

youthwise

Autumn 2025

In this issue

Resilience Builders

FEATURED

Melbourne Victory

FEATURED

The KYUP Project

FEATURED

*b kinder
foundation*

Also in this issue

All Together Now



ISSN 2209-9565

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A letter from the Editor

The current mental health crises means that youth is no longer one of the happiest times in life. Over the past twenty years, mental health conditions among young people between the ages of 12 -25 have increased by 50 per cent, with the covid 19 pandemic contributing to a worsening of young people’s mental health.

50% of all mental health illnesses begin at age 14.

Factors that can contribute to stress during adolescence include exposure to adversity, pressure to conform with peers, and exploration of identity. Media influence and gender norms can exacerbate the disparity between adolescents lived reality and their perceptions or aspirations for the future.

I think most of us, whether we are parents or teachers, compare our own teenage years to that of the youth of today, and I doubt it is a favorable comparison. I believe being a teenager in the world of today is harder, more complex and more challenging.

And it is glaringly obvious youth mental health statistics are worsening-that speaks for itself. In recent years we have seen significant increases in certain mental health disorders in youth, including depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation. Many factors shape the mental health of young people, from individual to societal level forces.

The common teenage problems that the youth of today face are usually related to the following:

Drugs, Bullying, Depression, Cyber addiction, Drinking/smoking/vaping, Teen pregnancy, Underage sex, Defiant behaviours, Peer pressure and competition.

The obvious conclusion that can be arrived at from this is that teenage years TODAY are fraught with more challenges, and that our adolescent mental health statistics continue to soar in the wrong direction.

“Solving youth mental health requires a multi-faceted approach, including promoting healthy lifestyle habits like regular exercise and good sleep patterns, supportive environments at school and home, readily accessible mental health services, open communication about mental health destigmatisation of seeking help and addressing underlying factors like peer pressure and academic stress. Essentially it involves creating a culture where young people feel comfortable discussing their mental health and have the resources to manage it effectively.”

We always include a few editorials every edition that are sport related, as numerous studies show the link between teen sports and improved mental health ,higher self- esteem ,reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression and much more.

The more time spent being physically active, the

less time as teen spends on social media, which is proved to lower adolescent wellbeing.

Again as always, thank you to all our passionate , educative and caring editorial writers ,whose ultimate aim is to lower our alarming youth mental health statistics. “It takes a village”

We wish you all good mental health.

Leigh Mary Leonard
Editor
Youthwise.

PS: We dedicate this edition to the memory of Bianca Jones and Holly Bowles, two bright and adventurous girls from MY local schools- Mentone Girls Grammar and Beaumaris Secondary College, whose lives were recently tragically cut short from methanol poisoning.

Our heartfelt prayers and condolences go out to their parents teachers, students, the local football club and all who knew and loved them.

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A CREATIVE APPROACH TO ADDRESSING STUDENT WELLBEING IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

“Creativity is now as important in education as literacy and numeracy...” - Ken Robinson (International Advisor on Education)



A GROWING CRISIS

Australian schools are facing a growing crisis, with approximately 50% of students experiencing psychological distress, which significantly impacts their ability to learn and engage. In 2024, over 25% of students required educational adjustments due to disabilities, placing additional pressure on the school system. Schools are now tasked with not only meeting diverse academic needs but also prioritizing the psychological well-being of students, creating a challenging environment for educators and administrators to support both learning and mental health.

Schools face rising burnout and resignations of teachers due to an increased workload and behavioral challenges in classrooms. These factors affect the quality of education for all students.

Schools urgently need innovative, evidence-based interventions run by qualified professionals to increase student well-being, support school culture and help retain teachers.

STUDENT STORIES

Case Study 1 (Primary School): Meet Jacob

At 7 years old, Jacob was diagnosed with ADHD and ASD Level 2. His teacher referred him to the Xpress Yourself! Program after noticing his struggles with emotional control, rigid thinking, and frequent outbursts. Academically, Jacob finds it hard to focus, sit still, and socially he struggles to connect with peers. At recess and lunch, he often finds himself alone or in the principal's office due to behavioral issues.

Case Study 2 (Secondary School): Meet Jessie

Jessie, 13, struggled with friendships and anxiety throughout Grade 6. These challenges have carried into her first year of secondary school. Everyday she feels high levels of anxiety and often complains of stomach aches, refusing to attend school. Although seeing the school counsellor helped, she continued to spend lunchtime alone. Noticing her isolation, her teacher referred her to the Xpress Yourself! Program to improve her relationship skills, build self-confidence, and support her transition into secondary school.

FEATURES OF THE XPRESS YOURSELF! WELLBEING PROGRAM

The Xpress Yourself! Wellbeing Program, offered by Evolution Creative Arts Therapies (eCAT), is a creative arts therapy initiative designed to support primary and secondary school students. This 6 or 12 week strength-based program uses creative expression, drama, movement, and art therapy techniques to foster resilience, boost self-esteem and confidence, regulate emotions, and improve social skills. Through artistic processes, students can safely explore emotions, develop insight, and regulate stress, helping to reduce distress and improve problem solving skills. Group-based arts therapies encourage social skills, communication, and collaboration, while movement and drama support emotional processing and nervous system regulation. By integrating mind and body, creative arts therapies provide a holistic and transformative approach to student well-being.

A key feature of the Xpress Yourself! Wellbeing Program is its integration of the 4 Genius Personality Types, developed by Roger James Hamilton and based on The I Ching and Carl

Jung's psychological theories. These personality types help identify and harness each student's natural strengths and learning styles, creating a more personalized and engaging experience that addresses diverse learning needs.

STUDENT TRANSFORMATIONS

Continuation of Case Study 1: Meet Jacob

Through weekly participation in the program, Jacob has gained tools for emotional regulation, learned to think more flexibly, and developed better communication skills. In the first few sessions of the program Jacob struggled to focus on a task for more than 8 minutes before requiring a sensory break. He often felt frustrated with class tasks and would 'give up' without trying.

Teachers have noticed progress in his classroom participation. Jacob is a more active participant in group discussions, is able to name his feelings and can better manage his emotions. He can also sit still and complete tasks with minimal distractions.

Continuation of Case Study 2: Meet Jessie

As a direct result of joining the Xpress Yourself! Program, Jessie has developed meaningful friendships, boosting her confidence and helping her build a positive experience of school. She no longer sees the school counsellor and has fully adjusted to the transition from primary to secondary school. At the commencement of Term 4, after the program's completion, she was looking forward to returning to school.

Teachers have noticed a positive shift in her attitude and behavior, as she now engages

in conversations with peers and actively participates in classroom discussions. Academically she is starting to excel.

eCAT has delivered the Xpress Yourself! Program to over 12 schools, achieving remarkable results, as seen below.

IMPROVING STUDENT OUTCOMES

80% of students reported an increase in self-esteem

87% felt more confident in social interactions

93% of participants experienced positive changes in resilience

100% of schools observed significant improvement in behaviour and academic engagement

Teachers also report feeling better supported, with students demonstrating fewer disruptive behaviours, allowing for a more productive classroom environment.

A teacher from a school that ran the program said, "We used the Xpress Yourself Wellbeing Program at Bellbridge Primary School this year. 8 students were selected with the aim to increase engagement at school, and give them something to look forward to each week. (Our students participated) in a variety of hands-on activities. By the end of the program the boys were working together as a team, and helping each other to manage some big emotions."

A KEY IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY FOR SCHOOLS

We start by first identifying each school's main

challenges and their wellbeing goals in line with their Annual Implementation Plan for the year. We develop goals together and collect pre and post assessments to measure the results.

With student mental health and disability challenges on the rise, schools must adopt proactive, engaging, and evidence-based programs that support the wellbeing of students and teachers.

Xpress Yourself! Offers:

- Creative arts-based interventions that target the 6 Disability Inclusion profile domains.
- A strengths-based approach that identifies and nurtures each child's learning style.
- Alignment with government funding, making it an affordable, accessible solution for schools.
- Proven outcomes, including increased student engagement, emotional regulation, and self-confidence.

Schools can access government funding to implement Xpress Yourself! through:

- The Disability Inclusion Profiles: Provides targeted funding to support students with additional needs.
- The Schools Mental Health Fund & Menu: Allows schools to invest in evidence-based programs, including creative arts therapies.

If your school is looking to improve student wellbeing, boost school engagement, and support teachers, Xpress Yourself! is the perfect program to integrate into your curriculum. Contact eCAT today for a free consultation and discover how your school can benefit from this innovative, government-funded program.

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All Together Now is an **award-winning charity** dedicated to preventing all forms of racism in Australia. Our mission is to **educate Australians about racism and hate**, and to mobilise systemic change.

We do this by imagining and delivering innovative and evidence-based projects that promote **racial equity**. We are community driven, utilise partnered approaches and all our work is intersectional.



We have several resources and programs available for social workers, youth workers, counsellors, teachers and parents focusing on issues such as racism, divisive misinformation, online hate and extremism.

Challenging Hateful Misinformation Workshop

Evidence-based workshop aimed at building your skills to recognise and respond to people who are engaging with hateful mis/disinformation, fake news and conspiracy theories. This workshop is specifically designed for frontline workers and teachers.

Countering Far-right Extremism Workshops

Young people are routinely targeted online by far-right extremists promoting hate and violence. Our interactive workshops are designed to provide participants with a nuanced understanding of far-right extremism and guidance on how to respond to young people in the early stages of engagement with hateful ideas.

Bespoke Anti-Racism Training

Our program aims to raise anti-racism awareness and enhance understanding of the different forms of racism and discrimination and their impacts on the workplace.

Anti-Racism Resources

Visit our website to learn about what racism is, how it continues to shape our world, and the impacts of racism in Australia today. You'll also discover tips you can do to actively challenge racism and guidance on how to address racism.

Discussing Racism with Children – Free Resource

As a parent or caregiver, it's likely that at some point you'll need to navigate conversations about race and racism with children. To make this easier and more effective, we partnered with the ABC series The School That Tried To End Racism to create a guide for adults to have better conversations with children about racism.

Everyday Racism App

A world-first mobile app designed to challenge your understanding of racism. Designed by All Together Now in partnership with Australian universities, the app has won several international awards, including from the United Nations.

STAY UPDATED WITH OUR ANTI-RACISM PROJECTS

Sign up to receive our newsletter and get the latest news about our anti-racism programs. Our regular newsletter will help you unlearn racism, discover tips you can do to actively challenge racism and create a positive social change. Subscribe to our newsletter at bit.ly/ATN-Newsletter

Visit alltogethernow.org.au to learn more about our anti-racism programs.

All of our work at All Together Now is imagined, designed and conducted on unceded Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and that Australia was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.



Cyberbullying

The digital age has completely revolutionised the way people communicate, and a new way for gamers to play has emerged. With the global gaming industry expected to be worth in excess of \$320B USD by the year 2026, the internet has allowed more gamers around the globe to connect and compete seamlessly. But this age of ultra-connectivity has brought with it a much darker side compared to the shiny façade of online gaming: cyberbullying.

WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying is a form of harassment, intimidation, or humiliation that occurs through digital platforms, which include social media, gaming forums, messaging applications, and other virtual spaces. Unlike the traditional forms of bullying, the impact of cyberbullying extends further because of its ubiquity. The victim may be called names, have false rumours spread about them, or be doxxed, among other harmful behaviours. Unfortunately, with the expansion of our digital presence, cyberbullying also expands, and this has made a whole lot of people ask: "Why me? Why do they hate me so?".

Cyberbullying affects victims emotionally, mentally, and even physically. It leads to severe stress, anxiety, depression, and in extreme cases, it can cause suicidal thoughts. The harassment can interfere with studies, friendships, and even impact a person's growth.

Speaking from personal experience, I have been a target of fake accounts that spread rumours about me in group chats during my early teens. This made me feel like an outcast, paranoid, and less of myself. With time, I learned the importance of building resilience and seeking support, but the scars of such experiences often linger.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS & HOW IT MANIFESTS

The importance of knowing the roots of cyberbullying forms a basis for tackling this situation. Certain factors have created the perfect conditions for cyberbullying to flourish. This includes:

1. Anonymity: The internet allows users to remain anonymous, doing things that are impossible to do in the real world where such anonymity is not present. The anonymity, through deindividuation increases the general crowd anonymity that leads to the development of such antisocial behaviour.

2. Power Imbalance: Bullies often target individuals they perceive as weaker or different in order to assert dominance.

3. No recourse: Most cyberbullies firmly believe that since it is online, nothing will ever come of it and they will not be held responsible at any point. Online spaces are notorious for being unregulated, despite the concept of the digital footprint. This lack of regulation in reality means that cyberbullying is often left without due repercussions.

CYBERBULLYING MANIFESTS IN SEVERAL WAYS INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO:

- Harassment: Repeated hurtful messages or threats, these can be private or public messages.

- Doxxing: Publishing someone's private information, such as their name, address, or bank account number without their permission.

- Exclusion: Leaving a person out of group chats or online activities deliberately.

- Impersonation: Making fake accounts with the intention of taking a person down.

- Rumour-spreading: Publishing fake news for the devaluation of someone.

All the above practices create a toxic environment where the victims are made to feel helpless.

Cyberbullying, as one may expect, is quite prevalent. Current research estimates that over 40% of teens have faced one form of online harassment, and the targets are highly disproportionately represented among women, sexual minorities, and racial-ethnic minorities. According to a report by the Pew Research Centre, for instance, 59% of U.S. teens say they have been bullied or harassed online. Whilst there has been increasing awareness about the issue, the anonymity of the internet coupled with its easy accessibility through digital platforms, has made the fight against cyberbullying tough.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO FIX CYBERBULLYING?

Cyberbullying is a problem best tackled at the individual, community and systemic levels. We can take some of the following actions to help tackle it:

1. Speak Up!

ALL TOGETHER NOW

One of the surefire ways of combating cyberbullying is reporting the incident to trusted adults or moderators or confronting the bully when safe/appropriate to do so.

2. Report and Block

Most social media platforms and online forums have tools that can be used to report abusive content and block users. Making use of features on these platforms to report cyberbullies can help prevent cyberbullying in the future.

3. Join Anti-Cyberbullying Movements

Organizations like the eSafety Commissioner and BullyZero have been working tirelessly to combat online harassment. You can support these movements through volunteering, donating, or simply passing on their message.

CONCLUSION

Cyberbullying is one of those issues that demand an intervention from all quarters. Whether this be by reporting the abusive behaviour, being of helpful support to the victims, or simply being an informed bystander, we all play a part in the fight against cyberbullying. We are all in this together to make the internet and gaming spaces a safer and more inclusive place regardless of who you are.

Sources

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- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deindividuation>
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- <https://www.bullyzero.org.au/>
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This article was written by young people aged 14-15 as part of All Together Now’s Game Changers program. Game Changers is a co-design project with and for young people. The aim of Game Changers is to create innovative solutions addressing the risks of far-right extremism and online hate in gaming spaces for young people. Through a comprehensive co-design process, Game Changers brings young people together to develop a series of resources to raise awareness about issues facing young people in this space.

Young people aged 14-15 chose to publish a series of short articles addressing certain issues in this space. The topics discussed in this article were chosen by young people directly. These were issues that were considered close to heart for them and allowed them to reflect on their own personal experiences and share their stories with the wider community. By amplifying gamer-led and youth-led initiatives, the Game Changers project aims to foster safer and more inclusive gaming communities for young people.

The project received grant funding from the Australian Government’s Safe and Together Community Grants Program. To read more about the

project and other resources created by young people please visit: <https://alltogethernow.org.au/our-work/far-right-extremism/game-changers/>

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Swing Into Success:
How Baseball is Shaping
Young Australians

In a world where screens dominate our free time, there’s something special about stepping onto a baseball field. The thrill of hitting and catching the ball, and the camaraderie between teammates— these experiences form lasting memories and valuable life lessons. Baseball NSW is excited to share why baseball is becoming the sport of choice for many young Australians and how it helps develop critical life skills.

Baseball stands out as a family-friendly and community-centric sport. Weekends often become family events with parents, siblings, and friends cheering from the sidelines. Importantly, baseball is also considered a safer alternative to some high-contact sports. With a strong emphasis on player safety, clear rules, and minimal physical collisions, baseball provides an environment where young athletes can thrive physically, mentally, and socially.

At its core, baseball is more than just a game; it’s a platform for growth. The sport teaches essential values such as teamwork, discipline, and perseverance. Players learn to overcome challenges together! Baseball is built on failure, where even the best players fail 7 out of 10 times and learn to overcome challenges. These experiences build resilience and character, helping young athletes navigate not only sports but also life’s ups and downs.

For juniors, starting with tee-ball is a great way to introduce the fundamentals of baseball. Young players refine their motor skills, improve hand-eye coordination, and learn how to work as part of a team. As they progress to more advanced levels of play, they receive new opportunities such as Association and National representation, starting at as young as 11 and 12 years old. In the past 2 years NSW has successfully won National events where the winner advances to the internationally renowned Little League World Series, in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, in the USA!

Additionally, players of all gender, shapes, sizes, and abilities can find success on the diamond. This inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging, making the sport popular across diverse communities. With modified versions of baseball to accommodate all abilities and growing participation in girls and women’s competitions across the State, there are opportunities for everyone.

