

# youthwise



Autumn 2024

In this issue

## Carlton Football Club

FEATURED

A Story of  
Drug Use and  
Coming Out  
The Other Side

FEATURED

**RAMS**

FEATURED

**ANTaR Victoria**

Also in this issue

The Pushup Challenge

ISSN 2209-9565

# Money lessons for life

Talk Money with Ecstra Foundation is designed to help Australian school students learn money lessons for life, to be confident talking about money and to make informed financial decisions. The program is provided at no cost to schools, enabling more students to access financial education at key life stages.

Talk Money workshops are delivered in person or virtually by trained facilitators, providing an engaging and interactive learning experience.

## Program structure

Talk Money offers two facilitator led workshops for Year 5-10 students and teacher resources to reinforce learning and key concepts between workshops.

Talk Money workshops and resources are evidence based and aligned to the Australian Curriculum and the National Consumer and Financial Literacy Framework.



## Modules

### Talking about money

Year 5 and 6 students

This module examines how people think, feel and act with money, including how to have constructive conversations about money with family and friends.

Students learn how to save, manage, and spend money, identify needs versus wants, and discuss the digitisation of money and different payment options.

### Spending and saving money

Year 7 and 8 students

This module explores spending and saving choices, how decisions now can affect future finances and strategies to achieve financial goals.

Students learn about influences on spending and how everyday choices can impact their saving and spending. They explore the importance of setting a savings goal and having a plan to achieve their goals.

### Making money work

Year 9 and 10 students

This module explores ways to make money and how to navigate the workplace including understanding rights at work.

Students learn practical skills including how to have constructive conversations in the workplace, read payslips, and managing tax and superannuation in their first jobs.

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## Register now

Learn more and register your school at [talkmoney.org.au/register](https://talkmoney.org.au/register)





# A letter from the Editor

In all the years I have been editor of Youthwise, not many submitted editorials prick my eyes with tears. And of course, some resonate with me more. Editorials on drugs are always a hard read for me, as it is not only a subject that I know a lot about, but one which I am very passionate about. The horrifying illness that is drug addiction affects many families-my family is no exception.

The editorial enclosed written by Matt Bell from ANTAR Victoria evokes similar emotions in me. I find it thought provoking, sad and unacceptable.

I have never understood racism and probably never will. During the Yes/No referendum to say that I was shocked by some of the opinions given to me on the aforementioned would be an understatement.

I was brought up by parents who had a diverse group of friends. I lived overseas in many countries for twenty years, and I also had a diverse group of friends-friends of different cultures and countries. I learned much from them,

And I agree with Matt's statement "All sorts of different cultures and identities are targets for racism"

As a mother of a child who was born and brought up overseas and brought back to Australia at eight or nine, and who thus

encountered some form of racism at that time, being Eurasian, I understand only too well what damage this incurs.

Since that time, Australia has become much more multi-cultural-we should be proud of our cultural diversity and embrace it.

So I can understand a just a LITTLE what challenges our First Nation children face and endure.

The definition of racism is as follows:

Prejudice, discrimination or antagonism by an individual, community or institution against a person or people on the basis of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.

It is the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities or qualities, especially, that distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another.

A study of over 800 Australian secondary schools found that racism has HUGE mental health impacts on those who experience it.

Racism is unacceptable in any shape or form. Australia is now a very culturally diverse country-a lot of us were born overseas or had a parent who was. When racial tensions develop, they just do not affect one or two of us, they affect us all-as neighbours, workmates, friends,

fellow classmates etc.

One's life should not be defined by what colour or ethnicity one is. That old adage "Treat people as how you would like to be treated oneself" is just so apt.

These days, especially, teenage years are hard enough to navigate-add the racism element to that, I would imagine, just makes it all so much harder.

We live on First Nations land. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have my respect and admiration.

Every child, teenager and adult has the right to be respected, valued and lifted up. As parents, it is our duty to teach our children this.

What a better world it would be if we took racism out of the equation.

As always, thank you to ALL our valued contributors. Life is a journey of learning, and I continue to learn from all of you-I hope our children and or readers do so, also!

Good Mental Health to all!

Leigh Mary Leonard  
Editor  
Youthwise

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# In Their Shoes

*Please note: This article can be triggering. It features themes of racism toward Aboriginal / Torres Strait peoples and asks the reader to imagine "What if this happened to me?". If your mental health is not great today, perhaps come back to this article another time.*

*If you are an Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander person, this exercise might be too close to home and perhaps is not for you.*

There is a lot of attention in the media about poor behaviour from Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people, especially young people. We hear about high crime rates in places like Alice Springs, the world record rates of youth incarceration in the Northern Territory, terrible overcrowding in youth detention centres in Queensland and high self-harm rates. We can see in the key social indicators that many Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people, including young people, have poor mental health, have had contact with the criminal justice system, and leave school early.

So, why is this? Are Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people just naturally bad people? Do Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people just have poorer mental health than the rest of Australia because they are Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander? Do Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander young people not want to learn? Do Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people not want to be positive members of society? The answer is; of course not. In fact, it's quite the opposite. Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people are strong, resilient, and courageous. However, they deal with so much negativity and that negativity has an impact.

This article will help you to understand one factor that creates poor mental health, education and justice outcomes for Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people. This is a complicated topic, and for simplicity I

have left out many other factors such as intergenerational trauma that plays into these concerns.

Imagine that you are an Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander person:

Imagine in preschool you heard Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people called names based on their cultural identity. That, when the grown-ups thought you weren't listening, but you were, they spoke about Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people using derogatory terms.

Imagine that as you entered primary school kids started to call you those names. You started to hear phrases like "They would be ok if they acted more like white people", or "You can't expect too much from them", or "They act like victims, always playing the race card, they should just get over it, stop whinging and fit in".

Imagine that as you entered upper primary and high school you noticed all the negative media about how lazy and violent Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people were. That they were all whingers that didn't want to work and just lived on welfare. When you went into a shop and the security or shop staff followed you to make sure you didn't steal anything.

Imagine you got bullied at school because of your identity. Imagine on social media all you saw was more of the same negative stereotypes, racist jokes and hurtful ignorant comments.

Imagine that the whole country had a vote on whether Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander voices should have a say about issues that affect them. And most of the country said no.

Imagine that your people, including respected Elders, are refused services in Taxi's.

Now, imagine. you are 15 years old and have experienced all the above: How might you

feel? Take 30 seconds to close your eyes and imagine how you might feel.

Do you feel angry? Do you feel sad or depressed? Do you feel you are worthless? Do you feel you don't belong and nobody wants you around? Do you feel ashamed?

Now, imagine that you feel all or some of the above what behaviours might this lead to? Close your eyes and take 30 seconds to think about what types of behaviours you might display.

Would you get into fights or become violent? Would you use drugs or alcohol? Would you leave school? Would you try to hurt yourself? Would you steal cars or rob houses? Would you feel unmotivated to contribute to society in a positive way?

For many Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people, this is what happens.

Before we go any further, in the words of Taylor Swift, shake it off. If you are feeling heavy, upset or distressed by the exercise you have just done, take a minute to shake it off. Get up, move around, shake your arms, shake your legs. Talk to a trusted friend or supportive adult if you need to. Imagine that you are a dog soaked in water and shake it all off you.

If what you have just experienced is not your experience, then you are lucky. You have the privilege of shaking it off, being able to move on. Hopefully with a greater sense of empathy for what Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander peoples experience. For many Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people they don't have the luxury. This is their lived experience that sits with them every day, everywhere they go, in every social interaction they have. This is one reason why Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander only spaces are so important. It's one of the few spaces where they know that the people they are with



Professor Uncle Richard Frankland, Co- Chair ANTAr Victoria. Tomorrow Australia Launch and ANTAr Victoria 25th Anniversary, Richmond Town Hall, 10 July 2022

"get it" and understand what it's like. It's one reason why it's important that we all work to create spaces that are culturally affirming, respectful and safe for Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people.

We can see Indigenous peoples all over the world who have been colonised face the same challenges as Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people do in this area. It is not unique to Australia or Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is common for all colonised people who still experience racism, cultural abuse and the negative impact of such practices as Stolen Children, massacres and land theft.

So, what can we do about all this? The good news is that the answer is lots.

Firstly, don't do or say racist or culturally disrespectful things yourself. This can be easier said than done because you may have picked up some racist ideas through your family, community or online. Make a habit of questioning your own attitudes, beliefs and assumptions to check them for hidden racist views. Remember, you are not a racist if you have some of these racist views, most of us have them buried somewhere inside us. You are a legend for identifying them and challenging

yourself.

Secondly, speak up if you hear or see racist or culturally disrespectful comments or behaviour. This can be scary and takes courage, but any Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander person who you support will feel valued and appreciate it.

Thirdly, work to create positive spaces where Aboriginal / Torres Strait people and culture are valued and respected. This will act as an important counter narrative to the negative messaging and experiences that we explored above. The spaces you create might just make all the difference in someone's life.

In this article I have tried to create an exercise that builds empathy towards Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people. I hope now that you have a little experience of standing in their shoes you have gained a little sense of what it can be like for Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander peoples and an understanding that if you experienced what they did, you might respond in a similar way.

This experience of racism is not limited to Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander peoples. All sorts of different cultures and identities are targets for racism in this country. Finally,



'Walk for Yes,' Melbourne, 17 September 2023



it is a testament to the resilience, courage, cultural pride and cultural strength of so many Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander people that they can rise above the experiences that I outlined above, even to use those experiences, to become positive, successful, proud and strong members of their communities and of our country. They have my respect and admiration, because I am not sure I would have done so well if I was in their shoes.

Matt Bell is a member of ANTAr Victoria, is from European Heritage, and has worked alongside Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander peoples for over 20 years in advocacy and support roles.

Matt Bell  
ANTAr Victoria





## Youth Empowerment through Entrepreneurship: Finding Purpose and Resilience

In a world filled with endless possibilities, youth are often faced with the daunting task of finding their purpose and navigating the challenges that come with it. For Daniel Mierzanowski, a Year 11 student at Cathwest Innovation College in Sydney, entrepreneurship has given him a sense of purpose and valuable lessons in resilience.

At a time when many of his peers were still figuring out their path, Daniel chose to embark on the journey of entrepreneurship as a way to discover his purpose. "I see myself working on Lory Coffee to prove to myself that I am capable of achieving something that not many people have achieved before," he shares. This sense of purpose has driven him to overcome obstacles and persevere in facing challenges.

Daniel's entrepreneurial journey is inspiring, but he has learned it is not all easy sailing. "Entrepreneurism is not a sprint but a marathon," says Emmanuel Martin, General Manager of BREED Australia. "Entrepreneurism is the great catalyst for prosperity and mental well-being for youth in our society", he adds. "The fact that Daniel launched Lory Coffee in less than two months was remarkable!".

BREED Australia (BREED), a Western Sydney-based charity, has, over the last 30 years, helped youth discover their purpose and build resilience and emotional intelligence while focusing on business incubation.

Since 2022, BREED has partnered with Cathwest Innovation College to empower its students by facilitating various mental health-based workshops. In 2023, BREED ran a six-week Youth Entrepreneur Program, which Daniel completed. Emmanuel "saw something special in Daniel from the beginning. His curiosity and passion for wanting to start a business was evident," he adds.

Judith Smith is the Manager of Entrepreneurial Partnership at Cathwest Innovation College. Her role is to develop pathways for students such as Daniel. According to Judy, "Our collaboration with BREED has provided our students with a deeper understanding of simple strategies to build resilience, understand Emotional Intelligence and achieve their goals.

When Daniel completed the six-week Youth Entrepreneur Program, Judy encouraged Daniel to join BREED's 10-week Intensive Entrepreneur Incubator Program, which helps aspiring and early-stage entrepreneurs take their business ideas to the launch stage while at the same time providing long-term coaching and incubation opportunities.

Daniel was the youngest in a group of eight participants. But through his will, tenacity, and encouragement from his group and mentors, he launched Lory Coffee in late 2023—Lory Coffee ([www.lorycoffee.com](http://www.lorycoffee.com)) is a coffee roaster with an online presence for now, with big goals in the future.

Chris, Daniel's dad, explains, "This is where Cathwest and Breed have helped him. They supported him in creating something tangible from a dream and desire. BREED challenged him to create a product for a local expo. So that's how Lory Coffee was born. Daniel launched a product with an e-commerce website in 6 weeks while finishing year 10!"

One of the most significant challenges Daniel has faced is breaking old bad habits and building new good habits. "I am still struggling to do this now," he admits. However, rather than being discouraged by these challenges, Daniel sees them as opportunities for growth. "I will make sure that I will see this through to the end, even if things might not be going as I imagined them," he asserts.

Entrepreneurship has also taught Daniel the importance of resilience. The road to success is often paved with setbacks and failures, but how one responds to these challenges determines their success. "It's the grind that turns dreams into reality," Chris added. Through his journey with Lory Coffee, Daniel has learned to embrace failure as a stepping stone to success rather than a roadblock.

Moreover, entrepreneurship has helped Daniel develop essential life skills such as communication, problem-solving, and decision-making. By interacting with customers, suppliers, and mentors, he has learned how to communicate his ideas effectively and negotiate deals. He has also honed his problem-solving skills by finding creative solutions to the challenges he faces in running his business.

Chris, Daniel's father who emigrated from Poland, emphasizes the

Daniel with Emmanuel Martin, General Manager at BREED Australia, at a NSW Small Business Month Workshop

[www.breedaustralia.com.au](http://www.breedaustralia.com.au)  
BREED Australia @breedaus

Left: Daniel attending BREED's 10-week Entrepreneur Incubator Program.

Daniel mastering the coffee roasting process

importance of mentorship in Daniel's journey. "Mentors accelerate your dreams," he says. "Daniel has been fortunate to have mentors at BREED Australia, Cathwest Innovation College, and other places who have guided and supported him." Mentorship has played a crucial role in Daniel's development, providing him with valuable insights and advice that have helped him navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship.

According to Chris, Daniel's success is also a result of his willingness to take action. "A dream without action is just a wish, and that's what he had before BREED," Chris recalls. Daniel's decision to take action and pursue his dream of starting Lory Coffee has been instrumental in his success. It has allowed him to turn his passion into a thriving business and given him a sense of purpose and direction.

Despite his busy schedule, Daniel has managed to strike a balance between his business and social life. "Change of school, studies, and starting a business meant that friends were pushed a bit to a side," Chris acknowledges. "We encouraged him to make sure there is balance between his job/business and social life." Daniel has been actively working on maintaining this balance by engaging in social and educational activities at the Mirrabooka Study Centre.

For Daniel, entrepreneurship is about building a successful business and positively impacting the community. "I want Lory Coffee to be more than just a business," he says. "I want it to be a brand people trust and admire." Through his commitment to quality and sustainability, Daniel hopes to create a brand that delivers great coffee and contributes to a better world.

