

What are Family and Relationship Problems?

Family and relationship problems can occur between partners, spouses, parents, children, siblings, friends and other important people in your life. All relationships and families go through difficult times and experiencing occasional problems and conflict in personal relationships is normal. However, sometimes these problems can become overwhelming. Signs of family and relationship problems include frequent arguing, disagreements, breakdown in communication, angry outbursts, avoidance and physical conflict.

Family and relationship problems can be triggered by differences in opinion, personalities, beliefs, values or goals for the future. Family and relationship problems can also be caused by personal circumstances or events, such as:

- Change in family circumstances (e.g. new baby, children becoming teenagers, separation/divorce, blending families)
- Change in life circumstances (e.g. unemployment, moving house, homelessness, retirement, ageing, health deterioration)
- Financial problems
- Stress (e.g. pressures at work/school, lack of time)
- Physical health (e.g. illness, chronic pain)
- Issues relating to sexuality
- Alcohol or drug use
- Gambling problems
- Bullying/harassment
- Natural disasters (e.g. drought, flood, bushfire, cyclone)
- Death of a family member, friend, colleague or pet
- Lack of trust or respect in a relationship

How do family and relationship problems affect wellbeing?

Often your family are the people closest to you and relationship problems can cause considerable distress for you and those around you. Family and relationship problems may lead to:

- Often having negative emotions (e.g. anger, sadness, depression, anxiety)
- Often feeling stressed, exhausted or confused
- Feeling isolated, alone or withdrawn
- Difficulties eating or sleeping properly
- Difficulties concentrating or making mistakes at work or school
- Not enjoying your normal activities or hobbies
- Problems with other personal relationships (e.g. friends, colleagues, children)
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope or escape the situation.

What helps?

Talk about it - communication is the key to making your relationships work. Talking calmly and openly about your problems with your loved ones is the first step to finding a solution.

Accepting your differences – even people who are very close sometimes have different ideas, opinions and beliefs. Acknowledging that you may not always agree with your loved ones can help to avoid unnecessary conflict.

Have fun together – even when things are tough, it is important to find time to do things you enjoy with your partner or family.

Develop a plan – if your family and relationship problems are mainly due to your circumstances, it can help to work with your family or partner to develop a plan for action that you all agree on. For example, if you are having financial difficulties, it may help to create a family budget. Having a plan can reduce stress and give you and your family common goals to work towards.

Get help – there may be times when you are not able to solve your family and relationship problems alone and need some external help. There are many types of assistance available, including family or relationship counselling, mediation and courses and workshops in communication, parenting, problem-solving and positive coping skills.

People in supportive, loving relationships help each other practically as well as emotionally. Supportive partners share the good times and help each other through the tough ones. They are also more likely to feel healthier, happier and satisfied with their lives and less likely to have mental or physical health problems.



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Find out more

Call Lifeline – **13 11 14** if you need to speak to someone about family and relationship problems. Alternatively call Relationships Australia on **1300 364 277**, visit their website www.relationships.com.au/advice/ or visit the Australian Government's Family Relationships website at www.familyrelationships.gov.au

A range of self-help resources and information is also available at www.lifeline.org.au

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