Baseball also offers opportunities beyond Australian shores. Connections through BNSW’s Pathways and Baseball Australia’s College initiatives have helped numerous players pursue scholarships internationally with colleges, and even advance to compete in professional leagues. In 2024, we saw a first for the country with Travis Bazzana of Hornsby, NSW, becoming the first Australian to be drafted with the first overall pick in the Major League Baseball Draft. International sporting opportunities broaden horizons and provide young athletes with once-in-a-lifetime experiences. With Baseball re-entering the Olympics in 2028, and Australia set to host in 2032, we see many opportunities on the horizon for our NSW players who have been living and playing over in the States, refining their craft under elite level coaching.

Baseball NSW is committed to providing opportunities for youth across the state to experience these benefits. With international partnerships, ‘try baseball’ events, holiday camps, coaching clinics, and development programs tailored for all skill levels, there has never been a better time to pick up a bat and glove.

So, what are you waiting for? It’s time to swing for the fences and discover how baseball can shape your future. Whether you’re new to the game or looking to take your skills to the next level, baseball is here to help you succeed—on and off the field.

For more information on how to get involved, visit www.baseballnsw.com.au. Join us on this exciting journey and be part of the growing baseball community in New South Wales!

Georgia Marino
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www.baseballnsw.com.au



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Building Wellbeing *literally* brick by Lego brick



Increasing mental health concerns in our young people is sadly a fact we are often all too familiar with. We see it in our families, schools, clubs and communities and the most recent National Study of mental health and Wellbeing (2020-2022) confirmed nearly 40 per cent of young Australians experience a diagnosable mental illness in any one year.

Alongside an increasing need and demand or mental health services, communities are reporting significant wait times for care or a lack of availability or access to services.

This is where mental health education programs like the innovative Building Wellbeing In Our Community are hoping to bridge the gap by providing skills, understanding and resources to people who are supporting someone with a possible mental health issue.

“We know that early intervention is key to providing helping people recover from a problem faster and with less impact on their life,” said Michael Donehue, a program facilitator and mental health advocate.

“Giving people in our community the skills to identify when someone they know is struggling and then giving them the knowledge they need to help can literally save a life,” added Donehue.

The Building Wellbeing program was created by long term mental health and wellbeing educators Isabel Fox (Fearless Fox Training) and Ashley Gurney (Alcohol, Drug & Mental Health Education Specialists). The program combines the latest information and statistics with evidence-based mental health support and interventions. Building Wellbeing innovates through the use of the LEGO Serious Play methodology to be culturally inclusive, gender diverse all participants are engaged, thinking and learning.

“We had been running wellbeing programs designed by other people for a long time and we could see the benefits but also the limitations of certain ways of learning,” said program

developer Isabel Fox.

“We have found that if people have barriers to traditional learning – whether it is language, mental health literacy, or a whole range of other thigs – they can become disengaged. They are there, but they are not getting the most out of the experience.”

The introduction of activities using LEGO to harness creativity, overcome barriers but also inject a whole lot of fun has been a game changer according to the team.

“You can feel the difference in the energy and the engagement in the room when we are using the LEGO,” said Ashley Gurney, program co-developer.

Participants are encouraged to work together creatively as teams to explore, represent and then explain things about mental health and wellbeing.

“We can’t believe what a winner it has been, and we’ve had very positive feedback, as well as the achievement of learning outcomes shown in participant data.”

The Building Wellbeing program has been through an independent validation and accreditation process from a team of multidisciplinary experts and has been given the seal of approval as an evidence-based mental health and suicide prevention program.

One of the highlights for everyone is the chance to build themselves as a LEGO minifigure – complete with choices of hair, clothes and accessories – and then getting to take it home as a reminder to practice self-care.

“For many of us working in caring professions or raising families or supporting loved ones, we often forget to look after ourselves,” Ms Fox said.

“What better way is there than a super cute LEGO minifigure of ourselves to remind us?!”

Alcohol, Drug & Mental Health Education Specialists
www.adesaustralia.com

Micheal Donehue: Michael has vast experience in delivering community projects, involvement in charity organisations and promoting mental health awareness.

Michael has also delivered more than 130 accredited Mental Health First Aid courses over the past 4 years to approximately 1500+ participants.

Throughout his life Michael has had loved ones affected by both mental health concerns and substance abuse. He is also the current National Services Manager at Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Education Specialists (AD+M) and has been working for AD+MH for the past 9 years. Email: michael@alcocups.com

Isabel Fox: is an experienced academic and educator, specialising in innovative course design for mental health early intervention, diversity and inclusion, and sex-positive consent and respectful relationships education. She is Managing Director of the not-for-profit Fearless Fox Training. Email: fearlessfoxtraining@gmail.com

Ashley Gurney: With more than 20+ years experience in the Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health sector, Ashley founded Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Educational Specialists (originally AlcoCups) in 2010 with the aim of increasing public knowledge of alcohol and drugs in order to reduce harms and risks. Prior to establishing AD+MH Ashley worked as a 24/7 alcohol & drug youth outreach worker for The Salvation Army for approximately 4 years. Prior to this role Ashley managed and designed bars and nightclubs in Melbourne and London.

Ashley has a Bachelor Degree in Behavioral Neuroscience, a Diploma of Alcohol & Other Drugs Work, Diploma of Mental Health, Accredited Mental Health First Aid Australia Master Instructor, Certified LEGO Play Instructor & Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

All of this experience enables Ashley to be an engaging and innovative facilitator when delivering alcohol and drug education to any target audience. Email: ashley@alcocups.com



Empowering the Future: How Grok Academy is Transforming Digital Technologies Education for all

In an increasingly digital world, the need for robust, future-focused technology education has never been greater. Grok Academy has long been a leader in equipping students and teachers with the skills, resources, and confidence to navigate the evolving digital landscape. With a mission to make high-quality computing education accessible to all, Grok Academy has become an essential force in Australian schools, ensuring that the next generation is prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the digital economy. Central to this mission is Grok’s focus on helping disadvantaged youth—breaking down barriers to digital learning and ensuring that students from all backgrounds have the opportunity to thrive in the tech-driven future.

At the heart of Grok Academy’s growth and expanding impact is its partnership with KIK Innovation, an organisation renowned for its commitment to education and social impact. This collaboration is more than a business acquisition; it’s a strategic alliance focused on breaking down barriers to opportunity. By joining forces with KIK Innovation, Grok Academy can now focus even more on helping disadvantaged youth, ensuring that digital technologies education reaches students who face the greatest barriers.

Louise Nobes, Chief Executive of KIK Innovation, is passionate about this mission: “Grok Academy has been a game-changer for digital education in Australia. Their resources are not just teaching students how to code; they’re preparing them to be the innovators and problem-solvers of tomorrow. We at KIK Innovation are incredibly excited to support and expand Grok’s vision, ensuring that every student, no matter their background, has access to high-quality technology education.”

With KIK Innovation’s support, Grok Academy can scale its programs, focusing on disadvantaged communities where digital education can be truly transformative. This partnership enables Grok to develop tailored content that meets the unique needs of diverse student groups, expand access to cutting-edge resources, and foster stronger collaborations with educators, industry leaders, and policymakers.

KIK Innovation has a rich history of creating opportunities for disadvantaged youth through innovative education and entrepreneurship programs. Their initiatives have empowered young people from underrepresented communities to gain practical skills, build confidence, and pursue meaningful careers. By fostering environments that encourage creativity, critical thinking, and resilience, KIK Innovation has helped countless individuals overcome barriers and unlock their full potential. This legacy of impact makes them the perfect partner to support Grok Academy’s mission of transforming digital education for all.

Digital literacy is no longer a niche skill—it is a necessity. As industries become increasingly dependent on automation, artificial intelligence,

and cybersecurity, students who develop strong digital competencies will be better positioned for success in the workforce. Grok Academy addresses this need by offering interactive courses that introduce students to foundational programming languages, real-world problem-solving, and ethical considerations in technology.

One of Grok Academy’s flagship initiatives is the National Computer Science School (NCSS), a prestigious program that has helped thousands of high school students build coding skills through immersive, hands-on learning experiences. Additionally, Grok’s Cyber Challenges introduce young Australians to the world of cybersecurity, an area of critical importance in today’s digital landscape.

The Academy’s commitment to accessibility extends beyond students; it is also dedicated to empowering educators. Through professional development workshops, classroom-ready resources, and an intuitive online learning platform, Grok Academy makes it easy for teachers to bring cutting-edge digital technologies education into their schools—regardless of their own prior coding experience.

The future of digital education is bright, and Grok Academy is at the forefront of this transformation. As more schools recognise the importance of integrating computational thinking and coding into their curriculums, Grok’s innovative platform will continue to play a vital role in shaping Australia’s digital workforce.

Beyond coding, Grok Academy is also helping students develop crucial skills like critical thinking, creativity, and digital ethics—attributes that will be essential in a rapidly evolving technological world. With its user-friendly interface, engaging challenges, and commitment to inclusivity, Grok Academy ensures that students from all backgrounds can thrive in the digital age.

With KIK Innovation’s support, Grok Academy is set to broaden its reach, making digital education even more accessible and impactful. Whether through expanded curriculum offerings, new partnerships, or innovative learning technologies, the future is full of possibilities.

Grok Academy has already made a profound impact on digital technologies education in Australia, and with the backing of KIK Innovation, its influence is only set to grow. As students, teachers, and schools continue to embrace digital learning, Grok Academy stands ready to empower the next generation of tech-savvy leaders.

Written by Angela Dickinson
Grokacademy.org
Grok Academy



Goals for Change:

Melbourne Victory's Commitment to Youth Engagement in Schools

FOOTBALL is more than just a game - it's a universal language and a powerful tool for social change that fosters cohesion, improves mental health and creates opportunities for young people. The post-pandemic years have ushered in a time that many are calling a youth engagement "crisis", resulting in increased rates of youth suicide and crime across Australia by young people aged 12 to 17. The need for effective interventions to address the root causes of youth disengagement and anti-social behaviour are more important now than ever. Delivering innovative programs at convenient locations can support a young person to lead a better life. Football can provide a youth-friendly way of engaging young people in their schools, especially as costs to participate continue to rise.

This year is the 20th anniversary of Melbourne Victory Football Club. We are the biggest brand in Australian football, supported by a large membership base that has seen us consistently fill stadiums and a cabinet full of championships trophies. Our Club's efforts extend beyond the football field. We are dedicated to building a community that leverages football to positively impacts the lives of young people. We achieve this by collaborating closely with schools to design and deliver programs that provide young people with the skills, support, and opportunities they need to thrive.

Our school engagement framework delivers programs that are developed in close consultation with leaders (both students and teachers) at schools that face higher rates of disadvantage, generally caused by socioeconomic or cultural barriers. Programs range from fun football sessions that aide skill development through to yearlong evidence-based programs that aim to improve connection with disengaged students.

SCHOOL OF FOOTBALL

The School of Football program aims to increase student engagement, achievement, and attainment through football. By embedding football

programs within the school environment throughout a school year, Melbourne Victory provides an avenue for students to connect with their peers, develop a sense of belonging, and channel their energy into positive activities. This approach not only enhances mental and physical health but also contributes to improved academic outcomes and reduced behavioural issues.

The program is delivered at several secondary schools with aims that vary from boosting year 7 enrolments to increasing school attendance. Lisa Vinnicombe, Jonh Fakner College Principal based in a culturally diverse suburb in Melbourne's north, stresses the importance of sport as an engagement tool, "Students will come to school whenever there's something that provides meaning and connection for them. For students in our community, a soccer program at school is an ideal way to re-engage them with the school community and to feel a sense of belonging. We see rapid improvement in our students their independence, their resilience, their academic progress, and importantly, in their self-confidence".

The program at John Fawkner College has been instrumental in the school attracting more students and improving school morale. Lisa continued "Our local community is one which thrives on soccer and supports strong allegiances to local clubs. By having a program on offer at school, it enables families and students to extend their passion for the game and bring it into school", resulting in strengthened relationships with a neighbouring football club and the local government.

The same program has been delivered at Dandenong High School for the past 3 years and has seen significant improvements in student attendance. This is reinforced by Steph Travaligni leads all physical education programs at the school, "We have seen a rise in attendance, decreased lateness and less behavioural posts on compass for students who are part of the program.". School staff work closely with Victory coaches who are embedded in the school to support delivery of programs in and out of class time. A key outcome of the program at Dandenong was



improving behaviour and attendance, Steph continued "Students have also developed confidence in their leadership abilities which they have been able to display through other school and sporting activities across the school year".

FOOTBALL IS A SPACE FOR LEARNING

In other schools, Melbourne Victory works with leadership to develop programs that reflect their individual school's values. Football can provide a space for experiential learning (learning through playing or doing). This is often more fun, appealing and effective than traditional forms of education in class time, which may limit engagement. Football offers innovative and creative ways for young people to learn, including to address sensitive or taboo topics. Rather than talking about skills or values, it provides an opportunity for young people to put knowledge, skills, and values into practice.

ATTRIBUTES LEARNED THROUGH FOOTBALL

Football can promote social and emotional learning, helping to assist young people in their transition to adulthood and the establishment of healthy lifestyles, behaviour and learning. Physical literacy provides the basis for lifelong participation in physical activity and can also contribute to broader education outcomes, including improved behaviour and discipline, school attendance, grade attainment and academic. The key topics delivered in all Melbourne Victory football programs include:

- Cooperation
- Fair play
- Communication
- Respect for the rules and others
- Self-esteem and self-care
- Problem solving
- Trust
- Understanding
- Honesty
- Building relationships
- Leadership
- Tolerance
- Resilience
- Value of effort
- Teamwork
- How to manage competition
- Discipline
- Confidence

PROGRAMS NEED TO BE ADAPTABLE

Football may not be the secret ingredient that turns interventions into positive outcomes. As an elite club, we recognise there are significant barriers for marginalised young people. Football can be gendered or unwelcoming to people of diverse abilities. However, through working with schools to identify student cohorts, targeted football programs can challenge stereotypes and promote equitable access to physical activity in school time and contribute to pathways outside the school. Well-designed and effectively delivered initiatives can provide safe spaces to engage and support all students, promote leadership and encourage inclusive attitudes, including addressing violence and harmful practices.

FOOTBALL IS JUST ONE PART OF THE JOURNEY

Football based approaches can provide a platform for engaging young people in other topics. Our partnership with subject matter experts allows us to incorporate content that addresses wicked problems such as mental health (with LifeChanger Foundation) or healthy masculinities (with The Men's Project). In this case, football is a vehicle that incentivises participants to attend broader interventions, which otherwise might not be appealing in a school environment.

Coaches and trainers are often seen as more relatable by young people than their teachers or parents, especially if these coaches come from the same community, are closer in age or represent an elite sporting organisation they identify with. Social learning theory asserts that people learn best from those who are "just like them", meaning that sport coaches can be excellent role models for youth.

Connecting with Melbourne Victory provides schools and young people with unique experiences they wouldn't otherwise access. Each year, our Club hosts the Victory Schools Cup which brings together partner schools from across Victoria to play in a tournament that prioritises social cohesion, introducing young people from different communities to connect and build social capital. Participating schools regularly attend A League men's and women's matches at no cost and experience the thrill of meeting players in an informal environment.

Opportunities and possibilities to develop young leaders through innovative school-based programs are now greater than ever. These programs represent a tangible way of harnessing the energy and vitality of young people that may be disengaged to contribute meaningfully to their school and wider community. There is a Nelson Mandela quote from 2000 that still resonates today, "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair." The popularity of football can be harnessed at schools across the country to ensure young people make better choices on and off the field.

To learn more about Melbourne Victory's school programs please visit
<https://melbournevictory.com.au/community/education/> or send an email to community@mvlc.com.au

THE HARSH REALITY OF STEM EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

"I just don't like maths." The heart-breaking, yet somewhat expected phrase heard in classrooms throughout Australia. I'm sure every teacher is familiar with their pupils giving up all hope in such a wonderful subject before even scraping its surface. For many students, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects feel intimidating, irrelevant, or simply out of touch.

The result? Australia is facing a growing anti-STEM culture in its youth. Participation rates are plummeting, and by the time students reach high school, advanced math and science enrolments have hit record lows. And this decline isn't just a classroom issue—it's fueling a nationwide skills shortage, leaving industries struggling to find qualified professionals in engineering, technology, and other critical fields, steadily fueling the slow decline of the Australian economy.

THE ISSUE

The failure of STEM Education in Australia is a complex topic. It really comes down to the manner in which our system tackles the delivery of these subjects. Our schools lack the training, equipment, funding, and expertise to deliver STEM in a hands-on manner that effectively engages and captivates students. Teachers just don't have the resources to effectively teach these subjects. Many schools barely even have a budget for STEM, and even schools that do, rarely know how to effectively use it. And while VCAA outlines for primary schools to include STEM, there are no clear, enforceable mandates for standalone STEM classes, leading to highly variable implementation across different schools.

THE IMPACT

As a result, students leave school with little

appreciation for how science and technology shape the world around them. By age 12, nearly 70% of girls have already written off engineering, and the vast majority couldn't even define what the field of engineering entails. Horrifying. And the statistics don't look much better for boys and worsen with age!

By high school the situation seems even more dire. In the last 20 years, participation in VCE Specialist Mathematics, an advanced maths subject offered in year 12, has dropped by 40%. This is unacceptable for a wealthy, developed country.

However, the consequences go beyond education and career pathways. A population with poor STEM literacy struggles to engage with evidence-based decision-making, making them more susceptible to misinformation, propaganda, and pseudoscience. In a democracy, this is dangerous—citizens who lack fundamental scientific understanding are less equipped to critically assess policy.

