



Thrive and survive VCE together

a guide for everyone

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The year ahead


Its not just the young person completing their senior year of school, everyone in the family is doing Year 11 or Year 12.

- So we need a plan for the year ahead
- Talk about our role
- What does support look like
- Recognising stress and anxiety / impact on our learning
- What's helpful and not helpful

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Achievements

- Top ten from 2002-2016 in the world
- 20 Grand Slam Titles
- 36 years old
- How is this possible?



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Support Team

Can't do this on our own...even to best of the best have good supports

Identify your team...who do I feel comfortable with....recruit them

- The go to friend
- Parents
- Teacher
- Extended Family (cousin, aunt, grandparent)
- Tutor
- Outline resources
- Doctor
- Counsellor
- The family pet

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Reminder for Parent's...

We have a vital role in helping our children but we also need to:

- manage our time
- manage our energy
- manage our stress
- look after ourselves
- need team approach
- communicate with each other
- manage family matters

You can do anything but not everything.

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Need a Plan... household

For a vcer to be organised they need the support of their parents and family members.


- Ensure that everyone in the family is on the same page together set some ground rules / guidelines for everyone to help.
- Routine Routine Routine....
- Highlight and talk about likely distractions and how are we going to manage them (Risk management)
- Also consider rosters for household chores etc.
- Respect Study time - try to keep siblings and pets away while studying.
- Whenever possible, have dinner at around the same time each night.
- Try to maintain new normalsearch for balance (COVID-normal)

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Doing our very best...it's a work in progress

Where to start?

- Need a Plan
- Preparation
- Routine
- Support Team
- Self care
- Toolkit-resources



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Mindful of our communication

Not all communication is straightforward... we are not mind readers

- **Sometimes we might need to make the first move-** waiting for them to come to you could lead to you are waiting an awfully long time so take the first step to show them you care.
- **It's all in the timing catch the right moment-** over a meal when it is just the two of you, over an activity such as a walk or preparing dinner or a long drive

Avoid starting conversations...

- As soon as they walk through the door from school/ work
- When rushing to get somewhere
- Late at night
- When siblings, friends or other family members are around
- In an ad-break
- During a fight or disagreement

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Mindful of our language

Understand we may be sensitive reactionary so broad shoulders are recommended for everyone

Hints:

- Try to separate the emotion / behaviour / emotion from the person
- All feelings are ok
- Better out than in
- Try to treat the problem as something external that you can deal with together

Example

- **Not Ideal** "You are lazy and need to work harder!"
- **Maybe :** "Okay, I can see you are finding it difficult right now to get motivated. How can we help you get more motivated is there a way I can help?"

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Mindful of our approach

Showing your support = together

If your teenager tells you about something specific that is stressing them out, it is important to work through it together.

Ask them:

- "What have you already tried to solve the problem?"
- "Why do you think that didn't work?"
- "Do you have any other ideas?"
- "Is there anyone you could go to who could help?"
- "Do you want to hear some of my ideas?"
- When suggesting your ideas, be careful not to use "should", or "must" as kids may not respond well to being told what to do.

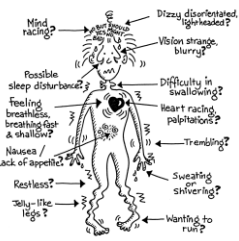
Try saying:

- "Have you thought about...?"
- "Maybe you could try...?"

Emphasise to your teenager that you may not be able to solve the problem completely or all in one go but it's worth trying something which could improve things

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DOES THIS LOOK FAMILIAR?



and overall, a feeling of fear and dread that seems to come from nowhere?

What does this look and feel like

If we worry or stress too much it can feel uncomfortable

In our body
In our mind

- Which can stop us doing things we like
- Can impact on how we think, feel and behave

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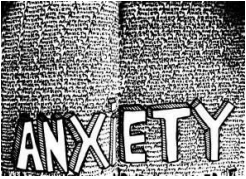
What is stress?



