NHS

Hampshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

The Good Mental Health Handbook

A guide for parents and carers









Welcome

Being the parent of a child who is struggling with their mental health can be utterly heart-breaking and extremely challenging. No one likes to see someone they love in so much pain. My child has struggled with mental health difficulties for years. As a mum, I feel it is my job to protect my child and make everything better. I can't instantly do that and there are times when I feel completely lost, frustrated, broken and powerless. The impact can be far reaching, effecting family dynamics, our ability to work, changing relationships with friends and impacting our own mental and physical wellbeing. Our worlds can become very small as we focus our time and energy on helping our child, fighting for the right support, and trying to find any strategies or helpful advice we can. Frustratingly, there is not one answer or solution. Our children and our families are all individual, needing individual approaches and intervention. I had to try countless ways to help my child before I found the one that resonated with him and gave us a chink of light.

The Good Mental Health Handbook has been developed by Hampshire CAMHS and parents/carers. Within its pages it contains information, short videos, and workshops to support our children's mental health challenges including anxiety, bereavement, depression, self-harm, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, sexuality, substance misuse and trauma. As a family, we found information on self soothing boxes helpful (pg 72)

This handbook also contains information on parental wellbeing. During my child's journey, I had to find the resources within myself to support him 24 hours a day whilst also finding the help he needed. Alongside all the other responsibilities we all have. I felt exhausted but couldn't simply stop and rest, I had to keep going. So, I had to learn ways to support my own mental and physical health.

Have you heard of the airplane analogy? In an emergency, we are told to put our own mask on first, so that we are able to help others. It can feel like yet another 'thing' we must do and finding the time or energy to care for ourselves can feel impossible. However, even at very difficult times, breathing techniques helped me to stay calm. Just stopping to take one deep breath each time I remembered to supported me to feel more in control (STOPP pg 87). Spending time thinking about things that may trigger me (pg 82) and managing my own emotional regulation (pg 86) not only helped me to cope, but I also noticed it helped my child to recognise how effective those strategies can be.

Having all this information in one place means we can refer to it when we are able to. Our lives are busy, and our children need our attention. The information can be read in sections, and the QR codes mean we have instant access to short videos and workshops. It is a parent carer toolkit that we have constant assess to.

The parents and carers I have worked alongside all say they want strategies, ideas, suggestions, helpful hints, top tips, a guide or anything to try to help their child. A toolkit of information that they can look through when they have the time and energy.

The Good Mental Health Handbook is that toolkit.

MARY BALDWIN

Lived Experience Parent Carer Peer Supporter

Back to Basics

It is important to have the basics in place when supporting your child's mental health and wellbeing.

The Back to Basics approach can help you to do this. By making simple changes to your child and family routine as well as lifestyle you will begin to see improvements in your child's overall wellbeing.



Be active

We know that being active is vitally important for good mental health. Encourage your child to be active with you. Activity comes in many different forms - whether it is formal exercise such as sport or whether it is informal, such as taking the stairs instead of the lift, walking to school rather than driving, or dancing to music. Physical activity should be fun. You could go for a walk together every day or spend 10 minutes dancing together in the house to music.

Keep learning

Learning new things helps keep their brains active. Set a goal to learn something new with your child/ young person; learn an instrument, cook a meal together or learn something important to them. Make it fun. Learning new things increases confidence and self-esteem.

Connect

It is important that children and young people connect with the people around them. Encourage your child to reduce screen time and go out with friends, have a good sleep routine and eat their meals with the family or people they live with. By spending time connecting, your child will begin to feel less isolated and alone.

Take notice

Children and young people can feel overwhelmed with life and its changing demands. It is important that you help your child take time out to ground themselves and take notice of the world around them. Encourage your child to pay attention to the things going on around them. A helpful way to do this is to encourage them to use their five senses by noticing and naming five things they can see, four things they can feel, three things they can hear, two things they can smell and one thing they can taste.

Give

Using our time in a way that benefits others can boost feelings of wellbeing and even improve self confidence. You could help your child experience the benefits of giving by supporting your child to volunteer, join a group, do a good deed for a neighbour, visit a family member and sit with them or give them space to sit with you and talk.







What to do

- Setting goals can be helpful in focusing and working jointly on an agreed goal
- Use the goal setting tool to identify with your child three things you will do together and track their progress
- Once you begin to see changes in your child think about what new goals you will move onto
- Remember to celebrate your successes and not to give up. Change can be challenging and can take time but it will be worth it in the end.
- If you would like to find out more about Back to Basics, please contact your child's school or college or contact your Local Children's Partnership Board via your local Hampshire County Council Family Support Service.

To watch some helpful videos please visit:

bit.ly/3fAkD6Q

"Back to Basics helped as it reminded me of common sense things I already knew but have forgotten due to a busy life"

"Just making a few changes really helped"

"I feel more confident as I have a better understanding of my child"

My goals

1 .....

Where am I currently

10=Goal reached 1=Just starting out

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Where do I want to be

10=Goal reached 1=Just starting out

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

2 .....

Where am I currently

10=Goal reached 1=Just starting out

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Where do I want to be

10=Goal reached 1=Just starting out

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3 .....

Where am I currently

10=Goal reached 1=Just starting out

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Where do I want to be

10=Goal reached 1=Just starting out

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Notes:

Common problems and life issues

Despite implementing the Back to Basics strategies, some young people may experience specific challenges and need more targeted help. We will now cover some of the common problems and life issues that young people face. The next section will include; what to look for and strategies, techniques and resources that may be helpful to you and or your young person.











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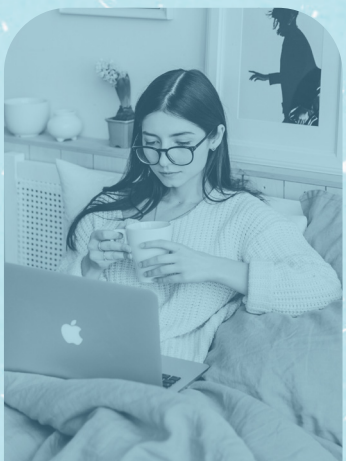
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Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects behaviour and includes symptoms of inattentiveness, impulsivity and hyperactivity. An ADHD diagnosis can include a combined presentation of inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity, a predominantly inattentive presentation or a predominantly hyperactive-impulsive presentation.

Type and Nature of Worry

Coping/needs some support

Children and young people go through phases where they are restless and inattentive. These difficulties can be short term and have no long term impact on daily functioning at home and at school. These difficulties are often completely normal and do not necessarily mean the child or young person has ADHD. These difficulties can be managed with consistent parenting approaches, the love and support of parents/carers and good home school communication.

Needs help

The degree to which a young person struggles with attention, hyperactivity and impulsivity are persisting and may be having a longer term impact on daily functioning at home and at school.

Referred to a school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) to receive help with their behaviour in the classroom setting.

Undergone a period of 'watchful waiting' of up to 10 weeks.

Parents of a CYP have been:
Informed of and attended the local parent training/education programmes.

Needs specialist help

When a child or young person has a significant number of features usually associated with ADHD and their symptoms have been present since childhood and are problematic across all environments such as at home and at school. It might be worth considering an ADHD assessment. You would consider this when these difficulties with attention, activity and impulsivity are severe and enduring and are causing significant disruption to a young person. Their symptoms are significantly disrupting daily life such as school/college and socialising. The young person experiences ongoing difficulties. The young person may be failing to meet expected academic levels due to poor concentration.

Some children and young people with ADHD also have other mental health difficulties like any other child or young person might. If this is the case they may benefit from some therapeutic intervention for this. Some children and young people with ADHD might have specific learning difficulties (assessed by school and/or Educational Psychology Services and/or Paediatricians) and social communication problems which may need further consideration, as well as, an ADHD assessment.

What you might see or what a child or young person might report

Physical Sensations

- Restless and fidgety.
- Struggling to get to sleep at night, having restless sleep or early morning wakening.

Emotions

- Becoming agitated, oppositional or aggressive towards others when they are struggling with expectations placed on them.

Behaviour

- Moving from one activity to another without completing one.
- May not play for long and not enjoy playing with toys and games.
- May prefer active games.
- May struggle to sit still and watch television or a film for any length of time.
- Will often appear not to hear when spoken to.
- They may be constantly fidgety, make lots of noises, and talk all the time (even in situations where it is not appropriate).
- Often doing something that they should not be doing like talking, being disruptive in class.
- Be easily distracted by things going on around them.
- Be impulsive and accident prone.
- Have problems settling for bed and getting to sleep.

Cognitions (thoughts)

- Difficulties paying attention and easily distracted and forgetful (starting things but not completing them).
- May seem to be disinterested or daydreaming (glazed over).

Systemic

- Family and school functioning may be disrupted and families and schools are required to make significant adjustments to accommodate how the young person is managing or responding. Examples of this include, failing at school or leading to problems in relationships at home to the detriment of development.
- May struggle to make friends.
- May struggle to manage social situations.

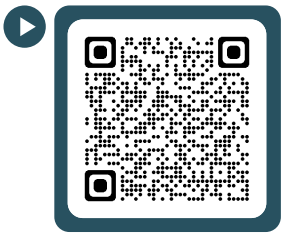
Things to try, support and next steps

- Stay calm (ask for help from someone in the family, take a break, pick your battles and the child will respond better).
- Use pictorial guides or lists to prompt routines and help with organisation.
- Say your child's name and look at them to get their attention when talking to them.
- Only give one instruction at a time (break things down into small steps).
- Get your child to pack their school/college bag the night before school.
- Consider talking to the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) at school.
- Consider parenting classes (your child's school/college should have knowledge of any available in the local area).
- Minimise distractions particularly when trying to work.
- Repeat messages or important information regularly.
- Present information verbally and in writing where possible.
- Role play and practice skills such as turn taking, how to do activities safely (such as crossing the road), and reducing impulsivity/reactivity.
- Change activities regularly to reduce boredom and restlessness.
- Role model and demonstrate that you can do things even when you're anxious.
- Supporting your child to problem solve any obvious triggers.
- Share concerns with your child's school/college and identify whether additional pastoral support is available.
- Depending on the context and the origins of the anxiety being experienced, other services may be helpful (family guidance if there is family breakdown or conflict).
- Make sure that you have a consistent night time routine. Have a set bedtime. Make sure that all screens are off a minimum of one hour before bed time. Visit: **hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/help/young-people/sleep/** short link: **bit.ly/3etqTMZ**
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**

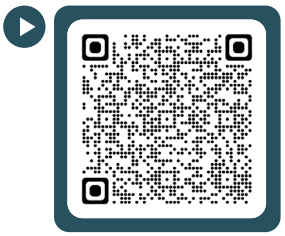


Strategies and resources to try

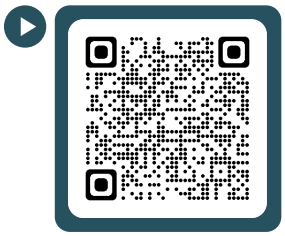
A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling: **bit.ly/3UxEbbJ**



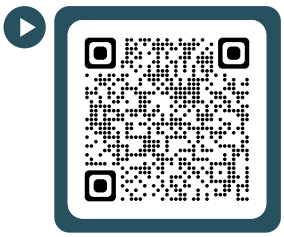
A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: **bit.ly/3fcoINN**



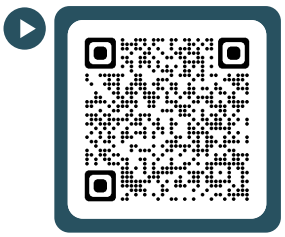
A short film about how people connect, give and receive love and nurture in different ways and approaches: **bit.ly/3xILd3D**



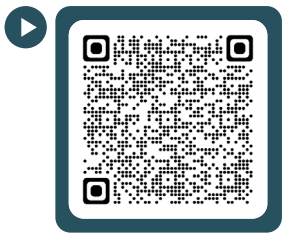
Maslow's hierarchy of needs - a short film to explain the different types and levels of needs we as humans have for healthy growth, development, happiness and functioning and why these are important: **bit.ly/3QXWEuU**



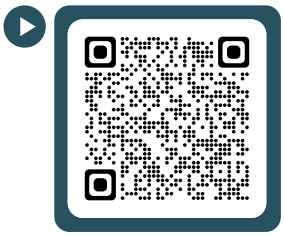
The Window of Tolerance - a short film to explain a model of emotion regulation how much we can and can't cope with: **bit.ly/3dC5KQn**



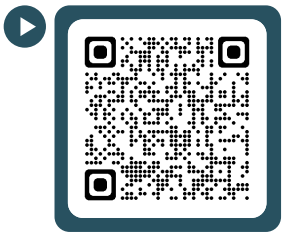
Teenage Turmoil - a workshop for parents to better understand why the teenage years are so challenging: **bit.ly/3Bzt1KD**



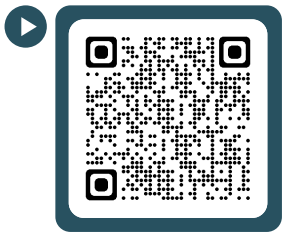
A workshop on supporting a young person with anxiety: **bit.ly/3EiWc6v**



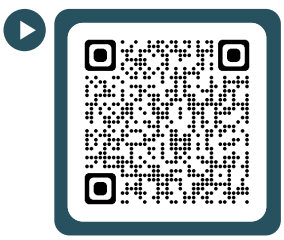
A workshop on getting good sleep: **bit.ly/45vAmc9**



A workshop on CARE (coping and resilience education skills): **bit.ly/2NyIRjG**



A video about supporting a young person with ADHD: **bit.ly/3L63HS5**



Strategies for behaviour of concern: **bit.ly/43YPahH**



Anxiety

All children and young people may feel anxious from time to time. Here's a guide to help you know how best to support your child if they experience symptoms of worry or anxiety. This is not an exhaustive list. Children and young people will experience other types of worry and symptoms which may not be included in this section of the guide.

Type and Nature of Worry

Coping/needs some support

It is common for children and young people to experience worry as they develop through childhood and adolescence. The typical worries children and young people experience tend to be situation specific, short term and can be managed with the love and support of parents/carers.

Examples might be

- Being away from home/parent
- Going to school (but settling)
- Worrying about going to bed/the dark
- Worry about something bad happening to themselves or to a loved one
- Doing new things
- Going to unfamiliar places
- Doing things independently
- Public speaking/performing
- Tests and exams
- Change and uncertainty (e.g. family breakdown or conflict)
- In response to an upsetting event such as being bullied
- Being in social situations

Needs help

The degree to which a child or young person worries appears out of context or disproportionate to the reason why they might be worrying. Episodes of anxiety might be more frequent or prolonged and cause the child or young person distress or might have some mild impact on their ability to cope with everyday life such as going to or coping at school, seeing friends or taking part in leisure activities.

Examples might be

- Fears that something bad might happen to themselves or someone else
- Worry about not coping
- Worry about performance in exams or the future
- Worries related to being habitually bullied or experiencing regular conflict or distress either at home or school
- Worries about what others might think, say or do
- Worries about negative judgements by others or social rejection/exclusion

Needs specialist help:

These anxieties are severe and enduring. These cause significant distress to the child or young person and significantly disrupt daily coping such as school/college, socialising and even self-care activities (sleep, bathing and eating). Despite trying self-help or community-based help (school/college or GP) difficulties remain. This is when you might consider accessing specialist support from a service such as CAMHS.

What you might see or what a child or young person might report

Physical Sensations

- Racing heart rate, quicker breathing, upset tummy, feeling sick, feeling dizzy or faint.
- Disrupted sleep (difficulties getting to or staying asleep, nightmares/night terrors).

Emotions

- May become distressed or agitated when facing fear or even thinking about facing the fear.
- May become oppositional or aggressive towards others when in a situation they are particularly fearful of.

Behaviour

- Persistent physical or verbal seeking of reassurance (being clingy and not wanting to be separated from a parent/carer; not wanting to be left alone).
- Resistance to doing things; requiring a lot of cajoling or persuading.
- Refusal to leave the house or attend/take part in activities such as school, hobbies, interests, seeing friends.
- Some repeated patterns of behaviour or routines which seem to help the young person but don't make sense to others (repeated checking or counting).
- Demanding things be done in certain ways or requesting others to do things for them.

Systemic

- Families might also find themselves struggling to do things as they normally would as they may make adjustments to accommodate how the young person is feeling or responding.
- There may be conflict or arguments between the young person and family members or between family members.

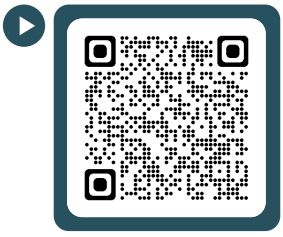


Things to try, support and next steps

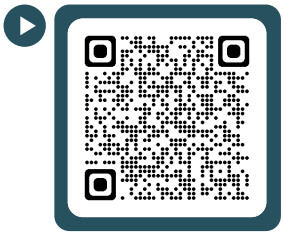
- Normalise that anxiety is a natural emotion. The physical sensations of anxiety can be unpleasant but it's OK, it will pass and won't cause any harm.
- Encourage, reward and praise your child for not to avoiding things that make them anxious (triggers). The more your child avoids triggers the harder it becomes and the more anxious they will become. Instead, encourage them to face their fear, so your child can tolerate and manage their anxiety.
- Break things down into steps and do these as often as possible so your child can habituate and tolerate their anxiety before going onto the next step.
- Role model and demonstrate that you can do things even when you're anxious.
- Supporting a young person to problem solve any obvious triggers.
- Share concerns with your child's school/college and identify whether additional pastoral support is available.
- Depending on the context and/or the origins of the anxiety being experienced, other services may be helpful (family guidance if there is family breakdown or conflict).
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**

Strategies and resources to try

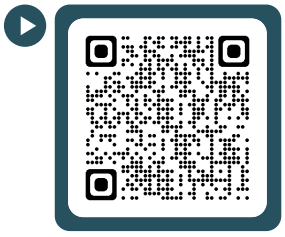
A workshop on supporting a young person with anxiety: **bit.ly/3EiWc6v**



Leaves on a Stream - a video on mindfulness: **bit.ly/44wXoxU**



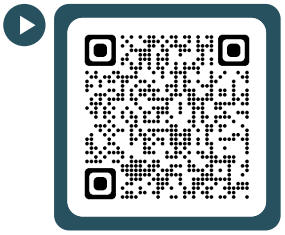
A workshop on CARE (coping and resilience education skills): **bit.ly/2NyIRjG**



A short film about how people connect, give and receive love and nurture in different ways and approaches: **bit.ly/3xILd3D**



A workshop on getting good sleep: **bit.ly/45vAmc9**



A podcast on how to manage school anxiety: **bit.ly/3MrgU7n**



Teenage Turmoil - a workshop for parents to better understand why the teenage years are so challenging:
bit.ly/3Bzt1KD

Maslow's hierarchy of needs - a short film to explain the different types and levels of needs we as humans have for healthy growth, development, happiness and functioning and why these are important:
bit.ly/3QXWEuU

The Window of Tolerance - a short film to explain a model of emotion regulation how much we can and can't cope with: **bit.ly/3dC5KQn**

A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try:
bit.ly/3lBwUp7

A coping strategy film about how to make your own self-soothe box:
bit.ly/2H6uDU1

A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling:
bit.ly/3UxEbbJ

A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation:
bit.ly/3fcoINN

A coping strategy film on how to help your child set achievable goals:
bit.ly/3DGOion

A coping strategy film on breathing techniques:
bit.ly/3UyD3Vk

Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC)

Having an Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) means that the person has a different way of understanding other people and the world around them. ASC is a lifelong developmental condition, not an illness or a disease so there is no 'cure' but there are many ways that difficulties can be managed.

