

BEING TRUE

A RESOURCE FOR YOUNG MEN



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Banyule Youth Services wish to extend gratitude to the young men from Parade College who contributed time, consideration and passion to the development of this resource.

Acknowledgement

Banyule Youth Services are proud to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land as the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people and we pay respect to all Aboriginal Elders, past, present and emerging, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the region's history.

BEING TRUE: A RESOURCE FOR YOUNG MEN

What does it mean to be a man?

Some might say it's about being strong, powerful and confident, or providing for and protecting the people that we care about. The interesting thing is, these attributes can be found in anyone, regardless of gender.

So, what does masculinity mean?

This resource is about equipping you with knowledge and advice to help you define your own understanding of masculinity. We will be exploring what it takes to be physically and emotionally healthy, in tune with your wellbeing, and being kind and compassionate to others.

How to use this resource

This booklet has been designed in collaboration with young people to be a useful, easy-to-navigate resource for young men. It covers a range of topics that may help you to be a happy and connected person and man. You may want to read it from start to finish or go straight to a section that is most relevant to you.

You may notice overlaps in the subjects – this is because lots of things in life are connected and may share things in common. Something that is good for your body will often be good for your mind as well, and vice versa.

We have included a section at the end which has suggestions for further reading or learning if you want to explore more!

YOUR BODY

LOOKING YOUR BEST CAN RESULT
IN YOU FEELING YOUR BEST!

GROOMING

Different people will have different ideas and opinions about how to dress; style and present ourselves to the world.

If you're wanting to refresh your wardrobe or style, you don't need to spend a lot to look good! Op shops are a great place to start when looking for new clothes. They are full of affordable clothes in good condition and are better for our environment. When choosing an outfit, think about nice colour combinations, patterns and layering.

Grooming tips for young men:

- ▶ Clean your face daily with a gentle facial wash (this can also help with pimples).
- ▶ Use a gentle body wash when showering.
- ▶ Choose a body wash suitable for your skin type (everyone has different skin types and needs).

Keep your nails clean and trimmed:

- ▶ Trim nails regularly, keeping them short and even.
- ▶ Clean under nails to remove dirt.

Use deodorant daily:

- ▶ Apply deodorant after showering.
- ▶ Choose an antiperspirant if you tend to sweat more.
- ▶ Reapply if needed, especially after playing sport or going to the gym.

Wash your hands regularly

- ▶ To protect yourself from getting sick, wash your hands regularly and properly – with soap and warm/ hot water, and for around 20 seconds, working the soap over every part of your hands and fingers.

Brush teeth twice daily and floss regularly:

- ▶ Brush for at least two minutes, covering all surfaces of your teeth.
- ▶ Use fluoride toothpaste to help prevent cavities.
- ▶ Floss at least once daily to remove plaque between teeth.

Visiting the dentist can be expensive, so looking after our teeth can prevent problems from occurring to begin with!

Shaving your face:

A well-trimmed beard or a clean shave can make a difference! For a safe and smooth shave you can follow this routine:

- ▶ Wet your face with warm water to soften the hair.

- ▶ Apply some shaving cream or gel, and use a sharp razor.
- ▶ Shave in the direction your hair grows to avoid irritating your skin. You can shave against the direction of your hair growth for a closer shave, but be careful and don't rush.
- ▶ The razor should be held at an angle so that the blades are almost flat against your skin.
- ▶ Use short and gentle strokes, and be sure to wash hair off the blades as you go.
- ▶ Once finished, rinse your face with cold water, and apply aftershave or moisturiser to soothe your skin.

healthdirect.gov.au/personal-hygiene

NUTRITION AND DIET

Did you know that our brains and our stomachs affect each other?

Eating a mostly healthy diet is proven to be great for our brains and our gut bacteria, which work best when they are well looked after. Fresh fruit and vegetables should be part of your daily eating habits, as they are rich in vitamins and fibre which are vital for good gut health. It's okay to eat junk food occasionally, but if it makes up most of your diet, try to make some changes. Eating too much highly processed food will weaken your immune system, upset your stomach, and can create all kinds of long-term health issues.

