

SYDNEY
THEATRE
CO
EDUCATION

ON CUE

DEAR EVAN HANSEN

BOOK BY
STEVEN
LEVENSON

MUSIC AND
LYRICS BY
BENJ PASEK
& JUSTIN PAUL

DIRECTED BY
DEAN BRYANT

michael
cassel
group

CONTENTS

Cast and Creatives	3
Synopsis.....	5
Musical Numbers	5
Curriculum Links	6
Director’s Note: Dean Bryant.....	7
Character Analysis.....	9
Form, Style and Convention	13
Themes and Ideas	15
Classroom Activities	17
Support and Resources	27
Bibliography.....	30
Mental Health Services and Support.....	31

Photo: Daniel Boud

Compiled by Ellen Osborne.

The activities and resources contained in this document are designed for educators as the starting point for developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. You can contact the Education Team on **education@sydneytheatre.com.au**

© Copyright protects this Education Resource.

Except for purposes permitted by the Copyright Act, reproduction by whatever means is prohibited. However, limited photocopying for classroom use only is permitted by educational institutions.

We acknowledge the Gadigal of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land and waters on which the Company gathers. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with whom we work and with whom we share stories.

CAST AND CREATIVES

DEAR EVAN HANSEN

BOOK BY STEVEN LEVENSON; MUSIC AND LYRICS BY BENJ PASEK & JUSTIN PAUL

DIRECTED BY DEAN BRYANT

CAST

Evan Hansen	Beau Woodbridge
Larry Murphy	Martin Crewes
Heidi Hansen	Verity Hunt-Ballard
Zoe Murphy	Georgia Laga'aia
Cynthia Murphy	Natalie O'Donnell
Alana Beck	Carmel Rodrigues
Jared Kleinman	Jacob Rozario
Connor Murphy	Harry Targett

STANBYS

Lawrence Hawkins
Jessica Kok
Ariyan Sharma
Tod Strike
Teresa Tate Britten

UNDERSTUDIES

Evan Hansen	Lawrence Hawkins, Harry Targett
Alana Beck	Jessica Kok
Heidi Hansen	Teresa Tate Britten
Jared Kleinman	Ariyan Sharma
Connor Murphy	Lawrence Hawkins, Ariyan Sharma
Cynthia Murphy	Teresa Tate Britten
Larry Murphy	Tod Strike
Zoe Murphy	Jessica Kok

BAND

Music Director/Conductor/Keyboard	Zara Stanton
Associate Music Director/Keyboard	Maia Hopf
Guitar 1	Nathan Barraclough
Guitar 2	Michael Brady
Drums	Cypress Bartlett
Bass	Amanda Jenkins
Violin	Tracy Lynch
Viola	Charlotte Fetherston
Cello	Heather Hinrichs

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Director	Dean Bryant	Company Manager	Will Sheehan
Orchestrations & Additional Arrangements	Alex Lacamoire	Production Stage Manager	Sarah Smith
Set Designer	Jeremy Allen	Stage Manager	Toby Rosengarten
Costume Designer	Isabel Hudson	Deputy Stage Manager	Neole Goss
Lighting Designer	Matt Scott	Assistant Stage Manager	Elly Rickwood
Sound Designer	Andrew Poppleton	Wig, Hair & Makeup Supervisor	Lauren A Proietti
Video Designer	David Bergman	Backstage Wardrobe Supervisor	Simone Edwards
Movement Director	Shannon Burns	Wardrobe Maintenance	Bella Sigglekow
Music Supervisor	Laura Tipoki	Head of Lighting	Jesse Greig
Resident Director	Liam McIlwain	Deputy Head of Lighting & Board Operator	Kit Cunneen
Music Director	Zara Stanton	Head of Sound	Ghiovanna De Oliveira
Associate Music Director	Maia Hopf	Deputy Head of Sound	Zac Saric
Vocal Arrangements & Additional Arrangements	Justin Paul	Sound Technician	Chloe Langdon
		Video Systems Technician	Rose Mulcare
		Head Mechanist	Jack McCabe
		Venue Staging Supervisor	David Tongs
Senior Producer	Ben White	Head of Automation	Mungo Trumble
Associate Producer	Alice Hatton	Deputy Head Mechanist	Liam Kennedy
Producer	Michael Cassel AM	Fly Supervisor	Zachary White
Associate Producer	Liam Mangan	Floor Mechanist	Oscar Broadhead
		Intimacy Coordinator	Chloe Dallimore
Production Manager	Ryan Garreffa	Voice and Text Coach	Charmian Gradwell
Deputy Production Manager	Julia Orlando	Costume Coordinator	Samantha Perkins
Production Manager	Ricky Matepi	Lighting Supervisor	Jesse Greig
		Venue Lighting Supervisor	Amy Robertson
		Sound Supervisor	Ben Andrews
		Video Supervisor	Michael Hedges
		Staging Supervisor	David Tongs
		Venue Staging Supervisor	Kane Mott
		Lighting Programmer	Matt Quince
		Music Programming	Tom McKeand

THIS PRODUCTION OPENED AT ROSLYN PACKER THEATRE, SYDNEY ON 18 OCTOBER 2024



SYNOPSIS

Dear Evan Hansen is the raw, moving and inspiring story of a socially anxious highschooler who is suddenly thrust into the spotlight when he inadvertently invents an important role for himself at the centre of a local tragedy.

Called a “breathtaking knockout of a musical” by The New York Times and the winner of six Tony Awards, including Best Book by writer Steven Levenson, *Dear Evan Hansen* features music from the Grammy and Academy Award-winning geniuses Benj Pasek and Justin Paul (*La La Land*, *The Greatest Showman*) and a story that journeys to the heart of the contemporary teenage condition with a tenderness and wit that will set your heart alight.

In a brand-new production helmed by one of Australia’s great interpreters of musical theatre, Dean Bryant (*Fun Home*, *Hubris & Humiliation*), *Dear Evan Hansen* is an empowering and uplifting experience for anyone who’s ever considered themselves on the “outside, always looking in”.

