



School Perspectives:

Responding to children and teens with mental health issue

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Presented by Dianne Summers

PATHS (vic)/ Woodleigh School



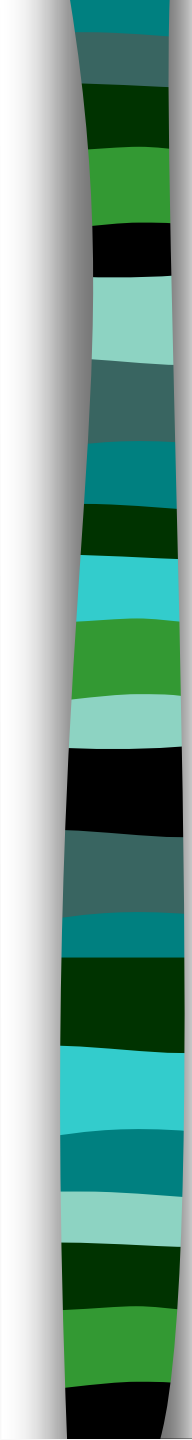
Schools and Mental Health

- ◆ Educational, personal and social experiences impact on young people's mental health, as well as their learning and life options. (Mind Matters, 2000)
- ◆ Students with a mental health problem are 5 times more likely to have below age academic attainment than other students
 - greatest difficulties are encountered by those presenting with attention problems, social problems and anxiety/depression (Marshall & Watt, 1999)
- ◆ Schools play an important role in providing protection against potential problem behaviours such as drug abuse, self harm and delinquency; and mental illnesses such as anxiety and depressive disorders.



Schools and Mental Health (2)

- ◆ Resilience and emotional intelligence depends largely on a sense of connectedness and belonging. Belonging implies feeling part of a group, which in turn requires the development of social competencies, empathy, caring and social mindedness
- ◆ Schools are a major social learning environment and learning at school takes place in the context of social relationships
- ◆ Victorian research with secondary aged students has indicated that school programs that promote peer connectedness, a sense of 'fitting in' at school, and positive relationships with teacher role-models enhance student well-being.



“The overall message from prevention research is that schools can prevent the onset, severity and duration of problematic substance use, bullying, violence and mental health problems by undertaking a process of developing a culture that promotes resilience.”

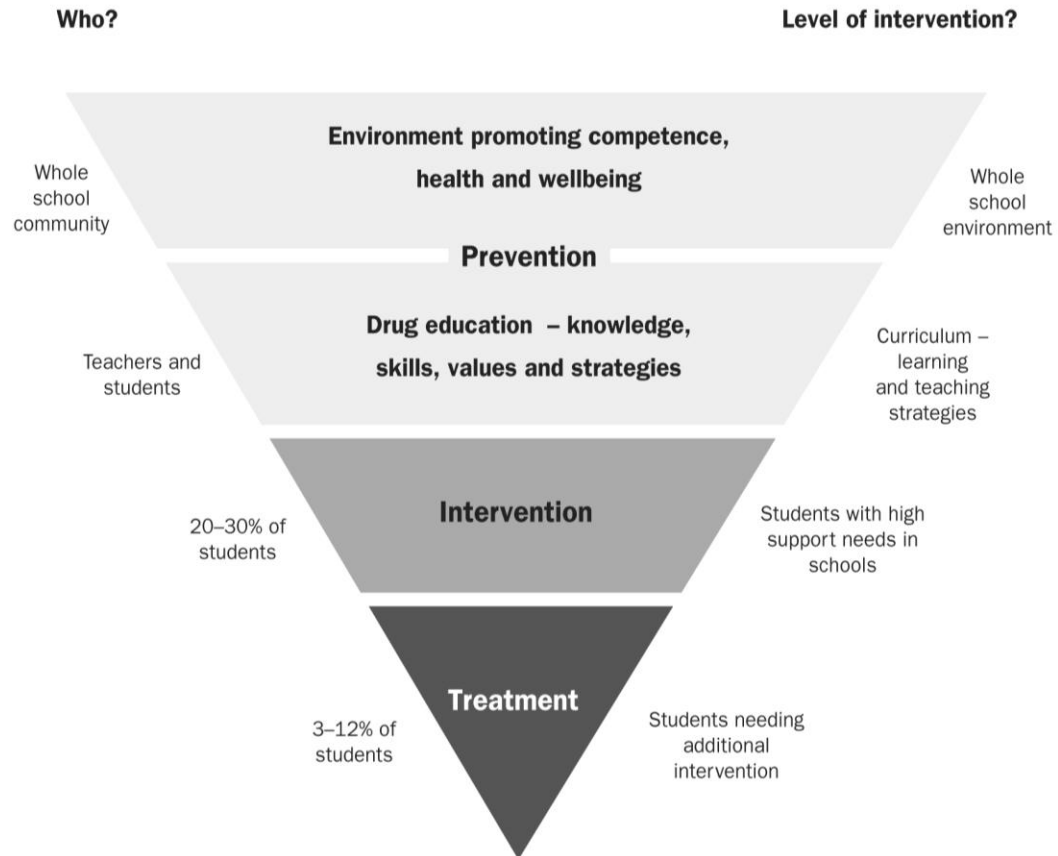
Andrew Fuller

Whole school approach



REDI for school communities

Whole School Health Promotion





Resilience is ...

- ... the happy knack of being able to bungee jump through the pitfalls of life (Andrew Fuller)
- Being resilient involves “the inherent and nurtured capacity of individuals to deal with life stressors in ways that enable them to lead healthy and fulfilling lives” (Howard & Johnson 1999)



A culture of solution focus

Resilience / Protective Factors

- Solution focused approaches set positive expectations of student accomplishment within a culture of supported achievement
- Strengths and achievements of all young people are acknowledged (sense of belonging & inclusion)
- Within the classroom, students are encouraged to participate in cooperative activities
- Within the school, students are encouraged to participate in, and take responsibility for, decision making (collaborative school community)



School Ethos & Environment

Policies and Practices

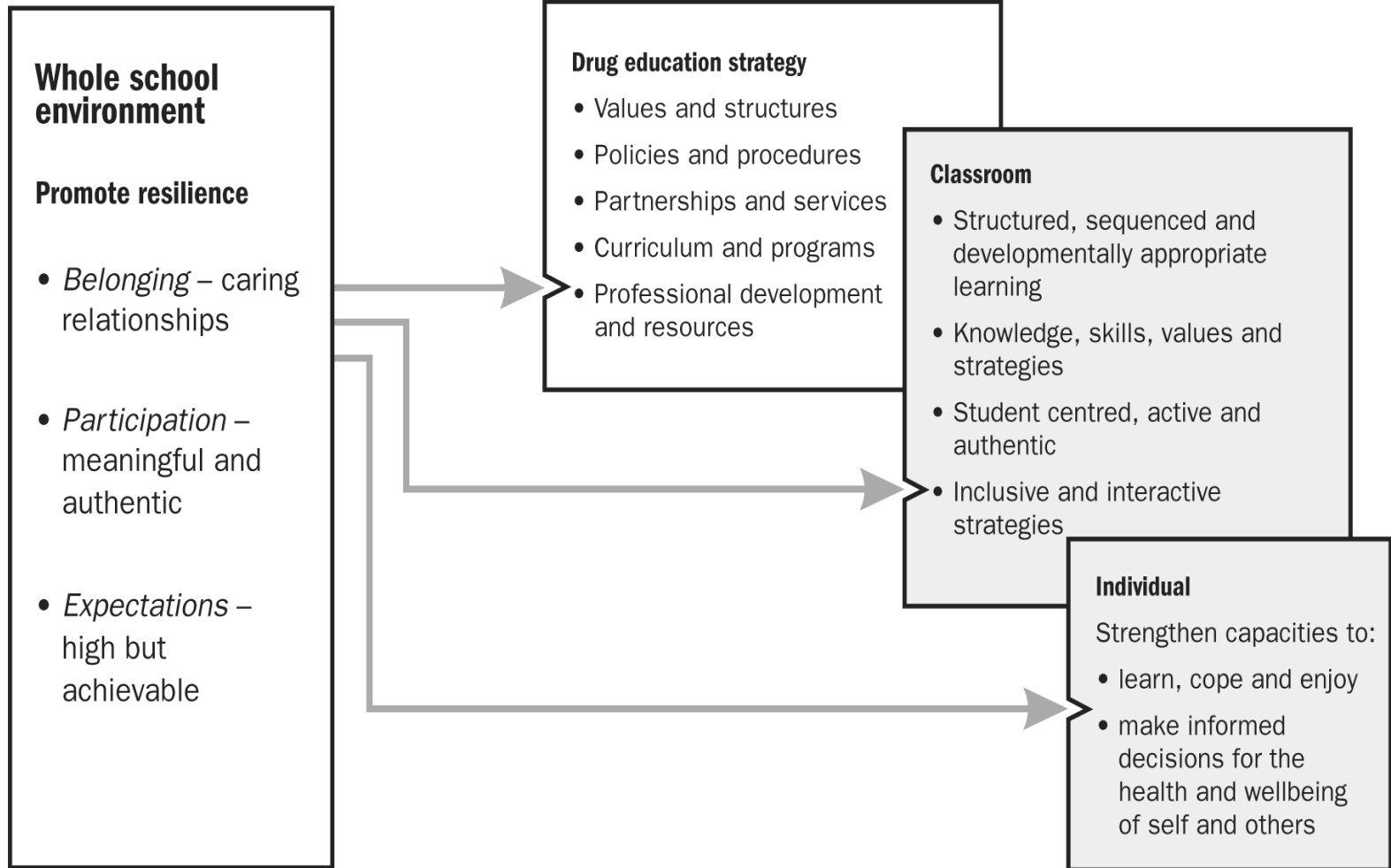
- Policies :
 - School wellbeing (support roles, access and process)
 - Safe schools/ Positive relationships
 - Drug and alcohol
 - Same Sex Attracted
 - Code of Conduct
 - Supporting Vulnerable Children (mandatory reporting)

