

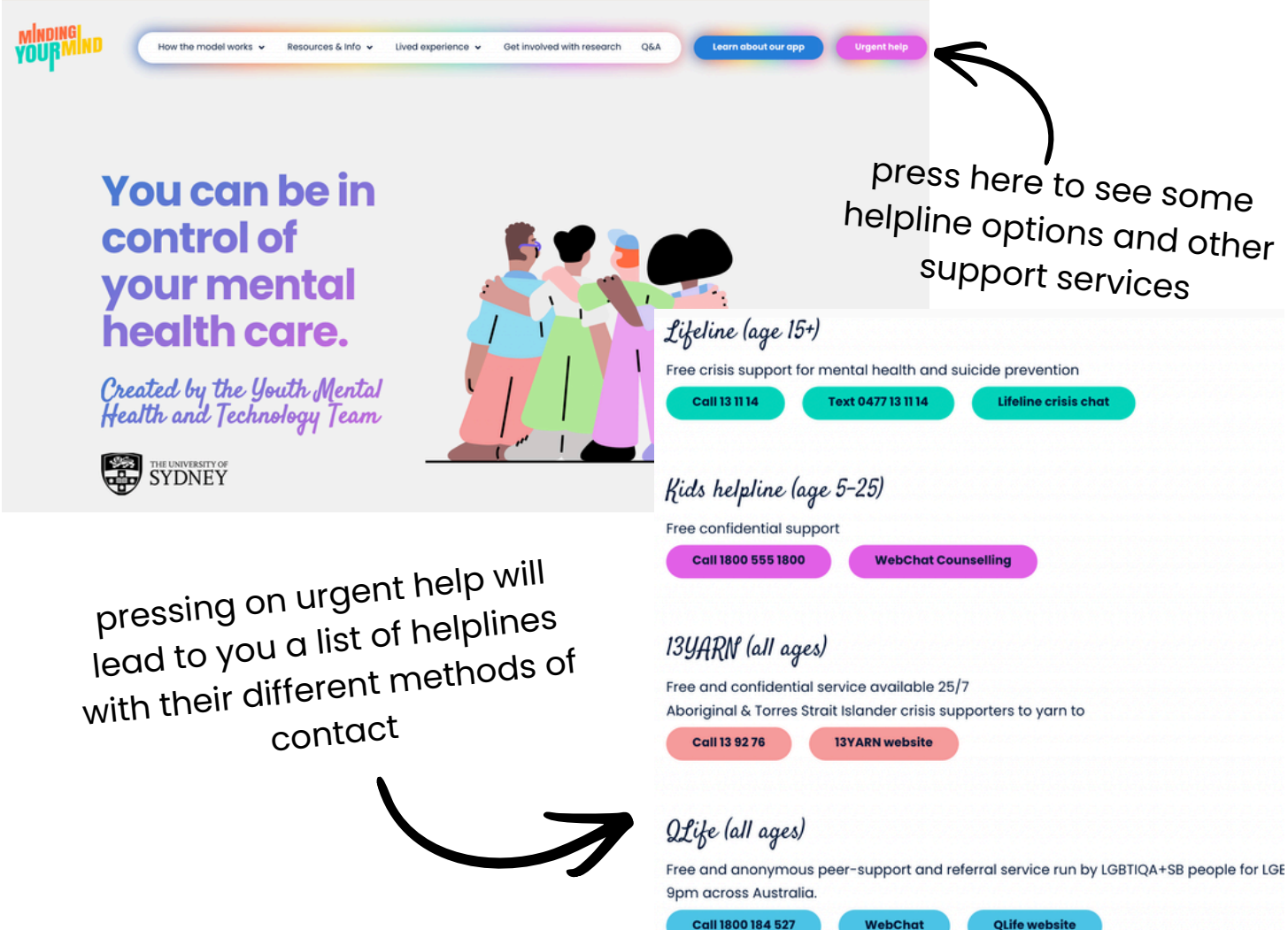
Demistifying Helplines in Australia

Tara Tjahjadi (she/her)

What is a helpline? What does a helpline do?

A helpline refers to a phone service that provide access to relatively immediate support and resources. Some helplines, alongside providing a telephone service, can provide support via webchat, text message and email. Different helplines provide different resources and services such as distress and crisis support, medical advice, general wellbeing support and are run by responders with training, qualifications or experiences relevant to the functions of the helpline.