Musical Numbers

Act I

“Anybody Have a Map?”	Heidi, Cynthia
“Waving Through a Window”	Evan, Company
“For Forever”	Evan
“Sincerely, Me”	Connor, Evan, Jared
“Requiem”	Zoe, Larry, Cynthia
“If I Could Tell Her”	Evan, Zoe
“Disappear”	Connor, Evan, Alana, Jared, Cynthia, Larry, Zoe
“You Will Be Found”	Evan, Company

Act II

“Sincerely, Me” (Reprise)	Connor, Jared
“To Break in a Glove”	Larry, Evan
“Only Us”	Zoe, Evan
“Good for You”	Heidi, Alana, Jared, Evan
“You Will Be Found” (Reprise)	Company
“Words Fail”	Evan
“So Big/So Small”	Heidi
“Finale”	Company

CURRICULUM LINKS

<p>NSW</p> <p>Drama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stage 5<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Dramatic Forms and Performance Styles: Scripted Drama○ Elements of Production• Stage 6<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Monologues○ Reading and Writing about Drama and Theatre○ Technical Aspects of Production <p>English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stage 5 - Contemporary Possibilities• Stage 6 - Texts and Human Experiences - related text. <p>Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stage 5 - Musical Theatre• Stage 6 - Music 1: Aural Skills	<p>TOURING STATES</p> <p>VIC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• VCE Theatre Studies<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Elements of Theatre Composition○ Modern Theatre Styles and Conventions <p>ACT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• BSSS DRAMA A-T-M - STUDIES OF DRAMA A-T-M UNITS<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Communicating Meaning in Drama○ Independent Study <p>SA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SACE<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Stage 1: Responding to Drama○ Stage 2: Evaluation
--	---

SUITABLE FOR

Years 10 – 12

FORM, STYLE & CONVENTION

- Musical Theatre
- Realism/Non-Naturalistic elements
- Digital Technology

THEMES

- Mental Health and Grief
- Suicide
- Loneliness and Connection

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: DEAN BRYANT

We know the secret to happiness is to connect with other people. So why is it so impossibly difficult? *Dear Evan Hansen* is about many things, but at its core is the story of a teenage boy trying to figure out how to be with people, how to be in the world. How to get past that crippling self-judgment to forge the bonds with people he knows he needs to. Anxiety is such a challenging thing to manage every day. Will meditation help? Should I sleep more? See a therapist? Go on medication, go off stimulants, journal? It feels like so much work for something that should be so natural, the simple ability to be present with yourself, with other people, without panic, shame, fear.

Evan has very little self-worth. He is keenly aware of his lack of social capital, that his self-consciousness makes every interaction awkward, that he can't relax enough to share the things we need to make friendship happen. He spends his life trying to either stay invisible (safer but soul-destroying) or guessing what people want him to be (exhausting). His therapist has asked him to write letters to himself that build his self-confidence - "today is going to be a good day and here's why" - and Evan knows the right answer to achieve that is to just "be yourself". Common advice and so difficult to act on. Our self changes depending on who we're with, what they need from us. Evan builds a sense of self through his attempts to bring solace to a grieving family. They need him and he grows from being needed. The Evan they see in him helps him forge an identity he can live with, someone who is confident, someone who is acceptable.

But self must be built on authenticity. Without that, it's unsustainable. Yes, you want to be known in the world, but for what you truly are, not what you've let people believe. Social media allows us to play with personas, but it's only an extension of what we've always done as humans, figuring out how to show the world something that feels in alignment with what we feel we are at our core. Evan eventually finds his way through to an outer self that finally matches his inner self.



Harry Targett, Beau Woodbridge, Jacob Rozario, and Dean Bryant.

As I write this note, we are midway through the rehearsal process. Our cast, who range from actual teenagers to adults in midlife, have been navigating the complex emotional terrain of *Dear Evan Hansen*. We share our experience of the subjects that the musical deals with; what it's like to have anxiety, to suffer depression, to care for someone who is struggling. Every generation has a different way of talking about this, the language to use, the level of vulnerability to offer in the rehearsal room, and it has built a beautiful trust between us as a company as we breathe new life into this remarkable piece of writing. I am awed by what the cast can do - the script demands the nuance of a play and the score the power of a rock concert. So much of it is carried by a cast who actually finished high school in the last few years. But there lies the show's power.

Soon enough we will leave the rehearsal room and enter the deep blue chamber the creative team have designed to embody Evan's mind, how contained he feels, what he's pushing against. We'll add the AV imagery that brings to life how the internet feels to the characters, the promise and illusion of it, another way to connect, another way to notice your failure at connecting.

What allows Evan to begin to truly connect, to find the space for an authentic sense of self, is speaking the truth. Allowing himself to be fully seen. He fears being cast out, that primal terror we social beings carry at being thrown out of the tribe. What surprises him is that he finds generosity.

This generosity is ultimately critical to what gives this musical the incredible power it has had for audiences since it premiered a decade ago. Humans can be cruel to each other, we can put ourselves through such pain, but we can also offer each other grace and the freedom to truly be ourselves. In a world that is quick to judge, to demand punishment for anyone who transgresses, there is something rare in a piece that recognises extending kindness and understanding is the most radical thing we could do.

It's a privilege to make a new production of *Dear Evan Hansen* for Australian audiences, to balance both what is contemporary and what is timeless about what Steven Levenson and newly-crowned EGOT-winners, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul conjured up. Fans of the musical have been waiting a long time to see Evan's story onstage here. That expectation could cause anxiety, but hopefully Evan has shown us, instead, how to be present.



Georgia Laga'ala, Dean Bryant, and Beau Woodbridge

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

From the notebook of book writer Steven Levenson

Evan Hansen (17)

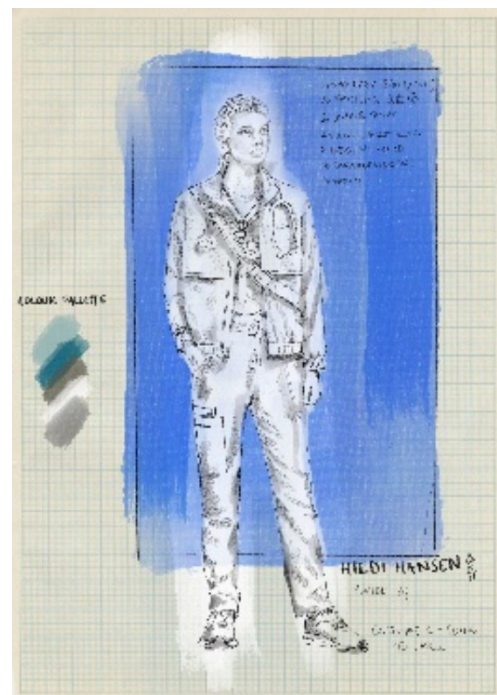
Smart, sincere, and cripplingly self-conscious, Evan prefers to hover in the background, a supporting player in his own life, too afraid to step forward into the spotlight and risk ridicule or, what might be worse, no one noticing him at all.



