



Wellbeing

What is good mental health?

Looking after your mental health is not something we should just do if we are struggling, or feeling low, anxious or stressed. It's actually something we should think about all the time and really invest in, just like with our physical health.

Staying on top of our mental wellbeing is good for us now but also helps us deal manage difficult times in the future. Over time, it can also reduce our risk of physical health problems.

There are lots of things we can do to look after our mental health and wellbeing every day – make a start with the [5 Ways to Wellbeing](#).

Five ways to wellbeing

connect

Talk with someone in your family or group of friends and really listen to what he or she has to say. Perhaps ask about something that happened at work, at a club or perhaps how he or she is feeling today and why that is.

Be Active

Do something active with your family or friends like going for a walk or playing a game that gets you moving.

Take notice

Take a bit of time to notice things around you, perhaps have a mindful moment, notice what you can see, hear, smell, feel. Perhaps notice what the people around you are up to, how they are feeling or acting.

Keep Learning

We're learning new things all of the time. See if you can find out about something new, or an interesting fact, perhaps learn a new skill.

give

Think of an opportunity to show kindness to someone else. Being kind to others actually makes you feel good so it's a kindness for you as much as the person on the receiving end!



Everyone feels low or down from time to time. It does not always mean something is wrong. Feeling low is common after distressing events or major life changes, but sometimes periods of low mood happen for no obvious reason.

Low Mood

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Top tips to improve your mood



Challenge unhelpful thoughts

The way we think affects the way we feel. Watch this video to learn how to challenge unhelpful thoughts:

[Video: Reframing unhelpful thoughts](#)



Increase helpful activity

Low mood can stop us doing important or enjoyable activities. Try listing these things and doing some each day. Start with easier ones and, as you progress, your mood should improve.



Talk to someone

Trusted friends, family and colleagues, or contacting a helpline, can help us when we are struggling. Watch this video for more ideas:

[Video: Social connection](#)

If you're having thoughts that life's not worth living, or you're self-harming or thinking about doing so, it's important to tell someone. You do not have to struggle alone – [urgent help and support](#) is available right now if you need it, or ring **0800 051 6171**



You may feel tired, lacking confidence, frustrated, angry and worried. But a low mood will often pass after a couple of days or weeks – and there are some easy things you can try and small changes you can make that will usually help improve your mood.

More top tips to improve your mood

Low Mood

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Get better sleep

Low moods can make us feel tired. Tiredness can also have a bad impact on our mood. Watch the video on tips to improve your sleep.

[Video: Tips for sleeping better](#)



Boost your mood with music

Music can be a powerful way to change our feelings. See if you can create a playlist to listen to when feeling low – start with slower choices and gradually move to faster, uplifting songs. This can help your mood to gradually lift too.



A little activity every day

If you can, doing little things every day to be more active – like taking the stairs instead of a lift, or standing up to stretch your legs every so often when sitting down for long periods – can really lift your mood.

[Better Health: Get active](#)

If you're having thoughts that life's not worth living, or you're self-harming or thinking about doing so, it's important to tell someone. You do not have to struggle alone – [urgent help and support](#) is available right now if you need it, or ring **0800 051 6171**



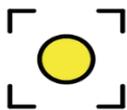
Feeling anxious?

Anxiety is something everyone experiences at times, and feeling anxious is a perfectly natural reaction to some situations.

Top tips to cope with anxiety

Anxiety

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Shift your focus

Some people find relaxation, mindfulness or breathing exercises helpful. They reduce tension and focus our awareness on the present moment.

[Try NHS-recommended relaxation exercises](#)



Challenge your anxious thoughts

Tackling unhelpful thoughts is one of the best things we can do to feel less anxious. Watch the video to find out more.

[Video: Reframing unhelpful thoughts](#)



Make time for worries

If your worry feels overwhelming and takes over your day, setting specific "worry time" to go through your concerns each day can help you to focus on other things. Watch the video for more advice.

[Video: Tackle your worries](#)



Feeling anxious?

Sometimes feelings of anxiety can be constant, overwhelming or out of proportion to the situation and this can affect your daily life.

The good news is there are plenty of things you can try to help cope with anxiety.

Anxiety

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More top tips to cope with anxiety



Understand your anxiety

Try keeping a diary of what you are doing and how you feel at different times to help identify what's affecting you and what you need to take action on.



