

YA @ THE LOFT

The Hills Clinic

healthcare™

PARENT & CARER INFORMATION HANDOUT

With one in five Australians experiencing mental health issues in any year, one in five self-harming, and 75 percent of all lifetime mental disorders manifesting by the mid-20s, more than one million Australian families are affected by youth mental health issues.

While parents play a vital role in adolescents' care by encouraging them to seek help and are recognised as the "backbone of community mental health support", parents typically get little support themselves.

Coping with high levels of stress, round the clock caring, parents and family members' own health and quality of life suffers. At the same time, they often struggle with their own emotions, a sense of powerlessness, feelings of guilt, isolation, fear and anxiety.

Meanwhile, they are dealing with changing parenting guideposts, 24/7 connectivity and social media pressures, and difficulty discerning between teenage behaviours and mental health issues.

The Hills Clinic's YA Parent Information Session and this take-home brochure are designed as just small steps towards supporting parents with knowledge, connection and resources.

Understanding Mental Health Issues

Anxiety is a normal human emotion. We feel fear when faced with imminent danger. We feel anxiety when we are not in imminent danger, but we worry about something bad happening to us in the future.



Anxiety can be helpful in communicating with ourselves, to motivate us or help us perform. However, it can become excessive and problematic, stopping us from doing what we wish to do.

Anxiety has physical, cognitive and behavioural symptoms. Getting to know these symptoms, how we experience them, how we maintain them, and their impact on our lives, is an important step in managing anxiety.

Depression is a prolonged period of low mood that fails to resolve. It has psychological (eg. sadness, short temper, self-criticism, pessimism, low motivation), physical (eg. loss of appetite, low energy, weight gain or loss, sleep impact) and social consequences (eg. withdrawal, irritability, argumentative, avoidance).

Recognising early warning signs, acting quickly and seeking help can help minimise depressive illness.

"I was permanently tired, regardless of how much sleep I got. Some days it was too much effort even to get out of bed. The thought of facing the outside world and its inhabitants was too overwhelming. It was safer to hid under my bedsheets. But I wanted to get out of bed - 'Please let my legs drag me out of bed and break the chains!' - but I couldn't. Instead, I cried for acting so weak and so sad."

Courtney, 16

Addiction is when someone engages in repetitive, compulsive behaviour that is rewarding and reinforcing, even in the fact of negative consequences. Addictions rarely develop without some underlying stress, anxiety, depression or trauma which lead to overwhelming emotions we find hard to deal with.

Substances are added - alcohol, drugs, or adopt problematic behaviours (overeating, gambling, sex) - to numb the painful



emotions. Repeating these habits, increases tolerance, requiring more and more of the substance to get the same effect. At the same time, dependence develops, making it harder to stop using.

YA @The Loft Program

During their three-week stay at The Hills Clinic, your child will engage in a holistic program specially designed for young adult therapy.

Its main aims are to:

- Help young adults better understand their mental health
- Create a meaningful life
- Understand the consequences of their long term and short-term coping strategies
- Improve self-esteem by cultivating a sense of self
- Increase skills in regulating emotions, tolerating distress and improve daily functioning.

The program combines:

- Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)
- Mindfulness Practice
- Art Therapy
- Tai Chi, Martial Arts and Exercise
- Horticulture

Your young adult will be encouraged to take responsibility for their mental health recovery, try to make more effective choices and recognise the importance of creating healthy sleep, diet and exercise routines. Healthy communication and boundaries are contrasted with passive communication, not taking responsibility and unhelpful thinking patterns. Self-compassion is encouraged over self-judgement to encourage adolescents to treat themselves with the same kindness they would others.

What happens next?

It is sometimes helpful to think of your young adult's stay at The Hills Clinic as a sort of circuit breaker or reboot for the family. While they are being cared for in hospital, try to look after yourself, attend to your own needs and those of other family members.

Setting expectations, mental health recovery is a journey rather than a race, with a one-two year recovery timeframe typical. From an inpatient stay like this, best practice recommends planning, ongoing professional/ therapy support, and continued skills development and commitment to recovery by engaging in day programs.

Day programs are important in continuing skills development, ongoing accountability and support, and forming new habits. During their last week at the hospital, your young adult will discuss with their psychiatrist and the Allied Health team which program may best suit them.

Day Program

Day Program	Duration	Suited for
Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Foundation Skills – Part 1	12 weeks	This skills-based group is for people 16 years and older who experience symptoms of impulsivity, frequent interpersonal conflict, have difficulty regulating their emotions and anger, or who struggle coping in stressful situations. Skills help improve distress tolerance, mindfulness, emotional regulation and interpersonal skills.
Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Masterclass Skills – Part 2	6 months	Open to people 16 years and older who have completed the Foundation Skills program. Ideal for people diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder or those with intense, unstable moods, self-harm and unstable relationships. Requires a strong commitment to therapy.
Phoenix (Addiction Program)	11 weeks	Open to people over 16 years with substance use issues. This skills-based group integrates relapse prevention skills with mindfulness practice to increase your ability to cope with life drug/ alcohol-free. Sessions focus on increasing awareness of triggers and automatic reactions to develop a greater sense of choice about how to respond to situations without using substances.
Manoeuvres (CBT)	10 weeks	Open to people over 16 years with depression, anxiety or stress. Focusing on the "here and now", this program helps you to understand and change unhelpful thinking, behaviours and feelings that may be negatively affecting day to day life.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)	10 weeks	Helps people accept what is out of control, identify what's important to them and commit to action to enrich their life. It promotes mindfulness to notice painful thoughts, emotions, practice greater self-compassion and open them up to trying new approaches. Open to those over 16 years.
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Supporting your young adult

Ways you can support your young adult's recovery include:

- Self-reflection – what can you work on to enhance communication, tweak family dynamics, and provide a supportive framework
- Communication – see this as a fresh start and an opportunity for more open, mindful communication on all sides
- Model supportive relationships including healthy communication and boundaries
- Take responsibility for your own problems, stress, emotion regulation and habits
- Validate your own and their emotions
- Practice greater mindfulness and acceptance
- Help them notice early warning signs, triggers, and consistently take prescribed medication
- Remind them to use skills and develop problem-solving
- Seek your own therapy to deal with feelings of hurt, resentment, loss and lack of acceptance
- Be fair, be consistent. Ensure clear boundaries with agreed consequences

Resources and Support

Mental Health Support

Resource	What's Included	Website/Contact
Headspace	resources	www.fds.org.au
Beyond Blue	meetings, resources, links, online forums	www.al-anon.org.au
Lifeline	24 hr crisis support	www.lifeline.org.au / 13 11 14
Reach Out	forums, self-help, resources	www.au.reachout.com www.parents.au.reachout.com

Support for Families and Carers

Resource	What's Included	Website/Contact
Family Drug Support Australia	local meetings	www.fds.org.au
AL-ANON	local meetings, resources	www.al-anon.org.au
Sydney Drug Education	counselling, parent support groups	www.sdecc.org.au/
Mental Health Carers Australia	advocacy, resources	mentalhealthcarersaustralia.org.au
SANE Carers Forum	online forum, resources	www.sane.org

Support for People with Substance Abuse

Resource	What's Included	Website/Contact
Sydney Drug Education	counselling, support group	www.sdec.org.au
SMART Recovery	local meetings,	smartrecoveryaustralia.com.au
Alcoholics Anonymous	local meetings	www.aa.org.au
Narcotics Anonymous	local meetings	www.na.org.au