Importantly, helplines are not a substitute for emergency services and if you are ever in immediate danger or in an emergency, you should call 000.



The screenshot shows the 'MINDING YOUR MIND' website. The header has a navigation bar with links: 'How the model works', 'Resources & info', 'Lived experience', 'Get involved with research', 'Q&A', 'Learn about our app', and 'Urgent help'. The 'Urgent help' link is highlighted in pink. A black arrow points from the text 'press here to see some helpline options and other support services' to this link. Below the header, there's a large section titled 'You can be in control of your mental health care.' with the text 'Created by the Youth Mental Health and Technology Team' and 'THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY'. To the right of this text is an illustration of four diverse people hugging. Below this, there are three sections for helplines: 'Lifeline (age 15+)' with options 'Call 13 11 14', 'Text 0477 13 11 14', and 'Lifeline crisis chat'; 'Kids helpline (age 5-25)' with options 'Call 1800 555 1800' and 'WebChat Counselling'; and '13YARN (all ages)' with options 'Call 13 92 76' and '13YARN website'. At the bottom, there's a section for 'QLife (all ages)' with options 'Call 1800 184 527', 'WebChat', and 'QLife website'. A black arrow points from the text 'pressing on urgent help will lead to you a list of helplines with their different methods of contact' to the 'Urgent help' link.

You can be in control of your mental health care.
Created by the Youth Mental Health and Technology Team
THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Lifeline (age 15+)
Free crisis support for mental health and suicide prevention
Call 13 11 14 | Text 0477 13 11 14 | Lifeline crisis chat

Kids helpline (age 5-25)
Free confidential support
Call 1800 555 1800 | WebChat Counselling

13YARN (all ages)
Free and confidential service available 25/7
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander crisis supporters to yarn to
Call 13 92 76 | 13YARN website

QLife (all ages)
Free and anonymous peer-support and referral service run by LGBTIQA+SB people for LGE
9pm across Australia.
Call 1800 184 527 | WebChat | QLife website

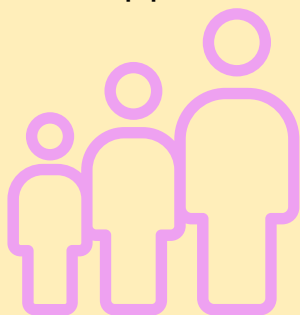
press here to see some helpline options and other support services

pressing on urgent help will lead to you a list of helplines with their different methods of contact

How do I know when I should call a helpline and which one should I call?

Helplines are generally thought to be support services that you contact whilst in acute distress. Some helplines are geared towards immediate distress whilst others also focus on general wellbeing support. For example, helplines like Kids Helpline and Beyond Blue support people experiencing suicidal distress, but also offer support for emotional wellbeing, maintaining relationships, big life changes (eg. starting a new job, graduating school, etc), supporting a family member or friend, and even just having someone to listen about your bad day. Some helplines have other features you may want to be aware of such as:

The age of people they support



The ability to choose the gender of the responder

If you can speak with someone you have spoken to previously with the service



The functions of the helpline, for example:

- Kids Helpline – for children and young people, 5–25 years old
- Health Direct – for medical information
- 13YARN, peer-run for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Butterfly Foundation – support for eating and body image concerns



If there is a limit to how long you can speak for



If the helpline is connected with a translating service if you want to speak in a language other than english



What does calling a helpline look like?

When you dial the number for a helpline you will initially hear an automated message with information about the helpline, including their privacy policy. A similar automated message will be sent if you are connected via webchat or text message. Some webchats and text message connections will ask for other details before you start the chat, such as your name, age and the state you are connecting from. For phone calls, you may instead be asked this information when your call is answered.



Kids Helpline has a YouTube video with an example of what you may hear if you call them



Depending on the helpline and time of day, you may have to wait some time before your call or message is answered. Some helplines inform you about how long the wait is, or how many people are in line ahead of you. Don't let this discourage you! If you wait, you will progress through the queue, or if you decide to stop waiting you can always connect back another time or connect with another helpline that may have less of a wait.

Once you get connected to a responder, they may ask if you have called the helpline before and provide you with more information about their privacy policy if this is your first time calling. It can be confusing to know what to say, but it's okay to ask for some time to think or say that you're not so sure what to say.

I hope that helps clear up some uncertainty around connecting with a helpline and make them feel more approachable!

-Tara