Online Self-Help Programs

- **MoodGYM - www.moodgym.anu.edu.au**
  Structure
  MoodGYM is a highly structured program that integrates mental health literacy, assessments, self-help strategies, and exercises in five modules. Users of MoodGYM work through the program in a set linear sequence and are required to complete some quizzes in each module in order to continue. At the end of each module, there is a content summary and a graph showing the scores on each symptom quiz. The program records and displays scores each time a quiz is completed and so the user can track their progress over the program. At the completion of the program, the user is presented with a completion certificate that certifies the user as 'unwarped'.

  Interventions
  MoodGYM primarily provides cognitive behaviour therapy skills for depression and also offers activity scheduling, relaxation therapy, and a simple problem solving technique. Although it was designed to focus on depressive symptoms, the interventions have been shown to be effective in preventing and reducing anxiety symptoms as well (see MoodGYM Research).

  Pros and Cons
  Some users enjoy the structured learning environment of MoodGYM and the rapid introduction of cognitive self-help strategies. Other users may prefer to freely choose between different types of self-help skills and between modules designed for a wider range of specific symptoms. For these users, e-couch may be more suitable as it allows people to choose between a wider range of self-help options and provides initial psycho-educational material to help them make informed choices between the options.

- **e-couch - www.ecouch.anu.edu.au**
  Structure
  e-couch is a dynamic, open-ended program that currently provides five discrete sub-programs – Depression, Generalised Anxiety Disorder, Social Anxiety, Divorce/ relationship breakdown and Grief/ loss. Each subprogram begins with an 'armchair' which provides information about the area of concern and an overview of the evidence base for key interventions. When the user has worked through the armchair, they progress to the 'couch' in which they can choose amongst the self-help toolkits tailored to these five conditions/situations.

Users of e-couch are required to complete some quizzes after registration and this data is used to suggest a specific program to the user (for example, the depression program will be suggested to those with high depression scores), but people can freely choose which programs to work with. There are also quizzes during/after the 'armchair' section. With the exception of the Divorce and Social Anxiety programs, users are able to access the toolkits in any order that they wish. A 'Congratulations!' page appears once the user has accessed all the toolkits in a program; otherwise, e-couch has no obvious 'completion' point.

  Interventions
  e-couch provides mental health literacy and interventions tailored for depression, generalised anxiety disorder, social anxiety, divorce and relationship breakdown, and grief and loss. A sixth program for panic is currently under development. e-couch interventions include cognitive behaviour therapy, interpersonal psychotherapy, problem solving, physical activity, relaxation therapy, exposure therapy, attention practice, social skills training, and anger management.

  Pros and Cons
  Some people enjoy the greater diversity of material within e-couch and the freedom of movement within e-couch that allows them to choose the program and toolkits that they would like to access. MoodGYM might be preferred by people who prefer a more structured, linear approach that moves immediately into interventions.

Who are the programs suitable for?

- MoodGYM was originally designed as a prevention program for young people between 15 to 25 years of age. MoodGYM characters and scenarios reflect this initial design, so some of the examples may be more relevant to young people than to older age groups. However, the MoodGYM program has been found to be effective in reducing symptoms of depression in adults (see MoodGYM Research).
- e-couch was designed for a broader age demographic and the characters and scenarios are designed to relate more generally to a range of adult users. However, pilot tests with secondary school students have also demonstrated acceptability with young people.