

How to use the Be You Mental Health Continuum



What is the Mental Health Continuum?

The Be You Mental Health Continuum is a tool for educators designed to assist you in knowing when to seek support for a child or young person who you think may be experiencing mental health issues or in need of extra support.

As an educator it is not your role to diagnose mental health conditions – this can only be done by a health care professional. Instead it's your role to notice changes in behaviour, know when to be concerned, and know where to refer to for help.

The Be You Mental Health Continuum provides guidance on how to do this with the following sections:

1. What to notice

'What to notice' provides a list of behaviours in children and young people to indicate where on the Mental Health Continuum they might be sitting. This can be used in conjunction with the [Behaviour Emotions Thoughts Learning and Social Relationships \(BETLS\) observation tool](#) to help you in documenting observations about a child or young person you are concerned about.

2. When to be concerned

'When to be concerned' provides a checklist to use to help guide decision-making around whether you should seek further support for the child or young person. While it's always best to act on the side of caution, reflecting on the ten questions below can help you determine whether you need to raise your concerns with the person responsible for wellbeing in your setting.

3. What to do

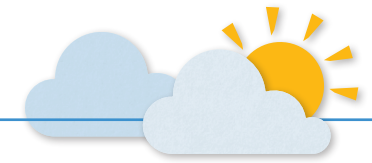
'What to do' provides a list of evidence-based actions educators can take to support mental health at key points across the continuum. These are split into three tiers:

- Good for all – actions to take to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people.
- Necessary for some – actions focused on **internal supports** for children and young people who may be experiencing emerging signs of poor mental health.
- Essential for a few – actions to take when a child or young person is in need of **external professional support** outside of the early learning service or school.

Children and young people can move along the Mental Health Continuum at different stages of development and life. Children and young people can have mental health issues and still be flourishing.






1. What to notice



	Flourishing	Going OK	Struggling	Severely impacting everyday activities
Level of concern	Very low	Low	Moderate	High
Core features	Optimal wellbeing	Overall positive wellbeing with a few isolated experiences of distress	Occasional and time limited periods of distress with mild impact on wellbeing	Poor mental health and wellbeing causing distress and significantly impacting on daily experiences
Support focus	Maintain	Enhance	Monitor & Internal Support	External Support & Collaboration

What it can look like

	Flourishing	Going OK	Struggling	Severely impacting everyday activities
Behaviours, emotions, thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regularly experiences more positive than negative emotions Manages negative emotions in a healthy way Manages stress and challenges in a productive way Well-developed emotional regulation Understands and utilises personal strengths Healthy lifestyle habits that promote wellness and educational achievements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displays emotional stability, or a range of emotions at a level appropriate to the context or situation Copes with normal stressors of learning environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fluctuations in emotions at times seem disproportionate to event or situation More frequent or intense expression of emotions such as anger, worry or sadness in comparison to peers Reduced expression of emotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent displays of externalising (irritable, low impulse control, anger) or internalising (avoidance, worry, sadness) behaviours Needs things to be perfect; distressed at mistakes Low energy or tiredness Frequently critical of self and others Loss of interest in previously enjoyed topics/activities Constant reassurance seeking Regular complaints of physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, nausea) Excessive or limited appetite; significant change in weight Regression in behaviour
Learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interested, curious and absorbed in learning Pursues and achieves learning goals with determination Growth mindset when faced with learning challenges Sense of optimism about future learning Engaged in social and emotional learning as appropriate for developmental level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participates in learning experiences Makes progress within expected parameters Realises own abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some reluctance to try tasks or completes them at a lower level than ability Often distracted, off-task or disengaged Progress is slower than expected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational progress has slowed or declined Avoids completing tasks, or tasks are completed at a much lower standard than expected Regular absences Avoids participating in new learning experiences or group work Significant change in learning outcomes in comparison to their normal level Difficulty paying attention
Social relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains positive and supportive peer relationships Manages conflict effectively Continues developing awareness of and skills for connecting with others Makes valued contributions to others Has established relationships with significant adults that are meaningful, with warm, caring and responsive interactions that support them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has several friendships Interacts appropriately with peers Shows consideration and empathy for others Interacts in meaningful relationships with significant adults that are warm, caring and responsive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has some difficulties getting along with peers (for example, isolates self at times, or refuses to share or take turns) May find it challenging at times when engaging in interactions (e.g. separating from families, entering into peer group, or transitioning between experiences or places) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular difficulties getting along with peers or joining in Withdrawn from others or socially isolated Bullies others or is bullied by others

