

# MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

## Mental Health & Wellbeing

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# Family and relationship concerns

Family and relationship problems can occur between partners, spouses, parents, children, siblings, friends, and other important people in your life. All relationships and families go through difficult times and experience occasional problems and conflicts – this is completely normal. It may feel as if your type of family situations are unique, but in most cases, there are tons of families around the world that deal with similar problems. At times it may seem overwhelming to deal with certain family and relationship concerns. It’s important to remember to take care of yourself – taking time out regularly, eating healthy, sleeping well and exercising.

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## What are family and relationship concerns?

Positive family relationships are important as it can make you feel secure and loved. Each family has its own individual hang-ups. Families influences who we are and how we function, and it can be healthy or unhealthy. There are many signs of problems in relationships that can occur whether its recurring arguments that are never resolved, feelings of dissatisfaction, disagreements, breakdown in communication, angry outbursts, avoidance, physical conflict and feeling neglected. Often your family are the people closest to you and relationship problems can cause distress for you and those around you. Relationship concerns can lead to; often having negative emotions (such as anger, sadness, depression), often feeling stressed or exhausted, feeling isolated, alone, difficulty eating, difficulties concentrating.

Many family and relationship concerns can be triggered by having different values, beliefs, opinions, personalities or expectations that may make you feel emotional and sometimes angry. However, between any two people within a family (this includes extended families), there will be differences in ideas and expectations, and sometimes conflict and strong expression of feelings. Family and relationship concerns can also be caused by change in family circumstances such as new baby or separation/divorce, financial problems, stress, physical health, alcohol or drug use, lack of trust, death of a family member, friend, or pet.

When considering potential problems within the family, it can be helpful to reflect on models that explore what a "healthy", strong family looks like. A model by DeFrain's (1999) Family Strengths Model, considers six elements of a strong, healthy family. These elements include:

- ▶ Commitment to one another
- ▶ Positive communication
- ▶ Spending time together
- ▶ Showing appreciation and affection to one another
- ▶ Working through a crisis effectively
- ▶ Having a sense of spiritual well-being.

## Strategies to manage family and relationship concerns

Positive family relationships are an important part of life. Here are some strategies and interventions to maintain and improve relationships.

- ▶ **Listen attentively** – keep comfortable eye contact, and show genuine attention and interest, try to stay calm

- ▶ **Spend quality time** – use everyday time together to talk and laugh, have one-on-one chats with each family member to strengthen individual relationships.
- ▶ **Positive communication** – listen without judgment, express your own thoughts and feelings openly and respectfully. Be open to talk about difficult things – like mistakes and feelings.
- ▶ **Negotiate** – try to separate the problem from the person, work out if the issue is worth fighting over, try to find points of common ground, agree to disagree.
- ▶ **Teamwork** – be willing to compromise, come up with as many possible solutions.
- ▶ **Appreciation** – take interest in each other’s lives, include everyone in conversations, acknowledge each other’s differences, talents, and abilities.
- ▶ **Love language** – be aware of each other’s love language. Often in relationships, individuals express their love and like to receive love/appreciation in different ways. For example, some partners may be quite expressive in terms of their words or by being physically affectionate, while others prefer more quality time together or to receive gifts. Where there are substantial differences, there can be conflict.
  - You can complete the [free online Love Language Quiz](#). The results give simple suggestions on the types of actions/words/thoughts that may make a difference, particularly if there are differences in how couples/families express and prefer to receive love in relationships.
- ▶ **Personality types** – The [Myers-Briggs personality test](#) proposes 16 different personality types with different approaches to romantic relationships, career choices, friendships and so on. Understanding your personality type may help to inspire and improve understanding of yourself and your relationships (introversion vs extroversion, thinking vs judging, etc.)

## Family and relationship concerns and my studies

Family and relationship concerns can make it difficult to prepare for exams and to focus on assignments. With the right support and resources, you can find a balance between your loved ones and your studies.

- ▶ **Create a (shared) schedule:** Having a visual aid in breaking down the day, week, and/or month can allow you to allocate time to each task, while providing clear boundaries between time spent with loved ones and at university.
- ▶ **Maintain a separate study space:** Having boundaries between your studies and home life can help you focus on what tasks you need to complete with your university courses.
- ▶ **Seek services for your well-being:** It may be helpful to speak to someone professional, particularly someone who will hold an objective lens to your situation. Attending a counselling session independently or with your loved one can encourage a safe space to talk about your feelings towards one another
- ▶ **Notify your professors:** Talking to your professors can allow them to understand the stresses you experience, and can assist in accommodating to your needs when discussing deadlines and exams.