Daniel's story is a testament to the transformative power of entrepreneurship in the lives of young people. By giving them a sense of purpose and teaching them valuable life skills, entrepreneurship can empower youth to overcome challenges, discover their potential, and achieve their dreams. As Daniel continues to grow and expand Lory Coffee, he inspires young people everywhere, showing them that anything is possible with passion, determination, and resilience.

**Daniel has been one of many young people whose entrepreneurial journey BREED has helped over the years. Like many local charities, BREED relies on support from Grants and Corporate Sponsorships. To find out more about helping young people like Daniel, please visit BREED's website ([www.breedaustralia.com.au](http://www.breedaustralia.com.au))**

Daniel with his Early Bird Coffee Blend at Cathwest Innovation College

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# BODY BLOOM.

**BODY BLOOM DEFINED:**

Body Bloom is a progressive and early intervention secondary school program aimed at providing young women with the necessary motivational tools to foster confidence, self-empowerment, and appreciation for their bodies, to sustain both physical and mental well-being. It integrates evidence-based nutrition with principles of positive psychology, challenging self-talk and reshaping individual narratives concerning body image.

**THE CREATORS OF BODY BLOOM:**

Laura Hamilton and Liv Crumpton are the masterminds behind Body Bloom. Not only are they the founders, but they also serve as dedicated facilitators driven by a professional and personal commitment to enhancing the mental health of young women. Leveraging their extensive professional backgrounds and personal experiences, they’ve developed a targeted program focusing on two pivotal aspects: body image and self-appreciation.

Laura Hamilton boasts qualifications as a registered PACFA counsellor, amassing 16 years of expertise in addressing youth’s mental health and well-being. Her career spans various roles, including providing mental health services within schools and advocating for overall health promotion.

Olivia Crumpton holds a degree in Clinical Nutrition and is currently pursuing a master’s degree in Women’s Health Medicine. Through her practice, emphasising a ‘No Diet’ approach, she specialises in women’s health, blending scientific rigour with intuitive and mindful eating strategies.

**THE MOTIVATION BEHIND THE PROGRAM:**

The genesis of the program stemmed from the realisation that the idealised notion of a ‘perfect’ body, often perpetuated by media standards, is unattainable and unrealistic. Particularly exacerbated by the post-COVID era marked by increased screen time and social isolation, young women are increasingly vulnerable to negative self-perception and body dissatisfaction, factors that can culminate in eating disorders later in life. According to Mission Australia (2021), body image ranks as the third most significant personal concern among Australians aged 15-19.

Furthermore, the 2023 Butterfly Body Kind Survey reported that “90% of 12–18-year-old said they had some level of body dissatisfaction and 50% of 12-18 year old’s say that “their body image has stopped them from putting their hand up in class, focusing on school work and for some going to school.”

Laura and Liv draw from their own adolescent experiences, recognising how a program like Body Bloom could have transformed their self-perception and confidence during their formative years. They observed a persistent gap in the educational landscape, wherein traditional approaches fail to address evolving challenges effectively.

The program confronts an educational framework that continues to prioritise health solely based on quantitative metrics such as BMI and calorie counts, alongside simplistic food categorisations like ‘unhealthy,’ ‘healthy,’ and ‘sometimes.’ These approaches require modernisation and simplification, necessitating considerations for diverse factors such as muscle and fat distribution, bone density, ethnic backgrounds, and the multifaceted benefits of foods for both nourishment and enjoyment.

**THE IMPACT OF DIET CULTURE ON BODY IMAGE:**

Diet culture exerts a profound influence on body image in two primary ways. Firstly, it propagates the notion that thinness equates to attractiveness, health, and happiness, fostering an unhealthy fixation on weight and appearance. This obsession often leads to disordered eating habits and negative psychological outcomes, perpetuating a damaging cycle. Additionally, diet culture instils fear and shame in individuals who do not conform to narrow beauty standards or the categorisatoin of weight based on a number (BMI), but here’s the thing, you can’t tell how healthy someone is based on appearance.

**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BODY IMAGE:**

The importance of a positive body image cannot be overstated. Studies, such as one conducted by Dove in 2016, reveal staggering statistics, indicating that most Australian women alter or cancel plans due to dissatisfaction with their appearance. Poor body image undermines self-confidence and impairs cognitive function and emotional well-being. Various factors, including familial influences, societal norms, and hormonal changes, converge to shape young women’s perceptions of their bodies, underscoring the need for comprehensive interventions like Body Bloom.

**RESULTS IN FOCUS**

Since Starting the program as a pilot in 2020 with the support of Avalon Youth Hub, funded by the Northern Beaches Council, Body Bloom has visited state, Catholic, and private schools NSW-wide.

100% of the participants responded that the session educated them on the right food to eat.

90% of participants reported that the session changed their awareness towards their self-talk around their body image.

95% said they were able to engage and connect with the facilitators.

97% said that they would recommend the program to a friend.

*For more information, connect with Laura and Liv*  
**connect@bodybloom.com.au**  
**<https://www.bodybloom.com.au/>**

Author | Olivia Crumpton

**BODY BLOOM CO/FOUNDER / CLINICAL NUTRITIONIST / PUBLIC HEALTH FACILITATOR / WOMEN’S HEALTH SPECIALIST**

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*Be Challenged*  
**[www.bechallenged.com.au](http://www.bechallenged.com.au)**





# BODY BLOOM

Body Bloom is a progressive tertiary program providing young women with the motivational tools to establish confidence, self-empowerment, and body appreciation for prevailing physical and mental health.

Body Bloom fuses evidence-based nutrition with a positive psychology framework to challenge negative self-talk and re-write individual narratives around body image.

## THE PROGRAM

We provide a series of engaging and educational presentations to females, or those who identify as female, in a tertiary setting from years 7 to 12.

**PART A** Specialised scientific nutrition for young women, combined with a focus on intuitive eating, we de-emphasize dieting and promote healthy relationships with food and body image.

**PART B** Applying a cognitive behavioural approach, we challenge self-limiting beliefs and stereotypes to harness and celebrate individuality.



"Liv & Laura bring an honest, raw and uplifting vibe. The energy was positive and motivating throughout the presentation. Body Bloom is invaluable and needs to be part of every school program."

TIM HUSSEY, YEAR 8 COORDINATOR MERCY CATHOLIC COLLEGE

[connect@bodybloom.com.au](mailto:connect@bodybloom.com.au) | [bodybloom.com.au](http://bodybloom.com.au)



Over 90% of young females experienced body image concerns.

47% of those were either extremely or very concerned about their body image

\*2021 Mission Australia Youth Survey



**Laura Hamilton** is a qualified registered PACFA counsellor with 16 years experience working with young people's mental health.

**Olivia Crumpton** is a degree-certified Clinical Nutritionist, completing her Master's in Women's Health Medicine.

# BODY BLOOM







# School Refusal & Mental Health: Can you relate to any of this?

*After twenty years of supporting children who can't face school, I've learnt that every situation is unique, yet there are some proven strategies that really work.*



Feeling left out from your peer group really sucks. Sitting in a classroom where you don’t understand any of the information also really sucks. If either of these things have ever happened to you, you’ll know exactly what I mean.

Even though school avoidance has been around for many decades, it has become increasingly prevalent since recent lockdowns, not just in Australia, but around the world.

A school refusing child has a massive impact on the ecosystem. The situation can cause immense stress and confusion for teachers, parents, and of course the young person. The sheer emotional demands of raising and educating a child can be taxing, and trying to understand why a child is saying they can’t face school, when they know that school is supposed to be ‘good’ for them, is a very real challenge.

At such a difficult time, it is easy for adults to focus on the actual behaviours (e.g. not getting out of bed, negative talk etc) rather than looking at the underlying problems that may be driving the behaviour. Many young people find it challenging to express why they are feeling like this, and this state of mind can turn to aggressive behaviours at home. As such, it is important that young people have a safe space where they can express their feelings and be

listened to.

The two main most common mental health issues, among all students, but especially those who avoid school, are anxiety and depression.

The connection between mental health and school avoidance is intricate; there can often be several underlying causes, contributing to anxiety and depression.

Avoidance coping: Young people with mental health issues often employ avoidance as a coping mechanism to deal with the distressing emotions they experience at school. Avoidance - for example, not turning up to appointments, not talking to teachers, not going to school - provides temporary relief from their anxiety or depression, reinforcing the pattern of school refusal.

Negative reinforcement: When students refuse to attend school, they may receive increased attention and support from parents, leading to negative reinforcement. Parents may inadvertently reward the refusal by allowing their child to stay home, which further reinforces the avoidance behaviour.

Peer relationships: Social anxiety or difficulties with peers can make school an emotionally challenging environment for students. Negative interactions with classmates can intensify feelings of anxiety and depression, reinforcing school refusal.

Academic stress: High expectations, challenging

coursework, and academic pressure can contribute to anxiety and depression in students. The fear of academic failure or unrealistic academic demands may lead to school refusal.

Trauma and bullying: Past traumatic experiences, including bullying, harassment, or abuse, can leave lasting emotional scars and trigger school refusal. The associated trauma can lead to severe anxiety and depression when faced with school-related triggers.

Family dynamics: Family factors, such as overprotective parenting or enabling behaviours, can contribute to school refusal.

## NEURODIVERSITY AND SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

Neurodiversity is not, by any stretch, a mental health issue, however especially unaddressed neurodiversity can lead to mental health issues. Hence, absenteeism occurs at higher rates for students with learning needs, including Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia etc. Many of these students feel isolation, experience bullying at school, and often require extra individualised support.

This can often be a precursor to parents de-registering their child from school and electing for them to learn from home due to their dissatisfaction at the schools capacity to meet their child's learning and mental health needs.

School based adaptations are necessary, and due to the increasing prevalence of diagnoses

more needs to be done in this area, so that all young people can have their learning needs met and feel a sense of achievement in a community situation. Until there is deeper learning about neurodiversity on teacher graduate curriculum, advocating for this can be extremely taxing for parents.

## WHY ATTENDING SCHOOL IS IMPORTANT FOR POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

Relationships. Relationships are a critical aspect of what makes us feel valued and happy in ourselves. When relationships in our life are not going well, then everything suffers including our mental health.

If relationships at the school have broken down whether that be with teachers or peers, this is really important to address. As adults, we have to let young people feel comfortable in themselves, listen to what they have to say, and show the will to support them. This is what has a positive impact on that ‘sense of belonging’ young people desire.

In many ways, schools are a smaller version of society. They should be a place where you can thrive, be happy, make mistakes, feel confident and comfortable to be yourself, and dream about your future while living in the present. Positive relationships connect us to these feelings.

## ‘PAT ON THE BACK EMOJI’ TO THE PARENTS

Mindful parenting works. Parents must be

encouraged to hang in there when it comes to school avoidance as this is a confronting and difficult space to be in. Please know there is most certainly a way out.

Parents must also be prepared to change the way they are addressing the situation. The same approach, the same conversations and/or arguments in the morning routine just turn life into ‘Groundhog day’ and simply won't change anything if repeated again and again.

Start by asking questions, talking to people, trying different things, seeking help from those who are familiar with your situation. Importantly, remember to keep the school informed of what you are going through, and don’t make any changes without negotiating them with your child first.

## TWENTY YEARS WORKING WITH SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

There are many educational institutions that just can’t cater for all young people. There are many reasons for this, and although the system is constantly changing and is addressing school avoidance, it hasn't got it right just yet.

Unfortunately, especially when relationships have broken down with the school, finding that one teacher who can assist isn't always easy. The student may have lost trust in the school, and in many situations, the school has grown frustrated with the child. This can feel like gridlock, and may require outside intervention or mediation. The good news though is that

with the right assistance, the problem can often quickly be resolved.

The first step needs to be finding that understanding person at the school, having a third party help you with this if you need, then you can start to address and unpack all the other complicating factors.



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# The Carlton College of Sport:

## A journey to success

By Carlton Media

In 2018, the Carlton Football Club, in partnership with La Trobe University, opened Carlton College of Sport (CCoS), providing an opportunity for students to get a foot in the door of the sports industry.

Boasting a campus like no other, CCoS is located at the home of the Carlton Football Club, IKON Park. Combining tertiary study with real-world experience, students are immersed in the sporting world from day one, with the classrooms looking out over the training ground of both the Carlton AFL and AFLW teams.

Carlton College of Sport graduate Ash Naulty, now the Head of AFLW at Carlton, began his journey into sport slightly later in his career.

“I did a variety of things in the construction field, I started as an apprentice and then worked as a subcontractor on the tools, as well as doing some project management and supervising work,” Naulty said.

“At the end of 2019, I wanted to make a shift to working in sport so started looking into what opportunities there were to study and upskill. At the time I was coaching locally at Aquinas Old Collegians, and I wanted to make a career of working in sport, particularly footy.

“I did some research and came across the Carlton College of Sport. I looked at some other competitors but the courses and teachings on offer at CCoS were exactly what I wanted to study, to kickstart my career in sport.”

The partnership between Carlton and La Trobe, one of Australia’s leading sport universities, instils confidence in students, that the unique opportunity to combine tertiary-level study with immersive learning experiences in Carlton’s elite sporting environment is worthwhile.

Being based at IKON Park gives students at CCoS the opportunity to interact with staff, coaches, and players from the Club, furthering their professional networks.

“I always talk so highly of the Carlton College of Sport; I don’t think there are many opportunities out there like it. The coursework combined with the learning opportunities you have and the chance to network is incredible,” Naulty said.

Guest lectures are a regular at CCoS, with students given the opportunity to hear firsthand from a range of industry professionals, including the likes of Brian Cook, the CEO at Carlton, about their journey into the industry. This was an invaluable aspect of Naulty’s studies who raved about the guest speakers CCoS brought in.

“Hearing from people who are currently working in the industry gave me a different side of teaching that I appreciated, especially for my own personal growth,” Naulty said.

“I started to understand and notice a lot of key attributes in those guest speakers, which included some of the leaders of departments at Carlton. They each had a high attention to detail and showed genuine connections with their audience and high preparation.

“I began to drill in these attributes and focused on how I could better prepare, but equally what areas I needed to work harder in.

“I always sought out feedback when I was submitting work, to be able to see if I could get better. I learned what it was like being in the environment and then I tried to put the attributes of what I was observing into action.”

At the end of each year, the Carlton College of Sport offers four full-time

positions at the Carlton Football Club, for the graduating cohort.

“The tangible opportunities that are provided through Carlton College of Sport are unmatched. I graduated with a Diploma of Sport Coaching and Development and the opportunity to work for the Carlton Football Club,” Naulty said

Naulty was offered a job as Development and Pathways Coordinator, with his first role seeing him working across The Academy and the Carlton College of Sport.

“I worked closely with Torin Baker, the Carlton College of Sport and Academy Coaching Lead and AFL Development Coach, to set up some systems and processes to recruit students. I also had a great mentor in Chris Clay, who, at the time, was the manager of the College,” Naulty said.

