

14

## YOUTH WELFARE

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CHAPTER





# Chapter 14

## Youth Welfare

There are strong links between feelings of security and emotional well-being for young people. It is difficult for anyone to feel a sense of connectedness to an environment in which they do not feel safe and secure. Not feeling safe from physical harm or threats of physical harm, not being able to express a point of view without being put down or being deliberately left out or isolated can have significant ramifications for the well-being of adolescents. In the school and football environment, such experiences will impact on the young person's sense of connectedness, engagement in learning and well-being.

### UNDERSTANDING YOUTH TODAY

In order to understand young people today and the choices they make (either good or bad) we need to have an understanding how their social context shapes their choices and decisions.

The social construction of growing up now is centred around a number of changing factors including consumption (globalisation), production (young people as workers), education and training (life-long learning, requiring more/higher level credentials) and greatly varied lifestyles ('choice').

This has resulted in new patterns of transitions for young people passing from childhood to adulthood – some objective and some subjective. These include:

#### Objective Factors

- Part-time labour markets.
- Contract work.
- Inequalities.
- Unemployment.
- Increasing education costs.
- Changes in the welfare state.

#### Subjective Factors

- Individual responsibility/blame.
- 'Choice'.
- Opportunities.

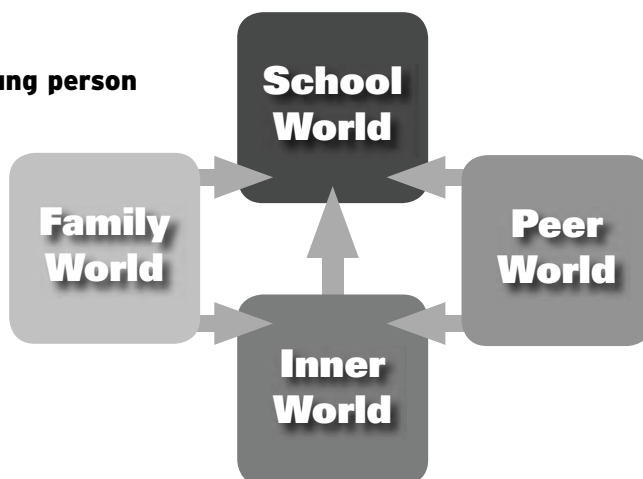
#### Australian Youth in the 2000s

The Australian environment for young people is characterised by rising rates of:

- Homelessness.
- Poverty and unemployment.
- Crime.
- Physical, sexual & emotional abuse.
- Suicide, depression and deliberate self-harm.
- Denial of access to educational opportunities.
- Increasingly experiencing more stress, uncertainty, confusion, self doubt and pressure to succeed.
- Problems compounded by financial uncertainty, unemployment, separation/divorce, moving to a new community, all of which can be unsettling and can intensify self doubt.
- Overall, young people live in a rapidly changing and unstable personal and social environment.
- They are confronted by more information about graver problems at an earlier age than previous generations.

Young people operate in four interconnected 'worlds' – the Family World, the School World, the Peer World and the Inner World (Self).

#### **Four worlds of a young person**



#### **Emotional difficulties in adolescence - more than a passing phase**

From being characterised as a time in which 'storm and stress' are inevitable and therefore to be 'grown out of', adolescence is increasingly viewed as a period through which most young people pass relatively unscathed, although encountering many 'first time' experiences which may be stressful. Nevertheless, community concerns about youth suicide, drug abuse, homelessness and unemployment have focussed attention increasingly on the mental health and emotional well-being of young people.

### **THE NATURE AND PREVALENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN ADOLESCENCE**

While most young people negotiate adolescence without upheaval, around one in five adolescents do experience periods of prolonged emotional difficulties and rates of adolescent-onset psychiatric disorders appear to be increasing.

The Department of Human Services' Framework for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (1996) reported that between 10 and 20 per cent of young people in Victoria suffer from diagnosable psychiatric disorders and three to five per cent of these have a more severe mental illness. Depression is the most frequently reported mental health problem in adolescence and the largest single risk factor for suicide and suicidal behaviour.

