

What does a school psychologist do?

Information for Students

November 2015



What does the school psychologist do?

The school psychologist is the leading mental health expert in your school. This means that he or she can help you to get the best out of life at school. Psychologists are experts in human behaviour. They have studied the brain, memory, learning, human development and the ways that people think, feel, behave and react. This is why your school psychologist is the best person to help you think through difficulties you might be having with friends, teachers or parents, and they can assist you with learning, motivation and study problems.

How do they do this?

The psychologist can talk to you privately about specific issues in your life. This can involve assessment of learning, or talking about coping skills. If you are sad or anxious, feeling stressed or just not coping, the psychologist can offer counselling and support.

You can talk to the psychologist about all sorts of problems. They will take your concerns seriously. Difficult life situations affect all young people and can include:

- emotional stress such as depression and anxiety
- grief and sadness
- bullying
- sexuality issues
- substance abuse issues
- trauma
- family breakdown or parent problems, or
- friendship and relationship issues.

Seeing a psychologist is an opportunity to talk about problems, ask questions and get a new perspective on things. It can be an opportunity for time out with a skilled listener to quietly think and talk about the things that are getting you down.



How do I know that the psychologist is the right person to help me?

Psychologists who are members of the Australian Psychological Society (APS) are regulated by the APS *Code of Ethics*. They are trained in ethical practice and have formal accredited qualifications. Many school psychologists also have formal teaching qualifications. All of this means that school psychologists are specialists who can offer you the best available support for difficulties you might be experiencing.

How can I see the psychologist?

Sometimes secondary schools require parent consent for you to see the psychologist. Often you can simply self-refer. If you feel you can't speak to your parents first about seeing the school psychologist, you can generally make an appointment directly with the psychologist.

What happens in the sessions with the school psychologist?

That depends on the concerns you have at the time. If you are having difficulty with school work, motivation or studying there might be some formal assessment and recommendations. If you are having difficulty with friends or with other relationships, the psychologist can assist with problem solving and can help with thinking and coping strategies which might help you manage better. Seeing the psychologist is an opportunity to explore your ideas and think about the way you see the world.

Sessions with the psychologist are usually about 50 minutes long and can occur weekly or more often if you need. The psychologist will discuss with you if a referral to another support agency would be more helpful.



Will other people know?

You can make appointments outside of class time, either before or after school, at lunchtime or in your spare sessions. If an appointment is scheduled during class time the class teacher will generally need to know why you are absent.

Will the information be confidential?

The psychologist has an ethical and legal responsibility to protect your rights to confidentiality and privacy. However, there are occasions when psychologists are legally required to disclose information, for example, if they believe that you, or someone else, is at risk of harm. The psychologist will ask you to sign a form that says that you have understood when they cannot keep information confidential.

Your confidential psychology files will be securely stored either in password protected electronic files or locked filing cabinets. Only the psychologist has access to these files.

How will information about me be used?

The school psychologist can only use information about you for the reason that it was collected. For example, if you see the psychologist for learning difficulties, information from assessments will be used to assist teachers with planning and programming. Any other family or personal information that you might have shared with the psychologist cannot be shared, unless it is directly relevant to your learning.



For more information about the APS please visit psychology.org.au or contact:

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Other support is available:

Beyond Blue (advice line for depression)
Ph: 1300 224 636

Kids Helpline
(support for children and young people up to 25 years)
Ph: 1800 551 800

Lifeline
Ph: 131114

SuicideLine
Ph: 1300 651 251

Online assistance:

kidshelpline.com.au	mentalhealthonline.org.au
reachout.com.au	suicidecallbackservice.org.au
headspace.org.au	
beyondblue.org.au	



Where can I get more information?

More information about how an APS psychologist can help you is available on the APS website at:

psychology.org.au/public/what-is-psychology/

Contact information: