

Looking after yourself during your senior studies and dealing with changes and challenges arising from COVID19

Years 11 and 12 can be stressful, and the situation with coronavirus (COVID-19) has only added to the uncertainty and challenges of senior studies. You might feel worried about what will happen this year, as well as what lies ahead in 2021 and beyond. These emotions, while understandable, can be distracting and draining. So it is important to have some strategies to manage our worries, re-focus our thinking and look after ourselves.

Be balanced and compassionate in your thinking

It's important to be kind to yourself and realistic in your thinking. Try to be as kind and supportive when speaking to yourself as you would be if you were talking with a good friend.

Keep connected

In challenging times we're better together, so stay in touch, look out for each other and keep connected. There are lots of new and different ways you can catch up from the comfort of your own home. Your friends are likely experiencing similar worries and it can really help to talk about it together and support each other. Your family are also there to support you. So make time to be around people who make you feel good and are there to help.

Take back some control

When major change occurs, it's important to think about how much control you have over the situation. Understanding your role and how much you are able to change can help you put things in perspective. Identify things in your life that you are in control of, make a "to-do" list of what you are going to complete and check them off when done.

Accept what you are unable to change and re-frame

When unwanted change is beyond your control, look to take a reflective approach. Accepting that there are things beyond your control, and choosing to be comfortable with that fact, is likely to bring greater peace of mind and use less energy than fighting something you can't change. Try to see change as an opportunity to learn and grow, rather than as a setback.

Make healthy choices

Stay active - do a free on-line work-out or get outdoors and do something physical to give yourself a break, get the blood flowing and boost your mood. Make sure you get enough sleep to give your brain a rest and allow you to recharge. Eating well and staying hydrated will help to improve your mood, boost your energy level and support your general health.

Remember that you are still in control of your own path, and there are lots of different pathways to study and to work.

Education authorities and universities know that you may be worried about the HSC and your post-school plans. It can help to stay in touch with the latest advice and get updates as they are available.

NESA - Current advice for Year 11 and 12 students impacted by COVID-19 from the Education Standards Authority

UAC - Current advice for Year 12 students regarding university admission for 2021

For more information on university, TAFE, apprenticeships, other education/ training organisations or employment please contact them directly or your Careers Advisor.

Ideas for taking care of yourself and managing the challenges of senior studies



Self care apps and tools

Apps

Smiling Mind - a mindfulness meditation app. Mindfulness meditation can help manage stress, resilience, anxiety, depression and improve general health and wellbeing.

Niggle - helps you track your wellbeing and get personalised information, videos, podcasts, quizzes and tips to help tame your 'niggles'.

ReachOut WorryTime - helps you to control everyday stress and anxiety by acting as a place to store your daily worries.

ReachOut Breathe - helps reduce the physical symptoms of stress and anxiety by slowing down your breathing and your heart rate with your iPhone or Apple Watch.

Websites

Spaces - a place where you can collect and manage resources to build your own personalised mental health toolkit

ReachOut Chilling Out - a selection of strategies to choose from to help you relax and chill out

Beyond Blue Relaxation exercises - offers a range of relaxation exercises that can refocus your attention, clear your mind, slow down your body and help to put things in perspective.



Study tools and tips

Apps

Flora - stay focused and manage your screen time via a virtual garden. Each time you put your phone down, Flora plants a seed and a tree begins to grow. The less you use your phone, the better your garden grows.

Habit Tracker Bull - allows you to track and input good habits to help organise your life and develop good routines.

Recharge - helps track your sleep schedule, gives you activities to do in the morning to get the blood pumping and allows you to track your mood.

StudyStack - helps you memorise information by creating flashcards that can be studied and used to develop other games and activities to revise information.

7 minute Workout - offers daily workouts that are designed to get your heart rate up and clear the mind. No equipment and minimal time is needed for these workouts.

Websites

ReachOut Stressed about study during coronavirus? - a collection of material for students to get you through everything from studying at home, exam stress and fear about the future



Online self help tools

myCompass - a free program for people who have been feeling down, stressed or anxious or simply want to build good mental health. It includes many different interactive learning activities and a lifestyle tracking feature to help you better understand yourself and learn strategies to improve your mental health.

ReachOut Next Step - an online tool to help you work out what's going on and then recommend support options so that you can take the next step. Every recommendation has a range of options, allowing you to choose what you want to do next.

moodgym - a free program that will help you identify whether you are having problems with emotions like anxiety and depression and learn skills that can help to cope with these emotions.

BRAVE program - a free program that is designed to help young people with anxiety develop skills and coping strategies so that your worries and anxiety don't stop you from doing the things you want or need to do.

iBobbly - a free wellbeing app for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged 15 years+ that shows you ways to manage your thoughts and feelings, as well as how to decide what is important in your life.

People who can support you at school

You don't have to work everything out by yourself. There are plenty of people there to provide you with support and offer advice and suggestions.

These include:

- Your class teachers
- Year advisor/s
- Careers advisor
- School counsellor / school psychologist
- Student support officer

Your local doctor is also a great place to start – they are trained to help with any type of physical or mental health issue.

If you or a friend need more support

Everyone needs help sometimes. If you are feeling overwhelmed, there are people that can help support you through these challenging times. Many services have on-line and phone options, meaning you can chat with a mental health professional at a time, and in a way that works best for you.

Kids Helpline - free phone and online counselling support available 24/7 every day 1800 55 1800

Lifeline - free phone (24/7), online (7pm - 12am) and text chat (6pm - 12am) available every day 13 11 14

headspace - free online and phone chats (9am - 1am) and face to face support available 1800 650 890

Youth beyondblue - free phone (24/7) and online chat (3pm - 12am) available 1300 224 636

ReachOut (online forums and resources) au.reachout.com