



## teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA): What parents need to know

Dear Carers/Parents of GSG Year Ten students 2021:

Great Southern Grammar is conducting teenMHFA training, which gives teenagers the skills they need to recognise and help their peers/friends with mental health problems/crises, and to get the help of an adult quickly. teenMHFA is part of the Year Ten Health Curriculum, managed by Paul Donaldson who has ensured that the content of the MHFA course compliments and echoes the wider Health and Physical Education course which your child will participate in this year.

Presenter:

Sheryl Moncur is a Counsellor/Teacher who has worked in education nationwide in rural, regional and urban regions for over 40 years, the last 14 as counsellor and psych-educator. 2021 is Sheryl's twentieth year at GSG as educator, middle management and pastoral leader. She is an accredited teenMHFA trainer and YouthMHFA trainer (for adults who work with adolescents). Sheryl is passionate about child and adolescent mental health and wellbeing.

Young people will often turn to each other when stressed or upset, and try to help each other, taking too much on. This course teaches them not to take on these problems alone and to link their friend to an adult.

The course briefly addresses suicide as part of Session 2. You may wish to discuss this with your child, if you think they will find it distressing.

This course has not been introduced because of any specific problems at the school. Mental health problems are very common in adolescents.

Your child might want to talk about the course. The following can help you to have a conversation if this is needed.

**Session 1** discusses mental health problems in general, and understanding how common and disabling these are in young people. Students also learn about professionals who can help.

**Session 2** talks about helping a friend who is in crisis, whether because they are suicidal, engaging in non-suicidal self-injury, using alcohol or other drugs, or experiencing bullying or abuse.

The Action Plan ('Look, Ask, Listen, Help Your Friend') is introduced for the first time, and applied to a crisis situation. You can find details about the Action Plan on the MHFA website listed below.

There is a video which shows a young man helping a friend who is experiencing suicidal thoughts. Participants are told that in a crisis



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situation it is important to get a responsible adult involved right away. It is important to note that school staff have seen this film.

**Session 3** takes a step back and discusses how to help if someone seems to be developing a mental health problem. We don't teach students how to diagnose problems – it's advice about being a supportive friend, encouraging the friend to seek help, and knowing when it's time to get an adult involved.

Your child will bring their manual home after Session 3. There are resources for further information in the back and you may want to explore them together. If you wish to learn more now, resources are also provided overleaf.

Also, if you wish to contact Sheryl, her email address is [sheryl.moncur@gsg.wa.edu.au](mailto:sheryl.moncur@gsg.wa.edu.au)

### **If you wish to learn more...**

... about mental health problems experienced by young people, visit:

- [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)
- [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)

... about suicide:

- [www.livingisforeveryone.com.au](http://www.livingisforeveryone.com.au)

... about tMHFA and other MHFA courses:

- [www.mhfa.com.au](http://www.mhfa.com.au)

### **For immediate online help for teenagers:**

- [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)
- [www.eheadspace.org.au](http://www.eheadspace.org.au)



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### GSG Pastoral Teams:

As Year Ten students, your pastoral teams include your homeroom teachers, Heads of House, and trusted adults such as other teachers and coaches. Many of our staff have completed the Youth Mental Health First Aid Course, which assists staff in providing support for young people. These people are Mark Bonnin, Karen Bradbury, Sheryl Moncur, Rachel Mordy, Angela Ferreira, Brendan Goggins, Brett Tompkin, Atsuko Kagi, Elinor Couper, Angelina Ross, Alexis Stone, Claire St Jack, Emma Franklin, Bryce McLean, Nathan Symonds, Ian Robson, Bea Pritchard, Meredith Wright, Penni Berryman, Penny Simpson, Catherine Nathan, Elizabeth Cosh, Rebecca Davies, Angela Golling, Josh Pitman, Tim Basten, Tara Ball, Jenny Colgate, Nyree Mckenzie, Kathy Lubke, Ellen Smith, Paul Donaldson, Grant Taylor, Peta Spinks, Amber Freeman, Amanda Stanborough, Neil Ferreira, Stephen Berryman, Leah Field, Jill Bascombe. The list of these YMHFA'ers is glued into the inside cover of the manual which students take home at the end of Session 3. Also, the pastoral team have lists of these people.