The suicide rate in Australia has trebled among young Australian males and doubled for young Australian females over the past three decades. A recent Victorian adolescent health survey found that one in 20 15-16-year-olds engage in self-harm on a regular basis. Adolescent alcohol and substance abuse, eating disorders and risky sexual behaviours are also of increasing concern.

Young people's lives may also be affected by the experiences of those around them. Research for the National Mental Health Strategy (1997) found that substantial numbers of young Australians have had exposure to mental health-related problems through people they knew.

An approach aimed at preventing mental illness is clearly desirable. It is important to note, however, that many young people will experience 'mental health problems' which will never be clinically diagnosed but, which will cause considerable distress and impact adversely on their everyday enjoyment of life. Therefore, broad-based interventions aimed at promoting the emotional well-being of all young people – not just those at 'high risk' – are recommended and include an important role for families, schools and community organisations, including football clubs.

## **ADOLESCENT RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOUR**

An important aspect of adolescent development is what is commonly referred to as 'risk-taking behaviour'. Risk-taking is seen as encompassing a range of behaviours that characterise adolescents striving for independence, particularly in middle adolescence.

It is important to bear in mind that risk-taking is not a purely adolescent exploit – adults take risks, large and small, every day. Some risk-taking can also be considered in a positive light; to take a risk often means to try something different, and may be the only way we learn what 'works' for us and what doesn't.

In this respect, risk-taking can be seen as a continuum, ranging from high-risk to low-risk situations and activities. Behaviours such as debating, presenting in front of the class and playing sport can all be seen as risks at the lower end of the spectrum for young people. Unsafe sexual behaviour, injecting drug use and drink driving, on the other hand, may be considered high-risk behaviours that ring the 'alarm bells' in our work with young people.

Research shows that engaging in such behaviours is often associated with young people who have a lack of 'connectedness' to important people and places in their lives, for example, school, family and peers. It is important to point out that a certain amount of risk-taking behaviour by young people is considered developmentally normal, especially around middle adolescence (14-16 years). Adolescents have more opportunities to engage in risk-taking behaviour than children do, and engaging in something risky is often a new and exciting way to beat boredom or escape stress. While this is sometimes a concern, overall this behaviour is a normal part of the push for independence.

In this respect, risk-taking may also be considered as a 'rite of passage' for some adolescents. To some extent, western society is seen as offering less opportunity for a distinct 'rite of passage' into adulthood than some other cultures, for example, the initiation ceremonies of indigenous Australians. Engaging in certain risk-taking behaviours may be a way of the adolescent to show that they are now physically capable of adult 'behaviour' (if not cognitively mature enough yet to understand the consequences of such behaviours).

Research suggests that some young people, particularly those who are depressed or alienated, may take more risks than others and engage in higher-risk activities. Young people may also be unsure of rules and expectations. In this case they may just think of their behaviour as fun, challenging or exciting (e.g. alcohol use, illicit drugs etc).

It is uncommon, however, for adolescents to participate in behaviours specifically intended to cause injury and death. The challenge facing society is to equip young people with the skills and strategies to make healthy choices about their risk-taking. In this way, young people are able to take risks which help them learn and develop boundaries and self-concepts.

Risk-taking behaviour is most often used as a judgmental term by adults, who may fail to have an understanding of adolescent development, the balance of risk and protective factors, and the point of view of the young person involved. In this sense, risk-taking may mean very different things to adults and adolescents:

To the adolescent	To the adult
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fun.</li> <li>• Challenge.</li> <li>• Excitement.</li> <li>• Experience.</li> <li>• Curiosity.</li> <li>• Proof of adulthood.</li> <li>• Proof of love.</li> <li>• Proof of belonging to peers.</li> <li>• Proof of attractiveness.</li> <li>• Escape.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stupid.</li> <li>• Foolish.</li> <li>• Rebellious.</li> <li>• Immature.</li> <li>• Ignorant.</li> <li>• Anti-social.</li> <li>• Irresponsible.</li> <li>• Easily influenced.</li> <li>• Promiscuous.</li> </ul>

While the adult judgment may be more acceptable to us, it is important to understand the young person and try to mediate between the two viewpoints.