“The role was fast-paced and had a high level of accountability and feedback which I really appreciated.”

Within four weeks of working within the elite sporting environment at Carlton, Naulty was given another opportunity to advance his career.

“Len Villani, Head of Football Operations and Special Projects, asked if I would be interested in managing the VFL program at Carlton. That was a huge shock to me, I remember I was driving out to coach my local footy club at the time and got the phone call and almost wanted to say yes straight away,” Naulty explained.

“Fast forward another 12 months and Len again asked me if I wanted to work alongside Tarah Kavanagh, the Club Psychologist, to work more directly in football. I relinquished the College and Academy role and took up the AFL well-being coordinator role and remained as the VFL operations coordinator.”

With his reputation continuing to grow, Naulty was offered a position in the football’s AFLW Program, which was in the midst of considerable change.

“Brad Lloyd, General Manager of Football, asked if I wanted to step in as the interim Head of the AFLW program. I began in February and went straight into the sign and trade period, trying to make sure we retained all

our great players,” Naulty said.

“I really tried to hone in on the attributes and teaching from CCoS, so I prioritised connecting with the broader business to establish relationships, people plan and strategy, and our overall vision for the AFLW program.”

Reflecting positively on his time spent at the Carlton College of Sport Naulty expressed his gratitude.

“I have so many highlights from my time. One important to me is the connections with my fellow peers and the teachers. Everyone was super supportive at CCoS, I saw a difference of people that I wasn’t privy to in construction,” Naulty said.

“The teachers were genuinely so invested in watching you grow and develop and that rubbed off on me. I would really encourage people who are serious about their career and sport, it’s a great opportunity for them to explore what it is like to work in sport.”

The Carlton College of Sport offers two higher education diplomas; Elite Sport Business and Sport Coaching and Development, ensuring there is a range of pathways on offer.

“Anyone, including mature-age students, even if they are new to tertiary education or looking for a career change, should consider CCoS,” Naulty said.

“The time I spent at CCoS was incredible, I built so many great relationships, and I am proud to have some of those relationships to this day.

“I love working in a place that’s so connected with their values and really want to display an inclusive environment that is equally relentless.”

For more information, please visit <https://carltoncollegeofsport.com.au/site/>

By Carlton Media





# A STORY OF DRUG USE AND COMING OUT THE OTHER SIDE

*There’s a perception out there that people battling substance use issues must have a background of trauma or brokenness. Tragically, for many people, this is the case, but for so many others, trauma is not the catalyst. As drug production grows around the world, in particular the illicit drug trade, it is promoted as a fun, relaxing pastime and freedom of choice...*

“It’s my body, I can do what I choose with it”, is a common attitude, with little or no thought of any possible repercussions. As a consequence, millions of people, just wanting to ‘have a bit of fun’, have naively fallen down the slippery slope from ‘a bit of fun’, to dependence and addiction. This was my story.

I grew up in a loving family, was sporty, had good friends, and went to good schools. But in my teenage years, I began to follow my friends into the party scene; drinking, smoking, and all of that legal stuff, and then one day I was introduced to marijuana. Feeling the need to ‘fit in’, I said, “Yes”, and for me, that’s where it all began.

I moved out of home at 19 and the real partying began. Of course, when you cross that line into the world of taking mind-altering substances, usually beginning with marijuana, you meet people in that scene using other drugs and it’s so easy to be tempted to try something more. And so, being young and naïve and with an immature brain, for me, the slippery slope was now set in motion.

...Before I continue, I must add that I am not proud of any of this. If I could turn back the clock and change my choices and take away the heartache and pain this later brought to me and my loved ones, I would do that in a heartbeat. But of course, we can’t change the past, so I am doing my best to use my knowledge, experience

and wisdom to warn and educate others.

The next substance I tried was hallucinogens, then speed, and one day, after a visit from a friend who told me they had been using heroin, curiosity got the better of me and I had my first taste of heroin. I was only going to try this once; just to see what all the hype was about. Besides, it all just seemed like a bit of fun. And oh, so cool!! (As if no one had ever done this before!) How deceived I was. Unfortunately, heroin is a very addictive drug and before long, I had my second taste, and then my third as heroin, or smack as we called it, began to sneak more and more into my life.

In my mind, a person with a drug ‘problem’ was someone living a life out of control. I was not living on the streets needing a hit multiple times a day. I had a full-time office job and although I used drugs daily, usually after work, and on weekends, I didn’t see this as addiction. I am not suggesting that I am any better than anyone else. I am not. The point is, that because I still held a full-time job, I was deluded into believing that I didn’t have a problem. This was a lie that I chose to believe. In the middle of this lifestyle, you can so easily become blind to what you are doing and where you are heading.

Slowly, but surely, my life began to spiral out of control as my world became a mix of work, parties, and even some normal family functions. My boyfriend and I had arguments over money and drugs. We experienced frightening overdoses and we were even robbed twice by supposed friends. Then suddenly, for me, it all came crashing down.

At the age of 25, I developed drug-related heart and kidney failure and was rushed to the Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, where I almost died several times. At one point, I was given less than 2 hours to live! In fact, I had to be resuscitated at one time as I had massive Grand Mal seizures, fell out of bed unconscious and my heart stopped. The medical staff managed to revive me, but I ended up in a coma with no guarantee of survival. Amazingly, 3 days later I awoke, but I



spent nearly 5 months in that major Melbourne hospital fighting for my life. I was extremely fortunate to survive. It was quite miraculous. My book, Chasing After the Wind, has captured my full story.

In 2010, I was invited by a teacher, to speak to the year 10 students in the school where he taught. My talk was so well received, that I realised, I have a powerful message to share, and over the past 13 years, I have been delivering compelling drug & alcohol awareness presentations, in schools and corporate settings, educating and warning people of all ages on the many different drugs available and about the dangers of substance use; a major point throughout being the power of our choices.

The choices we make, particularly in our teens, can affect the whole of our lives. Good, healthy choices can lead to a great life; however, bad, unhealthy choices can lead to a life filled with disaster and regret. The choice to use drugs often leads to long-term medical problems, mental health issues, family breakdowns, work and road accidents, etc., and of course, even death.

On the 1st of December 2021, further consequences of my past drug-related health issues arose and I was rushed to hospital for emergency open-heart surgery. I had several complications following this surgery and once again nearly died. Incredibly, again, I survived.

The regret that I carry for the naïve choices I made in my youth, at times overwhelms me, but the fact, that my message to others may save lives, helps me to live with that heartache.

And always remember, no matter what you may think about yourself, or what anyone else may have said about you, you are valuable and your life is important.

Choose Life!

Kerryn Redpath  
www.daesy.com.au

## “Get in the boot, Mia.”

It’s Christmas break-up. The last semester is done and dusted. Three carloads filled with first-year student teachers show up at a secluded picnic spot—a short six or seven kilometres from their rural campus. There are BBQs here, a few fixed tables with bench seats, and plenty of space to stretch out a blanket or two. One day, this lot will be fully-fledged school teachers. Today, they are all between 17 and 19 years old. It’s been a big year. With lots of changes and challenges, they all got through. Time to celebrate! Everyone has chipped in. We have meat, salads, some vegan dishes, and an Esky full of ice for the cruisers and beer.

It’s been a ripping three or four hours. Some relationships have been reestablished, and some new ones forged. There’s even romance in the air for one young couple. A problem: three cars showed up, but two have since left—Kirsty’s sedan seats five. However, seven people remain. Three girls and four guys. The boys are sharp. They understand Amber and Kirsty are inseparable. Besides, Amber’s already belted up in the passenger seat. So the four of them squeeze into the back. These dudes are big, strong, and healthy. We’re talking major overloading in that back seat.

The introverted one of the bunch and youngest, 17-year-old Mia, is left standing outside the car. An only child, Mia has blossomed over the last 12 months. The stress of moving away from Mum and Dad and chasing her dream of becoming a teacher is well underway. Physically, she has gone through some changes, from plain to pretty to quite beautiful. However, her inner confidence remains a work in progress. A kind girl, she’s finding her way. Amber winds down her window. “Get in the boot, Mia.” Kirsty pops it open. Are they joking? Yes and no. ‘Young adult’ is a term we use too freely. These young kids are still that, just kids. And Mia..? Well, she gets inside the boot. She even manages to close it from the inside.

The rest of the story plays out like your classic TAC commercial. Inside the car, there is banter and laughter. From the back seat, one of the

guys leans forward and nudges Kirsty’s elbow, her hands gripped on the steering wheel. She hits the brake - “Nick-off! Rhyce, you idiot.” The boys in the back laugh. She turns to them. “Very funny.” “KIRSTY!” A driver confronted with hitting an object head-on instinctively turns the steering wheel away and to the right. That way, they are as far as possible from impact. Our Kirsty, that’s what she does. BADA-BOOM!!! On this occasion, it is a tree, a really big one. Amber and Kirsty are

inseparable...were inseparable. Not anymore, because Amber is gone. The 18year-old will never see another day, let alone another moment. This tree is such a structure it stops the car flat. What a miracle! Kirsty and the four boys in the back are pretty much unscathed. Sure, there are some cuts, bumps, and bruises, but physically, they are all going to be okay. Hang on, Mia’s in the boot and alive; thank God there is no head trauma. Sadly, her spinal cord didn’t fare too well. They say the first several weeks after a major car accident are crucial. As soon as you are able to start rehab, you have to hit it as hard as you can. The more effort the victim can put in, the better their long-term future will be.

Mia’s mum, Jill, is a larger-than-life character: a go-getter and straight shooter. Over the last 12 months, Mia has enjoyed freedom away from her family. She loves them but is at that stage in her life. That drawing away from the folks, then coming close again before drawing off a little further. It’s called gaining your independence. Jill rides her daughter over those coming weeks and months during her rehab. Because of it, Mia develops her tricep muscles to such an extent she can propel herself forward and back as well as turn corners in her wheelchair. Her hands are pretty much useless on their own and flop there. She needs regular pressure lifts to avoid getting ulcers on her backside. Mum and Dad share that. Jill is the one who empties her catheter rather than the carers doing it. A clever contraption placed on Mia’s hand when she dines allows her to get food from her plate to her mouth. Jill is the only one allowed to cut up

her food prior to her eating. When Dad or Nan does it looks like mush. And that’s the last thing she wants anyone to spot in public. Mia is 100% quadriplegic. I could go on and on about her challenges, but you get the drift.

Mia’s 21st birthday party was a mix of emotions for those of us who attended. Both inspiring and soul-destroying. The impact on the mental health of every person in that car, their family, friends, loved ones, and colleagues will never fully be known. How, then, do we educate our young people? It goes beyond learning what to do when behind the wheel of a car. It’s about training kids to have the toughness to not get into the car in the first place. If the vehicle is overloaded or if you believe the driver is drug or alcohol affected or doesn’t hold a driver’s license.

Sticking together is part of it when it comes to peer group pressure. Often, the ones feeling pressure are in the majority but don’t necessarily know it. You are not alone. Cars are powerful machines. We take a risk each time we jump into a one, regardless if we are the driver or not. You can do everything right behind that wheel and still not make it. How much more then do we need to take an interest in our inexperienced young drivers? Over 25-year-olds need to kick off conversations with our precious young people. Instead of just hoping they survive—invaluable resources and programs are available, like the TAC L2P Program & Novice Driver Program. www.vicroads.vic.gov.au & The Salvation Army’s Drive for Life program. www.salvationarmy.org.au. To name a few. Let’s all of us keep the lines of communication open...

...And stay safe.

Daniel Cassar.  
danielcassar1@hotmail.com







# “How Can We Solve This Together?”

## Healthy Empathy in Parent-Teacher Relationships for Improved Student Outcomes

In the dynamic journey of a child’s education, the teamwork between parents and teachers is a key to their success. At the core of this relationship is a powerful ingredient - healthy empathy. This special connection, covering emotions, understanding, and communication, not only strengthens relationships between parents and teachers but also has the power to greatly improve how well our students do in school. In this article, we’ll explore the important role of healthy empathy in the relationship between parents and teachers, examining how it influences collaboration, and the overall growth of our students.

### THE SHARED ASPIRATIONS OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS

It is a universal truth that parents and teachers share a common goal - the desire for the best possible outcomes for the student. Whilst academic results are important, these shared aspirations also include longing to feel heard, valued, healthy and safe while also experiencing a sense of happiness, belonging, trust and community. Identifying these common threads forms the foundation upon which healthy empathy can thrive between parents and teachers.

### EMPATHY IN ACTION

Healthy empathy goes beyond understanding and resonating with the feelings of others; it encompasses a deep comprehension of perspectives and a compassionate response to build connection. It is the bridge that links parents and teachers in a shared commitment to the well-being and success of the child. By recognising and embracing healthy empathy, we lay the groundwork for effective communication and collaboration. Understanding the three types of empathy helps us to see how they work together to make our connections even stronger.

### THE THREE TYPES OF EMPATHY

Emotional empathy involves sharing and understanding the feelings of another. In the context of parent-teacher relationships, this means

acknowledging and resonating with the emotional experiences of both parents and teachers. By recognising and validating each other’s emotions, we build a sense of connection and mutual support.

Cognitive empathy is the ability to ‘put yourself in someone else’s shoes,’ and centres around the ability to understand and respect the perspectives of others. In the realm of education, cognitive empathy enables teachers and parents to appreciate each other’s viewpoints and promote collaborative problem-solving. It is through cognitive empathy that a deeper understanding of parents’ and children’s needs can be achieved.

The third type is compassionate empathy – the doing - it’s the ability to share and understand the feelings and perspectives of another person and respond appropriately. Healthy compassionate empathy combines feeling and perspective-taking while also prioritising our own emotional wellbeing. It’s learning to respond in a healthy way that makes the other person feel authentically heard. In the parent-teacher dynamic, compassionate empathy involves listening, patience, curiosity and reassurance.

In a nutshell, healthy compassionate empathy is the glue that improves mental health, strengthens relationships and connects communities.

And here’s the cool bit – the ability to share and understand the feelings and perspectives of another person and respond appropriately is a learned skill.

Developing and practicing healthy compassionate empathy positively impacts our mental health by enhancing emotional regulation, improving communication, and reducing stress. Nurturing healthy empathy can lead to better decision-making during high-stress situations, stronger trust and teamwork between parents and teachers, and a decreased risk of emotional burnout.

