Parent Wellbeing Evening

Strategies for managing teenage stress and anxiety and building resilience

What will we cover this evening?

1. What is RIOT?
2. What is taught to our students?
3. What success/changes have we seen so far?
4. How does stress and anxiety manifest in the school environment?
5. What is the connection between anxiety and attendance and what can we do?
6. What strategies exist to build resilience?
7. What can happen at home to help support these teachings?
8. Where can you go when RIOT isn't enough?

1. What is RIOT?

Resilience In Our Teens

A program focused on understanding and reducing anxiety and building resilience. Our goal is to assist students in increasing their capacity to manage regular feelings of stress.
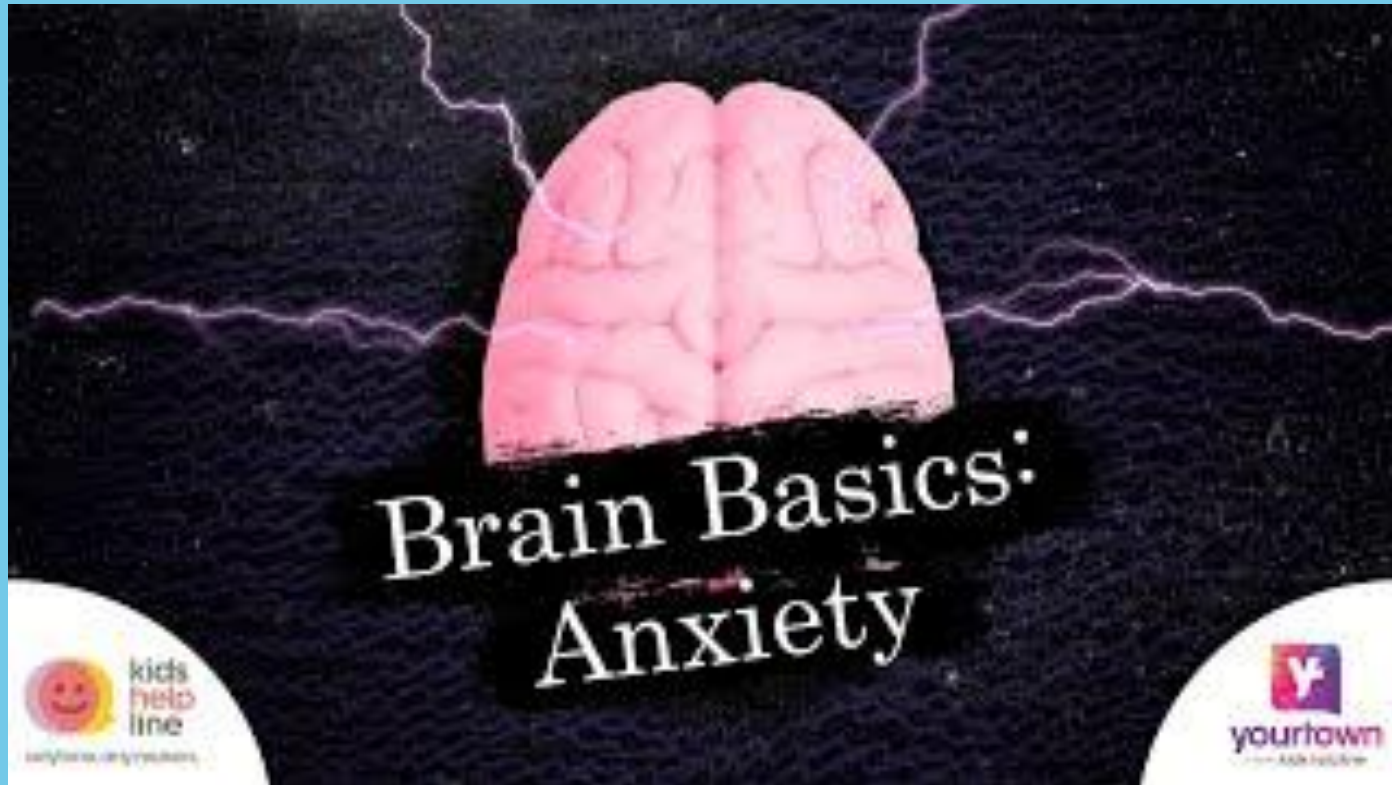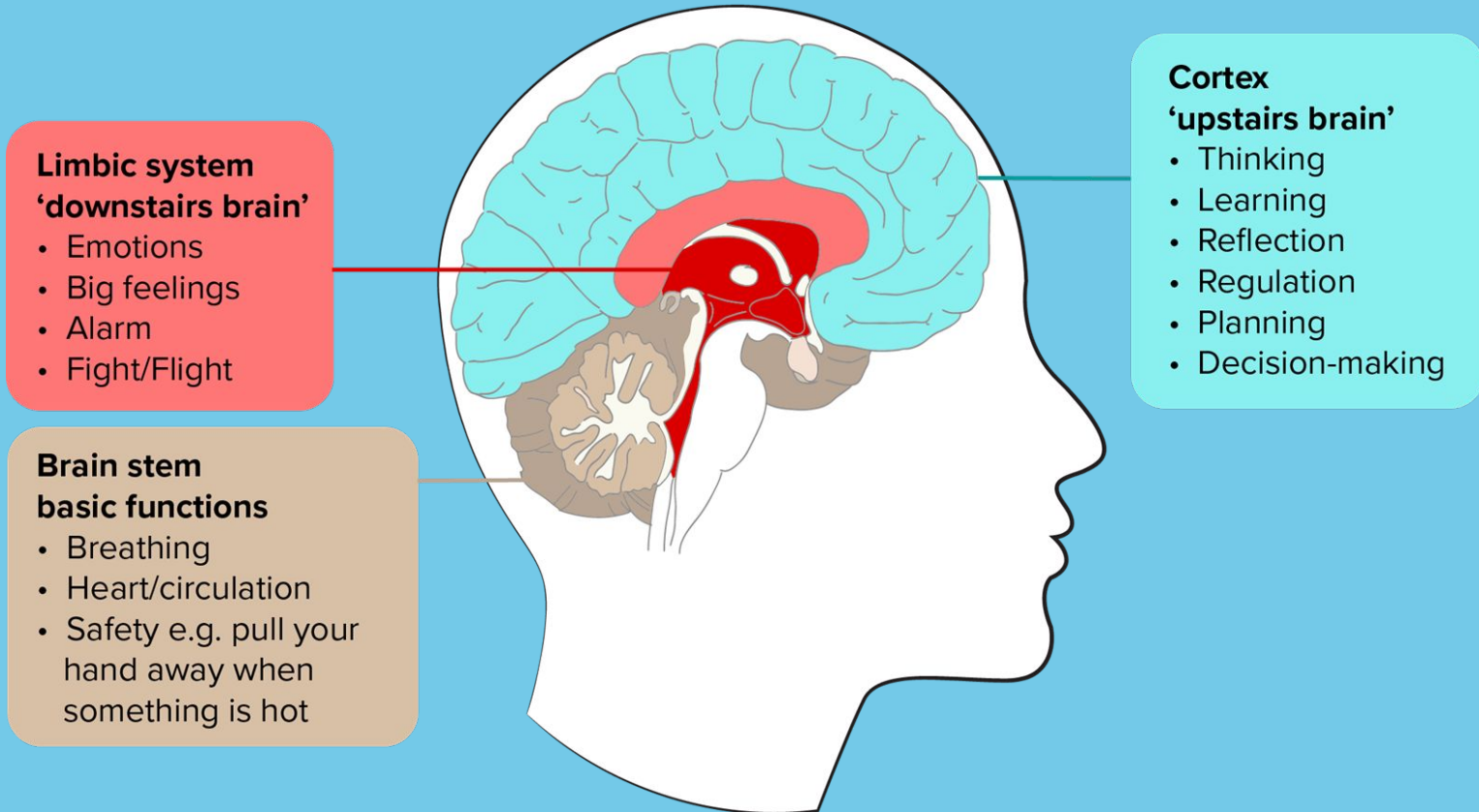
2. What is taught to our students?

