

How to Identify and Support Students At-Risk

Suggested years: 7–9

Suggested subjects: English (issues, creative writing), Civics and Citizenship

Links to Australian Curriculum:

General Capabilities

- Personal and social capability
- Ethical understanding
- Creative and critical thinking

Length: 1-2 periods of 50 mins

Activity objective:

For students to identify possible emotions, thoughts and behaviours a young person may exhibit when experiencing a disrupted home life.

Skills practised:

- Teamwork
- Interpersonal skills
- Critical thinking
- Empathy

Materials:

- Activity 1 worksheet – 1 per person
- Poster paper and craft supplies (optional)

Activity 1: To Walk in Their Shoes

Teacher Instructions

1. Ask students to get into groups of 3–4.
2. Allocate each group a persona. It's okay if some groups have the same persona.
3. Provide students with Activity 1 worksheet (digital or hard copy).
4. Ask one member of each team to read the persona story aloud to their group.
5. Invite teams to brainstorm and record their ideas under the first heading (feeling). Encourage them to write down as many ideas as possible in 3 minutes.
6. When time is up, ask groups to swap their persona and sheet with another group. They must select a different person to read the new persona aloud, along with the answers from the previous group.

This resource was developed in partnership by Oasis Ambassador Schools, [YLab](#) and [Shark Island Institute](#), through the generous support of The Caledonia Foundation.

7. Give them 3 minutes to brainstorm and record their ideas under the second heading (thinking). If they have time, they can also add to the previous group's answers.
8. Repeat Step 6 & 7 until groups have contributed to four different sheets.
9. Draw two columns on the board and label them "similarities" and "differences".
10. Ask students to think about the four personas they focused on. Give them 3 minutes to jot down any similarities between the personas, in terms of what they were feeling, thinking, saying and doing.
11. To develop a comprehensive list on the board, create a competition to see which group can contribute the most answers. Ask one group at a time to supply one new idea within 30 seconds. If they repeat an idea or can't contribute, they are out of the game. Focus on the similarities first, then move onto the differences.
12. Explain these lists highlight some of the common and uncommon feelings, thoughts and behaviours someone might exhibit when experiencing a disrupted home life. You may like to refer to them from now on as "warning signs".
13. **Extension activity:** Students can work individually or in pairs to design a poster communicating one or more of the "warning signs" to educate other young people. These posters could be placed around the school or published in the school newsletter.

Activity 2: A Step in the Right Direction

Teacher Instructions

1. Give students the option to work independently or in pairs for this task.
2. Invite students to select one of the personas from the previous activity.
3. Explain the purpose of the activity is to explore different ways the selected persona could be supported to aid mental wellbeing and prevent homelessness.
4. Check to ensure students know the difference between self-help and peer support, then explain they will be required to consider possible solutions from both perspectives (the persona and the persona's friend). Students working in pairs might like to focus on one each.
5. The task requires students to create a presentation documenting how the persona could implement self-help strategies, and/or receive peer support. The presentation could be in the form of a poster, video or slideshow.
6. Provide students with the Presentation Checklist so they have some guidance on what information they could include. Whether they must include all dot points can be negotiated as a group.
7. Allocate enough time for students to research and develop their presentation (60+ minutes recommended).
8. Invite students to share their presentations in small groups. If time permits, ask groups to nominate their favourite presentation to share with the whole class and/or plan to show it to the whole school during assembly.

This resource was developed in partnership by Oasis Ambassador Schools, [YLab](#) and [Shark Island Institute](#), through the generous support of The Caledonia Foundation.