- Staff Professional Development

- Layers of support
 - Classroom teachers
 - Homeroom/ tutors
 - Coordinators
 - Senior Management & Support Staff

- Authentic opportunities for student participation & leadership

Linking it together





Effective primary prevention

- Effective primary prevention programs are those that teach the skills of extracting positive responses from the environment (including others), coping strategies, problem solving, helpseeking, thinking and learning strategies.....
and help develop a sense of mastery and accomplishment



Underlying micro skills

- attending to the cues (face, tone, posture)
- reading intentions (perspective taking and empathy)
- vocabulary of emotions
- generation of multiple effective options (perspective taking and moral reasoning)
- realistic anticipation of consequences
- effective interaction habits (approaching others, asking questions, maintaining a conversation...)
- habits of self-efficacy and optimism (seek out the positive)
- emotional regulation (concentration, focusing and calming)
- personal mastery identified
- connections with others

...a set of habits developed through experiences
(Fuller, 2001)



Developmental focus

- Pre-school & early primary
 - Establish links between school and parents
 - emotional regulation
 - concentration and attending (espec boys)
 - joining in with others (taking turns, sharing)
 - coping skills (espec girls)
- Middle & Upper primary
 - establishment and consolidation of friendships
 - inclusion programs for isolated children
 - social justice and community mindedness
 - explicit culture that does not tolerate violence
 - alternatives for resolving conflict and expressing frustration
 - diversity of friendships and promotion of tolerance



Developmental focus (2)

- Primary to secondary transition
 - susceptibility of girls and students with LDs
 - personal identity and mastery
 - recognition of success in transition (passports/ personal best project)
 - sexuality, puberty and body image (at risk: early girls and late boys)
 - group cohesion and team work
 - link between school and parents

- Middle secondary
 - authentic learning and team projects
 - community links
 - diversity in friendships and areas of mastery
 - self and group responsibility
 - diverse role models to identify with
 - coping skills and decision making



Linking curriculum to culture

As students develop the key skills and competencies attained in the curriculum program, they must have the opportunity to apply those skills in meaningful and purposeful ways, leading to increased:

- Student engagement
- Connectedness to school, peers & family
- Self-concept and school self-efficacy
- Practical intelligence
- Student leadership competencies



More for the overcrowded curriculum?



