

# Considerations in working with young people

Irene Verins - Manager Mental Wellbeing



# VicHealth's strategies for young people



[Home](#)



# Why focus on young people?



Youth & young adulthood are characterised by **critical transitions**

75% adult mental health conditions emerge by age 24 and half by age 14 years

1 in 4 young Australians currently has a mental disorder

1 in 4 report **limited access to social support** when needed

Nationally, the top three barriers young people felt would impact on their study/work goals were:  
academic ability (22.0%),  
financial difficulty (14.2%)  
**mental health (13.2%)**

# Research: Future trends impacting young people's mental wellbeing



A megatrend is a long term change affecting societies, governments and economies over a long period of time

Megatrends identify both **challenges and opportunities** relating to youth mental wellbeing over the coming 20 years

$\frac{3}{4}$  of young people will thrive and flourish into the future

Some trends will provide risk for the vulnerable  $\frac{1}{4}$

# Megatrends

- Advances in technology & increased automation are placing high & low skilled, routine manual and entry level job at risk
- Rise of freelancing, portfolio work & flexible work models
- Increased use of online environment
- New technologies allow better treatment options for mental wellbeing

# Challenges

- Young people will be required to have levels of adaptability, autonomy and confidence
- Young people are moving into a world of work that is different from their parents
- Many young people are anxious about job prospects, and once in work, some are finding the precarious new conditions stressful and isolating
- Stress, anxiety and loneliness are on the rise, particularly for those on lower incomes



**Promote  
mental wellbeing**



**resilience and social connection**



A dynamic state in which the individual is able to

- develop to their potential,
- work productively and creatively,
- build strong and positive relationships with others and
- contribute to the community



# Why focus on Social Connections?

Social support is a **protective factor** (perceived more powerful than actual)

Social support can act as a **'buffer'** to stressors

Loneliness can have a **stronger negative influence** than the impact of stress and anxiety

Young people are **more connected online** than ever before (communities of interest)

Younger Victorians (15-34 years) are **least likely** to feel they belong to their local neighbourhood

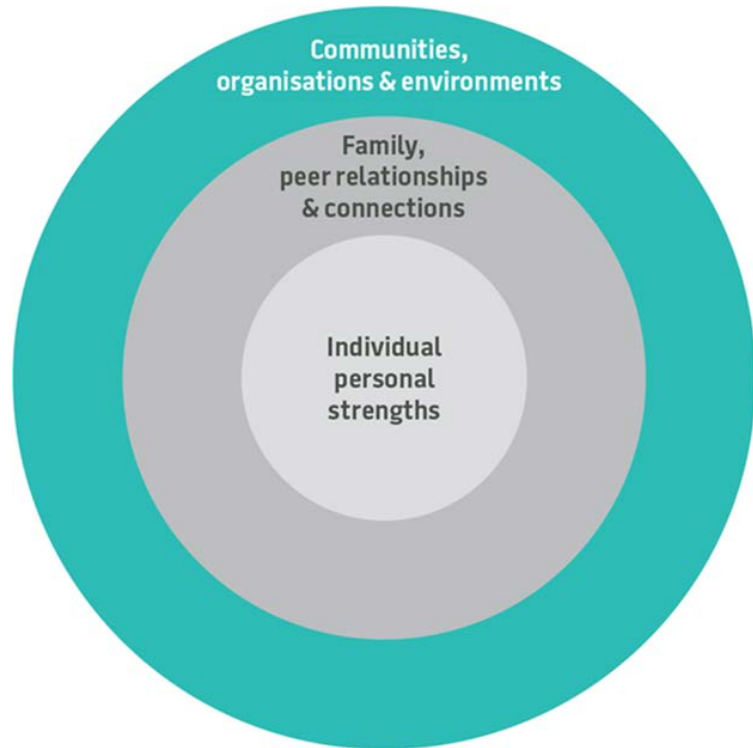


<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/letter/articles/vh-letter-47-loneliness>

<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/young-victorians-resilience-and-mental-wellbeing>