OUR STORY OF REVIVING STEM

After finishing high school, our founders, Benjamin Grant and Toby Simonds, saw a clear pattern: passion for STEM wasn't sparked by worksheets or tests—it came from hands-on experiences. Despite attending different high-achieving schools, they and their peers found their love for STEM outside the classroom—through personal projects, engaged parents, documentaries, or YouTube videos. This realisation was key: STEM is inherently fascinating, but the way it's traditionally taught can make it feel tedious and inaccessible.

WHAT IS INSPIRE ROBOTICS

Originally, Inspire Robotics wasn't a company—it started as a simple effort to help Toby's old

school teach robotics. There was no business plan, just a passion for making STEM engaging. But as demand grew, so did the realisation that schools across Australia needed more than just equipment—they needed effective, hands-on programs designed by people who live and breathe STEM. Inspire Robotics exists to genuinely improve STEM education by making real engineering fun and accessible in the classroom.

Today, we are a team of young scientists and engineers delivering multi-session STEM incursions across Victoria. Our programs go far beyond standard curriculum requirements, bringing university-level—and even professional-grade—engineering into the classroom. For example, students will build and launch model rockets powered by black powder engines, design and program animatronic robots, or even create their own fully functional smart watches.

WHAT SETS US APART

- We design everything. Our programs aren't built around off-the-shelf kits; we engineer our own circuit boards, 3D models, and software to deliver an unmatched learning experience.
- Our team consists of STEM professionals who are also great educators. It's far easier to teach engineers how to work with kids than to give teachers the depth of STEM expertise needed to teach at this level.
- We are incredibly affordable. Schools could never replicate this level of STEM education on their own. Hiring a single engineer for a school program would be prohibitively expensive,

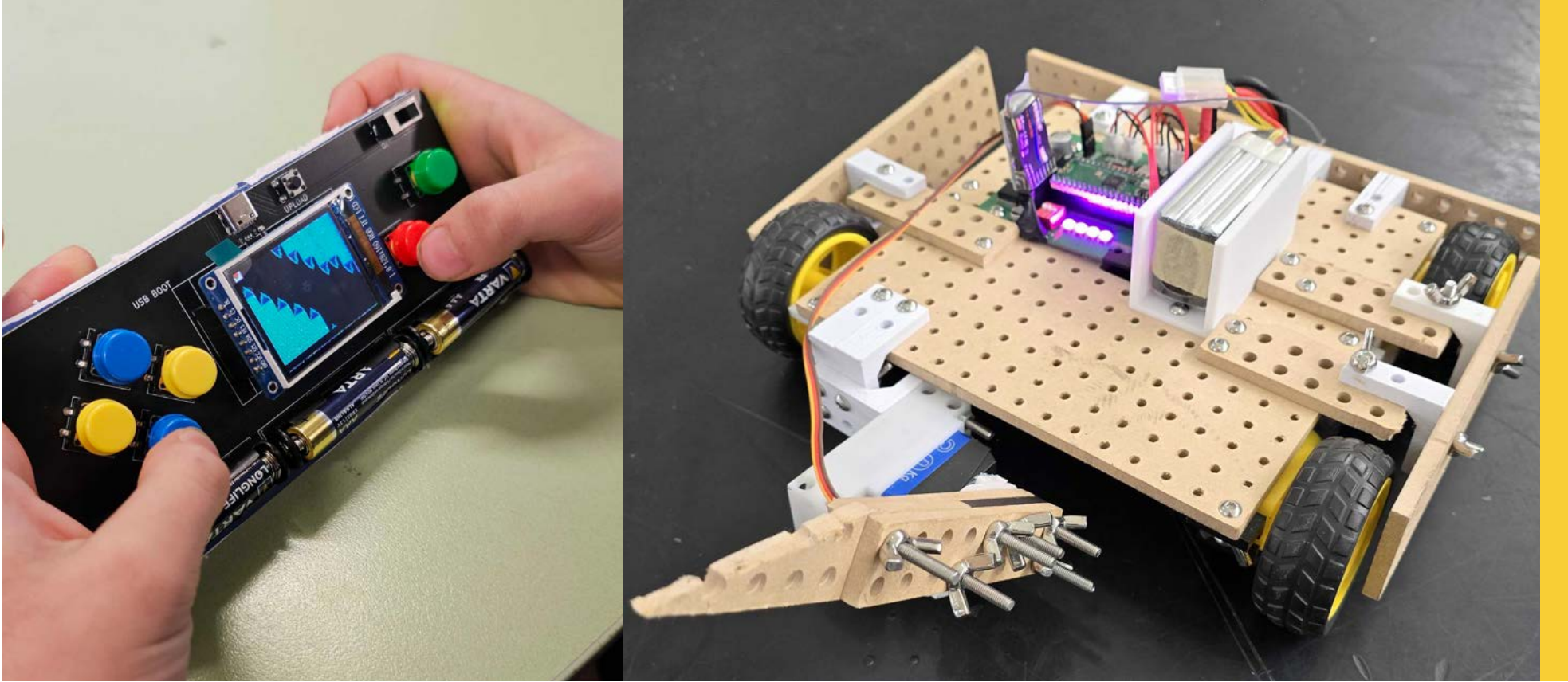
not to mention the costs of R&D, equipment, and staff training. Our incursion-based model centralizes resources, making high-quality STEM education accessible without enormous investment.

Many schools try to improve their STEM curriculum by purchasing expensive kits, but these often go unused due to complexity or lack of training. Our approach ensures that schools don't just have the tools—they have the expertise and engaging programs to use them effectively.

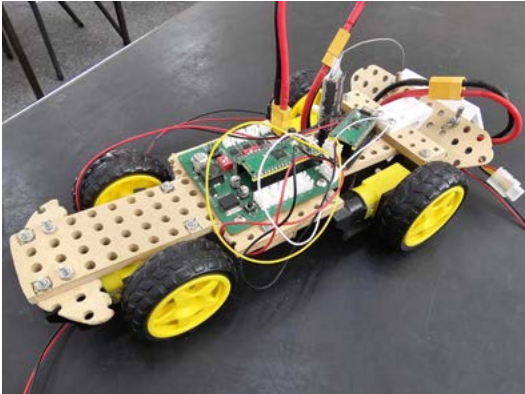
OUR IMPACT

Our biggest motivator fueling us to continue this revolutionary venture, is the ostentatious impact we have had on the students we work with. We have had teachers report that between sessions, students would spend every lunchtime in their groups, meticulously planning and discussing their strategy for the upcoming battle bots competition, or even had parents begging and emailing the teachers to run our programs. Most importantly, we have had students who were previously disruptive or uninterested in STEM suddenly perk up, developing a newfound passion and curiosity for STEM.

At Inspire Robotics we do believe STEM in Australia is broken. But we also believe we have found the ultimate solution. We ask schools to recognise their critical role in society during this time of technological advancement and join us! Together, we can inspire young people's love of STEM!



Inspire Robotics
www.inspirerobotics.com.au





Championing Courage: KYUP!'s Mission to Empower Young Women

Imagine for a moment: your daughter is on her way home from school, her backpack slung over one shoulder, her headphones in. You trust that she knows the route, that she's aware of her surroundings, but there's still that knot in your stomach. It's a feeling many parents know all too well. What if something happened to her? What if she found herself in a situation where she needed to defend herself, but didn't know how?

That fear is real, and it's not unfounded. The statistics tell a sobering story—violence against women and children in Australia is a crisis. In fact, intimate partner violence is a leading cause of preventable death for women aged 15 to 44. Every parent worries about their child's safety, but here's the good news: someone is doing something about it. And not just something small—a movement is growing, and it's making a difference. It's called the KYUP! Project, and it's keeping Australian girls safer by teaching them how to value themselves and stand up against violence.

Founded by Mel Thomas, a survivor of domestic violence, KYUP! (pronounced “key-up,” like the martial arts power shout) is more than just self-defence classes. It's a program rooted in empowerment and self-worth. It's about teaching girls and young women that they don't just deserve to be safe—they have the right to protect themselves, to recognise warning signs, and to demand better for their lives.

Mel's journey is at the heart of KYUP!. As a child, she grew up in a household shadowed by domestic violence. Later, she faced a brutal assault that could have broken her. But instead of staying silent, she turned her experience into something powerful. Over the years, she trained as a self-defence instructor and combined her skills with a mission: to break the cycle of violence by educating the next generation.

So, what does KYUP! actually do? It goes beyond teaching kicks and punches—although those are part of the program too. Through workshops in schools, community centers, and organisations, KYUP! addresses the root of the issue: self-worth. Girls learn that their safety starts with understanding their value. Mel often says, “You'll fight as hard for yourself as you believe you're worth.” That's the core message. When

Mel Thomas
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www.instagram.com/kyupproject/

young girls believe they deserve to be treated with respect and dignity, they're more likely to set boundaries and less likely to tolerate abusive behavior.

KYUP! has already reached over 10,000 young people across Australia and New Zealand. The workshops aren't just one-off events; they leave a lasting impact. Girls walk away knowing how to spot red flags in relationships, how to handle situations where they feel unsafe, and yes—how to physically defend themselves if necessary. But more importantly, they leave with confidence, a sense of agency, and the belief that they are worth protecting.

Parents who've witnessed their daughters go through the KYUP! workshops often share how the change is immediate. Their girls sit a little straighter, speak a little louder, and carry themselves differently. They've learned not just how to stay safe but how to advocate for themselves. It's the kind of change you can't put a price on.

But the reach of KYUP! isn't just limited to the girls in the workshops. The project partners with schools, local governments, and organizations like the NSW Police and PCYC to spread its message even further. They're creating safer communities by addressing violence at its roots—through education, prevention, and empowerment.

For parents, KYUP! is a lifeline. It's a reminder that while we can't always be there to protect our children, we can equip them with the tools to protect themselves. We can raise daughters who know their worth, who can walk home from school with their heads held high, and who won't settle for anything less than respect.

So, when you think about your daughter—or any young girl in your life—ask yourself this: what would it mean to you to know she's prepared, confident, and aware of her own power? That's the gift KYUP! is giving thousands of girls, and it's something we should all get behind. Because keeping our kids safe isn't just about watching over them—it's about teaching them to watch over themselves.

Champion Boys. Challenge Culture. Let's champion together?

DANIEL PRINCIPE
Youth Advocate & Educator



DANIELPRINCIPE.COM.AU

Championing Boys

NURTURING A GENERATION OF BOYS INTO DECENT, COURAGEOUS AND EMPATHETIC YOUNG MEN.

As caregivers and educators, our goal is to create environments where young people thrive emotionally and mentally. They face unique pressures today, and it's our job to guide them with intention. Boys are navigating a distracted, digital world unlike ever before where hyper-sexualised content and toxic influencers can shape how they view themselves and their relationships. These online forces permeate popular culture, sometimes leading boys to act out in harmful ways toward themselves and others. Adolescent boys are having their templates for manhood, relationships, and sex shaped by these cultural forces. How can we help them become aware of the ideas and role models (irl and online) influencing their identities, well-being, and attitudes?

Despite these challenges, we know our youth are capable of living courageously, with empathy, respect, and kindness. From my experiences engaging with tens of thousands of young people, I never doubt their potential to share in meaningful conversations. I witness their desire to care deeply, their incredible insights and growing empathy every day. The real challenge for them — and for all of us, if we are honest — is having the courage to live out these convictions, especially when peer pressure and online influencers can make it difficult - for boys especially - to be decent and kind.

This shift doesn't happen on its own. All young people need our help to unpack the messages they receive about stereotypes, relationships, and sexuality. For boys, it's crucial to ask ourselves and them: What does a respectful man look like, how does he act, and how does he make others feel? Creating space for these conversations helps boys and all young people develop healthier perspectives on

their identities, relationships, and how they can purposefully navigate the world around them. This growth begins for all of us with a deeper understanding of the cultural forces shaping adolescents today and how we can engage them and their strengths to shape our communities for the good of all.

WHAT DO WE CELEBRATE?

Culture plays a powerful role in shaping who we are and who we aspire to become. As educators and parents we need to consider: What do we celebrate? Are we elevating the values that truly matter—such as empathy, integrity, and respect—or are we unintentionally celebrating harmful expressions like control, dominance, or emotional detachment? By being intentional about the heroes we cheer on - whether in sports, history or social media — we can guide boys toward healthy traits worth aspiring to. What and who we praise matters. Together we can choose heroes who demonstrate strength, humility, kindness, and wisdom. Let these be the figures they see us value as we create a culture where character is celebrated.

CHOOSE FRIENDS WISELY.

Boys need positive role models at home, in our culture, and among their peers. People from all walks of life who embody what it means to be a decent human. They also need encouragement and the right examples to discern who they will surround themselves with. The friends they choose and the company they keep will shape how they see themselves and interact with the world around them. Teaching boys to recognise unhealthy relationship dynamics and encouraging positive friendships helps them cultivate a supportive social environment. This is a safe place for them to develop the soft skills we all need in life, a space where empathy and mutual respect can thrive.

ENGAGE THEIR HEARTS.

Young people are all facing similar challenges. Boys, just like girls, are also facing unique pressures due to harmful cultural norms. From societal expectations about toughness to the fear of not measuring up, boys can feel immense pressure to conform and perform. As educators and caregivers, it's crucial we engage their hearts and show empathy for the challenges they are navigating. This isn't about creating a “victim mindset”; rather, it's about empowering them with the tools to understand their own experiences and emotions which should naturally compel them to extend that same care to others. Encouraging empathy opens their hearts to the possibility of connection as well as fostering emotional intelligence. These traits help boys form authentic bonds with their peers and build stronger, more supportive communities.

ENGAGE THEIR MINDS.

The world around us isn't just selling products, but ideas and attitudes designed to shape how we think, feel, and act. The ads they see, the music they listen to, and the social media influencers they follow are all trying to shape their perspectives and, of course, their spending habits. Helping young people develop critical thinking skills is one of the most powerful tools we have. Teaching them to ask: why certain ideas are marketed to them? Who benefits from selling this? What is the underlying narrative, and does it align with their values? By helping them develop a curious mindset, we steadily equip them to navigate a world full of distractions and noise. We can encourage them to make informed decisions that align with their values, not their insecurities.

GROUNDING CONFIDENCE.

Confidence should not be confused with

arrogance or bravado; it’s about being secure in who you are and who you’re becoming. We can cultivate this in all young people by nurturing self-acceptance and self-awareness. Encouraging them to embrace their unique strengths and challenges. Grounded confidence means being comfortable in your own skin and trusting you can handle life’s ups and downs. By encouraging boys to embrace their uniqueness, we help them develop an inner strength that doesn’t rely on tearing others down to feel ‘good’ about themselves. When young people understand that confidence comes from within—not external validation—they’re better equipped to face challenges with resilience and grace.

LET’S CHAMPION TOGETHER.

To champion boys, we must guide them with intention, helping them develop emotional intelligence, confidence, and a strong sense of empathy. By creating spaces for authentic

conversations about the challenges they face—whether it’s consent, social media influencers, porn culture or limiting stereotypes—we empower them to make informed choices about their relationships and their futures. Together, we can help guide young people to become emotionally intune, responsible adults who lead with compassion, respect, and courage throughout their lives.

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Martial Arts and Bullies, do they mix?



Bullying is a hot topic in society from parents, teachers and students of all ages, and rightfully so. I’m sure everyone of us can look back and find an incident that happened to us when we were the victim of bullying. More uncomfortably is if we were all truly honest with ourselves, we could also find an incident where we were also the perpetrator and bullied someone else.

So what is bullying? By the definition given by the humanright.gov.au, it is:

“Bullying is when people repeatedly and intentionally use words or actions against someone or a group of people to cause distress and risk to their wellbeing. These actions are usually done by people who have more influence or power over someone else, or who want to make someone else feel less powerful or helpless.

Bullying is not the same as conflict between people (like having a fight) or disliking someone, even though people might bully each other because of conflict or dislike.

The sort of repeated behaviour that can be considered bullying includes:

- Keeping someone out of a group (online or offline)
- Acting in an unpleasant way near or towards someone
- Giving nasty looks, making rude gestures, calling names, being rude and impolite, and constantly negative teasing.
- Spreading rumours or lies, or misrepresenting someone (i.e. using their Facebook account to post messages as if it were them)
- Mucking about that goes too far
- Harassing someone based on their race, sex, religion, gender or a disability
- Intentionally and repeatedly hurting someone physically
- Intentionally stalking someone
- Taking advantage of any power over someone else like a Prefect or a Student Representative.”

When you look at the list above it becomes easy to find various situations as a parent when their child has been bullied at school. The problem we have is that we are human. We learn by observing and doing. As a child you have to learn how to navigate all sorts of situations, emotions and actions. Children learn by absorbing information, that information to a child is just that, information. It is neither right or wrong, once they act upon what they learn then they find the consequence whether it be right or wrong. And even the consequence of right and wrong is also subjective depending on the point of view from each person. So, no wonder kids find it hard to be good to others all the time.

A child, teen or even an adult my inadvertently bully another just because

they might not see anything wrong with their own actions. The victim feels a certain way due to their own personal experiences. So how does a person become aware of all the different ways that what they perceive as normal vs how their version of normality can cause offence to another? That is a question for the ages and perhaps another article.

