most young people sit at the *Flourishing* end of the mental health continuum, most of the time. However, you may have noticed during COVID-19, some young people showed changes in their relationships, their behaviour and learning that significantly impacted their daily activities, and this might suggest they may be in, or are moving towards, the far-right side of the continuum.

The [mental health continuum](#) demonstrates a stepped care approach to supporting young people. Having productive conversations with young people as they move along the continuum, such as how they can maintain their mental wellness, rather than wait until it impacts on their functioning, can be an example of this.

So, what the continuum looks like in real life, for a young person during COVID-19 and what conversations can be helpful?

[2] World Health Organization (2005)

starting a conversation

the “*NIP it in the bud!*” guide to support your young person

NOTICE

You might notice changes in a young person, for example:

- A noticeable change in how they are feeling and thinking
- Feelings like anger, sadness, fear, not caring about anything, risk taking
- You might see changes in the way your child is behaving or acting
- Not enjoying things anymore
- Changes in eating or sleeping
- Being easily irritated or having problems with friends and family
- Finding they can't focus on things or maintain attention
- Feeling down or that there is no hope or point to life
- Having trouble concentrating or remembering things
- Turning to alcohol or drugs to cope with feelings
- Having negative thoughts or distressing thoughts
- Feeling unusually stressed or worried
- Changes socially like withdrawal, being secretive, acting out of character

INQUIRE

There's no perfect way to start a conversation about mental health – so it's ok if you're finding it hard.

It can help to do some research first and find a time and place where everyone involved is feeling safe to talk about it.

When asking, it can help to be specific about the things you've noticed. And remember, you're asking to understand.

Understanding your young person's experience can leave you in a better place to respond in a way that helps.

Some ways to try having this conversation might be:

- *Hey, I've noticed you seem to have a lot on your mind at the moment. I'd like to hear how it's been for you.*
- *I've noticed that sleep has been harder for you lately. Have you got some ideas about why that might be?*
- *I haven't seen any of your friends recently. How have things been going?*
- *What can I do to be help?*

PROVIDE

It's about providing what you think your young person might need at that time. This will include support, listening, and empathy. Responding in a way that shows you're really listening can make a big impact.

Here are some statements that might help:

- *"I can hear this is really tough for you"*
- *"It sounds like it's been impacting lots of areas of your life"*
- *"Thank you for sharing with me, I care about how you feel and what you're going through."*

Taking the time to try to understand, can show the young person you're a safe place to go to for support and might mean they end up sharing more. In trying to find the best way to offer some support, it can help to share the decisions with the young person.

Some statements that might help include:

- *"I'd like to find a way that I can be helpful for you. Would that be ok for you?"*
- *"It sounds like home is a bit stressful now. Would you like to have a go with me at figuring out some ways to take some of that stress away?"*
- *"I'm not feeling very confident about the best way to help at the moment. Would it be ok if we called a service to help us figure out the best way forward?"*

If you have immediate concerns, take them to your local Emergency department or phone 000 and stay with them.

headspace vocational programs

how does headspace help young people in work and study?

The headspace Work and Study Program supports 15 – 25 year-olds to plan their career, find employment and work towards further education. The program works with young people online through webchat, video, email, or phone, so we know how to connect with young people. It is free and young people don't have to be on Centrelink payments to be eligible.

Each young person receives tailored, confidential and youth-friendly support that is highly accessible. headspace can also assist a young person if mental health issues are getting in the way of work or study.

headspace Work and Study can assist young people with the following:

- job search skills and job applications
- resume and cover letter preparation
- career planning
- study and enrolment support
- support transitioning from school to work or further study
- navigating Centrelink or other government support options
- balancing mental health and wellbeing with work or study

Learn more about the Work and Study Program at www.headspace.org.au/workandstudy.



free online support, wherever and whenever you need it

There are lots of things for your young person to think about like school, study, work, relationships, physical and mental health. Whatever it is they're facing, headspace is here to help.

Develop self-help skills

There are interactive exercises that allow your young person to manage their own mental health. These bite-sized activities help them reflect on their own needs, build their everyday skills and set goals to improve their mental health.

Join the community

Our safe and supportive online community provides a great way to connect with others and share resources that are helpful.

Our regular group chats bring young people together and explore topics that are important to the community. Our peer-led chats are held every week, where young people can share tips and experiences with others. There are also chats run by our professional clinicians who explore topics and provide resources, strategies and advice to help build their skills.

Chat privately with professionals

Young people can chat privately with our professional counsellors over the phone or webchat, seven days a week between 9am – 1am (AEST). It's a safe space if they want some advice, unsure of what help they need or maybe just want to talk things through.

Get support with work and study

Young people can get support with their work and study goals by speaking with our work and study specialists via webchat, video chat, email or phone and it's free. We can help young people with everything from writing resumes and job applications through to planning course options, practicing interviews and managing their mental health with their work and study. Visit headspace.org.au/workandstudy to register or call 1800 810 794.

Resources and tips

There are heaps of resources available which can be a great starting place to gather information that's relevant to them.