The nature of Autism Spectrum Condition

1. Difficulties with communication

- Taking what people say literally (thinking people mean exactly what they say).
- Not understanding jokes or sarcasm.
- Preferring facts and logic.
- Finding it hard to understand facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures.
- Only feeling comfortable when talking about topics they are interested in.
- Repetitive in what they say.

2. Difficulties with interaction and socialising with people

- Not wanting to make eye contact.
- Feeling awkward and not knowing what to say or do in social situations.
- Difficulties making and keeping friends and romantic relationships.
- Preferring to be alone and only doing activities they feel comfortable to do.
- Finding it hard to take turns when playing games.
- Not liking to be touched or comforted by other people.
- Difficulty with seeing things from other people's point of view.

3. Difficulties with imagination

- People with ASC can struggle with make believe play or storytelling.
- It can also be hard to imagine what other people might be thinking or feeling.

4. Special interests

- Having special interests that they invest their time and energy into.
- Becoming very knowledgeable about a specific topic and spending a lot of time involved in the topic.

5. Sensory differences

People with ASC may be overly sensitive to sounds, smells, touch, pain or light, finding these things uncomfortable, frightening or painful. Some people do not appear sensitive to these things at all.

6. Routines

- People with ASC can find change and transition (going from one thing to another) hard, so they prefer familiar and strict routines.
- These differences that people with ASC may experience can make everyday life overwhelming.
- Often people can feel worried and stressed by everyday activities such as going to school, meeting people and trying new things.
- Difficulties with social communication and interaction and the differences in their interests, strengths and talents can make them feel left out and misunderstood by other people, which can lead to problems with low mood and low self- esteem.

Things to try, support and next steps

Communication

- Use the child's name to get their attention before you speak.
- Be clear and specific about what you mean. For example "pick up your Lego and put it in the box" rather than "tidy up".
- If you need a message to be received, like an instruction, cut out unnecessary social language such as "do you think you could".
- Be careful of using language that is ambiguous or requires interpretation. Some children and young people with autistic spectrum conditions find it difficult to understand sarcasm, humour, irony, figurative language, metaphors. This can lead to the message being misunderstood and your child becoming confused and anxious.
- Make sure what you say matches your tone of voice, gesture, facial expression and body language. However at times of anxiety or distress reduce the volume of your communication to reduce arousal (use less gesture, less eye contact etc).
- Tell your child what you want them to do, rather than what they shouldn't do. For example "Finish your text, then lay the table" rather than "Get off your phone".
- Give instructions in the correct order, and break down into chunks. Only give as much information as your child can cope with.
- Be careful of giving open ended choice such as "What do you want for tea?" You may find it better to give a choice of options "Would you like spaghetti or fish-fingers?".
- Praise and reward when things go well.

Structure and predictability

- The use of diaries, calendars, timetables and notebooks can be really helpful. Put it where it can be easily seen. Write or draw what your child/young person can expect to happen that day, any particular events, anything they have to remember. Refer to it each day, or more frequently if necessary.
- Use pictures and drawings as well as words if your child finds this helpful. This can make the information easier to understand even if your child can read well.

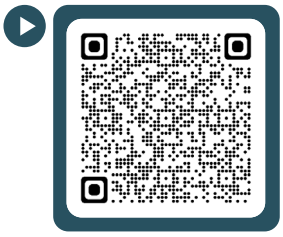
- Use a calendar or timetable to agree sequences such as when to do homework, when to go on the computer, when to go to bed etc.
- If there are changes to plans let your child know in advance, discuss what will be happening instead, and change it in their diary or calendar.
- Use normal daily routines to provide structure to the day. Make sure you have a good morning routine, meal routine, bedtime routine. Having time points in the day that always happen in the same way can provide security and reduce anxiety.

The environment and activity

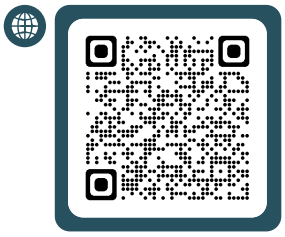
- Be aware of how much sensory information there is going on (sounds, smells, lights etc). Some children and young people can find this overwhelming. Think about reducing it – turn the TV off if you are not watching it.
- Starting and finishing activities can cause difficulties. Think of ways to clearly indicate the beginning or end of something. Consider using timers to count down time to something finishing, so the child/young person is prepared.
- Waiting and unstructured time can be difficult for children and young people with ASC. Plan in advance for when out and about (taking a book to a doctor's appointment). At home make sure your child knows the options for what they can do in free time.
- Physical exercise can be really useful in managing anxiety for all children and young people and especially for those with ASC.
- Seek support from the school teacher or home school link worker.
- Consider talking to the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) at school.
- Consider parenting classes (your child's school should have knowledge of any available in the local area).
- Depending on the context and/or the origins of the anxiety being experienced, other services may be helpful (family guidance if there is family breakdown or conflict).
- Make sure that you have a consistent night time routine. Have a set bedtime. Make sure that all screens are off a minimum of one hour before bed time. Visit: **hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/issue/sleep**
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**

Strategies and resources to try

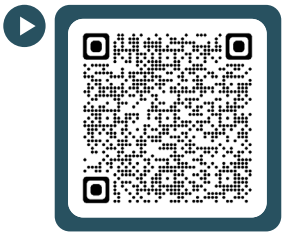
Supporting a young person with ASC: **bit.ly/44vJRqs**



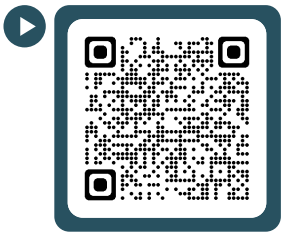
Strategies for behaviour of concern: **bit.ly/38P0dBa**



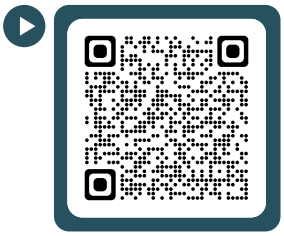
A video on teenage turmoil: **bit.ly/3Bzt1KD**



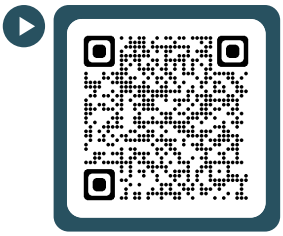
A short film about how people connect, give and receive love and nurture in different ways and approaches: **bit.ly/3xILd3D**



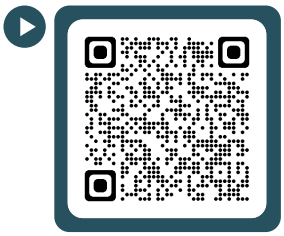
A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling: **bit.ly/3UxEbbJ**



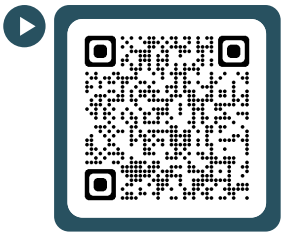
A coping strategy film on how to help your child set achievable goals: **bit.ly/3My8c7A**



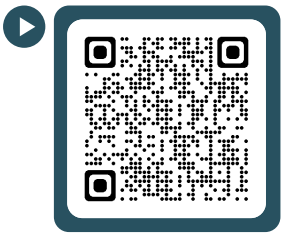
A workshop on supporting a young person with anxiety: **bit.ly/3EiWc6v**



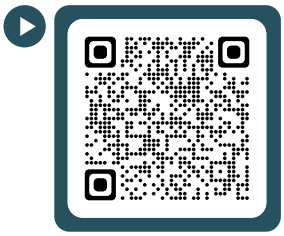
A workshop on getting good sleep: **bit.ly/45vAmc9**



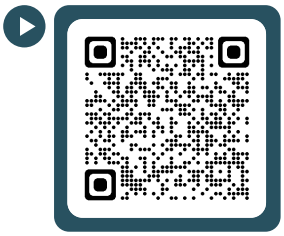
A workshop on CARE (coping and resilience education skills): **bit.ly/2NyIRjG**



Maslow's hierarchy of needs - a short film to explain the different types and levels of needs we as humans have for healthy growth, development, happiness and functioning and why these are important: **bit.ly/3QXWEuU**



The Window of Tolerance - a short film to explain a model of emotion regulation how much we can and can't cope with: **bit.ly/3dC5KQn**



Bereavement

Bereavement and loss of a loved one (such as a family member, friend or pet) can be devastating. A child or young person may also feel a sense of loss when an important relationship ends (such as relationship break up or friendship break down).

Bereavement or loss, can be hard to understand, process and adjust to. The child or young person may experience many thoughts and feelings including, sadness, worry, anger or confusion. If the person they have lost has been unwell, they may experience other feelings such as relief.

Some children and young people may not experience any strong feelings at all. There is no right or wrong way to feel think or behave. Everyone processes grief differently. Some days they may feel more able to cope than other days.

What it might look like if a child or young person is struggling with bereavement or loss

- A range of emotions from sadness, anger, fear, relief or even nothing at all.
- Difficulties accepting the loss.
- A sense of guilt, regret or responsibility.
- Difficulties concentrating and poor motivation. You may notice or they may report it being harder to do school or home work.
- Preferring to be by themselves - not wanting to speak to or spend time with other people OR not wanting to be by themselves and wanting to be close to people they feel comfortable with.
- Having worries that bad things might happen to them or other people they love and care about.
- Having thoughts or urges about wanting to end their life to be with the loved one they have lost.
- Constant thoughts about what has happened to the loved one they have lost.
- Disinterest and loss of enjoyment in hobbies and interests.
- Difficulty sleeping (nightmares, difficulties getting to or staying asleep, early morning wakening).
- For some children and young people they may wet the bed at night (this is often a sign of unhappiness and stress).
- Loss of appetite or comfort eating.

Things that might help someone struggling with bereavement or loss

- Acknowledging and normalising that it is usual to feel a range of emotions from sadness, anger, fear, relief or even nothing at all. Some people find anniversaries and certain days (such as birthdays) harder to deal with so thinking together about how to manage particularly tough days or dates can be helpful.
- Try to keep normal routines going as much as possible.
- Encourage your child to keep doing activities they enjoy and spend time with friends and family. Let them know that it is okay to feel happy, to laugh or to have fun. This does not mean that they don't care about the person they have lost.
- If they are finding it hard to talk about how they feel, they might find it easier to write down how they are feeling rather than talk.
- Create a memory box full of pictures and items which remind them of good times they had with the person they have lost.

- Grieving takes a lot of energy. Make sure they eat, drink and rest regularly. Physical activity and getting outside for fresh air daily can help.
- Share concerns with your child's school/college and identify whether additional pastoral support is available.
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**
- There is more information on the Hampshire CAMHS website: **hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/help/young-people/bereavement-loss/** Short link: **bit.ly/3MyYW2Z**
- Simon Says Bereavement Support (Hampshire-based): **simonsays.org.uk**
- Winston's Wish Bereavement Support: **winstonswish.org**
- Hope Again Bereavement Support: **hopeagain.org.uk**
- Grief Encounter Bereavement Support: **griefencounter.org.uk (Helpline: 0808 802 011, weekdays 9am-9pm)**
- Survivors of Those Bereaved by Suicide: **uksobs.org**

Strategies and resources to try

A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: **bit.ly/3lBwUp7**

A coping strategy film on how to make your own self-soothe box: **bit.ly/2H6uDU1**

A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling: **bit.ly/3UxEbbJ**

A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: **bit.ly/3fcoINN**

A short film on how to use de-escalation techniques for a young person in distress: **bit.ly/47Y3Kcs**

A coping strategy film on how to help your child set achievable goals: **bit.ly/3DGOion**

A coping strategy film on breathing techniques: **bit.ly/3UyD3Vk**

A short film about how people connect, give and receive love and nurture in different ways and approaches: **bit.ly/3xILd3D**

Body Image

Body image is the term used to describe the way that we see ourselves. It's how we think and feel about our appearance and the relationship we have with our bodies. Most people from time to time feel unsure or lack confidence in their image and appearance. Having thoughts about wanting to be a bit taller or worrying about what our hair or skin might look like. For a lot of people, they worry about the size and shape of their body. Boys and girls can worry about their body image and appearance and these worries can have a really big impact on daily life.

What it might look like or feel like if a child or young person is struggling with poor body image

- Talking about body dissatisfaction or worrying about their appearance.
- Comparing themselves to other people.
- Spending excessive time getting ready, which makes them late for or miss commitments.
- Preoccupation with weight and shape (weighing themselves regularly).
- Body checking behaviour (pinching self and checking reflection in the mirror regularly).
- Wanting to or trying to diet by 'eating healthily' or following food movements such as the 'clean eating', 'raw food'. Wanting to become vegetarian or vegan without clear reason.
- Increase in activity/exercise with a purpose of changing their size and shape.
- Engaging in weight altering/compensatory behaviour such as taking laxatives or diuretics, self-induced vomiting, use of weight loss/gain aids or use of steroids.
- Feeling anxious about being seen in front of others and eating in public/in front of others.
- May struggle to identify positive qualities or characteristics in themselves.
- May struggle to make friends or struggle at school.
- May refuse or find excuses to engage in PE lessons.

Things that might help a child or young person who is struggling with poor body image

- Remind your child that they're more than the way they look.
- Notice, comment, encourage and praise - individuality, personality, characteristics, morals, values, ethics, behaviour, skills, effort, passion, goals, ambition, friendships, hobbies and interests.
- Keep your child focused on how they feel, not how they look.
- Remember that your words have power. Be aware of throwaway comments.
- Role model being kind to yourself.
- Lead by example - no diet/body shaming chat/ take a non-judgemental stance towards others.
- Set and work towards your own self-care goals.
- Practice safe-social media use - limit their use of social media and encourage them to think carefully about what they share online, especially on social networks and review their Internet usage.
- Encourage acceptance, kindness and compassion towards others and themselves.

- There is a lot of information on the Hampshire CAMHS website: **hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/issue/body-image-self-esteem/** short link:**bit.ly/3Ey6v7Z**
- Share concerns with your child's school/college and identify whether additional pastoral support is available.
- There is more information on the Dove Self-Esteem Project website for parents and carers: **dove.com/uk/dove-self-esteem-project/help-for-parents.html** short link: **bit.ly/3yC8qVy**
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**

Strategies and resources to try

A workshop on boosting body image and self-esteem: **bit.ly/3SoELGN**

A workshop on supporting a young person with anxiety: **bit.ly/3EiWc6v**

A workshop on CARE (coping and resilience education skills): **bit.ly/2NyIRjG**

A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: **bit.ly/3fcoINN**

Teenage Turmoil - a workshop for parents to better understand why the teenage years are so challenging: **bit.ly/3Bzt1KD**

A workshop on getting good sleep: **bit.ly/45vAmc9**

A coping strategy film on how to make your own self-soothe box: **bit.ly/2H6uDU1**

A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling: **bit.ly/3UxEbbJ**

A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: **bit.ly/3lBwUp7**

Bullying

Bullying is a word used to describe deliberate behaviour that causes upset and hurt to another person. It is intended to, and can cause, emotional, psychological or physical pain, harm and distress (worry and upset) to another person. Common emotions of someone who is being bullied include but are not limited to, worry and fear, low mood, embarrassment and humiliation, feeling worthless, helpless and hopeless.

This may impact a person's mood, health and ability to live their everyday life. There are many forms of bullying which can include 'teasing' or 'banter' as well as online bullying. Online bullying includes being bullied via mobile phone, email, messaging services and social media.

Bullying can happen to anyone of any age, gender, ethnicity or background. Although bullying can be common in schools, colleges and online, this does not mean that it is ok.

What it might look like feel like if a child or young person is being bullied

- Having low self-esteem and lacking in confidence. Feeling not good enough or not as good as anyone else.
- Believing what bullies tell them.
- Feeling worried and panicking.
- Having physical (body) feelings such as a racing heart rate, quicker breathing, upset tummy, feeling sick, feeling dizzy, faint or sweaty hands.
- Having lots of "what if" thoughts, such as, "what if something bad happens?" which can result in them feeling too overwhelmed to go into school.
- Feeling angry towards bullies and other people. This might mean they might behave in an angry way, being irritable, shouting or being physically aggressive.
- Difficulties concentrating and struggling with motivation. You may notice or they may report they're not doing as well in their work at school.
- They may not feel like hanging out with their friends or doing sociable things.
- They might not enjoy their hobbies and interests as much as they once did.
- Problems with sleep. Difficulties getting to or staying asleep and nightmares.
- For some children and young people they may wet the bed at night (this is often a sign of unhappiness and stress).
- They may have thoughts about harming themselves or ending their life.

Things that might help a child or young person who is being bullied

- Many children and young people worry about telling an adult as they don't want the bullying to get worse and also worry about being believed. Although these worries are understandable, it's important that a child/young person feels able to tell a trusted adult so that they can have the help and support they need. Being aware and acknowledging that your child has these worries, is important.
- Some forms of bullying are illegal (violence, theft, harassment or intimidation, threats and abusive phone calls, emails or text messages) and should be reported to the police.

- Remind your child that it's not their fault and they do not deserve to be abused or made to feel any less of a person.
- Encourage your child to practice 'safe social media use'. Block, unfriend, mute and delete anyone or any group that is unhelpful. If social media is a problem, delete the apps on their phone/tablet. Encourage your child to turn their phone off at night.
- Find hobbies and activities that will boost their self-esteem and confidence. Joining new groups or clubs will give them the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends.
- Share concerns with your child's school/college and identify whether additional pastoral support is available.
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**
- If a child or young person is in crisis they can call **116123** or text YM to **85258** (free to call or text 24hrs a day 7 days a week)
- Hampshire CAMHS bullying resources page: **hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/help/young-people/bullying-yp/** short link: **bit.ly/3KPyHmZ**

Strategies and resources to try

A video on managing bullying and how to get help: **bit.ly/3OQy9AE**

A coping strategy film on how to make your own self-soothe box: **bit.ly/2H6uDU1**

A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling: **bit.ly/3UxEbbJ**

A coping strategy film on breathing techniques: **bit.ly/3UyD3Vk**

A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: **bit.ly/3fcoINN**

A short film about how people connect, give and receive love and nurture in different ways and approaches: **bit.ly/3xILd3D**

A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: **bit.ly/3lBwUp7**

Depression, Crisis, Self-Harm and Suicide

Depression is a mental health difficulty that involves persistent low mood (continuing for a long time). It impacts on the way people feel, think and behave. Depression can happen as a reaction to difficult experiences such as bullying, bereavement or family relationship difficulties. It can also happen without any obvious trigger or reason.