Face the things you want to avoid

It's easy to avoid situations, or rely on habits that make us feel safer, but these can keep anxiety going. By slowly building up time in worrying situations, anxious feelings will gradually reduce and you will see these situations are OK.



Look at the bigger picture

If we feel anxious about a situation, we might get stuck on the details and stop seeing things rationally. Thinking about your problem or situation from someone else's view can make it easier to come up with a plan. What advice would you give to a friend or family member?



Panic is the most severe form of anxiety. During a panic attack, you get a rush of intense mental and physical symptoms. It can come on very quickly and for no apparent reason. Panic attacks can be very frightening and distressing and can involve a racing heartbeat, dizziness, chest pain, feeling disconnected from your body, trembling, and shortness of breath.

Panic

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Ways to cope with panic

Breathing exercises

If you're breathing quickly during a panic attack, doing a breathing exercise can ease your other symptoms. Try this:



- breathe in as slowly, deeply and gently as you can, through your nose
- breathe out slowly, deeply and gently through your mouth
- some people find it helpful to count steadily from one to five on each in-breath and each out-breath
- close your eyes and focus on your breathing
- You should start to feel better in a few minutes. You may feel tired afterwards.



Although panic attacks are frightening, they're not dangerous. An attack will not cause you any physical harm, and it's unlikely you'll be admitted to hospital if you have one.

Panic

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More top tips to cope with panic



Understand your panic

Panic attacks always pass and the symptoms are not a sign of anything harmful happening. Remind yourself that the physical symptoms you are experiencing are caused by anxiety.



Confront your fear

If you don't run away from what you are scared of, you're giving yourself a chance to discover that nothing bad is going to happen.



Look at the bigger picture

Ride out your panic attack. Try to keep doing things. If possible, it's important to try to remain in the situation until your panic has reduced so you learn over time that you can cope in that situation.

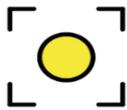


Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a type of anxiety which involves experiencing repeating thoughts, images or feelings that are distressing. Sometimes when our mind is filled with upsetting thoughts, we can try to take actions (rituals) that will bring us relief and make the thoughts go away; these actions can become compulsions where we might believe that if we don't do them, something bad will happen to us.

OCD

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Top tips to cope with OCD



Notice what is going on

It's important to recognise when your behaviour is making you feel worse. Knowing that what you are doing is increasing your anxiety, rather than helping it, is the first step to overcoming OCD.



Talk to someone you trust

Talking about how you feel is the first step towards getting better. It might be difficult to explain, but people who care about you will want to support you. You could try talking to a relative, teacher, friend, counsellor or helpline.



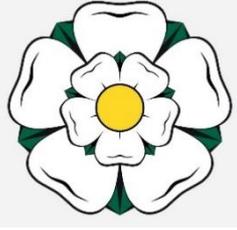
Find a distraction that works for you

Whenever you feel like you are getting anxious, or about to do something you don't want to do, find a distraction. You could try listening to music, texting a friend or going for a walk.



Try self-help resources

[OCD-UK](#) offers a range of self-help resources you can try based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).



OCD

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It's important to realise that with OCD, often our compulsive habits or rituals end up making us feel worse. This is because once the ritual is finished, anxious thoughts come rushing back again, sometimes even more extreme. This is how some people get trapped in a cycle of doing the same action again and again, feeling unable to stop. OCD rituals can be obvious to other people (like checking if doors are locked) or they can happen inside your head (like counting things or trying to counteract negative thoughts with positive ones).

More tips to cope with OCD



OCD is not just about being tidy

OCD thoughts can come in all shapes and sizes and involve lots of different types of habits and rituals. They often revolve around things like danger, dirt and contamination, or worries around sexuality or religion. Some people feel guilty, or even ashamed of their thoughts. But it is common to have thoughts like these, and there is nothing to be ashamed of.



Try relaxation techniques

Stress and anxiety can make OCD worse. You can manage stress better through regularly practising relaxation and mindfulness techniques. You can [read more about mindfulness here](#)



Look after your physical health

Many people find exercise a challenge but it's important to find something that works for you – activities like yoga, swimming or walking can help improve your mood and reduce your stress levels. You can [read more about physical activity and mental health here](#).



Ways to help avoid self-harm

Finding ways to prevent or distract yourself from self-harm may help you get through a difficult moment. Many people who self-harm will eventually stop on their own. However, support and treatment is available if you need it to help address the underlying cause.

