

WORKING WITH CHILDREN

CHILDREN: WHY IS THIS THEME SO IMPORTANT?

- Young children need positive mental health to thrive and develop in healthy and positive ways.
- By supporting the mental health of each and every child, no matter where they live, we support the positive and healthy development of all of Australia's children.
- A range of protective and risk factors can help or hinder mental health and wellbeing outcomes, including supportive relationships and connectedness, knowledge and access to support, as well as physical and emotional safety.
- Research shows between primary school and high school, this desire to stay connected increases.
- Positive mental and emotional wellbeing keeps children level, learning and thriving.
- To look after all kids' health, we need a wide range of supports and help to keep families on stable ground. For example, community programs help spot possible mental health issues early – this helps make sure that all children get the support they need to develop healthily.
- Mental Health Week marks an important and powerful opportunity to tell people how important childhood experiences are for life-long resilience, social and emotional wellbeing, cementing and building loving relationships, self-esteem, and compassionate, confident people.



IDEAS: WHAT CAN YOU DO IN MENTAL HEALTH WEEK?

- Share a photo on Instagram showing how you already look after your mental wellbeing and how you positively engage with children #MHW2021 @MentalHealthWeekWA
- Print out the Mental Health Week 2021 poster and display it at home or in your community group, workplace or school
- Encourage your students or clients to draw or write about their feelings and how they take care of their mental health
- Talk to kids about looking after your mental health is important
- Take part in some mindfulness activities
- Share what your school or workplace is already doing - are there mindfulness, yoga, singing, dancing, or drawing activities?
- Get involved in a local community event or host one yourself to raise awareness - list it on the events page of the MHW website
- Participate in some of the events, activities, including the dance and drawing challenges
- Browse through the resources on the MHW website including recommended reading, helpful Apps and websites
- Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok and help spread the word
- Print off the post cards from our website and share tips or a supportive message with someone you know
- Talk to your kids about why looking after their mental health is important and it's normal to express a range of different feelings.



QUICK TIPS FOR IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH WITH CHILDREN

- Find out more about positive reinforcement and encouragement on our MHW support page
- Avoid shaming children when they have done something wrong or made a mistake- it breeds resentment and negative self-worth.
- Bullying can be a huge issue for children and young people, find ways to address it and reduce it on the MHW support page.
- Read Telethon Kids Institute's Core Study Language Guide on the Mental Health Week resources webpage
- Read Emerging Minds' material on how to talk about and frame mental health with children
- It's important to listen – if a child tells you how they feel it's because they trust you, and you are a safe and secure space for them.
- Keep it simple when trying to connect with children: fun activities that build genuine engagement.
- **Don't lose your sense of humour!** If tension rises, try to keep perspective and see the lighter side of the situation.
- Singing is just as therapeutic and satisfying as shouting - give those vocal chords a stretch and keep frustrations at bay.
- Self-care is important - if you feel good children will pick on that energy and also soak up your renewed interest in them.
- We all need to feel recognised, noticed and given sincere praise - children are no different. Children feel respected, heard and valued when they are included in conversations - positive reassurance does wonders.
- Ask children about their interests, hobbies and things they like to discuss. Talk to them, not down to them.
- Create a culture of confidence, connection and community - friendships, and trust are important for wellbeing, support and belonging.
- Encourage kids to draw, colour, write, and get creative with crafts.
- For older children, journaling and /or talking with a trusted person is important to maintain good mental wellbeing.
- Sharing how they feel helps to filter our thoughts and reflections; and harness their hopes, dreams, goals, and plans.
- Being in fresh air around nature and water can always seem to diffuse, distract and delight people of any age!
- Music and dancing fuel the soul and can help to shake out negative feelings and renew hope and optimism.
- Movement matters - support opportunities for exercise, sport or physical activities.