- Helping students to understand the difference between 'normal', everyday emotional experiences and anxiety disorders, and how to manage these.
- When to seek additional help and how to do this.
- The neuroscience behind anxiety.
- Regulation/coping strategies.
- Framing conversations about anxiety in a more positive light - emotions/ anxiety are not permanent.
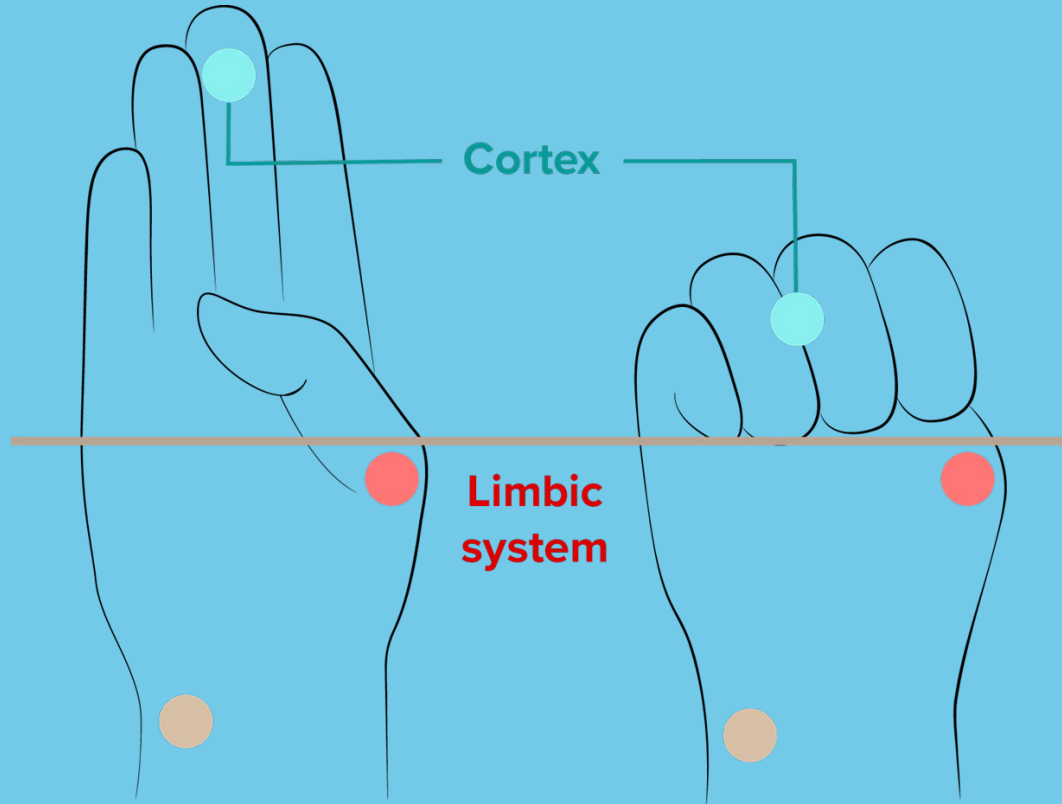- How to not 'fix' issues on behalf of students / children