Self-Harm

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Try talking about your feelings to a friend, family member, trained volunteer or health professional. You could contact [Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org), call: 116 123 or email: jo@samaritans.org if you need someone to talk to.



Try working out if feeling a certain way leads to your self-harm – for example, when you're feeling sad or anxious you could try expressing that emotion in a safer way



Try waiting before you consider self-harm – distract yourself by going out for a walk, listening to music, or doing something else harmless that interests you; the need to self-harm may begin to pass over time



Try [calming breathing exercises](#) or other things you find relaxing to reduce feelings of anxiety



Write down your feelings – no one else needs to see it



Self-Harm

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Read about [mental health and wellbeing](#) – including help for common feelings such as stress, anxiety and depression



If you struggle with suicidal thoughts, it may help to make a safety plan to use if you need it – the [Staying Safe website](#) has a guide on how to make a safety plan



Search and download [mental health apps](#) from the NHS apps library – the free [distrACT app](#) gives you easy, quick and discreet access to information and advice about self-harm and suicidal thoughts

Some useful recommended websites

www.mind.org.uk

www.thesite.org/mental-health/self-harm

www.childline.org.uk/Explore/Self-harm

www.youngminds.org.uk



Self-Esteem

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What is self-esteem?

Self-esteem is the opinion we have of ourselves. When we have healthy self-esteem, we tend to feel positive about ourselves and about life in general. It makes us better able to deal with life's ups and downs. When our self-esteem is low, we tend to see ourselves and our life in a more negative and critical light. We also feel less able to take on the challenges that life throws at us.



Recognise what you're good at

We tend to enjoy doing the things we're good at, which can help boost your mood.



Start saying "no"

People with low self-esteem often feel they have to say yes to other people, even when they do not really want to. The risk is that you become overburdened, resentful, angry and depressed.



Learn to be assertive

One trick is to look at other people who act assertively and copy what they do. It's not about pretending you're someone you're not. It's picking up hints and tips from people you admire and letting the real you come out.



Self-Esteem

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What causes low self-esteem?

Low self-esteem often begins in childhood. Our teachers, friends, siblings, parents, and even the media send us positive and negative messages about ourselves.

For some reason, the message that you are not good enough is the one that stays with you. Perhaps you found it difficult to live up to other people's expectations of you, or to your own expectations. Stress and difficult life events, such as serious illness or a [bereavement](#), can have a negative effect on self-esteem.

Personality can also play a part. Some people are just more prone to negative thinking, while others set impossibly high standards for themselves.



Build positive relationships

Try to build relationships with people who are positive and who appreciate you.



Be kind to yourself

Being kind to yourself means being gentle to yourself at times when you feel like being self-critical.



Give yourself a challenge

We all feel nervous or afraid to do things at times. But people with healthy self-esteem do not let these feelings stop them trying new things or taking on challenges. Set yourself a goal, such as joining an exercise class or going to a social occasion. Achieving your goals will help to increase your self-esteem.





Stress can cause many different symptoms. It might affect how you feel physically, mentally and also how you behave.

Stress

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Top tips to deal with stress and burnout



Split up big tasks

If a task seems overwhelming and difficult to start, try breaking it down into easier chunks, and give yourself credit for completing them.



Allow yourself some positivity

Take time to think about the good things in your life. Each day, consider what went well and try to list 3 things you're thankful for.



Challenge your thoughts

The way we think affects the way we feel. Watch the video to learn how to challenge unhelpful thoughts.

[Video: Reframing unhelpful thoughts](#)



Talk to someone

Trusted friends, family and colleagues, or contacting a helpline, can help us when we are struggling. Watch our video for more ideas.

[Video: Social connection](#)



It's not always easy to recognise when stress is the reason you're feeling or acting differently.

More top tips to deal with stress and burnout



Be more active

Being active can help you to burn off nervous energy. It will not make your stress disappear, but it can make it less intense.

[Better Health: Home workout videos](#)



Plan ahead

Planning out any upcoming stressful days or events – a to-do list, the journey you need to do, things you need to take – can really help.





Stress is our bodies response to pressure. Many different situations or life events can cause stress. We all deal with stress differently. When we encounter stress, our body produces stress hormones that trigger a fight/flight/freeze response. Stress can be triggered when we experience something: new or unexpected, something that threatens our sense of self, or when we feel we have little control over a situation.