Victorian Essential Learning Standards

LEVEL 6

- Looking towards adulthood
- making choices about the future
- having a career orientation
- employing a range of coping skills
- increasing differentiation and specialisation across domains
- building expertise through formal methods of inquiry
- participating as a community member both within and beyond school



Victorian Essential Learning Standards

- Physical, Personal and Social Learning
 - Health and Physical Education
 - Civics and Citizenship
 - Interpersonal Development
 - Personal Learning

- Interdisciplinary Learning
 - Communication
 - Thinking



Interpersonal development

- Building social relationships

- Level 6

- Awareness of complex social conventions and appropriate behaviour when interacting with others
 - Impact of local and global values and beliefs on social relationships
 - Evaluate own behaviour in relationships, identify potential conflict and management strategies

- Working in teams

- Level 6

- Work collaboratively, negotiate roles, delegate tasks
 - Work with strengths of a team to achieve set goals within a time frame
 - Respect, reflect and develop strategies for team improvement



Personal learning

□ The individual learner

– Level 6

- Utilise knowledge of strengths to plan for future learning needs
- Identify areas for improvement and initiate action
- Work independently and with peers to maximise learning
- Seek and respond to feedback about their learning from multiple sources
- Evaluate the effectiveness of personal learning strategies
- Identify ethical frameworks that affect learning
- Creation of positive learning environments

□ Managing personal learning

– Level 6

- Monitor progress
- Initiate personal learning goals
- Negotiate courses of action
- Range of learning strategies
- Allocate time and resources to manage competing priorities
- Making informed learning decisions based on ethical considerations and the impact of their choices on themselves and others

