

## When things are difficult at school...

For some young people, school is very difficult. It can be difficult because of things that are happening at school, or because of things happening at home.

Some of the things that can make it difficult to be at school are:

- Being bullied or harassed at school (or over the phone or internet)
- Fights with your parents/ people at home
- Domestic violence or abuse at home
- Coming to Australia from another country
- If you've left home and you're living with friends (homelessness)
- If your parents are sick, or have mental health issues
- If you feel sad, or angry, or hopeless or really down on yourself
- If you don't have friends at school, or you feel lonely and isolated
- If your friends do things that get you into trouble (wagging, smoking etc)
- If you have a problem with drinking or drug use
- If you have conflict with a teacher
- If you need to care for your brothers and sisters, parents or grandparents or worry about them, which makes it hard to focus on school and get things done
- If you don't feel like you fit in at school
- If you feel confused or uncertain about what you want to do
- If you're truanting or skipping classes
- If you get suspended a lot, or get into lots of trouble at school

If you or someone you know has these issues, maybe you should speak to someone? Each school is different, but there are a lot of people at school who might be able to help you!

These can include:

- YSCs: we're at most state high schools
- Principal or Deputy Principals: especially if something big is happening that is impacting on your ability to focus on school, or if someone is bullying you or harassing you.
- Year Level Coordinators or Heads of Department: if something is happening that makes being at school difficult, or you have a problem with a teacher or a subject or assessment.
- Teachers: especially if it's about school work, assignments or exams or if you think you're falling behind because of what's happening outside of school. Maybe they can give you an extension? Try finding a time when they are not busy (like before or after a lesson or lunch time).
- Guidance Officers: help out with a lot of things, sometimes just career planning and subject choice but also if something big is happening that you need support around

- School Based Youth Health Nurse: can give you information and ideas on how you feel and answer any questions about your health or emotional well-being.
- Chaplain: to support you about how your feeling and help you work things out.
- Indigenous or Polynesian support workers (some schools have these): can help you work things out and find the right people to support you.

If people don't know what's happening for you, they can't help. You have a right to be heard and listened to. If something's getting in the way of you being at school, or concentrating at school, maybe it's time to sort it out?

## Confidentiality – who will they tell?

People with different jobs have different rules about confidentiality. This means they have different rules about what they do with the information you tell them. If you are worried about this, speak to them first. Ask them what their rules about confidentiality are, or what information they need to tell the Principal, or your parents, or the police about.

This can help you decide who you will tell, and how much you will tell them.

Sometimes you just need to find someone you trust. Maybe it's a teacher you really like, or has been nice to talk to in the past. They might be able to help, or point you in the right direction to get some help.

Remember, if you are worried about the school telling your parents or the Principal about something, ask them first. Some young people say "I have a friend who has this problem... would you tell their parents?" It helps you understand what that person can keep between you and them, and what they may need to tell someone else about (like the police, or your parents, or the Principal).

**If someone is not safe, if you are being harmed, then this is NOT OK. No one deserves to be hurt.**

**People have a right to feel safe, all of the time.**

## What happens if they don't care?

If you try and talk to someone and they don't listen, or they don't seem interested, DON'T GIVE UP. How you feel and what's happening for you is important. Please try again with someone else.

You are not alone. You don't have to work this out by yourself. Nothing is so big that you can't tell someone about it.

## Who else can help?

Outside of school there are people who can help as well.

These could include:

- Parents, step-parents, the adults you live with
- Sisters, brothers, cousins – especially if they're older than you are and might have some ideas on how to fix things.
- Extended family like grandparents or aunts and uncles, or a family friend that listens to you and takes you seriously.
- Your friends (sometimes you may need to get an adult or older person involved as well, but your friends are a good place to start)
- Neighbours you like and trust, or maybe your friend's mum or dad
- Church leaders, elders etc
- Counselling services – like Kids Helpline (you don't have to tell them your name and it's free)
- Doctors like your GP – you can ask to go in alone or make an appointment by yourself and chat to them about how you're feeling, whether it's health related or mental health related.
- Youth Services like Inala Youth Service
- Headspace – one has just opened up in Inala
- If it's really serious and you are being harmed, or someone else is being harmed, the Police or the Department of Child Safety can help. It is not ok for anyone to be hurt, ever. Everyone has a right to feel safe ALL the time.

## What happens if they FREAK OUT?

Sometimes when you try and tell an adult something that's big and out of the blue they might get very angry, or upset. Sometimes they just need to calm down a bit and think it through.

Just because people get angry or upset doesn't mean they don't care. Sometimes it means they care a lot - they are just upset and not thinking clearly.

No matter how angry or shocked or upset people are, they should not harm you, or themselves, or anyone else. If you think there's a chance that the person you are going to talk to is going to get angry enough to hurt you, or themselves, or someone else, you need to talk to someone else first. Someone like a youth worker, or a support person at school, or a Guidance Officer, or the police or the Department of Child Safety.

It's our JOB to stay calm and cool and help you! We can also support you to tell someone else.

If the people you are talking to do not seem interested, or are not listening to how you feel, there are other supports and services that can help. These include:

- Inala Youth Service – there are a lot of different programs that support young people.
- Headspace – Inala Civic Center
- Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800