But for now, let’s look at some of the common causes of bullying with kids. As described by healthdirect.gov.au, some of the different reasons why people bully, include:

- wanting to dominate others and improve their social status
- having low self-esteem and wanting to feel better about themselves
- having a lack of remorse or failing to recognise their behaviour as a problem
- feeling angry, frustrated or jealous
- struggling socially
- being the victim of bullying themselves

Bullying is an outlet for emotions. Physical bullying is usually an attempt to control and create a feeling of dominance. This behaviour can come out of both emotional frustration and learnt behaviour.

So, the big question, what about Martial Arts and Bullying, is it for the victim to help them learn tools to manage being bullied through gaining self-confidence, emotional control and stability, confidence in their own abilities to stand up to being challenged. Learning ways to avoid potential damaging situations and of course ways to protect themselves from physical violence? Definitely, but there is another side. Children that have bullying tendencies will also benefit from learning Martial Arts in the same way. When you look at the list of what constitutes a bully by the definition and the emotional tendencies, they have common elements with all children and even teens and adults. For example, if a child has low self-esteem, they may be quiet, introverted, don’t have any friends. This behaviour to most isn’t alarming because the child goes unnoticed. On the other hand, if they were to lash out physically, or being vociferous and disruptive, pushing boundaries to get attention then this child would be most likely be labelled as a bully. Both of these children will gain a lot from any form of Martial Art.

I would often hear the question “if a child is already a bully, then training them in a martial art will only make them more dangerous” Lets think about this statement for a minute. If a child is a sponge and is continuously learning from their environment, absorbing information in its raw form. Not knowing if the information is right or wrong and can only use their learnt behaviour to make that judgement. Their judgment is only validated when they act out the behaviour and tested with the social norm. Put the same child into a sport such as football, cricket, basketball or any other team sport for that matter, they are judged on their physical



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ability to play the sport well to support the team to win. The thought process is manly on doing a job, the job being the activity of the sport. They release tension, frustration etc while participating in the sport but they generally lack any personal consequence for behaviour outside their sport.

Then what does Martial Arts teach them? Martial Arts is an equaliser, the focus is on the individual within a group environment. Students from all ages and abilities attend each class, students interact with all sorts of skill levels and abilities. For a person to improve in any Martial Art takes dedication, focus and confidence. Skills that are learnt in class and supported by the instructor and more senior students. In a primary or secondary school class they may be abusive to other students and teachers, over time they have learnt that the only consequence is administrative punishment. At the same time other piers will cheer them on and make them the centre of attention so the reward out weighs the risk. In a general sport environment, they could be punished by being made to miss out during the game. This only has an effect at that time and no bearing on any other part of their life.

During Martial Arts classes the students have personal consequences for decisions. If they do not focus and support each other then, practicing techniques even from an individual level may cause some physical harm. That might sound scary but I’m referring to little things. Not punching the bag correctly will cause discomfort. This causes the brain to focus on the action, redirecting the initial lack of focus and thought patterns. Angry behaviour is met by resistance through more physical activity such as push ups in front of the class. Or making the class do push ups as a team with that student watching.

This may also seem extreme at first glance but it is fostering the subconscious that every action has a person re-action, teaching them boundaries. Students will test their skills through a form of combat called sparing, this will vary from one system to another however they all have the same effect. The student starts to learn that there is always someone better than them. There is a consequence in being dominant over a less skilled opponent. They will find themselves being the less skill opponent on many occasions and feel rewarded when a higher rank student helps them. In the dojo (class) age is not a factor. There are often situations where a younger student will out rank an older one.

This teaches humility, changing their behaviour from thinking they are



the strong and dominant, realising that a younger and smaller person could potentially be a physical threat to them and human instinct kicks in learning to second guess violent outbursts. Then they evolve to be the teacher in class, as all students are encouraged to do. This gives them reward and admiration for self-perseverance and supporting others helping to diminish poor self-esteem and anger issues etc.

The choice of which Martial Arts suits a person the best can only come by trying some. Manakai Martial Arts is founded on the ability to master the techniques to one's self, and not on how well you copy a fixed form. The students are graded on their ability in honing their techniques to themselves in the most adaptive way and understanding the applications for those techniques. Students tend to learn much more without the stress of learning specific techniques and forms that might not suit them, and which may prove useless if they were to find themselves compromised, or in a dangerous situation.

Today Manakai Martial Arts continues to offer classes for all ages and promotes family to train together strengthening family bonds while learning how to defend themselves together. We also offer tailored self-defence courses that include: Families, Teachers, in school programs for Junior and Secondary school students and First Responders.

Contact us for corporate bookings or more information on: info@manakaimartialarts.com.au and visit us at manakaimartialarts.com.au
Sōke, David Mesaros
Chief instructor Manakai Martial Arts



Mastering the Art of the Kick: How Kicking Dynamics is Shaping the Future of AFL

In the fast-paced world of Australian Rules Football, precision and skill separate the great from the good. Few understand this better than Tim Schmidt, a former professional AFL footballer whose playing days with the Sydney Swans were defined by his pinpoint kicking and tactical intelligence. Now, as the founder of Kicking Dynamics, Schmidt has turned his expertise into a mission: helping players—from beginners to elite athletes—perfect their craft and build confidence through world-class coaching.

The Making of a Kicking Guru

Founded in 2013, Kicking Dynamics emerged from Schmidt’s passion for player development and his deep understanding of the game. His nickname, ‘The Brain,’ bestowed by premiership-winning coach Paul Roos, wasn’t just a title—it was a reflection of his analytical approach to AFL. Forced into early retirement due to injuries, Schmidt saw an opportunity to give back, leveraging his knowledge to help others achieve their own footballing dreams.

Fast forward over a decade, and Kicking Dynamics has revolutionised skill development in Australian football. With over 35,000 players and coaches trained across the country—including rising stars in both the AFL and AFLW—it is now the gold standard for kicking excellence in Australia.

A Philosophy of Simplicity and Growth

At Kicking Dynamics, the approach is refreshingly straightforward: ‘simplify the process’. Schmidt and his team believe that too many players overcomplicate their technique, leading to inconsistency and self-doubt. Their coaching method strips back the excess, ensuring that players focus on fundamentals first—then build confidence and precision through repetition and mental discipline.

They also emphasise mindset training. Many players hesitate or second-guess their skills, especially under pressure. By reinforcing a growth mindset—where mistakes are seen as opportunities to learn rather than failures—Kicking Dynamics empowers players to analyse their performance, make real-time adjustments, and ultimately, become more consistent and effective on the field.

Programs Designed for Every Player

Whether you’re a junior just starting out, a club player looking to refine your technique, or an elite athlete aiming for perfection, Kicking Dynamics offers tailored programs to suit every level of development.



1-on-1 and Small Group Training

For players seeking individualised coaching, these sessions maximise feedback and focus. With options for up to four players, each session is structured to hone skills with personalised adjustments and hands-on instruction.

Club & Group Training

Designed for teams and clubs, these sessions cater to up to 25 players at a time. Coaches work directly with clubs to customise training plans based on specific needs, ensuring that every player walks away with improved skills and a deeper understanding of kicking mechanics.

School Holiday Clinics

More than just a training camp, these clinics are held across Sydney, Canberra, Adelaide, and Perth (Australia-wide by request), offering young players an intensive yet fun development experience. With a focus on fundamentals, game-specific kicking techniques, and real-match scenarios, players leave these clinics not just better kickers, but smarter footballers.

Beyond the Field: Virtual Training & Coaching Support

Kicking Dynamics is also leading the way in virtual coaching, offering online video analysis and virtual sessions for players who may not have access to in-person training. Additionally, they provide Coach the Coach workshops, ensuring that grassroots and elite coaches alike can pass on the best kicking techniques to their players.

And for those looking for a unique way to celebrate a birthday? Kicking Dynamics even offers kids' birthday party sessions, blending skill-building with fun challenges to create an unforgettable experience.

The Future of AFL Kicking Starts Here

The evolution of Australian Rules Football demands a new level of precision and skill. With its innovative approach and commitment to simplicity, Kicking Dynamics is shaping the next generation of AFL stars. Whether you’re aiming for the big leagues or just looking to improve your game, Tim Schmidt and his team are ready to help you master the most crucial skill in football.

For more details on their programs, visit www.kickingdynamics.com.au and take your game to the next level.



Beyond Band-Aid Solutions: Creating Neuro-Affirming School Communities

SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE: DIFFERENCES, NOT DEFICITS

Picture a classroom where fidgeting isn't just tolerated - it's welcomed. Where deep thinking and novel approaches aren't disruptions but gifts. Where neurodivergent students don't just survive but flourish.

Educators are often the first line of support for autistic and ADHD students navigating the challenges of school. However, traditional learning environments - with rigid schedules, sensory overload, and standardised teaching methods - are not always designed for fast thinkers, deep processors, or sensory-sensitive students.

A neuro-affirming approach shifts the focus from fixing challenges to amplifying strengths. Neurodivergent students don't need to be 'normalised'; they thrive when schools embrace their cognitive styles, recognise their unique needs, and provide structured flexibility.

Recent Australian research shows that approximately 1 in 40 students are autistic, while 1 in 10 have ADHD. Despite their strengths, many struggle - not always because of their neurodiversity, but because schools were not built with their thinking styles in mind.

EMBRACING NEURODIVERSITY: A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH

Rather than asking neurodivergent students to mask their natural ways of thinking, forward-thinking schools are recognising the value of neurodiversity. Think of it like having a Ferrari brain in a world designed for driving within school zone limits - our job is not to slow them down or modify their engine - but to create roads where they can thrive.

These students bring unique strengths:

- Creativity & Deep Thinking – Many autistic and ADHD students make unexpected connections and approach problems from novel angles, offering fresh perspectives that enrich class discussions.
- Passion-Driven Learning – When engaged, their capacity for hyperfocus can lead to mastery of subjects that capture their interest, often surpassing peer knowledge in specific areas.
- Resilience & Adaptability – Navigating a system not designed for them requires perseverance, emotional intelligence, and self-advocacy.

So how can educators nurture these strengths while minimising common struggles?

CREATING A NEURO-INCLUSIVE LEARNING SPACE



A neuro-affirming classroom does not see differences as disruptions but as opportunities to expand teaching methods. Here's how educators can foster engagement, reduce barriers and be curious about alternative ways to show engagement.

1. RETHINKING "FOCUS" AND "ENGAGEMENT"

Traditional classrooms often define attention as stillness and eye contact. Neurodivergent engagement often looks different: A student doodling or swinging while listening might be actively processing information. Another pacing at the back of the room could be deeply engaged in problem-solving. Movement often enhances rather than hinders concentration for these learners.

- Fidgeting ≠ Distraction: Let's normalise movement – it can help regulate attention.
- Allow flexible seating: Try standing desks, wobble stools, or fidget tools.
- Integrate short brain breaks: Walking, jumping, or catching a ball enhance concentration.
- Avoiding eye contact ≠ Disinterest: Eye contact can be overwhelming, some students engage best without direct gaze.

2. EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING CHALLENGES: STRUCTURE & FLEXIBILITY

ADHD and autistic students often struggle with planning, organisation, and time management. Executive functioning challenges are not character flaws - they are differences in how the brain organises and processes information. Support success by:

- Use visual schedules and color-coded steps for assignments.
- Break tasks into smaller, manageable parts.
- Provide written AND verbal instructions (not just oral).
- Encourage and teach the use of timers (e.g., the Pomodoro technique: 20 minutes work, 5-minute break).

3. SENSORY OVERLOAD: CREATING SENSORY-INTELLIGENT SPACES

Fluorescent lights, crowded hallways, and noisy classrooms can be overwhelming, and environmental overwhelm can derail learning before it begins. Simple adjustments make a significant difference, so it's worth making adjustments as standard practice:

- Provide sensory-friendly spaces (quiet corners, noise-cancelling headphones).



- Minimise unnecessary noise.
- Reduce unnecessary visual and auditory stimuli.
- Allow for individual workspaces when needed.

4. EMOTIONAL REGULATION: TEACHING SELF-AWARENESS & SUPPORT STRATEGIES

Many neurodivergent students experience emotional dysregulation due to sensory overload or social stress. The goal isn't to suppress emotions but to equip students with tools to navigate them.

- Teach emotion-naming skills (e.g., "I feel overwhelmed" instead of "I hate this").
- Introduce co-regulation strategies (Breathing exercises, grounding techniques).
- Use check-in scales ("On a scale of 1-10, how's your energy?").

ENCOURAGING SELF-ADVOCACY & STUDENT VOICE

Empower students with options in their learning environment and expression methods. Educators normalising accommodations rather than requiring students to request them or to "mask" their differences. Create environments where uniqueness is valued, not corrected. Try asking:

- "Would it help to have extra time?"
- "Would you like to submit your answer in writing instead of speaking aloud?"
- "Would you prefer to talk into Word, rather than typing?"
- "Would movement breaks or a quiet workspace help your focus?"

THE SCIENCE OF THRIVING: SMALL DAILY WELLBEING HABITS

Supporting neurodivergent students is not just about learning accommodations - it's about proactive wellbeing strategies. Educators can help students regulate their energy and attention through small, science-backed habits such as:

- Hydration first – Many students run on caffeine but crash without water.
- Morning movement & sunlight – Reduces stress and improves focus.
- Teaching and supporting a 30-second body scan before class – Helps prevent overwhelm.

SUPPORTING YOUR SCHOOL'S JOURNEY

Creating neuro-affirming schools requires ongoing learning and systemic shifts. Consider professional development in:

- Staff training on neurodiversity and inclusive teaching.
- Consultations on sensory-friendly environments.
- Parent education to foster school-home collaboration.
- Evidence-based student support tailored to different cognitive styles.

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Creating neuro-affirming schools is about removing unnecessary barriers to learning. When we design our educational spaces to support neurodivergent students, we create better learning environments for everyone.

Start small, celebrate progress, and keep building. Your classroom might not transform overnight, but every adjustment that helps a student feel more understood and supported is a victory worth celebrating.

Remember: We're not trying to change how these students think - we are changing how we think about these students.

Would you like more resources on neuro-affirming education? Visit think-differently or reach out at hello@think-differently for guidance and professional development opportunities.

**Dr. Amanda Mullin is a neurodivergent Doctor of Clinical Psychology specialising in neurodiversity-affirming practice. Contact us for resources and support, or staff training in creating neuro-affirming learning environments **



Unlock Your Potential: How the eResilience Program Transforms Lives

The Game-Changer for a Thriving Life

Life is unpredictable. Challenges, setbacks and unexpected hurdles are inevitable. But here is the reality. Some people crumble under pressure, while others rise, stronger and more determined than ever. The difference? Resilience. It is not just about surviving tough times; it is about thriving despite them.

The real question is, are you equipped to take control of your life, navigate adversity and turn obstacles into opportunities? If not, the eResilience Program is your game-changer.

Introducing the eResilience Program

The eResilience Program, developed by Resilience Builders, founded by David Buttifant and Nick Farr is more than just an online course. It's a transformational toolkit designed to arm you with the mental and emotional strength to not only endure but to excel. Backed by extensive research, this program is a step-by-step roadmap to empower you with proven strategies to develop resilience and take charge of your future.

Think about it. Just like an athlete conditions their body for peak performance; your mind, emotions and inner strength need training too. Resilience is a skill, one that can be cultivated, refined and mastered. Imagine approaching life with a bulletproof mindset, where stress, setbacks and uncertainty no longer derail you. Instead, they fuel your growth.

Proven Results: A Research-Backed Approach

The effectiveness of the eResilience Program isn't theoretical, it's backed by real-world results. When tested with Victoria Police, the program

achieved an impressive 20% increase in resilience scores in just 10 weeks. These results drive meaningful change in workplace culture, reducing injuries, strengthening team cohesion, improving retention, and boosting overall productivity. People become stronger, healthier, and more effective in their roles.

These results underscore one simple truth, resilience is the foundation of success. Whether in your personal or professional life, developing resilience equips you to handle pressure, make better decisions and achieve your full potential.

Why Resilience is the Key to a Fulfilling Life

If you are serious about creating a thriving, fulfilling life, resilience is a non-negotiable. Consider the benefits:

- Reduced stress and anxiety - by training your mind to reframe challenges positively
- Stronger decision-making - you gain clarity and confidence in difficult situations
- Improved emotional regulation - handling setbacks with composure and grit
- Greater personal and professional success - resilient individuals are more adaptable and driven
- Stronger relationships - when you are resilient, you build deeper connections and handle conflicts constructively

But most importantly, resilience grants you control over your life. You are no longer at the mercy of external circumstances. You become the architect of your own destiny.

What's Included in the eResilience Program?

This structured, self-paced program is designed to fit seamlessly into your life. It offers a clear, actionable framework to build resilience through

engaging, practical exercises.

Here's what you get:

- Five Learning Modules - covering essential resilience-building techniques
- Two Resilience360 Self-Assessments - track your progress with personalised reports
- Five Post-Module Activity Guides - practical exercises to reinforce learning
- A Certificate of Completion - a testament to your commitment to growth

This is not just another self-help course, it is a science-backed, results-driven system that fosters real, measurable change within just five to six weeks.

The Key to Lasting Change: Habits, Mindset and Action

Transformation doesn't happen overnight, and resilience isn't built in a day. But here's the good news: resilience is within your control. The eResilience Program helps you develop lasting habits that solidify your inner strength.

The program includes:

- Quizzes, self-reflection exercises and challenges to help you integrate what you learn
- Practical strategies to shift your mindset, reframe challenges and manage stress

Resilience isn't just something you have; it's something you build.

