



## Tips for Parents Struggling to Get their Child to School

We acknowledge that at times it can be difficult to get your child to school. To assist you with this process, we have provided some strategies and information below that may be helpful.

### What does your child miss when they are not at school?

- Opportunities to learn
- Routines
- Responsibilities and expectations
- Opportunities to socialise and build friendships with other students
- A chance to build resilience and problem solving skills
- A chance to appreciate diversity of thought
- Team work and co-operation skills
- A strong work ethic
- A pathway to employment and independence



### Children and young people who regularly attend school and complete Year 12, or an equivalent qualification, have:

- better health outcomes,
- better employment outcomes, and
- higher incomes across their lives

Reference: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/going-to-school/Pages/attendance-missing-school.aspx>

### What if your child refuses to attend school?

If you are unsuccessful in getting your child to school, it is important that you maintain a normal school routine at home.

- Get your child out of bed at the usual time.
- Do not allow access to any preferred alternative activities at times when they should be at school (e.g., TV, computer access, internet). If necessary, remove the internet cable or electronic device to prevent your child from accessing it. *Your child needs to see that school is a more desirable place to be than home.*
- Set academic tasks for them to complete. Plenty of maths and English worksheets are readily available from the internet.
- Break times should correspond with school break times. Make these active and technology free (e.g., go for a walk, read outside etc). Remember, your aim should be to make school a more desirable place to be.
- Be clear about your expectations. Every day of school counts. Time off with no valid reason, puts a student behind in their learning.

**Did you know that missing one day of school every fortnight equates to one full year of learning over a 12-year period? (Queensland Department of Education)**

### The importance of building a home-school partnership:

- Work with school staff to encourage school attendance – Refer to page four of this document for details of key school personnel who can assist you with attendance issues.
- Avoid prolonged goodbyes when you drop your child off at school. Plan an exit strategy with school staff and stick to it.
- Be on time to pick up your child from school at the end of the day if you provide transportation.

Reference: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/youth/Documents/forum-speaker-presentations/2017/school-refusal-parent-handout.pdf>

### Technology

Technology is a great way for students to communicate with their peers and seek entertainment. However, it is extremely important that parents manage the use of technology so that students have enough time to socialise face-to-face with others and get a good night's sleep.

- Turn off all electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime. The lights in phones/tablet/computers are known to keep the brain active.
- Ensure that no devices, including televisions and computers, are allowed to remain in the child's bedroom. A child's brain needs to associate the bedroom as a place of rest.
- Use technology and internet access as a reward. Once the school day is over, negotiate with your child a suitable amount of time in which they can have access to their devices

Reference: [www.REACH OUT.com](http://www.REACH OUT.com)

Do not accept the argument from your child that they need their phone with them at all times. Alarm clocks and reading books are great alternatives to a smart phone in the bedroom and do not interfere with a child's sleep patterns.

### Ways to improve mental health

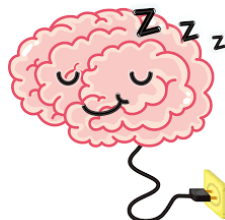
There are a number of things we can all do to improve our mental health. These include (Freeman et al., 2017; Roberts & Bowman, 2019):

- Eating well and not skipping any meals.
- Getting plenty of exercise during the day.
- Connecting with supportive friends and maintaining an active social life
- Getting enough sleep each night.

#### What's a normal amount of sleep? In general:

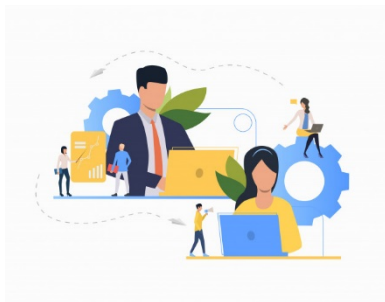
- Adults should get **seven** to **eight** hours' sleep per night.
- Because they're growing so fast, children, teenagers and young adults require at least **nine** hours of sleep per night. The extra hours allow for healthy brain and body development ([www.REACH OUT.com](http://www.REACH OUT.com)).

*When it comes to sleep, though, everyone is different. Some people need more than the recommended amount of sleep, while others can function just fine on less.*



### Balancing part-time work and school

While part-time work is an excellent way for students to earn a little money and develop a work ethic, students and their parents need to be realistic about how much work should be taken on in a week. The senior years can be very challenging and students are expected to dedicate a considerable amount of their time to independent study at home. Leaving enough time to socialise is also important for maintaining good mental health. As parents, you need to negotiate a balance between work, study and play.