# University Support

## WSU resources:

- ▶ There are [Parent and Breastfeeding rooms](#) at WSU which are available at Bankstown campus, Blacktown, Campbelltown, Hawkesbury, Kingswood, Liverpool, Macarthur clinic school, Parramatta, and Parramatta City Campus.
- ▶ There are [Women's rooms](#) at WSU which are available at Bankstown Campus, Campbelltown, Hawkesbury, Kingswood, Parramatta, and Parramatta city campus.
- ▶ There are [Queer rooms](#) at WSU which are available at Bankstown campus, Campbelltown, Hawkesbury, Kingswood, and Parramatta.
- ▶ Here is a link to a form to get a Carers Verification Statement ([form](#))

If family or relationship concerns are creating barriers that may affect your study or you want support to optimise your study then the WSU [Counselling Service](#), [Disability Service](#), or [Student Welfare Service](#) may be able to help.

- ▶ **WSU [Counselling Service](#).**

Students can access free, short term, confidential counselling services. Face to face, Zoom or phone appointments can be made by telephoning 1300 668 370. Our office hours are Monday to Friday 9.00am - 4:30pm. Alternatively, or email [counselling@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:counselling@westernsydney.edu.au)

- ▶ **WSU [Disability Service](#).**

The Disability Service is free to access with Disability Advisors assisting students to meet their full potential. If you have a diagnosed physical, psychological or medical condition that impacts on your studies, you may be eligible for an [Academic Integration Plan \(AIP\)](#), developed by the Disability Service. Contact the Disability Service on 1300 668 370, email [disability@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:disability@westernsydney.edu.au) or make contact via [WesternNow](#).

- ▶ **WSU [Welfare Service](#).**

Academic, Personal and Financial Hardship, International Support and Accommodation: 1300 668 370 or via [WesternNow](#).

▶ **Multifaith [Chaplaincy](#)**

Multifaith Chaplaincy can provide confidential conversation and care, support for stress management and anxiety with links to religious groups and faith communities. For more information, please call Daniel Jantos on 0402771543 or email [d.jantos@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:d.jantos@westernsydney.edu.au).

▶ **WesternLife**

[WesternLife](#) - Join thousands of students at Your Virtual Community to share experiences, learn new things, connect with new friends, and engage with events or discussions that interest you!

▶ **Disruption to Studies**

Consider applying for [Disruption to Studies](#) and [Requests for Extension](#) if you feel as though your studies have been significantly impacted.

▶ **Deferred Exam**

[Deferred Exam](#) – You can apply for a Deferred Exam no later than 5.00 pm on the second working day after your scheduled exam if you are unable to attend a final exam due to serious illness, misadventure or other exceptional circumstances beyond your control. Submit a [Student Form](#) and attach supporting documents online for application.

● **Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty**

[Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty](#) is an option available after the Census Date of the teaching term provided that you meet eligibility.

▶ **Leave of absence**

A [Leave of Absence](#) is a temporary break from studying. Once you have completed one or more subjects in your enrolled program, you can apply for a Leave of Absence. A Leave of Absence can be taken as either six or twelve months. The maximum amount of leave you can take during your program is twelve months. Please note, you must submit your application before the relevant census date

If you are considering any of these options, please reach out to the counselling service for support and guidance. If you are an international student, please make sure you seek advice

particularly if you are considering withdrawing without penalty or taking a leave of absence as these may have [implications for your visa conditions](#).

## Community Support

### Community resources:

- ▶ **Lifeline** (24 hours crisis counselling) - **13 11 14**  
Lifeline SMS Counselling Service - between 6pm- Midnight you can text **0477 13 11 14** and somebody will text you back! You can find more information [here](#).
- ▶ **Mental Health Telephone Access Line**  
[Mental Health Telephone Access Line](#) - 1800 011 511  
This Mental Health Line is staffed by mental health professionals that can help and provide you advice about your needs and discuss referrals to local mental health services. It is available to everyone in NSW and operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- ▶ [Full Stop Australia](#) provides support for those who have been affected by sexual, domestic, or family violence, online or via telephone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from expert counsellors who are trauma specialists
- ▶ [1800Respect](#) is a national domestic family and sexual counselling, information and support service. They are available 24 hours a day via telephone or online chat
- ▶ **Relationships Australia** has various support services for individuals, families, and communities.  
<https://relationships.org.au>
- ▶ **Family Relationship Advice line – 1800 050 321** is a national telephone service that helps families affected by relationship or separation issues. They can also refer you to local services that help. Their operation times are as follow; Monday to Friday (8am to 8pm) Saturday (10am to 4pm) and closed on Sundays and national public holidays. <https://www.familyrelationships.gov.au/talk-someone/advice-line>
- ▶ **Relationships Australia – Partners: A guide to Successful Relationships** this information [booklet](#) talks about about successful relationships developed by MensLine and Relationships Australia.