Long-Term Resilience: The Key to an Unshakable Mindset

Like physical fitness, mental and emotional resilience require consistent

Factor averages

RESILIENCE BUILDERS

The chart below shows the average of your ratings for each factor:



Factor	Average Score
Physical Resilience	3.75
Emotional Resilience	3.73
Social Resilience	4.1
Psychological Recovery	3.98

effort. The eResilience Program helps you develop habits that support long-term growth, such as:

- Mindfulness techniques - improve focus, clarity, and emotional regulation
- Journaling and self-reflection - track progress and reinforce a positive mindset
- Intentional routines - establish habits that fortify your mental toughness

When resilience becomes second nature, you gain control over your responses, decisions and future. Your future depends on the actions you take today. The reality is, life's challenges will not stop coming, but your ability to handle them can improve dramatically. With the eResilience Program, you can gain the strategies, mindset and confidence to turn struggles into stepping stones for success.

Ask yourself: Do you want to stay stuck in cycles of stress and self-doubt? Or do you want to take charge of your future?

The choice is yours. Step into your full potential, build an unshakable mindset and start thriving today.

Start your resilience journey now. Life will test you, but with the right tools, you will rise stronger than ever.

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LEARNING GROUND IN SCHOOL

Many young Australians are struggling to attend school and to meet literacy and numeracy standards. Reports from school principals and teachers indicate a rapid decline in engagement, particularly among students aged 13 to 16.

This can be detrimental to students' mental health and can negatively impact their future life and career opportunities. In addition it is resulting in increasing pressure on teachers in classrooms across Australia.

Prior to the COVID pandemic, the Grattan Institute reported that 40% of students were disengaged from learning. This has increased significantly since then.

This concerning / alarming trend is acknowledged by academics, parents and the education sector.

It calls for urgent action and innovative solutions to address the highly complex issue of student behaviour, engagement and mental health challenges.

Chain Reaction Foundation (Chain Reaction) is contributing to the solution through a suite of proven impactful programs which support young people to stay in school, develop life skills, and make positive life choices. We create brighter futures for students by nurturing personal growth and wellbeing, and by fostering social cohesion and cultural connection.

Our signature in school program, Learning Ground in School (LGiS) provides a psycho-social solution to student disengagement, addressing latent causes of student disengagement and allowing for student led solutions to their everyday challenges. It is culturally inclusive, academically proven, and evidence-based.

Students who have participated in LGiS reported learning life-changing skills, improvement in sense of self, enhanced confidence and experiencing connection and support while part of the program.

Student attendance improved and both school staff and school executives reported observable positive change in student conduct and engagement.

Current and latent mental health issues and associated behavioural manifestations when left unaddressed continue to impact the school environment. The indications are becoming increasingly evident in teenagers today and are being reported in mainstream media with concerning frequency. Young people who do not reach their potential and contribute positively to the community and society are likely to become adults overly reliant on social services at a high cost to the community. This is why well researched and effective programs, like LGiS, are needed in schools as a matter of urgency.

For almost 20 years, Chain Reaction's Mt Druitt Learning Ground Centre has worked with local schools to support students at risk of disengaging from school. Over a three-year period (2020- 2022), our time tested relational approach was piloted in seven schools in western and south western Sydney and evaluated by Western Sydney University's School of Education.

This proven program, Learning Ground in School (LGiS) is now available to all schools in Australia.

More information on LGiS is available on our website www.chainreaction.org.au. To discuss LGiS, please contact the Learning Ground team on 02 8319 1809.



Rumbi Mabambe

Rumbi is the executive director of Chain Reaction Foundation and is in the final year of her doctoral thesis on adolescent social cohesion.

EMPOWER
EDUCATION

up to
50%
OFF

Empower Oz
ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORM
Student focused. Teacher friendly.

Student Focused

We've shaped our evidence-based **Alcohol & Other Drug education program** into engaging, video-style modules your students will enjoy. Designed for **Year 7 to Year 12**, Empower Oz offers age-appropriate content aligned with the Australian Curriculum (Version 9.0) and the 2023 Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum.

Teacher Friendly

With Empower Oz, there's no course preparation required. With the **Teacher Pack** we provide, you'll have everything required to let your students independently engage with the online content or to guide meaningful classroom discussions at a pace that suits you.

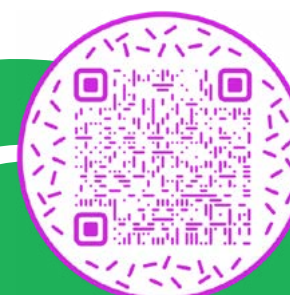
Looking to be more involved? Our **Teacher Dashboard** and **Teacher Resource Room** offer a variety of tools to actively engage with both your students' learning and the subject matter.

Massive Discounts

Empower Oz is available at a 50% discount to schools in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and the ACT. Schools in regional South Australia receive a 25% discount in addition to the Department for Education's existing subsidy.



Enquire Now
(Select "Empower Oz")



Want to learn more and watch our video?



With 25 years of experience, Encounter Youth is a trusted provider of Alcohol & Other Drug education for secondary schools. Each year, we educate over 30,000 students, parents and teachers.

www.encounteryouth.com.au

Effective Alcohol & Other Drug Education in Schools

“Including scary stories will really hit home the consequences of doing the wrong thing”.

“You need more focus on the negative consequences of alcohol and other drug use to make an impact.”

The absence of scare tactics, sensationalism, and a limited focus on the negative consequences of wrong choices are among the most common criticisms of the specialised Alcohol & Other Drug education we provide to over 30,000 students, parents, and teachers each year through our Empower Education program.

Since we started delivering seminars to secondary schools in 2000, we’ve deliberately avoided a fear-based approach. Why?

It simply does not work. 1,2

Instead, the research suggests that there are five components necessary for an effective school drug education program. 1,3

Five Essentials for Effective Alcohol & Other Drug Education in Schools

1. Effective education normalises the non-use of alcohol and other drugs.

Evidence shows that the majority of Australian secondary students identify as ‘non-drinkers,’ and 85% have never used an illegal drug. 4 This sharply contrasts with the inaccurate portrayal in social media and the entertainment industry, which sensationalises alcohol and other drug use among young people.

So, we let the evidence do the talking in our program.

By normalising the non-use of alcohol and other drugs in our seminars, we use data to show that most Australian young people are making smart, responsible choices. We encourage students to join this growing majority, empowering them to make positive, healthy decisions.

2. Effective education encourages the development of social skills.

In a TED Talk on substance use and addiction, Johann Hari stated, “The opposite of addiction is not sobriety... it is [social] connection.”5 While this statement oversimplifies the complex

factors contributing to substance use, the talk played a crucial role in highlighting research on the importance of positive social connections.

For this reason, we include a social focus in our key message to young people in our program: “look after yourselves, look after your mates, it’s your choice”. We reinforce this with practical examples of how to support friends in challenging social situations and care for them in times of need. These strategies help build positive social skills and connections, reducing the risk of alcohol- or drug-related harm among young people.

3. Effective education uses interactive methods.

We avoid telling young people what to do because it’s ineffective and often stifles the critical thinking required to make positive, healthy choices.

As a young person’s brain develops, they build their capacity for independent and critical thought. They need space to think, express their opinions, challenge ideas, and feel that their perspectives are valued in an ever-changing world.

Our program is engaging and highly interactive, offering structured activities and opportunities for students to critically explore the topics that matter to them, while freely expressing their thoughts, questions, and opinions. This level of involvement helps students engage more deeply and make better-informed decisions.

4. Effective education involves the important others in a young person’s life.

Research consistently shows that parents are the most influential figures in a young person’s life. When parents discuss alcohol and other drugs with their children, it reduces the likelihood of them drinking, using other substances, or experiencing related harms later in life. 6 Furthermore, parents’ attitudes and actions play a crucial role in shaping a young person’s drinking behaviour. 7

Effective education adopts a holistic approach, offering resources and support to the key adults in a young person’s life, including school teachers. This fosters consistency in understanding and expectations regarding alcohol and other drugs.

For this reason, we aim to equip parents and teachers with the latest research, effective harm-reduction strategies, and the confidence to engage in meaningful, impactful conversations about alcohol and other drugs with the children and young people in their care.

5. Effective education starts early but avoids overeducating.

Many strategies are most effective when implemented before a young person is exposed to alcohol or other drugs. Therefore, the earlier parents find ways to discuss these topics with their children, the better. Research shows that using age-appropriate language in natural conversations fosters an open-door relationship and creates a shared language as a child enters adolescence and progresses to high school. 8

Through our program, we encourage parents to adopt a proactive approach, implementing effective practices before young people are exposed to alcohol or other drugs. For example, helping a preadolescent child understand that a headache tablet is a legal drug and explaining why it is safe when used correctly offers a simple, engaging way to introduce the topic without overeducating them.

Conclusion

Many ineffective strategies, such as scare tactics and sensationalism, remain popular. While they may capture attention, they fail to promote the critical thinking and behavioural change needed to empower young people to make positive, healthy choices. In an age of information overload, these approaches often numb individuals to thoughtful reflection.

However, an educational approach that integrates these components within a broader program of student care and wellbeing will foster positive change in school communities and create lasting change in young people’s attitudes and perspectives on alcohol and other drugs.

Through our Empower Education program, we adopt a positive, holistic, evidence-based approach to Alcohol & Other Drug education. Our program is designed to reduce and prevent alcohol and drug-related harm among young people and is available both in-person and online via our Empower Oz platform.

Encounter Youth
www.encounteryouth.com.au



For a list of references please contact the editor



We Are SAPA

"We are SAPA, a place where children and adults alike grow in confidence and self-belief through the magic of performing arts.

OUR classes in singing, acting, piano, dancing, theatre, and guitar provide an avenue for self-expression and skill-building, led by highly passionate and skilled instructors. More than just a school, we have built a community that fosters positivity, creativity, and unwavering support, ensuring every student feels seen, heard, and encouraged. SAPA is more than a place to learn—it is a place to belong.

Our doors are open to everyone, from absolute beginners exploring a new passion to seasoned performers striving for Broadway or the big screen. We take pride in guiding not only performers but also future educators, training them to become the most dedicated and inspiring performing arts teachers. At SAPA, ambition and enthusiasm are met with expert guidance, helping students refine their craft and achieve their goals, no matter how big or small. Every student who walks through our doors is given the tools to rise, to believe in themselves, and to chase their dreams with unwavering confidence.

Why do we do what we do? Because we know firsthand the power of performing arts to change lives. Our founder, Chloe, grew up in a broken home, where life wasn’t always easy. But despite the hardships, her parents did everything they could to give her a strong upbringing, ensuring she had the opportunity to nurture her talents. Even in the toughest times, they supported her dreams, fueling the belief that she could accomplish anything she set her mind to. Their sacrifice and love instilled in her a deep resilience, a determination to push forward, and an unshakable passion for the arts.

School wasn’t always a safe place for Chloe. She faced bullying, feeling out of place and misunderstood. But when she stepped into her performing arts classes, everything changed. It was there that she felt truly alive—a space where she could express herself freely, where her talent was nurtured, and where she was surrounded by people who lifted her up instead of tearing her down. Performing arts became her refuge, her sanctuary, and her stage to soar. She understands firsthand what it means to find strength through creativity, and that is the heartbeat of SAPA.

Today, Chloe pours her heart and soul into SAPA, ensuring that no child or adult is ever left without the opportunity to discover their passion and talent. With experience in TV commercials, short films, and stage productions like Sesame Street and Lalaloopsy, she knows the industry inside and out—but more importantly, she knows the importance of having a safe, uplifting environment to grow. Her dream is to provide top-tier performing arts education at an affordable price, because no one should ever be forced to go without the opportunity to shine.

Performing arts is more than just entertainment—it is a vital tool for mental well-being, emotional release, and deep self-connection. Through singing, dancing, acting, and playing instruments, individuals can tap into emotions they may not even realize they are holding onto. It allows students to process their feelings in a healthy way, turning pain into passion, struggles into stories, and emotions into art. The stage, the studio, and the rehearsal room become sacred spaces where feelings are not only accepted but celebrated. The ability to lose yourself in a song, find yourself in a role, or express joy through movement is unmatched in its healing power. SAPA nurtures this connection, ensuring that every student has a safe, creative outlet where they can truly be themselves.

At SAPA, we believe that talent deserves a chance to flourish, and we are here to provide that chance. We are not just creating performers; we are building resilient, confident individuals who will carry their strength and self-belief with them long after they leave our studio. This is our mission. This is our passion. This is SAPA—where every dream has a home, and every student has the power to soar."



Chloe Savanah
The Savanah Group
www.thesavanahgroup.com



WHAT'S YOUR AG STORY?

Promoting the perks of agriculture to the next gen

Tessa Cook knows all too well the hard work and harsh realities of working in agriculture, both physically and mentally, but it was following her gap years (yes, two!) post-high school that she really understood the positive impact agriculture has on people, regardless of if you're born into it, or a new kid on the block.

"When you say you work in agriculture, people think hard working, harsh landscape, it's rough working in agriculture, and people are struggling a mental and physical battle," observes Tessa Cook.

"There's a perception that people on the land are built strong and tough."

Having grown up on a beef and cropping property in central Queensland, this perception was somewhat of a reality, but life on the land was familiar and also an enticing career prospect for Tessa.

She attended a tiny bush school with a total of nine kids (three being her sisters) and moved to Brisbane for boarding school. While ag wasn't a focus at school, Tessa found a love of science in biology and chemistry, which led her to explore a career in veterinary science.

After finishing school Tessa had two gap years on her family property, and with veterinary science was still in her sights, she knew she also wanted to come at ag from a different angle.

"I was fortunate enough in my gap years to complete a pregnancy testing and artificial insemination (AI) certificate through the Emerald Agricultural College. This allowed me to broaden my knowledge and apply to study veterinary science," said Tessa.

It wasn't until Tessa started studying at James Cook University and connected with the close-knit vet community she discovered a new appreciation for the ag industry. In 2023 Tessa received an AgriFutures Horizon Scholarship, an opportunity, that in her words "literally broadened my horizons" on career prospects and understanding of the impact agriculture has on people and communities.

Finding your feet

As part of the Horizon Scholarship, Tessa was sponsored by Meat and Livestock Australia to complete industry work placements and professional development opportunities. It was at the annual scholarship workshop that conversations between peers began to explore the different ways people find their feet in the ag industry – and how they start their ag story.

"I'm all for people coming into ag, especially people from non-rural backgrounds starting their ag story. I was introduced to mine as I was born into it. But what about others that aren't born into it? When, and how, will they be introduced to agriculture?"

This conversation only scratched the surface and led Tessa to pose a deeply personal and provocative question to her peers to unravel the more challenging aspects of agriculture.

"I was in high school and lost a friend to suicide. It absolutely rattled me. And by the time I was 21 I couldn't even count the number of people I'd lost to suicide on two hands," explained Tessa.

"I'd never been exposed to it, and all these people had an agricultural background. I was baffled, if we can't look after people currently in agriculture suffering mental health, how are we meant to support people entering the industry?"

Sparking bold conversations

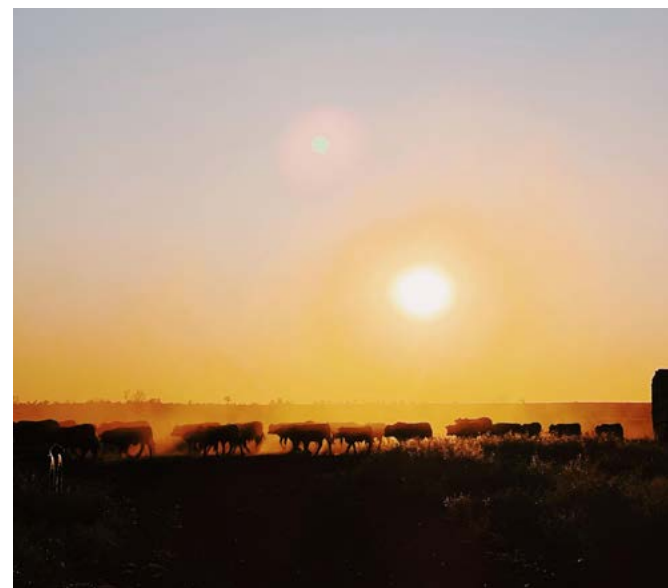
"I'm really interested in what people think about agriculture and mental health. They think drought; desolate country and people having bad mental health. That's all they see. They don't think about the positivity about being outdoors, being a working part of making the world thrive, putting food on table, clothing on our backs.

"We need to make sure people feel comfortable talking about mental health and have access to services."

For Tessa, this questioning exposed a gap in the way agriculture is perceived and made her reflect on what the industry can do differently to support not only newcomers, but those who have been in the industry for years.

"The opportunities in agriculture are endless - you can wear many hats. On my gap year, I could be a butcher in the morning, doing vet jobs in the afternoon vaccinating cattle. I'd be mustering the next day and focused on animal husbandry the next.

"It's an exciting time to be in Australian agriculture, and there are so many people out there making a positive impact. Look at the Trademutt boys and their high vis shirts, sparking bold conversations about mental health. At home on the farm, we wear our Trademutt shirts on a Friday and to community



workshops, they always spark a conversation.

"Then there's Do it for Dolly, The Resilience Project and Blue Tree project; there are so many great initiatives embracing how we talk about mental health and showing how communities can incorporate it into everyday life.

"But there's always more that can be done."

An advocate for change

Now well and truly on her chosen career path in agriculture, Tessa is a vocal advocate for positive change in the industry and wants to see more young people from non-rural backgrounds start their ag story.

