



## **GUIDELINES:**

Supporting young people with stress,  
anxiety and/or depression





978-0-478-32380-1 (online)

**Publisher Details:**

Ministry of Social Development on  
behalf of The Prime Minister's Youth  
Mental Health Project.

PO BOX 1556  
Wellington 6140

Published July 2015



## INTRODUCTION

---

These guidelines are for people who a young person confides in about wanting support for mild to moderate mental health issues such as stress, anxiety or mild depression. You could be a friend, whānau or family member, or part of the community. It is about supporting a young person as mental health issues develop, but before they need clinical support.

Whether approached formally or informally by a young person, the following guidelines will help you assist them to navigate the support they need.

This booklet was written after a review of how young people access youth mental health support (sometimes referred to as 'referral pathways') highlighted the need for guidance to support people in the youth support navigator role.

These guidelines are part of the Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project, which focuses on reducing the incidence and prevalence of mild to moderate mental health problems in young people.

Read about the Youth Mental Health Project:

<http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/mental-health-and-addictions/youth-mental-health-project/youth-mental-health-project-initiatives#new>







## CONTENTS

---

What is the role of a youth support navigator?	07
Why is a youth support navigator important for young people?	08
What are mild to moderate mental health needs?	10
Who can be a youth support navigator?	11
Why are community connections important?	12
What is resilience, and why is it important?	13
Why are education settings important for providing support?	15
<b>Being a youth support navigator – in practice</b>	<b>17</b>
Being a youth support navigator	19
Principles for engaging young people	20
Respecting all cultures	22
What can and can't be shared	25
Other privacy considerations	26
Rights of a young person	28
Additional resources	30





## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A YOUTH SUPPORT NAVIGATOR?

---

A youth support navigator is any person in the community that a young person confides in about their wellbeing and wanting support for mild to moderate mental health issues such as stress, anxiety or depression.

The role of a youth support navigator involves 'walking alongside' a young person and their family to help them access mental health advice or support.





## WHY IS A YOUTH SUPPORT NAVIGATOR IMPORTANT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?

---

Getting early support before levels of mental health distress become worse can be crucial to a young person's wellbeing. Youth support navigators help young people access the mental health support they need, especially when that young person is hesitant about accessing help.

Youth support navigators empower young people to make the decisions that are right for them, by advocating for the needs and rights of the young person accessing mental health support.

The importance of adults mentoring young people is a feature of the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa. This strategy provides guidance on youth development in New Zealand. A youth development approach includes supporting a young person so they remain connected with the people around them, their home and their community; can make positive choices about their future; and can contribute positively to society.

Read about the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa:

<http://www.myd.govt.nz/resources-and-reports/publications/youth-development-strategy-aotearoa.html>



### **Expanding support networks for young people is important**

A young person may connect with and seek advice from a range of people who do not have a defined navigator support role as part of their professional practice, eg teachers, coaches or community leaders.

People with defined navigator roles are not always available, such as in rural places and for young people who have exited the formal education system. It is important that people in the community who may be approached for navigator support (either formally or informally) have guidance to assist them in this role.



## WHAT ARE MILD TO MODERATE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS?

---

Mild to moderate mental health needs are issues of emotional stability and behaviour – not serious enough to require a specialist referral, but of concern because they signal that a young person is distressed. There is the potential for things to become worse in the long-term if not addressed early.

Mental health needs that are not considered mild to moderate include psychotic disorders, severe personality disorders, severe anxiety, major depression, significant alcohol and other drug abuse issues or co-existing conditions. The majority of young people diagnosed with such conditions will require more intensive treatment with a specialist mental health provider such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Many severe disorders will also require the use of medication.

Further information about mental health issues in young people is available on:

- the Common Ground website: <http://www.commonground.org.nz>
- the Lowdown website: <http://www.thelowdown.co.nz>



## WHO CAN BE A YOUTH SUPPORT NAVIGATOR?

---

Anyone (adults or peers) working alongside or in contact with a young person can be a youth support navigator. Whether in the community or in a community agency, they walk alongside the young person and help them access the support they need.

Youth support navigators may be, but are not limited to:

- Staff who already have a defined community liaison role, such as youth workers, guidance counsellors or pastoral care coordinators in schools.
- People who do not have a defined youth support navigator role, such as teachers and school staff, coaches, peers of young people, community leaders, and providers of youth-focused activities (eg sports clubs).

A youth support navigator may be the first contact that a young person seeks advice from in dealing with a mental health and/or addiction issue. Professionals who have existing roles helping young people access services can also be considered youth support navigators, such as Whānau Ora service providers and social workers.



## WHY ARE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS IMPORTANT?

---

Young people are most resilient when they maintain connections to their community. Family, friends and community organisations can all help a young person maintain a positive sense of wellbeing during and after mental health support or therapy. Having a constant support structure in their life can help a young person overcome any challenges they may face.

Research supports the important role that friends and peers play in helping young people seek help with mental health issues. They are often the first to know if one of their friends is experiencing mental health issues. Friends and peers can become youth support navigators.





## WHAT IS RESILIENCE, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

---

For young people, resilience means rebounding from adversity, trauma, tragedy, loss or stress. It is also about maintaining wellbeing, and mastering life with a sense of competence and hope. Resilience exists in individuals, families, whānau and communities and is something a navigator can help build in a young person and their family.

Research has identified a combination of factors that contribute to resilience in a person's life. The most important factor is having positive, trusting and supportive interpersonal relationships.

Resilience has relevance for everyone. Initially, resilience can be fostered through positive childhood experiences, and further developed through learning from challenges and mistakes. It includes either recognising or growing individual strengths such as optimism, self-esteem, good problem-solving skills and personal supports. It can also be developed through participation in community networks or groups, which can help people build essential and supportive connections.





## WHY ARE EDUCATION SETTINGS IMPORTANT FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT?

---

Education settings and other learning environments play an important role in helping young people feel safe, resilient and become connected to their communities. In addition, all schools and education providers have a responsibility to ensure, to the best of their abilities, the wellbeing of their students.

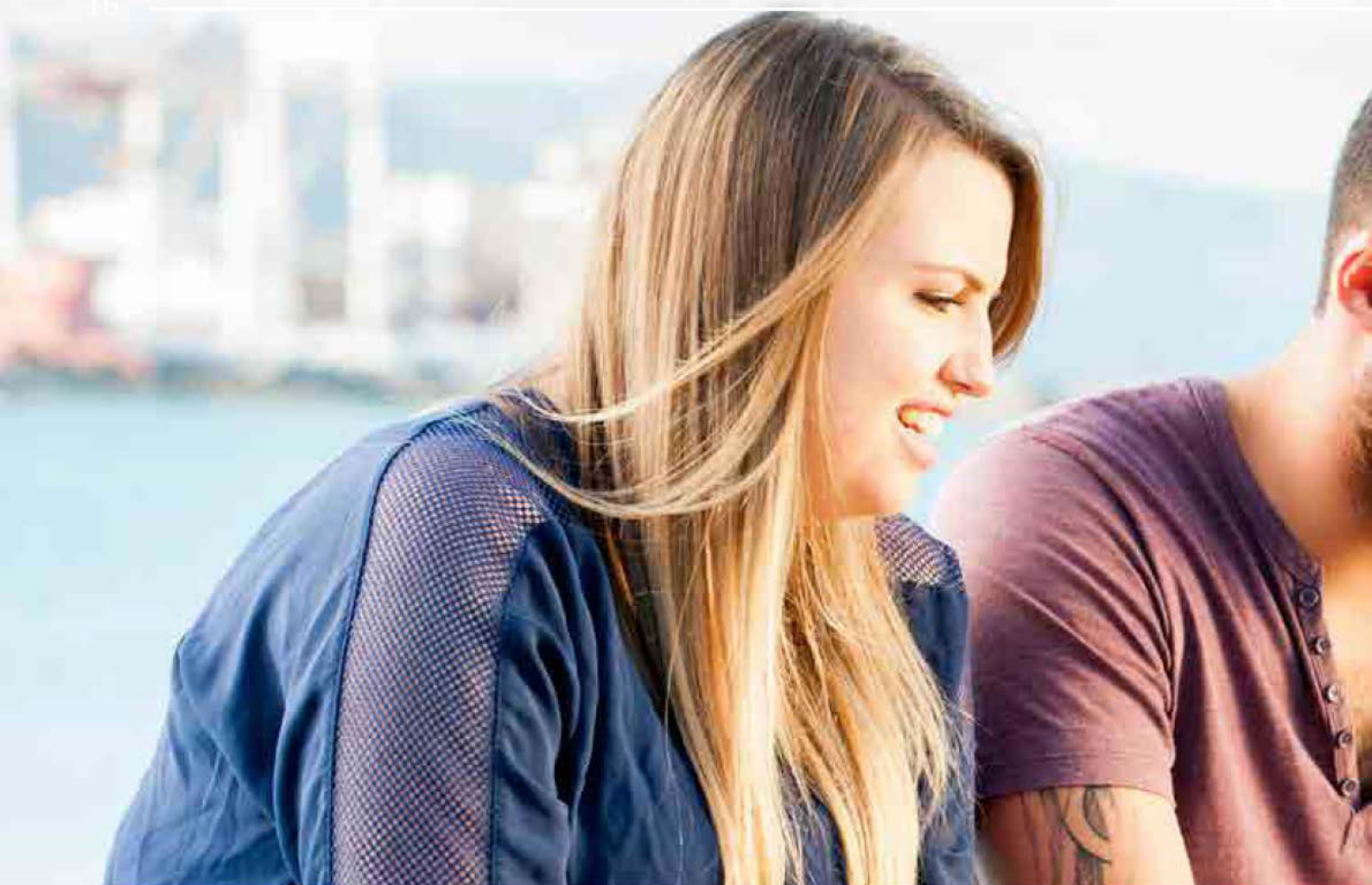
Some schools provide mental health support. For example, pastoral care co-ordinators keep a watch on the welfare and progress of students, and work closely with the school's specialist counselling and careers staff. These roles can be a very positive way for schools to improve 'referral pathways' within and outside of schools.

For schools that have a youth worker, this responsibility also includes a community liaison and co-ordination role.

Most secondary schools have access to funding to employ trained school counsellors and receive professional supervision. However, area schools and schools with fewer than 400 students are in a more vulnerable position as they don't always have the same level of funding.

Many universities, polytechnics and some training institutes have health services that include access to counsellors and mental health supports.









## **BEING A YOUTH SUPPORT NAVIGATOR – IN PRACTICE**









## BEING A YOUTH SUPPORT NAVIGATOR

---

Creating a good relationship with a young person and building trust to enable honest conversations is at the heart of being a youth support navigator. In many cases, simply providing a consistent caring presence is beneficial.

Being a youth support navigator is about:

- listening and being non-judgemental
- being approachable and strengths-based\*
- supporting a young person to make their own decisions
- providing consistent and supportive attention for the young person. This may or may not include being in touch with a mental health provider (subject to the consent of the young person)
- having hope and belief that positive change for a young person can occur if they want it
- understanding a youth perspective.

*\*Strengths-based approaches are about valuing the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in a young person and their community. This approach emphasises helping a young person identify possibilities and choices, rather than focusing on deficits and barriers.*



## PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE

---

The following principles have been developed in partnership with young people.

- Put yourself in the shoes of the young person seeking your support and guidance. Treat the person seeking support as you would like to be treated. Be a role model.
- Be non-judgemental, neutral and listen to what the young person says.
- Remember that trust takes time to build.
- Be aware that the young person may not want to have a conversation about what is troubling them. This may take time.
- Allow the young person to direct what is spoken about and how it is discussed.
- Keep conversations informal and friendly and use open-ended questions\*. Be aware of your body language.
- Give the young person time to think about and reply to a question. Silence is okay.
- Being on time is less important than making time. Conversations do not always fit a schedule.
- Ensure that the venue for a conversation is safe and welcoming. Conversations could occur during activities away from an office, eg while going for a walk, kicking a ball or painting.
- Confidentiality and privacy are important. The young person will guide you on what can and can't be shared.



- There is unlikely to be one right answer. Being approachable and keeping conversations open is most important.
- Don't tell the young person what to do; encourage them to come up with options.
- Show an interest in the young person and what is topical for them. Don't just focus on the issue itself.
- Focus on the strengths of the young person.
- Reassure the young person that feeling anxious, stressed or depressed are normal emotions and that it is okay to ask for support. Most of these feelings are temporary.

*\*Open-ended questions begin with 'how' or 'what' and will allow a young person seeking support to elaborate upon their feelings and, therefore, lead any conversation. Avoid asking questions that begin with 'why' as this will move away from a young person-centred approach and make the young person feel controlled and unsupported. If you still need to ask this kind of question, then think of using 'what happened?' or 'what was all that about?'.*



## RESPECTING ALL CULTURES

---

**A culturally responsive approach recognises values, beliefs and realities as the basis of a quality interpersonal interaction between a youth support navigator and a young person.**

Being responsive to a young person's culture is about recognising how their cultural background shapes their personal world view. A young person may identify to one or more cultures; how a young person identifies with those cultures may be still developing.

Recognising and understanding different world views is essential to developing effective relationships. Being culturally responsive involves working in ways that resonate with and affirm the culture defined by a young person (and therefore culturally appropriate to them). For those young people who identify as Māori, this principle also recognises them as tangata whenua.

Key culturally responsive principles include:

- seeing a young person in the context of other things going on in their lives (for Māori, use of the Whare Tapa Whā concept is a useful start; see <http://www.r2r.org.nz/maori-health/whare-tapa-wha.html>). For Pasifika, their Fonofale Pasifika model of health adopts a similar holistic model of wellbeing (<http://www.hauora.co.nz/pacific-health-promotion-models.html>). Many of these concepts will also be important for other communities, such as migrant communities

- focusing on a young person in the context of their family and whānau.
- where possible, integrating cultural processes and protocols when engaging with young people
- holding discussions in environments that can assist in enhancing cultural identity and connections, such as marae, schools, church and community places.

When working with Māori, being culturally responsive includes using Māori values and practices such as tikanga (processes that provide safety and integrity for all), manaakitanga (caring for and enhancing mana), whakamanawa (advocacy to challenge), utu (reciprocity), rangatiratanga (uniqueness of Māori leadership styles), whakapapa (connecting, valuing and deepening links), kaitiakitanga (protecting, supporting and sustaining), being flexible and using te reo where possible. Many of these concepts are equally important across other cultures.

Further information: <http://www.toromai.co.nz/chur-chur-bro>









## WHAT CAN AND CAN'T BE SHARED

---

**Dealing with a young person's privacy is extremely important. Keeping the trust around that information is integral to open and free conversations.**

The nature of information shared will come from the young person. Only when issues of self-harm or harm to others are identified is it appropriate to bring in further supports; where possible this should be done in consultation with the young person.

In general, health and community providers should seek agreement with the young person about what information will be shared, and with who. This agreement should identify what other services the young person and their family and whānau wish to be involved with and how and what information will be shared with those services. For example, whether information will be shared with the young person's school, doctor, or a non-governmental service, and if so, whether the information will be passed on by the service or by the young person/family and whānau.

There is no legal precedent requiring parental consent for young people to access school-based health or non-school-based services. However, parents and guardians should, where appropriate, be provided with information about the nature of the services available at the time of student enrolment. There are a range of practices appropriate to the different settings and communities within which school-based services function, with many accepting opt-in consent, while others require opt-out consent. In all instances, it is considered good practice to provide parents or guardians with opportunities to discuss concerns they may have about the service with the healthcare provider. It is not usually appropriate to provide them with information about individual clinical contacts (including with the child).



## OTHER PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS

---

**The Privacy Act 1993 sets rules to protect the privacy of personal information. The Health Information Privacy Code 1994 sets specific rules for health-sector agencies to better ensure protection of individuals' health information.**

Key points from these pieces of legislation include:

- the Privacy Act provides a set of principles which agencies dealing with personal information must comply with. These principles cover the collection, storage, use and disclosure of information, and set out individuals' rights to access information about themselves. With respect to health information, the Health Information Privacy Code replaces the information privacy principles in the Privacy Act
- a health agency must ensure that before collecting health information from the child/young person, the child/young person is aware of the reasons for collecting that information
- a health agency can refuse to allow a child or young person under 16 access to his or her information if, the disclosure of that information would be contrary to that individual's interests
- under the Health Information Privacy Code, a health agency must not disclose health information unless one of the exceptions (under rule 11) applies

- parents do not have an automatic right to all information about their mature children
- the views of a mature young person must be listened to and taken into account in respect of treatment, and their views should be ascertained and considered in respect to the disclosure of personal information
- when disclosure of information was not one of the purposes for which information was collected, information can be disclosed without authorisation from the patient or their representative if another law authorises or requires it.

Further Information: <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/consent-child-and-youth-health-information-practitioners>





## RIGHTS OF A YOUNG PERSON

---

**Every young person has the following rights, which are based on the Charter on the Rights of Tamariki Children & Rangatahi Young People in Healthcare Services in Aotearoa New Zealand\***

1. Consideration of their best interests as the primary concern of all involved in their care.
2. To express their views and to be heard and taken seriously.
3. The highest attainable standard of care.
4. Respect as a whole person, as well as respect for their family and whānau and their family's and whānau's individual characteristics, beliefs, culture and contexts.
5. To be nurtured by their parents and family and whānau, and to have family and whānau relationships supported by the services through which the young person is receiving care.
6. Information given in a form that is understandable to them.
7. To participate in decision-making and, as appropriate to their capabilities, to make decisions about their care.
8. Be kept safe from all forms of harm.
9. To have their privacy respected.
10. To play and participate in education, creative activities and recreation, even if this is difficult due to their illness or disability.
11. Continuity of care.

*\*The above content is based on the Charter on the Rights of the Tamariki Children & Rangitahi Youth People in Healthcare Services in Aotearoa New Zealand. The full Charter is available here: <http://www.paediatrics.org.nz/files/Charter%20on%20the%20rights%20of%20Children%20and%20Young%20People%20in%20NZ%20final%20version.pdf>*





## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

---

### Transition guidelines

- <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/transition-planning-guidelines-infant-child-and-adolescent-mental-health-alcohol-and-other-drugs>

### Advice on mild to moderate mental health issues and access to services

- <http://www.commonground.org.nz/>
- <http://www.thelowdown.co.nz/>
- <http://www.headspace.org.nz/young-people/>
- <http://www.everybody.co.nz/page-f66c7940-509c-4e0d-ae61-1a5cabd6d184.aspx>
- <http://www.youthline.co.nz/>

### Working with young people

- [http://www.wfct.org.nz/IM\\_Custom/ContentStore/Assets/6/52/d30cbf97e1af98f46ef3009593f6abb5/Positive%20Youth%20Development\\_16.pdf](http://www.wfct.org.nz/IM_Custom/ContentStore/Assets/6/52/d30cbf97e1af98f46ef3009593f6abb5/Positive%20Youth%20Development_16.pdf)
- <http://www.myd.govt.nz/working-with-young-people>
- <http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/mental-health-and-addictions/youth-mental-health-project>

### Youth cultures

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex <http://curious.org.nz/>
- Pasifika <http://www.leva.co.nz/library/leva/lets-get-real---real-skills-plus-seitapu---working-with-pacific-peoples>



- Youth culture in general <http://www.cpyu.org/>

Youth development and resilience

- <http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>

Education information

- Positive Behaviour for Learning: problem behaviour, improving children's wellbeing and increasing educational achievement <http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/>
- Bullying Prevention <http://www.education.govt.nz/school/managing-and-supporting-students/bullying-prevention-and-response/> -
- Education Review Office wellbeing indicators: The indicators are a tool to help schools improve and respond to student wellbeing <http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/Wellbeing-Indicators-for-Schools>
- Wellbeing@School: The Wellbeing@School self-review tools explore how different layers of school life contribute to creating a safe and caring climate that deters bullying <http://www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz/>



New Zealand Government