Exploring Anxiety and Stress Management in Teens

Bottom - up thinking

Limbic system
'downstairs brain'
- Emotions
- Big feelings
- Alarm
- Fight/Flight

Brain stem
basic functions
- Breathing
- Heart/circulation
- Safety e.g. pull your hand away when something is hot

Cortex
'upstairs brain'
- Thinking
- Learning
- Reflection
- Regulation
- Planning
- Decision-making

The Hand Model of the Brain - Flipping your lid

Cortex

Limbic system

What can you do to bring your lid back down? Understanding cognitive distortions.

All or nothing thinking
Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

Over-generalising
Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in drawing conclussion.

Mental filter
Only paying attention to certain types of evidence. Noticing failures but not seeing sucesses.
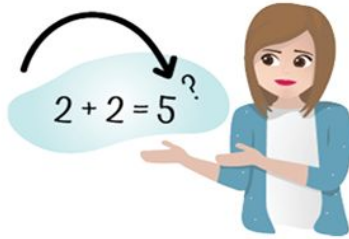
What can you do to bring your lid back down? Understanding cognitive distortions.

Disqualifying
Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another.

"That doesn't count."

Jumping to conclusions
The 2 key types are: mind reading (predicting what others are thinking), fortune telling (predicting the future)

$2 + 2 = 5$

Labelling
Assigning labels to ourselves or other people. "I'm a loser."
"I'm completely useless."
"They're such an idiot."

useless
"those idiots"
loser
stupid

Personalisation
Blaming yourself/taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming others for something that was your fault.

This is my fault!!

What can you do to bring your lid back down? Understanding cognitive distortions.

Magnify & minimise
Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important.

Emotional reasoning
Assuming that because we feel a certain way that we think it must be true. "I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot."

Should & must
Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we already failed.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Worksheets

TEMPLATE: A CBT WORKSHEET

Activating Event	Beliefs, thoughts and attitudes about A	Consequences of A + B on your emotions and behaviours.	Dispute (question and examine) B and generate alternative beliefs – helpful, necessary, or true.	Effect of alternative thoughts and beliefs (D)
A	B	C	D	E
Briefly write down what preceded (happened before) your emotions. (An event, a situation, a sensation, a memory, an image, a person)	Write down what went through your mind, or what A meant to you. Bs can be about you, others, the world, the past, or the future.	Write down what emotion you felt and how you acted when you felt this emotion.	Write an alternative for each B, using supporting arguments and evidence.	Write down how you feel and wish to act as a consequence of your alternatives at D

These tables are adaptations from Branch, R & Willson, R 2010 *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for DUMMIES* John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, West Sussex, England p. 47.

Emotional Thermometer

ANGRY, FURIOUS, EXPLOSIVE
Yelling, stomping, melting down

FRUSTRATED, ANNOYED, IRRITABLE
Arguing, refusing, shutting down

ANXIOUS, WORRIED, UNSETTLED
Piercing, avoiding, clinging

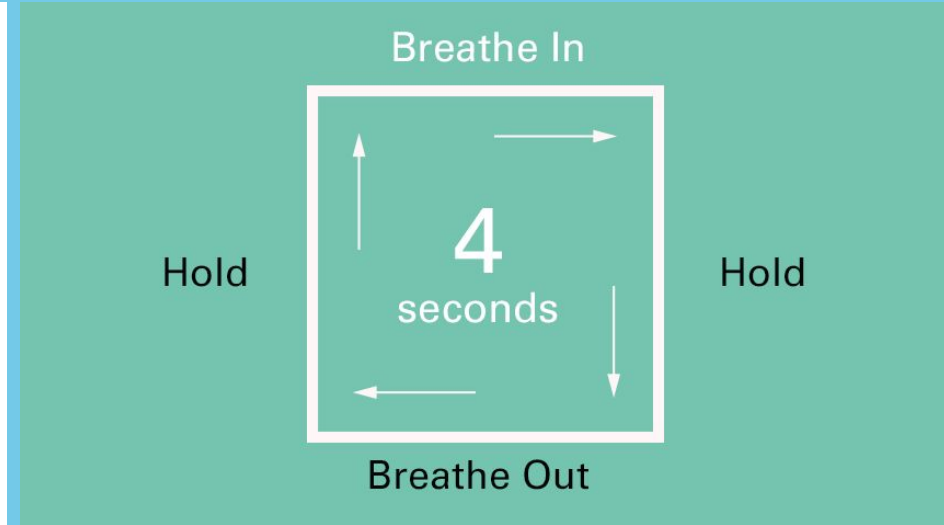**SAD, NEGATIVE, LONELY**
Crying, withdrawing, disengaging

