

## **Information for teachers using the online yshareit Youth Ambassador (YA) workshop with students**

Hi, thank you for visiting the yshareit web site. We hope you will find this information for teachers useful. This information is available in power point and video form at [www.yshareit.com](http://www.yshareit.com)

### **Introduction to the yshareit website.**

The yshareit (said 'why-share-it') website you have accessed links you and your students to 5 of the top Australian websites on mental health for young people. These are [reachout](#), [moodgym](#), [ybblue](#), [bluepages](#) and [kids help line](#). The sites were chosen because they are professionally reviewed with direct input from young people, making them high quality and user friendly.

### **Why use the yshareit website?**

The sites we link to contain lots of information about things that affect young people such as stress, body image, feeling down, drugs and alcohol issues, family problems and keeping yourself mentally healthy. We know that young people use the internet to access information about their health. We want to encourage them to use sites that contain reliable information.

The web sites are youth friendly with a variety of formats including information sheets, forums and transcripts and videos of young people's struggles and successes in living with and recovering from their mental illness. The sites contain information for getting help specific to Australia but also offer general advice on what helps when you are stressed or have a mental illness. Check out these sites for yourself!

### **The online YA workshop**

The yshareit YA workshop is an interactive program that encourages students to familiarise themselves with internet mental health resources. It promotes the idea of telling others about where to find help online.

It is a program designed for high school students to work through, either with the help and support of a teacher or alone. The program lets students know where the good mental health sites in Australia are, and encourages them to share this information with peers, friends and family. The program outlines common mental health problems that young people have, suggests to them that they have the resources to share this information, and gives them a few basic ideas about how best to help someone else seek help if they need it.

When doing the workshop students have the opportunity to be leaders in their school and community by becoming a youth ambassador for good mental health. It creates the opportunity to de-stigmatise mental health as it encourages students to think and talk about mental health issues. It also encourages students to think about effective help-seeking, not only for themselves but for their family and friends as well.

Knowing about mental illness and seeking help early are the most important determinants in reducing the incidence of untreated mental illness. We know that most young people who develop a mental illness have it for many years before seeking help.

We have recently conducted a study which showed that 15-16 year olds who attended a 1 hour online yshareit YA workshop increased their knowledge about internet based mental health sites. Their peer group, who did not attend the workshop also showed an increase in sharing and recommending use of internet resources after our workshops.

### **Why schools are an important place to run the workshops.**

We know that young people are not used to seeking help, they often don't want to talk to adults about their issues, they think that they should be able to sort problems out themselves, or don't trust that others will listen to them or take them seriously. Sometimes they are not aware they have a mental health issue.

Adults are a vital link in helping young people get the help they need. While parents are very important, teachers are also important in helping students identify their problems and get help. Studies suggest this is because teachers act as 'gatekeepers' in identifying students' mental health needs. That means they are the ones who, by the formal and informal discussions, identify issues and refer students on. There are a number of programs in Australian and internationally that show that when teachers act as gatekeepers for students' mental health there are positive outcomes. So having a teacher who is informed about mental health resources, and knows the students in their classes well is really important.

### **Where this program fits into your school**

Research shows that mental health initiatives work best in schools when they are tailored to the schools needs. Common factors that seem to determine success in schools are programs that:

- focus on whole school implementation
- are supported by the school ethos/culture
- are used over a sustained period of time
- are supported by closer ties with mental health services.

The yshareit YA program is an easy to run program that doesn't require specialized support. It can help to promote good mental health in schools by using it in a way that suits your school. For example perhaps it could be used in home classes as way of opening up discussion about seeking help and giving help or it could be used in class as a platform for project work on mental health issues. You might choose to link it to other activities the school undertakes, such as Make a Difference day or mental health week. Your school may be involved in other healthy schools programs such as mindmatters or party safe and the yshareit YA project could be used in conjunction with these.

This interactive program facilitates discussion in the class room about common mental health scenarios and how and where to get help. It encourages sharing of this information with friends and family outside of the classroom. It may also increase the likelihood of students seeking help from adults.

#### **How to use the program.**

If you are already logged on to the [www.shareit.com](http://www.shareit.com) website take a few minutes to check out the linked web sites, or just float the mouse over the links and a summary of their content will pop up.

If you go to the Youth Ambassador site you will see there are 3 stages on the program which can be done in any order.

Stage 1 looks at common problems for young people. There are 5 scenarios that look at depression (Melanie), parental separation (Ben ), bullying (Tony), anxiety (Sarah) and drug use (Matt). We recommend that students work through 1-2 of these. It will get them thinking about how these common problems present in others, who might help them with these problems and how they can help themselves or others. If you are working through the program with your students you might want to focus on particular scenarios that are most important to your class age or current class issues.

Stage 2 looks at what young people can do to get information about good websites out to friends and family. It encourages them to brainstorm ideas, even if they are not planning to undertake the ideas, just to think about how much time, skill and money the ideas would take to carry out.

Stage 3 looks at improving communication skills when discussing mental health. Students can complete some fact finding activities and work through a hypothetical scenario deciding how they can best help a friend or family member with a problem. This stage focuses on ideas of open body language, listening, not giving advice, being open minded, not judging others, being supportive and helping them get help.

### Game

There is a game on the yshareit website which the students really enjoy! Sometimes this seems to be a good way to get the kids involved in the workshop.

### **Logistic/technical issues.**

It takes about 40mins to run through the 3 stages.

#### Computers.

To set up for this workshop you ideally need a computer per student.

#### Access to sites

You will need to check that the yshareit and linked websites are not blocked by your school server (we didn't have any trouble accessing the websites in Tasmanian schools in 2008 but as filters school use change it would be advisable to check this first).

#### Pop ups allowed

Pop ups are needed for the workshop. While in the program sometimes students will need to click on the 'allow pop ups bar' to continue. They should only have to do this once. This was the most common cause for students not being able to run parts of the program in our study.

#### Volume on the computer

Having the computers' volumes switched on is a bonus, as in stage 3 there are some sound effects that some students really like.

**We hope that helps you run the program.**

**Some feedback about how you use the YA program in your school and any school or class based projects that stem from it would really help us further develop the program.**

**Please contact**

yshareit@utas.edu.au