Experiencing a mental health/emotional health crisis means feeling unable to cope with overwhelming or upsetting thoughts and feelings. Crisis is different for everyone. There may be different triggers and different ways in which people experience crisis. There is no right or wrong way to think or feel when in crisis.

Not everyone who engages in self-harm behaviour is depressed or in crisis and not everyone who engages in self-harm is suicidal. Not everyone who experiences suicidal thoughts or urges engages in self-harm and they may not appear to be in crisis.

Self-harm involves the act of doing something to cause harm or omitting to do something which in turn may cause harm (such as not taking prescribed medications). There are many forms of self-harm. There are many reasons why a child or young person may engage in self-harm and each individual episode of self-harm may have a different trigger or reason. The most important thing to know about self-harm is that it is purposeful and meaningful, it serves a need or function.

Suicide is the act of intentionally and purposefully ending one's life. A lot of children and young people may experience thoughts about wanting to harm themselves or end their life, particularly when in crisis or they experience a distressing life event. It can be difficult to notice if a child or young person is experiencing thoughts and urges or even making plans to end their life, particularly as suicidal thoughts and urges can occur suddenly, unexpectedly and impulsively, especially among adolescents.

Here's a guide to help you know how best to support your child if they experience symptoms of low mood or depression, crisis, self-harm or suicide ideation.

Type and Nature of Mood Issue

Coping/needs some support

It is common for children and young people to experience episodes of feeling sad, low or down as they develop through childhood and adolescence. The typical mood issues children and young people experience tend to be situation specific, short term and can be managed with the love and support of parents/carers.

Examples of situations that may cause/contribute to a young person to feel down or low in mood might be

- Adjusting to changes (such as a new school).
- Friendships or relationship issues.
- Episodes of being teased or bullied (including being or feeling left out or excluded).
- Being physically poorly or in pain.
- Family breakdown or conflict.
- Grief or loss (of a pet, family member or friend).
- Struggling with academic work.

Needs help

The degree to which a child or young person feels low or depressed appears out of context or disproportionate to the reason why they might be feeling sad. Episodes of low mood might be more frequent or prolonged and cause the child or young person distress or might have some mild impact on their ability to cope with everyday life such as going to or coping at school, seeing friends or taking part in leisure activities.

Examples of situations that may cause/contribute to a young person feeling low in mood or depressed

- Being routinely teased or bullied (including being or feeling left out or excluded).
- Grief or loss (including romantic relationships ending).
- Witnessing or experiencing of conflict (at home or school).
- Change and uncertainty (such as family breakdown).
- Family and relationship stressors (parent/sibling ill-health, financial or social stressors).
- Academic pressures/demands including exam stress and worry about the future.
- Please note, there are occasions when there is no apparent trigger/cause/contributory factor as to why a child or young person may be experiencing episodes of low mood/depression.
- A child or young person can still be low in mood without clear reason.

Needs specialist help:

Episodes of low mood/depression are severe and enduring. These cause significant distress to a child or young person and significantly disrupt daily coping such as school/college, socialising and even self-care activities (sleep, bathing and eating). Despite trying advice in the green and amber stages, the child or young person still experiences depression symptoms.

Examples of situations that may cause/ contribute to a young person feeling low in mood or depressed

- Chronic bullying or abuse (including neglect, emotional, physical, sexual).
- Social or family financial stressors (such as family breakdown, conflict or parental/ sibling ill-health).
- Grief or loss.
- Witnessing or experiencing a traumatic event.
- Overwhelmed by pressures and stressors including individual factors - health, social factors, relationships, occupational factors (school/college, environment and living circumstances).
- Please note, there are occasions when there is no apparent trigger/cause/contributory factor as to why a child or young person may be experiencing episodes of low mood/depression.
- A child or young person can still be acutely depressed without clear reason.

What you might see or what a child or young person might report

Physical Sensations

- Disrupted sleep - difficulties getting to or staying asleep, waking very early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep or oversleeping.
- Changes in appetite and eating behaviour - loss of appetite and reduced food and fluid intake or an increase in appetite and consumption of food and fluids.
- Physical symptoms including headaches, digestive upset or pain.
- Self-harm - unexplained cuts, bruises, marks, burns on the body. These could appear anywhere on someone's body. Unexplained blood stains on tissues, sheets or clothing. Evidence of vomiting on toilets, wash basins, showers or baths (drains may become blocked).

Emotions

- Appearing uncaring or unbothered about people or activities they previously would have cared about. This may lead to not honouring commitments or responsibilities which is uncharacteristic.
- Emotionally labile - frequent changes of emotion, more sensitive (irritable, upset, confused).
- May on occasion become agitated, distressed, oppositional or aggressive.
- Experience apathy.
- Feeling flat, empty or numb.
- Feeling hopeless and helpless.

Cognitions (Thoughts)

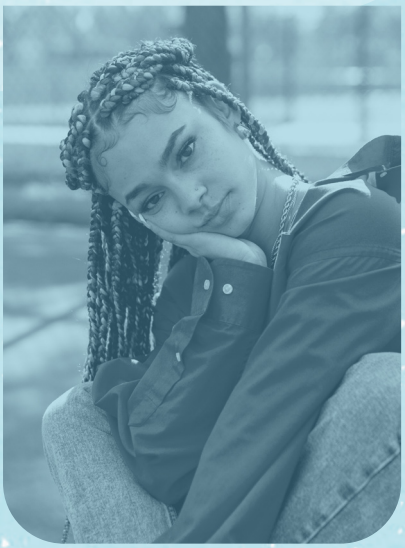
- Lack of insight or awareness that others may be concerned.
- Not being able to see a future and appearing to give up on dreams, goals and hopes.
- Resistance to doing things, appearing unmotivated and disinterested.
- Difficulties concentrating.
- Low self-esteem - thinking or believing they are not good enough or expressing a desire to punish themselves- they may make statements of worthlessness or hopelessness.
- Thoughts, feelings, urges, plans or intent to harm self or end their life or harm others.
  Please note that not all young people who engage in self-harm behaviour are depressed or suicidal. There are many reasons why a young person may engage in self-harm behaviour.

Behaviour

- Isolating self from friends and family.
- Withdrawn and uncommunicative or not wanting to be left alone at all. This may seem uncharacteristic or age inappropriate for some teenagers.
- Refusal to leave the house or attend or take part in activities such as school, hobbies, interests and seeing friends.
- Reactive and impulsive behaviour such as running away which may place them or others in danger.
- Poor personal hygiene (not washing or changing clothes regularly).
- Seeking verbal reassurance and checking things are OK.

Systemic

- Not wanting to be separated from a parent/carer or be left alone.
- Care givers may find themselves taking on or completing tasks or supporting your child to do tasks they previously would not have needed to or developmentally may seem incongruent.







Things to try, support and next steps

- Normalise that feeling sad or down is a natural emotion particularly in response to a sad, disappointing or difficult event.
- Activity helps, encourage your child to do a range of tasks and activities including one they need to do such as school work to fun things.
- Keep a routine and have nice things planned.
- Break things down into small steps and do one at a time so tasks do not seem so overwhelming.
- Role model and demonstrate that you can do things even when you're feeling sad or down.
- Be compassionate by validating how a young person is feeling.
- Support your child to problem solve any obvious triggers.
- Share concerns with your child's school/college.
- See your child's GP.
- Access pastoral support from school.
- Consider accessing help from a local counselling service.
- Depending on the context and/or the origins of the low mood being experienced, other services may be helpful (family guidance if there is family breakdown or conflict).
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**
- Access the **"Help I'm in Crisis"** Button on the Hampshire CAMHS website during times of stress or crisis: **HampshireCamhs.nhs.uk**
- NHS Mental Health Triage Service **111** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) or visit **11.nhs.uk** and speak to the NHS Mental Health, Triage Service, who provide mental health support to people of all ages.

Strategies and resources to try

A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: **bit.ly/3lBwUp7**

A coping strategy film on how to make your own self-soothe box: **bit.ly/2H6uDU1**

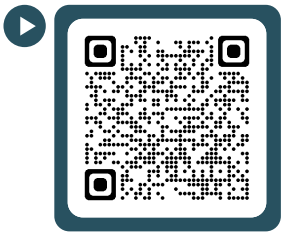
A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling: **bit.ly/3UxEbbJ**

A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: **bit.ly/3fcoINN**

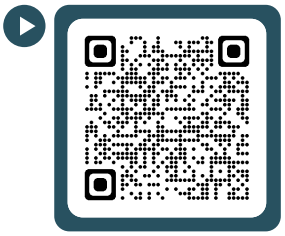
A short film on how to use de-escalation techniques for a young person in distress: **bit.ly/47Y3Kcs**

A coping strategy film on how to help your child set achievable goals: **bit.ly/3DGOion**

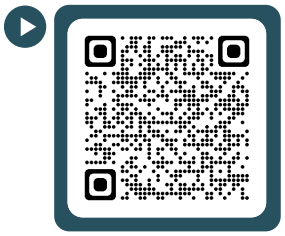
Coping strategy film - breathing techniques: **bit.ly/3UyD3Vk**



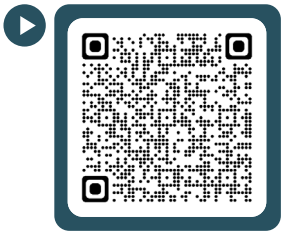
A short film about how people connect, give and receive love and nurture in different ways and approaches: **bit.ly/3xILd3D**



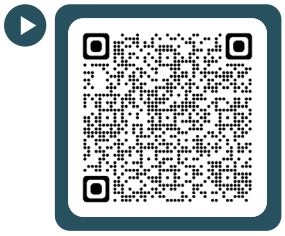
A presentation on the 8 truths about suicide: **bit.ly/3R3VnSY**



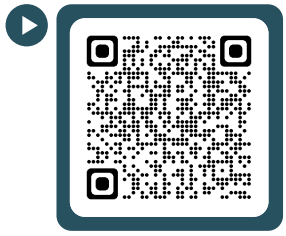
A workshop on supporting a young person who self harms or is in crisis: **bit.ly/32NTQdp**



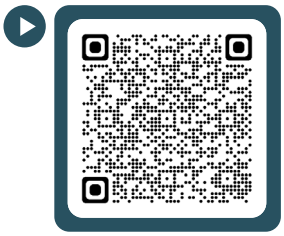
Create a crisis and coping plan with a young person: **bit.ly/3DKS7Jw**



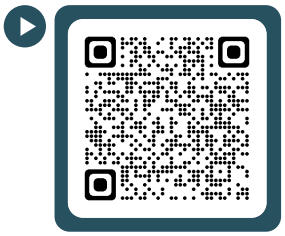
Myths about why young people engage in self harm: **bit.ly/47YqkBZ**



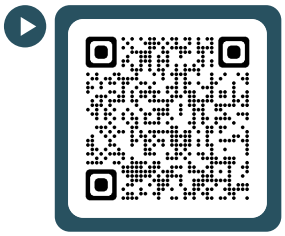
Managing a young person in crisis and suicide prevention: **bit.ly/3R3VnSY**



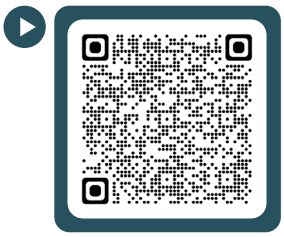
How to understanding and manage self-harm in young people: **bit.ly/3QVVMdY**



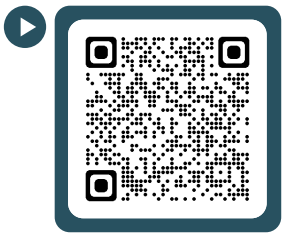
A workshop on getting good sleep: **bit.ly/45vAmc9**



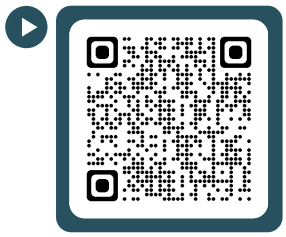
Teenage Turmoil - a workshop for parents to better understand why the teenage years are so challenging: **bit.ly/3Bzt1KD**



The Window of Tolerance - a short film to explain a model of emotion regulation and how much we can and can't cope with: **bit.ly/3dC5KQn**



A workshop on CARE (coping and resilience education skills): **bit.ly/2NyIRjG**





Maslow's hierarchy of needs - a short film to explain the different types and levels of needs we as humans have for healthy growth, development, happiness and functioning and why these are important: **bit.ly/3QXWEuU**

Eating Disorders

Many children and young people go through phases of dieting and not eating enough. Sometimes this can tip into developing an eating disorder. Here's a guide to help you know how best to support your child if they are experiencing eating difficulties.

Type and Nature of Eating Disorders

Coping/needs some support

It is common for children and young people to experience eating difficulties during childhood and adolescence. These tend to be short term, have no impact on physical health or daily functioning (going to school, seeing friends, taking part in hobbies or activities) and can be managed with clear boundaries combined with the love and support of parents/carers.

Examples might be

- Wanting to or trying to diet by 'eating healthily' or following food movements such as the 'clean eating', 'raw food', 'vegan'.
- Taking a more active interest in food, meal preparation or checking food labels or packaging.
- Taking a more active interest in fitness/health or wellbeing or increasing activity levels/ exercise.
- Talk about body dissatisfaction or worrying about appearance and comparing themselves to others.
- Feeling anxious about eating in public or in front of others.
- Children and young people with Type 1 diabetes may become more inconsistent with insulin and diabetes less well managed (this should be checked with a medical team as a matter of priority).

Needs help

The degree to which a young person experiences eating difficulties may cause the young person distress or might have some mild impact on their ability to cope with everyday life such as going to or coping at school, seeing friends or taking part in leisure activities. The family may also be experiencing a degree of stress characterised by more arguments or disagreements around food/mealtimes, exercise levels/known or suspected vomiting. Other people may be commenting or noticing there is a difficulty or noticing change in weight. These difficulties may have been going on for a few weeks. Examples might be:

Examples might be

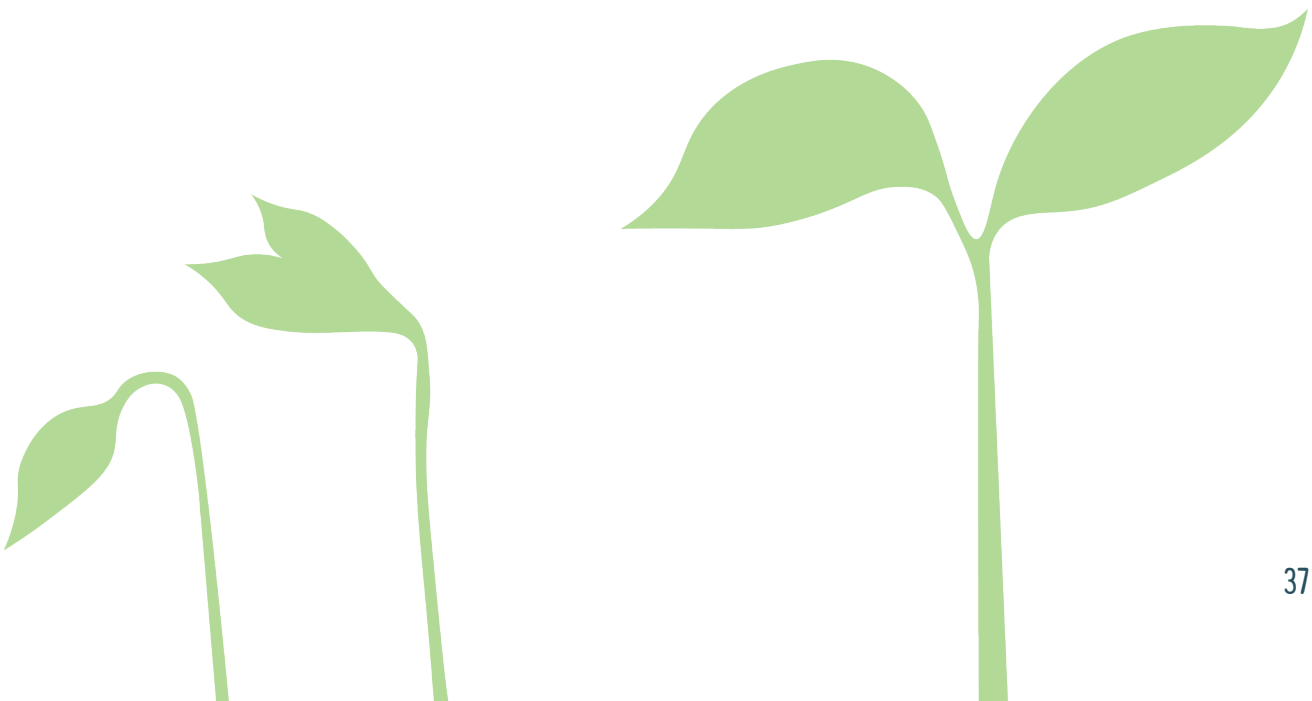
- A committed and persistent effort to lose weight or control weight or shape through; dieting/ restricting food intake, exercising/increased activity, purging (self-induced vomiting), taking laxatives or eating excessive amounts/ binging/constantly seeking food; gaining weigh.

Needs specialist help

The degree to which a child or young person experiences eating difficulties may cause the child or young person distress or might have an impact on their ability to cope with everyday life such as going to or coping at school, seeing friends or taking part in leisure activities. The family may also be experiencing a degree of stress characterised by; more arguments or disagreements around food/mealtimes or exercise levels/known or suspected vomiting. Other people may be commenting or noticing there is a difficulty or noticing change in weight.

- The difficulties may have had a sudden onset at a significant level of concern or may have been deteriorating gradually over a long period of time.

Emergency symptoms (seek immediate medical advice): Sudden or rapid weight loss, fainting/collapse, drowsiness, refusing food or drink for more than 24 hours, chest pains or concerns about daily vomiting.



What you might see or what a child or young person might report

Physical Sensations

- Rapid weight loss. This is a concern for both young people that lose weight and become underweight as well as young people who perhaps are overweight then lose weight and appear to be a healthy weight. It is the speed of weight loss not necessarily just their weight that is a concern.
- Children and young people with Type 1 diabetes may become more inconsistent with insulin and diabetes less well managed.
- Feeling physical unwell - dizzy, light-headed, chest pains, fainting, stomach pains, constipation or coldness.
- Symptoms of vomiting including bad breath, swollen or puffy face or poor dental health.
- For those who menstruate - periods become irregular or stop (they may stop asking for feminine hygiene products).
- Lethargic or tired.

Emotions

- Distress prior to, during or after meals.
- More emotionally labile/more sensitive (upset, irritable, withdrawn) especially when boundaries are put in around food or exercise.
- May appear more anxious.