Consider the following quote from a young person who was interviewed about risk-taking and its relation to peer pressure in a US study:

*“There’s all this crap about being accepted into a group and struggling and making an effort to make friends and not being comfortable about your own self-worth as a human being ... (But) the idea of peer pressure all the way through school is that someone is going to walk up to me and say, ‘Here, drink this and you’ll be cool.’ It wasn’t like that at all. You go somewhere and everyone else would be doing it and you’d think, ‘Hey, everyone else is doing it and they seem to be having a good time – now why wouldn’t I do this?’ In that sense, the preparation of the powers that be, the lessons that they tried to drill into me, they were completely off. They have no idea what we’re up against.”*

## DRUGS AND ADOLESCENCE

**Geoff Munro, Director of for Youth Drug Studies at the Australian Drug Foundation has researched and written extensively on issues related to drug use in adolescents and provides the following insights.**

Adolescent drug use is driven by a complex amalgam of social customs, traditions, expectations and the perception of personal well-being (relaxation, happiness, confidence, prestige, independence, social and sexual success, etc). The experience of two decades demonstrates that experimentation with popular drugs is an entrenched adolescent behaviour not easily changed by programs conducted in schools and communities.

Recently developed guidelines state that abstinence is not a realistic goal, as the use of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana is endemic among young people. The aim of abstinence implies that the school is the primary influence and can expect to shape the behaviour of adolescents. Many other agents, however, including family, friends, coaches and advertising, help to fashion adolescent values and can therefore also play an important role in drug education.

### Research on adolescent drug use

Australian adolescents are growing up in a world in which a smorgasbord of legal and illegal drugs are available and accessible, a world in which drugs are used by a substantial proportion of the adult population. There is no sign that humans are about to relinquish the pleasures of alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and other favourite substances. There is in fact every sign that humans are about to expand their drug use as they seek better performances, more intelligent brains or longer sex lives through an ever-increasing variety of natural and artificial chemicals. It seems as though our major responsibility is to learn to manage drug use rather than pretend we can eliminate it and to limit the damage that harmful drugs cause to individuals and the broader society.

The first national survey of drug use among secondary school students was undertaken in Australia in 1996 and repeated in 1999, involving over 25,000 students aged 12-17 years. The results showed:

- The use of tobacco and alcohol was a significant part of the experience of adolescents and increased with age.
- The most common substance used by secondary students was analgesics (painkillers) – 95 per cent had used analgesics by the age of 12.
- The most common illicit substance used was cannabis – 29 per cent of secondary students had used it at some time in their life.

Analgesics, alcohol, tobacco and cannabis are the most prevalent substances used by secondary students. Since the statistics provided here are relevant only to those attending school at the time, it is likely the figures are higher for the overall population of young Australians.

It should be noted that much drug use by adolescents is experimental, fuelled by curiosity, and of limited duration. Some drug use can be characterised as functional and does not lead to ongoing problems. Only a minority of drug users graduate to regular or problematic use and they are likely to be adolescents already troubled.

### **Causes of serious problems**

Research has shown a number of causes for young people engaging in high-risk behaviours. These causes or influences, also known as 'risk factors', are organised according to the different influences on young people's development such as family, school, friends and others in the community, as well as individual personality characteristics. Following are some examples of the risk factors which can influence young people's drug use.

#### **Family influences**

- Family conflict, such as arguments or members of the family often insulting or yelling at each other.
- Family management problems, such as not having clear standards or rules for behaviour, and excessively severe or inconsistent punishment.
- Family living in poverty.
- Parents using drugs and having positive attitudes towards drug use.
- Family history of drug abuse.

#### **School influences**

- Academic failure and lack of attachment or commitment to school.
- Early and persistent problem behaviours, such as misbehaving in school or getting into fights with other students.

#### **Community influences**

- Laws and regulations regarding drugs.
- Community attitudes towards drug use.
- Poor, deteriorating or crime-ridden neighbourhood.
- Availability of drugs in the community – e.g. if it's easy to get cigarettes, alcohol, cannabis etc.

#### **Personality and peer influences**

- Aggressive or problem behaviours.
- Rebelliousness and not feeling like they are a part of their community or society.
- Association with friends who are using alcohol or other drugs (peer acceptance).