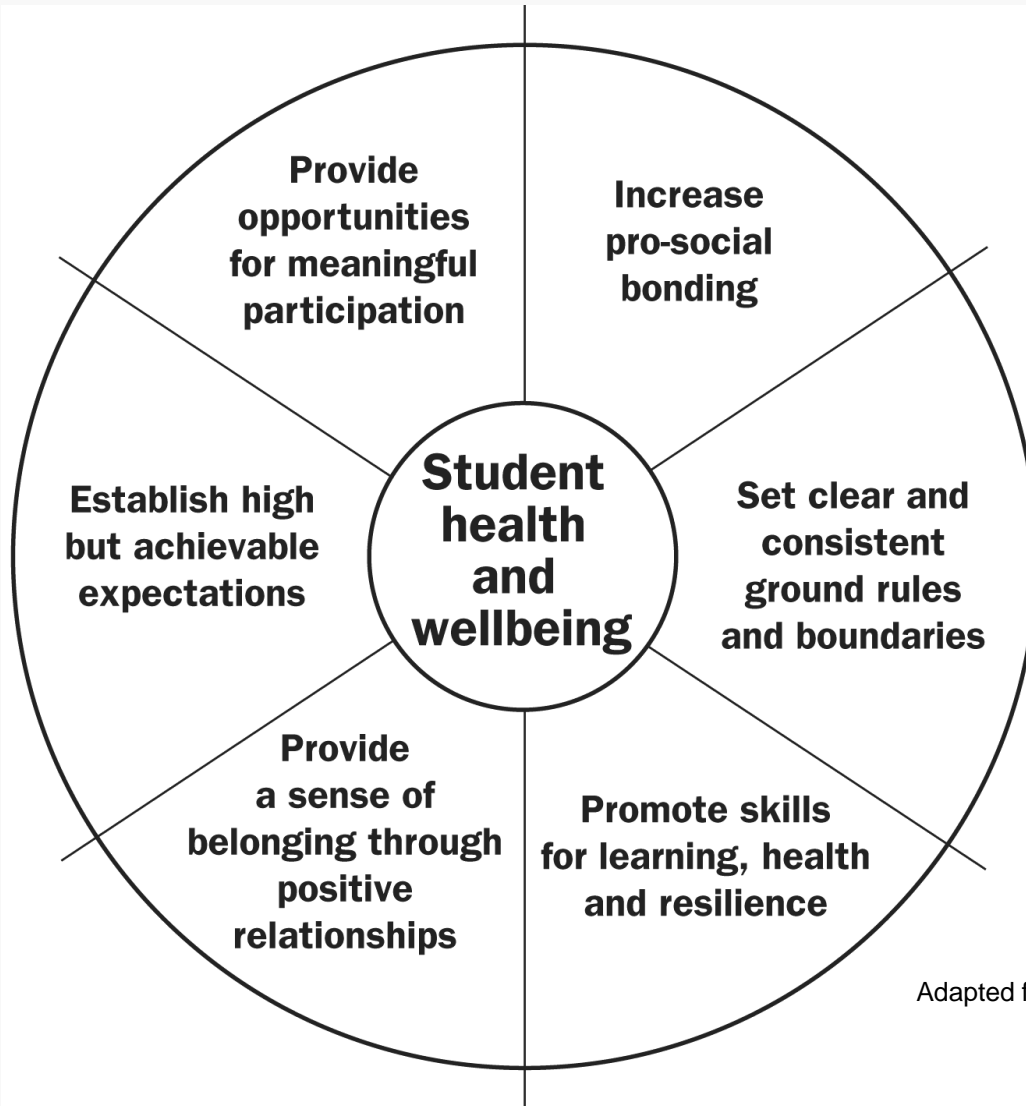


Communication

- Listening, viewing and responding
 - Level 6
 - Identify how message has been effectively communicated
 - Consider alternate views
 - Recognise multiple interpretations and respond with insight
 - Use complex verbal and non-verbal cues, subject specific language and wide range of communication forms
 - Elaborate and clarify with questions

- Presenting
 - Level 6
 - Relationship between communication format, content and mode, resources and technologies to communicate effectively.
 - Utilise subject specific language and conventions to communicate complex information for a purpose.
 - Provide and use feedback and reflection to inform future presentation

A resilience promoting classroom



Adapted from Henderson & Milstein 1996



Interactive strategies

Provide opportunities to participate in a range of student centred group activities for developing knowledge, understanding and skills.

- paired sharing
- small group simulations and problem solving
- role plays
- class discussion.



Inclusive strategies

- Aim to ensure all students are included and acknowledged in the classroom and during learning interactions.
- Are fundamental to enhancing the resilience and wellbeing of students, whatever the stage, subject, school activity and age of the students.