Cognitions (Thoughts)

- Preoccupation with food/eating/weight or body shape or appearance.
- Lack of recognition of concern that others may have or minimising the extent of difficulties.
- May become rigid or fixed in their thinking and struggling to see things from the perspective of others.
- May struggle with concentration and motivation.

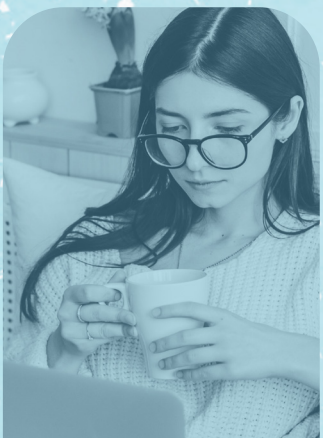
Behaviour

- Significant restriction of food and fluid, leading to rapid weight loss.
- Weight control behaviour including - exercise/increased activity, laxative/ diuretic misuse or self-induced vomiting.
- Your child may avoid eating - excuses such as ‘have already eaten’, ‘not hungry’ or ‘don’t feel well’.
- You might notice your child may want to prepare their own food or eat alone.
- Rituals around eating/preparing food such as weighing food and eating with certain crockery/cutlery.
- Unusual eating behaviour - unusual combinations of food or cutting up food into very small pieces/ eating very slowly.
- Hiding or throwing food away.
- Checking themselves in the mirror and weighing themselves or avoids mirrors altogether.
- May appear to want or need a routine, reassurance and struggle to cope with changes/ transitions or unpredictability.

Systemic

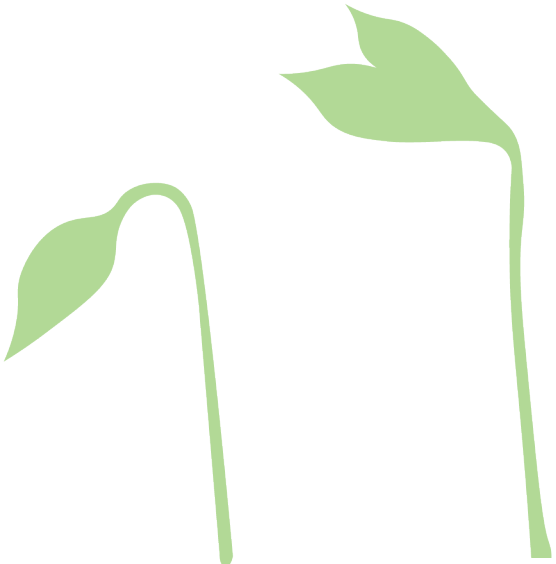
- Family stress and arguments (especially around food or mealtimes).





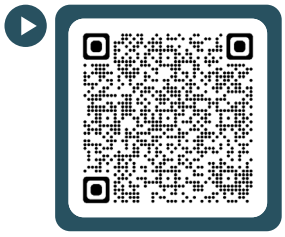
Things to try, support and next steps

- Share concerns with your child's school/college.
- See your child's GP - ask for physical observations to be taken (including height, weight, temperature, blood pressure, pulse and request a blood test).
- Important that all children and young people eat regularly so insisting upon breakfast, lunch and dinner plus snacks. Support and supervise meals and snacks. If a child or young person has severely restricted their food and fluid, you must seek advice from a medical professional about restarting eating and drinking as this needs to be done with careful monitoring of physical health.
- Encourage balanced life style. Explain that they need all food groups (carbohydrates, protein, vegetables and fruits, dairy/dairy alternatives).
- Ensure your child is well hydrated. Aim for 6-8 glasses per day (water, milk, avoid sugary drinks).
- Inform and access pastoral support from school/college.
- Monitor and restrict use of apps/gadgets that track exercise and food e.g. My Fitness Pal or Fitbit watches.
- Monitor use of social media and ensure only positive accounts are being followed/accessed.
- Access the **"Help I'm in Crisis"** Button on the Hampshire CAMHS website during times of stress or crisis: **hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk**
- Seek advice and consultation from our Specialist Eating Disorders Team: **0300 304 0062** or email: **SPNT.HANTSCAMHSEDT@nhs.net**

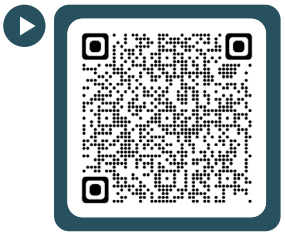


Strategies and resources to try

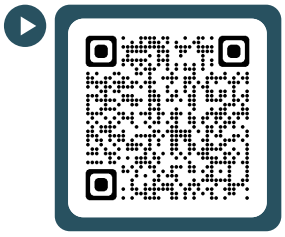
A workshop on boosting body image and self-esteem: **bit.ly/3SoELGN**



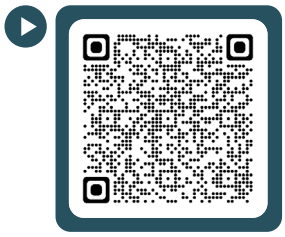
Practical tips for families caring for a child with an eating disorder: **bit.ly/3S5amxv**



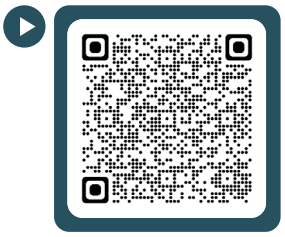
A video on the treatment approach for an eating disorder: **bit.ly/3C0e4Tj**



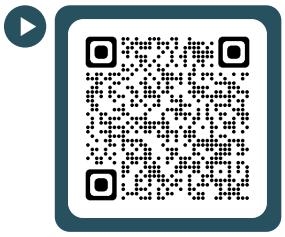
A workshop on supporting a young person with an eating difficulty: **bit.ly/2MnaU55**



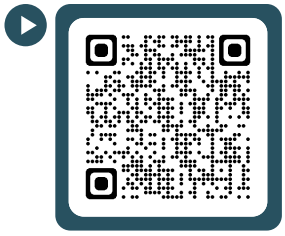
Managing a young person in crisis and suicide prevention: **bit.ly/3R3VnSY**



A workshop on supporting a young person with anxiety: **bit.ly/3EiWc6v**



A workshop on CARE (coping and resilience education skills): **bit.ly/2NyIRjG**



Family Breakdown

Families come in all kinds of combinations but it can be a really upsetting, confusing and stressful time when relationships between family members break down. If there are disagreements or arguments, this can make home life really tough which can impact on how a child/young person feels, how they cope at school/college, and even whether they want to take part in activities or spend time with family and friends.

Lots of children and young people worry about their parents/carers and siblings during a separation, or when there are arguments. It can also be hard if parents separate and one of them meets a new partner. Some children and young people may have to move house or live with new people.

Some children and young people may worry about how often they might see their family, or worry about how the family might cope. It is not uncommon that they worry if their parents have enough money. It's not uncommon for them to worry about whether parents separating is their fault.

When families experience a separation or a big change, it can take a while for all family members to understand, process and adjust to these changes. There is no right or wrong way to feel, think or behave. Everyone processes change differently. Some days a child/young person may feel more able to cope than other days. It is important to be aware that some family members may struggle more than others with the changes.

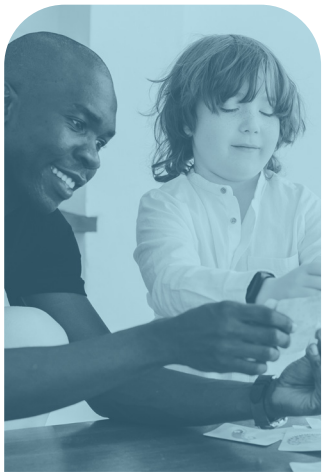
What it might look like if a child or young person is struggling with family conflict or breakdown

- A range of emotions from sadness, anger, fear, relief or even nothing at all.
- Difficulties accepting the changes (if there has been a breakdown).
- A sense of guilt, regret or responsibility.
- Having low self-esteem and lacking in confidence. Feeling not good enough or not as good as anyone else.
- Having physical (body) feelings such as a racing heart rate, quicker breathing, upset tummy, feeling sick, feeling dizzy and faint or sweaty hands.
- Having lots of "what if" thoughts, such as, "what if something bad happens?" which can result in them feeling too overwhelmed to engage in activities such as going to school.
- Feeling angry towards other people (this might mean they behave in an angry way by being irritable, shouting or being physically aggressive).
- Difficulties concentrating and struggling with motivation. You may notice or they may report they're not doing as well in their work at school.
- They may not feel like hanging out with family, their friends or doing sociable things.
- They might not enjoy their hobbies and interests as much as they once did.
- Problems with sleep (difficulties getting to or staying asleep and nightmares).
- For some children/young people they may wet the bed at night (this is often a sign of unhappiness and stress).
- They may have thoughts about harming themselves or ending their life.

Things that might help a child or young person who is struggling with family conflict or breakdown

- Acknowledging and normalising that it is usual to feel a range of emotions from sadness, anger, fear, relief or even nothing at all.
- Your child may find certain days (such as birthdays and family orientated times/significant celebrations/festivals) harder to deal with so thinking together about how to manage particularly tough days or dates can be helpful.
- Try to keep normal routines going as much as possible.
- Encourage your child to keep doing activities they enjoy and spend time with friends and family. Let them know that it is okay to feel happy, to laugh or to have fun.
- If they are finding it hard to talk about how they feel, they might find it easier to write down how they are feeling rather than talk.
- Finding ways to manage anxiety and stress can be very helpful.
- Share concerns with your child's school/college and identify whether additional pastoral support is available.
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**







Strategies and resources to try

A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: **bit.ly/3lBwUp7**

A coping strategy film on how to make your own self-soothe box: **bit.ly/2H6uDU1**

A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling: **bit.ly/3UxEbbJ**

A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: **bit.ly/3fcoINN**

Teenage Turmoil - a workshop for parents to better understand why the teenage years are so challenging: **bit.ly/3Bzt1KD**

A workshop on getting good sleep: **bit.ly/45vAmc9**

A workshop on supporting a young person with anxiety: **bit.ly/3EiWc6v**

A workshop on CARE (coping and resilience education skills): **bit.ly/2NyIRjG**

Passing Clouds - a guided mindfulness video**:** **bit.ly/3R2EdsB**

Leaves on a Stream - a video on mindfulness: **bit.ly/44wXoxU**





Friendships and Loneliness

Friendships are great when things are going well, but life can feel pretty miserable and stressful if a child/young person is struggling to make friends or when there are arguments and they fall out.

Loneliness is an emotion that many children/young people may feel from time to time. It can often arise from a child or young person feeling dissatisfied with either the quantity or quality of the social connections and relationships they have with others. It can also result from feeling misunderstood, uncared for by others or feeling somehow 'different' from their peer group. This means that even if a child or young person appears to have many friends or people to 'hang out with' inside or outside of school, they may still experience feelings of loneliness.

What it might look like if a child or young person is struggling with the feeling of loneliness

- Low self-esteem - thinking or believing they are not good enough or expressing a desire to punish themselves. They may make statements of worthlessness or hopelessness.
- Appearing uncaring or unbothered about people or activities they previously would have cared about. This may lead to not honouring commitments or responsibilities, which is uncharacteristic.
- Emotionally labile - frequent changes of emotion and appearing more sensitive (irritable, upset).
- Feeling flat, empty, numb, hopeless and helpless.
- Acting withdrawn and uncommunicative. May lead to refusal to leave the house or attend/take part in activities such as school, hobbies, interests, seeing friends.
- Persistent efforts to engage with others and seek social contact.
- Seeking verbal reassurance and checking things are OK with others including peers.
- Disrupted sleep - difficulties getting to or staying asleep, waking very early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep or oversleeping.
- Changes in appetite and eating behaviour. A loss of appetite and reduced food and fluid intake or an increase in appetite and consumption of food and fluids.
- Physical symptoms including headaches, digestive upset and pain.
- They may have thoughts about harming themselves or ending their life.

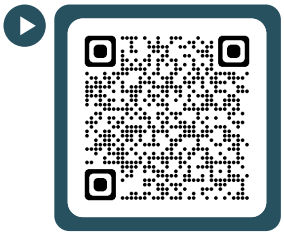
Things that might help a child or young person if they are experiencing difficulties in their friendships or feel lonely

- Acknowledging and normalising that it is usual to feel a range of emotions.
- Try to keep normal routines going as much as possible.
- Encourage your child to keep doing activities they enjoy. Discourage them from avoiding social opportunities when they arise.
- If they are finding it hard to talk about how they feel, they might find it easier to write down how they are feeling rather than talk.
- Remind your child that If they are being bullied, it is not their fault and they do not deserve to be abused or made to feel any less of a person.
- Find hobbies and activities that will boost their self-esteem and confidence. Joining new groups or clubs will give them the opportunity to meet new people and make new friends.
- Encourage your child to practice 'safe social media use'. Block, unfriend, mute and delete anyone or any group that is unhelpful. If social media is a problem, delete the apps off their phones/tablet. Encourage your child to turn their phone off at night.

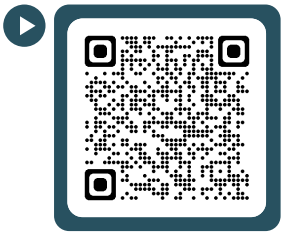
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Strategies and resources to try

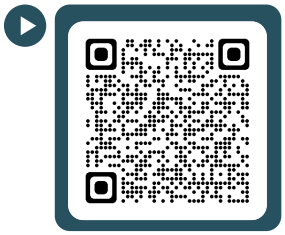
A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: **bit.ly/3lBwUp7**



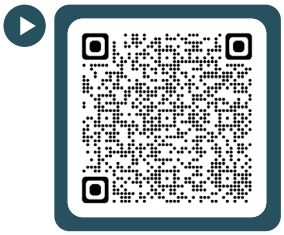
A coping strategy film on how to make your own self-soothe box: **bit.ly/2H6uDU1**



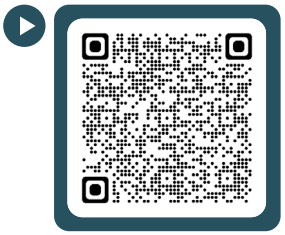
A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling: **bit.ly/3UxEbbJ**



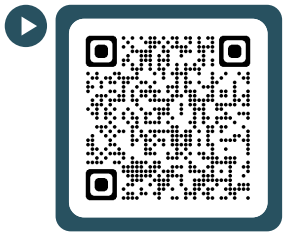
A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: **bit.ly/3fcoINN**



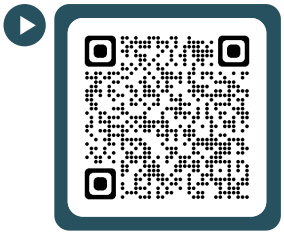
Teenage Turmoil - a workshop for parents to better understand why the teenage years are so challenging: **bit.ly/3Bzt1KD**



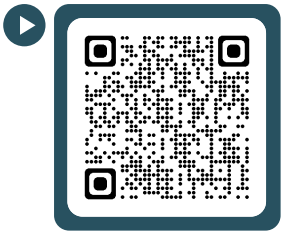
A workshop on getting good sleep: **bit.ly/45vAmc9**



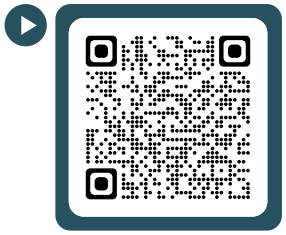
A workshop on supporting a young person with anxiety: **bit.ly/3EiWc6v**



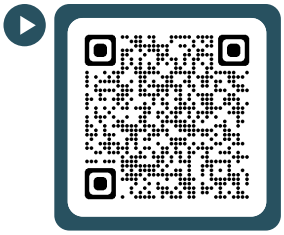
A workshop on CARE (coping and resilience education skills): **bit.ly/2NyIRjG**



Passing Clouds - a guided mindfulness video: **bit.ly/3R2EdsB**



Leaves on a Stream - a video on mindfulness: **bit.ly/44wXoxU**



Gaming Addiction

Lots of people like to play video or online games and can spend many hours gaming. For many people this is OK and they are able to have other hobbies and interests, such as, seeing friends and getting on with their everyday life. For others this love of gaming can tip into being unhelpful and impact on their life in a damaging way.

It is possible to be at risk of or develop an addiction to gaming in a similar way to those who are at risk of becoming addicted to substances (such as drugs or alcohol).

What it might look or feel like if a child or young person is struggling with problematic gaming

- Constantly thinking about or wanting to play video games.
- Feeling irritable and restless (fidgety) when not playing.
- Underreporting or lying about how much time they've spent playing or playing in secret (such as in the middle of the night).
- Tiredness, headaches or hand pain from too much screen time and use of controllers.
- Not wanting to pay attention to things such as personal hygiene (washing) or eating.
- Not seeing friends as often or doing other things they used to enjoy because all their time is spent gaming/online.
- Not wanting to go to school so that they can play video games.
- Sleep disturbance (difficulties getting to or staying asleep or restless sleep with or without nightmares).

Not everyone who has a gaming addiction will experience all these signs and symptoms. If a child or young person is experiencing some of these signs and symptoms this doesn't necessarily mean that they have a gaming addition. It's important to get further help and advice.

Things that might help a child or young person who is experiencing problematic gaming

- Helping your child to develop an awareness and understanding of their gaming behaviour and how this is having a detrimental impact on their wellbeing and or functioning. Having an open, non-judgemental, non-blaming/critical conversation sharing concerns and observations may be a starting point.
- Remaining open and curious to the lived and felt experience of your child will help you both to better understand the drivers and rewards (factors which make gaming more likely) for your child.
- If a child or young person is gaming, ensure that they are playing age appropriate games. Games have age ratings just like films. Pan European Game Information (PEGI) **pegi.info** provides detailed age ratings to help you decide how appropriate a game is for your child.
- Some games allow players to connect and interact with others, including people they may not know. Make sure your child knows how to protect themselves online by not sharing personal information. If you or your child are concerned about online interactions, you can report it to Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) **bit.ly/3T9avA4** who can advise and support you.

- Aim to work together with your child in reducing the time spent gaming. This may need to be done in stages. Think together about how to stop a gaming session. Strategies which may help could include using a timer to remind them how much gaming time they've got left. You can do this using in-game timers to set a fixed play time, or alternatively, agree a stopping point in a way that works for the game they're playing – for example, stopping at the end of a particular level.
- It can be helpful to think about other activities that the child/young person can engage with to replace or fill the time they previously would have spent gaming. It will be important to acknowledge other activities may not be as enjoyable or seen as important to the child or young person, so they will need regular encouragement.
- Set family boundaries for time spent on technology such as TVs, phones, games consoles and computer systems etc. This could include cut off times for WIFI or use of technology. Here is a useful tool to help you create your own family agreement: **childnet.com/resources/family-agreement/** short link: **bit.ly/3COtZob**
- There is more information and advice on the Big Deal Website (Gaming information, advice and support for children and young people): **bigdeal.org.uk**
- There is more information on the Ask About Games Website: **askaboutgames.com**
- Share concerns with your child's school/college and identify whether additional pastoral support is available.
- If a child or young person is in crisis they can call **116123** or text YM to **85258** (free to call or text 24hrs a day 7 days a week)
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**

Strategies and resources to try

A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: **bit.ly/3lBwUp7**

Coping strategy film - how to make your own self-soothe box: **bit.ly/2H6uDU1**

A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling: **bit.ly/3UxEbbJ**

Coping strategy film - how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: **bit.ly/3fcoINN**

Coping strategy film - on breathing techniques: **bit.ly/3UyD3Vk**

Gender Identity

Gender identity refers to who you are and your sense of self. Our gender identity can be very important to who we are as a person.

