



What is the Healthy Eating Active Living Matters (HEALing Matters) program?

HEALing Matters is a Victorian Government funded online training package and knowledge exchange platform for foster and kinship carers. Developed by health and psychology researchers at the Health and Social Care Unit, Monash University, the program is based on extensive end-user, community service organisations and stakeholder engagement. The primary aim of HEALing Matters is to improve the nutrition, physical activity habits, wellbeing and life skills of young people living in foster and kinship care.

The HEALing Matters program uses a trauma informed philosophy to guide your understanding of the link between healthy lifestyle behaviours of the young people you care for and improved physical, cognitive, social (interpersonal) and emotional outcomes. In doing so, HEALing Matters moves beyond a solely behavioural approach to health and wellbeing and recognises that food and physical activity can be powerful ways of demonstrating trust, predictability and the provision of support and care that is attuned to the needs of the young people. It is through this approach that HEALing Matters is seen as foundational in helping young people develop the necessary life skills required before leaving care.

The HEALing Matters program provides you with a valuable professional development opportunity designed to help you not only improve the eating and physical activity habits of the young people you care for but also with other important factors that form part of the day-to-day roles and responsibilities of foster and kinship carers. These include how to respond to pain-based behaviour, develop and maintain strong relationships, create a consistent and productive house environment through shaping routines, and how to avoid burnout by taking care of oneself.

In addition, from breakfast to lunch, dinner and snacks, we have you covered when it comes to healthy and nutritious recipes that are easy and won't break the budget. HEALing Matters also includes a wide range of easy-to-use and practical resources, including shopping tricks and tips, where to find local sporting opportunities, how to encourage incidental exercise, and much more! There is also a discussion board where you can share your thoughts and experiences with other carers, including what you have learned or what you might be having difficulty with.



The online training and knowledge exchange platform involves the completion of six core modules. In response to stakeholder feedback, eight new modules have been added to the HEALing Matters Training.



Module 1. This domain covers strategies to help you build a reciprocal relationship with a young person, where you really get to know the young person and, in turn, they get to know and trust you. Being able to offer personalised care and knowing what is right for a particular young person, will help create a space to explore healthy lifestyle behaviours, non-judgementally.



Module 2. This domain covers strategies to help you set consistent routines and expectations. Routines that are predictable are important for development, providing a feeling of safety and security. They can also help a young person to learn how to receive care, and how to show care to others.



Module 3. How we 'do food' and the routines and rituals that this involves interlinks with our values, and how we care for others and ourselves. This domain covers strategies that will help you use food to create a homely, family atmosphere, and help young people learn about their relationship with food.



Module 4. Participation in both structured and unstructured physical and/or recreation activities provides an everyday opportunity to help young people feel connected, to form new relationships and gain a sense of belonging. This domain covers strategies to help you look for opportunities to help young people build physical activity into their everyday routines.



Module 5. This domain covers strategies to help you identify the health care needs of the young people in your care, as well as behaviour change techniques to help you encourage healthy lifestyle behaviours. In this module, we provide you with the facts, then show you different ways to help achieve a healthy living environment.



Module 6. This domain covers strategies to help you reflect on the impact of a young person's behaviour on your own thoughts and feelings and will help you identify opportunities to maintain your own physical, mental and emotional health. More specifically, Module 6 was designed to help foster and kinship carers deal with the stress and challenging interactions they often face.

Eight additional modules