# How is resilience relevant?

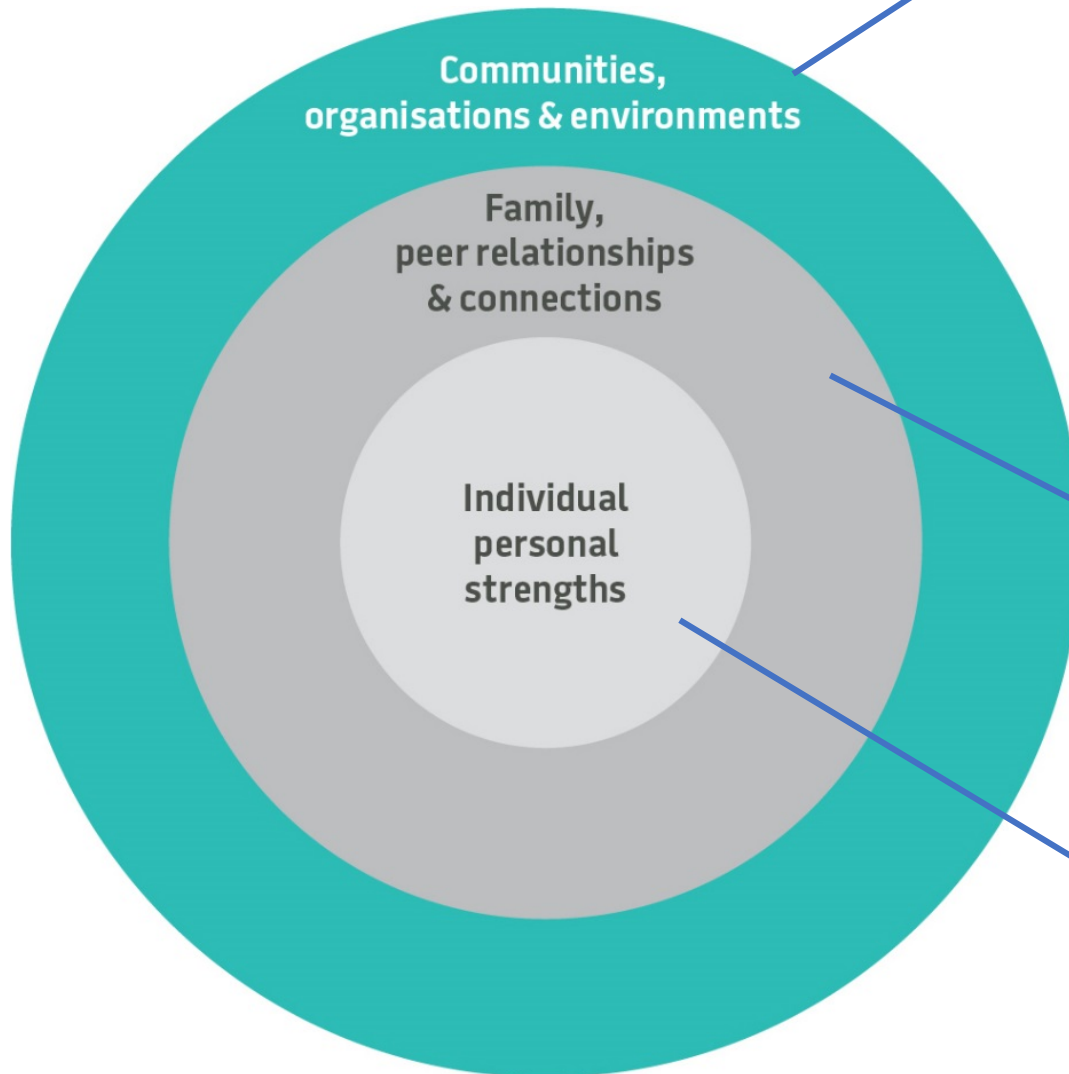


- Ability to adapt, cope and bounce back from adversity
- It's not inherent but develops over time through interactions between person and their social environment
- 3 key protective assets are associated with development of resilience
  - Personal life skills
  - Supportive relationships
  - Connected, safe and cohesive communities

<https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/mental-wellbeing-strategy>

# Implementation considerations when working with young people

# Build evidence for resilience & social connections



## LIMITED EVIDENCE

- How do communities, organisations, environments build resilience & social connections?
- What are the processes & capabilities required?