Just remember:

- ▶ Eat a variety of different foods, and include lots of fresh veggies, fruit, nuts and grains.
- ▶ Don't eat too much highly processed food – highly processed food is mostly stripped of nutritional content.
- ▶ Limit high sugar intake – most processed food has high sugar content, which is bad for pretty much everything in your body.
- ▶ Stay hydrated! It's important to drink plenty of water throughout the day.

betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/Mens-nutrition-needs

Healthy, cheap and easy to make recipes at: banyuleyouth.com/download-free-resources

YOUR CHANGING BODY

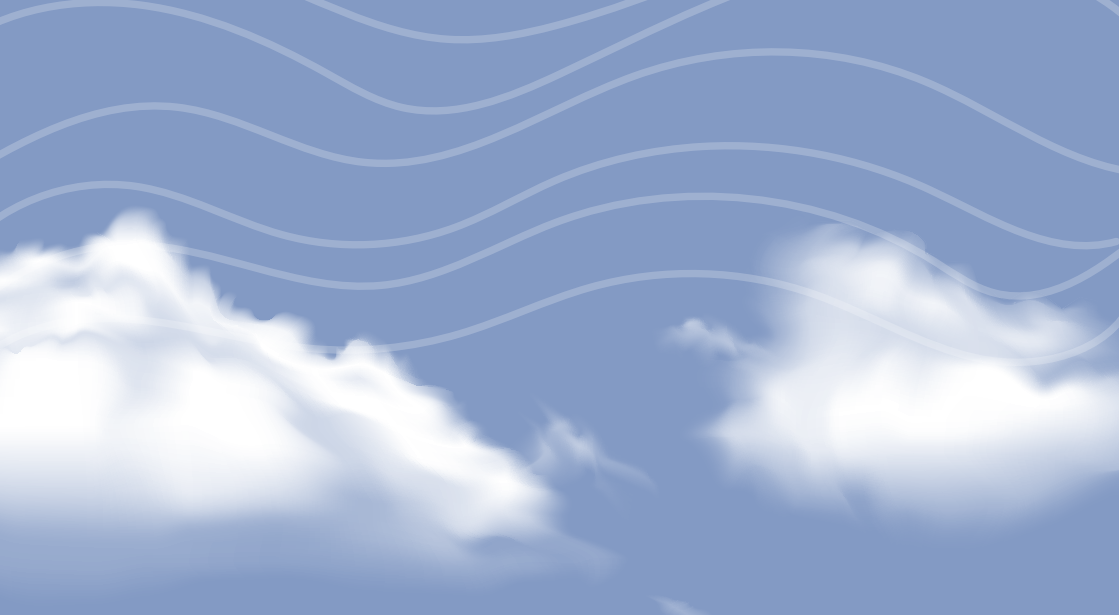
For boys, puberty usually begins between the ages of 9 and 14, though this can vary from person to person.

During this phase of development as you grow out of childhood and into your teenage stages, you may notice differences – your body and voice might change, you may experience emotions in a new way, and you might begin to think differently about certain things. Puberty can be difficult for all young people, and if it is for you, remember that it is natural and you're not alone. Try to be kind to yourself and keep in mind that you are on a journey of development. Talk to close friends or family about it if you feel comfortable in doing so.

And as always, respect yourself and the people around you, because everyone experiences changes in themselves, and we can all benefit from it with the right support and understanding.

- ▶ Most changes are very normal!
- ▶ Puberty can be weird or difficult, but it won't last forever, so try not to let it stress you out!
- ▶ Pretty much everyone goes through puberty, you're not alone.
- ▶ It is a vital part of your development.
- ▶ If you are concerned about any changes to your body, book an appointment with your doctor to discuss what's happening.

healthdirect.gov.au/puberty-for-boys



SLEEP

Sleep is vital for good health. Most people need between 7 and 9 hours of sleep per night, and young people often need even more than that.

