

6 April 2020

Dear Melrose Parents/Carers,

The public health emergency (COVID19) has presented a tough couple of weeks for our school and community. We sincerely hope you and your family are adjusting well to pupil free days and that you are coping okay.

The Melrose Student Engagement Team want to reach out and remind you we are still here for support now and in Term Two, 2020. We have put together some useful information about how to handle the concerns of teens during the pandemic as well as some mental health resources and support services.

Information to support your teens

The COVID19 epidemic can pose difficulties for families with teens since it is quite normal for teens to want to socialise with groups of friends. Many teens will find social isolation and physical distancing a huge challenge. [Talking to your teens](#) about this is strongly recommended. Some teens are going to find the current circumstances [stressful and overwhelming](#), but you can [help your teen adjust](#) by providing factual, age-appropriate information that keeps concerns in perspective. Talking with your teen is also an opportunity for you to hear their concerns, reinforce current [health advice](#) and to set the emotional tone by amplifying the positives. You could focus on this being a temporary situation, on global vaccine initiatives, our excellent health system, and the many new ways people are creating community to foster hope. This is also a good time to focus on [healthy living](#), [compassion](#) for self and others, and engaging with [alternative boredom busters](#) during self-isolation and social distancing.

Teens and Social Media

Many young people socialise online and are exposed to a wide variety of information sources by peers and social media platforms. This information can be highly variable in quality and agenda. Social media platforms can be a great way of keeping informed with high-quality information from reliable sources, but their suggestions are based on social networks and reading history which may amplify negative messages for some users, leading to an increase in anxiety. If online media is causing your teen distress, it may be best to encourage them to self-limit media consumption.

Support for students with disabilities

If you have a teen with an intellectual disability or Autism, then [Autism Australia](#) has gathered a comprehensive range of teen-friendly visuals, videos, and social stories related to COVID19. There is something for everyone. Our local [Marymead Autism Centre](#) also continues to deliver a range of services for teens and families.

Looking after yourself

Your [well-being as a parent](#) matters too. There may be many adult responsibilities to juggle and you may have your own COVID19 [adult concerns](#). However, if you are starting to feel anxious, then the [Child Mind Institute](#) has an article with positive stress management strategies for parents. The better you look after yourself, the more patience and reserves

you have to understand your teen's perspective, struggles and behaviour. Remember, in young people stress is often expressed in behaviour rather than words.

Coping resources for teens and their families

The ACT [Office for Mental Health and Wellbeing](#) suggests the following tips for looking after your mental health:

- Maintain **social connections** by finding new ways to remain connected with others.
- **Communicate openly** about your feelings with family and friends.
- **Set goals** for yourself and explore activities and hobbies you can enjoy.
- Keep up a **healthy lifestyle** by eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, getting quality sleep and minimise the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.
- Practice any form of **relaxation**, meditation and mindfulness – perhaps in the natural environment.

If your young person is having a hard time and there is deterioration in their sleeping, eating and mood, then you might like to direct them to the free [Smiling mind](#) app that can teach stress reduction and relaxation; the [Biteback](#) website where they will find resources to amplify the 'good stuff' in life; check out [Headspace](#)'s 7 tips on how to build and maintain a healthy headspace; [This Way Up](#) for resources on coping with stress; or get your teen to do the online evidence-based [BRAVE](#) program to combat anxiety.

Local supports for teens and their families

[Headspace](#) is a free online and telephone service that support young people between 12 and 25 years of age, as well as their families. Phone: 1800 650 890.

[Kids Helpline \(teens\)](#) is a free, private and confidential, 24/7 telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people between 5 and 25 years of age: Phone: 1800 55 1800.

[Lifeline](#) can be accessed 24/7 for crisis support and suicide prevention by phone (Ph. 13 11 14) and 7 pm to midnight for [online chat](#).

[Youth Beyond Blue](#) is a dedicated site for youth with information, resources, and support for young people dealing with depression and / or anxiety.

[Parentline](#) offers free, confidential telephone (02 6287 3833) or Zoom/Skype counselling to parents and carers.

[Domestic Violence Crisis Services](#) (DVCS) can provide 24/7 support, advice, resources and services for people experiencing violence in the home (Ph. 62 800 900). COVID19 lockdown could intensify [conflict in families](#).

Your regular GP or [CALMS](#) Southside Surgery for medical concerns.

Immediate Mental Health Concerns

If you have serious concerns for a young person's mental health or they are in crisis, you can contact:

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS; open 8.30 AM-4.51 PM). Ph.: 02 5124 3133
- Access Mental Health, ACT Health (24 hours, 7 days a week). Ph: 1900 629 354
- Attend your nearest emergency department.

Melrose Student Well-being Supports

Student Engagement Team:

- URSafe@melrose.act.edu.au
- Nathan.Hitchcock@ed.act.edu.au
- Lucy.Sedlacek@ed.act.edu.au
- Des.Proctor@ed.act.edu.au

Year Coordinators:

- 7 Tim.Pike@ed.act.edu.au
- 8 Dane.Wells@ed.act.edu.au
- 9 Kerryn.Leiper@ed.act.edu.au
- 10 Garry.Douglas@ed.act.edu.au

Youth Support Worker:

- Mark.Baldwin@ed.act.edu.au
- Disability Education Contact Officers: Eleanor McMillan and the LSC/LSU teachers
 - Eleanor.McMillan@ed.act.edu.au
 - Anthony.Hilton@ed.act.edu.au
 - Lynn.Hart@ed.act.edu.au
- School Health Nurse: Jess is currently unavailable.

School Psychology Service

Melrose High School has a Psychologist, Anne Shaw, who is available to explore your mental health concerns and advise on options for further support for your teen. Anne can be contacted via referral from the Year co-ordinators, Student Services or the Deputy Principal.

Wishing you all the best,

Student Engagement

Hours during Term: School hours.

Anne Shaw (School Psychologist)

Hours during Term: School hours during odd weeks (Monday -Thursday) and even weeks (Monday-Wednesday).