



Regulation and self-management

Everyone has emotions. They tell us what we're thinking and feeling or what we need. Sometimes strong emotions can contribute to bullying or other harmful behaviours, especially if they aren't understood or managed well.

This resource will help you notice and manage your emotions. This is an important life skill. It can help you recognise harmful behaviour in yourself and others, and reach out for support when you need it.

'Big feelings look like me just staring out of space, trying to piece everything together, like solving a puzzle, trying to question why I feel like this and whether it is or not valid.'

– YOUNG PERSON, PROJECT
ROCKIT NATIONAL YOUTH
COLLECTIVE

Understanding your emotions

Sometimes your emotions are easy to notice. Other times, you might not know exactly what you're feeling or why. This is a normal part of growing up. Getting to know yourself takes time and practice. Once you can name what you're feeling, it's easier to manage.

What happens in your body and brain?

When you are under stress, the feeling part of your brain reacts faster than the thinking part. You might notice signs like a faster heartbeat, confused thoughts, a tight chest or a hot face. These signs can appear before you've had time to think clearly. Learning to recognise them can help you pause and respond calmly.

Tools for emotional regulation

There are different ways to help identify and manage your emotions. The strategies below can help when you feel anxious or angry. They can also help when things feel tense with friends or family, or when you feel pressured to go along with something you're not comfortable with.

- ◉ Breathing: Slow down your breathing. Try breathing in for 4 seconds, then out for 5 seconds.
- ◉ Pausing: Stop and count slowly to 5. This gives you a moment to think before you react.
- ◉ Naming the feeling: Ask yourself, 'What am I feeling right now?'
- ◉ Mindfulness: Find a quiet place to sit. Slowly notice how your body feels.
- ◉ Moving: Use recess and lunchtime to move your body.
- ◉ Using your senses: Have a drink or splash water on your face.
- ◉ Taking a break: Walk away from the situation.
- ◉ Drawing or writing: Draw or write about how you are feeling.
- ◉ Talking to a trusted adult, such as a parent, carer or teacher.

Next steps

Next time you feel yourself reacting to emotions like anxiety or anger, pause and try one of the strategies above. Over time, you will find the strategies that work best for you. When you manage your emotions, you can feel more confident in how you respond to different situations. You can also feel more capable and in control.

Reflection tool

Use this reflection tool to think about your emotions and how you can manage them. You can come back to it any time you like. There are no right or wrong answers, and you can skip anything that does not feel right. Take your time with each question. You do not have to answer them all at once.

Before you begin, take a slow breath. Think about how you are feeling. Notice how each part of your body feels right now.

Prompt 1: What does overwhelm feel like in your body?

Write or think about 3 things that you notice in your body when you feel overwhelmed, upset or worried.

Prompt 2: What helps you feel calmer or more settled?

Think back to times you have felt anxious or upset, and try to remember what helped. Write down 2 or 3 things that made you feel better.

Prompt 3: Who do you feel comfortable talking to?

This could be a trusted adult, like a parent or carer, another family member or teacher, a coach or a friend you trust.

Prompt 4: What is one emotional regulation tool you would like to try?

Sometimes strong feelings come up. Try different strategies to see what helps you notice and manage your emotions. The list of emotional regulation tools above is a good starting point. Some tools work better than others, depending on the situation. For example, deep breathing can help you feel calmer before you check in with a friend who is upset, or talking to a trusted adult could help if you're dealing with bullying.

Note

Go to the 'Connected resources' section for more support if you're finding it hard to think of someone to talk to. You can also talk to someone at the support organisations listed in the 'Where to get more help' section at the end of this resource.



Come back to this reflection tool any time you need it. Getting to know yourself and managing your emotions are skills that grow stronger with practice.

Connected resources

- ◉ Who's in my corner?
- ◉ What do I need? Supporting yourself and self-care

Where to get more help

If you need further support, help is available:

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au. Free, confidential counselling for bullying and other harmful behaviours, school issues, online harm and wellbeing, available 24/7.

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 or beyondblue.org.au. Mental health support for stress, anxiety or overwhelm, available 24/7.

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au. Crisis support and counselling if things feel overwhelming, available 24/7.

Dolly's Dream Bullying Support Line: 13 36 55 (13 DOLLY) or dollysdream.org.au. Counselling and guidance for children and young people experiencing bullying and other harmful behaviour, available 24/7.

headspace/ehespace: 1800 650 890 or headspace.org.au. Mental health, wellbeing and early intervention support, available 9 am–1 am daily.

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732 or 1800respect.org.au. Sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling line for anyone who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault, available 24/7.

13YARN: 13 92 76 or 13yarn.org.au. Culturally safe 24/7 support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

QLife (LGBTIQA+ young people): 1800 184 527 or qlife.org.au. Free, anonymous peer support and referral service, available 3 pm–9 pm daily.

eSafety Commissioner: esafety.gov.au. Report cyberbullying, get advice and request content removal support.

Australian Human Rights Commission: humanrights.gov.au. Support for cases involving discriminatory harm. Reports can be made via their website or by emailing infoservice@humanrights.gov.au.

State, territory and non-government education sectors will reflect the expectations of the National Framework for Addressing Bullying in Australian schools in their policies and procedures by Term 1 2027. This includes making reasonable efforts to initiate a response to bullying and harmful behaviour within two school days, recognising that further time may be required to fully address the issue. By Term 1 2027, all schools will also publish or link to policies and procedures that align with the National Framework (or equivalent contemporary jurisdiction specific Frameworks) and their local polices and school context.