



Dear Parents & Caregivers,

As part of Wellbeing initiatives at your school, I was invited to speak to students about Mental Health. I wanted to share some background with you all, as my talk may spark some conversation in your home.

The core intention of my session was to encourage children to get comfortable talking about their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Talking about these topics on a regular basis, means they may be more likely to reach out for help, when life throws challenges at them.

*As a parent to a 9 year old, I live by the mantra that **“if we listen to the small stuff when they are young, they will be more likely to tell you the big stuff when they are older”***

Youth Mental Health statistics are alarming. According to Beyond Blue, one in seven young Australians, aged 4-17, experience a mental health condition. The latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (released in 2018), showed 180 people aged under 19 years died by suicide in 2017. Twenty-four of those deaths were children younger than 14.

You may be wondering why I was talking to your kids about mental health.

I am someone who has suffered with mental illness since I was a teenager and suffered a mental health breakdown in my 40's, which had a significant impact on my family. I now work with corporate organisations to help them get comfortable with the uncomfortable topic of Mental Health and REFUEL teams in times of stressful change. I also volunteer speaking time in schools through the ambisie.com #giveonehour movement. I know from my personal experience, as well as my Mental Health First Aider training, that talking about our mental health is important skill for life and a solid foundation for our overall wellbeing.

Attached is a simple exercise that I use with students in K-YR4 and I encourage parents & caregivers to “play along”! It is an easy and fun way to subtly check-in on your child's mental wellbeing. Give it a try! You may be surprised how much more they will share about their day rather than the standard “Good” or “Fine” response.

Please feel free to contact me directly me if you have any feedback or questions.

Dianne McCabe

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ROSE, THORN & BANANA

A fun family game to encourage open conversations about feelings and mental health.

Take turns sharing your ROSE, THORN and BANANA for today. Always end on the BANANA!

This game can be played in the car, around the dinner table or during bedtime snuggles.

	<p>What was your ROSE for today? <i>A rose is the best part/thing about your day</i></p>
	<p>What was your THORN for today? <i>A thorn is the least best thing/ or hardest part of your day</i></p>
	<p>What was your BANANA for today? <i>A banana is the funniest thing that happened today</i></p>