Someone's gender identity might match or be different from their biological sex. Biological sex (chromosomes, gonads, hormones and genitals) are determined by someone's genetic makeup. Gender identity is someone's own personal sense of gender and how they choose to express this regardless of biology and physiology.

For some people, they know and feel certain about their gender whereas for others it may not be as clear.

What it might feel like if a child or young person is struggling with their gender identity

- Preferring to be by themselves and not spending as much time with family or friends. Not wanting to do things or interact with other people.
- Feeling alone.
- Feeling upset with the changes that happen to their body, particularly during puberty such as having periods, body hair growth and their voice changing.
- Worrying about how to dress or present themselves to others. Finding it hard and upsetting going clothes shopping.
- Feeling uncomfortable using biological sex pronouns.
- Feeling uncomfortable wearing gender based school uniform.
- Feeling uncomfortable using designated biological sex toilets.
- Feeling upset and anxious about P.E. and having to get changed in front of others.
- Worrying about what others might say or do if they found out the struggle with their gender identity.
- Feeling hopeless and struggling to see a future.
- Thoughts, urges or plans to harm themselves or some thoughts to end their life.
- Problems with sleep (difficulties getting to or staying asleep, waking very early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep).
- Having low self-esteem and lacking in confidence.
- Misusing substances such as drugs or alcohol.

Things that might help a child or young person who is struggling with their gender identity

- Not all children and young people will be certain about their gender identity. Let them know it's ok not to be sure or to be curious. They don't have to be certain or decide, they can take the time they need.
- It's important to remind your child that we're all unique and there is only one them.

- It can be helpful for you and your child to be aware of the NHS Rainbow Badge Scheme. If you see someone who works in the NHS wearing a Rainbow NHS badge this means that they have completed specialist training in LGBTQ+ issues including supporting people who may be struggling with their sexuality and gender. It shows that the wearer is there to listen without judgement and to provide information and support if needed.
- If a child or young person is in crisis they can call **116123** or text YM to **85258** (free to call or text 24hrs a day 7 days a week)
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Useful websites and resources

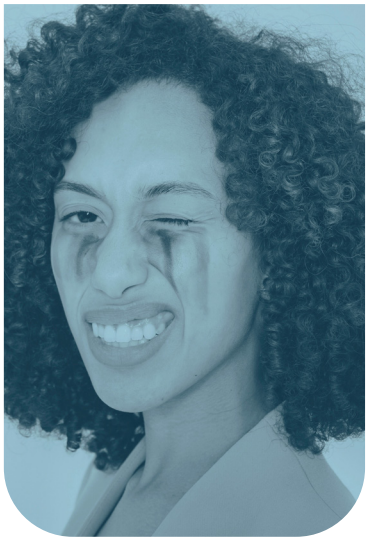
A short film to explain what the NHS Rainbow Badge Scheme is: **bit.ly/3DzPUQi**

The Proud Trust: **TheProudTrust.org**

Breakout Youth (Hampshire specific): **YServices.co.uk**

LGBTQ+ Youth in Care: **LgbtYouthInCare.com**

Hampshire CAMHS sexuality and gender identity section: **bit.ly/45g9E7j**





Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

OCD is a mental health disorder which has two components, obsessions and compulsions. Obsessions are often repetitive and intrusive thoughts, images or urges which can cause significant distress, anxiety and or shame.

Compulsions are behavioural routines, rituals and activities that are done repeatedly in an attempt to manage or reduce the anxiety/obsession. People who engage in compulsions often say they feel they 'have' to do these activities 'just right' or until they 'feel right'. The person will continue to do their compulsions even if they don't make logical sense and take a long time to complete. Compulsions can interrupt daily life or cause significant distress.

Obsessions and compulsions can vary in their frequency, intensity and duration on a day to day basis. Here's a guide to help you know how best to support your child if they have OCD.

Type and Nature of Worry

Coping/needs some support:

It is common for children and young people to experience worrying or intrusive thoughts as they develop through childhood and adolescence. The typical worries children and young people experience tend to be situation specific. These worries are short term and can be managed with the love and support of parents/carers. Children and young people may also engage in safety behaviour activities, that reduce anxiety, as they believe it will prevent the things they worry about happening.

Examples of worries

- Worrying you have forgotten to do something.
- Worrying about something bad happening (failing tests, getting things wrong, being told off, either themselves or someone they care about having an accident, either themselves or someone they care about becoming unwell, either themselves or someone they care about dying).

Examples of safety behaviour

- Having lucky mascots or items (for tests or exams).
- Seeking reassurance and checking with others that things (situations/ people/ items) are safe or ok.
- Not wanting to be left alone or staying in close proximity to a safe adult.

Needs help

The degree to which a child or young person worries appears out of context or disproportionate to the reason why they might be worrying. Episodes of anxiety, obsessions and compulsions might be more frequent or prolonged. Cause the child or young person distress, or might have some mild impact on their ability to cope with everyday life. They may struggle with going to or coping at school/college, seeing friends or taking part in leisure activities.

Examples of obsessions might be

- Fears that something bad might happen to themselves or someone else.

Examples of compulsions might be

- Seeking reassurance and checking with others that things (situations, people or items) are safe or ok.
- Not wanting to be left alone or staying in close proximity to a safe adult.
- Having some rules, rituals or routines to help them manage or cope with situations they find challenging.

Needs specialist help

These anxieties are severe and enduring. These cause significant distress to the child or young person and significantly disrupt their ability to cope daily, when they are at school/college, socialising and even self-care activities (sleeping, bathing and eating). Despite trying self help or community based help (school/college and GP) difficulties remain. This is the point when you should consider accessing specialist support from a service such as CAMHS.

Examples of obsessions include

- Worrying you have harmed someone or going to harm someone through not being careful or losing control.
- Violent or disturbing thoughts or images (which lead the person to believe they are a danger to others).
- Worries about not being good enough (which can lead to friendship and relationship breakdown).
- Sexually intrusive thoughts which often cause doubt, distress and shame.
- Fears of contamination (worries about catching or spreading illness).
- Other fears that something bad will happen and that you are responsible.

Examples of compulsions include

- Rituals (doing things in certain orders, a certain number of times or in a certain way).
- Checking behaviour.
- Correcting behaviour (repeating or replacing with counteractive thoughts, images or behaviour).
- Seeking reassurance.

Some children or young people will visibly demonstrate compulsions whereas others may have more internal mental compulsions. It may not be obvious to others that they are struggling with compulsions if they are internal.

What you might see or what a child or young person might report

Physical Sensations

- Some episodes of panicking such as getting distressed, racing heart rate, quicker breathing, upset tummy, feeling sick, feeling dizzy or faint.
- Disrupted sleep (difficulties getting to or staying asleep, nightmares/night terrors).

Emotions

- May become distressed or agitated when facing fear or even thinking about facing their fear.
- May become agitated, distressed, oppositional or aggressive towards others when in a situation they are particularly fearful of.
- May experience shame or guilt as a result of certain obsessions thoughts, images, urges or compulsions.

Cognitions (Thoughts)

- Strong unwavering beliefs that something bad might happen or that there is danger which they are responsible/accountable for in some way.
- Repeated, intense and overwhelming "what if" thoughts that are catastrophic in nature.
- Thoughts and beliefs are rigid and cannot be challenged or thought about from a different perspective (they 100% belief that something bad will happen).
- Thoughts and images may be graphic, frightening or distressing. They may occur without warning and cause preoccupation.

It is important to note that obsessions and images are not necessarily reflective of someone's true beliefs, values or desires. This is in part why they cause a significant degree of distress. People rarely act upon thoughts and urges they may have.

Behaviour

- Persistent physical or verbal seeking of reassurance (being clingy and not wanting to be separated from a parent/carer, not wanting to be left alone).
- Resistance to doing things, requiring a lot of cajoling or persuading.
- Refusal to leave the house or attend/take part in activities such as school/college, hobbies, interests and seeing friends.
- Repeated patterns of behaviour or routines that do not make logical sense (repeated checking or counting). These behaviours or routines must be carried out until the child or young person 'feels right'. Regardless of how long it takes or the impact they have on other commitments and other people.
- Demanding things be done in certain ways or requesting others to do things for them.
- May appear forgetful, distracted or preoccupied. You may see mumbling or murmuring as some children and young people will recite something, count or engage in mental or verbal 'counteractive' compulsions.

Systemic

- Families might also find themselves struggling to do things as they normally would as they may make adjustments to accommodate how the child or young person is feeling or responding.
- There may be conflict or arguments between the child or young person and family members or between family members.





Things to try, support and next steps

- Normalise that we all have intrusive, unusual, upsetting, confusing thoughts and images or urges from time to time. Just because we have a particular thought, image or urge, does not make us a bad person. It does not mean that thinking about the thought will make it come true or that we have to act on it. Be open to listening and try not to judge the thoughts and worries your child may be struggling with.
- Normalise that anxiety is a natural emotion.The physical sensations of anxiety can be unpleasant but it's OK, it will pass and won't cause any harm.
- Be patient and kind. Even if the obsessions and or compulsions do not make sense to you, they are real and likely to be distressing your child.
- Whilst supporting your child, it is important to not to get involved with compulsive behaviour by helping them with routines, rituals, following rules or offering persistent reassurance. This will inadvertently reinforce the belief that doing compulsions is the only way to manage the anxiety. Instead support them to manage their anxiety and compulsions.
- Encourage, reward and praise your child for not avoiding situations where they fear their obsessions or compulsions may occur. The more your child avoids, the more anxious they will become. By encouraging your child to face their fear more, it will become easier for them to manage their anxiety.
- Share concerns with your child's school/college and identify whether additional pastoral support is available.
- Depending on the context and origins of the anxiety being experienced, other services may be helpful (family guidance if there is family breakdown or conflict).
- Role model and demonstrate that you can do things even when you're anxious.
- Supporting your child to problem solve any obvious triggers.
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**

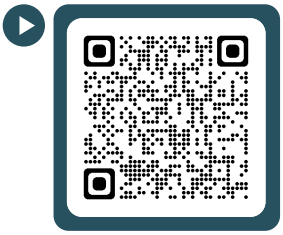
Strategies and resources to try

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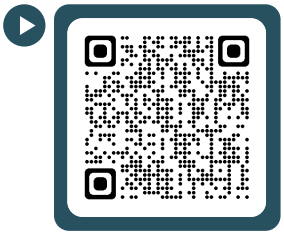
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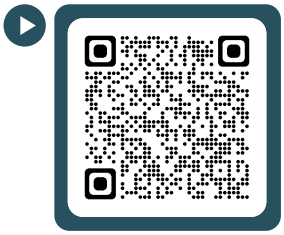
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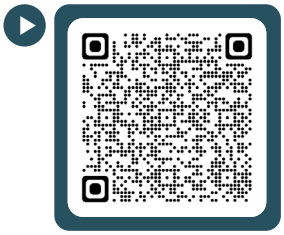
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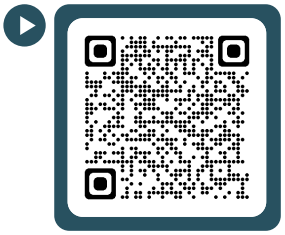
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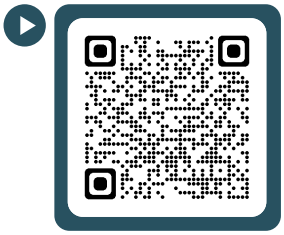
Coping strategy film - on performing the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: **bit.ly/3fcoINN**



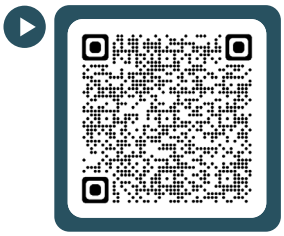
Coping strategy film - how to help your child set achievable goals: **bit.ly/3DGOion**



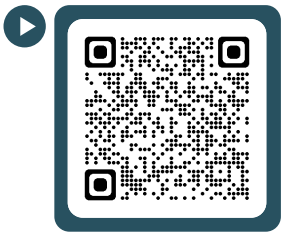
Coping strategy film - on breathing techniques: **bit.ly/3UyD3Vk**



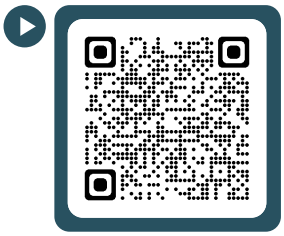
Teenage Turmoil - a workshop for parents to better understand why the teenage years are so challenging: **bit.ly/3Bzt1KD**



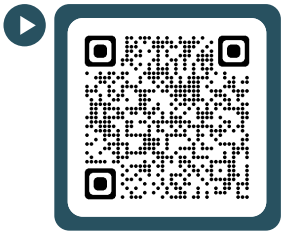
The Window of Tolerance - a short film to explain a model of emotion regulation and how much we can and can't cope with: **bit.ly/3dC5KQn**



A short film about how people connect, give and receive love and nurture in different ways and approaches: **bit.ly/3xILd3D**



Maslow's hierarchy of needs - a short film to explain the different types and levels of needs we as humans have for healthy growth, development, happiness and functioning and why these are important: **bit.ly/3QXWEuU**



Self-esteem

Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves in general. People with good self-esteem are generally confident and accepting of themselves. They are able to see their positive qualities and experience feelings, such as pride in themselves. Those with low self-esteem may experience thoughts or beliefs about not being good enough and struggle to identify positive qualities or characteristics in themselves. Most people will feel unsure or lack confidence in themselves from time to time, especially when trying something new.

What it might look like or feel like if a child or young person is struggling with low self-esteem

- Comparing themselves negatively to other people (appearance, academic success, sporting ability etc).
- Being self-critical and struggling to identify or accept personal positive qualities, traits, characteristics or successes.
- Dismissing or discounting positive feedback from others.
- Belief that others do not have genuine positive intentions towards them (they are only speaking to me to get something from me/to be polite/because they have to, not because they genuinely want to).
- Not sharing opinions or preferences. Not believing these are important or equal to others' (can lead to agreement to do things they don't really want to do).
- Making assumptions that acts of injustice are deserved (bad things happened to me because I am a bad person/I deserved it).
- Taking personal responsibility for things beyond their control.
- May experience reluctance to try new things due to anxiety.
- Episodes of low mood.
- May experience difficulties making and maintain friendships.
- May have traits of perfectionism and struggle with making mistakes, real or perceived failure.
- Worry about letting other people down.

Things that might help a child or young person who is experiencing low self-esteem

- Notice, comment, encourage and praise - individuality, personality, characteristics, morals, values, ethics, behaviour, skills, effort, passion, goals, ambition, friendships, hobbies and interests.
- Role model being kind to yourself and prioritising self-care needs.
- Encourage acceptance, kindness and compassion towards others and themselves.
- Let them know they should not be afraid to voice their ideas and opinions. It's ok when people disagree, we all see things differently.
- Role model and normalise making mistakes. Let them know you value effort rather than perfection and encourage them to try new things regardless of the outcome.
- Help children/young people discover and develop their talents, through clubs, groups and activities.

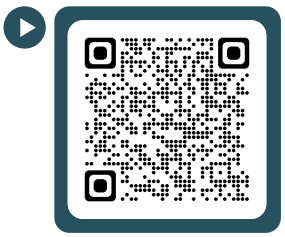
- Help your child understand that skill acquisition takes time so when they say "I can't do it" add in "yet" so it becomes "I can't do it yet".
- There is more information on the Dove Self-Esteem Project website for parents and carers: **dove.com/uk/dove-self-esteem-project/help-for-parents.html** short link: **bit.ly/3yC8qVy**
- Share concerns with your child's school/college and identify whether additional pastoral support is available.
- There is a lot of information on the Hampshire CAMHS website: **hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk/issue/body-image-self-esteem/** short link: **bit.ly/3Ey6v7Z**
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**

Strategies and resources to try

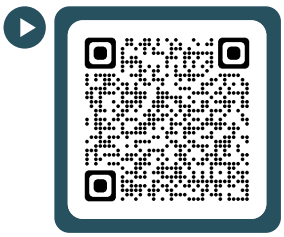
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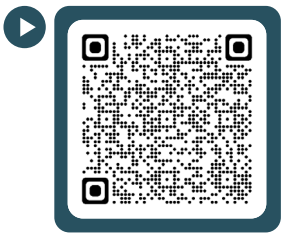
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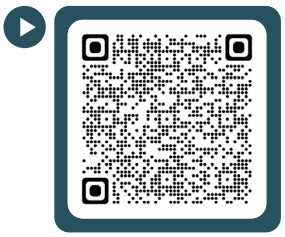
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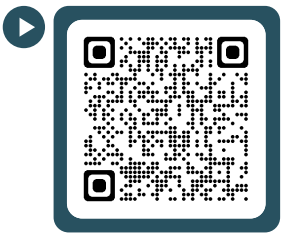
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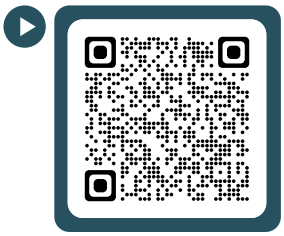
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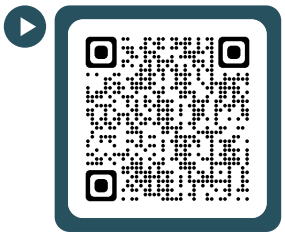
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Sexuality

Sexual orientation refers to who someone is romantically or sexually attracted to. For some people, they know and feel certain about their sexuality whereas for others it may not be as clear. It can take time to fully understand thoughts and feelings.

For others it will be clear but may still cause worry or stress. Many teenagers will be curious about or question their sexuality at some point.

What it might feel like if a child or young person is struggling with their sexuality

- Preferring to be by themselves and not spending as much time with family or friends. Not wanting to do things or interact with other people.
- Feeling alone.
- Problems with sleep (difficulties getting to or staying asleep, waking very early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep).
- Worrying about what others might say or do if they found out.
- Feeling hopeless and struggling to see a future.
- Feeling anxious and having lots of "what if" thoughts (such as "what if something bad happens?").
- Thoughts, urges or plans to harm themselves or some thoughts to end their life.
- Low self-esteem and confidence.
- Difficulties with concentration and motivation. You might notice or they might report not doing as well in their schoolwork.
- Misusing substances such as drugs or alcohol.