Although no single risk factor can be said to cause harmful drug use, the more risk factors a young person is exposed to, the greater the impact on their later development. Recent research in Australia indicates that the same risk factors which influence harmful drug use among young people can influence other problems such as delinquency, homelessness, mental health problems and sexual risk-taking.

### **Protective factors**

Research has also shown that it is possible to reduce the risks of harmful drug use by building up certain protective factors in young people. In the broader community, some of these protective factors include:

- A sense of belonging or connectedness in the family.
- Having a sense of belonging and fitting in at school.
- Positive experiences and achievements at school.
- Having someone outside the family who believes in them (could be the coach).
- Having opportunities to be an active contributor in their family, school and community.
- A warm relationship with at least one parent or significant adult.
- Feeling loved and respected.
- Religious or spiritual connectedness.

Parents, families, schools, communities and government all have a role to play in preventing or reducing the risks and increasing the protective factors in young people.



## Football clubs and alcohol use

Playing and watching sport is a traditional Australian activity. So, too, is drinking alcohol. In many sports, like Australian Football, the two traditions come together in a formidable partnership. Football clubs can be locations of hazardous drinking, particularly by younger people, with an array of personal, social and civil problems. Sports clubs, therefore, constitute an important, if challenging, site for interventions to reduce alcohol-related harms. Subsequently, coaches and other team staff can play an important role and make an important contribution in reducing alcohol consumption and use within clubs.

## Strategies for coaches

To prevent players misusing social drugs, coaches should:

- Make players aware that the abuse of any substance is likely to injure their health and reduce their performance, and that drug abuse is simply incompatible with sport.
- Ensure that players are aware of the facts on alcohol and social drug misuse.
- Set guidelines and ensure a total commitment by all to these guidelines.
- Establish alternative methods of celebrating, or control celebrations with strategies such as meeting all post-match commitments before celebrating, organising a meal with the celebrations, or involving parents.
- Be available to discuss issues with players and know where to get help.

## Performance enhancing drugs – the coach's role

Drugs in sport are now a significant issue at all levels of sport. It is important that all coaches are prepared to deal with this issue and have developed their own philosophy and strategies to address it appropriately.

The impact coaches have on players places them in a position to play a significant role with regard to drugs in sport. An effective coach can prevent drug misuse by players and help them deal with other issues related to drugs in sport. Coaches can influence the attitudes of players and should support and care for them as individuals.

There are actions a coach can take to minimise drug misuse, including:

- Communicating beliefs about health and fair play to players by reinforcing that the use of banned substances is cheating.
- Discouraging practises such as smoking, drinking and the over-use of anti-inflammatories.
- Encouraging players to abide by the AFL Drug Policy.
- Providing players with factual information about banned drugs.
- Being good role models.
- Alleviating pressures on players where possible.
- Helping players to develop skills such as decision making and assertiveness.

## BULLYING AND VILIFICATION

Bullying is a form of deliberate aggressive and hurtful behaviour. Most bullying and victimisation is founded on an abuse of power and a desire to intimidate. It can be carried out against a victim by an individual or by a group. It is often an expression of prejudice based on issues such as race, culture, religion, sexual preference or perceived sexual preference.

There are many forms of bullying:

- Physical – e.g. hitting, kicking, taking and damaging belongings.
- Verbal – e.g. name-calling, insulting, repeated teasing and taunting, religious, racist or homophobic remarks.
- Indirect – e.g. spreading rumours, excluding someone from groups, etc.

The AFL has clear guidelines and policies on racial and religious vilification (AFL Rule 30) which provide a strong message that vilification on these (or indeed any other) grounds is not acceptable on the field (see AFL info sheets. Racial and religious vilification at [afl.com.au](http://afl.com.au)). These principles should carry over to all parts of the youth football environment including training, social and other activities and apply to all persons participating in that environment.

It is important that young players feel safe in football clubs and the wider football environment. Clubs and coaches should develop clear policies on bullying and vilification and methods of dealing with them appropriately.