Good sleep improves memory, concentration, cardiovascular health and emotional regulation. In fact, it improves almost everything! If you are struggling with sleep, here are some sleep hygiene strategies:

- ▶ Avoid using your phone or looking at screens when you are close to going to bed – bright screens keep our brain awake! Try to reduce your screen use at least 1.5 hours before going to bed.
- ▶ Avoid eating meals right before going to sleep.
- ▶ Exercising can help you sleep well by expending energy that might otherwise keep you awake when you don't want to be.
- ▶ Aim to get between 7 and 9 hours of sleep every night.
- ▶ Consistency helps a lot – by having a routine and going to bed and waking up at the same time, your body clock will function better.

sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene

EXERCISE

Exercise is proven to be incredibly effective for good physical and mental health. It strengthens our bones, muscles and joints and reduces the risk of many chronic diseases and conditions.

It is fantastic for boosting our immune system and energy levels, and it releases endorphins which help reduce stress, depression and anxiety symptoms. Moving your body for even 30 minutes a day can have huge positive effects. Some men feel that the point is to be big – that's fine for some, but you don't need to be the Hulk, you might just want to feel good. A regular exercise habit will help you to do that, and it will do wonders for many parts of your life.

- ▶ With exercise, even a little bit is better than none at all.
- ▶ 30 mins of exercise daily will provide many benefits.
- ▶ If you don't enjoy running or lifting weights, there are all kinds of exercise you might love! Do some research and try new things.
- ▶ Some people find it hard to exercise alone – joining a group or exercising with a mate can help keep you motivated!

At home workout routine – no equipment needed!

Warm-up (5 minutes):

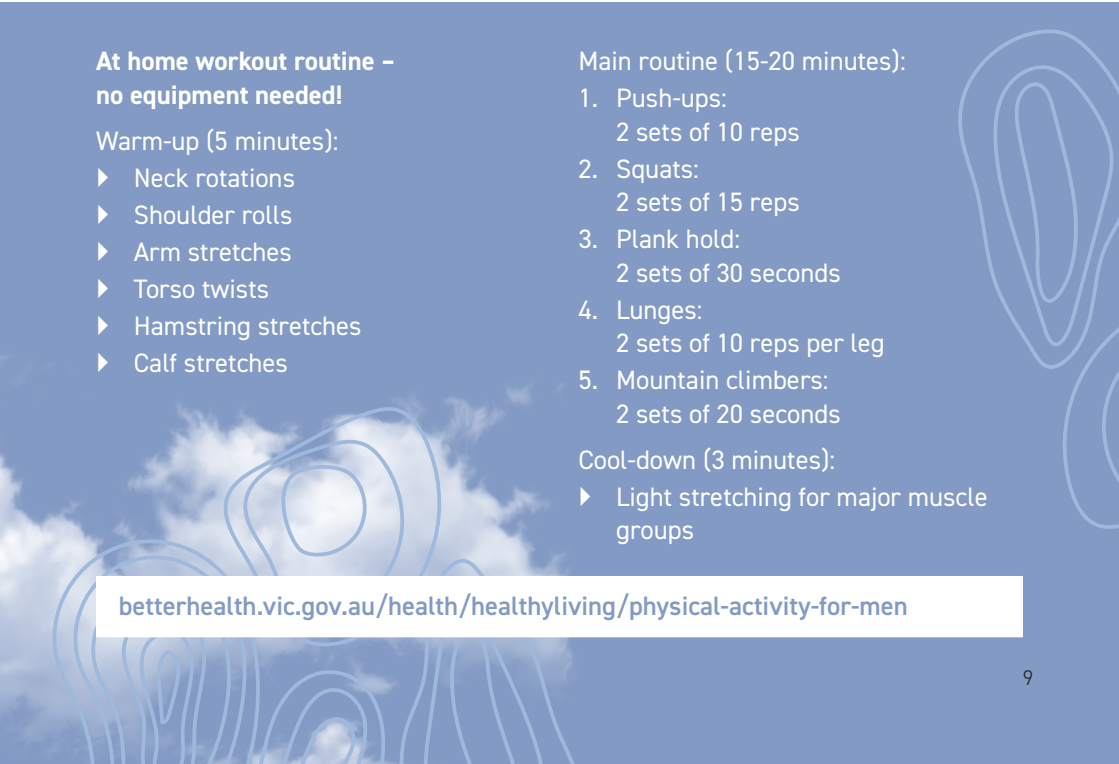
- ▶ Neck rotations
- ▶ Shoulder rolls
- ▶ Arm stretches
- ▶ Torso twists
- ▶ Hamstring stretches
- ▶ Calf stretches