HAPPY, CALM, CONTENT
Smiling, laughing, engaging

Coping Strategies - Box Breathing and Star Breathing

Coping Strategies - Grounding Exercises

The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique
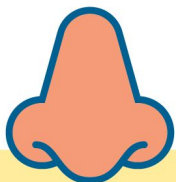
Ease your state of mind in stressful moments.

Acknowledge **5** things that you can see around you.

Acknowledge **4** things that you can touch around you.

Acknowledge **3** things that you can hear around you.

Acknowledge **2** things that you can smell around you.

Acknowledge **1** thing that you can taste around you.

#DeStressMonday   DeStressMonday.org   DeStress MONDAY

How to Do a Body Scan Meditation

Get comfortable

Close your eyes & focus on your breath

Bring awareness to a specific part of your body

Spend 20-60 seconds noticing sensations

Imagine tension decreasing with each breath

Release your focus on that part of your body

Move to the next part of your body and continue

If your thoughts wander, gently bring your awareness back

After several scans, let your awareness travel across your whole body

Release your focus & come back to your surroundings

healthline

When should we use these strategies?

- **Strategies to regulate** the nervous system e.g. breathing exercises, mindfulness and grounding exercises, meditation, movement and exercise, journaling

The **"strategies to regulate" must first be practiced when calm,** to later be effective strategies to draw on when the "lid is flipped" (when not calm.)

- **Strategies to teach** metacognition and improve student thinking and understanding of emotions e.g. cognitive distortion checksheets, catastrophe scale, Rational Emotional Behaviour Therapy/Cognitive Behaviour Therapy worksheets (Situation, Thinking, Feeling, Behaving chain)

The **"strategies to teach" are only to be completed when a student is already calm** and regulated. Require the prefrontal cortex to be working - not for use in the moments of dysregulation, but can be used as reflective practices after the fact.

3. What success/changes have we seen so far?

- Students are accessing our wellbeing space at a higher rate.
- Increased teacher consistency with how we discuss and manage these issues with students.
- A shared RIOT language amongst students, teachers, executive staff, parents, learning support counsellors etc.
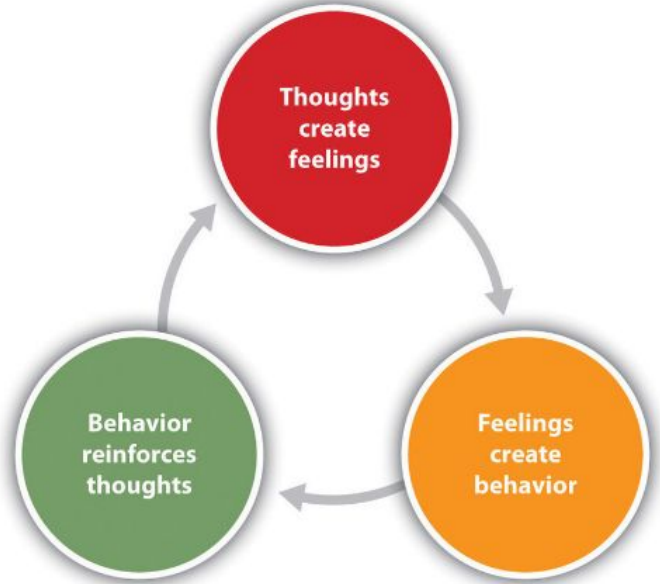
Thoughts, Emotions, Behaviors: The Cognitive Triangle

4. How does stress and anxiety manifest in the school environment?

- School refusal
- Assessment anxiety - time management and exam performance
- Overwhelm especially during exam weeks
- Changing friendships and isolation
- Perfectionism

5. What is the connection between anxiety and attendance and what can we do?

- Anxiety & perfectionism → avoidance
- Exposure ladders - expose self to fear and build resilience in facing challenge
- Encouraging positive and productive conversations and building habits → small changes and short term goals lead to long term change
- To do lists, chunking/sequencing tasks

RIOT

As a student at Mackellar, I will ...

Self-Check
✓ Self-check when I'm feeling stressed or anxious and reflect on my thoughts.

Think First
✓ Recognise that feelings come and go, and not all need action.

Clear Expression
✓ Use clear language to express my feelings and concerns.

Think Critically
✓ Apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Calm Reminders
✓ Practise self-calming and help my friends stay calm by reminding them of these relaxation techniques.

Seek Help
✓ Seek adult help when I cannot resolve a problem myself.

7. What can happen at home to help support these teachings?

- Understanding strategies - read newsletter and school website communications to stay updated on new strategies.
- Reinforce these strategies at home.
- Don't jump into fixing issues, take a step back, model rational reasoning and regulation, empathise with them.
- Help with time management and goal setting
- Encourage healthy digital habits and enforce and model sleep habits.