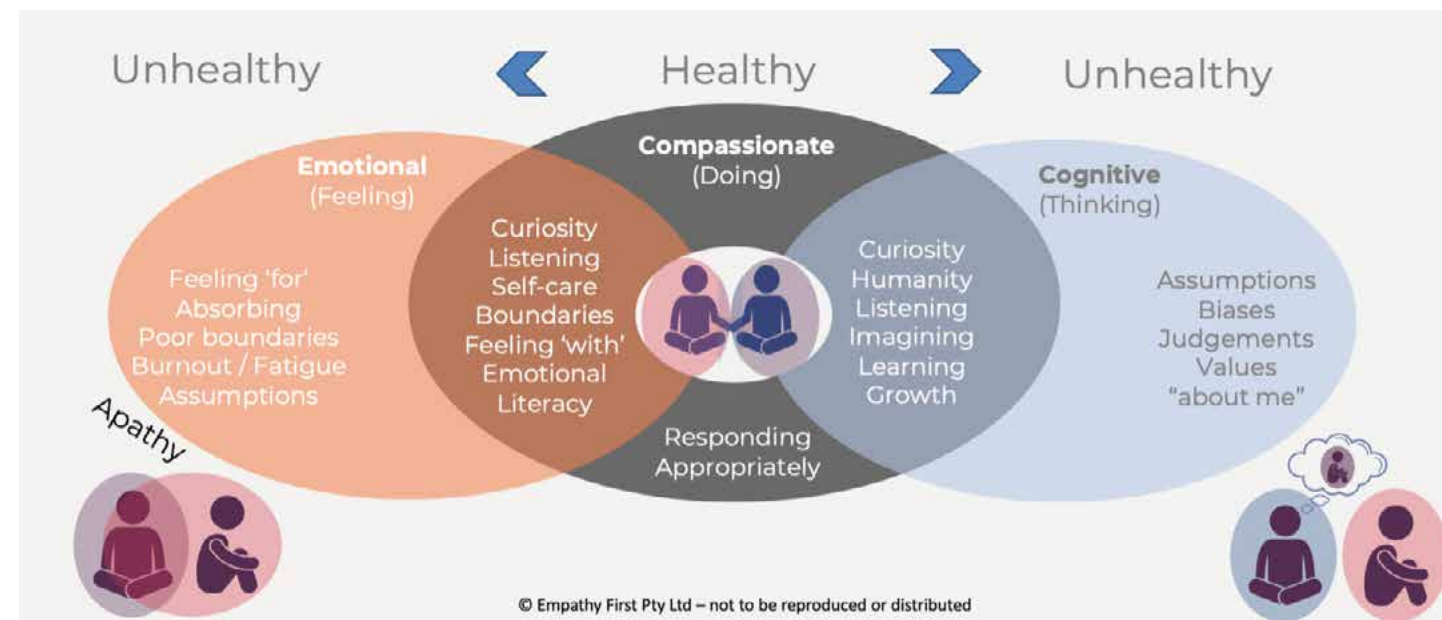


Figure 1 – A visual description of the 3 types of empathy including healthy and unhealthy (Butterworth, 2023).

### THE ROLE OF TRUST

Santiago et al. (2016) emphasised the pivotal role of trust in establishing and nurturing relationships between parents and teachers. Trust is the foundation that supports the bridge connecting these two influential spheres in a child’s life. Defined as the belief that the other party will meet the expectations of their role and demonstrate openness, honesty, benevolence, and reliability, trust serves as the bedrock upon which healthy empathy can flourish.

### BENEFITS OF HEALTHY EMPATHY FOR STUDENTS

Research, such as the findings from Lekli (2015) and Leenders (2019), underscores the tangible benefits of strong parent-teacher relationships on student outcomes. Children have been shown to thrive in environments where their primary caregivers - both at home and at school - work in harmony towards their development. As healthy empathy between teachers and parents deepens, the ripple effect on child outcomes becomes evident. Students experience higher levels of adaptive functioning, lower levels of disruptive behaviour, and increased motivation for learning. Positive emotional and social growth, enhanced academic performance, and increased self-esteem are among the benefits of healthy communication between teachers and parents.

### STANDING ALONGSIDE, NOT ABOVE

Success in parent-teacher partnerships emerges when teachers stand alongside parents instead of addressing them from an 'expert' role (Leenders et al., 2019). Shifting away from a traditional hierarchy, collaborative problem-solving becomes the mantra: "How can we solve this together?" This approach recognises the unique insights and strengths each party brings to the table, creating a synergy that transcends individual expertise.

### PRACTICAL STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

For teachers eager to incorporate healthy empathy into their interactions, implementing practical strategies for engagement is essential. These strategies encompass fostering open communication from the early stages, building genuine partnerships that transcend traditional roles, presuming positive intentions of parents, and validating the unique perspectives of both teachers and parents. Realism and transparency in setting expectations and timelines are crucial, coupled with regular follow-ups and check-ins to maintain ongoing collaboration. A genuine interest in the child’s well-being, coupled with an approachable demeanour, fosters an environment of trust and openness. Encouraging informal conversations, engaging in genuine dialogues during parent-teacher conferences that extend beyond academics and behaviour, and establishing two-way communication channels are instrumental. Direct invitations for parents into school and classroom activities, clarifying academic metrics, and proactively addressing concerns ensure an active and participative partnership in the holistic development of the student.

The path to effective parent-teacher partnerships is paved with collaboration, trust, and a shared commitment to solving challenges together. By shifting away from traditional roles and embracing a collaborative, empathetic mindset we lay the foundation for a future where our children not only thrive academically but also grow into compassionate, well-rounded individuals.

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For a list of references please contact the Editor.





## Helping women and girls feel Safe, Resilient & Empowered

### Empowering young women with ESD+ Training

#### Our Journey...

In 2016 I was at a crossroads, having recently decided to move on after 20 years of being a teacher. I had spent years exploring the positive impact of the mind-body connection and the place it and stress management plays on both our mental and physical wellbeing. So when I was finished teaching, I began formally studying relaxation therapy and stress management. At the same time, my husband, Mark, finally let go of working in the stressful IT industry in order to find something he was truly passionate about.

We gave ourselves the following 6 months to just relax, heal & allow the next leg of our journey to reveal itself. During this time Mark read an article written for martial arts teachers that shared a statistic from the ABS: **"1 in 5 Australian women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime"**. This figure was so startling, overwhelming and abhorrent that it started him down a path of research into the best options available for female self defence. We both have experience in Martial Arts (Aikido) & thought we understood self defence well. After researching, we discovered a huge body of evidence for a more holistic system of women's self defence called Empowerment Self Defence (or ESD). It became clear that this training was the most effective way to more immediately reduce gender-based violence, while helping women and girls feel safe and empowered.

We quickly realised that our shared passion and complementing skillsets seemed a perfect fit for co-facilitation. This ultimately led us to travel to New York in 2019 to receive Facilitator Training in ESD and shortly after, form our Not-For-Profit called 'Empowered Today'. In time we added to our training, a number of Mindfulness-Based Stress Management (MBSM) strategies to form our own unique curriculum called ESD+.

Since then we have been offering ESD+ workshops and, more recently, facilitator training in NSW.

#### What is ESD+?

ESD+ is a comprehensive toolkit of practical life skills designed to help people navigate challenging and/or threatening situations anywhere along the stress or violence spectrums. The toolkit provides a range of mental, emotional and physical strategies to protect yourself and feel safer, more confident and capable in all areas of your life. The 3 foundational pillars of our training are Empowerment, Resilience and Safety.

ESD+ is trauma-informed, with participants always having control over their own experience and how they engage in the content and activities.

#### ESD+ training covers a wide range of topics and skills including:

- The 5 Principles of ESD: Think, Yell, Run, Fight, Talk
- Understanding Stress & Violence: Statistics, Myth Busting, Perpetrator Psychology, Fight/Flight/Freeze, Situational Awareness, Intuition, Mindfulness, Stress Management and Self-Care.
- Effective Communication & Respectful Relationships: Finding and using your voice, Boundary Setting and Consent, Assertiveness, De-Escalation, Non-Verbal Communication, Safe Partying, Pornography and Peer Pressure
- Risk Assessment & Tactical Thinking: Red-Flag behaviour, Safety Planning and Distract-Evade-Escape strategies.
- Practical & Effective Physical Skills: Fighting Spirit, Physical Self-Defence Principles, Soft Physical (Non-Violent), Grabs/Holds & Strangles, Rear Attacks, Targeted striking and Abduction Prevention.

For more information on our workshops or facilitator training, visit our website [www.empoweredtoday.org.au](http://www.empoweredtoday.org.au) or call us on 0480183414.

#### Who is ESD+ for?

ESD+ is for any individual or organisation that would benefit from empowerment, resilience and safety (self-defence) training. In other words...Everyone!!

Although ESD is a holistic form of women's self defence (designed by women, for women and the types of violence women are most likely to experience), the principles, and majority of the strategies taught, are equally applicable for men and boys. As are the resilience and stress management techniques included in the training.

Females 16-24yrs old are at the highest risk of sexual assault and 1 in 3 people aged 16-24 years experience mental health issues such as anxiety. For this reason it is really important we reach young people with ESD+ programs. The skills we teach, help them adopt healthy mental health strategies and identify and build respectful relationships.



#### Why offer ESD+ programs?

On an individual level - because ESD+ training is empowerment-based, it helps people live a safer, happier and healthier life. It has an immediate positive impact, on all areas of their life. This type of training helps give participants a more immediate sense of safety, self-confidence and capability, expanding their range of options in any given situation.

It is these outcomes that make ESD+ applicable in such a broad range of sectors (community services, health, education, workplaces, justice etc).

On a community level - ESD+ offers a unique, practical and immediate approach to increasing resilience as well as reducing the statistics on both gender-based violence and mental health issues in Australia.

As part of our National initiative, "Empowered Communities", we are spending 12 months doing a lap around the country to offer facilitator training to regional/rural towns in order to make ESD+ programs more available throughout Australia.

Lisa Evans  
President, Empowered Today



DONATE



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## MAKE AN IMPACT

In 2022, a group of daring Australian entrepreneurs undertook a remarkable 50-kilometre journey around the captivating island of Siquijor, nestled amidst the majestic Indian and Pacific Oceans in the heart of the Philippines.

Their mission was bold yet simple: to infuse the essence of friendship, fitness, and adventure into a lifeline of support for children in remote schools, delivering essential resources.

## BE A PART OF OUR STORY

Your support changes everything. Every dollar you donate helps provide vital education resources to children, helping them to thrive and succeed. Together, we can create a brighter future.

## READY TO MAKE AN IMPACT?

Take the first step towards change today by making a donation. To be involved in 2024, visit [www.thebigschoolwalk.org](http://www.thebigschoolwalk.org) and join us on our mission to make a difference.



# My Journey: From Olympic Dreams to Conquering Addiction

**GROWING UP,** I had this big dream of going to the Olympics. I was disciplined and focused, spending my weekdays training and competing on weekends. I had many great opportunities to race in State Championships in WA and be selected in the team to race in Singapore and Malaysia. I was a middle-distance runner and enjoyed the 400m and 800m event. Life was good; I had a good family, enjoyed school, and had great friends.

However, at 15, I decided to take a break from sports, not realising the void it would create. I started to search in the wrong places to fit in and try to find my identity outside of athletics. I followed the wrong crowd down the path of parties and drinking alcohol and experimenting with drugs. It started with marijuana, then escalated to LSD, ecstasy, and speed after I started going to rave parties. By 18, I was hooked on heroin, and my life became a chaotic mix of crime and violence.

In 1999, at 21, I found myself in serious trouble with the law and made the choice to go to the Teen Challenge WA Program. Little did I know that by the grace of God this program would radically change my life. I spent three years working to break free from addiction and get strong.

During my own personal recovery, I discovered aspects of my life that were instrumental in my rehabilitation and personal growth. Firstly, I discovered my identity, understanding who I was as an individual. This allowed me to recognise my strengths, weaknesses, and values, providing a strong foundation for life beyond addiction.

Secondly, I found a purpose bigger than drug addiction. There is a quote that reads, "If your addiction is bigger than your dream, then your dream is not big enough". I realised that my goal had to be more significant than simply overcoming a drug problem; it had to be established in contributing positively to the world around me. This newfound purpose started a passion and determination within me, driving me to pursue meaningful goals to make a difference in the lives of others.

Lastly, I discovered where I belonged – in a community of people who shared a passion to help others. This continues to give me the ability to set high standards and believe that I can achieve them.

Completing the Teen Challenge program in 2000 was a pivotal moment for me. Since then, I've dedicated the past 24 years to sharing my story, primarily with students. If I could make a positive difference in just one person's life or one family's journey, then every effort was worthwhile. Today, my passion for sharing my story remains as strong as it was when I first started.

I launched my school-based seminars in 2002 and authored two



books which are in hundreds of schools across Australia. Recently I graduated university with Master's degree in Criminology with my final research paper on 'Juvenile Offending'. This allows me to offer a unique criminological perspective and an evidence base in my talks.

Every year the demand for my presentations in schools and community grows. Today, my school seminars are titled 'Be Strong' and I have expanded the topics to address emerging youth issues such as vaping, drugs, alcohol, mental health, and consent.

My 'Be Strong' campaign aims to empower young people to make informed decisions, prioritise their mental health, develop resilience strategies, and to be strong in the face of adversity. It serves as a toolbox of life skills for navigating the challenges of adolescence and beyond.

Vaping has emerged as the new drug of choice among young people, much like what drugs and alcohol were to my generation. Just as my peers and I navigated the risks of substance abuse, today's youth face the lure of vaping.

I help them to understand the parallels between vaping and past substance abuse trends, as well as recognise the potential dangers behind vaping and what is marketed to them as 'harmless'. Beyond physical health risks, there's a significant link between vaping and mental health issues. Vaping can intensify stress and anxiety, leading to mental health issues such as depression and mood swings. Also, the addictive nature of nicotine in vaping products can disrupt brain function and worsen existing mental health conditions. This can create a vicious cycle where individuals turn to vaping as a coping mechanism, only to find their mental health further deteriorating as a result. This is where hopelessness can set it in.

Caring for the mental health of this generation is essential. Young people today face high levels of stress, anxiety, and social pressures. Not only are factors such as substance use stressful, but academic expectations, social media influence, and family dynamics can also contribute to mental



health challenges. My Be Strong campaign seminars help by providing education and support. We give tips on how to practice mindfulness, how to set boundaries and seek out the right support. We help young people to develop ways to care for their mental well-being.

Schools are one part of the work that I do. I have also established an award winning not-for-profit called Yellow Ribbon Project for Second Chances. This has helped hundreds of female and young offenders find their second chance at life through life skills and mentoring programs.