Costume Design for Evan – Isabel Hudson

Heidi Hansen (40s)

Evan's mother. Overworked and stretched too thin, Heidi loves her son fiercely, but fears they have begun to grow apart. She is prepared to do anything to repair the damage.



Costume Design for Heidi – Isabel Hudson

Zoe Murphy (16)

Sensitive and sophisticated, Zoe couldn't care less about the status games and popularity rites of high school. Funny and bright, she feels a terrible ambivalence about her brother's death, finding it difficult to forgive him for all he did, and forgive the part of herself that finds relief in the fact that he's gone.



Costume Design for Zoe – Isabel Hudson

Connor Murphy (17)

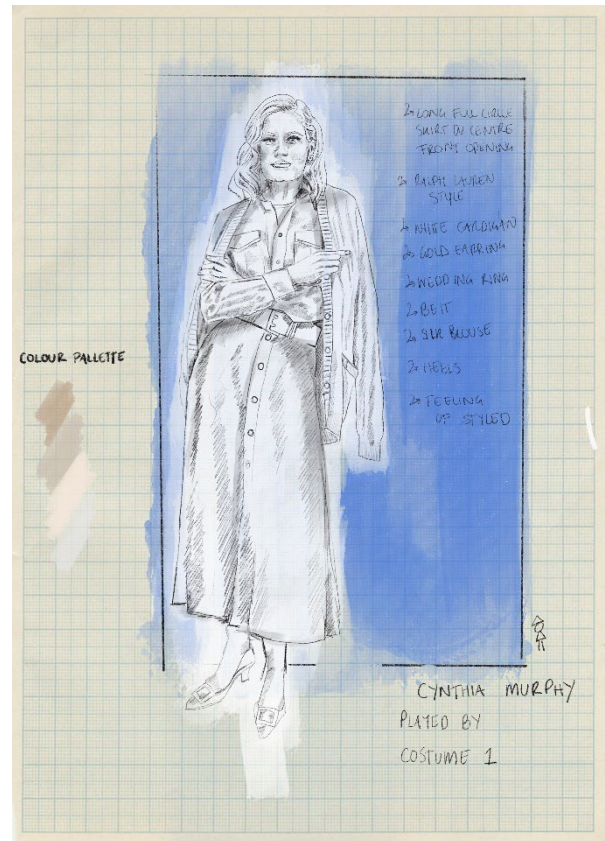
An angry, disaffected loner, Connor has been a troubled kid for as long as anyone can remember, an enigma and a source of endless consternation to his long-suffering parents and sister.



Costume Design for Connor – Isabel Hudson

Cynthia Murphy (40s)

Connor and Zoe's mother. To Evan, she seems to be the perfect mother, nurturing, available, and willing to talk about anything. To her own children, it's a bit more complicated.



Costume Design for Cynthia – Isabel Hudson

Larry Murphy (40s)

Connor and Zoe's father. Though often tense and taciturn, Larry shows a different face to the world, representing for Evan the dad he always wished for: strong, confident, and, more than anything, reliable, someone to be counted on.



Costume Design for Larry – Isabel Hudson

Jared Kleinman (17)

Droll and sarcastic, Jared claims to be forced by his parents to hang out with family friend Evan, for whom he ostensibly has nothing but disdain. Jared covers his own obvious insecurities with a well-practiced braggadocio and a know-it-all arrogance.



Costume Design for Jared – Isabel Hudson

Alana Beck (17)

Alana is an incredibly genuine person. Everything she does comes from a place of deep honesty and tremendous feeling. All of the characters in this musical put up masks of sorts. For Alana, it's a façade of cheerfulness. She is always ready with a smile, a note of encouragement. This hides the loneliness underneath.



Costume Design for Alana – Isabel Hudson

FORM, STYLE AND CONVENTION

Musical Theatre

Dear Evan Hansen is firstly a musical in its form, where characters emote through song. Songs have a dramatic function, just as crucial as scenes in needing to be informative. Lyrics should give audiences new information and insights into characters that may not be present in spoken dialogue. Recurring phrases, imagery, and symbolism in lyrics allow playwrights to create unity and continuity throughout a production. It's said of musical theatre, "When the emotion becomes too strong for speech, you sing; when it becomes too strong for song, you dance." The songs in *Dear Evan Hansen* are not just performances but extensions of the character's thoughts and emotions, and we can see this through the conversational style, allowing for a seamless flow between dialogue and music. Songs, much like monologues, reveal the characters' inner lives.

Musical theatre conventions can include:

- strong, emphatic acting style
- storytelling through song
- characters with everyday struggles or flaws to overcome
- spoken dialogue included in the songs
- use of solo, duet and ensemble performance
- acting, singing and dancing skills
- popular and theatrical music
- fresh and inventive use of language for song lyrics, including rhyme.

The narrative structure of *Dear Evan Hansen* follows a linear narrative with nonlinear elements, such as flashbacks and sequences in the past that are visited through memory and imagination. Time is used to explore memories of core moments in the character's lives - allowing the audience to form a deeper understanding of some characters and their relationships. The musical features contemporary pop-rock music that is deeply integrated into the narrative and contains pure moments of both light and shade - when comparing upbeat and darkly comedic songs like "Sincerely Me" with poignant moments and messages of the play like "You Will Be Found".

Music is a powerful force that brings us together, particularly in an increasingly isolated society, and it is fitting that *Dear Evan Hansen*'s themes play on this concept through its songs.

Realism / Non-Naturalism

The acting within *Dear Evan Hansen* is grounded in realism in the way it portrays the internal emotional struggles of its characters in a believable and relatable way. This makes it unique from other musicals where the acting style might tend towards non-naturalism, with actors employing grander gestures, facial expressions and heightened dance moves. There are elements of non-naturalism, however, in that the characters break into song, and the staging is generally minimalistic and less realistic so that audiences will suspend their disbelief to see the Murphy's living room or an internet email chain on stage.