- Stress is a normal response which occurs when we react to certain situations or events.
- It causes your body to go into an "emergency mode."
- "Stress is not necessarily a bad thing."
- When we are stressed, our body produces chemicals which raises our heart rates and increases mental focus, allowing you to perform well over short periods of time.

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What is anxiety



- o Anxiety is a perceived threat and best understood by its impact on our body in terms of our feelings, thoughts and our behaviours

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The impacts on our mind and body

It can be common to try to hide or mask anxiety but in doing so, the condition is often exacerbated.

Acknowledging, paying attention to what is underneath, behind the thoughts and behaviours can help us manage anxiety.

- o How we feel in our physical bodies (muscle tension, nausea, dizziness etc.)
- o How we think (over thinking, what if, constant doubt, worry)
- o How we feel / our emotions (fear, anger, sadness, dread)
- o How we behave (performance, avoidance, act out)

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How it can impact on our learning...

The prefrontal cortex of the brain is offline, making high-level tasks such as problem-solving, rational thinking, and decision-making challenging.

- o Procrastination
- o Perfectionistic
- o Catastrophizing
- o Impact on our ability to think clearly
- o Ability to retain and recall information

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Brain drain-how to assist

Reassuring is a fine art and it's likely we will say wrong thing.

- It's more about what you do than what you say. Providing meals, comfort and for some, reassuring hugs is often more powerful than words.
- When highly stressed we can struggle to think clearly, complete work, want to avoid schoolwork completely. Its time to go back to basics. Feed Hydrate and Rest Then gently bring them back to the topic.
- If stuck feeling like they know nothing. We can gently start to rebuild their confidence.

Example: Lets start with what you think you know.

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Parent's role

We can't control the outcome ... but can help to prepare them to do their best

- Provide a balanced diet
- Encourage your child to stay active do at least 30 min of exercise a day
- Avoid drinking alcohol or taking drugs at all costs
- Encourage them to have some balance take time out of your day to do something you enjoy
- Get enough sleep
- Communicate with the teacher if concerned

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Good food ...feeds the mind

- Eating regular meals with some pit stops in between if you delay a meal you end up with brain fog
- Meal plan to include nutrients from fruit, vegetables, nuts and lean protein
- Research supports fish is brain food can assist in concentration and learning ability)(omega 3
- Avoid sugary foods and drinks because this impacts on our energy levels and our mood swings
- Low GI foods
- Avoid processed foods that provide quick sugar hits
- Try to drink 8 glasses of water a day

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Good sleep...improves mood, concentration and performance

- Create a good sleep routine
- Reduce your caffeine intake early afternoon
- Avoid drinking alcohol (impairs our thinking)
- Try going to bed same time each night
- Get up at the same time each morning
- Do something with the worries- write them down
- Try to relax for about 30 minutes before going to bed
- Avoid naps in the day
- Toss and turning -get up after 15 minutes if you can't sleep and restless return to bed when you feel more relaxed and sleepy
- Get active every day

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Need Balance -stay active

- Healthy body healthy mind
- Activities like sport, dance, walking or yoga can increase your performance by increasing oxygen to your brain. It's also great at reducing tension from stress and school pressure.
- Time for you (relax / sport /music)
- Time management: try making a list of activities and prioritise
- Connect with others: talk about your worries, laugh, be positive, be social
- Do the things you enjoy or help you maintain your wellbeing
- Be kind to yourself (listen to your internal talk)

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Self care

We can be our worst critic (the way we treat ourselves the way we talk to ourselves)

- Be kind to yourself
- Be gentle
- Be compassionate
- Be a good friend to yourself
- Accept your having a bad day
- Not everyday is the same
- Give yourself permission