## SOME EVIDENCE EXISTS

- Secure attachment
- Positive parent-child relationships
- Positive family environment
- Friendships with pro-social peers

## STRONG EVIDENCE EXISTS

- Self-esteem, confidence, self-efficacy, emotion regulation, problem-solving, social skills & perseverance

# Build capability in youth participation



Research indicates that youth participation can:

- result in improved academic adjustment
  - greater magnitude of community change
  - higher relevance & impact of health promotion efforts
  - strengthened connections with their community
- 
- *(Chisholm 2015, Paviglianti & Irwin 2017)*

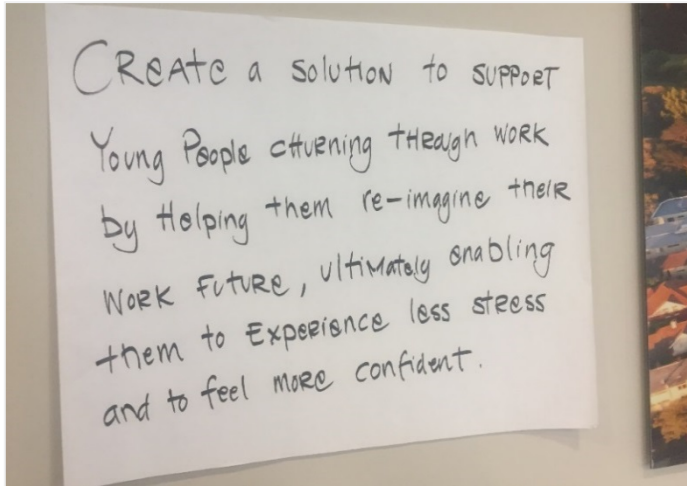


# Use VicHealth's resources

1. Online toolkit for co design with young people
2. Resilience and Social Connection Framework
3. Research summaries from evaluation reports from funded activity in education, work, online, arts, sports & community

# Case studies of practice

# Transitions from education to work



- Young people have fewer professional networks, less job experience, and poorer career curation skills
- 1 in 3 Young people are un or underemployed, and looking for more work
- It is taking 2 - 4.6 years for young people to move from ed to work : “churn”
- This is contributing to rising levels of anxiety, stress and poor mental health





<https://youtu.be/651xutHYjI4>



TOMORROW ME - YOUNG WORKERS GAMIFICATION PROJECT

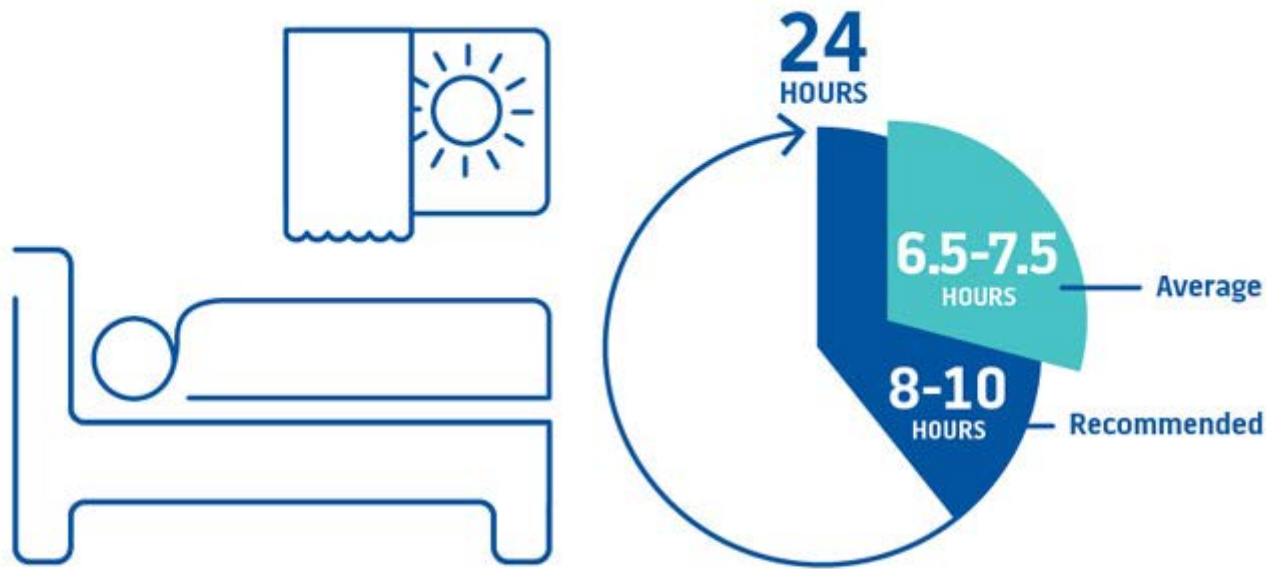
## Using games to help boost young workers' resilience





