SIX WAYS IN

for the trusted adults

Openers for something she may not have the words for yet. **The most commonly missed signal is freeze** and from the outside it looks exactly like not bothering.

1 "YOU HAVEN'T SEEMED LIKE YOU LATELY. WHAT'S GOING ON?"

NAME WHAT YOU'VE NOTICED - not what you think it is

She doesn't need the right words and neither do you. Describing what you've seen, not sleeping, not eating, not herself — is enough to open it. Marny's advice is to get curious, not to arrive with a diagnosis.

2 "IS THIS NOT WANTING TO, OR NOT BEING ABLE TO?"

THE ONE TO GET RIGHT - freeze looks exactly like laziness

Fight, flight, and freeze. Marny says freeze shows up as avoiding tasks, procrastinating, sleeping all day, losing interest in things she used to love and that most adults read it as laziness and tell her to get out of bed. It is the most commonly missed signal in the episode.

3 "WHAT WOULD HAVE TO COME OFF YOUR PLATE FOR THIS TO FEEL DOABLE?"

HER MENTAL LOAD IS REAL - it's just more invisible than yours

Friendships, school, ATAR, sport, her future, relationships, you, homework, exams. Maddie's conclusion after sitting with these girls: it's the same load adults carry, except nobody counts it, because we expect it of them.

4 "WHAT DO YOU NEED TO BE YOUR BEST SELF?" – THEN PUT IT IN THE DIARY.

REST IS SCHEDULED, NOT FOUND- make it as fixed as the dentist

Marny: Life will never offer you the time. She wants downtime ritualised, the way elite athletes build recovery into a training schedule. Boredom is not wasted time, it's where her brain does its resetting and hands her the solutions.

5 "TELL ME AND I'LL JUST LISTEN. I WON'T TRY TO FIX IT."

THE HARDEST ONE - and the one she most needs

Marny has teenagers herself and says she wouldn't win any parenting trophy. Her observation: they usually already have the answers, and what they're short of is someone who'll listen instead of talking at them.

6 "SHALL WE BOTH PUT OUR PHONES IN THE KITCHEN FOR AN HOUR?"

GO FIRST- this one fails if it's a punishment

Every gap that used to be downtime is now filled, and Marnie admits she's seen things on her own feed she can't unsee. Maddie's version: the less she's on her phone, the less she wants to be. Doing it together makes it a household thing.

WORTH ACTING ON, NOT WAITING OUT

Signals Marny would want looked at rather than jut being put down to a phase

- Sleep broken night after night - can't get off to sleep, or waking repeatedly
- Avoiding everything, sleeping all day, losing interest in what she loved. Freeze, not laziness
- Physical symptoms with no clear cause: nausea, gut trouble, racing heart
- Exhaustion that never lifts. This isn't simply being a teenager
- Replaying conversations for days and not being able to put them down
- Panic attacks - breathlessness, palpitations, the room going in and out. They do subside.
- Loneliness isn't depression, but left long enough it can turn into it
- Low mood that reliably follows drinking alcohol, which is a depressant

Lifeline — 13 11 14 · 24/7 · or text 0477 13 11 14
headspace — 1800 650 890 · 3pm–10pm daily · ages 12–25
Beyond Blue — 1300 22 4636 · 24/7
You don't have to be in crisis to ring any of them.

This is designed as a conversation starter, **not clinical advice.** If you're unsure whether something warrants help, that uncertainty is itself a good reason to ring — headspace takes calls from family seeking support about a young person, not only from the young person.