Her advice for others considering agriculture?

"Do it. Go for a gap year, give ag a chance and see what it's about. Agriculture has a funny effect on people, the community and support around ag makes you feel good, and when you feel good, you work well.

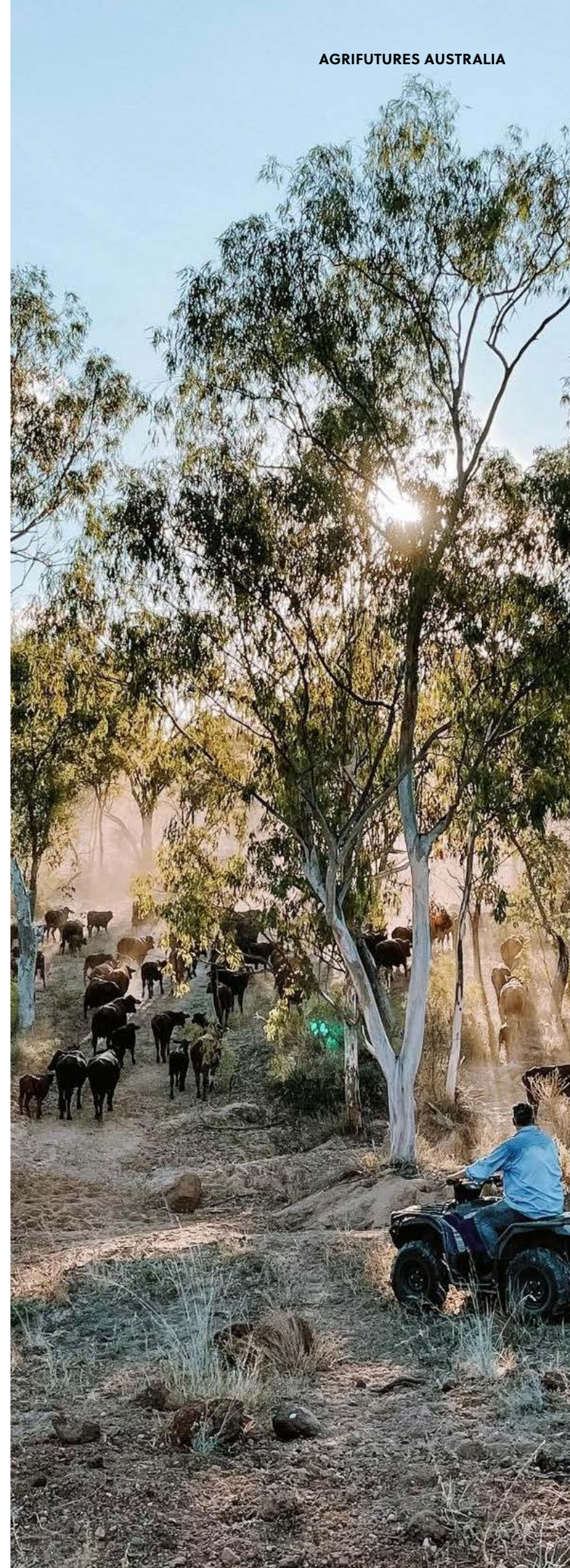
"People need a supportive community, which is what agriculture is centred around, it supports the skills you do have and helps grow the skills you might not know you have."

AGRIFUTURES AUSTRALIA

AgriFutures Australia is committed to supporting the next generation of leaders that will drive the future prosperity of Australian rural industries and communities.

AgriFutures Australia is proud to lead The Cultivating the Next Generation project, funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, which aims to promote Australian agriculture as a diverse employer of choice for the next generation workforce.

For teachers and career advisors seeking evidence-based resources about the diverse career opportunities in Australia agriculture, visit: agrifutures.com.au/cultivating-futures



AGRIFUTURES AUSTRALIA



Empowering Schools, Educators, and Young People: Youth Engagement Project

WHO WE ARE

At Youth Engagement Project (YEP), we are dedicated to transforming the landscape of youth engagement in schools, businesses, and not-for-profits. Our mission is simple yet profound: to empower young people with the skills and confidence to thrive in education, work, and life while equipping those who support them - educators, mentors, and professionals - with the tools to foster genuine engagement.

In an era where youth wellbeing is declining, despite an abundance of resources, we asked ourselves: Where is the disconnect? The answer lies in the approach. Engagement is not about more programs or one-off interventions - it's about how we connect, communicate, and create meaningful learning experiences. YEP exists to bridge this gap.

With a foundation built on research, experiential learning, and personal development, we offer public speaking workshops for students, teacher professional development, and youth engagement training for organisations working with young people. Our facilitators bring over 12 years of experience in the education and public speaking sector, ensuring every session

is engaging, evidence-based, and tailored to the needs of our audience.

SUPPORTING SCHOOLS: PUBLIC SPEAKING & ORAL PRESENTATION WORKSHOPS

Public speaking is an essential skill for high school students because it directly impacts their career readiness, confidence, and ability to communicate effectively in professional settings.

We know that public speaking is one of the most valuable skills a student can develop, yet it remains one of the most daunting. Research shows that 75% of people experience a fear of public speaking. That means in a classroom of 25 students, approximately 19 may feel deeply uncomfortable standing in front of their peers to speak.

Our Public Speaking and Oral Presentation Workshops are designed to equip students with the confidence, clarity, and skills to express themselves effectively. These sessions are hands-on, interactive, and push students beyond their comfort zones, where real transformation happens.

Who Are These Workshops For?

Our workshops cater to a range of student needs, including:

- VCE Oral Presentation Preparation

- Debating Teams

- Year Level Groups: General Public Speaking Skill Development

What Students Will Learn

Through dynamic activities and coaching, students will gain:

- Audience Engagement Strategies – Learning how to read a room and keep listeners interested.
- Mastery of Non-Verbal Communication – Using voice, breath, and body language effectively.
- Purposeful Hand Gestures & Spatial Awareness – Enhancing delivery through movement and space anchoring.
- Building Connection & Trust with an Audience – Speaking with authenticity and impact.
- Managing Nerves & Self-Regulation – Overcoming anxiety and presenting with confidence.
- Minimising Filler Words – Reducing "um," "uh," and other hesitations for fluency.
- Self-Reflection & Growth – Evaluating strengths and areas for improvement.

Our workshops are designed with the realities of the classroom in mind, ensuring students leave with practical skills they can immediately apply.



EMPOWERING EDUCATORS: TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The role of an educator extends far beyond delivering curriculum. Teachers shape learning environments, influence student motivation, and navigate complex interpersonal dynamics daily. However, teacher burnout is at an all-time high - a 2023 Australian Education Union survey found that 39% of early-career teachers plan to leave the profession within a decade. Additionally, 52% of teachers report moderate to severe symptoms of depression, compared to just 12.1% of the general population (Black Dog Institute, 2023).

At Youth Engagement Project, we believe that supporting students starts with supporting educators. Our Teacher Professional Development workshops are designed by teachers, for teachers, ensuring relevance, practicality, and immediate application.

Our Teacher PD Workshops Include:

- Student Engagement: Learn evidence-based strategies to increase engagement, participation, and motivation in the classroom.
- Behind the Behaviour: Gain insight into the underlying factors influencing student behaviour and learn trauma-informed strategies to decode and respond effectively, fostering a safe and supportive learning environment.
- Communication & Conflict Resolution: Develop effective communication techniques to foster

positive relationships with students, colleagues, and parents.

- Teacher Wellbeing: Prioritise mental, emotional, and physical well-being through mindfulness, stress management, and self-care strategies.
- Promoting Academic Ownership: Encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.
- The Teen Landscape - Building Trust & Connection: Understand adolescent development and the modern challenges students face to foster meaningful relationships.
- Bespoke Professional Learning: Developed in collaboration with the school leadership team to address specific school needs.

These workshops recognise the pressures that educators face and are designed to uplift, equip, and inspire. Our goal is to ensure teachers walk away with tools that make their jobs easier - not more overwhelming.

BEYOND SCHOOLS: TRAINING FOR BUSINESSES & NOT-FOR-PROFITS

While schools remain a core focus, Youth Engagement Project also partners with businesses, charities, and organisations to strengthen their engagement with young people. We provide training to improve communication, program delivery, and service accessibility, ensuring youth-focused initiatives create lasting impact. As workplaces evolve, we

also support employers in attracting, engaging, and retaining a Gen Z workforce, offering practical insights into cross-generational collaboration and leadership.

WHY PARTNER WITH US?

At Youth Engagement Project, we don't believe in tick-the-box training. Every workshop and program we offer is rooted in research and real-world experience. Our facilitators don't just teach engagement - they live it.

By working with us, you're not just improving skills; you're fostering lasting change in your students, staff, and community. Whether it's helping a nervous student find their voice, supporting teachers to make their mark, or training a youth organisation to engage more effectively, Youth Engagement Project is here to make a difference.

Together, we can create a legacy of genuine engagement - one conversation, one presentation, and one empowered young person at a time.

Let's Connect
Want to bring our programs to your school or organisation?
hello@youthengagementproject.com
www.youthengagementproject.com
@youthengagementproject



First Nations Incursions

For Ganga Giri and Henning Gerlt, First Nations Incursions is a passion project, born from a mutual love of the sound of the didgeridoo, and a legacy to create a sustainable and inclusive, positive future for Australia. Starting with the kids, our future leaders, we nurture understanding through experiential and enjoyable activities; a project aimed to encourage reconciliation, a deeper understanding of connection to Country and respect for the oldest living culture of the world.

OUR initiatives extend beyond performance; they encompass educational programs designed to immerse participants in the tactile and experiential aspects of Aboriginal culture. By integrating these programs into classroom settings, we aim to provide a bridge to this rich culture, offering hands-on experiences that are both engaging and inspiring. These programs not only educate but also promote well-being and a deeper appreciation for the rich traditions of Aboriginal peoples.

Via a powerful fusion of traditional and contemporary expression, through music, art, history, movement and community engagement we invite all to experience the spiritual depths of Aboriginal culture, fostering a space where ancient wisdom meets modern understanding, promoting healing, connection, and cultural pride. Ultimately it is through deeper understanding and mutual respect that we can witness Reconciliation in action; for the future of all Australians to walk together to care for Country.

We are driven by a desire for people to understand our cultural practices and to share

them in a way that helps you in your daily life, in a way that you can see universal similarities, and learn new tools that may be of assistance. Some key concepts in our culture that aid in health and well-being are shared here by Bunurong Elder, Uncle Mark Brown and Palawa performer and educator, Ganga Giri.

CONNECTION TO COUNTRY

In Aboriginal culture, the concept of "Country" transcends the mere physicality of land; it embodies a profound spiritual, cultural, and emotional relationship between Indigenous peoples and their ancestral territories. This connection is integral to identity, well-being, and the preservation of cultural heritage. The land, or "Country," isn't merely a physical space but a living entity imbued with ancestral spirits and stories.

The connection to Country is recognised as a vital component of social and emotional well-being among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This holistic perspective encompasses relationships with family, community, land, culture, spirituality, and ancestry. Practices that strengthen this connection, such as mindfulness and meditation, are essential for maintaining mental health and overall wellness.

THE HEALING POWER OF SOUND

The Yidaki, traditionally known as the didgeridoo, is more than an instrument; it's a conduit for

spiritual and physical healing. The practice of playing the Yidaki involves circular breathing, a

technique that promotes mindfulness and has been linked to various health benefits, including stress reduction and improved respiratory function. Scientific studies have shown that meditation practices, akin to those facilitated by Yidaki playing, can alleviate anxiety, pain, and depression, offering a natural pathway to mental health improvement.

The Yidaki produces low-frequency vibrations that can resonate deeply within the body. Playing the Yidaki involves a technique called circular breathing, where the player breathes in through the nose while simultaneously expelling air through the mouth. This continuous airflow is essential for producing the instrument's sustained tones. Regular practice of circular breathing can enhance lung capacity, improve respiratory efficiency, and strengthen the muscles involved in breathing. Notably, studies have indicated that didgeridoo playing can be beneficial for individuals with asthma, as it trains the respiratory system and may reduce symptoms.

CONTEMPORARY INITIATIVES AND PRACTICES

Modern initiatives continue to honour and revitalise the connection to Country. For instance,

"Ngarayamurah – Listening to Country" is a meditation practice that encourages individuals to

reconnect with the earth and their inner selves through storytelling and guided reflection. Such

practices are designed to ground individuals, helping them manage stress and enhance their sense of belonging.



As you can see it is through the profound knowledge and understanding of Elders and educators like Uncle Mark and a willingness to share those teachings, a rich culture emerges prompting an undeniable understanding that we are all connected, we are all growing and learning from one another and this beautiful land we all inhabit.

First Nations Incursions offer a variety of art, music, movement and informational activities, all hands on and designed for fun and deeper learning. Our school assemblies often include an Elder who provides a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony followed by Ganga Giri performing a mix of traditional and modern didgeridoo along with uptempo beats.

In Aboriginal Culture Sean Candy discusses a range of authentic artefacts which are passed around; baskets, spears, boomerangs, animal skins and Marngrooks. Nikki Browne often takes her groups for a 'walk and talk' discussing bush foods and plants. In Fibre Craft she teaches about identifying plants, harvesting, dyeing, fibre preparation and weaving.

Our art activities include the opportunity for students to tell their own stories via traditional symbols, utilising natural paints like ochre and charcoal or to collaborate on large murals learning about moeties and bark painting.

And of course Didgeridoo lessons (males only) and presentations on this most wonderful instrument, the Yidaki or Didgeridoo. Roan Howard loves to share the experience of Ultimate Boomerang Games where students learn to throw hunting boomerangs to accurately hit a target, and the art of effectively

throwing a returning boomerang.

We endeavour to provide not only educational activities that are engaging and fun, but also leave a lasting impression, one which will ultimately help all to foster greater understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders Cultures.

Didgeridoo Australia
First Nations Incursions
www.firstnationsincursions.com.au





What Schools Don't Teach: Success Strategies

Have you ever thought about the purpose of mass education? Schools are designed to teach kids how to fit in and, hopefully, secure a job. It's a survival strategy that can lead to a comfortable living, but in today's world, there is no certainty, no guaranteed career path, no job security for anyone. That's why it's so important to consider SUCCESS strategies instead of just survival strategies.

Success isn't about doing what everyone else is doing and following a well-travelled path. Some of the greatest entrepreneurs, those who have shaken up industries and built game-changing businesses, started out feeling different. They didn't always get top marks at school, and they often saw things in ways that others didn't.

While traditional education teaches rules, systems, and knowledge, it often fails to teach young people how to think for themselves, take initiative, and create opportunities — the essential skills for business and life.

BE DIFFERENT: The Strength to Go Against the Flow

Most people are taught to follow the crowd. Schools prepare students for standard career paths, use standardised testing, and workplaces often reward those who stick to the rules. But the real changemakers, the ones who create something new, are the ones who dare to do things differently.

Look at Janine Allis, who started Boost Juice while juggling family life and without any business experience. Or Ruslan Kogan, who built a billion-dollar online business from his parents' garage, ignoring traditional retail models. They didn't wait for approval; they trusted their instincts and took action.

At MiniBoss, we see every child as having unlimited potential. The more unique and special you are, the greater your chances of becoming an outstanding leader. If you feel like you don't fit in, that's not a weakness, it's a strength. The world needs people who think differently and challenge the way things are. The best entrepreneurs don't try to blend in; they stand out.

RESILIENCE: The Power to Keep Going

The biggest reason people don't succeed isn't failure, it's giving up too soon. Rejection, criticism, and setbacks are part of the journey. Every successful entrepreneur has been knocked down more than once. The difference is, they got back up.

J.K. Rowling was rejected by 12 publishers before Harry Potter became a worldwide success. Walt Disney was told he lacked imagination. Oprah Winfrey was told she wasn't fit for TV. They didn't let rejection stop them.

Look at Fred Schebesta, co-founder of Finder. He grew up facing tough times and was once homeless. But he didn't let that define him. He built one of Australia's biggest financial comparison platforms, proving that where you start doesn't have to decide where you end up.

Don't let others put limitations on you. If you believe in your heart that you can achieve great things and make a difference, fight for it, follow your passion. You'll hear hundreds of no's and have doors shut in your face. Successful people hear far more no's than those who are afraid to veer away from the mainstream. But think about this: you cannot become a leader or start something new if you follow others.

PURPOSE: Success Is Not About Money

Many people think success is about money or status. But the entrepreneurs who create businesses that truly last, the ones who change lives, have a greater purpose driving them.

All successful businesses have one thing in common: they help people. They solve real problems, make life easier, or create opportunities for others. When your goal is to make a difference, success follows naturally.

At MiniBoss we teach our students that success isn't about what you get, it's about what you give. The more lives you change, the more fulfilled you'll feel. And in the end, that's what real success is, making the world a better place.

YOU CAN DO IT: Believe in Yourself and Follow Your Gut

If you ever feel like you don't belong, that's okay. The world doesn't need more people who follow the crowd. It needs visionaries, innovators, and people who are willing to take risks to make a difference.

Your school results don't define your future. What matters is your ability to think differently, take action, and keep going even when it's hard. Trust your instincts. Follow what excites you. Build something that matters.

Starting your own business is one of the best ways to take control of your future. You will make mistakes, everyone does. But it's better to make them early, when the stakes are low and learning is easy. Your own business gives you freedom: to be your own boss, make your own decisions, and choose your own path.