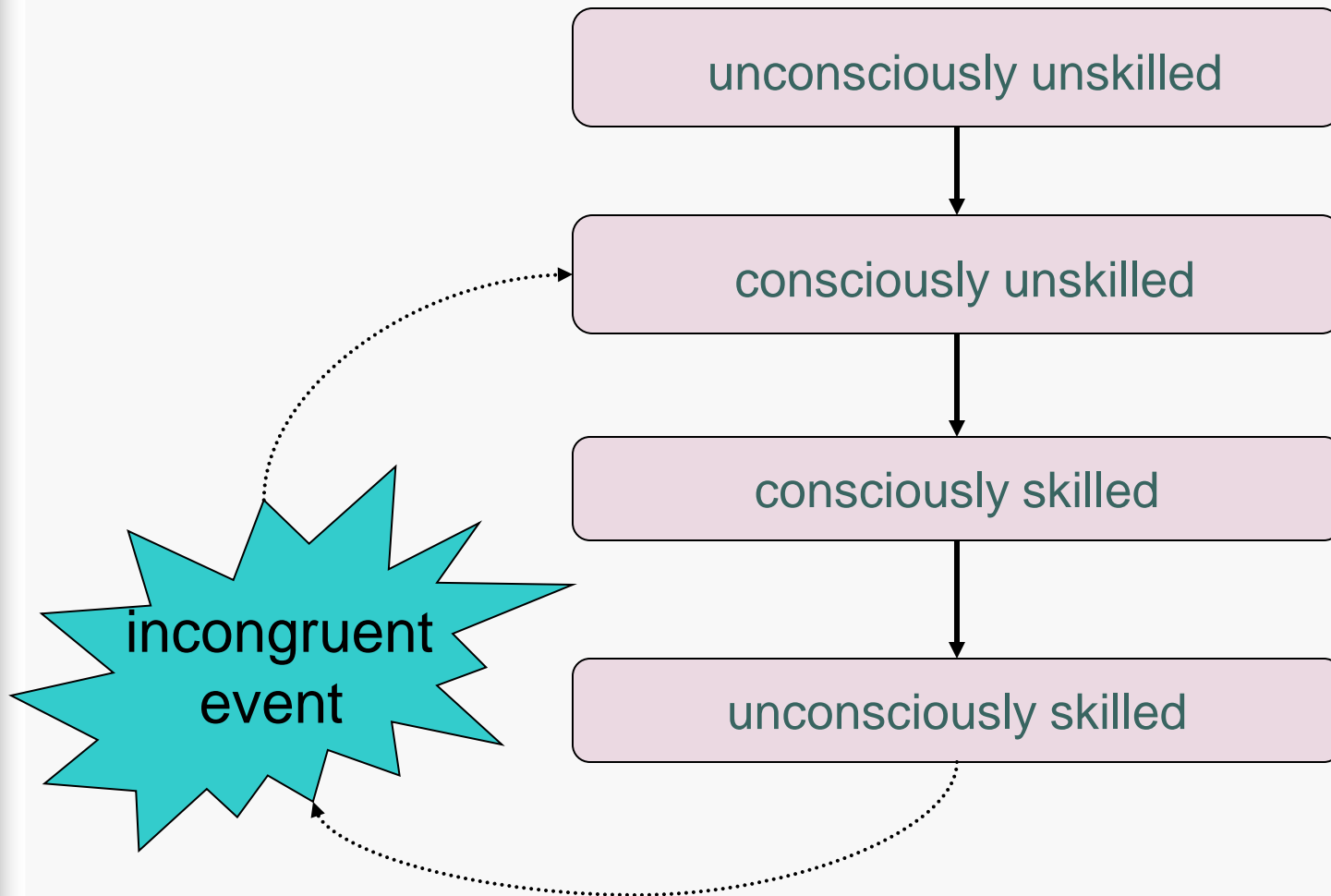


Building connectedness in the classroom

- Team-building games
- Paired sharing
- Brainstorming
- Small group learning activities
- Shared problem solving
- Time for fun and celebration
- Cooperative learning tasks
- Self-assessment
- Listening to shared/individual concerns
- Discussion or debate
- A shared sense of purpose

From a presentation by Helen Cahill, Youth Research Centre,
University of Melbourne

Skills learning





Intervention & Secondary Prevention

Identification

- Student monitoring (academic and wellbeing)
- Silent mentors
- Teacher teams
- Self/ Parent/ Peer referral

Responding

- Individual staff
- Team



Responding

- Ask
 - Timing
 - Open -ended questions (*How, Why, What, When, Tell me about....*)
- Be approachable
 - leave the door open (*If you ever.....*)
- Suggest others
 - If still concerned, encourage the use of other supports in the young person's network (*Who can you talk to when things are tough?*)
- Listen
 - Reflect back content and feelings (It sounds as though you feel... when.....)
 - Clarify
 - AVOID judging, advising (*you should...*), reacting with own emotions (*...that's awful*)
- Confidentiality
 - Maintain trust and your duty of care
 - Involve others if the situation is complex or you are finding it difficult
- Maintain a connection
 - Keep touch and keep trying



Case Management

- Collaborative process
- Student and solution focused
- Develop, monitor, disseminate, evaluate a plan of action
- AIM: student to function to the best of their ability and circumstances
- Roles are clearly defined (school based and community based)

Resources & Contacts

- Change Agents: A program for promoting self-awareness, team work, leadership and community action in the middle years. Dianne Summers, Gloria Douglas, Jane Anastasios
- Heartmasters: Junior secondary school Andrew Fuller, Bob Bellhouse, Glenda Johnston
- Heartmasters cards (resilience, feelings, values and attributes, communication, coping)
- Mindmasters cards (thinking)
- www.inyahead.com.au
- Mind Matters resource kit (www.mindmatters.edu.au)
- Coping for Capable Kids Cohen & Frydenberg
- www.youth.vic.gov.au
- www.beyondblue.org.au - Schools Intervention

dsummers@woodleigh.vic.edu.au