Things that might help a child or young person who is struggling with their sexuality

- Not all children and young people will be certain about their sexuality/sexual orientation. Let them know it's OK not to be sure or to be curious. They don't have to be certain or decide, they can take the time that they need.
- It's important to remind your child that we're all unique and there is only one them.
- It can be helpful for you and your child to be aware of the NHS Rainbow Badge Scheme. If you see someone who works in the NHS wearing a Rainbow NHS badge, this means that they have completed specialist training in LGBTQ+ issues including supporting people who may be struggling with their sexuality and gender. It shows that the wearer is there to listen without judgement and to provide information and support if needed.
- If a child or young person is in crisis they can call **116123** or text YM to **85258** **(free to call or text 24hrs a day 7 days a week)**
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**

Useful websites and resources

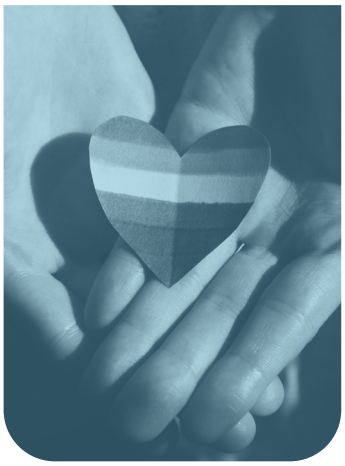
A short film to explain what the NHS Rainbow Badge Scheme is:
bit.ly/3DzPUQi

The Proud Trust:
TheProudTrust.org

Breakout Youth (Hampshire specific): **YServices.co.uk**

LGBTQ+ Youth in Care:
LgbtYouthInCare.com

Hampshire CAMHS sexuality and gender identity section:
bit.ly/3f6XZ5F







Sleep

Lots of children and young people find getting to sleep, staying asleep or waking up a real problem. Disrupted, broken or insufficient sleep can really impact on people's mood and ability to cope with daily life.

Sleep is important for growth and development. Teenagers aged 13-18 years should regularly sleep 8-11 hours per 24 hours.

Factors that impact on quality and amount of sleep

- The sleep environment may be too noisy, messy, too hot or too cold.
- The bed being uncomfortable.
- Not having a regular sleep routine.
- Not getting enough physical exercise during the day.
- Eating too late in the evening- and finding it hard to get off to sleep because of feeling full, uncomfortable or having provided your body with a boost of energy (particularly if sugary food has been eaten).
- Going to bed hungry and waking up too early because of hunger.
- Drinks containing caffeine, such as tea, coffee and energy drinks.
- Illness, pain, or a high temperature.
- Feeling worried or low in mood.
- Overthinking and having a busy brain.
- Medications that affect sleep.
- Drug and alcohol misuse.
- Engaging in stimulating activity such as using a phone, watching TV or playing games on a console immediately before bed.

What can help a child or young people get good quality and enough sleep

- Create a calming and peaceful sleeping environment. Rooms that are dark and cool are best for sleep.
- Aim to have a regular bedtime routine and sleep pattern, this includes going to bed and getting up at the same time every day.
- If at all possible, avoid using the bed for studying, reading or listening to music. Ideally, the bed space should only be used for sleeping.
- Avoid napping during the day.
- Avoid drinking caffeinated drinks (tea, coffee, energy drinks) particularly before bedtime.
- Avoid drinking too much before bed and go to the toilet as part of a night time routine.
- Avoid engaging in highly stimulating activities before bedtime such as using a phone, watching TV or playing games on a console.

- Avoid exercising right before bedtime.
- Exercise during the day.
- Get organised for the day ahead so this reduces any worry or thinking about what needs to be done.
- Encourage your child to talk to someone they trust about anything that's bothering them that might be keeping them awake.

Useful websites and resources

Hampshire CAMHS sleep help and guidance: **bit.ly/3etqTMZ**

The Sleep Council: **sleepcouncil.org.uk**

The Sleep Charity: **thesleepcharity.org.uk**

The Sleep Foundation: **bit.ly/3etr8rn**

A workshop on getting good sleep: **bit.ly/45vAmc9**

A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: **bit.ly/3fcoINN**

A coping strategy film on breathing techniques: **bit.ly/3UyD3Vk**

Substance Misuse (Drugs and Alcohol)

Substance misuse refers to using alcohol, illicit drugs or prescription medications in a way they are not meant to be used. Substance misuse amongst children and young people can vary from experimentation, occasional social usage through to dependency and addiction.

Substance misuse, of any form, can have a detrimental impact on young people's health, well-being and functioning.

Alongside peer group culture, expectations and norms, parental attitudes and the examples that parents set regarding their own use of alcohol, tobacco, prescription drugs, and other substances are a powerful influence on the decision making, attitude and behaviour of a child or young person.

What you might notice if a child or young person is misusing substances

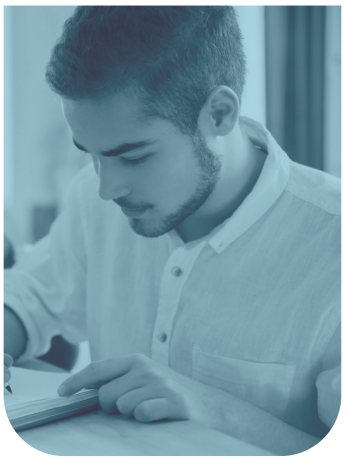
- Not wanting to pay attention to things such as personal hygiene (washing) or eating.
- Not seeing friends as often or doing other things they used to enjoy doing.
- Not wanting to go to school/college.
- Sleep disturbance (difficulties getting to or staying asleep, restless sleep, day night reversal or excessive sleeping during the day if awake at night).
- Finding drugs or drug paraphernalia (such as vapes, pipes, syringes, and scales).
- Erratic, changeable or uncharacteristic behaviour and labile (changeable, up and down) emotional states.
- A change in friendship groups.
- Poor motivation and concentration which may impact on academic performance and achievements.
- Poor physical health.

Things that might help a child or young person if a they are experiencing difficulties with substance abuse

- **Talk to Frank -** this website is helpful if you are concerned about substance misuse in a child or young person: **talktofrank.com** short link: **bit.ly/3er0Q99**
- **Re-Solv: UK's solvent abuse charity -** this website is helpful if you are concerned about solvent abuse by a child or young person. Solvent abuse advice and support: **re-solv.org**
- **NSPCC Children and drugs -** This website offers information and advice about how speak to a child or young person about substance misuse: **nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/talking-drugs-alcohol/children-and-drugs/** short link: **bit.ly/3esaGrD**
- **We Are With You -** this website offers information, advice and support about substance misuse: **wearewithyou.org.uk**
- **Adfam -** this website offers information, advise and support for families affected by drugs or alcohol: **adfam.org.uk**
- **Nacoa -** this website is helpful for children and young people affected by a parent's alcohol use: **nacoa.org.uk/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMInOf5xPvj-AIVTOztCh2wqg_yEAAYASAAEgISVvD_BwE** short link: **bit.ly/3rN0Vas**

Supporting a young person who is misusing substances: **bit.ly/3fAIwLA**







Tics and Tourettes Syndrome

Tics are involuntary repetitive sounds or movements. Tics can be 'simple', involving one movement or sound or they can be 'complex' which involve various movements and or sounds.

Examples of simple tics

- Sudden movements of body parts such as moving the head.
- Blinking and winking.
- Facial twitches.
- Touching one's face repeatedly.
- Coughing.
- Sniffing.
- Clearing one's throat.
- Licking/biting lips.
- Grunting/screeching/making unusual sounds.

Examples of complex tics

- Performing things in a certain order or manner.
- A combination of simple tics.
- Saying words or phrases (particularly out of context).

Tics can be common in childhood and will quite often improve without any intervention.

Tics can both lead to and be exacerbated by stress or anxiety. Those who experience tics may also feel embarrassed and shame.

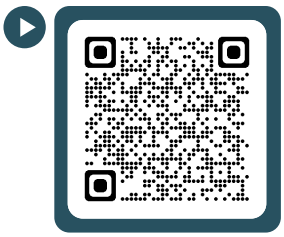
Tourette's Syndrome is diagnosed when a person has multiple tics which have lasted for longer than a year and impact on their wellbeing or functioning.

Things that might help a child or your person who experiences tics

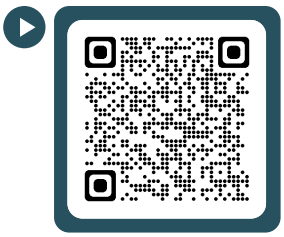
- It's important to remember that often tics are involuntary (they are not doing it on purpose) so getting cross or frustrated and telling them to stop will only add to their anxiety, frustration and shame. Try to be compassionate and understanding.
- Finding ways to manage anxiety and stress can be very helpful.
- Share concerns with your child's school/college and identify whether additional pastoral support is available.
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**
- PDF worksheet on tic attacks and how to cope with them: **tourettes-action.org.uk/storage/downloads/1615388654_Factsheet---Tic-Attacks.pdf** short link: **bit.ly/3EEEgVk**
- More information and advice is available from Great Ormond Street Hospital: **gosh.nhs.uk/conditions-and-treatments/conditions-we-treat/tourette-syndrome/** short link: **bit.ly/3CTuA8l**
- More information and advice is available from Tourette's Action: **Tourettes-Action.org.uk**

Strategies and resources to try

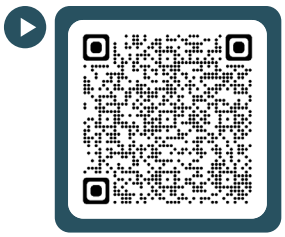
A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: **bit.ly/3lBwUp7**



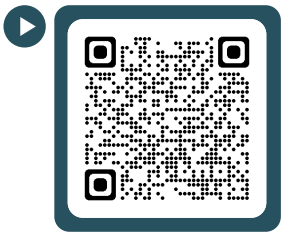
A coping strategy film on how to make your own self-soothe box: **bit.ly/2H6uDU1**



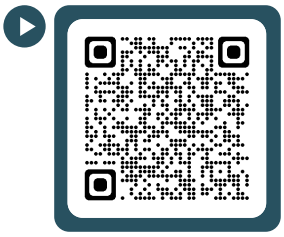
A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: **bit.ly/3fcoINN**



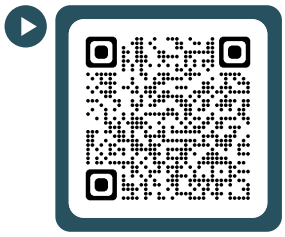
Coping strategy film on breathing techniques: **bit.ly/3UyD3Vk**



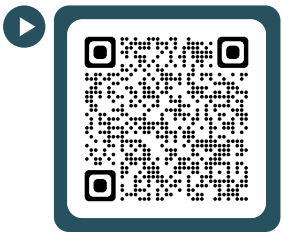
Leaves on a Stream - a video on mindfulness: **bit.ly/44wXoxU**



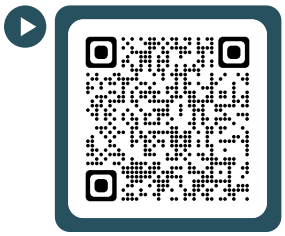
Passing Clouds - a guided mindfulness video: **bit.ly/3R2EdsB**



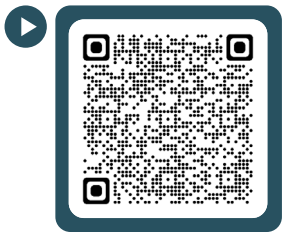
A workshop on supporting a young person with anxiety: **bit.ly/3EiWc6v**



A workshop on getting good sleep: **bit.ly/45vAmc9**



Teenage Turmoil - a workshop for parents to better understand why the teenage years are so challenging: **bit.ly/3Bzt1KD**





Trauma

Difficult, upsetting or traumatic events and experiences happen to young people. Any event or incident can be considered traumatic if it is very upsetting, scary, shocking, causes physical or emotional harm directly (to them) or indirectly (to someone else). There's no right or wrong way to feel, think or behave. Everyone processes trauma differently. Some children and young people may feel more able to cope than others. Here's a guide to help you know how best to support your young person if they experience a traumatic event.

Type and Nature of Worry

Coping/needs some support

It is common for children and young people to experience situations which are distressing, confusing or frightening as they develop through childhood and adolescence. A typical traumatic event that children and young people experience tends to be situation specific and short term. This can be managed with the love and support of parents/carers.

Examples of situations that may cause/contribute to a young person feeling distressed might be:

- Adjusting to changes (such as a new school).
- Friendships or relationship issues.
- Episodes of being teased or bullied (including being or feeling left out or excluded).
- Being physically poorly or in pain.
- Family breakdown or conflict.
- Grief or loss (of a pet, family member or friend).
- Accidents (e.g. breaking an arm).
- Unexpected events.
- Watching age/developmentally inappropriate material (e.g. films, games).

Needs help

The degree to which a child or young person reacts to a difficult or distressing event lasts longer than a couple of days/weeks and causes the young person distress or might have some mild impact on their ability to cope with everyday life such as going to or coping at school, seeing friends or taking part in leisure activities.

Examples of situations or events that may cause/contribute to a young person feeling distressed might be:

- Being routinely teased or bullied (including being or feeling left out or excluded).
- Grief or loss (including romantic relationships ending).
- Witness or experience of conflict (at home or school).
- Witness or experiencing an accident or injury.
- Family and relationship stressors (family breakdown parent/sibling ill-health, financial or social stressors).

Needs specialist help

The child or young person is displaying signs of trauma/Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. These difficulties cause significant distress to a young person and significantly disrupt daily coping such as school/college, socialising and even self-care activities (sleep, bathing and eating). The child or young person experiences trauma symptoms at least one month after the traumatic event.

Examples of situations that may cause/contribute to a young person feeling low in mood or depressed:

- Severe/chronic bullying or abuse (including neglect, emotional, physical and sexual).
- Social or family financial stressors (such as family breakdown, conflict or parental/sibling ill-health).
- Grief or loss.
- Witnessing or experiencing a traumatic event.
- Witness or experiencing an accident or injury.
- Overwhelmed by pressures and stressors including individual factors - health, social factors, relationships, occupational factors (school/college, environment and living circumstances).



What you might see or what a child or young person might report

Physical Sensations

- Disrupted sleep - difficulties getting to or staying asleep, waking very early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep.
- Nightmares/night terrors (that may or may not be linked to the traumatic event).
- May seem more on-edge or jumpy at times at other times may seem to be 'in their own world/day dream type state'.
- May experience episodes of acute physiological arousal - racing heart/ palpitations, shallow paced breathing, sweaty or nausea.

Emotions

- Episodes where the young person appears non-reactive/shut down/in a day-dream type state.
- Appearing uncaring or unbothered about people or activities they previously would have cared about.
- May on occasion becoming agitated, distressed, oppositional or aggressive towards others.
- Feeling hopeless about the future.

Cognitions (Thoughts)

- Flashbacks of the traumatic event (sudden/unexpected memories or recalling aspects of the traumatic event without warning or trying).
- Hypervigilance to threat and danger.
- Poor memory or recall, as well as, periods of confusion or feeling spaced out. May report things not feeling real.
- Overthinking and appearing preoccupied or concerned by the triggering event more.
- Aware of anything related to the triggering event.
- Not being able to see a future and appearing to give up on dreams, goals and hopes.
- Difficulties with concentration and motivation.

Thoughts, feelings, urges, plans or intent to harm self or end their life or harm others.

Please note - Not all children and young people who engage in self-harm behaviour are depressed or suicidal.

There are many reasons why a child or young person may engage in self-harm behaviour.

Behaviour

- Children may re-enact the traumatic event repeatedly in their play.
- Isolating self from friends and family.
- Withdrawn and uncommunicative or not wanting to be left alone at all - this may seem uncharacteristic or age inappropriate for some teenagers.
- Refusal to leave the house or attend/take part in activities such as school, hobbies, interests and seeing friends.
- Reactive and impulsive behaviour such as running away which may place them or others in danger.

Systemic

- Family anxiety or stress.
- Impairment of or disruption to family functioning.
- Arguments between family members.







Things to try, support and next steps

- Speak with your child's GP
- Speak with the school's nursing team
- Depending on the context and the origins of the distress being experienced, other services may be helpful. There may be a role for other services such as Children's Services or other statutory or voluntary organisations that can support if there are clear triggers for anxiety (abuse, domestic violence, bullying, being a young carer etc)
- Role model and demonstrate that you can do things even when you're anxious
- Supporting your child to problem solve any obvious triggers
- Access the **"Help I'm in Crisis"** Button on the Hampshire CAMHS website during times of stress or crisis: **hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk**
- Seek advice, guidance and support from YoungMinds Parent Helpline: **0808 802 5544**

Strategies and resources to try

Workshop on trauma:
bit.ly/3WxncY4

A coping strategy film on how to make your own self-soothe box: **bit.ly/2H6uDU1**

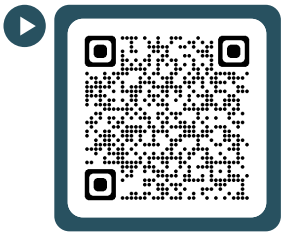
A short film on the importance of routine and activity scheduling:
bit.ly/3UxEbbJ

A coping strategy film on performing the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation:
bit.ly/3fcoINN

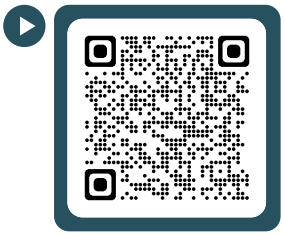
A short film on how to use de-escalation techniques for a young person in distress:
bit.ly/47Y3Kcs

A coping strategy film on how to help your child set achievable goals:
bit.ly/3DGOion

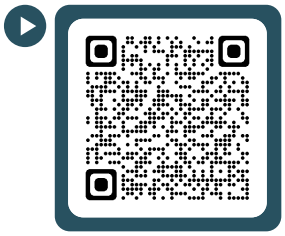
A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: **bit.ly/3lBwUp7**



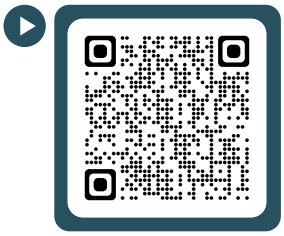
A coping strategy film on how to make your own self-soothe box: **bit.ly/2H6uDU1**



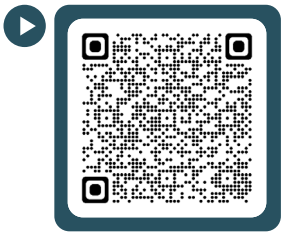
Activity scheduling: **bit.ly/3UxEbbJ**



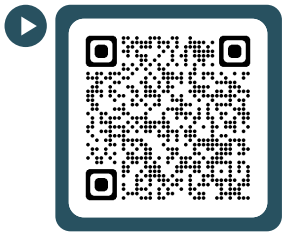
A workshop on CARE (coping and resilience education skills): **bit.ly/2NylRjG**



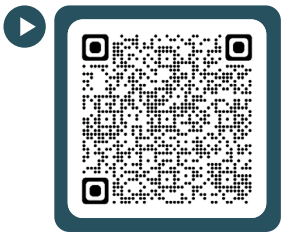
Managing a young person in crisis and suicide prevention: **bit.ly/3R3VnSY**



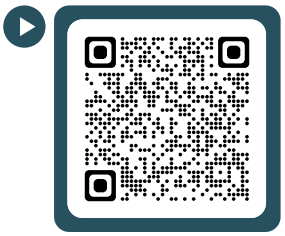
A workshop on supporting a young person with anxiety: **bit.ly/3EiWc6v**



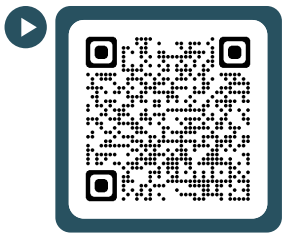
Create a crisis and coping plan with a young person: **bit.ly/3DKS7Jw**



The Window of Tolerance - a short film to explain a model of emotion regulation- how much we can and can't cope with: **bit.ly/3dC5KQn**



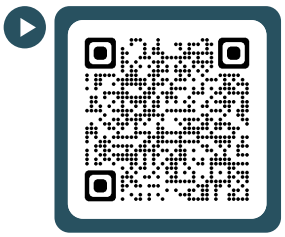
Coping strategy film - breathing techniques: **bit.ly/3UyD3Vk**



Maslow's hierarchy of needs - a short film to explain the different types and levels of needs we as humans have for healthy growth, development, happiness and functioning and why these are important: **bit.ly/3QXWEuU**



A short film about how people connect, give and receive love and nurture in different ways and approaches: **bit.ly/3xILd3D**



Notes:

Notes:

Looking after yourself to look after your child

It can be difficult to describe the true experience and vulnerability of being a mother, father or caregiver. Many parents will advocate that being a parent can be one of the most rewarding experiences in one's life, however the responsibility of nurturing, protecting, guiding and supporting a child can feel relentless, overwhelming and exhausting.