## **RESILIENCY**

The concept of resiliency has led to a range of studies identifying risk and protective factors which either diminish or increase the likelihood of negative health and social outcomes. It is important to build resiliency in all four worlds of young people (family, school, peer and inner self) to strengthen the inner sense of self and build relationships and connectedness.

### **What is Resiliency?**

An individual's unusual or marked capacity to recover from, or successfully cope with, significant internal or external stresses (the ability to overcome adversity and obstacles).

Melbourne clinical psychologist and family therapist Andrew Fuller says "Resilience is the happy knack of being able to bungy jump through the pitfalls of life. Even when hardship and adversity arise, it is as if the person has an elasticised rope around them that helps them to rebound when things get low and to maintain their sense of who they are as a person."

### **The characteristics of resilient youth**

- Thinks for self and can solve problems creatively.
- Can tolerate frustration and manage emotions.
- Avoids making other people's problems their own.
- Shows optimism and persistence in the face of failure.
- Resists being put down and negative labels.
- Has a sense of humour and can forgive and forget.
- Builds friendships based on care and mutual support.

### **Building Resiliency**

Resiliency is built by:

- Decreasing modifiable risk factors.
- Enhancing available protective factors.

Identify risk and protective factors at the family, school and individual levels as they relate to the four domains of young people's lives, e.g.

- Individual factors, such as temperament and personal disposition.
- Family factors, or a sense of connectedness to the family.
- External factors, such as support, care and nurturance of school and other social structures.

### **What are risk factors?**

Hazards that make it more likely that someone will develop difficulties, e.g.

- Poverty.
- Low school connectedness/achievement.
- Role models for anti-social behaviour.
- Low self-esteem.
- No hope for the future.
- Family history of psychological disorders.
- Physical/mental illness.
- Family discord (including abuse).

### **What are protective factors?**

Positive things that decrease the likelihood of negative health and social outcomes, e.g.

- Attachment to a caring adult.
- Independence and competency.
- High aspirations with adult support.
- Effective schooling, supportive, stimulating, caring teachers.
- Good health: physical, mental and spiritual.
- Motivated and knowledgeable about resources.



## **Personal factors**

(Andrew Fuller)

- Having a pleasant temperament and reasonably calm level of activity.
- Reacting to social cues and responding to people's interaction.
- Having an age – appropriate level of autonomy.
- Having curiosity and zest for life.
- High intelligence (except) when paired with sensitive temperament.
- Success during adolescence.
- Having a special gift, ability or talent.

## **Family**

- Having a sense of belonging or connectedness to family.
- Having some traits or characteristics valued by family members.
- Having a warm relationship with even one parent can protect young people even in situations where there is quite pronounced parental violence and disharmony.

## **Peer and Adult support**

- Having a sense of belonging and connectedness to school. This doesn't always correspond with academic performance.
- Positive achievements and evaluations in a school setting, having someone who believes in you.
- Having a positive relationship with an adult outside the family.

## **Communities provide the setting for healthy growth**

- Participation in sporting (e.g. football), recreational or other community groups is protective.
- A sense that adults in the local neighbourhood take an interest in the welfare and behaviour of young people is protective.
- Bored kids with nowhere to go are more likely to find risky lifestyles interesting.
- There is a need to create opportunities for communities engage more with young people.
- Participation in our local communities and with the young people in them has diminished for too many of us with busy work schedules and other agendas.

## **What is the research telling us?**

Research tells us that youth who are involved and feel safe, valued and connected are less likely to participate in risky behaviours and that social competitiveness learnt through active involvement make relationships in all areas easier to negotiate.

## **Life skills build resiliency**

- Communication skills.
- Decision-making and problem-solving skills.
- Coping skills (i.e.: reframing).
- Conflict resolution and stress management (options).
- Assertiveness.
- Leadership skills.
- Generic employability skills.
- Interpersonal relationship skills.
- Resisting peer pressure.
- Seeking adult support.

Most of these skills can be developed or enhanced in a football environment which delivers effective coaching.