Within *Dear Evan Hansen*, the character of Evan regularly transitions from speaking typically to then performing a song with ease. It is the realism within this play that allows the audience to connect with the characters on a deeper level. The storytelling is intimate, delving deeply into the personal lives and struggles of the characters, particularly Evan. The audience is very aware of the ‘fourth wall’, and bears witness to intimate family moments and often moments within Evan’s mind.

Movements are character-driven and naturalistic, while ‘dance’ is expressed in a modern and contemporary way. However, when the narrative moments expand and explode, the movement follows suit. Rather than relying on dance for big ensemble numbers, the cast’s movements are restrained, and purposeful movement creates shapes and shadows against a multimedia background; the cast is used almost like scenery to be projected upon.

Technology and Multimedia

The original Broadway production of *Dear Evan Hansen* was perhaps one of the first musicals to incorporate modern communication, like social media, as a storytelling device. Playwright Steven Levenson compared the use of social media and technology in *Dear Evan Hansen* with the original production of ‘Bye Bye Birdie’ as “when they’re using the telephones in “The Telephone Hour.” It’s like they’re not using the telephones to talk about telephones; they’re using them because that’s how their world functions. And if we tried to tell our story today without mobile phones and social media, there would be a real inauthenticity about the show.”

In our consumption of media today it is not unusual to have our digital world be a part of the grammar of the show and a storytelling device rather than just a theme or idea. This reflects the modern, digital world in which the characters live and underscores the impact of social media on their lives. In conveying these digital actions to the audience, the projections flash up on the screens and the actors speak out into the audience, almost like a monologue; we notice their movements are also more stylised in these vignettes. This allows the audience to suspend their disbelief, understanding that communication is through a digital form. The story explores how social media can shape perceptions, amplify voices, and connect people, but also how it can distort reality, spread misinformation, and increase the pressure to conform.



THEMES AND IDEAS

Mental Health and Grief

The production examines the impact of mental health issues on teenagers and young adults, highlighting how these struggles can lead to feelings of invisibility and desperation.

In *Dear Evan Hansen*, the title character struggles with social interaction and maintaining relationships, isolates himself, and fears being judged by others. Although Evan's specific problem is not named in the play, these are classic signs of social anxiety, a mental health condition that affects many young people, usually beginning during the early teen years. Shortly after we meet him, the character Connor Murphy takes his own life. Before his suicide, he is depicted as angry, oppositional, and isolated, which may be seen in young people struggling with depression. Self-harm, suicide attempts, and suicide are also strongly linked to adolescent mood disorders such as depression.

The challenges of anxiety and depression are managed in nuanced ways in the musical and songs, allowing the audience to engage with these themes in powerful ways. Protagonist Evan struggles to connect to others. Our first introduction to Evan reveals he is seeing a therapist and has been tasked with writing letters to himself. His anxiety is depicted through inner monologues as songs clearly in "Waving Through a Window", where his association with feeling invisible and as an outsider are evident in the lyrics of this song " , on the outside always lookin' in, will I ever be more than I've always been?". This is a normalising portrayal of anxiety, showing his thoughts and self-perception and allowing the audience our own empathetic 'window' to see his experience through.

Composer Justin Paul says on Evan being a protagonist with mental health issues, "it's definitely an unusual one in that he's riddled with anxieties, and with lots of self-esteem issues and a lot of other things. But I think that's what makes him very accessible and identifiable and relatable."

Suicide

Through Connor, we see the devastating effects of death by suicide early in the musical, and his presence looms large over the course of the entire narrative. We see his death as a catalyst for the rest of the events as it brings attention to the hidden struggles of depression that individuals can face. "The Connor Project," the social media driven movement to keep Connor's memory alive created by Alana, Jared and Evan, seeks to give solace to those who may be in a similar situation and allows the students within the production to channel their own grief and feelings into something constructive. We also see the effects of grief on Connor's family. The battle with guilt, confusion, anger and denial as each exhibits their own way of navigating their feelings - most apparent in the song "Requiem".

The musical also touches on the societal pressures that may impact a young adult's mental health, such as the desire to succeed and maintain a perfect façade, especially in front of friends and family.

Loneliness and Connection

The musical emphasises isolation and loneliness and the desire to build connections with most of its characters. Evan and Connor are both struggling with their mental health. Heidi and Cynthia feel isolated and responsible for their

families (“Does anybody have a map?”). Zoe’s place in her own family is shadowed by Connor’s presence, and Larry’s disconnect and disengagement from the rest of his family is evident from their first family scene.

The musical portrays the protagonist, Evan Hansen, and his state of mind during a particularly turbulent time, post-summer holidays, when he has been more isolated from his peers. We see his perspective of unsatisfying interactions with his ‘acquaintances’ Alana and Jared as he mentions his work as an apprentice Park Ranger - where an accident left him injured and undiscovered for a long time “*It’s a funny story, because there was this solid ten minutes after I fell, when I just lay there on the ground waiting for someone to come get me. Any second now, I kept saying to myself.*” Evan’s isolation and loneliness are apparent and further explored in ‘Waving Through a Window’, where he tells the audience he feels ‘invisible’.

Evan’s strained relationship with his mother also is heightened as the musical progresses; especially when he finds a sense of connection to the Murphy family, although these connections are based heavily on his lies about Connor. Each member of the Murphy family connects with Evan and these relationships become a healing balm in repairing the strained nature of their feelings for Connor.

Today, people often find it hard to connect with others in person and can often present digital versions of themselves on social media where not all aspects of our personalities are shared. Social media can also bring connections and community, however, and some people can find a sense of belonging in the world via the internet. Even Evan’s imagined relationship with Connor is not in person - email chains (made up by Evan and Jared) hone in on the sense of connection that can be built online; both false and real. Evan’s lie stems from his desire for connection and acceptance - *Dear Evan Hansen* reminds us of the power of being vulnerable with one another, like the breakthrough moment between Evan and Heidi. In the end, the characters manage to connect with each other - and we learn that the lack of communication can exacerbate mental health problems while connecting and supporting each other can help in healing and empathy.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Activity 1

As a class, start walking around in an empty space. Ensure you walk alone and keep moving towards spaces that aren't occupied.

