

Teen wellbeing: Small actions make a big difference

Supporting young people through high school can feel like juggling act – between academics, social life, emotions, screens and independence. The good news? There is a simple evidence-based approach that schools are using to support student wellbeing – and it can be just as effective at home.

It is called the FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING, and it is all about encouraging regular, everyday actions to build mental and emotional resilience. Developed through international research and used by Sout Western Sydney Local Health District, the Five Ways are easy to remember – and surprisingly powerful.

At school, our wellbeing programs, pastoral care, and classroom practices are increasingly shaped by the Five Ways. Here is how we are using them – and how you can apply them at home with your teenager (without the eyerolls).



“I move my body and feel better for it.”

At school: PE, sport and movement breaks help teen release stress and stay energised.

At home: Encourage activities that your teen enjoys – whether it is skateboarding, walking the dog, gym sessions or dancing in their room. It does not have to be structured – just regular movement can boost mood, sleep, and focus.



“I have strong relationships and talk to people I trust.”

At school: Group work, mentoring programs, and safe spaced for peer support help students feel connected and heard.

At home: While teens may not always initiate conversation, small daily check-ins matter. Ask open ended questions like “What was something good about today?” or share something about your own day to keep the connection flowing. Even car rides, walks, or preparing dinner can be good times to chat.



“I do kind things for others and feel good about it.”

At school: We foster community service, peer mentoring, and social responsibility.

At home: Teens often thrive when given responsibility. Let them help with siblings, cook a family meal or volunteer in their community. Even sending a supportive text to a friend counts. Giving builds self-esteem and purpose – especially in adolescence.



“I try new things and grow my skills.”

At school: Students are encouraged to explore electives, clubs and leadership roles.

At home: Support curiosity outside of academics – whether it is a new hobby, learn to cook, watch a documentary or following an interest on YouTube. Remind your teen that learning does not always mean homework – it is about growth and discovery.



“I am aware of what is going on around me and in me.”

At school: We promote mindfulness, gratitude and self-awareness through journaling, wellbeing apps or short breathing exercises.

At home: Help your teen notice how they are feeling without judgment. Try reflecting together on small wins and challenges. Simple practices like taking a few deep breaths before bed or naming one thing they are grateful for can build emotional regulation.

Teenagers often resist being “taught” wellbeing – but they respond to being shown. The trick? Start with what already fits into your life. These ideas will not require big changes – just small shifts in how we can connect, move, reflect, grow and give.

You might also enjoy a parenting podcast for practical advice that respects teens need for autonomy while helping the thrive.

Together, we can support the wellbeing of our young people – one small step at a time.