MANAGE REGULAR

stress WITH A

MINIMUM OF

anxiety.

Coaching strategies and holding sensitive conversations (some of these can apply at home too)

Our Aim:

To empower teachers to have sensitive conversations with students at appropriate times.

When:

- If you recognise a young person may be displaying signs of feeling stressed or anxious, or they have opened up to you about a difficulty coping (emotional dysregulation)
- If you already have a good rapport with the student. (what we suggest to teachers)
- If it is a good time for you and if you feel comfortable to have the conversation.

Listening with empathy

Listen with words, listen with body, listen with tone.

- "I'm hearing how you feel ___ about this."
- "Let me see if I've got this right. You're feeling like…"

Emotional coaching

In the moment when they are not calm:

● Set yourself aside and focus on their feelings.
● Listen with empathy.
● Help a teenager label their feelings accurately
● Suggest the coping/breathing techniques, guide them through thus

After they are calm again:

● Set limits while helping a teenager problem-solve. Create a plan for them to take to work towards solving their own issue.
● De-briefing after a period of emotional dysregulation.

A scaffolded conversation approach: SALON

S - Self-check - Is now a good time? (For both me and the person)

A - Acknowledge - I can see, I can hear, Let me see if I've got this right…

L - List the facts - This is what I've noticed/noted/heard…

O - Open ended questions - Is there anything else that might explain this? If (name someone they look up to) was here, what would they think or say?

N - Now what?

- I'm thinking there must be a solution here.
- I reckon this is a solvable problem. Got any ideas?
- I have every faith in your ability to work this out.

8. Where can you go when RIOT isn't enough?

In school:

- Year Advisor
- Head of Welfare
- Student Support Officer
- Trusted teacher
- School Counsellor
- Deputy Principals
- Learning Support Staffroom
- Wellbeing Space

Out of school:

- Online resources - Reach Out
- GP - mental healthcare plan
- Wellbeing Space
- Kids Helpline
- Headspace
- Books and podcasts
- Community information sessions

We are here for both yourself and the students and are always happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Contact us via the school's email address or phone number.

Parent Wellbeing Evening

Social Media, Technology Use and Managing Peer Conflict

Purpose of this Presentation:

1. To make you aware of what the school is teaching about screens and managing peer conflict.
2. To provide some strategies that may mitigate the negative impacts of screens and peer conflict.

What will we cover this evening?

1. What does the research say about screens and teenagers?
2. What does the school teach about social media and technology?
3. What has been the impact of the phone ban?
4. What apps are students using and how can they be safer?
5. What practical strategies does the school suggest for assisting teens with their social media and technology use?
6. What is the interplay between social media/technology and friendship conflicts?
7. What does the school teach about managing peer conflicts?
8. What practical strategies can you support your teen with when they face peer conflict?

What does the research say?
(Information that is not new, but worth keeping in mind when we get to the hard stuff.)

The Future Proofing Study (Black Dog Institute, 2023) involving over 3,700 Australian adolescents found that more screen time is linked with higher rates of **clinically significant depressive symptoms.**

A global study including Australian data of more than 577,000 adolescents (ages 11–15) showed that detrimental mental health effects begin after just **2 hours of recreational screen use per day for girls** (compared to 4 hours for boys), with effects including **depression, reduced quality of life, unhealthy diet, obesity, and poorer cognitive abilities.**

A review of 132 longitudinal studies involving over 290,000 children found a self-perpetuating cycle: higher screen use exacerbates **social-emotional issues (e.g., aggression, anxiety, attention difficulties, depression),** which in turn drive children back toward screens as a coping method.

Australian research from the University of the Sunshine Coast indicates that excessive screen use can lead to **poor social skills and low emotional intelligence**.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
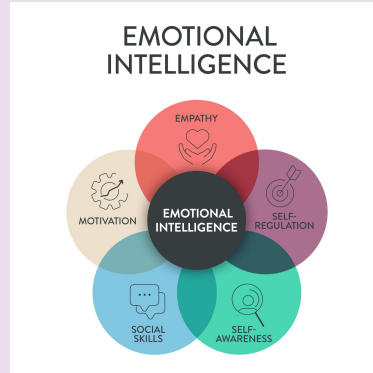
Additional Australian findings associate heavy technology use with **attention fragmentation**, potentially affecting the development of focus and executive function skills.

Globally, excessive use of beauty filters and curated self-images on social platforms has been linked to **lower self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, anxiety, depression, and body dysmorphia**, especially among adolescent girls.

2. What does the school teach about social media and technology?

PDHPE Content

Year 7 - Don't Be Mean Behind the Screen

- Peer Pressure
- Types of relationships
- Rights and responsibilities
- Online/offline behaviour
- Social Media
- Positive social media use
- Consequences of social media behaviour

Year 8 - Bouncing Back

- Reflection of current health behaviours
- Challenges and how we cope with them > includes help seeking strategies

Year 10 - Let's Party

- Social Media and Partying

TAS Content:

Design, production & project-based learning: Encourages practical, hands-on digital projects—helping students move from passive screen consumption to creative, purpose-driven digital tasks.

