

DURING HOLIDAY BREAK for families

- 1 Consider keeping a routine throughout the break that mirrors a typical weekly schedule. For younger students, especially, this sense of routine can make transitions between school and winter break easier. Maintaining a consistent bedtime (exceptions are allowed, of course!), wake-up hour, and mealtime schedule can be useful in fostering a sense of calm throughout the holiday season.
- 2 Wrap-up the year by taking time to consider what the goals of your family are—both as individual members and as a whole—for the upcoming year. Maybe the goal is to spend more uninterrupted time together as a family each week by playing a game together or finding time outside when the weather is nice. In addition, talking through any stresses or anxiety surrounding the upcoming year can also create connectedness. Children who are heading into high school or college may be worried about choosing a school or a career path; others may be worried about fitting in, getting good grades, or making a certain sports or activities team or trying out for a play. Laying worries out in the open allow for creation of a sense of calm.

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Practicing gratitude as a family is one way to think beyond the materialistic aspects of the holidays and consider what truly lifts people up and makes them happy. Naming something—or someone—families are grateful for each day can promote a sense of belonging and warmth during the season.

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These guides, designed for students and families, provide an overview of signs that others are in need of mental health aid, and contain practical strategies for enhancing mental health.

For parents and carers
Wellbeing support for students during the school holidays

This guide provides tips and resources for parents, carers and families to support the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in their care during the school holidays. This includes services to reach out to if more support is needed.

Actions that support positive mental health

Encourage your young person to:

- Exercise and eat healthily to boost their mood
- Prioritise sleep to support mental and emotional wellbeing
- Explore relaxation techniques and coping strategies
- Stay in touch and catch up with friends and loved ones
- Make time to do things they enjoy
- Practice positive self-talk, and remind them they are not alone
- Seek professional help if needed¹

The Department have developed wellbeing activities and conversation starters for parents and carers of primary school-aged children and secondary school-aged children.

Feeling it: mindfulness resources and activities for senior secondary students. Smiling Mind gives tips on self-care, understanding and managing emotions, being mindful, being kind to yourself, navigating uncertainty and preparing for change.

Signs a child or young person may need mental health support

In some cases, these options will not be enough to support positive mental health.

Keep an eye out and seek professional help for changes that last two or more weeks such as:

- Loss of interest or involvement in activities normally enjoyed
- Feeling 'low', unusually stressed or worried
- Ordinary things get harder
- Being easily irritated or angry
- Taking more dangerous risks, like using alcohol or drugs
- Withdrawn or feeling overwhelmed
- Difficulties with concentration and motivation
- Having a lot of negative thoughts
- Changing in sleeping and eating^{1,2}

¹ headspace – a parents guide to school issues and stress <https://headspace.org.au/friends-and-family/parents-guide/>
² headspace 'mental health and you' poster https://headspace.org.au/health/secondary/Mental_Health_Posters_mgsaf.pdf
³ headspace – how to talk to your children about mental health <https://headspace.org.au/whats/>

For students
Wellbeing support during the school holidays

This guide provides tips to continue looking after your mental health and wellbeing during the school holidays and services to reach out to if you need support.

Signs that you or a friend may need mental health support

Keep an eye out and seek professional help for changes that last two or more weeks such as:

- Loss of interest or involvement in activities normally enjoyed
- Feeling 'low', unusually stressed or worried
- Ordinary things get harder
- Being easily irritated or angry
- Taking more dangerous risks, like using alcohol or drugs
- Withdrawn or feeling overwhelmed
- Difficulties with concentration and motivation
- Having a lot of negative thoughts
- Changing in sleeping and eating^{1,2}

Actions that support positive mental health over the school holidays

Encourage your young person to:

- Exercise boosts mood and mental health – make it fun!
- Nourish your brain by eating healthily – it will also improve your mood
- Prioritise sleep to support mental and emotional wellbeing
- Explore relaxation techniques and coping strategies
- Stay in touch and catch up with friends and loved ones
- Make time to do things you enjoy
- Practice positive self-talk – and remember you are not alone
- Seek professional help if needed¹

Feeling it: mindfulness resources and activities for students. Smiling Mind gives you tips on looking after yourself, understanding and managing emotions, being mindful, being kind to yourself, negotiating uncertainty and preparing for change. You may find that these actions are not enough to look after your mental health. Here are some signs you may need some support.