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Tool Kit

Ideas... create a comfort box, a wall of courage, vision board

- Collect positive quotes and print them out and stick them on your wall or on the front of your folder. (wallpaper- computer / phone screen)
- Write down your gratitude list...everything good and wonderful in your life right now!
- Go for a walk and be in the moment – smell the roses, look at the colour of the leaves on the trees, look for the first signs of spring.
- Doing something you really enjoy, then make a list of things you really enjoy and do one each day for a week!
- Take a whole minute to eat a tiny square of chocolate.
- Build a list of inspirational songs and listen to it when you feel a little uptight.
- Buy yourself a stress ball and squeeze it!
- Take time out from study each day to look at your goals and focus on your dreams!
- Play sport or do some strenuous physical activity.
- Take a bath or a shower.
- Identify a self care.. What makes you feel good about yourself

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Listening to our internal chatter

The anxious mind can get quite creative...the more we feed it the stronger it becomes

Example: I'm going to fail... I can't

- ✓ Your thoughts are consumed with "I'm going to fail" I feel like I don't know anything.
- ✓ Ask yourself "Is this thought serving me well? (How is this impacting my learning or do well?"
- ✓ How can I challenge this thought in a gentle way?
- ✓ What could help you let go of worrying about it so much?
- ✓ Don't believe everything you think.
- ✓ We are not our thoughts.

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Challenge our thinking

Reality testing strategy

- ✓ What evidence supports my thinking?
- ✓ Are my thoughts based on facts or my interpretation of the situation?
- ✓ Am I jumping to negative conclusions?
- ✓ How can I find out if my thoughts are true?




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Gently challenge our perspective

Are there alternative explanations

- Are there other ways that I could look at this situation?
- **What else could the situation mean?**
- If I were being positive, how would I perceive this situation?



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Quick checklist for thriving

- Talking helps..because this challenges our perspective
- Do your normal or finding your "new normal" don't put life on hold
- We need to water ourselves, feed ourselves , need sunlight and to expend energy
- Establish a balanced regular routine study, living, sleeping
- Living well, looking at our diet, hydration, exercise
- Include things that make us feel good about being me

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Unhelpful

- Don't study on the bed, couch or with music and television on. Start to enact the exam environment –
- Naps
- Shelving your feelings, bottling them up
- Too many late nights
- Unhelpful people
- Blue light- screens

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"You can't stop the waves,
but you can learn to surf."

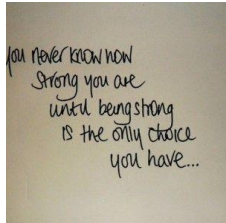
Jon Kabat-Zinn



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Living, learning, lessons

- If we learn how to manage our thoughts and feel our feelings, we are able to ride the waves, see a way through our struggles or situation.
- When we acknowledge and accept how we are thinking and feeling, we are able to see that we are so much wiser and more capable than our thoughts and emotions. We are not our thoughts.



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S	STOP ✓ Focus on the breath ✓ Aim to slow down ✓ Try breathing slowly and deeply
U	UNDERSTAND and acknowledge your thoughts and feelings ✓ Our thoughts are just thoughts ✓ Feelings will come and go ✓ Acceptance is the key "Resistance is futile"
R	REFLECT and remember you have a choice how you respond ✓ Ask yourself ✓ What do you have the power to change about this situation? ✓ What can you do to change this situation for the better? ✓ What could help you let go of worrying about it so much?
F	FOCUS on a way forward ✓ You have the power to choose your path ✓ Think of 2-3 options to try ✓ Select the best option for you and just do the best you can

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Helpful Relaxation techniques

Strategies

- Breathing Techniques
- Progressive Muscle Exercise
- Visualisation techniques
- Guided meditations
- Mindfulness activities
- Exercise
- Affirmation cards
- Cue cards



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Resources



Anxiety Recovery Centre Helpline on 9830 0533 or 1300 269 438 or 1300 ANXIETY.
Data-base of psychologists & psychiatrists who work with children.

Websites
www.arcvic.org.au (workshops, seminars)
www.headspace.org.au (ages 2-25 years)
www.reach.org.au (13-18 years)
www.heysigmund.com

Apps
 Smiling Mind
 Mind Unwind
 Headspace Guided Meditation and Mindfulness

Early intervention is a critical factor in combating the negative impact of anxiety on children.

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