If you build your business with purpose, focusing on others, you'll find support and make it happen. It's not all a walk in the park; it's more of a rollercoaster ride, and sometimes not a very safe one. But if you really want something, you can achieve it.

At MiniBoss, we don't just teach kids about business. We help them build real businesses. We equip them with the mindset, confidence, and skills they need to thrive in an unpredictable world.

So if you're ready to stand out, take charge of your future, and make a real impact, start now. The world needs young leaders and changemakers, and that can be you.

Elena Chirich
Mini Boss Australia
www.minibossbusinessschool.com.au

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How b kinder schools can transform your high school experience



When our school became a b kinder school, I wasn’t sure what to expect. The idea of kindness being the focus of a school-wide initiative sounded nice but, honestly, a bit vague. However, as the year unfolded, I quickly realised this was about so much more than just being polite—it was about transforming how we interact with each other and making real changes in our school community.

At its core, the b kinder school initiative is about fostering a culture of kindness and compassion, and amazingly it is entirely student driven. As someone who was selected to be part of the student leadership team, I got a front-row seat to see just how powerful it can be. Through organising events, collaborating with teachers, and connecting with other students, I gained skills and experiences I never imagined I would have.

There are 5 key pillars that every b kinder school leadership team helps to create;

1. Lead a b kinder day event at your school

This was one of the first things we did and it was incredible to see how it brought everyone together. We organised workshops, activities, and even a kindness wall where students could write notes of appreciation for one another. What struck me the most was how much of a difference small gestures could make. A simple message on a b kinder day card like, “Thanks for always helping me with math,” had such a big impact— you could feel the positive energy spreading throughout the school!

2. Establish a designated "kindness space" within your school

This was a spot where anyone could go if they needed a moment of peace or just wanted to connect with someone. It became a symbol of what b kinder is all about: creating a safe and inclusive environment where we all feel valued.

3. Demonstrate a commitment to community service

It also pushed us to look beyond our school. One of the key goals is community service which I had never done before, so we started a project to support a local shelter. We collected donations, wrote letters, and even organized a day to volunteer there. It was eye-opening to see how much of a difference we could make when we worked together.

4. Create methods for recognising acts of kindness among students

We’ve learned that leadership is not just about making big speeches or being the loudest voice in the room, it’s about listening to others,

understanding their needs, and finding ways to support them. We met regularly to make sure we were aware of students looking out for other students, especially with the pressures of bullying and social media.

5. Connect with other student leaders from other b kinder schools

We were lucky enough to take part in online and in-person workshops with schools all over the state which opened our eyes to other ways of thinking. A huge highlight of the program though for future leaders will be the b kinder summits, all-day events where student leaders from other schools come together. They will include interactive workshops on social ethics, entrepreneurship, and leadership and sound like they will be amazing.

One of the coolest things about being a b kinder school is how it empowers students to take ownership of the program. As leaders, we weren’t just following instructions from teachers—we were coming up with ideas, solving problems, and making decisions. This sense of ownership gave us a huge confidence boost.

Being part of the b kinder initiative has also changed the way I see my peers. Before, it was easy to get caught up in cliques or focus on our differences, but through this program, I’ve realised how much we all have in common. We all want to feel valued, appreciated, and connected. By focusing on kindness, we’ve built stronger relationships and a more supportive school environment.

Looking back on 2024, I’m proud of what we all accomplished. We not only made our school a kinder place but also gained skills that will stay with us for the rest of our lives. The emphasis on empathy, collaboration, and leadership has prepared us to tackle challenges in the future, whether in school, work, or our personal lives.

Being part of the b kinder initiative has shown me that kindness isn’t just a nice idea—it’s a powerful force for change. And the best part? Anyone can be a part of it.

For more information about the program and how your school can get involved, visit www.bkinderfoundation.org and chat to your principal or teachers about wanting to make a difference.

Jennifer (pseudonym for privacy)



Softball Victoria

If you mention Softball, most parents and teachers will say “I used to play Softball at school, it was so much fun!”

We want to see everyone share this experience and have the opportunity to love the sport as much as past generations, which is why Softball Australia has just launched the “We love Softball, so will you” campaign!

Softball has long been a cherished sport, offering young people a chance to develop a variety of skills, make friends, and compete at various levels, from grassroots to national representation. As the sporting landscape evolves, more opportunities are emerging for young people to get involved in ways that suit their schedule and lifestyle.

One of the aspects that makes Softball so popular among kids and parents alike, is that there’s a way for everyone play to your strengths, even if you’re not the sportiest person going around! Many young people find themselves loving the statistical elements and learn the intricacies of scoring (including the tech people), for those who love rules, softball has plenty to learn and many find great satisfaction in umpiring.

Of course, the athletes among us find Softball to be an awesome combination of physical and mental challenges, and one of the most comprehensive sports including hitting, running, throwing, catching, fielding and pitching with a strong strategic element.

Junior Participation opportunities are expanding to ensure continued growth, Softball Victoria is introducing initiatives aimed at making the sport more accessible with School Engagement Programs being run across the country. “In Victoria we collaborate with many organisations including School Sport Victoria and ACHPER to ensure teachers and students are well supported through their physical education curriculum and interschool sports competitions. The vital connection between schools and clubs is a continuous focus to ensure students can play and develop their love of Softball outside of school.” says State Operations Manager for Victoria, Jo Schutt

“These connections with the community quite often find the entire family becoming a member of the club, with many examples of parents falling in love with Softball and the range of benefits that come from being in such an inclusive environment.”

Softball really is a fun and affordable way to get out and about, become more active, make connections with like-minded people and learn something new, so how can you get involved? For young people looking to join a junior softball club head to the Club Finder tool on the Softball Australia website, enter your town or postcode and connect with your nearest club.

The future of junior softball is incredibly promising. With dedicated investment in facilities, coaching, and technology, the sport is set to thrive, offering young athletes more opportunities than ever to develop their skills and compete at higher levels. Australia is currently campaigning to qualify

for the LA Olympics in 2028, what an incredible achievement that would be to send an Australian team to play against the best in the world once again.

As participation continues to grow, we are well-positioned to become a leading force in junior softball across Australia, ensuring a vibrant and competitive environment for the next generation of players.

Softball Australia Club Finder
www.softball.org.au/club-finder/
Softball Victoria Website:
www.softballvic.org.au/home/
Softball Victoria Facebook:
www.facebook.com/softballvictoria
Instagram:
www.instagram.com/softball_vic/
And SoftballVic on TikTok



Titans Together

THE GOLD COAST TITANS have long distinguished themselves not only as a powerhouse in rugby league but also as a leader in community development and youth empowerment. Their comprehensive suite of youth programs, encompassing Leagueability, Deadly Futures, Kinetic Titans School League and an extensive array of Junior Rugby League initiatives, exemplifies a commitment to fostering excellence, inclusivity, and personal growth among young people.

At the forefront of the Titans community engagement is the Leagueability program, a groundbreaking initiative designed specifically for men and women with disabilities. With players ranged from 14, through to 55 years old, Leagueability targets a pivotal stage in young adults’ lives, a time when they are refining their identities and seeking meaningful avenues for self-expression. The program does more than teach the fundamentals of rugby league; it builds character, cultivates teamwork, and instils a profound sense of belonging.

Renee Cohen, General Manager of Community and Game Development, captures the ethos of Leagueability outcomes based on the change of society’s stereotypes.

“The Leagueability program is a testament to what can be achieved when we invest in the

potential of every young person,” Ms Cohen said.

“Our goal is to transform perceived limitations into strengths, ensuring that disability rugby league is recognised as an alternative path to excellence and opportunity,” she said.

In tandem with Leagueability, the Deadly Futures program represents another strategic pillar of the Titans’ youth engagement efforts. Focused on Indigenous students in Years 9 and 10, Deadly Futures seamlessly combines academic enrichment with the discipline of rugby league. This dual-faceted approach not only equips young Indigenous Australians with the skills necessary to excel academically, but also fosters a strong sense of pride in cultural identity.

Preston Campbell OAM, an esteemed Rugby League player and advocate for First Nations people, says the Deadly Futures program provides students with life-long lessons and purpose.

“Deadly Futures is more than an educational initiative, it is a beacon of hope and identity,” Mr Campbell OAM said.

“By uniting traditional cultural values with the modern challenges of education and sport, we

are preparing our young people to confront tomorrow’s challenges with confidence and resilience,” he said.

This program serves as a critical bridge, empowering Indigenous youth to navigate both their academic and personal journeys with assurance and confidence.

Complementing these specialised programs is the Titans robust Junior Rugby League framework, including the largest regional rugby league high school competition in Australia. Recognising that the future of the sport depends on a solid grassroots foundation, the Titans have developed a nurturing environment where young athletes from diverse backgrounds can learn, compete, and thrive.

The Kinetic Titans Schools League provides a comprehensive environment in both the physical and mental aspects of the game. Young players are not only taught the basic skills of rugby league but also the values of discipline, respect, and community engagement.

The Junior Rugby League programs are designed with inclusivity in mind. By ensuring that every child, regardless of background or ability, has access to high-quality coaching and support. The Titans lay the groundwork for a more equitable and dynamic sporting

community across the Gold Coast and Northern Rivers of New South Wales. These programs also function as a vital pipeline for the professional realm, equipping future players with the skills and mindset necessary to excel at higher levels of competition.

What distinguishes the Titans’ approach is its inclusive vision for youth development. Rather than limiting their efforts to training alone, the Gold Coast Titans understand that the formative years are a time for broad personal development. By integrating sports, education, and community values, the organisation creates a multi-dimensional platform where young people can flourish.

“When young individuals see themselves represented in all aspects of our community programs, it not only transforms their personal goals, but also fortifies the social foundations of our entire community,” Ms Cohen said.

The integrated nature of these programs not only enhances the sporting ability of the participants but also equips them with life skills that extend well beyond the boundaries of the playing field.

The youth programs at the Gold Coast Titans are a paragon of modern community engagement and youth empowerment.

Through Leagueability, Deadly Futures, Kinetic Titans Schools League and the expansive Junior Rugby League initiatives, the Titans are charting a course towards a future where every young person is given the opportunity to succeed.

By fostering inclusivity, nurturing talent, and championing cultural and educational growth, the Titans are not only preparing the next generation of rugby league stars, they are laying the foundations for a stronger, more inclusive society.





*care. include.
unite. inspire.*

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YOUR SON HAS TOURETTE SYNDROME

“Your son has Tourette Syndrome” The psychiatrist uttered to my parents as I played with my G I Joe’s on the Doctors office floor.

“What does that mean?” I asked myself as my parents confusingly mumbled their way around a few questions as they were just as dumbfounded as I was.

Let me introduce myself, my name is Seamus Evans, I speak in schools and conference around the country on resilience and pursuing your passion.

I spent the first 16 years of my career hosting TV and radio shows around Australia. (Toasted TV, Totally Wild, Hit Fm, Sea Fm)

I know what you’re thinking, “How did you work on TV and Radio with Tourette’s?”

The answer... A beep button... kidding, I don’t have the swearing Tourette’s. Only 10% of the population of people living with Tourette Syndrome have that. It’s called Coprolalia.

Let’s go back to that doctor’s office all those years ago. I remember distinctly going to the Mater children’s hospital and hearing the doctors’ words, “Tourette Syndrome”.

What the F*#K is that? No one had never even

heard of this strange syndrome before. And what does this mean?

Let me explain it in laymen’s terms. I twitch...

These twitches are called ‘Tics’.

The way it works is, everyone’s brain sends unwanted signals to the body. Everyone has a gate to keep the unwanted signals from firing through. People with Tourette’s have a weak gate, so the signals get through.

Just like not shutting the gate in the backyard properly, your dog is probably going to get out.

These signals commonly are things like barking, sniffing, grunting, shoulder shrugs, blinking, clicking fingers etc.

This syndrome is a cousin to ADHD, Autism and OCD. It falls under the neurodiverse umbrella.

We all have something, we all have an insecurity, flaw, setback, challenge or adversity of some kind.

I believe these are self-appointed setbacks. We allow them to stand in the way of our dreams and goals. But they only limit us or rob us of our potential, if we let them.

Once upon a time, I hated having Tourette Syndrome because it made me different. But

now I love it, because it makes me different.

Straight out of failing high school, I landed a job as a host of a tv show called “Toasted TV”. It was a kids program on Network 10.

However, a week in, my boss pulled me aside to question me about these odd twitches. He was shocked to learn it was Tourette Syndrome, and not having the full understanding he was scared he had hired the wrong person. So he dangled a poison carrot in front of me and stated “If it’s a problem, I will just fire you and hire someone else”

That was the moment my life changed forever.

Not for being punished or victimised for something out of my control, but I was provided an opportunity to take control of my own life.

We are all blessed with decisions every day. We overthink if we make the right decision, instead of making the decision right.

Not wanting my dream job to be taken away from me before I got a chance to start it, I was forced to redirect my tics so the camera wouldn’t see it.

Every day I would wake up and focus on learning how to take an over-the-top head flick to a stomach roll. Or a grunt to a throat clearing. And an eye flick to a tensing of the buttocks.



I won’t lie, it was tough, but the alternative was harder. Losing my dream job.

Fast forward to 2020 and I am 13 years into a media career that I never thought was possible due to my diagnosis all those years ago in that doctors office. But through pure determination, I managed to last that long.

I was hosting a breakfast radio show at the time in Cairns and at 9:05am we were called into the boss’ office after our morning show was completed.

“Due to covid 19, we’re making national cut backs and making all regional breakfast teams redundant. Thank you for all of your hard work, but tomorrow will be your last show”

I was ecstatic. Overjoyed and beside myself with excitement. One because I was about to get a pay day and two because I looked back at the 13 years and thought to myself “Wow... if I quit all those years ago because of my Tourette’s I never would have had such an awesome career.” So, I moved back in with my parents at 30 years of age and applied for ‘the dole’.

One morning at 3 am and I was wide awake, tossing and turning in bed wrestling with that horrible questions “What I am going to do with my life?” Then it dawned on me.

I need to give back. Inspire people who are just

like me and let them know they are perfect the way they are and they have the ability to write their own narrative.

Never let a simple diagnosis determine your future or your identity.

Today I travel the country speaking in schools, at conferences and to corporate teams about leadership, facing challenges and building resilience skills to push through adversity.

All because of Tourette Syndrome. The ‘dirty word’ that came out of my psychiatrists mouth all those years ago, that changed my life. Not for the worse... but for the better.

What dirty word will change yours?



Seamus Evans
Conference Keynote Speaker Pty Ltd
www.seamusevans.com.au



Emotional Safety in Sexual Health Education: A Missing Piece

When I reflect on my own experiences with sexual health education, one glaring omission stands out: emotional safety. The term was never mentioned, and like many others, I didn’t receive a comprehensive sexual health education. This gap in my learning is likely what drives my passion today to teach others about sexual health and safety.

As a teen navigating dating and relationships, I found discussing emotions and vulnerability incredibly challenging. Expressing my feelings often felt like I was “being too much” or that it was “not cool to care.” While we were taught the basics about STIs, STDs, and perhaps a little about contraception, the emotional aspects of relationships—arguably just as important—were left unspoken.

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL SAFETY?

Emotional safety is the sense of feeling secure, valued, and respected in relationships, including romantic and sexual ones. It’s about creating an environment where you can express yourself without fear of judgment, rejection, or harm. In the context of sexual health, emotional safety includes:

- **Consent:** Ensuring all parties willingly and enthusiastically agree to engage.
- **Communication:** Having open, honest conversations about boundaries, desires, and fears.
- **Vulnerability:** Feeling safe to express emotions without fear of being dismissed or shamed.
- **Respect:** Showing care for each other’s feelings, boundaries, and experiences.

WHY EMOTIONAL SAFETY MATTERS IN SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

Traditional sexual health education often focuses heavily on physical safety—preventing STIs, understanding contraception, and practising safe sex. While these are critical topics, they don’t address the full picture of

what it means to have healthy, fulfilling relationships.

Without emotional safety, physical safety measures can feel transactional rather than relational. Teens and young adults might know the mechanics of safe sex but lack the skills to navigate complex emotions, advocate for their needs, or recognise when their boundaries are being crossed.

INTEGRATING EMOTIONAL SAFETY INTO SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

At **Modern Intimacy Education**, we’ve designed programs tailored to two age groups: **14-18** and **18-25**. These programs are inclusive and aim to model emotional safety at every turn. Here’s how we approach it:

- **Consent Beyond a Checklist:** Teaching that consent isn’t just a one-time “yes” but an ongoing, enthusiastic agreement that includes emotional readiness.
- **Talking About Feelings:** Creating spaces where young people feel empowered to discuss their emotions and how they connect to their relationships and choices.
- **Modelling Respect:** Demonstrating how to show care and respect in conversations about sexual health, setting the tone for healthier interactions.

ASSESSING WHETHER A RELATIONSHIP IS HEALTHY OR UNHEALTHY

I like to teach using the **traffic light system**, which helps break down relationship behaviours into three categories:

- Green Light** – Healthy behaviours – Go ahead
- Yellow Light** – Might not be so healthy – Slow down
- Red Light** – Unhealthy behaviours – Stop

This approach makes it easier to recognise and reflect on different relationship dynamics.

By weaving emotional safety into sexual health education, we’re not just teaching young people how to stay physically safe. We’re equipping them with the tools to build relationships based on trust, care, and mutual respect. Emotional safety shouldn’t be an afterthought—it’s an essential component of holistic sexual health education.