- a. Pause. Choose one person (person A) to be magnetised towards. Don't indicate who your person is, but as you start walking again, you are constantly walking towards person A as you move around the room.
- b. Pause. You have been released from Person A. Choose another person (person B) to be repelled away from. Again, don't indicate who this person is. Then, begin moving around the room and staying far away from person B.
- c. Pause. Combine those two incentives as you walk around again—you will be magnetized towards Person A and repelled by Person B.
- d. Pause. Now, imagine you are Evan Hansen with his broken arm, trying to get it signed by anyone you pass in the room, but ultimately, Person A.
 - i. You might like to add some dialogue (e.g. "will you... Sign my cast?")



Harry Targett, Carmel Rodrigues, Jacob Rozario, Martin Crewes, Beau Woodbridge, Georgia Laga'ala, Natalie O'Donnell, and Verity Hunt-Ballard

Activity 2

In a group of 4-5, create a freeze frame image of a family photo (the kind that you'd hang up on a wall). The photo can be made up of whatever family members you choose (single mum with children; two fathers, nuclear family, stepfamily, etc.)

- a. Still in your groups, show us a freeze frame 2 minutes before the photo is taken.
- b. Now, show a freeze frame 5 minutes after the photo is taken.
- c. For each of the groups, take note of whether the family's appearance in the 'family photo' matches the energy of before AND after the photo (not talking to each other, on their phones, not engaging, some family members chatting etc)

Note the differences between appearance vs reality, photo vs life.

DISCUSS

- a. How might this activity relate to the two families we meet in *Dear Evan Hansen*?



Georgia Laga'aia, Verity Hunt-Ballard, Beau Woodbridge, Natalie O'Donnell, and Martin Crewes

Activity 3

When Evan arrives at the Murphy's household, he finds himself improvising a friendship with Connor to make the family feel more at ease and consoled. The family enables the imagined scene to extend and advance from Evan's ideas with their own suggestions.

The famous Australian television show *Thank God You're Here* is structured on a similar format - one actor/comedian does not know the intricacies of a scene/moment, and all the other actors do. The scene is fleshed out through open-ended questions and suggestions from the invited actor/comedian.

- a. In a group of 2-3, create a scenario where another character can join. Establish the 'who, what, when, where, why' of the scene (e.g. *two teachers and another student in the principal's office being asked to explain a situation that happened in class - it could be good but made to seem like they're in trouble*).
- b. Remaining in your groups, establish some skeleton dialogue and questions for your guest performer (e.g. *"Can you explain to us why Mr Turbet and I called you and Daniel here this morning?"*)
- c. Finally, invite your guest performer into the scene - this can be a student from another group.

Play out the scene with all group members improvising around your given scenario.

DISCUSS

- a. Was it easy for the invited guest to improvise around your scenario?
- b. How do you think Evan felt establishing his initial lies about his friendship with Connor?

Activity 4

Whilst *Dear Evan Hansen* is a musical with choreography and moved sequences to music, there are few traditional dance numbers; why do you think this was the case for this musical?

"My ideology is that everything that happens on stage should flow from the story. If you are thinking about the why they are dancing rather than just enjoying the moment, I haven't done my job correctly. It should seem the actors have no choice but to dance."

Danny Mefford

"Sincerely Me" features choreographed moves from Evan, Jared, and the imagined Connor, which bear a resemblance to the kind of 'secret handshakes' young friends might create together. The movement comes out of the world that they are in rather than a traditional dance number.

- a. Watch this clip from the original production on YouTube:
[Sincerely Me – Michael Lee Brown, Mike Faist, Will Roland \(Dear Evan Hansen\)](#)
Take note of the simple gestures and moves created by the chorus lyric, "Cos all that it takes is a little reinvention."
- b. In groups of 2-3, create a sequence of moves for your own secret handshake inspired by the chorus of the lyrics:

*"CAUSE ALL THAT IT TAKES IS A LITTLE REINVENTION
IT'S EASY TO CHANGE IF YOU GIVE IT YOUR ATTENTION*

*ALL YOU GOTTA DO IS JUST BELIEVE YOU CAN BE WHO YOU WANNA BE
SINCERELY, ME"*

- c. You can put this choreographed sequence to the music from *Dear Evan Hansen* (available on Spotify, Apple Music, or other music streaming services).

DISCUSS

- a. Do you think it's possible to reinvent yourself - either how you perceive yourself or how others perceive you?
- b. How can believing in yourself help to shape your personal narrative?



Activity 5

Each character in *Dear Evan Hansen* is complex, with its own challenges and successes. The parent characters are not just two-dimensional; they deal with their relationships with their children as much as the children deal with their relationships with themselves.

Use this Hot Seat activity to discover more insights into each character:

- a. Divide the class into groups of 4, allocating one character per group (Evan, Zoe, Connor, Heidi, Jared, Alana, Lary, Cynthia).
- b. Each group will brainstorm the fears and hopes of each character.
- c. Nominate one student to take on the role of the character for a whole-class hot-seat activity.
- d. The rest of the class will ask the nominated student/character questions about their motivations, fears, and desires, to be answered in character.

DISCUSS

- a. Did you gain any new insights into these characters?

EXTENSION

- a. Choose one character - write a "Dear (me)" letter as this character, beginning with: "Today is going to be an amazing day, and here's why..."

