

Wellbeing guide for young people



When you're feeling stressed, anxious or low, it can sometimes feel really isolating and can be difficult to know why you're feeling this way. If a member of your family works in the fire service, you might also experience additional stress and worry wondering what their job involves or if they are safe. It's important to remember that you are not on your own and there are lots of steps you can take towards feeling calmer and more optimistic.



Try some of our top tips below to look after your mental health & wellbeing:

Reach out and connect

Find an adult you trust to talk to about how you're feeling. This might be a family member or a professional such as your teacher or GP. You might also find it helpful to speak to other young people who are going through similar struggles and can share what has helped them.

Write things down

Writing things down can be a good way to express how you feel, and sometimes it's just helpful to get worries out of our minds and put them somewhere else! Try keeping a journal or a worry diary where you can jot thoughts down whenever you need to.

Express yourself

Being creative can help you process feelings you don't yet have the words for and it's been proven to improve mental health. Try drawing, painting, making, creating, doodling - anything that comes to mind! Try not to worry too much about the end product, focus instead on the process and how it feels to express yourself.

Breathe

Simple, right? Not always! When we feel stressed or anxious our breathing can be affected, and this can make our bodies feel even more stressed. A breathing exercise like 'box breathing' might be helpful to try; breathe in for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, breathe out for 4 seconds and hold for 4 seconds, then repeat a few times.

Listening to a relaxation or breathing exercise can help too. We recently introduced three sound benches at each of our centres. They play a short soundscape, accessed through a button on the bench, which forms a guided breathing exercise aimed at reducing stress, improving wellbeing and aiding relaxation.

Be mindful

Being mindful means fully paying attention to what you're doing or what is happening in the present moment. It's the opposite of doing something quickly or trying to multi-task. Try slowing right down and taking a minute to notice 3 things you can see, 3 things you can hear and 3 things you can feel.

Be in nature

Connecting with nature can be a helpful way to look after ourselves. Try being mindful in nature by noticing what wildlife, flowers or insects you can see and see it as a time to slow down.

Get enough sleep

Sleep helps our bodies to rest, repair and process - we can't survive without it! Most young people need 8-10 hours' sleep for their bodies to feel properly rested. Without it, you may find yourself irritable, unable to concentrate, emotional and feeling physically unwell. Try having at least an hour away from any bright screens before bed and do something relaxing, such as reading or taking a bath.



Eat well

The food we eat has a big impact on the way we feel. Try to eat a varied diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables, drink lots of water and try to cut out too much caffeine, sugar or processed foods. Breakfast is very important too and really is the most important meal of the day, so be sure to make time in the morning for it.

Exercise

Exercise can release feel-good hormones, so it's a great idea to get out and get active. Cycling, swimming, surfing, paddleboarding, skateboarding or playing competitive sports are a few examples, but the options are endless. Pick something you enjoy and find fun - and maybe even encourage some family or friends to give it a go too!

Be self-compassionate

Make sure you are kind to yourself and avoid being too self-critical. It can be helpful to think, 'what would I say to a friend if they were feeling this way?' We're often more compassionate to others than we are to ourselves. Try to give yourself a break and do something enjoyable, whatever that means to you.

Show gratitude

Adopting an 'attitude of gratitude' can help you to feel calmer and will release feel-good hormones in our body. It isn't about you ignoring the difficulties you're facing in life, but rather finding things to be grateful for even during difficult times. Try keeping a gratitude journal and writing down three things you're grateful for every other day, even small things count.

Further support

If you need additional support with your general mental health and wellbeing, the following organisations might also be able to support you:

1. Young Minds: www.youngminds.org.uk
2. Kooth: www.kooth.com
3. The Mix: www.themix.org.uk
4. Childline: www.childline.org.uk
5. Samaritans: www.samaritans.org

Keeping safe online

So much of our lives are now spent online and it can be a great way to connect with others, learn new things or have fun. To make sure you stay safe online, check out some top tips and resources from the UK Safer Internet Centre [here](#).

