

Wellbeing activities and conversation starters for parents of secondary school-aged children



There are a range of activities that will help build and maintain your child's wellbeing. Most of them are short and require very few materials.

The activities cover six key elements that are important to wellbeing. There are also activities that focus on positive thinking and gratitude as well as breathing exercises that promote calm.

These activities are based on the optional Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships teaching and learning materials.

Six key elements that are important to wellbeing



Understanding emotions

Understanding emotions helps your child to understand themselves and other people.

We can do this by focusing on recognising, expressing and managing emotions.

Understanding emotions is key to building empathy and self-awareness.



Personal strengths

Help to build your child's ability to recognise and understand positive qualities in themselves and others.

This will help to build your child's self-confidence and the capacity to face and manage challenges.



Positive coping

Provide opportunities for your child to discuss and learn different types of coping strategies.

This will increase your child's ability to manage stress, control impulses and overcome obstacles.



Problem solving

Your child can develop their critical and creative thinking skills to explore different types of problems.

This can build your child's ability to make responsible decisions that consider the likely consequences of different ways of solving problems.



Stress management

Learn about different calming strategies to deal with stress.

This can help your child to cope with challenges they are facing now and in the future.



Help seeking

In these challenging times, it is important to normalise asking for help.

Your child will learn to recognise situations in which to seek help, identify trusted people in their lives to ask for help and practice asking for and providing help.





For students in Years 7 and 8



Understanding emotions

Goal: Understand our emotions during stressful times.

Activity: With your child, discuss what emotions we feel when we are stressed. How does stress make our bodies, mind and heart feel? How can we handle feelings of being angry or sad?

Goal: Understand what empathy looks like in action.

Activity: With your child, discuss how do you know when someone is feeling sad or happy? How can we express concern when someone feels sad?



Personal strengths

Goal: Recognise our personal strengths.

Activity: With your child, talk about someone who you've met that you admire. List three positive qualities or strengths you admire about this person. What do these mean to you?

Goal: Find your top strengths.

Activity: With your child, take turns to discuss what you think each other's top 3 strengths are.

How can you use these strengths at home?



Positive coping

Goal: Practice positive self-talk.

Activity: Positive self-talk is when we say positive things to ourselves to help us deal with challenges. Set your child a positive self-talk challenge. Every time someone says or thinks "I can't do that" replace it with "how could this be done?"

Goal: Use our strengths to overcome challenges.

Activity: As a family, talk about an instance when you had to overcome a challenge when you were young. What were you scared of or worried about? What qualities or strengths did you have to draw on? What did you do/say to overcome the challenge?

For students in Years 7 and 8 continued



Problem solving

Goal: Come up with various ways to solve a problem.

Activity: Talk to your child about the way you solved a problem or issue you faced when you were at school.

Goal: Solve problems in small steps.

Activity: Implement the **SODAS** method to solve a problem with your child.

What is the **Situation**, **Options** to solve the issue, **Disadvantages & Advantages** (SODAS) to those options and, choose a **Solution!** Try it on this scenario: *You need to submit your assignment, but the internet is not working.*



Stress management

Goal: Talk about the things that make us feel stressed.

Activity: Talk to your child about what made you feel stressed when you were growing up. What were some positive ways you managed stress when you were young? What are some things that concern them or cause them stress?

Goal: Try different ways to manage stress.

Activity: With your child, come up with positive things your family can do together this week to help you relax and find joy!



Help seeking

Goal: Support each other.

Activity: With your child, draw a hand and on each finger write something that you will do to help or support each other.

Goal: Work together on a meaningful project.

Activity: Ask your child to come up with a home project they would like to work on. It could be fixing something, learning something new, doing something creative. Get some ideas from <https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/Pages/funathome>. Help them to work through the Who, What, Why, When, How. Ask: *How can I help you?*

Additional activities



Goal: Practice positive thinking.

Activity: Each day for the next week, spend 10-15 minutes with your child getting them to think about three things that went well during the day. Get them to write down the three things and then write down what they did that made them happen.

These can be simple things like someone laughed a joke or more major events.

This can become a weekly journal for your child.



Goal: Practice gratitude.

Activity: Encourage your child to create a family gratitude tree or wall.

Collect colourful pieces of paper, ribbons and string.

Cut the paper into postcard-size pieces. On each piece of paper, write down something to be grateful about. Tie them to the tree in your yard, a sturdy house plant or stick them up on a wall in the family room/kitchen.



Goal: Calm the mind and relax the body.

Activity: With your child, sit in a comfortable position. Ask your child to close their eyes and relax.

Ask your child to poke out their tongue and roll the sides of their tongue up so it forms a tube.

Ask your child to take long, deep breathes in and out through their rolled tongue. Repeat this cycle five to fifteen times.



For students in Years 9 and 10



Understanding emotions

Goal: Understand complex emotions.

Activity: With your child, take turns listing to what emotions you might feel and give an intensity rating out of 10 for the following scenarios:

- You receive an unpleasant text message from an unknown number
- A friend thanks you for supporting them through a tough time
- You have been the successful applicant for a job you applied for.

Goal: Understand complex emotions.

Activity: Share with your child what you found hard or easy to talk to your parents or family about growing up.

Talk about what made you feel scared or angry when you were a child. What cheered you up?



Personal strengths

Goal: Value character strengths.

Activity: With your child, discuss what character strengths you admire in others.

Goal: Finding your top strengths.

Activity: With your child, take turns to discuss what you think each other's top 3 strengths are.

How can you use these strengths at home?