Since finding my second chance in 1999, I am grateful for all the opportunities that have been given to me. I have worked hard to make the most of it. My biggest reward today among all my achievements, is that I am happily married with three children who carry the same passion for advocacy as I do. As a family, we are committed to doing all that we can

**Jade Lewis | Perth Public Speaker and Author**  
*Jade Lewis is the founder of Jade Lewis and Friends Inc a not for profit organisation and the Yellow Ribbon Project for Second Chances.*

[www.jadelewis.com](http://www.jadelewis.com)



## JUST SAY NO

**A school based Vaping prevention presentation By Jade Lewis**

- WHAT IS VAPING?
- WHY DO PEOPLE VAPE?
- IS IT REALLY THAT DANGEROUS?
- VAPING & MY BRAIN
- MARKETING
- CONSEQUENCES
- VAPING, MYTHS AND FACTS
- EXIT STRATEGIES
- GET HELP

**JADE LEWIS HAS BEEN PRESENTING IN HIGH SCHOOLS FOR 23 YEARS.**

- AWARD WINNING, BEST SELLING AUTHOR
- 16 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN WOMEN'S PRISON AND YOUTH JUSTICE
- MASTER'S IN CRIMINOLOGY
- LIVED EXPERIENCE

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
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# Use it or lose it

The ability to speak clearly and confidently is fading, along with handwriting skills and reading aloud with expression.

Yet, we live in a world where Tik Tok and videos are becoming ever more popular. Young people need to be able to express themselves in words and to be heard by their peers, teachers and later on, employers.

However, public speaking is not always considered important in the curriculum. The students who are the best at it, often go into debating or leadership and become even more proficient. However, the majority are often able to get away with mumbles, silence or even being excused from orals.

This must be reversed. But how? Public speaking can be taught. It is a question of making it fun, accessible and doable. Using props, such as toys can give a focus to a speech. Showing ways to grab the audience's attention, can help the audience sit up and listen. Telling anecdotes with plenty of pictures painted, can make the speech connect with the listeners. And having a structure that is sign posted can help the audience follow the speech.

Why is it we spend ages teaching children to read and write, but we do not spend much time teaching them how to speak confidently? Is it because people assume we know how to speak? Or is it because we assume they do not need much time to practice. Most people only practice three times. They need to practise thirteen times, as if. "As if" means as if they are in front of their target audience.

Most people rush when they are nervous or try to fit in too many words. The number of words per minute for speaking is 120. That will give the speaker plenty of time to pause and to allow ideas to sink in. The way to pause is to write the word "Pause" on the speech or start a new line in your written copy., every time you want to pause.

Most people also think public speaking is about speaking. But it is not!

Did you know that 90% of your message is conveyed through your body language and voice? The sentence, "I didn't say she said it," can be said seven different ways, with seven different meanings. Try it! Your tone conveys much of your message and your facial expressions should follow the tone you want. If you are delivering a positive message, smile. If you are concerned, your face needs to look concerned.

So, who can teach this tricky skill in a fun, quick way? Most teachers should be able to. However, like most people they have not had training in public speaking themselves. Unfortunately, many teachers, while confident in front of their own students, do not like presenting to peers. They may have a story in their head that fellow colleagues will be judging them or know more about the subject than they do. Other teachers dread parent teacher nights because they need to resent to the parents and that seems scary too. One tip to overcome negative the voice in the head is to focus on them. The important thing is that the audience gets your message, so see the funnel pointing out, not in. Focus on their needs, not yours.

The truth is that speaking to children, peers, parents, small crowds or big is actually much the same. It just feels different. More to the point, the voice in your head may be saying different things, depending on who you are speaking to. You need to learn to ignore that voice or it could trip you up.

So, whether you are a teacher, an administrator, or looking to run workshops for your students or employees, public speaking is a skill. It can be taught. It can be fun and it can be something you will use for the rest of your life.

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## Apprenticeships: Building Skills, Building Resilience (A parent and industry insider's perspective)

As a parent of an apprentice AND a Career Development Consultant for Mas National, an Australian Apprenticeship Support Network Provider (AASN), I have seen from a number of perspectives the value an apprenticeship can bring to a young person.

I've seen my son, along with many other young apprentices, grow not only from a skills perspective but also in terms of their mental and physical well-being, and overall maturity. The skills an apprentice learns and the relationships they establish in the workplace can set them up for success in all aspects of their life.

Taking on the responsibility of study and employment is no small feat, and its crucial young people have access to support services as they navigate through their apprenticeships. Parents, caregivers, employers, TAFE institutions and AASN providers all play important roles in helping them thrive in their apprenticeships.

A positive workplace environment, where you work with a great crew and a supportive employer, creates a sense of happiness and stability. Often, the people you work with become close friends outside of work, forming strong bonds that can last a lifetime. My son, who spends a lot of time with his workmates outside of working hours - going to gym, watching sports and having regular dinners together - has found these relationships provide a strong support system that extends beyond the workplace.

The importance of financial stability and independence can't be overstated. A pathway into an Apprenticeship not only kick starts a career in a chosen industry but also allows individuals to become financially independent through earning as they learn. This financial independence enables apprentices to afford things like buying their first car, taking trips they've always wanted and even saving for a home deposit.

Engaging in manual work can also provide a deep sense of satisfaction and accomplishment for some people. Unlike desk jobs, physical labour allows individuals to visually witness the results of their hard work, which can be incredibly rewarding. Physical work also acts as a form of exercise, triggering the release of endorphins that contribute to improved mental well-being. It is crucial to prioritise both physical and mental health by maintaining good sleeping habits, following a nutritious diet, and engaging in regular exercise. These practices have been proven to have positive effects on physical longevity within the trade industry.

It's important for apprentices and trainees to remember that help is always available if they encounter any issues during their Apprenticeship, whether they are workplace-related or personal.



At Mas National\*, we have a dedicated team of specialist Field Mentors who provide additional support to our apprentices and trainees, and our Mas Support Hub offers counselling and assistance for those experiencing difficulties or crises.

Our MasConnects App has been designed empower Mas Apprentices at every stage of their apprenticeship journey. With features like a Mood Meter Read, News feed, Babble Chat, Rewards Builder and more, MasConnects is the perfect one-stop solution to support, guide and track progress for Apprentices in various industries.

In addition to our Field Mentors, MasConnects App and Mas Support Hub, we also offer tailored career advice sessions for clients seeking guidance in various areas. Whether it's exploring apprenticeship or traineeship opportunities, finding study pathways, or navigating pathways into employment, our Career Development Consultants are here to assist.

We are committed to helping individuals make informed decisions and achieve their career goals. Additionally, there are plenty of Government supports available to help apprentices on their journey.

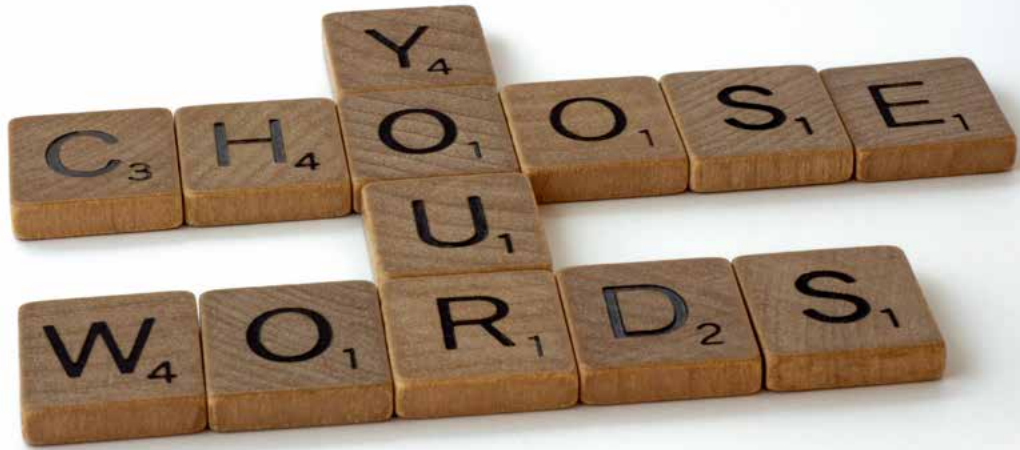
As we've just seen, undertaking a trade pathway can have some really positive impacts on the life of a young person. I'm excited to see the continued growth of my oldest son becoming a carpentry apprentice and I'm looking forward to seeing the development of my youngest son as he follows his brother into the carpentry trade in 2024.

To register for one of our complementary career advice sessions, please visit our website at <https://masexperience.com.au/for-job-seekers/career-advice/>.

\*Mas National is a part of the IntoWork Group.

Steve Roberts  
Career Development Consultant  
Mas National





watch YA language

shift YA selftalk

Not so long ago I was hanging my head over a toilet bowl, my spine hunched, teeth marks on my blood red knuckles from purging, and I was in a dark place as my thoughts took over this moment and drove me to the behaviours that kept me in my cage of the ED.

Hi, Im Meg Linton. A survivor of nearly three decades of disordered eating, mental health battles, suicide attempts, self harm and shitty self-talk.

I land here today to share to you that I am so grateful for all of the above. For if it wasn't for my journey, I wouldn't be where I am today sharing this to you, and the kids.

I used to pride myself on my labels, attachments, achievements, and what I had. I used to compare myself to those around me and put myself (or others) on a pedestal, constantly thinking one was better than another.

I would strive to be right. I would fight for the last word and I would blame everything and everyone around me for life not going the way I had planned. I was in constant struggle with a label, a definition, or another step up the ladder.

Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard said: "Once you label me, you negate me."

I have learnt that we are not just a body. We are a soul living a human experience. As such, what we have, what we own, how we look, and how we define ourselves is ultimately a whole load of BS.

We will all grow old, we will all lose our physical form and get wrinkles, have problems pooping, and need assistance feeding ourselves at some point. The more we accept and lean into that, the easier the acceptance of our true selves becomes.

The Dalai Lama also said: "If we define ourselves by the things we have or what we own, we will never find happiness, as happiness must be found within."

Upon realisation of this, it has now become my practice to treat everyone around me as an equal – another human who ultimately is also looking for love, compassion, and happiness just like me or you.

If I'm really honest with you, I also don't get this right all the time, and fuck it up more often than not, but I do have much more awareness now. It is no longer my "learnt response" to choose compassion and kindness over judging or comparing another or myself.

This backbone is the catalyst for my work today.

I am a passionate human here to make a big difference in the way we see ourselves, our dialogue and understanding the state of our nervous system.

Our phones and devices are quite literally killing us, and I will do all that I can to help you come to terms that we ALL need to take a stand and fight against big tech and social media.

Big tech giants have been programming and conditioning us since the "ding ding ding" dialup that many of us remember so well and were encapsulated by it at the time.

It was new, life changing (as we thought) and a breakthrough in technology as we knew it...

Little did we know that it would be one of the biggest causes of decline in our mental health that we have ever seen in history.

.....

Rabbit ears and dog noses were a thing! They were cute, sassy and got everyone hooked faster than my dog to her food bowl...

Instagram launched late 2010 and by 2013 there was a 67% rise in 12 – 17 year old females suiciding from 2012 – 2013.

Read that again.

This research has been my breakfast for the last 6 years since writing my first book, Watch YA Language and uncovering the dark spaces of our social media feeds. I share in chapter 5 of WYL (The Selfie Addiction) how quickly my own feed became a rabbit hole of ED tips and tricks, waist challenges, and how to stay under 45 kilos to keep me unwell, sick, and of course, dopamine addicted.

"Algorithms fuel more of what we are searching. So of course, if we are struggling with disordered eating and mental health, what we are searching



for may not be healthy. In fact, its likely to be the topics that help us stay stuck, and unwell. This repetition of seeing the same becomes what we know and it is how we develop a sense of not feeling enough as we are " – Watch YA Language

Within this chapter I knew there was more to dive in, so I am in the process now of my second book, The Perfection Pandemic, diving deeper into the world of Social media, our nervous systems, and our self-talk.

For me, learning to understand my nervous system through the teachings of the Poly Vagal theory was everything, and it gave me some tools in my kit to reach in and learn how to quickly regulate when I was feeling unsafe. I was also lucky enough to be introduced to Neuroplasticity and re-formation of our brain from Dr Joe Dispenza at the time.

What no one ever told me when I was unwell was to "listen to your body"

Dr Dispenza quotes – "If your thoughts can make you sick, and they can, is there the possibility that your thoughts can make you well.

Absolutely. I'm living proof and Ill do all in my power to share this message loud and clear.

Your body will tell you everything you need to know, we just need to be quiet.

In a world of constant tik toks, infinite scroll, notifications, emails, and (lets admit it) 8 hours plus for our teens on our devices, then its no

wonder, we are spiraling the wrong direction.

Our brains have not evolved like Big Tech, its like trying to cram in another Tupperware container into your mums cupboard, or an extra towel into that linen closet...you hearing me??

Hence where the Watch YA Language programs come in.

Im here to share that its now up to us to start to make a choice as to how these devices and phones are playing a huge role in the state of our nervous system, self talk and how we see ourselves.

The moment our body doesn't believe its safe, we are (unfortunately) unable to access our rational brain (the prefrontal cortex) to know we have a choice to choose again.

Phones essentially close our bodies.

Take a moment to feel this in your own body. Hold your phone and picture this whilst you scroll the mindless and potentially triggering, perfected, edited and your best life images from your social media feed...

The shoulders roll in, the armour comes on, the jaw clenches, the belly bloats and we become a prisoner to the old hardwired beliefs, patterns and behaviours that we know so well.

A nervous system that is balanced can see differently.

And in a nutshell, that's what I had to learn to

shift my own self talk from Judgement and comparison to acceptance and compassion,

You can too.

Social media is not bad

Phones are not bad, it's how we have become USERS to them, that is the issue. This practice of using is not only affecting our bodies, but our brains and our self-talk.

This is where we need to step in.

We humans, will be the biggest trend you ever did see...we just need to come together and have a voice and say no to what these devices are doing to our kids...because what we are seeing now, is only a glimpse of what we may see if we don't step in now.

School workshops, keynote talks and programs available for kids, teens, parents and teachers across Australia.

Its time to say no, and Ill do all that I can to help our kids feel regulated, safe and empowered in this world to know that they can be part of the change. To be a human race who connects, plays often, and is able to have a voice against big tech and take a stand for our bodies, our mental health, and our kids moving forward.

Meg Linton  
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www.watchyalanguage.com





# Australia's First NBA Basketball School: A Game Changer for Youth Development

Australia has long been a breeding ground for sporting talent, with a rich history of producing world-class athletes across various sports.

Now, with the establishment of Australia's first NBA Basketball School, located at Cranbrook School in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs and St. Philip's Christian College in Newcastle, a new chapter in Australian sports development is unfolding.

The NBA Basketball School Australia is not just about basketball; it's about fostering holistic development, both on and off the court. Embracing an athlete-first approach, this program aims to cultivate competence, confidence, and character in young athletes, equipping them not only with elite basketball skills but also with essential life skills for success beyond the game.

At the heart of the NBA Basketball School Australia's philosophy is a commitment to share the game of basketball while instilling values and promoting wellness in a positive, safe, and fun environment. By nurturing a culture of inclusivity and empowerment, the program seeks to inspire the next generation of basketball players to become not only skilled athletes but also exemplary role models in society.