Neurodiversity:

We all experience and interact with the world differently and there's no one right way to be! Neurodivergent people (those with ADHD, autism, dyslexia and learning disabilities, for example) can interpret the world in unique ways that, whilst sometimes create challenges, can also be beneficial and lead to creative and new ways of seeing things.

There are many organisations that can support you and your family if you are neurodivergent. Here are just a few suggestions:

1. [Disabilities and learning differences](#)
2. [Learning disabilities and syndromes](#)
3. [Autism](#)
4. [Dyslexia](#)

Puberty:

Puberty happens when our bodies develop and change as we become an adult. This causes hormonal changes that alter our body physically and affect our mental health, and there may be times when you feel more anxious, angry, or upset. You might feel uncomfortable with how your body is changing and your sense of who you are in the world may start to change too.

These are all normal ways to feel during puberty, so make sure that you take time out to have some fun and connect with others. For more information, check out the link below:

www.brook.org.uk/your-life/puberty/

Young carers:

You may have to care for another person who, due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or addiction, cannot cope without your support. This is a big responsibility to hold when you're also trying to attend school and look after yourself. Click on the links below to see how you can get support if you are a young carer:

- [Young Minds](#)
- [Sidekick](#)

LGBTQ+:

You might already identify as LGBTQ+ or maybe you're just exploring your identity and place in the world right now. Wherever you are on your journey, it can be helpful to connect with other young people who feel like you and get advice on topics such as coming out and navigating the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation. Below you'll find some helpful organisations to support both you and your family:

The Proud Trust: www.theproudtrust.org/young-people

Trans specific support: <https://mermaidsuk.org.uk/young-people>

Parent support: <https://www.fflag.org.uk>



Self-harm and suicide:

It can be scary when you have thoughts of hurting yourself or taking your own life. Sometimes they might come when life feels hard to cope with and we're dealing with lots of intense thoughts and feelings. It is important you know there is hope if you're feeling this way and you can get through this. You aren't on your own and there's lots of help out there, so it's important to speak to someone as soon as you can.

If you need urgent medical help, contact NHS 111 or if it's a life-threatening emergency, call 999. For further support with self-harm and suicide, reach out to the organisations below:

Childline: www.childline.org.uk

Papyrus: www.papyrus-uk.org

Shout: <https://giveusashout.org/>

Samaritans: www.samaritans.org

Eating disorders:

Eating disorders are serious mental health conditions that can affect anybody and may have developed as a way to manage difficult situations or feelings, such as restricting what food you eat or making yourself sick. If you feel like you might have an eating disorder or that you've developed an unhealthy relationship with food, it is important that you reach out for support as soon as you can. Beat, an eating disorders charity, may be able to help. [Click here to find out more.](#)

Alcohol and drugs:

It can be helpful to know the facts about drugs and alcohol, whether you're using them yourself or know of

others who use them. You might use alcohol and drugs if you feel intrigued and want to try something new or if you're trying to fit in with friends, or because you're trying to cope with a difficult situation or memory.

You can find out more about how drugs and alcohol might affect your mental health and what can happen if you choose to take illegal drugs, as well as where to go if you need further support, below:

- [Young Minds](#)

- [Frank](#)

Sex and healthy relationships:

Navigating sex and relationships with others can feel overwhelming at first, so it's important that you access the right kind of information. At every step of the way, you need to feel ready, safe and comfortable. Check out the websites below for information and support with sex and relationships:

- Brook: www.brook.org.uk

- Relate: www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/help-young-adults

Bereavement:

When someone we know or love dies, it can be an incredibly difficult time. We all grieve differently, so it's important to get support and understand there's no right way to process what has happened. The organisations below will help you to get the support that feels right for you:

- [Cruse](#)

- [Winston's Wish](#)



Get in touch

For further information about The Fire Fighters Charity, please visit www.firefighterscharity.org.uk