There are many ways young people can get the support they need just from visiting the headspace website and creating an account.

seven tips for a healthy headspace

There are small steps that you and your family can take to support your family's mental health.

1. Get into life

Set a goal or task that you want to achieve for the day - it can be something small like making your bed, going for a walk or calling a friend. Try some new hobbies and keep doing the things you love as best you can like reading, drawing or exercising.



2. Learn skills for a tough time

It might be helpful to learn new coping skills to maintain and improve wellbeing. Try journaling thoughts and feelings, practise some breathing exercises, explore mental health apps or websites, create a new routine, or take a digital detox.

3. Create connections

When we can't physically connect with friends and loved ones, there are so many other ways to stay connected. Try connecting by video chat or phone with friends and family. Online video and board games can also be used to connect with others.



4. Eat well

Minimise unhealthy snacks. It's good to develop coping strategies that are not related to food. Be sure to nourish your body with things like: fruits and veggies, foods high in fibre, fermented foods like unsweetened yoghurt, olive oil, and fish.

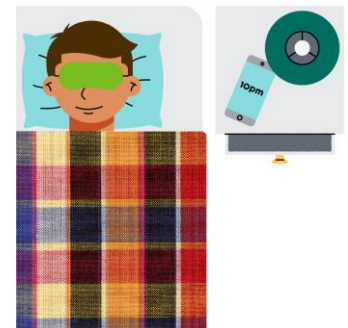
5. Stay active

Try doing an online fitness program or a yoga class, challenge your friends to a push-up challenge, get outside for fresh air or have a living room dance party – all great free ways to keep up physical and mental health.



6. Get enough sleep

Try to stick with a sleep routine. Go to bed and wake up at the same time as much as possible and aim for at least 8 hours of sleep a night. Switch off from electronics 30-60 mins before bed.



7. Cut back on alcohol and other drugs

Be mindful of your use of alcohol and other drugs. Try a short break – start with a few days and then try a week, consider alternatives like herbal tea, water or a smoothie, and find new activities to keep you engaged.



tips to get back into life during COVID-19

Life has changed for all of us due to COVID-19 restrictions. Some people have enjoyed these changes, others have found it challenging and many of us will have experienced a mixture of these things.

You might have had to transition to online school or study without much warning. You might have had less time to talk to friends, or had to change the way you spend time together. You might have had your work hours reduced or cut altogether, adding huge financial pressure on rent or bills. Spending more time at home may have put additional pressure on already strained family or household relationships, making it challenging for you to find space to look after your wellbeing.



Common responses

As a result of COVID-19 challenges you might find yourself:

- struggling to find motivation
- finding it hard to keep a routine
- not keeping up with day to day chores
- being less interested in things you usually enjoy
- sleeping a lot more or less
- increasing the use of alcohol and other drugs
- struggling to exercise
- feeling worried about the future.



Our 7 tips for a healthy headspace can help you build new ways of coping during these unusual times

So what can you do?

Prepare yourself by thinking about how your life has changed and what you want your life to look like.

You might find that some things are easier to return to than others. This will be different for everyone, and that's OK.

It can be tricky to know where to begin.

Here are a few ideas to help you get started:

- think about the fun things you want to do once restrictions ease
- write out a plan to help motivate yourself. Sometimes detail can help motivate you even if you don't quite feel like it at the time
- ask your family and friends to get involved
- take it slow. Gradually try new things. You don't need to do everything straight away
- start with something that seems easier, before moving to difficult things
- if you're worried about catching the virus remember to practice hand hygiene and physical distancing
- think about what you might need to do if things don't go well, and write down a few ideas of what might help you get back on track
- keep in mind that things may change and restrictions could start again

The easing of restrictions might be an exciting, fun, and enjoyable time for some. For others, it might be scary, uncertain or overwhelming. It's normal to feel anything and everything, so remember to be kind to yourself.

Preparing for change

Many people are starting to think about how life will change when restrictions ease. While some people are looking forward to this, it doesn't mean the next few weeks or months will be smooth sailing for everyone.

You might be:

- thinking that returning to your life before COVID-19 seems like a huge task
- finding things that used to be easy becoming difficult, worrying or scary
- finding it hard to get going
- concerned you might catch the virus
- realising you want to make changes to the way you live your life
- wondering if your friendships will be the same
- thinking about how to re-establish intimate relationships
- worrying about your alcohol and other drugs use.

Where do I go for help?

If you need support – start by reaching out to a trusted friend, family member, teacher or Elder to share what you are going through.

headspace

headspace: visit headspace.org.au to find your nearest centre or call eheadspace on 1800 650 890

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

National 24/7 crisis services

If you are in an emergency situation or need immediate assistance, contact mental health services or emergency services on 000.

- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au
- **Suicide Call Back Service:** 1300 659 467 or suicidecallbackservice.org.au
- **Beyond Blue:** 1300 224 636 or beyondblue.org.au

Additional youth services

- **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au
- **ReachOut:** reachout.com