Main routine (15-20 minutes):

1. Push-ups: 2 sets of 10 reps
2. Squats: 2 sets of 15 reps
3. Plank hold: 2 sets of 30 seconds
4. Lunges: 2 sets of 10 reps per leg
5. Mountain climbers: 2 sets of 20 seconds

Cool-down (3 minutes):

- ▶ Light stretching for major muscle groups



betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/physical-activity-for-men

MIND

THINGS TO BE AWARE OF TO FEEL BETTER MENTALLY

CONNECTION

We thrive when we work together.

It is proven that collaboration, shared experiences and a sense of belonging have many positive effects on our physical and mental wellbeing. Sometimes, men feel as if they need to deal with things on their own, and that asking for help is weak.

This is simply untrue; we need each other in order to feel useful, connected and understood. If you are feeling lonely or bored, consider joining a club such as sport, music, art or any other activities that you enjoy. This can help you connect with other like-minded people. You may also find connection in simple acts of warmth and kindness; we are all in this world together, and a friendly chat with

someone could make you both happier than you were a moment before.

- ▶ Collaboration and sharing experiences makes us happier!
- ▶ Humans need each other. This is natural and should be embraced.
- ▶ Clubs and events can be great spaces to meet and connect with people.
- ▶ It's fine to want to be alone, too! Sometimes we need time by ourselves to recharge. Just be mindful if you're avoiding people or situations that you usually connect with, it might be a sign that something else is going on.

banyuleyouth.com/join-a-group/
banyuleyouth.com/schoolholidays/
betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/Strong-relationships-strong-health

FRIENDSHIP

Friendships are a great form of connection, which for some people is just as important as family.

Friendship is something that needs to be actively worked on and built. You should cultivate your friendships – offer to help friends when they need it, chat to each other regularly, and make the effort to know your friends well.

Some people struggle to forge friendships, and this can be isolating and lead to depression or lack of motivation. If that applies to you, try not to give up! Though it can be difficult, consider actively searching for people and communities who share similar interests to you, through things like clubs or events, and be yourself! Socialising can be tricky, so remember that who you are is enough, and there are people who will love you for that.

- ▶ Get to know your friends well – keep up communication!
- ▶ There may be times where your friends are as important as your family, so treat them with love and care.
- ▶ Making friends can be difficult for anyone, and there will always be people out there who would enjoy your friendship.
- ▶ Social groups, sporting clubs and events can be a great way to meet new people.
- ▶ Be yourself! Authenticity is a highly respected trait, and people will like you more for it.

headspace.org.au/explore-topics/for-young-people/create-connections/

MENTAL HEALTH

Men are statistically less likely to seek mental health support.