The facilities at Cranbrook School and St. Philip's Christian College are nothing short of world-class, providing students with access to state-of-the-art training grounds equipped with the latest technology and resources. Under the guidance of NBA Basketball School Accredited coaches, young athletes will have the opportunity to hone their skills on the court, ensuring they are primed for success at the highest levels of competition.

Moreover, the NBA Basketball School Australia isn't confined to local borders; it offers international opportunities that broaden horizons and facilitate cultural exchange. The international presence of NBA Basketball School Australia was recently showcased at the inaugural NBA Basketball School Abu Dhabi Tournament. Other NBA Basketball School Teams such as Brazil, Kuwait, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates, participated in a three-day extravaganza.

Besides NBA Basketball School Australia showcasing their skills and earning gold medals, the players immersed themselves in the rich cultural experience of Abu Dhabi, meeting NBA/WNBA legends and attending the highly anticipated NBA Abu Dhabi Games.

Central to the program's success is its NBA-approved curriculum, developed in



collaboration with NBA coaches, former players, and player development experts. This comprehensive framework ensures that participants receive top-tier instruction that aligns with international standards, setting them on a path toward excellence in basketball and beyond.

As Australia's premier basketball development program, the NBA Basketball School Australia offers elite training, world-class facilities, and unparalleled opportunities for growth, it is paving the way for a new generation of Australian basketball stars to shine on the global stage.

In conclusion, the NBA Basketball School Australia represents more than just a training ground for aspiring athletes; it's a beacon of hope, empowerment, and opportunity for youth across the nation. With its unwavering commitment to excellence and inclusivity, this program is poised to leave an indelible mark on the Australian sporting landscape for years to come.

## From Likes to Loneliness: The Paradox of Hyper-Connectivity and Social Isolation in Teens

The digital age has ushered in a world of unprecedented connection. Teens, more than any generation before them, navigate a labyrinth of social media platforms, messaging apps, and online communities. While these tools offer avenues for communication, entertainment, and even support, the irony is that this hyper-connectivity can mask a deeper truth: **teenagers are lonelier than ever**. This paradox between constant online connection and social isolation has profound implications for their mental health, well-being, and even their ability to engage in education.

On the surface, social media seems tailor-made for fostering social connections. It allows teens to stay in touch with friends, engage in group chats, and discover communities based on shared interests. However, **these interactions often lack the depth and nuance of real-life encounters**. They are defined by curated profiles, fleeting comments, and carefully constructed online personas. The pressure to present a perfect online self creates anxiety and fuels unhealthy social comparison, leaving teens feeling inadequate and dissatisfied with their real lives.

Furthermore, the **algorithmic nature of social media platforms creates echo chambers, reinforcing existing beliefs and isolating users from diverse perspectives**. This fuels polarisation and amplifies pre-existing anxieties, as teens are primarily exposed to content that validates their own viewpoints. Lack of exposure to differing opinions hinders their ability to develop empathy, critical thinking skills, and healthy social interactions.

The consequences of this online disconnect bleed into various aspects of a teen's life. The constant pressure to stay connected can lead to **sleep deprivation**, as teens sacrifice rest to maintain their online presence. The fear of missing out (FOMO) becomes deeply ingrained, driving an unhealthy attachment to their devices and a sense of anxiety about what might be happening online while they are offline.

This pervasive loneliness and anxiety can also manifest in **school refusal**. The pressure to perform online and the fear of judgment in real-life social situations can create overwhelming emotional burdens that make regular school attendance difficult. Teens struggling with social isolation might find solace in the escapism offered by the virtual world, further disconnecting them from real-life peers and academic responsibilities.

The impact of hyper-connectivity extends beyond emotional well-being and academic engagement. Studies have linked excessive social media use to **increased rates of depression, anxiety, and even suicidal ideation**. The constant dopamine hits from likes and notifications create a dependence on external validation, leaving teens feeling empty and worthless if those online affirmations go lacking.

The impact of hyper-connectivity on Australian teens' mental health is starkly evident in alarming statistics. A 2020 study by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare revealed that almost 4 in 10 (44%) young people aged 12-17 experienced at least one negative online experience in the six months prior to the survey, with cyberbullying being particularly prevalent. Moreover, Mission Australia's Youth Survey found that over 80% of young people who experienced bullying in the previous year reported it happening at school, further blurring the lines between online and offline harassment.

These negative experiences translate into concerning mental health trends. The National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing (2020-2022) reported that almost 40% of young people aged 16-24 experience a 12-month mental disorder, with anxiety being the most common. Tragically, suicide remains a leading cause of death for young Australians, with the Australian Bureau of Statistics reporting 944 suicides among people aged 15-24 in 2021. While not all suicides are directly linked to technology, the constant pressure and unrealistic comparisons



fueled by online interactions undoubtedly contribute to the emotional distress and vulnerability young people face.

Furthermore, the link between technology use and school refusal cannot be ignored. School Refusal Recovery, a leading Australian school refusal organisation helping parents and school staff to get children back into the classroom, highlights the lack of an agreed-upon definition for school refusal, but acknowledges the emotional distress and difficulties attending school that characterise this issue. While statistics specifically linking school refusal to technology use are not readily available, the broader picture of anxiety, depression, and social isolation associated with hyper-connectivity paints a concerning picture. The potential for online bullying and the pressure to maintain a curated online persona can certainly exacerbate existing anxieties and contribute to a reluctance to engage in real-life social interactions within the school environment.

From frightening Australian statistics to recent Congressional hearings in the US, the alarm is sounding: teens' mental health is struggling amid hyper-connectivity. While social media offers connection, research and lived experiences paint a different picture - one of isolation, anxiety, and even suicidality. The spotlight is now on tech giants like Zuckerberg, with growing demands for them to address the negative impacts their platforms have on young liminal minds. The future seems to hinge on a collaborative effort - equipping teens with resilience, fostering responsible technology use, and holding tech accountable for creating a safer, more supportive online environment. Can we build a world where "likes" and "shares" don't eclipse genuine well-being and a fulfilling life for our future generation? Only time will tell, but the responsibility lies with all of us, from parents and educators to lawmakers and tech leaders.

Dr. Lynette Maguire  
Now Generation  
[www.nowgeneration.com.au](http://www.nowgeneration.com.au)



# Five reasons to consider occupational therapy as a career



Navigating the maze of career choices as a teenager can be both exhilarating and overwhelming. Choosing a pathway that aligns with your values, interests, and strengths is essential to building a fulfilling career. For many people, occupational therapy (OT) offers all this and more.

If you find yourself seeking a career that not only promises job security but also encompasses compassion, creativity, and a profound impact on lives, OT is a great choice. Here's why you should consider it for your future career.

## BUT FIRST... WHAT IS AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST?

Put simply, occupational therapists are dedicated professionals focused on improving people's lives. They do this by addressing challenges that impact their daily activities and functioning, whether this be as a result of injury, chronic illness, mental health problems, major life changes, or behavioural issues.

Found in various settings – from hospitals to nursing homes, schools, and private practices – OTs take a holistic approach to treatment by emphasising independence and engagement in meaningful activities. Through creative problem-solving and a personalised approach, occupational therapists empower individuals to build self-esteem, enhance their abilities, and navigate life with resilience and purpose. Their role extends beyond traditional healthcare, making them essential contributors to the well-being of diverse communities.

## BOOMING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

In recent years, the demand for occupational therapists has surged across the globe. This can be attributed to several factors, including an ageing population, increased prevalence of chronic conditions, and a growing recognition of the multifaceted benefits of therapy.

As individuals seek to lead more fulfilling lives, the role of occupational therapists becomes increasingly indispensable. This makes it a great choice for anyone who is looking for career

longevity and stability both now and in the future.

## ENJOY A VERSATILE CAREER

Occupational therapy isn't just a job; it's a calling that offers something for everyone. Whether you dream of working with children, adults, or communities as a whole, OT offers a diverse range of sectors to explore.

From helping children develop crucial life skills to aiding adults in adapting to life-altering injuries, the occupational therapy field encompasses daily living activities, education, leisure, social participation, and work. When you choose a career as an OT, the possibilities are as varied as the individuals you'll help along the way. This is why it's the perfect industry for people who want to help a variety of people from all walks of life.

## A PROFESSION FOR EVERYONE

Occupational therapy is breaking down gender stereotypes, proving to be an inclusive and rewarding profession for all people. As an occupational therapist, you'll find yourself in a position to make a real difference in people's lives – regardless of your gender.

Occupational therapy combines compassion, problem-solving, creativity, and a focus on enhancing the quality of life for others – qualities that all people can do in equal measure.

## CONTINUOUS INNOVATION AND EVOLUTION

In the world of occupational therapy, change is the only constant. This profession is a dynamic and innovative field where thinking outside the box is a daily practice.

Occupational therapists are continually inventing and reinventing, modifying environments to facilitate learning, play, and daily activities. If you have a passion for creativity and problem-solving, occupational therapy provides a platform to make a lasting impact through constant innovation.

## DIVERSE AREAS OF PRACTICE

As an occupational therapist, your skills will be in demand throughout your entire career. With an ageing population and a growing awareness of the benefits of therapy, the need for occupational therapists remains strong.

The profession offers an abundance of areas of practice, allowing you to work in various settings such as large hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, schools, and even large corporations. The versatility of the OT sector ensures that you can choose a path that aligns with your interests and values, even as they change throughout your life.

Occupational therapy is not just a career choice; it's an opportunity to create meaningful change in the lives of others. So, if you're ready to unlock your potential and embark on a journey of impact and innovation, consider occupational therapy as your gateway to a fulfilling and diverse career.

To learn more about careers in occupational therapy, go to:

<https://aboutoccupationaltherapy.com.au/what-do-occupational-therapists-do/>



# SIGN YOUR SCHOOL UP FOR AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST MENTAL HEALTH AND FITNESS EVENT.



The Push-Up Challenge is a unique, free and fun way for schools to encourage better mental health and wellbeing through connection, physical activity and education.

Held every June, your school will be challenged to complete push-ups while learning about mental health and how to support yourself and others.

*"I found myself having some really meaningful and vulnerable conversations with my teachers and mates - which has made school feel more like a home for myself and my peers."*  
-Dylan, Student

Find out more [thepushupchallenge.com.au](https://thepushupchallenge.com.au)





# THE YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH STATISTIC EDUCATORS CAN'T IGNORE

As everyone returns from the summer holidays, a new year begins with the readiness to inspire and grow our young people. But likely on the radar of many educators is the growing mental health crisis affecting Australian youth. The latest release of The National Mental Health Survey by the Australian Bureau of Statistics revealed that almost 40% of young Australians aged 16 to 24 have experienced a 12-month mental health disorder. This can include anxiety, depression and substance use disorders.

According to these findings, close to half of the students we see in Australian classrooms are now - perhaps despite outward appearances - struggling.

If you're an educator yourself, you'll know that those in the field often report getting into education with a desire to inspire the next generation, to shape life-long learners, to leave their students a little better than when they first entered their classroom. And so, with this foundation of care for young people at the core of the vocation, it's no doubt particularly difficult to witness our young people in distress. So, what can be done to push for better mental health for young Australians?

## WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Firstly, it's important to spark conversations about wellbeing and mental health, and to encourage help-seeking behaviours in the classroom. Given that suicide continues to be the leading cause of death for young Australians, paving the way for change in this area is crucial.

With young people less likely than any other age group to seek professional help; reducing stigma and other barriers to help-seeking so students think more proactively about their mental wellbeing, is a vital step.

## PROGRESS IN ACTION

At The Push-Up Challenge, we are passionate about supporting schools to encourage conversation and help de-stigmatise mental health. The Challenge is a unique, free and fun way for schools to encourage better mental health and wellbeing through connection, physical activity and education. This year, we'll be pushing from 5 to 28 June and asking participants to complete 3,249 push-ups – with each push-up representing a life lost to suicide in 2022. Participants receive mental health facts and information throughout the challenge to help generate conversations, reduce the stigma associated with mental illness and seek help if they need it.

As part of the Challenge, we proudly facilitate the Student Ambassador Program, which gives Year 10, 11 and 12 students across Australia an opportunity to lead the push for better mental health at their school. Student Ambassadors encourage fellow students (and teachers!) to get fit, have fun and learn about mental health through participation in The Push-Up Challenge. Student Ambassadors attend mental health awareness training - designed to increase knowledge around mental health, boost confidence in talking about mental health with their peers and equip students with skills in how to check in and support those who may be suffering from depression or anxiety.

## THE RESULTS WE'VE SEEN

We welcomed a record 31,200 school participants in The Push-Up Challenge 2023, which was an increase of 84% on 2022. Growing popularity and awareness of the Student Ambassador program also saw over 500 Student Ambassadors lead the way in bringing Australia's biggest mental health and fitness event into schools.

We surveyed hundreds of school participants from last year and the results are clear – participating in The Push-Up Challenge has helped make a difference to school communities across Australia, with 96% having learnt about mental health, 99% felt motivated

to exercise and 97% found it made seeking help easier.

"Being an all-boys school, The Push-Up Challenge has made extremely valuable advancements in my peers' ability to have those hard, vulnerable conversations in a really casual but effective way. For the senior students, it's provided us with competition, an outlet for stress and several important reminders to keep on looking after ourselves mentally and physically while we're so caught up in school." - Dylan, Student VIC

"[A benefit of doing the challenge was] seeing the College come together for a common cause - seeing the enthusiasm in each student. And listening to the conversations about mental health become slightly more normalised." - Josh, teacher, WA

## GET YOUR SCHOOL INVOLVED

As one of Australia's largest mental health and fitness events, we're committed to investing in initiatives that can help build resilience and result in better long-term outcomes for young people and their mental wellbeing.

Is your school community ready to push for better mental health? Register your school to be part of The Push-Up Challenge 2024 at [thepushupchallenge.com.au](http://thepushupchallenge.com.au). Together, we can push for better mental health for all Australian young people.

THE PUSH-UP CHALLENGE  
[www.thepushupchallenge.com.au](http://www.thepushupchallenge.com.au)







## Building Resilience & Developing RAMS: From Domestic Challenges to Empowering Students

Growing up in a domestic household with my step-father presented numerous challenges that spilled over into my academic life. Juggling personal difficulties at home while trying to navigate the intricate world of school often felt like an insurmountable task. Despite facing adversity, I found solace and strength in external groups that played a pivotal role in shaping my resilience.

As a young student, I encountered difficulties that stemmed from the tumultuous environment within my family. The emotional toll was reflected in my academic performance, leading to struggles with concentration and motivation. My journey through school was marked by setbacks, and at times, it seemed as if the obstacles were insurmountable.

However, external support became a beacon of hope. Engaging with community organizations, mentorship programs, and extracurricular activities provided a refuge from the challenges at home. These external groups offered guidance, encouragement, and a sense of

belonging that fueled my determination to overcome the difficulties I faced.

