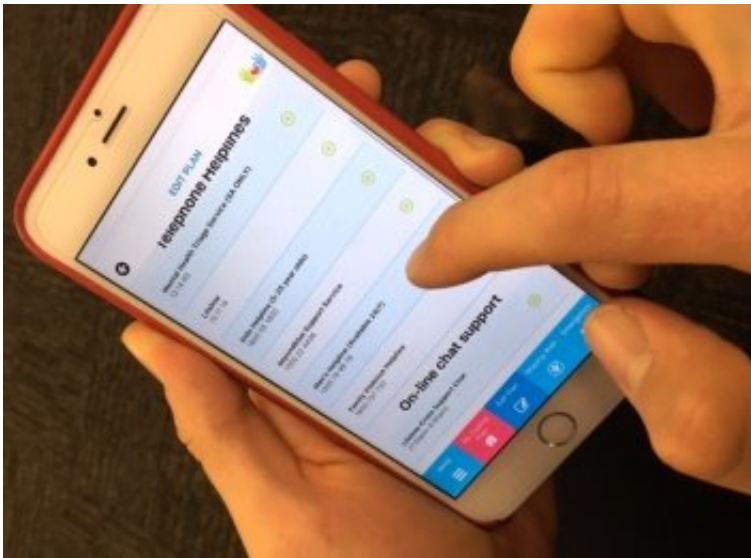


# New app supports a plan to cope and a strategy for suicide prevention

October 3 2017

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Credit: University of South Australia

The University of South Australia has released a new mobile application designed to help people cope with stress on a day-to-day basis.

The new app, 'My Coping Plan,' developed by UniSA Senior Lecturer Dr Helen Stallman, allows users to create, store and update a personalised coping plan on their mobile device.

Dr Stallman says the benefit of the new app is that it allows people to stick to a personalised coping plan.

"We all cope. However, in times of stress, anxiety or distress, it can be difficult to think clearly or make healthy decisions," Dr Stallman says.

"We may automatically resort to unhealthy coping strategies, such as emotional eating, drinking, yelling, self-criticism, or even suicidal thoughts.

"Our goal with this app is to make a coping plan with healthy strategies that is easily accessible and user-friendly, to support people to stick to the strategies they have made to feel calmer and in control.

"Our research tells us that coping is an important factor in suicide prevention. This app gives individuals the ability to devise and stick to a plan to manage their stress, anxiety and distress."

The plan is broken down into five categories - Calming down, Things I can do on my own, People I can spend time with, People I can talk with and Professionals who support me.

Users can manually enter strategies into their plan or select from a list of suggested strategies, such as walking the dog, exercising, contacting close friends and family, or seeking professional support.

Users also have the option to share their coping plan with their health professionals or people who support them.

The app is based on Dr Stallman's 'coping planning' approach to dealing with acute distress and suicidal ideation, developed in conjunction with Dr Tony Arklay and Dr John Bennett from The University of Queensland.

"The traditional approach to suicide prevention is safety planning, which commonly includes be alert for warning signs of a crisis," she says.

"We have moved to a strengths-focussed approach that helps people understand why they may be using unhealthy coping strategies and encourages them to look at what they can do to cope better."

In addition to people with mental illnesses, she says the app will be beneficial for anyone having trouble coping in stressful circumstances such as year 12 students who are about to commence their final exams, commonly a highly stressful time in their lives.

She says the app is suitable for everyone - children and adults.

'My Coping Plan' is now available for free download from the [Apple Store](#) or [Google Play](#).

The development of this app was funded by '[thedesk](#),' a web-based program helping students to be healthy and successful.

It was developed by the UniSA in partnership with consumers and [health professionals](#).

Provided by University of South Australia

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