Let’s give the next generation the tools they need to feel safe, not just in their bodies but in their hearts and minds as well.

BREAKING DOWN EMOTIONAL & PHYSICAL SAFETY IN STAGES

In both programs I teach, I like to break down emotional and physical safety into stages to better illustrate communication and vulnerability.

Pre-Care: Setting the Stage

Pre-care involves discussing expectations and boundaries **before** engaging in sexual activities. This preparation helps establish full consent and creates a respectful and safe environment.

Key elements include:

- **Check-In with Yourself:** Reflect on what you want from the experience, your mental and emotional state, and your physical readiness. Ask yourself: Is there consent present? Are they consenting, and am I?
- **Discuss Boundaries:** Talk about acceptable actions, contraception, STI/STD prevention, and what sex means to both of you.
- **Communicate Desires:** Be clear about what you want and listen to your partner’s desires and boundaries.
- **Establish Safe Words:** Agree on words or signals for any situation where one of you feels uncomfortable.

During-Care: Maintaining Safety

Maintaining safety during-care is about **ongoing communication and care throughout the sexual encounter**. This involves:

- **Checking-In:** Regularly ask your partner how they’re feeling and communicate your own needs.
- **Adjusting Actions:** Be open to changing activities based on feedback and ensure that both partners are comfortable.
- **Expressing Concerns:** If something doesn’t feel right, speak up and address it immediately.
- **Advocating for Yourself:** Use techniques like the DEAR MAN method from Dialectical Behaviour Therapy to assert your boundaries effectively.

AFTER-CARE: REFLECTING & CONNECTING

After-care is crucial for **maintaining emotional connection** and ensuring both partners feel valued. This includes:

- **Self-Check:** Reflect on your feelings about the experience. Consider whether you feel emotionally and mentally content.
- **Partner Check-In:** Ask your partner how they felt about the encounter and discuss any feelings or thoughts that emerged.
- **Affection & Communication:** Engage in affectionate behaviours like cuddling if desired, and maintain open communication about the experience.

Breaking things down into bite-sized steps is something I’ve found highly effective when working with students. As someone who is neurodiverse, I’m passionate about teaching sexual education in an **inclusive and accessible way**—ensuring young people feel confident in their decisions and empowered to communicate in a way that feels right for them.

I believe the sexual health education space is evolving in many positive ways, and I’m so grateful for that. However, one thing I would love to see more often is the inclusion of **emotional safety** in these conversations. My goal with **Modern Intimacy Education** is to create more dialogue around emotional safety and make it a fundamental part of sexual education—ensuring it becomes a commonplace consideration in sexual health education.

For more information on the programs, visit **modernintimacyeducation.com** or follow **@modern_intimacyeducation** on Instagram.



Greer Alexandra is a dedicated sexual health educator, therapist, and qualified trainer and assessor in the mental health field. She is the founder of Modern Intimacy Education.

With a background in counselling and education in the school health education sector, Greer is passionate about providing trauma-informed support to adolescents and adults to help them navigate their sexual health, relationships, and intimacy in the modern era.

Recently, Greer authored a comprehensive workbook titled “Let’s Talk Sex & Emotional Safety”, focusing on safe sex practices and emotional well-being.

Through her work, Greer creates an environment where people feel safe to explore sexual health, relationships, and self-empowerment.





Dyslexia and Young People's Mental Health: The Hidden Struggles and How to Help

Dyslexia affects approximately 10% of the population and makes up 50% of the neurodivergent population in Australia. Dyslexia affects a person's ability to read, including the speed of reading, reading fluency, and comprehension. In turn, this can impact their written expression including spelling, grammar sentence structure and maths.

DYSLEXIA also affects an individual's executive functioning skills such as working memory, which means they may have trouble remembering and following verbal instructions, particularly when given in sequence and may be slower at processing written and verbal information. They may have trouble staying organised missing key deadlines and appear forgetful. Dyslexia is highly genetic,

runs in families, and often occurs alongside other neurodevelopmental differences such as dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, ADHD, and autism.

For young people, dyslexia can be a significant factor in their mental health, influencing self-esteem, academic achievement, and overall well-being. While many see dyslexia primarily as a learning challenge, it is crucial to recognise the emotional toll it can take and explore strategies to support young people in managing school, relationships, part-time work, and their mental health.

The Emotional Toll of Dyslexia

From an early age, children with dyslexia may struggle to keep up with their peers academically in reading, spelling, and writing tasks. This can lead to feelings of frustration, embarrassment, and even shame. Without proper support, many young people may begin to develop anxiety around schoolwork and can feel isolated from classmates who progress more easily.

Low self-esteem is a common challenge among dyslexic students. When their difficulties are not understood, they may perceive themselves as "less intelligent" and use labels like "dumb" or

"stupid" to compare themselves to their peers, despite often possessing exceptional skills in other areas such as problem-solving skills, creativity, strong verbal reasoning, arts and sports. Over time, repeated academic struggles and negative feedback from teachers or peers can erode confidence and lead to avoidance behaviours, such as school refusal, reluctance to participate in class discussions, or delaying assignments.

The Link Between Dyslexia and Mental Health Conditions

Studies have shown that young people with dyslexia are at a higher risk of developing mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression. The pressure to meet academic expectations, combined with potential bullying or social exclusion, can make school a stressful experience including school refusal. Trying to keep up with classroom work can be mentally exhausting, causing feelings of significant fatigue and overwhelm.

Anxiety often arises from the fear of failure or being singled out due to learning differences. Young people may become overly self-conscious about reading aloud, spelling errors, or slower reading speeds. This anxiety can extend beyond the classroom, affecting their



willingness to engage in new activities or social interactions.

Depression can develop when young people feel a persistent sense of failure or believe they are incapable of succeeding. Without intervention, these feelings may worsen over time, affecting their overall mental health and future aspirations.

How Can We Support Young People with Dyslexia and Their Mental Health?

Supporting young people with dyslexia requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses both educational and emotional needs. Here are some key strategies:

Early Identification and Intervention

Early diagnosis and targeted intervention can make a world of difference. Although we know accessing a dyslexia assessment and intervention programs can be a significant financial barrier some schools, TAFE and universities can support access to assessment services and educational assistance. Universities often have low-cost assessment services that can be accessed and both TAFE and universities have access and inclusion services that can help with academic support such as reasonable adjustments.

Encouraging Strengths and Interests

It is essential to shift the focus from difficulties to strengths. Young people with dyslexia often excel in areas such as creativity, problem-solving, storytelling, music, art, sport and entrepreneurship. Encouraging engagement in these areas can build confidence and provide opportunities for success outside of traditional academic settings.

Parents and educators should help dyslexic students discover their strengths and pursue

activities that align with their talents. Whether through art, coding, hands-on projects, or sports, fostering their passions provides a sense of accomplishment and helps counterbalance academic struggles.

Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

Educators, whether in secondary school, TAFE or university, and employers play a crucial role in shaping a young person's educational and early career experience. These settings must foster inclusive environments that celebrate neurodiversity rather than stigmatising differences.

Encouraging flexible teaching methods, such as oral presentations instead of written essays or using audiobooks instead of printed texts, using AI and tools such as Grammarly to improve for spelling, grammar and sentence structure, speech-to-text and text-to-speech can remove unnecessary barriers to learning and allow young people to showcase their abilities.

Encouraging Social Connections and Finding Their Tribe

Social belonging is a key factor in mental well-being. Encouraging young people to build a strong support network by joining groups where they feel accepted can have a profound impact on their confidence.

Finding their "tribe"—a group of like-minded individuals who appreciate them for their strengths—can be life-changing. Dyslexic young people may find connections through neurodivergent support groups, creative communities, gaming groups, drama clubs, or even mentorship programs with adults who share similar lived experiences.

Education and employment settings can also facilitate peer mentoring programs have been shown to be extremely valuable in offering

support, empathy and understanding.

Providing Emotional Support

Counselling and seeking psychological support can be a game changer in helping young people navigate the emotional challenges associated with dyslexia and other co-occurring differences they may have. Parents, education and employment settings should encourage and support open conversations about learning differences and mental health, ensuring that young people feel safe to express their feelings.

Encouraging young people to seek support from trusted adults, whether parents, teachers, or mental health professionals and services such as re:think dyslexia and headspace services, can provide them with reassurance and coping strategies to manage their emotions and the ups and downs of living with dyslexia.

Using Assistive Technology

Technology is a game-changer for dyslexics. Tools such as text-to-speech software, audiobooks, and speech recognition programs allow dyslexics to access information and express their thoughts more easily. This not only improves academic and work performance but also reduces frustration, anxiety, cognitive overload and mental fatigue associated with reading and writing tasks and executive functioning difficulties.

Building self-advocacy skills

Building self-advocacy skills in young people with dyslexia is crucial because it empowers them to understand their strengths, communicate their needs, and access the right support throughout their education and future careers. Strong self-advocacy skills can help, young people confidently request accommodations, seek out tools that enhance their learning, and challenge misconceptions



about their abilities. Encouraging self-advocacy also helps build resilience and confidence, ensuring they see their dyslexia as a different way of thinking rather than a limitation. We can support them by providing clear information about their rights, fostering self-awareness through mentoring and peer support, and creating inclusive spaces where their voices are heard and valued. By equipping them with these skills early on, we help set them up for success in a world that often doesn't naturally accommodate diverse ways of thinking.

Looking Forward: A Call for Greater Awareness and Action

Despite growing awareness, dyslexia remains misunderstood, and many young people continue to struggle in silence. Schools, communities, and policymakers must prioritise inclusive education and mental health support for neurodivergent individuals. By fostering an environment that recognises dyslexia as a difference rather than a deficit, we can help young people develop resilience, confidence, and a sense of belonging.

Dyslexia does not define a person's intelligence or potential. With the right support, young

people with dyslexia can flourish academically, socially, and emotionally, ensuring they have the confidence to pursue their dreams without the weight of self-doubt.

For educators, workplaces and professionals, understanding the connection between dyslexia and mental health is the first step toward meaningful change. By embracing a holistic approach, we can create a world where young people with dyslexia not only succeed but thrive.

Need help now?

At re:think dyslexia, we're here to support you. Call our free and confidential helpline at 1800 13 NEAP (6327), available for young people and adults with dyslexia or other neurodivergent conditions (such as ADHD, dysgraphia, and autism), as well as employers who work with them. Together, we can help you thrive in the workplace and beyond.

Learn more about dyslexia and neurodivergence through the Dear Dyslexic Podcast Show or the re:think dyslexia YouTube channel. You can also explore our latest book, *Dyslexia: Insights into the Hidden Disability* in and out of the

Workplace. You can order your book through the QR code.



For more details on how we can assist you, reach out at **1800 13 NEAP (6327)** or visit rethinkdyslexia.com.au.

Dr Shae Wissell



Male volunteers URGENTLY NEEDED to help kids living with cancer.

Boys living with cancer need male role models to help with their development and confidence at camps which involve everything from rolling in mud to laser tag.

"You'll change lives by making a kid living with cancer smile and laugh. You'll make life-long friends with other volunteers who are selfless, funny and inspiring."
a Camp Quality volunteer



**CAN YOU HELP?
or know someone who can?**

campquality.org.au/volunteer or 1300 662 267

The McGrath Foundation makes life that little bit easier for families experiencing breast cancer, by placing specialist McGrath Breast Care Nurses wherever they're needed in Australia.



Donate today at www.mcgrathfoundation.com.au

Get Help

Nationwide

The National Cannabis Information & Helpline https://ncpic.org.au/helpline/ 1800 30 40 50	Headspace Chat Online https://eheadspace.org.au/ Online chat available 1800 650 890 (9AM -1AM)	1800RESPECT https://www.1800respect.org.au/ 1800 737 732	Blue Knot Foundation Helpline http://www.blueknot.org.au/Helpline 1300 657 380	Lifeline http://www.lifeline.org.au/ 13 11 14	The Butterfly Foundation http://thebutterflyfoundation.org.au/ 1800 33 4673
Kids Help Line http://www.kidshelp.com.au/ 1800 55 18 00	Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) http://www.dva.gov.au/ 1800 011 046	PANDA - National Perinatal Depression Helpline http://www.panda.org.au/ 1300 726 306	AustralianGovernment: AIHW MHSA http://mhsa.aihw.gov.au/home	SANE Australia http://www.sane.org/ 1800 187 263	Gambling Helpline http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au/ Online chat available 1800 858 858
Suicide Call Back Service https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au Online chat available 1300 659 467	Family Drug Support http://www.fds.org.au/ 1300 368 186	Al-Anon http://www.al-anon.org.au/contact 1300 ALANON (1300 252 666)	Alcoholics Anonymous http://www.aa.org.au/ 1300 222 222	Quit Line http://www.quit.org.au/ 13 78 48	Mind Connect https://www.mindaustalia.org.au/contact-us.html 1300 286 463
					Mensline Australia http://www.mensline.org.au/ 1300 78 99 78

Victoria

Youth Drug and Alcohol Advice (YoDAA) https://www.ysas.org.au	Pharmacotherapy, Advocacy, Mediation & Support (PAMS) Advice for anyone experiencing trouble with their pharmacotherapy program (Methadone, Suboxone etc...) 1800 443 844	1800 ICE ADVICE Advice and support for people who use ice, their families and health professionals. 1800 423 238	DirectLine Confidential alcohol and drug counselling and referral line. 1800 888 236	Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) A 24-hour confidential information, advice and referral telephone service. 1800 151 045	Ted Noffs Foundation help line Counselling and support for young people and their families.
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New South Wales

Queensland

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) Telephone information, counselling and referral. 1800 177 833	Counselling Online If you prefer to speak to someone 1800 177 833 (Regional) 07 3837 5989 (metro)	Alcohol and Drug Support Line 24/7, state-wide counselling, information, referral and support Metro: (08) 9442 5050 Country: 1800 653 203	Parent and Family Drug Support Line 24/7, state-wide counselling, information, referral and support. 1800 721 997	Meth Helpline 24/7, state-wide counselling, information, referral and support. 1800 874 878	Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) Telephone information, counselling, and referral service. 1300 131 340
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Western Australia

South Australia

ACT

Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) 24-hour telephone service offering information, advice, referral, intake, assessment and support. 02 6207 9977	Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) 24-hour Alcohol and Drug Telephone Information and counselling service. 1800 131 350	Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) A 24-hour telephone information and counselling line. 1800 811 994
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Northern Territory

Tasmania

If you are in an emergency, or at immediate risk of harm to yourself or others, please contact emergency services on 000



headspace

National Youth Mental Health Foundation

headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year-olds. By ensuring help is accessed in early stages of young people's lives and providing a holistic model of support, **headspace** provides a safe space where they can get their mental health and wellbeing back on track.

headspace services cover four core areas: mental health, physical health (including sexual health), work and study support and alcohol and other drug services. Services are confidential, youth friendly and free or low cost. Young people and their families can access services face-to-face at one of 98 **headspace** centres across which can be located Australia at www.headspace.org.au, or via **eheadspace** – a national online and telephone counselling service at www.eheadspace.org.au.

Over the past 10 years, **headspace** has proudly provided over 1.8 million services through centres, online and over the phone, helping over 310,000 young people across Australia. **headspace** wants to ensure young people aged 12-25 have access to youth friendly mental health services, no matter where they live.

Alongside **headspace** centre, online and telephone support, specialised services are provided in the following areas:

- **headspace** School Support – a suicide postvention program, which assists Australian school communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from a suicide.
- Digital Work and Study Service – a dedicated team assisting young people aged 15-24 in education and work options.
- **headspace** Youth Early Psychosis Program – a program focusing on early intervention, aiming to improve the lives of young people, and their families, who are affected by psychosis.

HEADSPACE DONATIONS AND FUNDRAISING

There are many ways to support **headspace** and the work carried out in providing mental health and wellbeing support, information and services to young people and their families across Australia. **headspace** has helped hundreds of thousands of young people get their lives back on track and your support will assist us with our work.

Any donation generously provided to **headspace** goes towards community engagement and awareness, which can be specifically given towards a local centre or to National Office.

Donations to **headspace** National Office, ensures the promotion of the importance of seeking help, to break down stigma associated with mental health issues and to make sure every young person across Australia, as well as their friends and family, knows there is help available.

You can find out more about donations and fundraising through the 'Get Involved' page at www.headspace.org.au

SEEKING HELP

Getting support can help a young person to keep on track at school, study or work, as well as personal and family relationships. The sooner help is received, the sooner things can begin to improve.

headspace can help any young person aged 12-25 years-old, a family member or friend wanting to seek information on youth mental health.

These are just some of the reasons someone may seek help from headspace:

- If someone is feeling down, stressed or constantly worrying
- If someone doesn't feel like themselves anymore
- If someone isn't coping with school/uni/work or finding it difficult to concentrate
- If someone is feeling sick or worried about their health
- If someone has questions about, or wants to cut down on alcohol or other drug use
- If someone wants to talk about sexuality, gender identity or relationships
- If someone is having difficulties with family or friends
- If someone is concerned about sexual health or wants information about contraception
- If someone is being bullied, hurt or harassed
- If someone is worried about work or study or having money trouble

DID YOU KNOW?

One in four young people have experienced a mental health issue in the past 12 months – a higher prevalence than all other age groups. Alarming, suicide is the leading cause of death of young people, accounting for one third of all deaths.

Adolescence and early adulthood is a critical time in a person's life, with 75 per cent of mental health disorders emerging before the age of 25.