### **For a young person, good coaches can change everything**

- Listens to what you have to say.
- Respects you as a person.
- Is relaxed, enjoys their day, and is able to laugh, especially at mistakes.
- Is flexible.
- Explains the work, makes the work interesting.
- Doesn't humiliate you in front of the other kids.
- Doesn't favour other kids who do what they're told.
- Doesn't keep picking on people who have a reputation, pushing them to retaliate.
- Gives you a chance to muck up and learn from it.
- Doesn't keep telling you you're no good and should leave.

Source: *Malcolm Slade, Flinders University, Boys in Schools Bulletin, 2001*

## **RESILIENT LEARNERS**

Andrew Fuller also relates resilience to learning. This has implications for coaching. As resilience includes the ability to overcome adversity and obstacles, during adolescent years, resilient learners are able to persist in the face of problems and have a higher tolerance for not knowing.

Learning is an emotional experience. We need to integrate what we know about supporting the youth emotionally with how we help them learn.

### **Creating resilient learners**

People learn best in an environment that is clearly pro-learning, where the critical mass of people are interested in learning and the risk of humiliation for not working well and achieving is minimal. Getting ready to learn includes the development of a safe and positive learning environment as well as the skills of concentration and attention.

Students of today are a generation of choosers. They belong to the 'click and go' generation. They have vast options but short attention spans. They aren't especially enticed by messages that putting in the 'hard yards' now will pay off in the long run.

Young people grow up in a world that feeds them vast amounts of information but restricts their experiences. They are data rich and experience poor. The development of resilience in learning requires a shift away from 'rushing through the curriculum' to providing experiences that involve many of their senses and expand them.

### **Trying out new behaviours**

Resilient learners are willing to have a go and utilise their knowledge to 'live by their wits'. Resilient learners not only try to solve problems, they actively find problems and challenges to overcome. Experiencing difficulties and then trying out different approaches to solving problems develops the habits of flexibly applying knowledge and actions to the solutions of novel situations.

People who believe they can solve problems, solve more problems. Some of the most effective learning does not involve teaching but rather setting problems that puzzle and interest students sufficiently that they persist. Coaches can incorporate many of the elements of a resilient learning environment into their training sessions.

## **SELF-ESTEEM**

With sport comes the opportunity to be recognised by peers, coaches and parents. Within this context, it is essential that sport facilitates avenues of team play and individual recognition. Self-esteem in this age group is generated from external feedback and players aged 14 to 16 are driven by the promise of heroic individual accomplishment and the subsequent respect and admiration that will accompany it from their peers. Self-esteem is also the value a person places on themselves. It is expressed firstly in our self-image, that is, what we believe our abilities and looks to be, and secondly in the value we place on our abilities or looks. Self-esteem is linked to the expectations of society, family and friends. When adolescents are valued by those close to them, they learn to value themselves. This social aspect allows young players to make friends and cultivate a sense of belonging and community. Australian Football is a vehicle for young players to establish self-esteem, and the sport can provide this outcome.



**The Whitehorse School Focused Youth Service provides the following insight into the tasks of adolescence and developing self-esteem.**

### **Key factors in self-esteem**

**Connectedness** – one of the most important factors in helping children grow into healthy adults is the quantity and quality of their relationships with others. Having a valued connection to at least one other adult is the rock by which adolescents maintain their faith in themselves and feel they are connected to something. Good relationships connect the adolescent to family, peers, school and society at large.

**Uniqueness** – adolescents can become obsessive about their looks. Their bodies are changing at an alarming rate, self-consciousness is at a peak and they are consequently very sensitive to comments about their appearance. Appearance is often the way a teenager expresses individuality and/or belonging. Clothing, haircuts and make-up are used as signals. They help to define the individual, often seeking to identify with someone outside the family. This is part of seeking an adult identity. Lack of interest in personal hygiene or appearance usually indicates low self-esteem. However, an unkempt look, dreadlocks or torn jeans may be just a part of the individual's search for identity.

**Power** – a person must have the resources, opportunities and capabilities to influence their world, to have a sense of control. It is important to include adolescents in decision-making and the responsibility of owning their choices.

**Completing the tasks of adolescence** – The tasks of adolescence include:

1. Successful separation from parents.
2. Completion of puberty, which starts earlier and lasts longer with each generation.
3. Establishing work identity and economic independence.
4. Establishment of self-identity.