The reasons for this can vary; social stigma may make men feel as if they should be strong enough to deal with things themselves, and that it isn't manly to seek help from others. Some boys and young men aren't used to expressing their thoughts or feelings. This could be due to traditional or cultural expectations, or learned behaviour from those around them, such as family and friends. It can also be the case that some men may know mental health care is a good idea, but still can't bring themselves to start the journey. There are youth mental health services and resources out there, so if you are feeling like things aren't going well for you mentally, talk to someone and take those first steps. If you're unsure of where to begin, speak to a trusted adult or your doctor about making a mental health care plan, and

you can access subsidised sessions with a mental health care professional.

- ▶ Mental health challenges are very common! Don't feel ashamed if you are struggling.
- ▶ Sometimes, the first step is the hardest one to take – if you can do that, you're on your way!
- ▶ Reach out to a trusted friend or adult and let them know how you're feeling.
- ▶ You might feel isolated or like no one cares, but that isn't true. It's likely there are lots of people who care about you and how you feel.
- ▶ Seek help if you need it, youth mental health services are full of professionals whose job is to help support you! Look up Headspace or talk to your GP to take that step.

headspace.org.au/our-impact/campaigns/for-you/young-men-mental-health/banyuleyouth.com/mental-health-support/

CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES AND UNHEALTHY MASCULINITY

Stereotypes are simplified ideas and beliefs about people of certain groups.

Stereotypes can be based on things like gender, ethnicity or age, and often lead to discrimination or prejudice toward people who belong to that group. When it comes to men, there are traits we often associate with masculinity – aggression, physical violence, dominance, suppressed emotions. Some people will stereotype men and suggest these traits are natural and a part of being a man. However, lots of research and studies suggest these traits are also socially constructed. This means these traits may not be inherent to men, but they are products of the way we think about maleness, and how society expects men to behave. The tricky part is that men can start to display these traits if they are made to believe that it is the 'correct' way to be a man. Young men will improve their wellbeing, sense

of purpose and emotional intelligence by remembering that being a man doesn't come before being a kind and thoughtful person. In fact, being kind, thoughtful, resourceful, respectful and sensitive are important for anyone. Positive masculinity should be about being a good person – being a man is just a part of that.

- ▶ Stereotypes are generally harmful and not useful – they don't define us.
- ▶ Men can break these stereotypes by demonstrating positive behaviour.
- ▶ Healthy masculinity is behaviour which shows that those stereotypes often aren't accurate.
- ▶ Men can be many things at once – humans are complex!

vichealth.vic.gov.au/news-publications/research-publications/masculinities-and-health



LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Many of us will meet someone at some point in our lives who we will feel strong emotions for, and form romantic relationships with.

Relationships can become incredibly important to us. They can make us more understanding of other people and teach us about ourselves in the process.

We can feel powerful empathy and care for our partners, and have deep respect and love for who they are. However, relationships can be difficult, and can at times, become unhealthy.

Sometimes, relationships can become too intense or negative. If you're facing difficulties in your relationship, bring them up with your partner in a calm and respectful way. Listen to them and their perspective, don't ignore what they are saying and how they feel. If arguments or conflicts are frequent, check-in with each other when the time is right for a conversation. If things can't be resolved, it might be best to acknowledge the relationship isn't working and reach an understanding with one another about what you both want.

Another thing to be careful with is that your relationship isn't making everything else in your life unimportant. It isn't healthy to put all your energy into one relationship and neglect other important parts of your life, such as your friendships or your family. A good relationship will generally make both of you feel better about life together, but if you often feel drained, worried or unheard/misunderstood, it might be time for a proper reflection on whether it is worth continuing or not.

- ▶ Loving relationships can be incredibly positive and important parts of our lives.
- ▶ They require compassion, patience, care and respect.
- ▶ Things can get tricky and become unhealthy for a couple – don't ignore things that are recurring problems.
- ▶ Always listen – to your partner's perspective and your own!

betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/relationships-tips-for-success

DEALING WITH ANGER

Experiencing anger is normal. It can be useful, in signalling when something is wrong, or when action needs to be taken. Of course, it can also be harmful.