Positive coping

Goal: Explore the benefits of positive self-talk.

Activity: With your child, discuss the definitions of "optimism" and "pessimism". Research shows that optimistic thinkers are better at coping with stress, even when things are tough.

Start a conversation with your child using the following prompts:

- What does your self-talk sound like?
- When has positive self-talk kept you motivated to keep trying at something that was challenging?
- How does positive self-talk make you feel?

Goal: Reflect on positive coping skills.

Activity: Take it in turns with your child to discuss what strategies you use when you have had a challenging day. What works best? Do these include organisational skills, finding distractions, being active, connecting with others and being mindful?

Your child may like to consider asking older family members the same questions too – do any of their responses seem like it may be helpful for your child?

For students in Years 9 and 10 continued



Problem solving

Goal: Solve a problem in six steps.

Activity: Ask your child to think of an issue that is making them feel worried at the moment, then go through each step:

1. Name the challenge
2. Brainstorm ideas (as many as you can)
3. Evaluate your ideas (could it work? Pros/cons. Give each idea a score out of 10)
4. Choose one idea
5. Think through what it will look like, sound like, and feel like to take this action.
6. Try it – assess it, did it work?

Goal: Practice assertiveness and making 'I' statements.

Activity: With your child, discuss the definitions of "aggressive", "assertive" and "submissive". You can explore these using body language, tones and words.

Practice being assertive about a scenario at home, using the model:

- When (state the action)
- I feel (name the emotion/s)
- So (make a request).



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Help seeking

Goal: Identify people we can go to for help and people we can help.

Activity: Make a family list of people you can contact for help - don't forget to include services like 000, eheadspace and Parentline and when you might use them or others.

Next to that list make a list of the ways you can help others.

Keep it displayed as a visual reminder. Add to it when you think of new ideas.

Goal: Recognise the people who help you.

Activity: Make a challenge as a family to thank a different person each day for something they have done to help you. It could be today, last week or a long time ago that they helped you with something big or little. Report back to each other who and why you thanked that person today.

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Goal: Soothe the mind and reduce anxiety.

Activity: With you child, sit in a comfortable position. Ask your child to close their eyes and relax.

Ask your child to gently close their mouth and place their index or middle fingers in their ears, ask your child to breath in slowly and then breath out slowly and make a deep humming sound.

Repeat this cycle five to fifteen times.



Challenge, opportunity and personal strengths

Goal: Identify strengths that are key to managing study.

Activity: With your child, take turns to discuss what you think each other's top 3 strengths are.

How can your child's top 3 strengths support their study?

How can you use your top 3 strengths to support your child's study this year?

Goal: Use strengths to reach a goal.

Activity: With your child, discuss what kind of support they would like from you to help them to stick to their study plan while learning from home.



Goal setting and time management

Goal: Set goals and objectives.

Activity: Encourage your child to set two SMART goals – one related to study and one related to self-care/wellbeing, using the information below:

- **Specific:** What will you do?
- **Measurable:** How will you know you have done it? How can it be seen, noticed or heard?
- **Achievable:** Can it be done in the timeframe? Do you need to change the amount or frequency?
- **Realistic:** Does it fit in with everything else?
- **Timely:** Is this happening at the right time? When will you do this?

Goal: Manage your time.

Activity: With your child, talk about your experiences when you have faced pressure, which could be at work, home or back when you were at school. Use this as the basis for a discussion about how you can help them manage their commitments while learning from home.



Positive self-talk

Goal: Making success scripts.

Activity: Encourage your child to develop a script for success for an upcoming homework task or exam, using the following:

- **I am** (describe some of your strengths)
- **I can** (describe a piece of evidence that shows how you have handled performance pressure before)
- **I will** (say what you will actually do).

Goal: Use positive self-talk in problem solving.

Activity: Encourage your child to talk with you about the ways they motivate themselves when they get stuck, lose confidence, or face a big challenge by asking the following questions:

- What usually works for you when you are under this kind of pressure?
- You've handled tough times before – what gets you through at other times? Can you use any of those tactics here?
- Is there anything that you need right now?
- What do you think would be the best thing for you to do to help calm yourself down?



For students in Years 11 and 12 continued



Stress management

Goal: Reflect on coping strategies.

Activity: With your child, discuss how you cope with stress and encourage them to think about if these strategies are proactive or reactive.

- **Proactive:** making a detailed plan showing the steps and timeline for a task, then begin at step 1
- **Reactive:** texting a friend to complain about an essay.

Discuss if these strategies are likely to be helpful or cause problems.

Goal: Learn relaxation techniques.

Activity: With your child, to explore the range of mindfulness and meditation material on the Smiling Mind website www.smilingmind.com.au and mobile app.



Help seeking

Goal: Search online for help.

Activity: With your child, visit each of the websites below and for each website, discuss who the target audience is and what you find most useful.

- **headspace:** <http://www.headspace.org.au/>
- **Youth beyondblue:** <http://www.youthbeyondblue.com/>
- **Bully Stoppers** (student resources): <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/students.aspx>
- **ReachOut:** <http://au.reachout.com/>
- **Kids Helpline:** <http://www.kidshelpline.com.au/>
- **YSAS:** <http://www.ysas.org.au/>



Additional activity

Goal: Increase energy and improve concentration.

Activity: With your child, sit in a comfortable position. Have them close their eyes, breathe deeply and relax.

Ask your child to breathe out completely, then block their left nostril with their left thumb and breath in deeply through the right nostril, then breathe out deeply through the right nostril.

Repeat for one to three minutes.