Activity 6

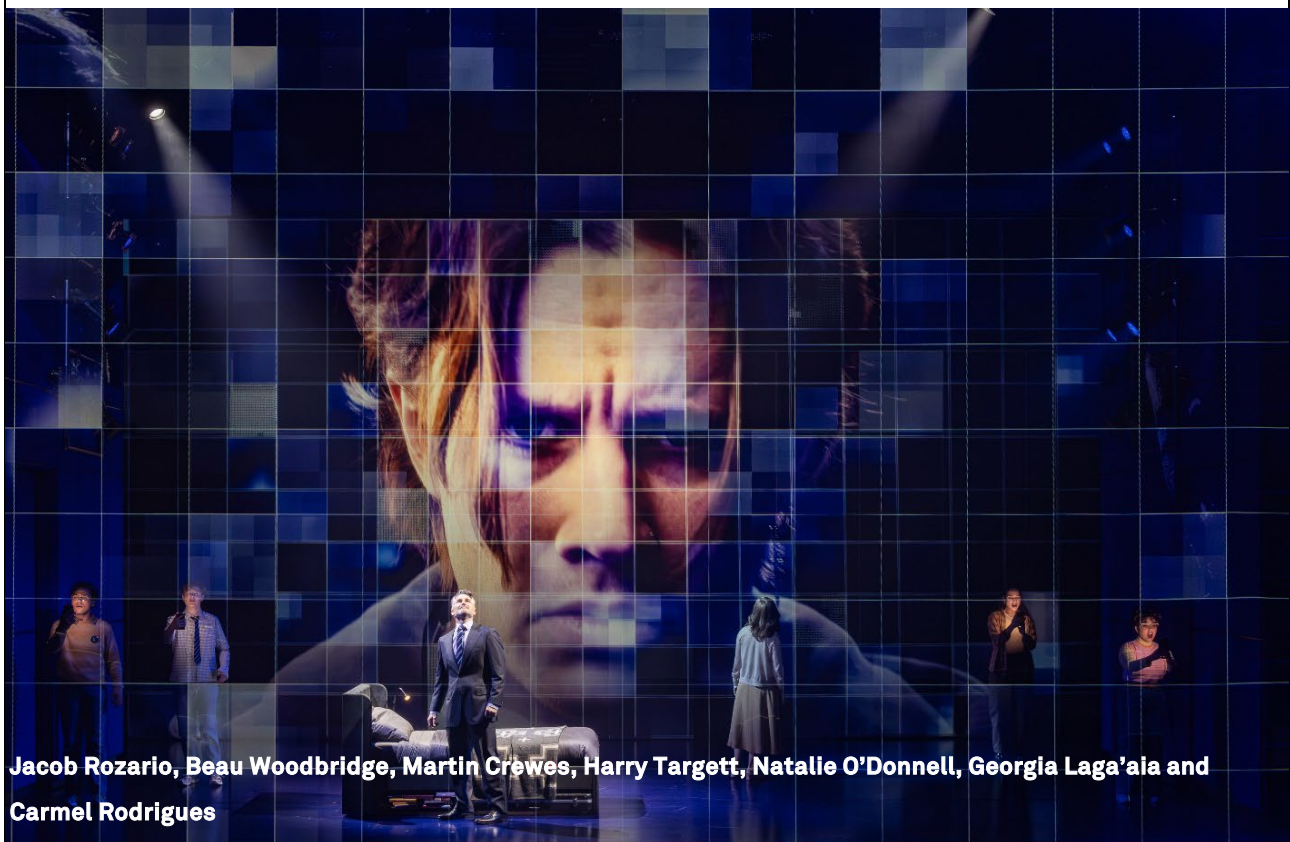
The end of Act 1 is a pivotal moment in *Dear Evan Hansen* and an emotional turning point for Evan and the broader themes of the show. Evan's speech, which then transitions into "You Will Be Found," is also a highly theatrical and digital moment on stage. As the speech/song goes viral on the internet, we see the swell of hope and connection that Evan begins to feel and the complexities of the notion of belonging and being 'found'.

DISCUSS

- a. How does the production manage this moment using both technology and theatricality?
b. The stage directions for the moments between the speech and the song read as follows:

He crouches to pick it up. There on the ground, Evan suddenly stops. He stares out past the lights at the faces in the auditorium. A moment of pure, unadulterated terror grips him. Everything is telling him to run away. A long beat. He looks at the tie. He makes a decision. Slowly, he stands, putting away the cards entirely. He begins once again, differently.

What is Evan's decision at this moment? How do things begin to change after "You Will Be Found?"



Activity 7

In a crucial moment of Act 2, Evan reveals Connor's 'suicide note' to Alana - who then shares it with the internet. The stage direction for this moment reads:

"Voices from the virtual world begin to pile up on top of each other, stacking and accumulating, accreting. Unlike before, the voices do not fuse – they congeal. This is not a community, but a hydra-headed herd-thing, primal and ravenous and cruel."

- a. In groups of 4-5, take the following dialogue of 'voices' from Act 2 of *Dear Evan Hansen*.

How can you portray this moment on stage - imbuing the space with a sense of both a digital and global world - something going viral and getting out of hand?

Forward. Share. Like. Maybe they should have spent their money on helping their son instead of... Please re-tweet. Evan Hansen was the only one who was paying any attention. Favourite. Share. Forward. The whole world needs to see this. Share it with everyone you know. This is why the orchard is so important, guys I just gave fifty dollars for the orchard and I think everyone else should give as much as they can.
Repost

- b. You may have someone also playing Evan now, reacting to the voices.
- c. Add your own music: how does this change the tone?



Activity 8 - Taking Action

In *Dear Evan Hansen*, Evan, Alana, and Jared become activists, developing a campaign to raise awareness about suicide and promote suicide prevention within their school and community. Some of the actions they take include:

- Creating and displaying awareness posters at school
- Selling awareness-raising buttons/badges
- Developing a social media campaign
- Speaking at a student assembly
- Launching a Kickstarter fundraising campaign

DISCUSS

- a. Together as a class, discuss some of the ways in which they take action. Now discuss what causes are important to you.
- b. Do you unite behind a single cause, or are there many individual interests?
- c. What are some of the actions you can take to be a changemaker around an issue that is important to you?

CREATE

Think specifically about an issue that is important to you and develop a plan of action.

- a. What campaign would you propose to raise awareness? How might you volunteer your time? What might you be able to do on a personal one-to-one level? How will you engage other friends and members of your community?



Activity 9

Review the final conversation between Evan and Connor at the end of the second act

DISCUSS

- a. What dramatic conceit does book writer Steven Levenson use to present this conflict? What does this conversation reveal to us?

Scene begins

Evan, alone.

EVAN: I'm not doing this. I'm done.

CONNOR: You can't just stop now.

And Connor is there.

EVAN: I don't think I can live with this anymore.

CONNOR: What about my parents?

EVAN: No more emails.

CONNOR: How can you do this to them?

EVAN: No more Connor Project. No more orchard.

CONNOR: After everything they've done for you? They need you.

EVAN: Need me for what? To keep lying to them?

CONNOR: That lie is the only thing that's keeping them together.

EVAN: That's not true.