Supporting a child or young person experiencing mental, emotional and developmental difficulties is common, however, it can be a lonely, emotional and stressful experience and can have additional stressors affecting their day-to-day lives. Hampshire CAMHS recognise parents and carers are key to supporting the mental health of their children, however, there is often a lack of support for the experiences of parents and carers. The difficulties and the impact on parent and carer wellbeing and how they cope will vary from person to person, however, practical advice and strategies can help parents and carers to look after themselves in order to better support the wellbeing of their child.

Within the Hampshire CAMHS parent and carer handbook we are going to be introducing you to a range of topics and strategies you can use to help you to cope better in order to support your child when they are struggling with mental health difficulties. These have been inspired and influenced by the book How to cope when your child can't, by Shafran, Saunders and Welham. Although we cover a range of topics from the book, there are additional useful strategies in the book and valuable and powerful stories of parent's experiences that are not captured in our manual. We recommend purchasing this book as a valuable tool to help you as parents and carers day to day.

We also want to reinforce that although these strategies are valuable skills to support your wellbeing and ability to cope better to support your child, they are not a substitute for mental health support. Having a child with mental health difficulties can understandably impact a parent or carers wellbeing and mental health. If you are significantly struggling with your mental health we recommend you seek professional support and speak with your GP.

Remember, parenting a child with mental health difficulties is hard. We hope this manual will give you some helpful strategies and ideas on how to support yourself, a sense of comfort and relief that is it normal to find it a challenge and a reminder of the skills, strengths and resources you have as a parent and carer.



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The basics to parent self-care

We believe very strongly in the value of parents looking after themselves and consider this to be an essential part of support for children with mental health difficulties. The concept of prioritising parent self-care can be challenging for many parents to consider, particularly when your child is struggling as you may want to put all your energy and time in to supporting your child's needs. Often parents of children with mental health difficulties tell us that prioritising their own self-care is the first thing that goes in these moments. However, supporting a child who's struggling with a mental health difficulty is incredibly hard work, it can be physically and emotionally exhausting for all family members and especially for parents and carers. It is absolutely critical that parents and carers take time every day to do things to take care of themselves, we like to call this self-care and consider good self-care to be one of the most important things a parent can do when their child is struggling with their mental health.

Many of you will have heard of the oxygen mask analogy, when we are on an aeroplane and the cabin crew explain safety procedures they state that if the oxygen masks fall down in an emergency, individuals should put their mask on before they assist whoever is around them. The oxygen mask and the aeroplane is a great analogy for parents and carers of children with mental health difficulties and their own self-care. By looking after themselves they are better placed to look after others.

There are number of reasons why prioritising self-care as a parent is important:

- Self-care is an important part of children's mental health recovery. By prioritising self-care as parents and carers, you are communicating to your child that this is important and showing them how to do it.
- Secondly, regular self-care will make it easier to remain calm and undisturbed in stressful situations.
- Thirdly, it is highly emotional and distressing as a parent seeing your child suffering. It is completely understandable and normal that would impact your own wellbeing and mental health.

Within the Hampshire CAMHS parent and carer manual we are going to be introducing you to a range of strategies you can use to help you to cope better in order to support your child when they are struggling with mental health difficulties.

It is important to highlight however, that in order to use these strategies effectively you need to be supporting your basic needs. Just as parents are encouraged to consider Maslow's hierarchy of need, a model that reflects our basic human needs from survival to thriving, to support their children to meet their basic needs in order to grow, develop and thrive. When you as parents are eating and sleeping better, exercising or taking regular medication when prescribed and seeking the additional professional support if you need it you can tackle day to day challenges better. You are likely to be more patient, use your parenting skills better and think more clearly. We recognise as parents this can sometimes be hard to do, so it is also important you are kind to yourself when you are unable to do this and therefore, find it difficult to use the strategies in the manual.

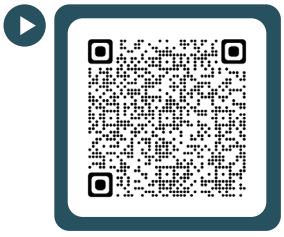
Research further suggests that small improvements to wellbeing can help decrease some mental health difficulties through the 5 ways to wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life, particularly when life is challenging and stressful. The 5 ways to wellbeing include connecting with others, getting active, taking notice, learning and giving. Within the manual we have included links to resources to provide you more information on this.

Activity

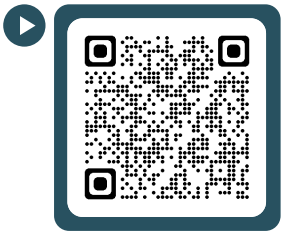
Consider how well you are doing to meet your basic needs and 5 ways to wellbeing at present. Consider how you can make small steps support your basic needs in the next few weeks. You may need the support of those around you to achieve this, however, it is important you are supporting yourself and prioritising your self-care in order to support your child.

Strategies and resources to try

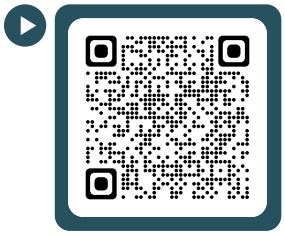
The NHS 5 Steps to mental wellbeing: **bit.ly/3roRzop**



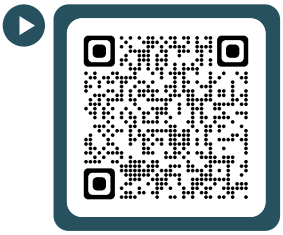
A short film explaining the 5 ways to wellbeing: **bit.ly/447q68u**



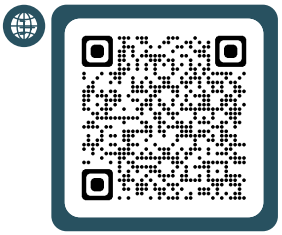
The basics of parent self-care a short film explaining the basics to parent self-care: **bit.ly/44KNKIB**



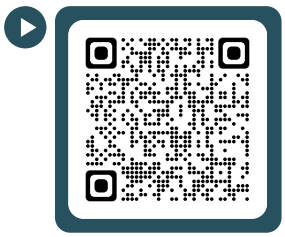
A workshop on getting good sleep: **bit.ly/45vAmc9**



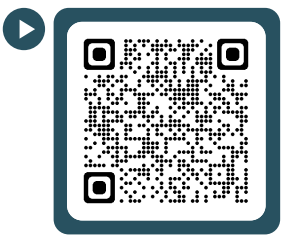
Hampshire CAMHS sleep help and guidance: **bit.ly/3etqTMZ**



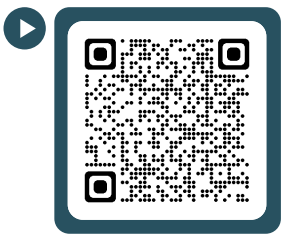
A workshop on getting good sleep: **bit.ly/45vAmc9**



Maslow's hierarchy of needs - a short film to explain the different types and levels of needs we as humans have for healthy growth, development, happiness and functioning and why these are important: **bit.ly/3QXWEuU**



A short video on how to pace as a parent or carer in order to support your wellbeing, whilst managing day to day tasks and challenges: **bit.ly/3NOCWlJ**



BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't: **bbc.in/46HyBtb**



Awareness of emotions and their triggers

Parenting a child who is struggling with their mental or physical health can test the most patient of parents and carers, and many find that as a result their own emotions can be overwhelming and unhelpful. Parents often describe feeling understandably exhausted, upset, frustrated, overwhelmed and confused when supporting their child when they are struggling.

Parents are often told it is good that children feel safe enough to express their frustrations and take it out on those they feel closest to at home. Parents are encouraged to make home their child's safe place; however, this can be emotionally challenging for parents who are supporting children in these moments. It can also lead to parents trying to be strong for their children in front of them and as a result they may try to hide their own worries for their future, hopelessness, and sadness for when parents are alone. At times, trying to manage all the emotions experienced as a parent can be very difficult and trying to contain or put your own emotions as a parent to the side in order to put your child first can make that even harder and at times it's not always possible.

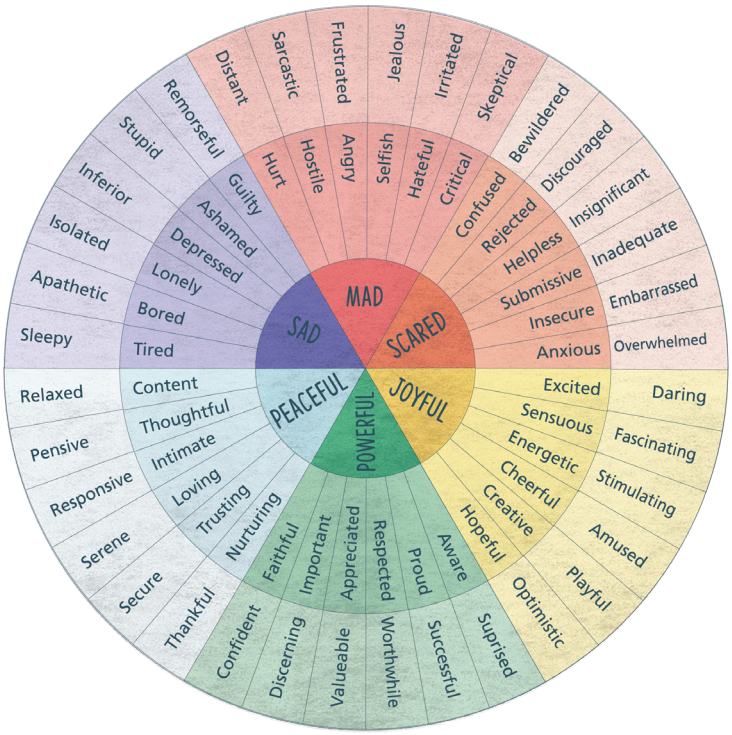
Increasing awareness of your emotions can be a useful skill for parents

- Learning and understanding your own emotions better can allow you to be more patient as a parent. This will allow you to have more patience to help you deal with the daily stresses that accompany supporting your children.
- Identifying and understanding emotions can make them seem more predictable and controllable. In turn, this means that the intense emotions will no longer take you by surprise, which should help make them less overwhelming.

What can parents do to support their own emotions?

8 steps to emotional awareness

1. Identify your emotions - Although this may seem simple, lots of people struggle to identify and label their emotions. Some people find a "Feelings Wheel' helpful in trying to identify their emotions.



2. Understand what your emotion means. Another helpful way to understand emotions and their triggers is by thinking of the emotion and what it is usually associated with. There is often a great taboo surrounding feelings of anxiety, sadness, anger and jealousy and this can actually lead parents to feel secondary emotions such as guilt or shame if they believe they should not be feeling this way. Despite the taboo, often these feelings can be very understandable and appropriate emotions in the right circumstances and are particularly understandable and appropriate in the context of being a parent or carer of a child who is struggling. Therefore, try to avoid self-criticism around feelings that arise. Instead be curious as to what might be driving these feelings and recognise when this highlights values of care as a parent or carer and desire to support your child, yourself or your family.

The box below shows some common themes behind particular emotions:

Emotion	Associated With	Example
Anxiety	Threat	The threat of not being able to cope will lead to a feeling of anxiety and worry about the future
Sadness	Loss	The loss of normal social interactions, and 'the perfect family' will lead to feelings of sadness
Anger and jealousy	Unfairness/Injustice	Thinking that something is unfair is associated with a sense of anger at the situation/person causing the injustice

3. Recognising the triggers. Different emotions are triggered differently for one person to another and the same situation can trigger an emotion at some times but not others. It may depend on a lot of personal factors- how tired or hungry you are, what is happening with other worries, if you have exercised, how well your day is going. Making a note of when you are at risk of increased emotional triggers is likely to be helpful. Being aware of triggers can not only help you feel prepared to manage the situation but also give you a sense of control and a strategy, so you can avoid emotional triggers from arising.
4. Identify your early warning signs. Anger, like anxiety and stress, causes a response in our bodies. Your heart may race, you may get a sense of rage just welling up from inside you. These will be early warning signs that you may be about to explode. You will have mental signs too- so make a note of them to catch them early, for example, thoughts about the unfairness of a situation, or your mind racing.
5. Accepting that it is normal to feel difficult emotions
6. Talk about your feelings with someone who can offer support and validation for why you might be feeling the way you are feeling. Having an outside perspective can provide a sense of comfort, normalisation and connection.
7. Be on the look out for emotions that feel positive. It is often a lot easier to notice when we feel difficult emotions and harder to recognise moments when we feel calm, content, grateful or relaxed. Be on the look out for these moments too, even if they are fleeting and small.
8. Use some of the strategies in this manual. Identifying thinking styles, addressing responsibility, emotion regulation, problem solving and mindfulness can all be helpful for identifying and managing emotions. Engaging in the small pleasures and learning acceptance is helpful too.
9. There are lots of apps out there that can help you to keep track of your emotions daily to help you to see patterns and triggers.

Strategies and resources to try

Awareness of emotions and triggers - a short video explaining how to improve awareness of emotions and triggers as a parent or carer:
bit.ly/3Ydw4mY

Emotion regulation - a short video about the importance of emotion regulation as a parent or carer and emotion regulation strategies:
bit.ly/3qfu5BI

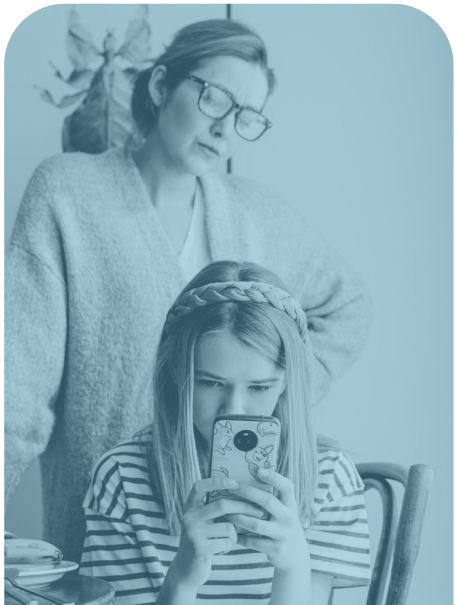
Small Pleasures - a short video on the finding small pleasures as a parent or carer:
bit.ly/44LaOHr

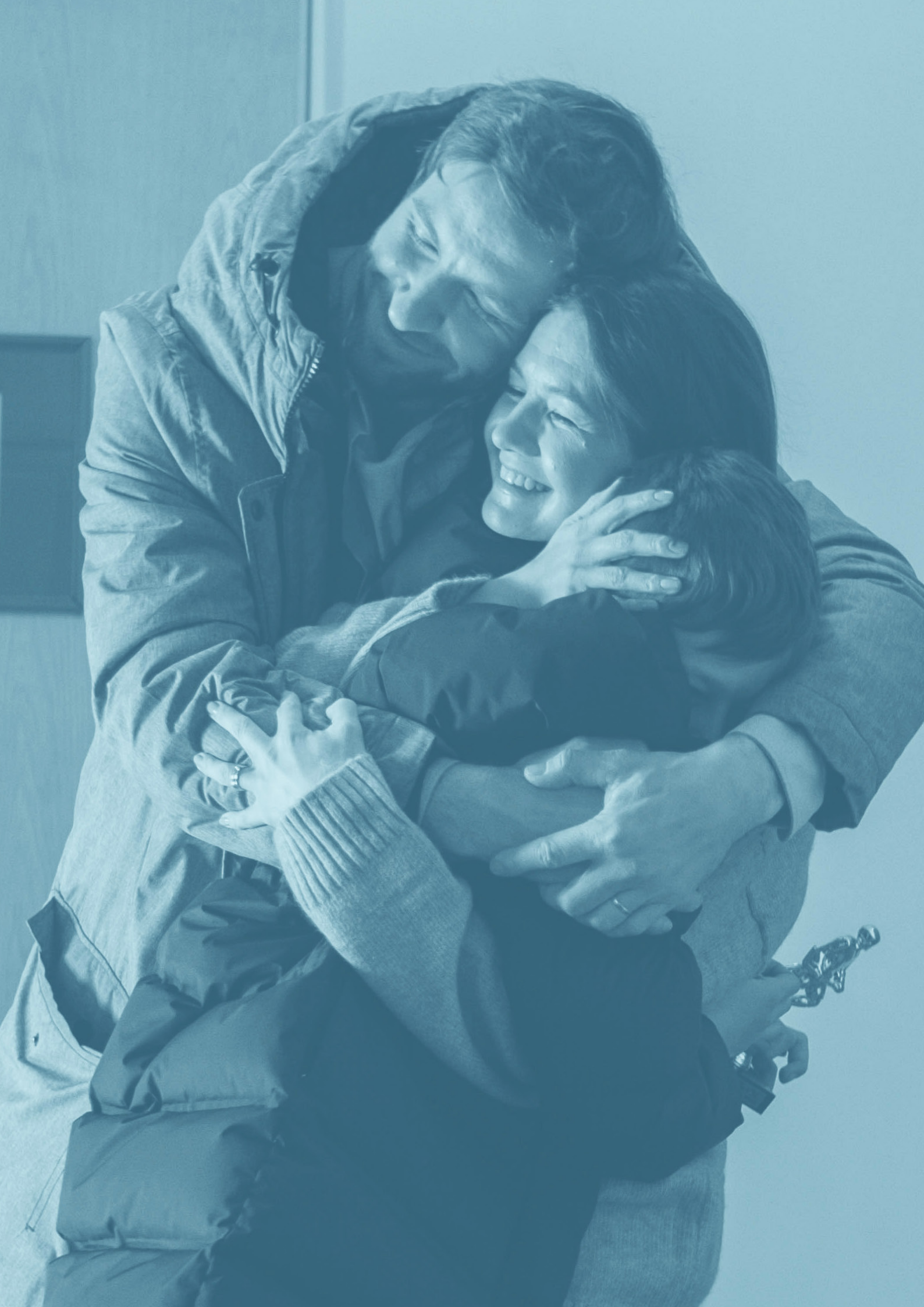
What's Up? The mental health app, informed by cognitive behavioural therapy that provides a range of guided self-help strategies and allows you to track your thoughts, feelings and behaviours:
bit.ly/3YagJ6y

Daylio Journal is an app that can be used to track emotions and triggers:
daylio.net

BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't:
bbc.in/46HyBtb







Emotion regulation

Regulate yourself in order to regulate your child

Emotions are normal and everyone experiences them. Sometimes, particularly when we have had persistent distressing experiences during our lives, we can emotionally react more often to situations where we feel threatened. The distress and emotional response can be very intense and it's difficult to manage ourselves and situations when things are feeling so over-whelming. In these moments it can be hard to think clearly, communicate our needs and regulate our emotions. Watching your child go through suffering and distress and experiencing mental health difficulties is a significant and persistent source of stress to parents and carers and therefore, it is likely that parents will experience more intense emotions and feel overwhelmed and dysregulated at times. This can make it very hard to parent well in these moments and support yourself and your child.

