

Looking after your

headspace

when transitioning to secondary school

**Starting
secondary school
can be exciting and fun,
but it can be overwhelming
and stressful at times too.
As a student, it's important
to look after yourself,
reduce stress, stay focussed
and be as organised as
you can be.**

Positive Self-Talk

The way that we talk to ourselves, that voice inside of our head, has a huge impact on our outlook, our motivation and dedication to ourselves and our lives.

It might not feel like it, but with practice you can change your self-talk, by rethinking negative self-talk (e.g. "how accurate/realistic is it?") and turning it into positive self-talk. Positive self-talk has the potential to change perspectives, attitudes, and reactions in regards to yourself, others and your circumstances.

This can then increase confidence and reduce stress, and can be a very effective way to prepare yourself for a big exam or event.

Exercise Your Mood

Physical exercise isn't just good for our general health, it's good for our mental health and for our brains too.

If you are feeling down, the last thing you might feel like doing is exercising but studies have suggested that any activity, from walking around the block, to yoga or cycling, could contribute to improving the symptoms of depression and anxiety, and can help you feel less stressed.

Relaxation Techniques

There are many different relaxation techniques you can use to cope with stress.

When you feel like everything is getting too much, try using some breathing techniques like deep breathing or focussed breathing; (breath in through the nose, and as you breathe out, say a positive statement to yourself like 'relax' or 'calm down').

If done correctly, you should find that your body calms down and relaxes. This can help to calm nerves before an exam.

Check out the web and app-based program 'Smiling Mind' for help with breathing and other relaxation techniques:
www.smilingmind.com.au

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Strategies you can use to manage stress at school

eating well

Some studies suggest that what you eat affects your mood. A good, balanced diet will ensure you have all the essential nutrients needed for your brain to function well, helping you to keep both physically and mentally healthy.

You may get tired when studying a lot, but eating junk food and drinking excessive caffeine can interfere with your ability to concentrate and get adequate sleep.

getting enough sleep

A good night's sleep is vital for our mental and emotional wellbeing. Sleep disruptions can increase negative thinking and heighten our stress levels. Try to maintain a regular sleep-and-wake schedule.

When possible, use your bedroom for its core purposes and avoid using distracting and stimulating devices such as a television or electronic devices when you are in bed (we know this is a tough one, but trust us – it helps!)

here are more ideas you can try

keeping in touch

We are social creatures, and social relationships are really important for our general wellbeing. It's okay for you to take time out for yourself, but try not to stay shut in for long periods as it will probably make you feel worse.

Keep your social relations strong when you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed or depressed, as your friends and family can help you through these times.

taking time to study

When it comes to assignment deadlines or exams, setting time aside to study can, in turn, help reduce your stress and anxiety.

To reduce pressure on yourself during peak study periods, it's still good to have a balance between social life and study time; plan rewards for yourself after handing up assignments or completing exams, study actively, try to test yourself with past exam papers, and develop and stick to a study routine at home.

help seeking

A problem can sometimes be too hard to solve alone (or even with friends and family), so it's important to seek professional help when needed. If you think you need additional support, you can see your family doctor, psychologist, social worker or counsellor. At school, you can also talk to a trusted teacher, the Student Wellbeing Coordinator or school counsellor who can provide advice, or direct you to the right person if you need further support.

headspace supports 12-25 year olds and can also help you and your friends who are going through a tough time. We can help students with general health, mental health and wellbeing, work, school, study, and alcohol and other drug services.