

# build and create close connections





*"I get a sense of satisfaction out of relationships, in terms of being able to connect with other people. It grounds me a lot. When I get stuck in my head, having relationships that I care about can bring me back out..."*

Sophia, hY NRG member  
(headspace Youth National Reference Group)

Putting time into your relationships can help you feel connected, boost your energy and, ultimately, keep your headspace healthy.

## Relationships and your mood

Healthy relationships are super important for your mental health. When you spend time with people you care about, who care about you, this can help you feel connected and supported.

Yet, we know relationships aren't always easy. Starting new relationships can often be scary. And if you're experiencing mental health difficulties you may feel like disconnecting from people, rather than reaching out.

But here's the thing – the more you work on your relationships, the stronger they get. Strong relationships can give you support when you need it and provide a sense of belonging and community. When you spend time connecting with and supporting others, your wellbeing improves, too!

Investing in relationships can improve your mood by:

- boosting your energy
- improving your sense of belonging
- helping you relax
- helping you feel supported.

## Ask an expert: how can I work on my relationships?

Our headspace team have the following tips for navigating relationships.

- Focus on positive relationships that make you feel good about yourself. Build relationships where you support each other and where you feel you can be yourself.
- Every relationship can bring you different benefits, so try to keep a variety of people in your life, such as friends from work or school, teachers, parents, people who have similar interests and more.
- Communication is important. When you are open with people, they will be more open with you – which strengthens your relationships.

- Understand that socialising and keeping relationships can be hard and have challenges. Occasionally you may feel left out, different, even criticised. Just remember, it's normal to feel this way sometimes and the feelings will pass.
- Your relationship with yourself is an important relationship too. And, when you look after yourself it can teach you how to look after others as well.



*"I find it hard to focus on relationships when I'm struggling. When I moved away from home for uni I was thrown into this environment where I didn't really know anyone and I did just have to make a lot of attempts at making friends. I think that's probably been a big source of anxiety for me – going out, trying to meet people and knowing it's not always going to work out.*

*I wasn't a big party animal, I wasn't really extroverted. But I learnt that you don't have to change yourself to try and fit into new friendships and new relationships and things like that. I focused on small level interactions that might not always eventually turn into a relationship. I think just having the confidence just to say, "Hi, how are you going?" Small talk was good to stay connected with my wider social environment.*

*I've come to see that working on relationships brings me out of my shell, not just talking to people, but getting out of the house and going to events and meeting new people as well. Sharing those new experiences, it gives me more energy, a bit more life and meaning, I guess. It's a chance to find out more about yourself and others."*

Sophia, hY NRG member  
(headspace Youth National Reference Group)

## Healthy habits

When you're feeling stressed, anxious or low on energy it's important to put healthy habits in place – to give yourself a better chance of coping with life's challenges.

Your relationships are so important for your general wellbeing. When you strengthen your relationships, and focus on forming healthy habits – such as cutting back on alcohol and drugs, sleeping well, and spending time with people you love – you put yourself in a great position to keep a healthy, happy mind.



**If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)**



**If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.**

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# Tip 3.

## create connections

### Spending time with people who care about me:

- gives me energy
- makes me feel like I belong
- helps me relax
- makes me feel supported.

### How can I improve the ways I connect with people? I can:

- stay friends with people who make me feel happy and let me be myself
- be friends with lots of different people, like school friends, work friends, neighbours, older people and people who like what I like
- be honest and share my thoughts and feelings with my friends
- be kind to myself in social situations, I know it can be hard to talk to people sometimes
- remember to look after myself, looking after myself teaches me how to care for others too
- be brave and speak to someone new.



## **Tip 3. create connections**

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**What things do I like? What do I like to do when I need to take a break from everything? What makes me feel good?**

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**3 things I like are:**

**When I need a break I like to:**

**3 things I like doing:**

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**What activities happen in my neighbourhood that I might want to go to?**

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**In social situations...**

**I am:**

confident / shy

loud / quiet

**I like:**

big groups / small groups

just talking / doing an activity

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**Getting to know myself helps me to choose ways to make new friends. It helps me understand other people too.**