It was through these experiences that I began to understand the transformative power of resilience. The ability to bounce back from adversity and harness personal strength became not just a survival mechanism but a cornerstone for personal growth. As I navigated through the storm, I realized that every student deserves the opportunity to cultivate resilience and rise above their circumstances.

Inspired by my own journey, I founded the Resilience Program, aptly named RAMS (Resilience And Mental Support). RAMS is a comprehensive initiative designed to empower students facing personal challenges and provide them with the tools to build resilience.

The program focuses on fostering a supportive community, offering mentorship, and teaching resilience skills that address both academic and personal development. Recognizing that students are not defined by their mistakes or personal hardships, RAMS encourages them to embrace their potential and work towards becoming the individuals they aspire to be.

One of the fundamental principles of RAMS is the belief that setbacks do not define a person; rather, they offer opportunities for growth and self-discovery. Through tailored support systems, workshops, and mentoring, RAMS guides students on a journey of self-empowerment, teaching them to view challenges as stepping stones rather than stumbling blocks.

The Resilience Program serves as a testament to the idea that with the right support, skills and mindset, students can overcome adversity and unlock their full potential. RAMS stands as a beacon of hope for those facing difficulties, showing them that they are not alone and that there is a pathway to resilience and success.

In essence, my personal struggles have given birth to a program that aims to uplift and empower students, reminding them that they are not defined by their past or present circumstances. The Resilience Program is a celebration of the human spirit's capacity to overcome, adapt, and thrive, showcasing the incredible potential within every student to become the architects of their own success.

And so, to schools, teachers, wellbeing workers;

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, our commitment to the holistic development of students is paramount. Today, more than ever, we find ourselves facing a concerning trend - a growing number of students disengaging from their educational journey. It is not merely a statistical blip, but a poignant call for a strategic intervention that addresses the root cause. Enter RAMS, designed to equip students with the tools they need to face the challenges of today and build a resilient foundation for their future.

Recent studies indicate that a staggering 42% of students are disengaging from education due to a lack of resilience. This statistic is a red flag that cannot be ignored. Disengaged students are not merely statistics; they represent untapped potential, dreams deferred, and futures at



risk of being overshadowed by the challenges life throws their way. It is our collective responsibility as educators to reverse this trend, and RAMS is our answer to this call.

The RAMS program doesn't just preach resilience; it actively cultivates it by instilling crucial life skills that are often overlooked in traditional education settings. We recognize that resilience is not an innate quality but a muscle that needs deliberate training. The program focuses on imparting skills that form the building blocks of resilience: Empathy, Impulse Control, Self-Regulation & Emotional Awareness, Optimism, Flexible Thinking, Reaching Out & Connectedness, and finally, Self-Efficacy.

Empathy forms the cornerstone of meaningful connections. In a world that is increasingly interconnected, the ability to understand and relate to others is not just a social skill but an essential tool for navigating diverse environments. The RAMS program provides students with the opportunity to hone this skill, fostering a culture of compassion and understanding.

Impulse Control, Self-Regulation & Emotional Awareness are the bedrock of emotional intelligence. Students who can navigate their emotions effectively are better equipped to handle the inevitable challenges life throws their way. RAMS ensures that students are not just academically competent but emotionally resilient, ready to face setbacks with grace and determination.

Optimism and Flexible Thinking empower students to approach problems with a positive mindset and adapt to change. In a world that demands constant innovation and resilience in the face of uncertainty, these skills are invaluable for personal and professional success.

Reaching Out & Connectedness are more than mere buzzwords. In an age of social isolation and digital detachment, fostering genuine connections is crucial. RAMS actively promotes a sense of community, encouraging students to lean on each other and seek support when needed.

Self-Efficacy is the culmination of all these skills, empowering students to believe in their abilities and take charge of their own success. By instilling a sense of self-efficacy, RAMS ensures that students are not defined by their circumstances but by their resilience in overcoming them.

Over the past five years, the results we have seen in students speak volumes about the transformative impact of RAMS. We've witnessed a 24% increase in student engagement in education, indicating a renewed enthusiasm for learning. Internal processing has seen a substantial 20% boost, reflecting improved cognitive and emotional abilities. School attendance has seen a remarkable 37% increase, pointing to a more positive and consistent presence in the academic environment.

Behavioral adjustment, a key indicator of emotional well-being, has shown a commendable 21% increase. Reports to our Wellbeing Team have reduced by 32%, a testament to the proactive nature of RAMS in addressing and mitigating potential issues before they escalate. The impact is not just in the numbers; it's in the qualitative experiences shared by our students.

An impressive 83% of students reported feeling more equipped to deal with life's hardships. This empowerment translates into real-world results, with a 28% decrease in students reporting feelings of loneliness. The RAMS community has become a haven for students,

fostering connections and support networks that extend beyond the classroom.

The voices of our students are perhaps the most compelling testimony to the success of RAMS. Consistently, students have expressed their newfound confidence, their belief in themselves even when faced with adversity. They speak of growth in self-esteem, control over impulses, and a desire to be more empathetic towards others.

The consensus among students is clear: they are becoming more confident in overcoming challenges, learning to believe in themselves even when others may not, and developing trust in others. The growth in self-esteem is evident, as is the newfound ability to control impulses and a genuine desire to care more about others and stop hurting them.

What is particularly heartening is the pride students take in being part of the RAMS community. Meeting new people within this supportive environment has been a transformative experience for many, leading to a sense of belonging and connection that extends far beyond the program itself.

As educators, we have a unique opportunity to shape the future by nurturing resilient individuals. RAMS is not just a program; it is a commitment to the success and well-being of our students. The evidence of its impact is not just in the numbers but in the stories, experiences, and voices of our students. Let us continue to embrace this initiative, empowering our students to face the challenges of today and emerge as resilient, successful adults tomorrow.

Faith Battisella  
RAMS





# WHAT IS RAMS?

## BUILDING INNER STRENGTH, NAVIGATING LIFE'S CHALLENGES

## WHAT WE OFFER

### RAMS Program

A year-long program, comprised of seven full-day sessions, focusing on fostering supportive community, offering mentorship, and teaching resilience skills. Featuring Dogs Therapy, Martial Arts and so much more.

### RAMS Seminars

RAMS presenters share their compelling life stories of overcoming adversity to inspire resilience and wellbeing.

### RAMS Resources

Teachers aids to help every school.

RAMS exists to build resilience and promote wellbeing in secondary school students enrolled throughout Australia. We focus on building self-esteem, critical reflection skills, and social-emotional intelligence in each participant.

RAMS is designed to help students explore and develop the seven resilience factors identified by Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatte (2002).

RAMS also adopts parts of the Reach Out Australia program and serves to complement schools' existing wellbeing initiatives.

## SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION



Faith Battistella  
RAMS CEO  
0434 630 489  
faith@rams.org.au

RAMS.ORG.AU



@\_RAMSPROGRAM

# Dads and kids connect at local school

Adam Murphy experienced the benefits of The Fathering Project program in his child's school.

**"Because of the shift work involved in firefighting, I've had the privilege to regularly attend the program at Oatley, my kids' school.", said Murphy.**

"Changing children's lives" is an outcome and vision The Fathering Project seeks to achieve.

**"I talk to Dads at school pick up, who have never been on on the school grounds, and not experienced the connections I've been given with my kids through The Fathering Project", Murphy said ruefully.**

**"I can see my kids more confidently connected to school and their challenges, partly because I've engaged closely with their experiences."**

Oatley Public School in Sydney's southwest hold regular events for Dads and Kids. **At their Term 1 activity, 200 Dads and kids connected over Paper Planes and Pizza.** Principal Debbie Hunter commented that with the growing number of engaged Dads on campus, there are also more Dads attending parent-teacher nights, with more kids better engaged with their learning.



Scan the QR code to listen to what local school Principal has to say about the success of The Fathering Project.



### About The Fathering Project

The Fathering Project is a secular not-for-profit organisation, operating nationally. Our mission is to educate, connect and empower fathers and father figures across Australia to prevent long term social, emotional and cognitive difficulties and create the conditions for children to thrive. Through resources, programs, events and community intervention programs we ensure all dads are best equipped to care for their children as they need.



To learn more, visit [thefatheringproject.org](https://thefatheringproject.org) or scan the QR code to view more information on the schools program.







# Voting Workshops Empower Students and Strengthen Democracy

The year 2024 is a big year for democracy. Over 2 billion people - half the adult population of the world - are expected to cast ballots in more than 70 countries. Some elections will be stitched up by dictators - like Russia and Iran - but many will be robust, like in India, the United States, and our neighbours in Indonesia. Australia may even join in. Our next federal election may come as early as August.

Australia is home to some of the world's strongest democratic institutions. Free and fair elections are overseen by an independent electoral body. Compulsory voting ensures high participation even among marginalised groups. Preferential voting delivers Parliamentary representation that closely, if not perfectly, reflects the electorate's preferences.

The global picture can lead Australians to feel complacent about our democracy. But a closer look shows growing weaknesses. Major party primary votes - and membership - are in long-term decline, while wealth inequality rises, and these trends correlate with declining faith in our system of government. Research conducted by Nicholas Biddle and Matthew Gray for the Australian National University in August 2023 showed that lower levels of income and education correlate with lower confidence in the government in Canberra.

Young Australians face particular barriers to participating in our democratic processes. Voter turnout in the 2022 federal election fell below 90% for the first time since compulsory voting was introduced in the 1920s. The main factor was low turnout in the youngest electorates, from Sydney (85%) to Lingiari in the Northern Territory (67%).

Polls show young Australians are less engaged in politics than older Australians. One 2020 poll found that large majorities of young Australians (18-29 years) could not name a politician who had a positive impact that year (67 per cent) or any political achievement (58 per cent). These responses significantly underperformed Australians over 50 years, which were 39 per cent and 43 per cent respectively.

Gaps in civics knowledge are also growing. In the 2019 national civics and citizenship assessment, conducted by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, just 38 per cent of Year 10 students demonstrated a proficient level of knowledge across topics including democracy and Australia's system of government, citizens' rights and legal obligations, and national values.

The long term consequences of these gaps may be significant. They leave young Australians at a disadvantage in the representation of their interests compared to older generations. That's a problem because they have distinct interests now - such as education, housing affordability and

employment - as well as a uniquely high stake in the long term future. Gaps in engagement can become entrenched, as early voting patterns are predictive of future ones. And such gaps materially impact political choices about how resources are distributed in society, as shown by the more egalitarian sharing of public goods as historically disenfranchised groups have joined the electoral rolls.

It is crucial that all students have the opportunity to recognise why voting - like education, a minimum wage, and trial by jury - is treated as such a fundamental right that it is imposed compulsorily. This is shaped by early experiences of how the benefits flow to both ourselves and others. Fortunately, this doesn't necessarily require travelling to Canberra or meeting your federal Member of Parliament. A fun and practical introduction to voting can be made in the classroom.

## Hands-on experiences make voting fun

Youth Decide workshops give students the chance to vote.

Ballots are printed to match the students' electorates, with candidate names shown in order based on the most recent federal or state election. Students enter cardboard polling booths, much like those in real elections. "The highlight for me was voting because it made me feel like an adult," reported a Year 10 student in one workshop.

When everyone has cast their votes, the ballots are spilled and students participate in the counting process, seeing the way preferences flow and influence the final result.

Students engage in respectful discussion about the factors that influenced their decisions - typically spanning from family and friends to values, promises, track records, and even identity attributes, such as gender or religion.

The voting experience is set in the context of how governments are formed, how laws are passed, and a broad understanding of what democracy is. Students discuss the checks and balances of democracy, too: the constitution and rule of law, human rights, separation of powers and more.

Students also engage in role plays that identify rights and responsibilities of people and groups in society, and experiment with various voting methods, including preferential, proportional and first past the post. These activities support syllabus outcomes in Commerce and Legal Studies, and create challenging and memorable learning experiences.

"The highlight for me was learning what some of the terms actually mean because I can now understand what they talk about in the news," wrote one student in feedback.

Students leave with a deeper understanding of their own values, and a wider perspective that democracy goes beyond merely the right to vote every three years. They can identify a web of institutions, rights and responsibilities that combine to support Australian democracy.

Most of all, however - and if they remember nothing else - they have a fun incursion that stays as a positive and confidence-boosting memory that prepares them for voting in real elections after they graduate.



**Voting experiences build new understanding, attitudes and behaviours**

It would be wrong to think that just because young Australians are often disengaged from politics, they must not be interested in learning more about it. In a quiz before each workshop we ask what questions are on students' minds. We hear a range of both conceptual and practical questions. "What are the requirements to vote, do I have to be a citizen?" is one example. "Why can't children aged between 10-18 vote for decisions that affect them?" and "How much value does my vote actually hold?" are also notable responses. It seems clear that many students will engage further if someone starts the conversation with them.

Workshop experiences consistently boost students' understanding of Australia's key institutions. The share of students who correctly understand how parties form governments in Australia has risen from 50 per cent to 81 per cent. This understanding has practical effects, too. Students report their biggest takeaways include learning how to find their federal electorate, and the fact they can enrol to vote at age 16. The share of students saying they are "very likely" to vote in elections when they become eligible increased from 65 per cent to 85 per cent.

Some practical effects start immediately. In workshops conducted around the time of last year's NSW election, 67 per cent of students said the workshop led them to research the election, and 75 per cent discussed the election with friends and family, with 58 per cent of those saying the workshop made this more likely. This shows how a positive experience at school quickly spills over into kitchen table conversations at home.

The experience also shapes students' attitudes towards respect, democracy, and the value of being an informed citizen. The proportion of students saying it is "very important" to listen respectfully to people who hold different views rose from 36 per cent to 51 per cent. The share of students saying they are "very satisfied" with the way democracy works in Australia rose from 11 per cent to 23 per cent. That boost to satisfaction with our democracy is heartening, but underscores how much further we have to go. The share of students saying it is "important" or "very important" to learn about political issues from the media rose from 65 per cent to 75 per cent.

**Bring Youth Decide to your school or community**

Hands-on voting experiences bring democracy to life in the classroom and empower students with skills and confidence to vote in future. They gain a richer understanding of Australian democracy and feel more satisfied that it can represent their interests. It adds up to help students develop greater long-term capacity to influence decisions that affect them - all while enjoying a fun and memorable school incursion.

*Voting workshops by Youth Decide are available at*  
**[www.youthdecide.net.au](http://www.youthdecide.net.au)**



# Talk Money

5 TIPS TO HELP YOUNG  
PEOPLE TO STAY POSITIVE



# Feeling good and making smart money choices:

## 5 tips to help young people to stay positive

**Treasurer** Jim Chalmers released the first national wellbeing framework, Measuring What Matters, in July 2023 to track progress towards a healthier, secure, sustainable, cohesive, and prosperous Australia. Financial security is an important determinant of personal well-being. It is measured by two financial stress indicators in the Framework to explain the extent to which Australians lack financial security.