¹ headspace – a parents guide to school issues and stress <https://headspace.org.au/friends-and-family/parents-guide/>
² headspace 'mental health and you' poster https://headspace.org.au/health/secondary/Mental_Health_Posters_mgsaf.pdf
³ headspace – how to talk to your children about mental health <https://headspace.org.au/whats/>

CLICK TO ACCESS!

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ParentsLead of North Dakota offers some holiday-time considerations for families, like modeling gratitude, setting realistic expectations, and focusing on what really matters - connection! Check those resources out [here!](#)

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If parents or caregivers are looking for opportunities to connect during the holidays and the start of the new year, click and check out the ParentsLead Calendars below!

30 Days of Holiday Fun!
START WHENEVER YOU WANT!

1. Have a food basket and drop it off to a neighbor in need.	2. Have a family arts and crafts day.	3. Build an snowman or do an outdoor snow activity.	4. Sign up for a Christmas movie marathon.	5. Discuss what each family member thinks are the most important personal qualities to have.	6. Make homemade decorations.	7. Together, make a family to-do list with positive affirmations.	
8. Talk about the importance of giving back and look for a volunteer you can do together.	9. Make Christmas cards to send out.	10. Drive around and look at Christmas lights.	11. Ask your children if there is anything... *Play on... *Have someone wanted to ask you... *Get advice from their friends.	12. Take a new spin on the Christmas letter and record a fun holiday greeting video from their video family and friends.	13. Bake holiday cookies and have a cookie swap with friends or neighbors.	14. Decorate a gingerbread house.	
15. Host an eggcellent and have a photo shoot.	16. Throw some Ping Pong game night.	17. Make space for new presents and donate toys to a local shelter.	18. Organize a carol Santa gift exchange with your loved ones.	19. Make and send a holiday care package to someone.	20. Challenge everyone in the family to do a random act of kindness.	21. Pick a gift to know your soul and go through it with your kids.	
22. Tell each other your favorite Christmas memories.	23. Read your favorite holiday book!	24. Try a new craft or activity with the whole family.	25. Make a homemade gift for someone special.	26. Research holiday traditions of other cultures and give one a try.	27. Together, keep a journal of family photos of holidays past.	28. Cook your favorite holiday meal together.	
29. Take a moment to let your children know how thankful you are to have them in your life.	30. Have a Christmas scavenger hunt!	For ideas on how to continue the conversation, visit parentslead.org				PARENTS LEAD	

30-day parenting challenge FOR THE NEW YEAR

1. Snowball fight!	2. Create an indoor obstacle course.	3. Watch funny videos and try not to laugh.	4. Check carbon monoxide and smoke detectors. Discuss safety plans.	5. Write letters to friends and relatives and mail them.	6. Paint the snow.	7. Family Friday: See how your kids pretend to be the parent and you pretend to be your child!	
8. Build a blanket fort.	9. Set up a tent and camp inside the house!	10. Talk about a time you failed at something. Share moments you could try again!	11. Use sticks to draw pictures in the snow.	12. Make snow angels.	13. Draw portraits of each other.	14. Create a calm-down spot in the house with soft music playing. Practice going there when you or your child get upset.	
15. Go for a nature walk. Look for animal footprints.	16. Have a hot chocolate tasting contest.	17. Start a dialogue about how to make the world a better place.	18. Have a snowman. Make a snow scene!	19. Make your own "Mud-to-ink-it" game and play them.	20. Make a new healthy homemade meal together as a family.	21. Show the neighbors sidewalk.	
22. Play a familiar board game but make up new rules together.	23. Make a music playlist for each mood: Sad, Happy, calm, etc.	24. Help your child set short-term, achievable goals to build up success.	25. Blow bubbles and watch them float!	26. Reread your favorite story, but make up a new ending.	27. Share your favorite memories from last year.	28. Make a scavenger hunt for each other around the house.	
29. Ask your child to list people who they can ask for help.	30. Talk about your hopes for the year. Dream big!	For ideas on how to continue the conversation, visit parentslead.org				PARENTS LEAD	

CLICK TO ACCESS!