CONNOR: Oh really? They seemed like a pretty happy family when you met them?

EVAN: I don't want to lie anymore.

CONNOR: And what about Zoe?

EVAN: Zoe said, she just...she wants me.

CONNOR: Right.

EVAN: She likes me for who I am.

CONNOR: Except you didn't happen to mention that everything you've told her, it's all been one big fucking lie, did you?

Evan says nothing.

Oh. You left that part out.

EVAN: So then, what if...what if I did tell her the truth?

CONNOR: She'll hate you.

EVAN: Maybe she would understand. Maybe everyone would understand.

CONNOR: Everyone will hate you.

EVAN: Not if I can just, if I can explain it, you know?

CONNOR: You'll go right back to where you started. No friends.

EVAN: I want to be done/ with this.

CONNOR: / Nobody. Nothing. Alone.

EVAN: I'm ready to be done with it.

CONNOR: If you really believe that, then why are you standing here, talking to yourself? Again?

Silence.

You think you're going to turn around all of a sudden and start telling everyone the truth? You can't even tell yourself the truth.

EVAN: What are you talking about?

CONNOR: How did you break your arm?

A pall comes over Evan.

How did you break your arm, Evan?

EVAN: I fell.

CONNOR: Really? Is that what happened?

EVAN: *(less and less confident)* I was, I lost my grip and I...I fell.

CONNOR: Did you fall? Or did you let go?

Beat.

MUSIC IN.

You can get rid of me whenever you want. You can get rid of all of it. The Connor Project. The orchard. But then all that you're going to be left with is...you.

For Forever (Reprise)

CONNOR: END OF MAY OR EARLY JUNE
THIS PICTURE PERFECT AFTERNOON WE SHARE.
DRIVE THE WINDING COUNTRY ROAD GRAB A
SCOOP AT "A LA MODE"
AND THEN WE'RE THERE ...

CONNOR: Think about it.

Evan stands there for a moment, lost.

He makes a decision.

*Lights shift and Evan and Alana are in their bedrooms, online.
Connor is gone.*

Activity 10

The final scene flashes forward about a year into the future where Evan and Zoe have some distance from what has happened. Then the ending leaves us thinking about the nature of consequences and healing and wondering about the relationship between punishment and healing.

DISCUSS

- a. Imagine Evan ten years on from this moment. How do you think he would reflect on his actions as a young adult?



Activity 11

Making Art about Art: Artists take inspiration from their life experiences, including other art forms. *Dear Evan Hansen* has inspired a tremendous outpouring of fan art, some of which was featured in [this music video](#) for “Waving Through a Window”.

CREATE

- a. How do the music, story, and emotions of *Dear Evan Hansen* inspire you artistically?
- b. Using any medium you like, create a piece of art that captures the most memorable moment of the play for you. Will you draw, paint, sculpt, make a collage or a film, write a song...? You might like to use some of these images as inspiration:



Activity 12 – Literary Comparisons

OPTION 1: OUTSIDERS

Literature, both classic and contemporary, is filled with “outsiders” — characters who, like Evan, feel isolated and struggle to connect. Although each character has his/ her own unique backstory and challenges, one can find commonalities between them.

WRITE

- a. Choose an “outsider” from another book you have read or are currently reading.
- b. Write a comparative essay showing the similarities and differences between that character and Evan. How do their emotions/choices/journeys parallel one another, and where do they diverge? What impact does each have on other characters in their respective stories?

Some suggested character comparisons.

- Laura from *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams
- Holden Caulfield from *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger
- Charlie from *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- Christopher from *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon
- Oscar from *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz
- Charlie or Jasper from *Jasper Jones* by Craig Silvey

OPTION 2: FLAWED HERO/DECEPTION

Many times, flawed heroes—like Evan—lie to gain status with others and/or a sense of belonging. Sometimes, these lies stem from uncorrected misconceptions or omissions of the truth and grow into greater deceptions. This convention appears not only in literature but also in many modern-day films.

- a. As a class, discuss the characteristics of a flawed hero. How does the presence of a flawed hero serve the overall storytelling of a fictional work? Why is it essential for protagonists to have character flaws? How do authors go about creating protagonists who are likable despite their flaws?

WRITE

- a. Choose a book/movie you have recently read/ seen in which lying/deception is a central theme. Compare it to *Dear Evan Hansen*. How does the lie begin? What are the character’s motives and what are the results?

Some suggested character comparisons.

- Gatsby from *The Great Gatsby*
- Tom from *The Talented Mr. Ripley*
- Huck from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
- Olive from *Easy A*

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

WHAT IS SOCIAL ANXIETY?

In their teen years, young people start being more aware of what other people think. There are “right” things to wear, say, or do—and things that teens shouldn’t do that could be embarrassing or weird. Some feel so worried about what others think about them that it starts negatively impacting their everyday lives. This kind of worry is called social anxiety.

Kids with social anxiety aren’t just nervous when they are at parties or giving a speech in class. Even answering a question in class can feel extremely scary; some kids worry they will humiliate themselves simply by eating in the school cafeteria or walking into a room. That’s because kids with social anxiety fear they might do something embarrassing or offensive, and it will make others judge or reject them.

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

A young person with depression may experience persistent, intense feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and irritability that make it hard to function day to day. We don’t know precisely how or why depression develops, but it’s not usually caused by bad things happening.

Depression can be internalised, which means that it primarily affects a young person’s emotional life rather than their behaviour. Because of this, it can take a while for others to recognise it — or for a young person to realise that his/her thinking and emotional responses are troubled. Adolescent depression is more common than some people think. According to some statistics, more than 12 percent of teens ages 15 and 16 struggle with depression. For teens ages 17 and 18, it jumps to more than 15 percent.

HOW CAN YOU SPOT SOCIAL ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION?

Young people with social anxiety often think their anxiety is evident (which can create more anxiety), but other people might not recognise it because a lot of the symptoms of anxiety are happening under the surface. Panicked thoughts, a racing heart, or an upset stomach aren’t apparent from the outside. For other kids, however, anxiety can produce outward signs such as anger or aggression.

Similarly, since adolescents often experience extreme changes in mood, it can be challenging to recognise when someone has become depressed. The first sign people tend to notice is withdrawal from friends, or when someone stops doing things they usually like to do.