It is important to recognise that anger often comes as a result of other feelings or experiences. We may be angry at something we think is unfair or unjust. A frustrating problem or issue may make us angry. Being afraid, stressed or anxious can lead to anger, as well as feeling unfulfilled or failing at something we wanted to succeed in. All of this is reasonable, and very common.

Unfortunately, unhealthy anger is also very common for everybody. If a person is angry all the time, it can make them unhappy, and difficult – sometimes even dangerous – to be around.

Some men who may not be used to expressing emotional vulnerability might resort to anger, and perhaps physical violence or aggression. If you feel angry very often, it may be due to other emotions not being expressed or addressed properly. Always be willing to acknowledge when anger is too frequent and consider talking to someone you trust such as a good friend, a family member or your doctor. A mental health service or resource may be what you need to start feeling less angry and more positive.

It is important to point out that a lot of research in human psychology suggests that anger and sadness are very closely related, and being angry all the time is a sign of something you shouldn't ignore.

- ▶ Anger is normal, and can be useful in the right situation – take care to know when it is or isn't useful.
- ▶ Anger is often connected to other things, so be willing to reflect on where your anger is coming from.

- ▶ Anger can be dangerous! It can be physically and emotionally very destructive if it gets beyond our control.
- ▶ We all get angry from time to time, but if you are always angry, it may be a bigger problem than you realise. Look after yourself and seek help from others if you need to.

mensline.org.au/how-to-deal-with-anger/managing-anger/

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

Problematic substance use is reported at a higher rate for young men than it is for young women. Taking risks is a normal part of the development young people go through as they age, and for some, experimenting with alcohol and/or other drugs may form some of that risk-taking.

The reasons that teenagers and young adults use alcohol or drugs are various – it might be that they make certain experiences more fun, or peers and friends are doing it, or just that they are curious. It can also be due to more serious issues, like coping strategies for stress or depression, school disengagement, unhealthy relationships or trauma. If you are considering experimenting with drugs or alcohol,

remember that they are all harmful in some way, so it is never good to use substances frequently. Don't try them if you don't want to, even if a friend wants you to – it isn't okay to pressure anyone into using alcohol or other drugs. It is also very important to remember that occasional experimenting can easily change to frequent use and dependency – be careful and kind to yourself, and think about your choices.

If something ever goes wrong and someone is in danger when you have been using alcohol or drugs, call 000. You won't get in trouble, and first responders can make sure that the person is safe.

- ▶ Experimenting with alcohol or other drugs is common but be careful as it is not always safe.
- ▶ Fun can turn to danger easily if you aren't careful – don't take anything if

you aren't sure of what it is.

- ▶ Heavy or frequent use is often connected to other things that may need attention, so look after yourself and seek help if you need it!
- ▶ If something goes wrong, or someone has a serious reaction to a substance and needs medical attention call 000.

au.reachout.com/mental-health-issues/addiction
yodaa.org.au/drug-alcohol-info
adf.org.au/insights/youth-aod-use/

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

ReachOut Australia

An online mental health organisation providing information, support, and resources for young people dealing with various issues.

au.reachout.com

Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS)

YSAS offers a range of services, including counseling, support, and education programs, specifically designed for young people dealing with substance abuse.

ysas.org.au

Headspace

Headspace is a national youth mental health foundation providing support for young people aged 12-25. They offer services related to mental health and wellbeing.

headspace.org.au

Kids Helpline

A 24/7 counselling service for young people in Australia. Kids Helpline offers support and information on a range of issues.

Hotline: 1800 55 1800
kidshelpline.com.au

eSafety Commissioner

eSafety can help Australians experiencing online bullying or abuse to take action or make a complaint.

esafety.gov.au

Banyule Youth Services

Banyule Youth Services are part of the Banyule City Council. We provide programs, activities and individual support to young people aged 12 – 25 years who are living, going to school, working or socialising in the Banyule community.

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Banyule Youth Services



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Jets Bundoora



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