### **Key factors for coaches in encouraging a positive self-esteem**

- Build on strengths and be more accepting of mistakes.
- Learning is a process, emphasise the process. Acknowledge the amount of work that is put into achievements rather than just the finished product.
- Value appropriate risk-taking.
- Provide opportunities for responsibility to be practised.
- Have positive, realistic expectations of the adolescent.
- Maintain a positive outlook.

### **Maintaining the self-esteem of individual players**

As players move through the age groups, it does not take long to realise that they lack ability when they are given less time in the game than others, are played in positions that have the least impact on the result and/or lose the majority of their contests. The increasing role of parents and the potential for placing undue pressure on players must also be carefully monitored. These outcomes are characteristic of competitive activities where the player is under the control of a coach.

In these situations some useful strategies for coaches include:

1. Providing opportunities and personally assisting lesser players to improve their skills.
2. Playing lesser players in prominent positions when playing against weaker opposition. The coach can then play better players in less prominent positions and encourage them to use their limited opportunities to have a positive impact on the game. This will eventually give the team greater flexibility against stronger teams.
3. Explaining to players that differences in ability are more the result of players being at different stages of development and having different natural abilities than being due to a lack of effort or worth.
4. Stressing the importance of players acknowledging the positives of their teammates' play rather than the mistakes, particularly in public.
5. Stressing to the player the value of being loyal to club, coach and teammates when discussing with others their involvement in the game.

## PROMOTING EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

One of the most critical approaches to promoting emotional well-being is to provide adolescents with the opportunities and skills to genuinely participate in all aspects of community life. This sends a strong message to young people that what they say is valued and that their contributions are worthwhile. The most important traits that characterise resilient adolescents are social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy and a sense of purpose. Caring and support, high expectations and encouragement of participation are also important. Expecting too little will undermine young people's motivation more so than when too much is expected. Adolescents are frequently denied opportunities to take responsibility. They need to have opportunities to individually and collectively take responsibility for shaping their world.

Many opportunities exist for adults to notice adolescents and make them feel that they and their contributions are valued. Coaches and other significant adults should do this through encouraging them, helping them, putting yourself out for them, showing interest in their lives and generally conveying to them that you, as coach, like them and that you are genuinely interested in their well-being. The power of simple feedback like a smile, a verbal thank you or a note of thanks should not be underestimated.

### Adolescent needs

Some of the things adolescents need that coaches should be mindful of includes:

- A chance to experiment.
- To be accepted for themselves.
- Security.
- People to take an interest.
- Praise.
- Understanding.
- To be trusted.
- To do adult things.
- Space of their own.
- To have friends.
- To make their own decisions.
- Independence.
- To feel useful.
- Appropriate affection.
- Reasonable rule limits.
- To test boundaries.
- Flexibility.
- Responsibility.
- Their own privacy.
- To be successful.
- To be taken seriously.
- Consistency.
- To be listened to.
- To choose their own friends.
- For it to be OK to fail.
- To be fashionable on their own terms.
- Not to be made to feel awkward.
- Not to be always criticised.
- Help and advice when asked.
- To try out new things.



## REFERRING YOUNG PEOPLE

Situations may arise in which coaches believe it is appropriate to refer young people to other agencies who can help them in these matters. The Whitehorse School Focused Youth Service offers the following advice.

### When to refer

Evidence of self-harming behaviour.

Which may include:

- Reckless activities.
- Problematic drug and alcohol use.
- Careless sexual activity.
- Eating disorders.
- Self-mutilation.

### When referring try to avoid

- Panic.
- Preach.
- Challenge.
- Ignore.
- Name call.
- Criticise.
- Blame.
- Being appalled or offended.
- Dramatise.
- Get angry.
- Use a quick fix approach.
- Punish.

### When referring

- Ask.
- Listen.
- Act.
- Identify the problem.
- Pay attention, don't judge.
- Seek support.

### Involve others

Don't try to handle a crisis situation alone.

### Resources

- [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)
- [wwwsfys.infoxchange.net.au](http://wwwsfys.infoxchange.net.au)
- [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- [www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)
- [www.somazone.com.au](http://www.somazone.com.au)