- ▶ **Relationships Australia and Mensline – Renovate your Relationship: A manual for men** this information [booklet](#) contains information that guides men to maintain work for themselves and their relationships, developed by Relationships Australia and MensLine.
- ▶ **Beyond blue** has many discussion forums where you can read, share, and learn from people who understand what you're going through. <https://forums.beyondblue.org.au>
- ▶ **NSW Domestic Violence Line – 1800 65 64 63** You can free call the NSW Domestic Violence Line on 1800 65 64 63 which is available 24/7. Interpreters are available. If you are hearing impaired, call the National Relay Service on 133 677. <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/domestic-violence/helpline>
- ▶ **Reachout – 02 9716 2222** Reachout is a great way to talk to someone if you are having family issues and problems. They can help if you're having a family crisis, want to get help with family stuff or matters. <https://au.reachout.com/articles/family-services>

## Resources

- ▶ [Podcasts](#)
- ▶ [Videos](#)
- ▶ [Apps](#)

### Podcasts

#### “Episode 42: Ten Tips to Navigating Family Relationships”

Tiffany from Therapy Thoughts discusses tips and tricks when navigating family relationships at all ages and in all relationships, including setting boundaries.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/za/podcast/episode-42-ten-tips-to-navigating-family-relationships/id1366535840?i=1000497094640>

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/4mT0Z7Cp9hE8ZcyFdickt2B?si=a964e024f8f84aba>

## Videos

### **4 Habits of ALL Successful Relationships | Dr. Andrea & Jonathan Taylor-Cummings | TEDxSquareMile**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4Y5Mr8rZ9A&ab\\_channel=TEDxTalks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4Y5Mr8rZ9A&ab_channel=TEDxTalks)

### **How to strengthen family relationships - #familymh5aday | Rosie and Claire Erasmus | TEDxNorwichED**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5tuaUFyQrE>

### **How to Heal Unhealthy Family Dynamics**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxv-YOq05PI>

## Apps

- ▶ **Divvito** Divvito is a free app that is available on iOS devices (app store) and android (google play). It helps separated parents communicate with ease around the shared care of their kids. Divvito combines email and messaging in one secure and convenient place.
  - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)
- ▶ **Coupleness** Coupleness is a free app available on iOS devices (app store) and android (google play). It's a great app for partners to understand likes and dislikes and enhance communication between each other. This app will help strengthen your relationship with offering tips and articles and options to answer several questions to understand more about your partners feelings.
  - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)
- ▶ **Peanut: Find Friends & Support** Peanut is a great app for women to connect, ask questions and find support. It's a free app available on iOS devices and android. Whether you're navigating fertility, pregnancy, motherhood or menopause, the app provides access to a community who listen, share information, and offer valuable advice.
  - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)
- ▶ **Paired: Couples and Relationships** Paired is a fun app for partners to improve communication, stay connected, and deepen intimacy. The app has daily questions, weekly quizzes, and games for partners to get to know each other better and discover relationship strength and growth areas
  - Available on [iOS](#) / [Android](#)



## Still struggling?

If you are still struggling, reach out to the WSU counselling team for support and advice. If you prefer to seek support from a service outside of the university, it may be helpful to speak to your General Practitioner regarding a [Mental Health Care Plan](#) and referral to a psychologist, or you can speak to a counsellor or other health professional. Remember you are not alone and there will always be someone out there who is willing to stay with you through your hard times.

**Please find the attached PDF document here.**

References:

[Western Sydney University- Disruption to Studies Policy](#)

[Western Sydney University- Withdrawing without academic penalty](#)

[Western Sydney University- Counselling Service](#)

[Western Sydney University- Student Welfare Service](#)

[Western Sydney University- WesternNow](#)

[Western Sydney University- Chaplaincy](#)

[Western Sydney University- TalkCampus](#)

[Beyond Blue- Online chat](#)

[Australian Institute of Family Matters – Strong Families](#)

[Reach Out - Family Services](#)

[5 Love Languages](#)

[16 Personalities](#)

[Medline Plus – Family Issues](#)