



## NOTICE

...changes in mood and behaviour that may indicate a child or young person is having difficulties managing emotional distress



## INQUIRE

...sensitively and competently about the child or young person's circumstances



## PLAN

...appropriate first steps and possible referrals within or outside school setting to support the child or young person



# INQUIRE – TIP SHEET

SAFEMinds is a partnership between:



**headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation



Education and Training

## THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Call 000 or follow emergency management protocols if the situation is an emergency.
- Gather important information to assess the need for additional support or action. *Appropriate inquiry about the wellbeing of students is part of a school's duty of care.*
- Model the values of respect, compassion, cooperation and friendliness. Children and young people are more likely to express vulnerability in a place that they feel is safe or that is private.
- Offer the child or young person a chance for emotional release – the focus does not always need to be on solutions!

## REFLECT FIRST

- Is this the right environment to be checking in with the child or young person?
- Do I feel equipped to support the student at this stage?
- Is this my responsibility or is there someone more suitable to support this student in this situation?
- Have I explained limits to confidentiality depending on their safety? (Conditional confidentiality)

## USE THE SAFEMinds SAFETY MAP TO FILL IN THE GAPS

- Is this developmentally appropriate?
- How acute is the distress?
- How many problems are there and how complex are they?
- What impact is this having on the child or young person's day-to-day functioning? (e.g. school work).
- Is the child or young person a risk to themselves or others?
- What are the risk factors?
- What are the protective factors?



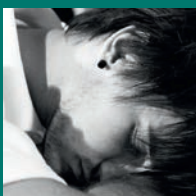
### INQUIRY DO's

- Stay calm and connected
- Ask questions to determine safety
- Consider language and tone of voice
- Actively listen and convey empathy
- Inquire within the boundaries of your role
- Keep conditional confidentiality
- Consider child safety protocols
- Recognise that in the case of self harm, this may be their only coping strategy
- Make positive statements about hope and help seeking



### INQUIRY DON'Ts

- Don't multi-task
- Don't give advice
- Don't make promises you can't keep
- Don't inquire about past traumas
- Don't use judgemental language
- Don't carry the entire burden alone





## SUGGESTED PHRASES

Everyone has their own style of talking to children and young people. Below are some suggested phrases for conversation starters and ways of encouraging them to talk about difficult issues. You might like to say them like this or adapt them to ensure you are comfortable with what you are saying.

### CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- *"Hey, are you ok?"*
- *"You haven't seemed like yourself lately, is there anything you would like to talk about?"*
- *"Is there something I can help you with?"*

### PROMOTING HELP SEEKING:

- *"Do you have someone to talk to about this?"*
- *"Would you like some help in handling this?"*
- *"Have you spoken to anyone else about this?"*
- *"What have you been doing to cope with this issue up until now?"*
- *"This sounds really upsetting for you at the moment. Have you thought about talking to someone more about this?"*

### CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENTS:

- *"Anything you tell me is confidential unless your emotional or physical safety is at risk. But if I need to get someone else involved we will talk about that beforehand, ok?"*
- *"Our conversation is just between you and me, unless I become so worried about your safety that I need to get someone else involved. If that happens we will discuss what details are to be shared with others in order to keep you safe and well."*



## RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Awareness of risk and protective factors can help schools optimise the wellbeing and academic achievement of all students.

Risk factors are circumstances or 'warning signs' that indicate an individual may be more vulnerable to emotional distress. They can increase the likelihood of a student developing physical, mental health and/or social difficulties.

Protective or 'resilience' factors can counter-balance the effects of risk factors and lessen their impact on an individual. People with more protective factors have a decreased possibility of developing physical, mental health and/or social difficulties.

Inquiring about and understanding the individual circumstances of their students can help schools identify which students require additional support or intervention.

RISK		PROTECTIVE	
<b>INDIVIDUAL</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low self-esteem</li> <li>▪ Poor social skills</li> <li>▪ Poor problem solving</li> <li>▪ Difficult temperament</li> <li>▪ Birth injury/disability/low birth weight</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Social competence – ability to relate and work with others</li> <li>▪ Problem solving skills</li> <li>▪ Optimism – hopefulness, confidence</li> <li>▪ Positive coping style</li> <li>▪ School achievement</li> <li>▪ Healthy physical environment</li> </ul>		
<b>SCHOOL</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School failure/dropout</li> <li>▪ Bullying</li> <li>▪ Peer rejection</li> <li>▪ Deviant peer group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pro-social peer group – positive, supportive</li> <li>▪ Positive achievements and sense of belonging</li> <li>▪ Opportunities for participation and success</li> </ul>		
<b>FAMILY</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Family conflict/breakdown</li> <li>▪ Inconsistent discipline</li> <li>▪ Lack of warmth and affection</li> <li>▪ Abuse and neglect</li> <li>▪ Parental substance abuse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Supportive parents/carers</li> <li>▪ Secure and stable family</li> <li>▪ Supportive relationship with other adults</li> <li>▪ Attachment to family</li> </ul>		
<b>COMMUNITY</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Socio-economic disadvantage</li> <li>▪ Exposure to violence and crime</li> <li>▪ Homelessness</li> <li>▪ Refugee experience</li> <li>▪ Racism/discrimination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sense of belonging</li> <li>▪ Access to support services</li> <li>▪ Participation in community (e.g. plays sport, belongs to school band, scouts)</li> <li>▪ Strong cultural identity/pride</li> <li>▪ Secure home/housing</li> </ul>		