THE STIGMA OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

Many people don’t want to believe that young people can have mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety. They say that young people with serious mental health problems are just going through regular growing pains. As we see in *Dear Evan Hansen*, the emotional problems that young people face are very real.

Adolescent psychiatric conditions are common (one in five children and teens struggle with a diagnosable disorder) and have real biological and environmental causes. But the denial of these facts leads struggling teens and their families to

feelings of shame and fear of judgement. Millions of children and teens don't seek treatment because of this stigma, but it is vital to be open and ask for help.

HOW CAN TEENS GET HELP IF THEY ARE ANXIOUS OR DEPRESSED?

Teens who think they need help with an emotional or mental health issue might not know how to ask for help. If they are very anxious, it might be embarrassing for them to admit that things that seem easy for other people are very hard for them. If they are depressed, they may worry that others won't understand and will tell them to "snap out of it" — or that family and friends will be disappointed.

But parents, teachers, and friends can be more sympathetic and less judgmental than teens imagine. First, however, they need to know how a young person is feeling. The sooner a teen asks for help, the sooner they will start feeling better.

These are some of the most prominent signs of depression in teens:

- Persistent sadness or irritability
- Feeling worthless or hopeless about the future
- Diminished interest in most activities, especially things they used to enjoy
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Low energy and motivation
- Decline in academic performance
- Decreased ability to think or concentrate
- Thinking about suicide or death

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP

If you need someone to talk to or want to find out more online, here are some organisations that can help:

- [Beyond Blue](#) Support Services on 1300 22 4636 or [chat to a counsellor online](#).
- [ClearlyMe](#) is an app designed for teens aged 12 – 17. It provides coping strategies and tools to help with negative thinking, low mood, and difficulty relaxing.
- [Kids Helpline](#) — telephone and online counselling for ages 5 to 25, call 1800 55 1800.
- [headspace](#) — online, in-person and phone support for people aged 12 to 25.
 - headspace also has mental health information and resources for [multicultural young people](#).
- [ReachOut](#) — youth online mental health service.
- [QLife](#) is a national counselling and referral service for LGBTIQ+ people. It is available from 3 pm to midnight, seven days a week. Phone 1800 184 527.
- [SANE Australia](#) — for people living with a mental illness, call 1800 187 263.
- [Lifeline](#) — support for anyone having a personal crisis, call 13 11 14.
- [Suicide Call Back Service](#) — for anyone thinking about suicide, call 1300 659 467.
- [Head to Health](#) — For advice and to connect to local mental health services, call 1800 595 212. Check the [operating times](#).

Other languages

Do you speak a language other than English?

- Transcultural Mental Health Centre has many [resources about wellbeing and mental health in different languages](#).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

This information has been developed for indigenous communities:

- [Yarn Safe](#) has mental health and wellbeing information.
- [Wellmob](#) has more mental health information and resources.
- [13YARN](#) provides 24/7 crisis support over the phone on 13 92 76.

State and territory mental health services: contacts for teenagers

Australian Capital Territory

- Access Mental Health: 1800 629 354 or (02) 6205 1065, 24 hours, 7 days
- [ACT Government Canberra Health Services – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service \(CAMHS\) Community Teams](#)

New South Wales

- Mental Health Line NSW: 1800 011 511, 24 hours, 7 days
- [NSW Government Health – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services \(CAMHS\)](#)

South Australia

- Mental Health Triage Service: 131 465, 24 hours, 7 days
- [SA Women’s and Children’s Health Network – Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service \(CAMHS\)](#)

Victoria

Each health region in Victoria has its own 24-hour triage phone number. To get the number for your area:

- Go to [Victoria’s Mental Health Services – Accessing mental health services](#).
- Choose the letter of your suburb or town. This will take you to a list of suburbs and towns starting with this letter.
- Find your suburb or town and choose Child & Adolescent for services in your area.

You can find more information at [Victorian Government Department of Health – Child and adolescent mental services](#).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

IMAGES

Production images are courtesy of Prudence Upton

DIGITAL

Musical Theatre: The Arts Unit Creative Classes

<https://sites.google.com/education.nsw.gov.au/tau-cc-musical-theatre-drama>

YMI: You Will be Found - Classroom resources

https://ymiclassroom.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/deh_kit.pdf

Dear Evan Hansen: Study Guide

<https://www.blumenthalarts.org/assets/doc/Dear-Evan-Hansen-Study-Guide-dd17f801f6.pdf>

Story of a Song: Waving Through a Window

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WPdsclRrA-E>

We Are Evan Hansen: Danny Mefford

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5dvepHxhXD8>

Choreographing Cyberspace, Dance Magazine

<https://www.dancemagazine.com/choreographing-cyberspace/#gsc.tab=0>

Social Media's Role in Dear Evan Hansen, Kassie Meiler

<https://kassiemeiler.medium.com/social-medias-role-in-the-tony-award-winning-musical-dear-evan-hansen-fed53cc00758>

The Existential Subtext of Dear Evan Hansen, Cinemablography

<http://www.cinemablography.org/the-existentialist-subtext-of-dear-evan-hansen.html#:~:text=Evan%20suffers%20from%20an%20unspecified,order%20to%20make%20ends%20meet.>

Teenage Mental Health, Health Direct

[https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/teenage-mental-](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/teenage-mental-health#:~:text=Lifeline%20E2%80%94%20support%20for%20anyone%20having,can%20call%201800%20595%20212.)

[health#:~:text=Lifeline%20E2%80%94%20support%20for%20anyone%20having,can%20call%201800%20595%20212.](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/teenage-mental-health#:~:text=Lifeline%20E2%80%94%20support%20for%20anyone%20having,can%20call%201800%20595%20212.)

Teens mental health: services, resources, contacts and links, Raising Children.net

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups/services-support/services-families-of-teens/teens-mental-health-services>

Mental health services and support helplines

<https://beyou.edu.au/resources/mental-health-services-and-support-helplines>

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

If this production raises concerns for you or anyone you know, mental health support is available.



Lifeline | 131 114 lifeline.org.au



Beyond Blue | 1300 224 636 beyondblue.org.au



Kids Helpline | 1800 55 1800 kidshelpline.com.au



headspace | 1800 650 890 headspace.org.au

**YOU
WILL BE
FOUND**