W@M

RESILIENCE IN OUR TEENS™

RIOT - SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

W@M Term One, Week Ten

Design Tricks

How is tech designed to hold our attention, and how can it impact our wellbeing?

These slides have been put together based on content created by the Center for Digital Thriving, based at Project Zero at Harvard.

What role has **social media** played in regards to these feelings?

Teens who spend more time using social media are more likely to experience depression, anxiety and other disorders, while teens who spend more time with groups of young people (such as sports teams or clubs) have better mental health.

Smartphones grab our attention so powerfully that if they vibrate, many of us will interrupt a face-to-face conversation, just in case the phone is bringing an update.

This reduces the quality of social interactions - it tells the person you are interacting with that they are not as important as the people on your phone. It also impacts on the quality of your learning.

Generation Z (you) are connected to everyone in the world, but studies show they are disconnected from those around them. Friendships have become more shallow by being governed by social media, which has been linked to weakening self-confidence and self-identity.

3. What has been the impact of the phone ban?

The NSW Department of Education's Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation survey found:

- 81 percent of principals say students' **learning has improved** since mobile phones were banned.
- 87 percent of principals say students are **less distracted** in the classroom since mobile phones were banned.
- 86 percent of principals say **socialising has improved** since the mobile phone ban.

- A survey conducted one year after implementing the ban surveyed almost 1,000 public school principals. It found that **95% support the phone ban**, reporting widespread positive outcomes.
- There is an active study linking screen use and NAPLAN results expected by end of 2026, which may shed more light on **academic impact.**

*Experts recommend: a **blended technology policy**. Time/place specific bans work in school contexts, and moderation plus digital literacy content, healthy boundaries and modelling are the best way to protect children from the potential harms of screens.*

4. What apps are students using and how can they be safer?

General Safety Habits Across All Apps

- **Group Chats are Terrible:** Wherever possible, discourage your child from participating in large group chats. These provide too many opportunities for negative interactions.
- **Passwords**: Young people should avoid using the same password across platforms, but parents should have the passwords.
- **Think Before Posting**: Remember screenshots can be taken, even in disappearing chats.
- **Report Abuse**: Take screenshots when something is not right, and share with the school. The school may recommend getting in touch with police.
- **Update apps**: Apps often update their policies and features.

Snapchat

- Turn on Ghost Mode in *Snap Map* settings so your location is hidden from everyone (or everyone except trusted friends).
- Share snaps only with specific people, not your whole friends list.
- Only accept friend requests from people you know in real life.
- Use the in-app tools to block unwanted contacts or report inappropriate snaps.

Instagram

- Private Profile: only approved followers can see posts, stories, and highlights.
- Share stories with a smaller, trusted group by sharing to 'Close Friends'.
- Limit who can comment on posts (friends only, or no one) with comment controls.
- Use tag approvals - require manual approval before anyone tags you in a photo.
- Quietly limit interactions from someone without blocking them by using 'restrict' control.

TikTok

- Only followers you approve can see your videos when you have a 'Private Account'.
- Automatically hide comments with certain words by using 'Comment Filters'.
- Restrict who can use your content in their own videos with duet and stitch controls.

YouTube

- Using 'Restricted Mode' filters out potentially mature or harmful content.
- Turn off comments or hold them for review.
- Limit chat in live streams to approved subscribers.
- On that note - limit live streams!

Roblox

- Limit who can chat with you, join your games, or see your inventory through the privacy settings.
- Prevents changes to privacy settings without a code by using an account PIN.
- Play only with people on your friends list in 'Friends Only Play'.

5. What practical strategies does the school suggest for assisting teens with their social media and technology use?

- Consider apps that allow oversight and control over young people's' phones (next slides)
- Have regular conversations with your children about screen time and what they're doing online.
- Make a community with other parents with similar values.
- Be aware they can do anything social they can do on phones on laptops.
- Make screens visible to parents at all times - no shut doors, no bedrooms.
- Model self-control and screen time goals.
- No phones an hour before bed.
- Use alarm clocks rather than students having phones in bedrooms.
- Lockboxes.
- Set clear rules and boundaries
- Use E-Safety Commissioner resources.
- Have visibility and transparency wherever possible.
- "The phone is yours"! - privacy is important, but you need access to what they do on your device.
- You can take their phones.

What apps can parents use to monitor family screen time?
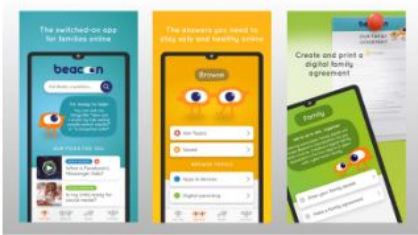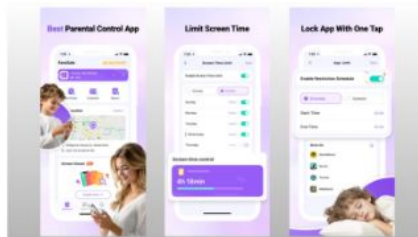

