



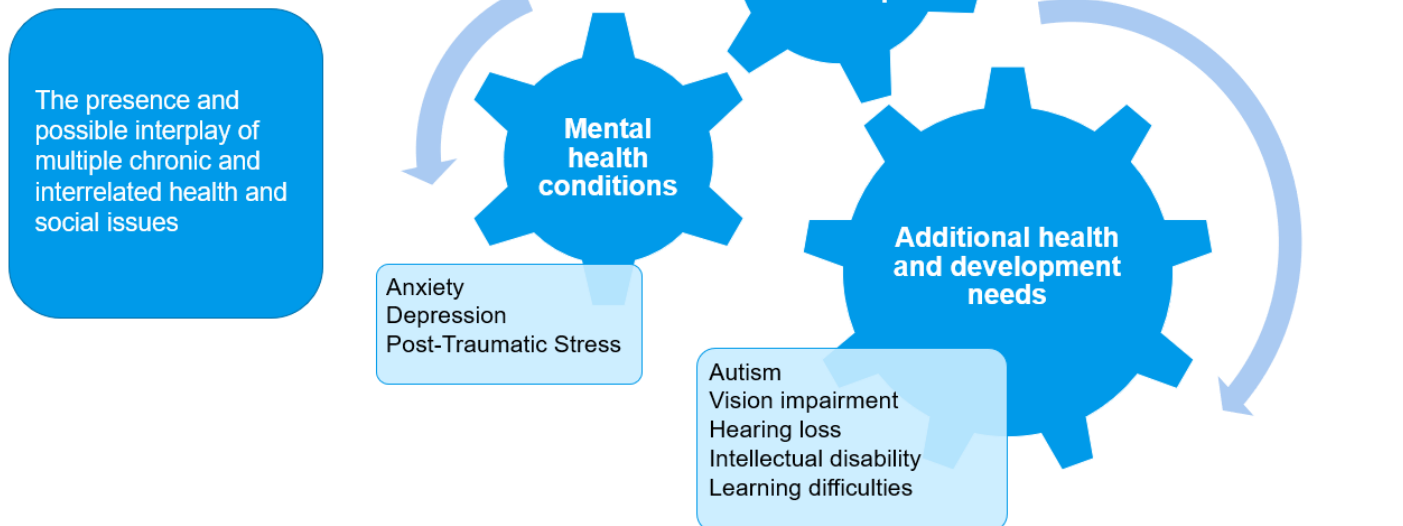
*Supporting
children with
complex needs*

Quick Summary of Key Concepts

What are complex needs?

- The term complex needs describes a collection of needs a child may have due to the presence and possible interplay of multiple chronic and interrelated health and social issues.
- Chronic and interrelated health and social issues may be associated with additional health and development needs such as physical and intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties.
- Issues may be related to mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder, along with adversity and hardship such as trauma, financial stress or a family member experiencing a mental health condition
- A child's complex needs will depend on their individual situation and the various health and social issues at play. These can present in many different ways in a child's learning community, such as these listed here
- Each issue in isolation may not be complex but it's the interaction between these that grows complexity and becomes more challenging for educators and support services to negotiate and respond to.

What are complex needs?



What role do I play as an educator?

- An educator's role is to understand a child's individual needs and respond appropriately to support learning and wellbeing
- Educators are not expected to make a clinical diagnosis or provide clinical support
- We recognise it can be challenging to balance responsibilities, knowing when to step in, when to refer internally, and when to seek external supports
- It is important to ask for support by your leadership team and seek advice as required by community and mental health services
- The [Be You BETLS observation tool](#) can be used to assist educators to gather and document information and observations about children and young people, and reflect on what action can be taken, including informing any relevant staff within your setting as a first point of call
- Key consideration for educators include:
 - Instructional support
 - Routines and rhythm
 - Triggers and fight, flight or freeze reactions
 - Behaviour specific praise
 - Emotional awareness and regulation
 - Attachment and connectedness.

Find out more about practical strategies in the recording.

Attendee Questions and Answers

Q: Is it best to only give learners one strategy or a few when in the 'red zone'?

A: One strategy is always best for the red zone. This strategy can be changed from time to time, but a learner needs to have the opportunity to learn, practice, have this approach modelled by educators and to receive praise from educators for their use of the approach. Depending on their age, children will need to be supported in their use of the approach because being in the red zone means that a child will be less able to reason and problem-solve in the moment. Therefore, catching children in the orange zone, or identifying the triggers before they leave the green zone, is always best.

Q: Where can I find an example of a visual scale or timetable?

A: Examples can be found through Boardmaker (<http://www.spectronics.com.au/>).

Q: Are there any suggested practices for high school educators specifically?

A: During adolescence, the same approaches of being aware of triggers from peers and family, routines and consistency, collaboration and choice, and attachments and relationships are all relevant. In terms of triggers, the triggers can be more diverse and occur often over the weekend or in the home which can then have implications for when the child returns to school. Triggers can also occur more often in the school yard with peers rather than in the classroom with teachers, so a collaborative approach with other professionals, family members and the young person is a good approach for identifying the triggers. For adolescents, unconditional positive regard is a great approach to show the young person that you are consistent and predictable and that you will regard them highly regardless of their mistakes.

Q: What are some book titles you suggest for teaching children about different emotions and emotional regulation?

A:

- My Many Colored Days by Dr. Seuss
- When I'm Feeling by Trace Moroney
- The Way I Feel by Janan Cain
- The Panicosaurus, The Red Beast, The Green-Eyed Goblin and The Disappointment Dragon by K.I. Al-Ghani

Q: Are there programs I can implement in my setting to support children with complex needs?

A: Implementing a formal program is one strategy your early learning service or school can use to support children and young people's social and emotional learning and promote positive mental health.

In Australia, there are hundreds of different programs offered by many different organisations. We know that choosing the right program can often be difficult.

The Programs Directory is a searchable database of external programs, providing key details about the program delivery, duration, and cost – which aims to help you make decisions about choosing the right program for your service or school.

Visit: <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides/about-programs-directory>

Attendee comments shared

- “When we have students who have triggers we need to give them a 'Time Out' card that they can use to take a break, go to the counsellor or just sit quietly while they cool down.”
- “I have a temperature scale linked to the zones for my boy with complex needs so he is able to say I am a 10, and then he has strategies that work when he is at that level to calm him down.”
- “S-T-A-R is a good tool.”
- “Bounce Back has lots of books on emotions.”
- “Julia Cooke is an author that writes great books on behaviours.”
- “At the last school I did a placement at, they were in the process of creating a sensory room for students to go to relax. They were collecting all sorts of textured items like carpets and cushions!”
- “Follow #schoolcouncillorlibrary on Instagram for good books about emotions and behaviour”
- “We used ‘Zones of Regulation’ and it is helping establish emotion awareness with children, and families are using them at home too.”

[Links to additional information, resources and references from the webinar](#)

Be You resources

- Be You Professional Learning <https://beyou.edu.au/learn>
- Be You Wellbeing Tools <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides>
- BETLS observation tool <https://beyou.edu.au/resources/tools-and-guides>