

An introduction to HEEADDESSS

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HEEADESSS-what is it?

Tool for:

- Communication
 - An interview prompt
 - An opportunity to develop a relationship and rapport
- Holistic assessment
 - A way to explore Anna's life
- Psych-social assessment
 - Risks and strengths
- A guide to possible future interventions

HEEADSSS-why and where?

Designed mid 1980s by General Practitioner in US

Standard clinic assessment wasn't working for YP

Flexible tool with +++ variations

Can be used anywhere

ED, clinic, ward, GP etc

In person, questionnaire in advance

Paeds and adult environments

HEEADSSS

Home

Education and employment

Eating

Activities

Drugs

Sexuality

Suicide and depression

Safety (savagery)

HEEADSSS interview tips

- See young person on their own
- Check understanding of confidentiality
- Interactive rather than interrogative
 - Be interested!
- Listen carefully and check language usage
- For sensitive issues take 'third person' approach
- Respect the young person's concerns & points of view

HEEADSSS

- Open-ended questions
- No 'standard' questions
- Avoid assumptions
- Not superficial-takes time
- Doesn't have to be 'completed' in 1 session

HEEADSSS interview tips

- Go with the flow and follow their lead-doesn't have to be done strictly in order. If they want to talk about something, if they raise a concern, explore it-just remember to cover all areas
- Doesn't have to be done in one sitting
- Can be part of an MDT assessment
- Practice!
 - Find the language you're comfortable with

Getting started-setting the scene

- What are you comfortable with?
 - What kind of mood are they in?
 - What kind of mood are you in?
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- 'I need to ask you some questions...'
 - 'I'd like to find out a bit more about you to see if there's anything we can help you'
 - 'As part of your appointment I'm going to undertake a HEEADDESSS Assessment'

HEEADSSS - Home

- Who lives with YP ? Where? What is neighbourhood like?
- Own room or shared?
- What are relationships like at home?
- What do parents/carers do for living?
- Any recent moves?
- New people in home environment?
- Ever run away/thought of running away? (What stopped you?)
- Is there someone you would talk to at home if you were worried about something? (Who?)

Education

- Likes/dislikes school ? Performance?
- Favourite subjects, worst subjects?
- Likes/doesn't like teachers?
- Suspensions/dropping out of lessons?
- Do hospital appointments have an impact?
- Changes in school?
- Further education/career goals?

Eating

- How much exercise in an average week?
- Anything you do you like and not like about your body?
- Any recent changes in weight?
- Worries about weight? How often?
- Dieted in the last year? How / how often?
- Anything else to manage weight?

- Does it ever seem as though your eating is out of control?
- Have you ever made yourself throw up on purpose to control your weight?
- Have you ever taken diet pills?
- What would it be like if you gained (lost) 4 kg?

Activities

- Fun with peers? When/ where?
- Activities with clubs or family?
- Sports-regular exercise?
- Hobbies –other home activities?
- Reading for fun/TV/Computer games?

Drugs

- Use by peers?
- Use by young person (tobacco, vaping, alcohol)?
- Amounts, frequency, patterns?

Sexuality

- Degree and types of sexual experience?
 - Orientation?
 - Number of partners?
 - Contraception and knowledge of STDs
 - Comfort with sexual activity
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- *‘Are you aware if any of your friends are sexually active? Is this something that you’re interested in?’*

Suicide and depression

- Sleep disorders?
- Appetite/eating behaviour changes?
- Hopeless/helpless feelings?
- Self harm/suicide attempts?
- Suicidal ideation?
- Affect in interview?

Safety

- Is there violence in your school or neighbourhood?
- Are you aware of anyone who has been picked on / bullied?
- Have you ever been seriously injured? How?
- Do you always wear a seatbelt in the car?
- Have you ever ridden with a driver who was drunk / high?
- Do you use safety equipment for sports and activities?
- Is there any violence in your home? Does this ever get physical?

Safety

- Is there violence in your school or neighbourhood?
- Have you ever been picked on / bullied?
- Have you ever been physically or sexually abused?
- Have you ever been in a car / motorcycle accident?
- Involved in physical fights?
- Do you ever carry a knife or gun or other weapon to protect yourself?
- *'Are you aware of any bullying in your school?'*

Closing

- Discuss how you will follow up
 - Actions
 - Next time
- Revisit some of the positive things you've identified
- Thank them

Truth or lie?

We are often asked: "How can we trust what teenagers say about drug use or sexual activity? Aren't they lying?" Certainly, youths as well as adults are known to underestimate or misreport alcohol and drug use. Occasionally, teens even overreport (if you are going to be "bad," be the "baddest"!).

In the end, it does not matter. In our experience, if we establish good rapport, we can get a good idea of which teens are having psychosocial difficulty. It does not matter if we ascertain and precisely quantify every risky activity. HEEADSSS is a screening tool. We fully expect to follow up over time, which will clarify the situation. The important point is to establish communication and demonstrate your willingness to discuss sensitive issues.

Resources

- RCPCH Young People's Health Special Interest Group (YPSIG) app – free to download here: <https://app.appinstitute.com/heedss>
- HEADS-ED assessment tool: <http://www.heads-ed.com/en/headsed/HEADSED Tool p3751.html>
- Goldenring JM, Rosen DS (2004) Getting into adolescent heads: An essential update Contemporary Pediatrics 21:64
- [HEEDSSS Assessment learning video resource - Youth health and wellbeing \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.nsw.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing/young-people/health-and-wellbeing/heedss)