### Having a good breakfast

We all know the benefits of having a good breakfast. Food is fuel for our body and mind. The SPACE (Deception Bay SHS's support centre) is open every morning from 7:45am for students who would like to fuel up before their busy day of learning.

### Home visits

It may be possible for a staff member to do a home visit to discuss concerns regarding your child's willingness to attend school. Please note that this service is dependent on staff availability and is not a requirement of school employees. To discuss the possibility of a home visit, please contact the school office during business hours (Ph: 3897 2222)

### Departmental Websites

The Department of Education's Youth Engagement Hub has developed a couple of websites to assist parents and students to remain engaged with education and learning. The websites include tips, information, and various support links. Follow the link below to access the website of interest to you.

**Spark their Future** (Parent Site): <https://www.sparktheirfuture.qld.edu.au/>

**We the Differents** (Youth Site): <https://www.wethedifferents.qld.edu.au/>



## Community contacts that may be helpful to families and students

Deception Bay has many community resources available to parents who are struggling with the day-to-day challenges of life. Listed below are just a few of these.

### National Crisis Lines/Services

- Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800
- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- eheadspace: [www.eheadspace.org.au](http://www.eheadspace.org.au)
- Beyond Blue Support Service: 1300 22 4636



### General support services in the local area

- Headspace Redcliffe: 3897 1897
- Child and Youth Mental Health Service - Redcliffe & Caboolture: 181 Anzac Ave, Redcliffe QLD 4020: Phone: 5316 3100
- Deception Bay Neighbourhood Centre: 07 3204 2022
- Men's Information and Support Agency – Strathpine – Ph: 1300 650 980
- Redcliffe Youth Space: 07 3283 8769
- Your Town Starfish Program (counselling service) : 07 3387 8800
- Marsden Family Services – Kallangur. Ph: 3285 0900

### Websites and Apps to support mental health and general wellbeing

- Calm – A 7 day beginner's meditation program
- Smiling Mind – Meditation made easy for all ages.
- Relax Melodies – Designed to give you a good night's sleep or to get you ready for the day
- Mental Stillness – Provides guided-meditation sequences on video that can be used on demand.
- Worry Time – Allows you to set a specific time to worry about things so that you have more time not to worry about things.
- Beyond Blue Online Forum – [www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/online-forums/anxiety](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/online-forums/anxiety)
- MoodGym – Teaches cognitive behaviour therapy skills to help prevent and manage symptoms of depression and anxiety – [www.moodgym.com.au](http://www.moodgym.com.au)
- ReachOut – Resources, information and factsheets for wellbeing and mental health – [www.reachout.com/articles](http://www.reachout.com/articles)
- Act-Belong-Commit – an online campaign encouraging people to promote their own mental wellbeing by being active, connecting with others and creating purpose in their life – [www.actbelongcommit.org.au](http://www.actbelongcommit.org.au)
- MindSpot Clinic - Online courses in managing depression, anxiety, stress and low mood in adults aged 18-64 – [www.mindspot.org.au](http://www.mindspot.org.au) or Phone 1800 61 44 34
- ReachOut Parents – Digital service for parents of teenagers to help support mental health and wellbeing – [www.parents.au.reachout.com](http://www.parents.au.reachout.com)



## Anxiety Program

The Brave online anxiety program is an excellent evidence-based program for students and their parents to work through anxiety related issues. It consists of ten, 60-minute sessions covered over a 10-week period. For more information, go to <http://www.brave-online.com>

# The Brave Program.

## Who should you contact if you are having difficulties getting your child to school?

If your child is refusing to attend school and the issue is not health or mental health related, your first point of contact is the Year Level Leader (YLL). Every grade has a YLL who can talk to you about your concerns and options. The school website ([www.deceptionbayshs.eq.edu.au](http://www.deceptionbayshs.eq.edu.au)) provides an up-to-date list of YLLs and their contact details.

If your child has a ***diagnosed*** mental health issue, you should talk to the Guidance Officers who can provide you with some options. Contact details are also available on the school website.



## Concluding Comment:

Change takes time. Consistency and perseverance with the strategies above will bring about the required changes necessary for ensuring your child attends school on a regular basis.

## References

Freeman, D., Sheaves, B., Goodwin, G., Yu, L., Nickless, A., Harrison, P., Emsley, R., Luik, A., Foster, R., ... Espie, C. (2017). The effects of improving sleep on mental health (OASIS): A randomised controlled trial with mediation analysis. *The Lancet* 4(10), 749-758. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(17\)30328-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(17)30328-0)

Roberts, R. & Bowman, J. (2019). Physical health of people with mental illness. *InPsych* 41(6), 28-33.