The latest ABS statistics from the General Social Survey in 2020 report that 20.7 per cent of households experienced cash flow problems in 2020, and 18.7 per cent of people could not raise \$2,000 in an emergency. Moreover, 48.6 per cent of single parents were more likely to report financial distress. More recent surveys show that the rising cost of living pressures have resulted in more Australians experiencing financial hardship.

Accordingly, many young people will be living in households experiencing financial hardship. These financial challenges can affect their mental health and family members. Conversely, when families are experiencing mental health struggles, getting on top of finances is much harder. The ability to maintain good health and be financially secure are intertwined.

The relationship between financial well-being and mental health can also be positive. Financial well-being is defined by researchers as “when a person is able to meet expenses and has some money left over, is in control of their finances and feels financially secure, now and in the future”.

Being on top of our finances is empowering and can bring a sense of security and peace of mind.

Here are five tips we can share with young people to help them make smart money choices and feel good:

**1. CREATE A BUDGET:**

A budget is essential for understanding where money is going and identifying areas of spending to cut back or allocate funds more wisely. To complete the budget, keep records of any money coming in (from jobs, allowances, etc.) and expenses (social outings, mobile phone, food, etc.). Using a spreadsheet program and downloading a budget template is especially useful for having a file they can easily update as circumstances change. To get started, try the budget planners in the resource links below.

**2. BUILD AN EMERGENCY FUND:**

‘Saving for a rainy day’ is a common saying for good reason. It is important to have money in an account whose only purpose is to help in an emergency. Even small contributions over time can add up and help you to pay for unexpected expenses like replacing a bike or scooter, increases in the cost of things you need like bus or train tickets, or fixing a broken phone. Having this account provides peace of mind but be careful not to make it too easy to withdraw money; we all have difficulty resisting temptation! Some banks allow the creation of sub-accounts that can be personalised with a nickname, such as “Keep out-emergencies only”.

**3. PRACTICE SMART SPENDING:**

Taking time to think through spending decisions will result in better use of money. This involves researching prices, looking for discounts or deals, and considering how much use it will get and even how much it could sell for later. Ideally, part of the decision-making process should include thinking about the other spending options for the same amount of money that could result in a better outcome. It’s important to understand that we all occasionally succumb to impulse buying but can change our habits to save money.

**4. GET MORE INFORMATION:**

Being open to learning about financial concepts and ways to help with managing money is crucial for long-term financial well-being. Key financial concepts to find out about include compound interest, credit scores, investments, and debt management. Check out the Moneysmart website, as it is designed to convey information in easy-to-read, bite-sized chunks and is from a trustworthy source. Other great sites from trusted sources are in the resource

links below.

**5. GET HELP WHEN NEEDED:**

Things can go wrong regarding money. Getting scammed and getting into bad debts are problems that are better talked about sooner rather than later. Telling someone or seeking advice from a counsellor is the first step. Many of us can find ourselves experiencing financial hardship or health challenges at points in our lives. There is no shame in this; seeking support is never too early or late.

**About Ecstra Foundation**

Ecstra Foundation exists to help build the financial well-being of all Australians within a fair financial system. In 2022 we launched Talk Money with Ecstra Foundation, a financial education program offered free to all Australian schools. The program aims to help young people develop the money skills and behaviours they needed to be confident talking about money and to make informed financial decisions, now and in the future. The financial behaviours developed early in their life are likely to persist in adulthood and majorly impact financial well-being. These five four tips provide some practical money lessons for life, which if reinforced can help improve people’s sense of financial security and wellbeing.

Book a free financial education workshop for a primary or secondary school anywhere in Australia at [www.talkmoney.org.au](http://www.talkmoney.org.au).

*Dr Tracey West is a financial literacy and financial education expert with over 11 years’ experience investigating and teaching consumer knowledge and behaviours. Tracey is the financial education manager for Ecstra Foundation and manages the Talk Money program.*

**Tracey holds a PhD (Finance), a G.Dip. Secondary Education and B.Commerce (Griffith University).**

*For a list of references please contact the editor.*

Image 1. Measuring What Matters Framework

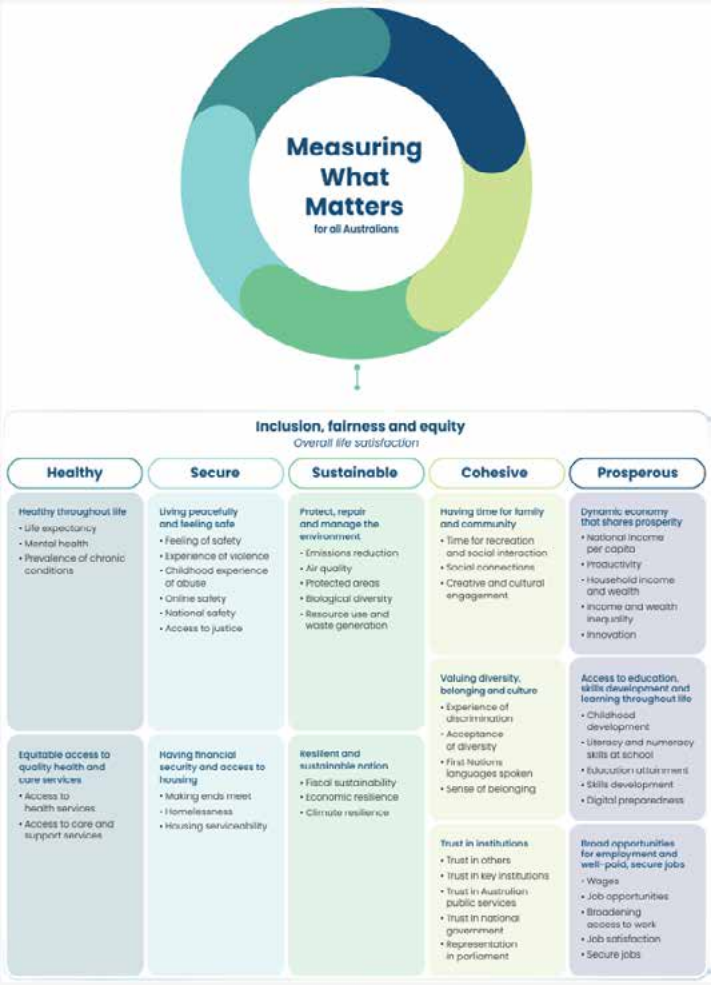


Image 2. Model of Financial Well-being

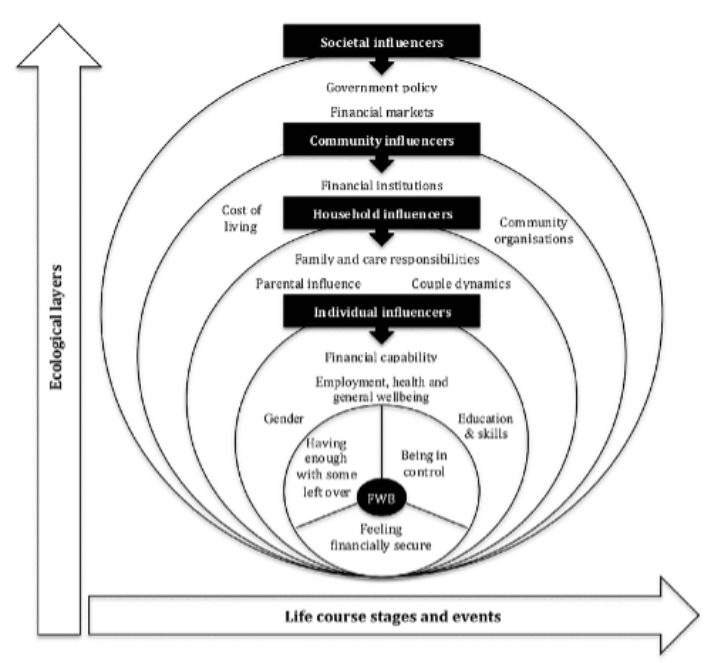


Image 3. The link between financial well-being and mental health





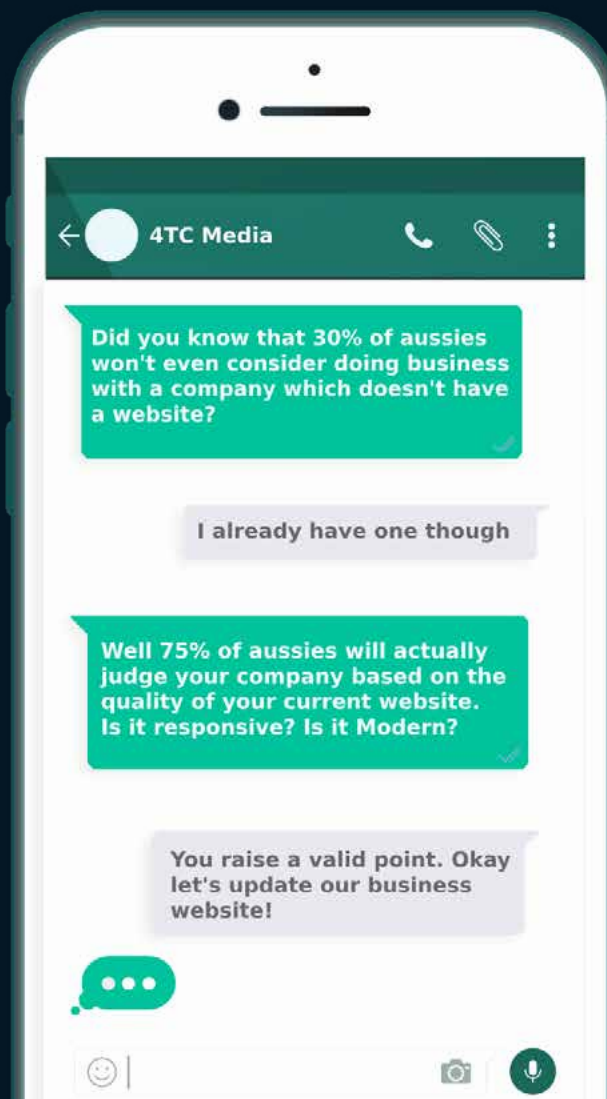


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## Get Help

### Nationwide

**The National Cannabis Information & Helpline**  
<https://ncpic.org.au/helpline/>  
**1800 30 40 50**

**Headspace Chat Online**  
<https://eheadspace.org.au/>  
**Online chat available**  
**1800 650 890 (9AM -1AM)**

**1800RESPECT**  
<https://www.1800respect.org.au/>  
**1800 737 732**

**Blue Knot Foundation Helpline**  
<http://www.blueknot.org.au/Helpline>  
**1300 657 380**

**Lifeline**  
<http://www.lifeline.org.au/>  
**13 11 14**

**The Butterfly Foundation**  
<http://thebutterflyfoundation.org.au/>  
**1800 33 4673**

**Kids Help Line**  
<http://www.kidshelp.com.au/>  
**1800 55 18 00**

**Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS)**  
<http://www.dva.gov.au/>  
**1800 011 046**

**PANDA - National Perinatal Depression Helpline**  
<http://www.panda.org.au/>  
**1300 726 306**

**Australian Government: AIHW MHSA**  
<http://mhsa.aihw.gov.au/home>

**SANE Australia**  
<http://www.sane.org/>  
**1800 187 263**

**Gambling Helpline**  
<http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/>  
**Online chat available**  
**1800 858 858**

**Suicide Call Back Service**  
<https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au>  
**Online chat available**  
**1300 659 467**

**Family Drug Support**  
<http://www.fds.org.au/>  
**1300 368 186**

**Al-Anon**  
<http://www.al-anon.org.au/contact>  
**1300 ALANON (1300 252 666)**

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
<http://www.aa.org.au/>  
**1300 222 222**

**Quit Line**  
<http://www.quit.org.au/>  
**13 78 48**

**Mind Connect**  
<https://www.mindaustalia.org.au/contact-us.html>  
**1300 286 463**

**Mensline Australia**  
<http://www.mensline.org.au/>  
**1300 78 99 78**

### Victoria

**Youth Drug and Alcohol Advice (YoDAA)**  
<https://www.ysas.org.au>

**Pharmacotherapy, Advocacy, Mediation & Support (PAMS)**  
Advice for anyone experiencing trouble with their pharmacotherapy program (Methadone, Suboxone etc...)  
**1800 443 844**

**1800 ICE ADVICE**  
Advice and support for people who use ice, their families and health professionals.  
**1800 423 238**

**DirectLine**  
Confidential alcohol and drug counselling and referral line.  
**1800 888 236**

**Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)**  
A 24-hour confidential information, advice and referral telephone service.  
**1800 151 045**

**Ted Noffs Foundation help line**  
Counselling and support for young people and their families.

### New South Wales

### Queensland

**Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)**  
Telephone information, counselling and referral.  
**1800 177 833**

**Counselling Online**  
If you prefer to speak to someone  
**1800 177 833 (Regional)**  
**07 3837 5989 (metro)**

**Alcohol and Drug Support Line**  
24/7, state-wide counselling, information, referral and support  
**Metro: (08) 9442 5050**  
**Country: 1800 653 203**

**Parent and Family Drug Support Line**  
24/7, state-wide counselling, information, referral and support.  
**1800 721 997**

**Meth Helpline**  
24/7, state-wide counselling, information, referral and support.  
**1800 874 878**

### South Australia

**Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)**  
Telephone information, counselling, and referral service.  
**1300 131 340**

### Western Australia

### ACT

**Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)**  
24-hour telephone service offering information, advice, referral, intake, assessment and support.  
**02 6207 9977**

### Northern Territory

**Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)**  
24-hour Alcohol and Drug Telephone Information and counselling service.  
**1800 131 350**

### Tasmania

**Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)**  
A 24-hour telephone information and counselling line.  
**1800 811 994**

*If you are in an emergency, or at immediate risk of harm to yourself or others, please contact emergency services on 000*



# The Big S'cool Walk



DONATE



EMPOWER



CHANGE

Donate  
Now



## MAKE AN IMPACT

In 2022, a group of daring Australian entrepreneurs undertook a remarkable 50-kilometre journey around the captivating island of Siquijor, nestled amidst the majestic Indian and Pacific Oceans in the heart of the Philippines.

Their mission was bold yet simple: to infuse the essence of friendship, fitness, and adventure into a lifeline of support for children in remote schools, delivering essential resources.

## BE A PART OF OUR STORY

Your support changes everything. Every dollar you donate helps provide vital education resources to children, helping them to thrive and succeed. Together, we can create a brighter future.

## READY TO MAKE AN IMPACT?

Take the first step towards change today by making a donation. To be involved in 2024, visit [www.thebigscoolwalk.org](http://www.thebigscoolwalk.org) and join us on our mission to make a difference.