Top tips to deal with exam stress

Exam Stress

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Break revision into small chunks and make a plan

If your revision seems overwhelming and difficult to start, try breaking it down into easier chunks, and give yourself credit for completing them.



Get organised

Write down where your exams are and how long they are. It is also helpful to think about when and where you work the best when revising.



Praise yourself

As you write your exams, tell yourself that you know everything, you have revised and that you are doing well so far.



Keep things in perspective

Lots of people will tell you this, because it's true – exams aren't everything. Whatever happens in your exams, you can still be successful in life afterwards. So if you don't do as well as you'd hoped, try to keep things in perspective.



Stress can cause many different symptoms. It might affect how you feel physically, mentally and also how you behave.

Exam Stress

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More tips to deal with exam stress



Avoid bad habits

Don't set yourself over-ambitious goals. Nobody can revise 10 topics in one day so try to avoid setting up your day to be disappointed. Also, don't cut out all the enjoyment from your life as it is counterproductive to try and focus all the time without resting your brain by doing other activities.



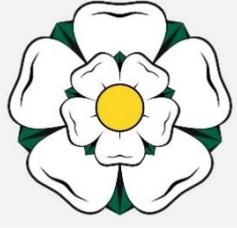
Get into some good habits

Take frequent breaks – we can only concentrate properly for 30-45 minutes at a time. When you do take a break, make sure you don't stay at your desk, you could go for a walk or even just make a cup of tea!



Work out the basics

Write down how the marks are allocated for your exams and how much you have to learn for each one. Don't expect to learn everything, but having in mind where you'll get the marks can help you prioritise revision.



Sleep benefits the brain and promotes attention, memory, and analytical thought. It makes thinking sharper, recognizing the most important information to consolidate learning. Sleep also facilitates [expansive thinking](#)² that can [spur creativity](#)³. Whether it's studying for a test, learning an instrument, or acquiring job skills, [sleep is essential for teens](#)⁴.

Sleep

Page 1 of 2

Top tips to get to sleep and sleep better



Keep regular sleep hours

Going to bed when you feel tired and getting up at roughly the same time helps teach your body to sleep better. Try to avoid napping where possible.



Create a restful environment

Dark, quiet and cool environments generally make it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep. Watch our video for tips on how to sleep better.

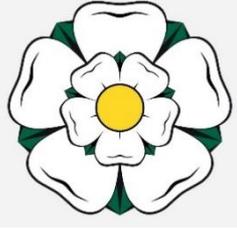
[Video: Tips for sleeping better](#)



Move more, sleep better

Being active can help you sleep better. These videos can get you going, but remember to avoid vigorous activity near bedtime if it affects your sleep.

[Better Health: Home workout videos](#)



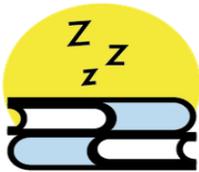
Given the importance of sleep for brain function, it's easy to see why teens who don't get enough sleep tend to suffer from [excessive drowsiness and lack of attention](#)⁵ that can [harm their academic performance](#)⁶.

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/teens-and-sleep>.

More top tips to get to sleep and sleep better

Sleep

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Confront sleeplessness

If you are lying awake unable to sleep, do not force it. Get up and do something relaxing for a bit, and return to bed when you feel sleepier.



Write down your worries

If you often lie awake worrying about tomorrow, set aside time before bed to make a list for the next day. This can help put your mind at rest.

[Video: Tackle your worries](#)



Put down the pick-me-ups

Caffeine and energy drinks can stop you falling asleep and prevent deep sleep. Try to cut out caffeine close to bedtime.



Some young people struggle with feeling overly restless, energised and impatient as well as being distracted and disorganised with difficulty listening and concentrating. This can be effectively managed through medication, exercise, stress management and healthy nutrition.

Poor concentration / hyperactivity

Page 1 of 2

Top tips to improve poor concentration and hyperactivity:



Chunk homework

Break homework down into stages, by focusing on only one topic, and then one part of the topic. Set a timer, keep it short and have targets for each period of time with short breaks.



Develop a good sleep routine

Try to go to sleep at the same time each night and avoid napping during the day. Having no screens in the bedroom and keeping your room quiet and dark can improve sleep quality and concentration.