SLEEP RESEARCH

## Aussie teens forgo sleep for screens



**Adolescents are only getting  
between 6.5 and 7.5 hours  
of sleep on school nights**

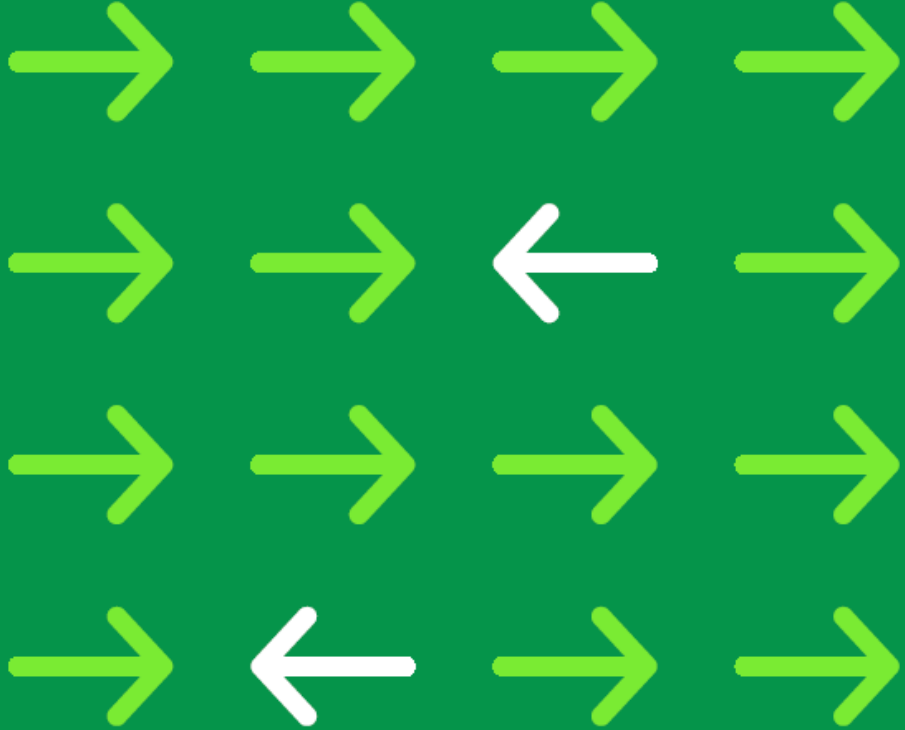


**21 minutes  
extra sleep  
per night**

**Teenagers who stopped using their  
phones just one hour before bedtime  
gained 1 hour and 45 minutes extra  
sleep over a school week**

## **(En)countering resistance**

Strategies to respond to resistance  
to gender equality initiatives



This practical guide draws together some effective strategies and tools to prepare for and respond to backlash and resistance to gender equality initiatives



# Thank you!

