



Youth Moves

A news-sheet for people interested in Youth Issues in Australia Iss. 6 Term 4 2001
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welcome!

Welcome to the sixth issue of "Youth Moves". As a Psychologist and Speaker specialising in youth issues I created this newsletter to give brief 'snatches' of youth news, info and resources relevant to busy people relating with young people. I hope this newsletter is of interest and help to you. If I can assist your work with young people in any way (by offering counselling services, speaking/training or just answering a question about youth issues), please feel free to phone me on 8357 1711, or email kirrilie@youthmoves.com.au

hot
news
and
resources

- There is an Adolescent Health Conference in Melbourne on 21st and 22nd of March 2002, for details go to: copas.com.au, click on "community service providers" & then go to the "whats new" section
- Do you know any young writers? The Advertiser Summer short story competition is open to all secondary students 13 – 17 years, has a maximum of 1000 words and must be titled "The Great Escape". Entries close 3rd of December. Ring the Advertiser for details on 8206 2000
- Advance notice for National Youth Week 2002: The dates are April 7-14 2002. For info goto www.youthweek.com
- Know budding young entrepreneurs? Get them to apply for the SA Youth Entrepreneur Scheme which supports, develops and helps grow young people in business. Applications close mid February 2002. Visit www.youthentrepreneur.com.au

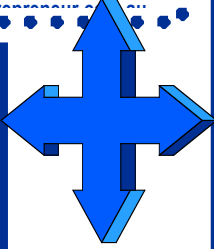
Here is a fantastic site for young people struggling with sadness or loneliness. Kind of "solo-therapy" and interesting too. <http://moodgym.anu.edu.au/>

Innovate psychology is taking bookings now for 2002 study skills and life skills seminars, Term 1 dates are filling quickly, for details call this office, 83571711

Raising Real People, by Andrew Fuller is an easily read book (with cartoons) excellent for parents raising teens. A great help for every youth workers/teachers/doctors office.

Another useful site for teens and adults working with teens comes from the Department of Education and Youth. It's filled with SA-specific info/resources. Go to www.maze.sa.gov.au

For people working with young men in particular, take note of the new national men's telephone counselling service. Launched by the Commonwealth FACS, it's answered 24hours/7day which makes it a great number to give to guys who might struggle talking to counsellors face to face.



The statistics on sanity:
one out of every four people is suffering from some form of mental illness. Think of your three best friends. If they're ok - it's you.

ideal!
The video "Mystery Men" starring Ben Stiller is a harmless but hilarious send up of superheroes that teens will love. It's a great way of starting conversation about "in" and "out" groups & being socially accepted or rejected.
Kirrilie Smout

DeStressing Teens

It seems absurd to think that young people need instruction on how to manage the high degree of stress in their lives. Nevertheless, it is a situation becoming increasingly common. With tertiary entrance ranks rising each year, and levels of unemployment remaining high for young people, many Australian teenagers are clearly experiencing stress. Here are some ideas I talk through with young people in managing their stress.

1. Recognise and acknowledge stress in a helpful way. People often deal with stress by being a *stress-obsessor* (complain about stress but do nothing about it), or a *stress-ignorer* (ignore stress and do nothing about it). The first step in dealing with stress is to instead recognise and monitor our own specific stress symptoms and to take responsibility for these when they arise. This means being aware of our usual thinking patterns, physical reactions and patterns of behaviour and noticing when they change. It also means taking responsibility for our own stress and not expecting others to make us feel better.

2. Slow down the physiological symptoms of stress. Stress symptoms can be divided into physiological (what happens to our body, eg fast heart rate), emotional (how we feel, eg irritable) and behavioural (what we do, eg kick the cat). I tell young people that reducing physiological symptoms of stress often then reduces other stress symptoms. The easiest way to do this is to slow and deepen our breathing. This can be as simple as spending 30 seconds with eyes closed, relaxing our neck and shoulder muscles, and focussing on breathing more slowly and from our diaphragm.

3. Think straight. Much of our stress comes from not the situations in our lives, but *the way we think* about those situations. Two classic thinking mistakes we all make under stress are 1) catastrophising - thinking that a situation is not just unpleasant but terrible or unbearable (eg "If I fail it will be the end of the world"), and 2) future predicting - predicting terrible futures (eg "I'm never going to be able to do anything with my life"). Stress relief is about consciously replacing these kinds of thoughts with ones which are helpful, and reassuring. Usually these helpful thoughts revolve around statements like, "I can cope", "I'll manage" and "I'm strong enough to get through this."

4. Get out of the traffic! Sometimes stress relief is obtained by changing not our bodies or thoughts, but our actual lifestyle. I recommend to young people (and adults!) that they think carefully about their life habits which might be causing stress. For example, eating too much junk, not getting enough sleep or exercise, trying to do too much, being bored, not laughing enough or having time to oneself, can all potentially cause stress.

One of the most important things we can do for young people is to proactively look after *ourselves* and manage *our own* stress levels. Young people learn most from watching, not listening. Stress reduction is not easy and does take time and energy. However, unless we devote time to "looking after ourselves" in the ways mentioned, in the long run, we do ourselves and the young people around us a disservice.