Healthy eating

Avoiding caffeine can reduce the risk of hyperactivity and sleep issues. Eating a balanced diet including breakfast and avoiding too much sugar and carbohydrates such as pasta or bread can help maintain better concentration.



There is usually not one simple answer to improve concentration and hyperactivity difficulties, but often it is a combination of strategies, implemented over a long period of time, which leads to positive change. You may have tried many of these strategies before, but it is important to not be disheartened.

Poor concentration / hyperactivity

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More tips to improve poor concentration and hyperactivity:



Have breaks

Recharge your brain by taking 3-10 minute breaks between tasks. Set time limits and use a timer so you can visually see an end to a task. This way, you are more likely to stay focussed and will be less distracted.



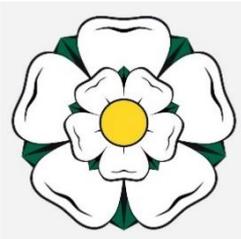
Calming activities

Meditation and 'mindfulness' can be helpful, even for just a few minutes. This doesn't have to be complicated, but relaxing your body one part at a time as you breathe out can be really effective in reducing hyperactivity.



Plan each day

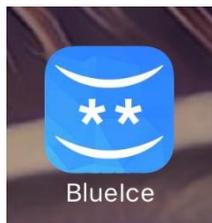
Use coloured coded visual timetables around your home to break activities into smaller, manageable chunks. Put a tick or star next to completed tasks to see what you have achieved. This will help improve your memory and confidence.



Other resources

Apps to help support your mental health

These apps can help you support your mental health and wellbeing. All the apps listed can be found on the [NHS Apps Library](#), an online directory of trusted health and wellbeing apps that have been assessed to be clinically safe and secure to use. The apps listed have also been reviewed by health app evaluation and advisor organisation [ORCHA](#).



BlueIce is an evidenced-based app to help young people manage their emotions and reduce urges to self-harm. It includes a mood diary, a toolbox of evidence-based techniques to reduce distress and automatic routing to emergency numbers if urges to harm continue.



Calm Harm is an app designed to help people resist or manage the urge to self-harm. It's private and password protected.



Learn how to manage feelings like anxiety and depression with **Catch It**. The app will teach you how to look at problems in a different way, turn negative thoughts into positive ones and improve your mental wellbeing.



Learn to relax, manage your worries and improve your wellbeing with **Chill Panda**. The app measures your heart rate and suggests tasks to suit your state of mind. Tasks include simple breathing techniques and light exercises to take your mind off your worries.



Other services



Other services who can support your mental health and wellbeing



Young Minds - www.youngminds.org.uk

Mental health advice for professionals, young people and parents. Whether you want to understand more about how you're feeling and find ways to feel better, or you want to support someone who's struggling, we can help.



Teen Sleep Hub - <https://teensleephub.org.uk/>

This is the Teen Sleep Hub: the one stop shop for all you need to know about sleep. If you're looking for advice on how to sleep better, would like tips on tweaking your routine or help to understand the science behind your sleep patterns, you'll find it all here.



Childline - www.childline.org.uk

Childline is free, confidential and available any time, day or night. You can talk to us by calling, by email or through 1-2-1 counsellor chat. Whatever feels best for you.



Alumina - <https://www.selfharm.co.uk/>

Alumina offers free online support for self-harm for young people aged 14-19.



Shout – text 'shout' to 85258

Shout is a free, confidential text messaging support service for anyone who is struggling to cope. We help people who are feeling anxious, stressed, depressed, suicidal, or overwhelmed and need immediate support.



The Wellbeing in Mind Team



Wellbeing in Mind Team

What we do

We provide care and interventions for young people including support for difficulties including low mood, anxiety, worry and stress.

We also provide advice and training on mental wellbeing issues to school staff, helping them to support you.

We also work closely with other services so that those with more complex problems can get the right help, from the right people, more quickly.

Who we are

We are a team of NHS staff, working in schools to offer support to students experiencing common emotional wellbeing difficulties.



Kat Regan

Senior Clinician



Pete Bogojevic

Senior Clinician

Why we do it

Difficulties you experience in your child and teenage years can affect things like your work, friendships and home life.

Having the right support available when and where you need it can help to lessen the impact difficulties like stress or anxiety have on you; both now and in the future.