Beacon: Cyber Safety
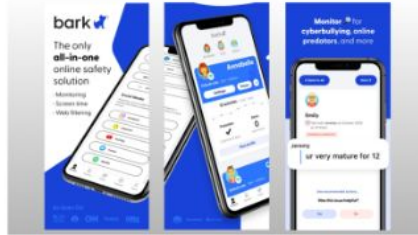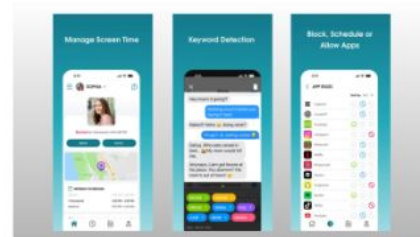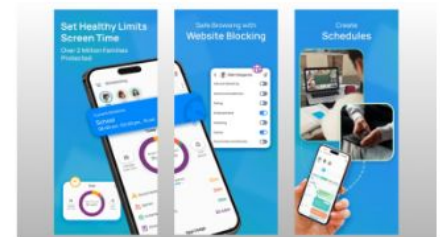
Bark
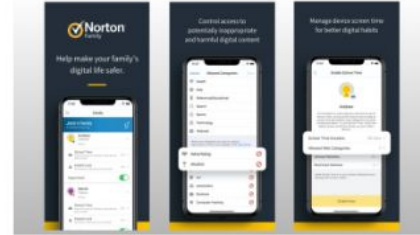
Norton Family Parental Control
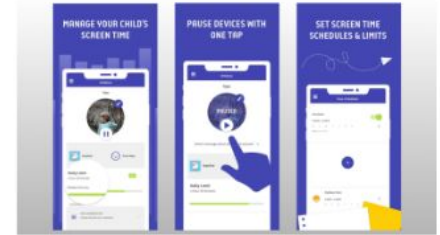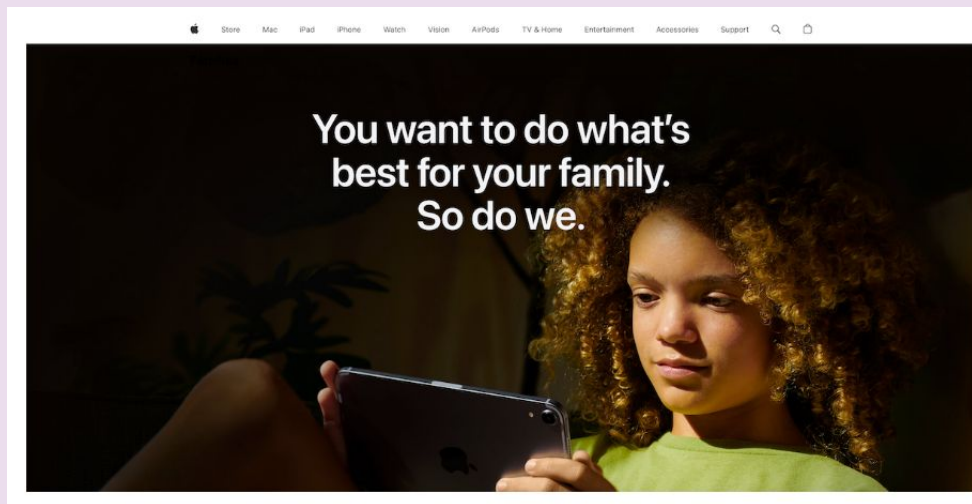
Screen Time
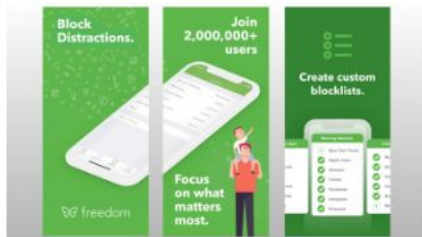
Freedom

FamiSafe

OurPact

Mobicip

Apple's Families page highlights tools and features designed to help parents manage their children's device usage and ensure a safe digital experience. Features like Screen Time and Parental Controls enable restrictions on app installations, in-app purchases, and content access. These features aim to empower parents to guide their children's technology use responsibly.

The App Store. A safe place for kids.

The Made for Kids section on the App Store is carefully curated to be a great space for children. And we review every app to make sure it does what it says it does. In Content Restrictions, you can also tap an age range and, just like that, your kids can buy or download only apps appropriate for them — including curated recommendations.

Learn more about the App Store ›

Cash Box with Key

$12

★★★☆☆ 3 (1)

Add to ba

afterpay⚹

On orders up to
$2000

Learn more

zp

On orders up to
$1000

Learn more

How to get it

Shop at   Broadway

Alarm Clock

$8

★★★★☆ 4.2 (358)

Ac

How to get it

Shop at Broadway

Click & Collect
Order before 12pm o

How could you **improve** social connectedness and continue to cut out social media at school?

1. TURN OFF iMESSAGE! Focus on the real world connections in class and allow your brain to focus on the work at hand. *(Of course iMessage is banned during class time.)*

2. Show your friends that they are important to you by not using devices during face-to-face interactions, and by limiting communication via devices. HINT! It is better to have your phone at the bottom of your bag than in your pocket - it's less of a temptation!

3. Develop your social skills by practising the art of conversation rather than retreating to online entertainment.

4. Experience boredom sometimes! Amusing yourself on your phone is blocking random, unplanned experiences that could be coming your way.

