

The Girl from Plainville

Discussion guide for young people



The Girl from Plainville is based on the story of Conrad Roy and his relationship with girlfriend Michelle Carter.

The series follows the events leading up to the suicide death of Conrad Roy, the involvement of Michelle Carter, and her conviction of involuntary manslaughter. The court proceedings in 2017 gained significant media attention and was referred to as the ‘texting suicide case’.

Young people should be aware this series depicts suicidality, conversations that encourage self-harm and suicide, suicide method, court proceedings, and the bereavement of family and friends.

As this series was produced in the United States, headspace was not consulted during production, nor has it viewed the series.

headspace developed the following information that may be helpful for viewers of the show and the wider community. The information included aims to make you aware of some of the themes covered in the series, as well as give you information to choose whether it’s right for you to watch.

There is also information to support you to look after yourself and your friends, where to seek help, as well as how to have conversations with your friends and families about the issues addressed in the series.



Important points to remember

- It's likely a lot of people will be talking about the series. It's important to be respectful and informed. The information included here can help to keep people safe and connected.
- Some people may be distressed by some of the themes in the series, while others are not. This will depend on individual life experiences and current circumstances. It is important to be respectful of other people's experience.
- Remember, this is TV, dramatized for viewer engagement, designed to entertain. The characters and events may not be realistic representations for every viewer.

Tips for watching the show safely

- If you are likely to be affected by any of the themes covered in the show, it is important to consider whether you watch it. You might choose not to, which is ok. Reading about some of the themes in the show can help you decide.
- If you choose to watch, you could make a plan to look after yourself. This might be with the support of family and friends. Letting them know what you might struggle with, and how they can help is likely to be useful.
- Your support plan could include self-care options such as:
 - take breaks between episodes
 - check in with family and friends between episodes
 - get information from reputable sources about the themes covered in the show.
- Take time to look after yourself. Some self-care tips include: prioritising sleep, eating well, staying active, maintaining close relationships with family and friends, learning ways to handle hard times (journaling, listening to music, quiet time out, relaxation), reducing alcohol and other drug use, keep on doing the things in your life that are fun and important to you.

Where to get help

For immediate help contact:
triple zero (000) if it is an emergency

National 24/7 crisis services:

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467 or
suicidecallbackservice.org.au

beyondblue: 1300 224 636 or beyondblue.org.au

Additional youth support services include:

headspace: visit headspace.org.au to find your nearest centre or call eheadspace on 1800 650 890

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 kidshelpline.com.au

ReachOut: reachout.com

SANE Australia: 1800 187 263 sane.org

suicide

- Suicide is a complex issue with many contributing factors, including individual personality characteristics, coping styles, life history of experiences, current circumstances, support networks, and mental health difficulties.
- Unfortunately, thinking about suicide is more common than it should be. Despite this, it is still a serious sign that things are not ok. If you are experiencing suicidal thinking it is important to share this with a trusted adult.
- Thoughts of suicide can occur when life circumstances have been difficult and stressful, such as after a major loss or traumatic event.
- Some young people have thoughts of suicide when life seems unbearable and they want to end their pain. Most young people who have thoughts of suicide may not want to die, they just can't imagine another way out of what they are going through.
- It's important to know that young people can and DO get through these times in their lives. Most young people who've had thoughts of suicide find a way to work through them. With effective treatment, social support and time, many who have tried to end, or considered ending their lives can go on to live full, meaningful and productive lives.
- If you are experiencing thoughts of suicide, it's important that you seek support. It takes a lot of courage to reach out, but getting help can make a big difference to how quickly you can overcome these thoughts and get back on track with your life. Reach out to a trusted family member, carer, teacher, friend, an Elder, or a professional service.
- Seeking support helps. It helps people to understand:
 - how to stay safe
 - what things contribute to suicidal thinking
 - how to manage and overcome the things that contribute to suicidal thinking
 - how to manage suicidal thinking
 - what to do when things get really tough
 - how to create a life with meaning, purpose and fulfilment.
- Remember that thoughts about suicide are changeable. You don't need to act on thoughts about suicide. Like all thoughts, they can be challenged and they can come and go. It can be hard, but with practise you can learn how to react differently to them. For example, you can remind yourself that they are just thoughts and you don't need to act on them.



suicide

- Create a safety plan that includes warning signs, reasons to live, names of people who love you, distractions and self-care activities and places you can go to be safe. Even if things start to look better, it can help to have a safety plan in place and to look out for your warning signs. Some useful resources to help you create a safety plan:
 - The Beyond Blue [safety plan](#) and [Beyond Now app](#)
 - [Menzie's Stay Strong Plan](#), specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.
- Self-care is about finding healthy activities that make you feel better and less stressed. Some activities might include breathing exercises, mindfulness, hanging out with people you love, getting outdoors or listening to music. It's really up to you as everyone is different. For more ideas about self-care activities, see our tips for a healthy headspace.
- Thoughts of suicide should always be taken seriously – it can sometimes be very difficult to recognize early warning signs, or to predict when someone is really struggling. Sometimes people will say something like 'I feel like a burden to everyone', or they may have recently experienced difficult life events. That's why it's important to regularly check in with people and to develop close relationships and support networks, as it can help reduce the risk of suicidal thinking taking over.

