Supporting your young person during
the holidays

Holidays can take students away from
friends and their usual school supports.

Changes to routine can cause some young people to feel stressed,
isolated and alone. Parent support is very important at this time.

Below is some information to help you support young people to stay in a
healthy headspace in school holidays. There is also some information that
may help you to identify when your young person might need some extra
support and where to go for help.

There are a number of ways
you can support your young person’s mental health and
wellbeing in the holidays:

1. Encourage them
to stay connected

Social relationships are important
to your young person’s general wellbeing.
It is okay if they take time out for
themselves at times, but encourage them
to keep in contact with friends over the
holidays. Friends can provide both play
and support, and spending time with
friends is also important for keeping
and building on existing friendships.
If your young person is not feeling up
to going out, even a phone call, email,
text message or Facebook message
can help them to feel connected to
friends and family.

2. Encourage them
to stay involved

Encourage involvement with volunteer
work, hobbies, clubs or committees,
or sports – these can help young people
feel connected to their wider community.
Participate with them when you can.

Involve them in decisions and give
them responsibility at home (e.g.
deciding what to eat for dinner and
helping to prepare it).

3. Encourage
physical activity

Physical activity is important for
everyone’s health and wellbeing. If your
young person is feeling down or finding
things are difficult, physical activity may
be the last thing they feel like doing. But
even small activities, like walking around
the block, can help relieve stress and
frustration, provide a good distraction
from worrying thoughts, improve
concentration and improve mood.

If your young person is struggling to get
active, find a physical activity that you
both enjoy and can do together (e.g.
swimming, playing sports with friends or
cycling) and make a plan to do it regularly.

4. Encourage
a regular routine

Getting a good night’s sleep helps
young people to feel energised, focused
and motivated.

Adolescence is a time when a number
of changes to the “body clock” impact
on sleeping patterns and young people
are more likely to have problems with
sleep. Developing a sleeping routine can
help. Encourage your young person to

wake up around the same time each
day, get out of bed when they wake up,
and go to bed around the same time
each night.

Avoiding caffeine after lunchtime, having
a quiet, dark and uncluttered bedroom
and shutting down electronic devices
before bed can also help them to get
a good night’s sleep.

5. Encourage healthy
eating habits

Eating well doesn’t only reduce the risk
of physical health problems, like heart
disease and diabetes, but it can also help
with sleeping patterns, energy levels,
mood, and general health and wellbeing.

A good balanced diet with less junk food/
lots of sugars and more vegies, fruit,
whole grains and plenty of water will
ensure your young person has all of the
vitamins and minerals to help their body
and brain function well.

6. Encourage play!

Devoting time to just having fun can help
to recharge your young person’s battery,
revitalise their social networks and reduce
stress and anxiety.
Changes in activity include:
- Not enjoying or not wanting to be involved in things they would normally enjoy
- Being involved in risky behaviour they would normally avoid
- Unusual sleeping or eating habits

Changes in thinking include:
- Having a lot of negative thoughts
- Expressing distorted thoughts about themselves and the world (e.g. everything seeming bad and pointless).

If you believe that your young person is at risk of harm you should seek professional support from your GP, mental health service or emergency department.

Signs that may suggest that your young person is struggling
It is normal for young people to have ups and downs. However, changes in mood, levels of participation, and thinking patterns which persist for more than a couple of weeks may indicate that your young person needs extra support.

Changes in mood include:
- Being irritable or angry with friends or family for no apparent reason
- Feeling tense, restless, stressed or worried
- Crying for no apparent reason, feeling sad or down for long periods of time

Support service options
- headspace centres provide support, information and advice to young people aged 12 to 25 – headspace.org.au
- eheadspace provides online counselling and telephone support to young people aged 12 to 25 – eheadspace.org.au 1800 650 890
- Kids Helpline is a 24-hour telephone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 – kidshelpline.com.au 1800 55 1800
- Lifeline is a 24-hour telephone counselling service – lifeline.org.au 13 11 14
- Parentline 1300 301 300
- ReachOut.com for information about well-being.

**Tips to help you support your young person**

1. **Recognise** their distress or concerning behaviour
2. **Ask** them about it (e.g. “I’ve noticed you seem to be sad a lot at the moment.”)
3. **Acknowledge** their feelings (e.g. “That seems like a really hard place to be in/I can understand why you are upset about that.”)
4. **Get appropriate support** and encourage healthy coping strategies (e.g. “Do you need some help to handle this?”)
5. **Check in** a short time afterwards to see how they are going

For more information on suicide or support and assistance visit headspace.org.au/schoolsupport or headspace.org.au

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