5. Go to the PDHPE staffroom at recess and lunch and borrow equipment.

6. What is the interplay between social media/technology and friendship conflicts?

- Constancy and connectivity
- Private interactions made public
- Not just friends - strangers, acquaintances and online-only friends.
- Misinterpretation of messages
- Exclusion
- Rumours and gossip spreading
- Group chats!!!
- Digital receipts, SnapStreaks.

What can the school do to support students when negative interactions occur online?

The school has duty of care over its students when they are on school grounds or if an incident has a clear and close connection to the school.

When an incident outside of school impacts a student's feeling of safety on school grounds, we will generally step in, when it is in a context where the school can reasonably intervene through our behaviour management processes.

School intervention may include:

- Wellbeing support for those affected and those offending.
- Peer or Staff Mediation for when friendships have broken down.
- Investigation to ensure consequences are appropriate and authentically delivered.
- Consequences for those in breach of school rules, the Department's Behaviour Code or when there are risks to student safety, both physical and emotional.

Where the school can't act, we may encourage parents to refer to:

- The E-Safety Commissioner
- NSW Police

Every instance of negative interactions online is different and therefore may require different handling.

7. What does the school teach about managing peer conflicts?
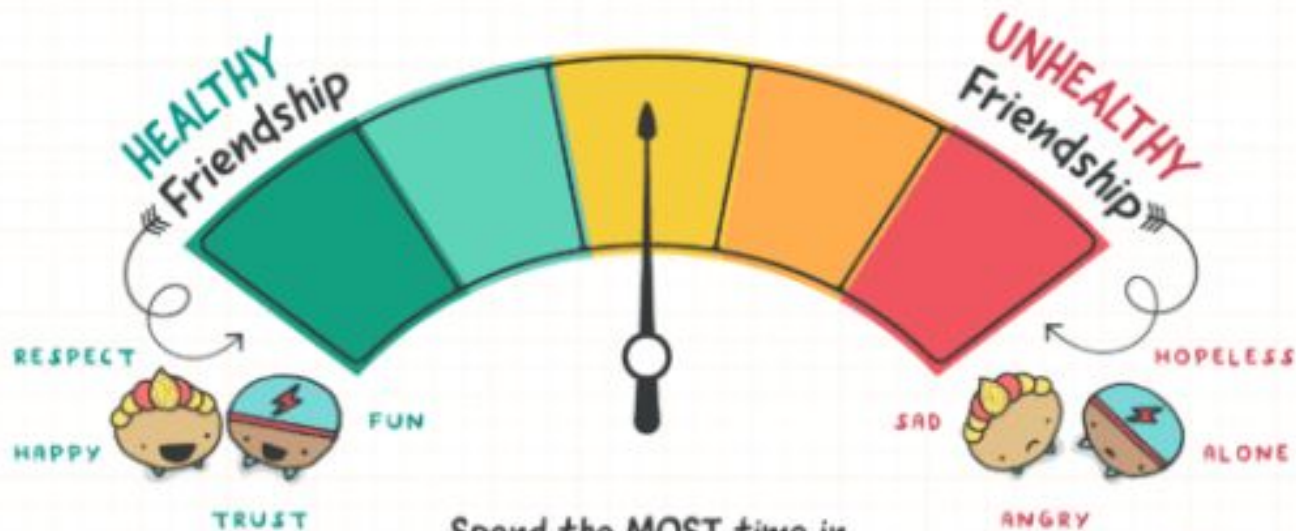
8. What practical strategies can you support your teen with when they face peer conflict?

- Know that conflict is an incredibly normal part of teen friendships.
- Use active listening, but recognise that not all feelings need to be validated.
- Some discussions are best carried out once a young person has self-regulated.
- Emotional coaching can be necessary at times - not just agreement.
- Help young people understand the difference between being hurt and someone intending to hurt them.
- Use the language of URStrong and RIOT where possible.
- Encourage agency, respect and values.
- Roleplay mediated discussions.
- Model positive friendships and conflict resolution.
- Seek help when needed, manage individually what they can.
- Take screenshots!

Help Seeking!

Student Support Officer - Lucie

School Counsellors

Year Advisors

Head Teacher Welfare

Deputy Principals

Principal

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Parent Wellbeing Evening

Q&A with Year Advisors

What will we cover this evening?

1. What is the role of the Year Advisor?
2. Who do I contact when...
3. Open forum!

What is the role of the Year Advisor?

- First point of contact between home and school.
- Year Advisors run meetings with their Year Groups three times a term that celebrate student success, discuss wellbeing concerns of the cohort and provide opportunities for mentoring students and improving communication.
- Create wellbeing plans when required.
- Liaise with external therapists to share strategies to support students at school.
- Liaise with staff about student issues and how to support them.

When do I contact the YA?

- Any concerns about your child – mental, physical, emotional
- Academic concerns – exam preparation, organisation, study skills, study strategies
- Relationship – friendship issues, home matters
- Attendance, welfare issues
- Referral to SSO or counselling service as needed, students can self-refer in High School

Open forum!

Please consider whether your question is specific to your child and might be better answered individually.