If you, or someone you care about, are in crisis call triple zero (000). You can also go to your local hospital emergency department. Remember to stay with the person until they are able to access professional support.

If you're feeling overwhelmed and need to speak with someone now, contact:

- **Lifeline on 13 11 14**
- **the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 (if you're aged 15 years or older).**

More information

Learn How to Handle Tough Times to Help Your Headspace.

grief

- Grief happens after experiencing loss. There are many types of loss, such as a loss of a relationship through break-up, a family unit through separation, virginity or sexual freedom; loss of social standing; loss of a friendship group through bullying or rumours, or the loss of a loved one.
- The grief that happens after loss is different for everyone. It can be different in duration and intensity. Commonly it is incredibly painful. There are many ways a person can experience grief:
 - How you feel: shock, disbelief, numbness, pain, intense sadness, anger, resentment, regret, guilt, abandonment, anxiety or worry
 - What you think: Thinking about all of the details of the loss, imagining a different future or past, having flashbacks or re-experiencing episodes, thinking that things don't matter any more, or you don't care, having trouble concentrating or remembering things.
 - What you do: Some people find themselves doing a lot to keep busy, while others stop doing a lot of the things they normally do.
- If these things are happening for you, the first thing to know is that's ok. Grief can be a difficult time. Here are some things that can be useful in the grieving process:
 - Be ok with feeling down. Find someone you trust to share these feelings with.
 - Try to maintain as many of the routine parts of life as you can, e.g. school or work or study, keeping in touch with friends or family.
 - Take some time to prioritise looking after yourself. This can include: working on keeping good sleep habits, trying to eat well, getting some exercise, maintaining any hobbies, connecting with family and friends.
 - Connect with people you trust. Share what you're going through. Being heard and understood can help to navigate the really hard times. You might need to keep persisting if you don't have any luck first time.
- If the impact of grief includes the following, it might be time to reach out:
 - Ongoing major sleep troubles
 - Ongoing withdrawal from school or study, or major academic troubles.
 - Hopelessness about the future
 - Relationship troubles or conflict with friends and family
 - Doing things out of character; such as increased or more unpredictable use of alcohol and other drugs, or sexual behaviour.

bullying

- Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, and/or social behaviour by one or more people towards someone with an intention to cause fear, distress or harm.
- Bullying is not just ‘playing around’ or harmless fun. Experiencing bullying can have serious immediate and long-term consequences, and increase the risk of developing mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.
- Bullying can take many forms. It can be:
 - physical (e.g., hurting people or their property)
 - verbal (e.g., insults / teasing or threatening others),
 - and/or relational (e.g. excluding people or spreading rumours).
- Bullying can occur in many different environments: face-to-face, over the phone or online (cyberbullying). Cyberbullying can be particularly difficult as it can happen anonymously, 24 hours a day.
- Bullying is highly contextual and dynamic. The same person can be a bully, bystander or victim. Each of these different roles has a negative impact on mental health and wellbeing, and can increase the risk of experiencing mental health problems.
- Those involved in bullying, as both a victim and perpetrator, are at the greatest risk of self-harm and suicide.
- Although not all people who experience bullying develop thoughts or feelings about suicide, people involved in bullying, including the victim and perpetrator, are at a greater risk of self-harm and suicide. This does not mean that bullying causes suicide. Instead, it suggests that bullying may be one of a number of major life challenges that contributes to distress, and may be a precipitating factor in some circumstances when accompanied by a number of other risk factors.

What do I do if I’m being bullied?

Face-to-face:

- Stay calm and try not to get upset or angry. This can be what the bully wants you to do.
- Don’t fight back. It can make the situation worse, or you can get blamed for starting trouble or get hurt.
- Try to ignore it and walk away calmly.
- If the person bullying tries to block you, be firm and clear. Tell them to stop.
- Get away from the situation as soon as possible and tell a trusted adult what has happened straight away.

Online:

- Don’t respond to people cyberbullying.
- Talk to your parents, teacher or trusted adult about what’s happening.
- Keep evidence of what is sent to you – emails, texts, instant messages and comments on social media. Give them to a trusted adult.
- Block the people bullying online.
- **If bullying continues and you feel afraid or threatened, report to the eSafety Commissioner or the police.**



headspace would like to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First People and Traditional Custodians. We value their cultures, identities, and continuing connection to country, waters, kin and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and are committed to making a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, by providing services that are welcoming, safe, culturally appropriate and inclusive.



headspace is committed to embracing diversity and eliminating all forms of discrimination in the provision of health services. headspace welcomes all people irrespective of ethnicity, lifestyle choice, faith, sexual orientation and gender identity.



headspace centres and services operate across Australia, in metro, regional and rural areas, supporting young Australians and their families to be mentally healthy and engaged in their communities.

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