Use the [BETLS observation tool](http://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides) to assist you in gathering information about a child or young person: <http://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides>

Note: Infants, toddlers and preschoolers are in a period of rapid development. Their mental health needs to be understood within a developmental framework and in the context of key relationships. Refer to the early learning stream of the Be You Professional Learning for a more comprehensive understanding of early childhood mental health.

2. When to be concerned



Mental health is like physical health. Children and young people will move along the Mental Health Continuum as a normal part of development. Someone with a mental health condition can flourish and lead a happy healthy life; just as someone who doesn't can experience poor mental health and require support.

As the continuum suggests, there is no clear point that identifies poor mental health, and so it can be hard to know when to be concerned.

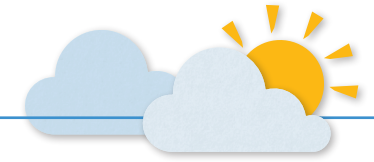
As a result, having indicators can be helpful when thinking about your observations and how concerned to be. These indicators can be useful in establishing what next steps to take. While it's always best to act on the side of caution, reflecting on the ten questions opposite can help you determine whether you need to raise your concerns with the person responsible for wellbeing in your setting.

These questions can also be used to improve consistency in how different educators across services and schools respond to signs of distress, and how concerns about children and young people are communicated to staff responsible for their wellbeing.

The more you answer 'yes', the greater the level of concern		Yes	No
1	Development Is this outside of what's expected at this stage of development?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	Personal Change Is this a noticeable change from their usual way of behaving?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	Developmental Milestones Does this differ to other children / young people of the same developmental stage?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	Duration Has this been occurring for more than 2 weeks?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	Context Are you aware of any significant events or challenging circumstances they're facing?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	Distress Does the child / young person seem bothered, concerned or upset by what's occurring?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	Frequency Is this occurring more days than not?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	Pervasiveness Is this occurring across multiple settings and situations? (inside or outside learning environments, at transition times, during certain learning experiences, home or broader community)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9	Impact Is this having an impact on their relationships, behaviour and/or learning?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10	Risk Do you hold concerns for their safety or the safety of others?*	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*If you answer 'yes' to question 10, regardless of your response to the other questions, you should immediately report your concern to the person at your school responsible for student wellbeing.

3. What to do



Be You assists educators to play their role within a whole-of-learning community approach to promoting mental health at each point of the Mental Health Continuum.

Engage with Be You's Professional Learning, resources, tools and support to learn how to undertake these evidence-based actions in your learning community.



Tier 1 – Good for all



Be You Domains: Mentally Healthy Communities, Family Partnerships, Learning Resilience, Responding Together

- Provide mental health awareness and education activities
- Foster a stable and positive learning environment and create a sense of belonging through strong relationships, embracing diversity and inclusive practice
- Foster resilience through explicit teaching of social and emotional skills: self-awareness, emotional regulation, social-awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making
- Promote partnerships with families
- Safe and effective management of critical incidents

Tier 2 – Necessary for some



Be You Domain: Early Support (Internal)

- Maintain routine and continue monitoring changes in learning, behaviour and relationships
- Increase awareness of relevant circumstances or adversity at home and school/early learning service
- Establish level of concern, and if indicated, follow procedure for raising concerns with staff responsible for wellbeing (and involve family and child/young person as age appropriate)
- Prioritise safety in classroom and playground
- Further invest in relationships between educators and children/young people, and facilitate positive peer connections
- Increase educational supports
- Implement internal wellbeing support

Tier 3 – Essential for a few



Be You Domain: Early Support (External)

- Help facilitate access to external professional support
- Promote collaborative decision making with families
- Promote collaboration with health professionals
- Develop Educational Support Plan
- Implement classroom strategies to enhance engagement in education
- Ensure immediate safety of child/young person and others