When you are dysregulated, you may feel hypo or hyper-aroused. This can look different for everyone; however, common symptoms include:

Hypo-aroused	Hyper-aroused
Feeling shut down	Frustrated or on edge
Numb	Pysical tension
Passive	Hypervigilant
Withdrawn	Tired
Feeling of shame	In a state of fight/flight
Becoming easily angry	Unable to think clearly

Often parents and carers will share that they feel guilty for experiencing these intense emotions, however, it is very normal and understandable in these moments to feel this way. When we are overtired, hungry or not able to meet our basic needs this will also make it more likely and more quickly for us to become emotionally dysregulated. Caring for a child with mental health challenges can intensify emotions, learning emotion regulation skills will help you learn to effectively manage and change the way we feel and cope with these situations and quickly reduce intense emotions in the moment.

There are many ways we regulate our emotions, through the small pleasures we enjoy in life or through taking a break from various stressors.

One method outlined by the 'getselfhelp' website to regulate our emotions is the STOPP method, which considers how whilst we often cannot change a situation, we can change how we feel about a situation. The app Whatsup - the mental health app also will go through this step by step in the moment with you.

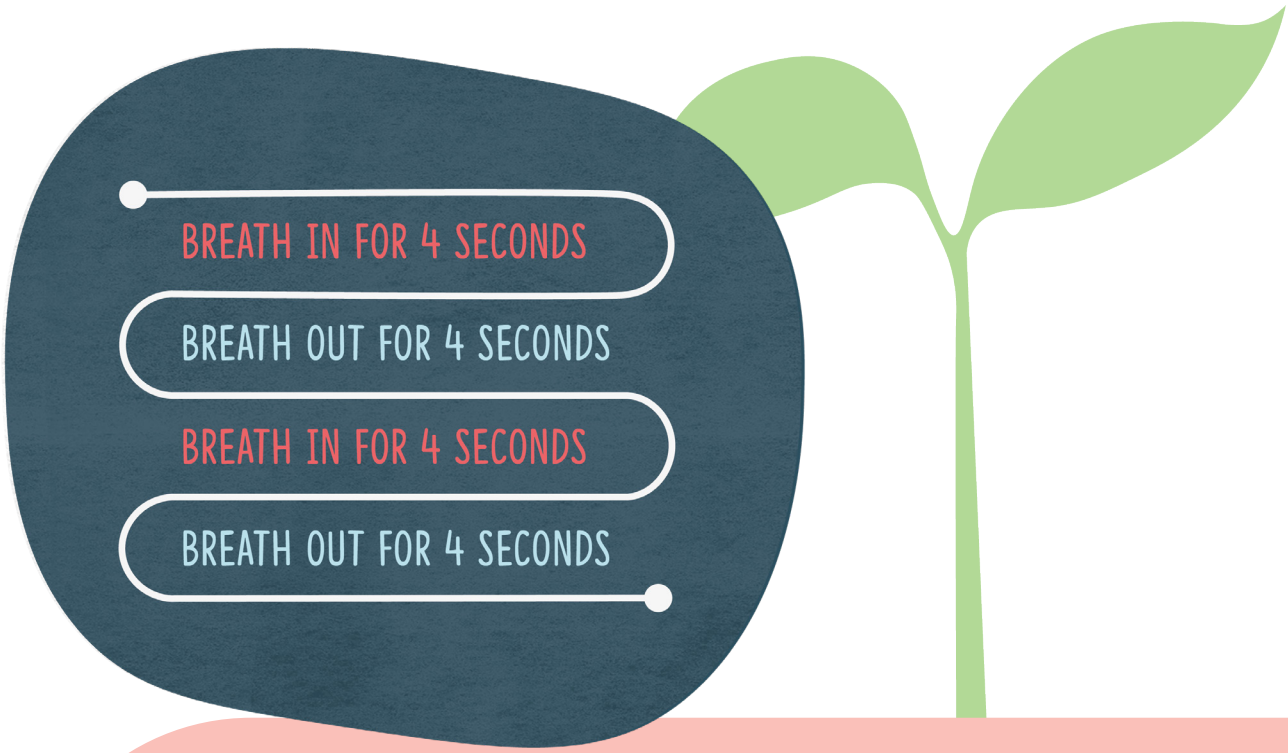
STOPP

Stop - wait a minute before responding to a situation with emotion.

Take a breath - Notice your breathing, in and out. You can control your breathing through a variety of breathing exercises such as square breathing, where you breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, breath out through your mouth for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds. By controlling our breathing, we can control our heart rate and the flight, fight or freeze response.
Observe - What are you thinking, what are you reacting to, what sensations can you notice in your body. It can be helpful to attempt to label some of these thoughts.

Pull back - Try and put the situation into perspective. Is there another way of looking at the situation or another way to respond? What might a friend's advice be right now? How important is this now and how important will it be a year from now?

Practice what works and proceed - what is the best thing I can do? What is going to be effective and appropriate whilst aligning with my values?



It is important to highlight that sometimes as a parent in high stress situations with your child or family you might need to step away from the situation for a few minutes to use the STOPP skill and regulate your emotions. This will then help you to manage your emotions in the moment, so you can think clearer, respond calmly and deescalate the situation. As long as it feels safe to do so, it is absolutely ok to step away from the situation to do this. If you are not regulating your own emotions, it is really hard to regulate your child's.

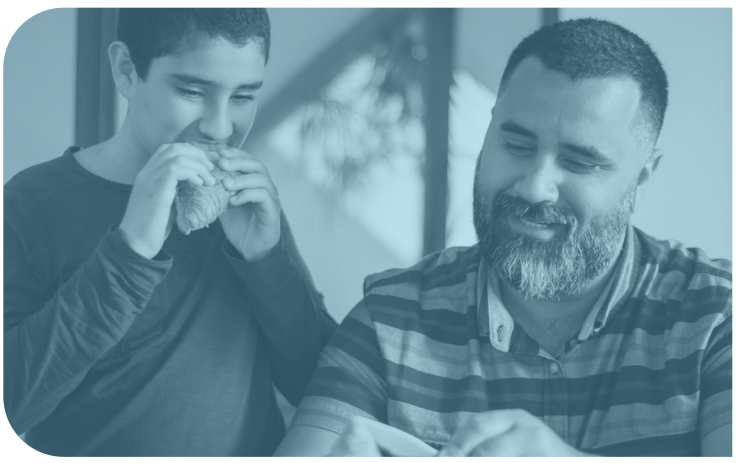
Looking after how you feel

Other emotion regulation strategies to use by yourself or with your child

- It is important to remember that these skills take practice, and it will be easier to respond in ways that align with your values if you are supporting yourself.
- You may choose to do activities that use your 5 senses.
- Whilst the STOPP skill works for some in these situations, others need a more physical release to bring down intense emotions. This might include a physical activity, putting your hands and face in cold water or having a fidget object to hand.
- You may try to find time to do things you enjoy.
- You might attempt some mindful activities in your free time.
- You might choose to connect with others, friends, fellow parents and the rest of your support network.
- You may make time for small pleasures that distract, refocus and help you reframe, such as taking a walk, trying a new sport or activity, watching something you enjoy.
- We may try activities that enhance gratitude and make us feel good. For example, we might take a moment at the end of a walk or exercise to appreciate how well we've done.







Strategies and resources to try

The Window of Tolerance - a short film to explain a model of emotion regulation - how much we can and can't cope with: **bit.ly/3dC5KQn**

A coping strategy film on breathing techniques: **bit.ly/3UyD3Vk**

Awareness of emotions and triggers - a short video explaining how to improve awareness of emotions and triggers as a parent or carer: **bit.ly/3Ydw4mY**

Emotion regulation - a short video about the importance of emotion regulation as a parent or carer and emotion regulation strategies: **bit.ly/3qfu5BI**

What's Up? - the mental health app, informed by cognitive behavioural therapy that provides a range of guided self-help strategies and allows you to track your thoughts, feelings and behaviours: **bit.ly/3YagJ6y**

STOPP - skill resource on get self help, the CBT therapy and self-help resources website: **bit.ly/3rG4d2i**

BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't: **bbc.in/46HyBtb**

Stress and Coping

Most of us will experience a healthy amount of stress in our lives but what happens when we are unable to cope? Stress is something parents will inevitably come into contact with as they interact with different challenges. All humans have their own limitations and ways of processing difficult situations. There are many different factors that will influence the amount of stress a parent faces which may result in them feeling overwhelmed. A situation one parent may perceive as unimportant, another may view as very impactful, meaning stress levels will vary from person to person. Having a child with mental health difficulties can be a significant source of stress in addition to the many day to day stresses that a parent might experience.

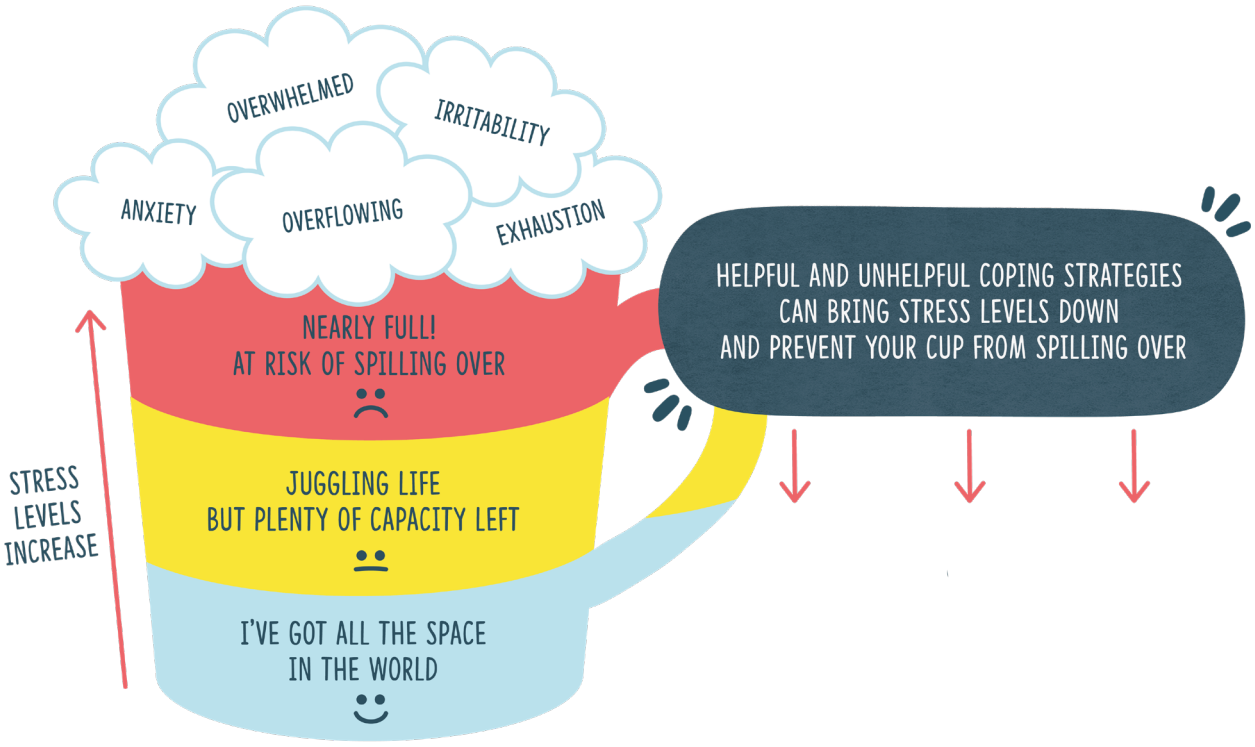
What it might look like when a parent is struggling with feelings of stress

- Changes in appetite such as overeating or undereating.
- Difficulty sleeping such as sleeping too little or too much. Sleep may also be interrupted by nightmares.
- They may have challenges regulating emotions often being quick to anger and express frustration.
- Physical responses including headaches, body pains and tensions, stomach problems and rashes.
- Low Self-Esteem - blaming themselves for things "going wrong" and feelings of not being good enough.
- Being in denial and not willing to accept responsibility.
- Developing avoidance behaviours such as procrastination.
- Misusing substances like drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism.
- They may have thoughts around harming themselves.

Things that may help a parent when they are not coping with managing stress

- Maintain a normal routine as much as possible.
- Remember that stress is a normal part of life and not coping with it does not make them a failure.
- Make time for exercise as a way of burning off the stressful energy.
- Encourage connection with others and to share problems with friends and family.
- Promote positive attitudes towards self-care. Healthy eating and sleeping can have a huge effect on our mental wellbeing.
- Seek help to support you to improve your time management skills and practice rationalising when you are feeling overwhelmed and unable to do this.
- Take information and social media breaks to prevent overstimulation.
- Make time for simple and small fun activities and engage in things you enjoy.
- Use simple relaxation strategies such as yoga and meditation. Help to re-centre the focus onto noticing the smaller pleasures in life.
- Identify whether your coping strategies are helpful or unhelpful.

The stress cup analogy created by the BBC to promote parent wellbeing can be a helpful way to think about stress, how it can build and spill out making you irritable, anxious, overwhelmed and exhausted.



Coping can be quite complicated. Whilst some coping strategies can help in the short term to reduce stress, they can prove unhelpful in the long- term. It can be helpful to spend some time considering whether your current coping strategies are overall helpful or unhelpful.

Here are some examples of coping strategies

Helpful coping	Unhelpful coping
Relaxation and breathing strategies	Drugs and alcohol
Connecting with others and asking for help and support	Avoidance
Problem solving	Sleeping too little or too much
Exercise	Blaming yourself and self-criticism
Gratitude and self-sooth strategies	Denial
Prioritising basic needs e.g. sleep, eating, medication	Procrastination
Self-regulation techniques	Overeating or undereating
Acceptance	Losing your temper

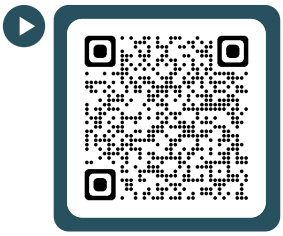
Activity

To help you identify your coping strategies ask yourself these questions

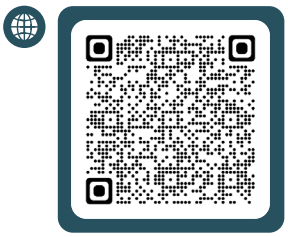
1. What problems are you trying to cope with at the moment?
2. What strategies have you tried?
3. What has happened? Did they have a helpful or unhelpful consequence for you and others?

Strategies and resources to try

Stress and coping - a short video explaining how to cope with stress as a parent and carer: **bit.ly/3DzxoHi**



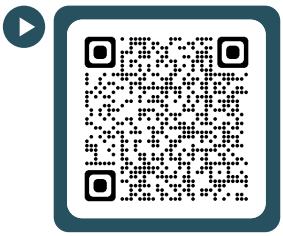
What's Up? - the mental health app, informed by cognitive behavioural therapy that provides a range of guided self-help strategies and allows you to track your thoughts, feelings and behaviours: **bit.ly/3YagJ6y**



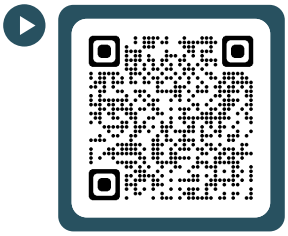
Headspace - an app providing guided mindfulness and meditation practice for everyday use: **bit.ly/43Joi5d**



A short video on how to pace as a parent or carer in order to support your wellbeing, whilst managing day to day tasks and challenges: **bit.ly/3NOCWlJ**



BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't: **bbc.in/46HyBtb**



A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: **bit.ly/3lBwUp7**



A coping strategy film on how to make your own self-soothe box: **bit.ly/2H6uDU1**

A coping strategy film on breathing techniques: **bit.ly/3UyD3Vk**

Passing Clouds - a guided mindfulness video: **bit.ly/3R2EdsB**

Leaves on a Stream - a video on mindfulness: **bit.ly/44wXoxU**

A workshop on getting good sleep: **bit.ly/45vAmc9**

A coping strategy film on how to perform the coping strategy of progressive muscle relaxation: **bit.ly/3fcoINN**



Small pleasures

When you or your child are struggling, it is easy to "lose yourself", taking time out to enjoy a small pleasure can help you to recharge and make it easier to cope and help your child.

What are small pleasures?

Small pleasures are simply little things that we enjoy doing. Everybody will have their own things that bring them happiness.

- Small pleasures can be split into three types: social, hobbies/activities, and nature. Some examples of each are given in the table below, but there are many more ways of finding small pleasures. Many small pleasures will cover more than one of these areas (e.g. going for a walk with a friend is both social and nature).
- Some small pleasures are just for you. Some can be shared with your family (e.g. owning a pet).
- They may be little things to be enjoyed immediately or small steps towards a bigger goal (e.g. getting fit).

Social	Hobbies/Activities	Example
Coffee and cake with friend or family member	Singing	Gardening
Singing in a choir	Art	Dog walking
Cinema with a friend	Baking	Walking
Chatting on the phone (could be whilst doing something else)	Cooking	Open air swimming
Going for a walk with a friend	Cleaning	Taking photos of sunsets
Swapping recipes	Exercise	Bird watching
Doing the food shop with a neighbour	Yoga	Noticing the birds singing at dawn
	Meditation	Smelling flowers
	Sport (watching & playing)	Hearing the rain
	Fishing	
	Reading	

How can small pleasures help me and my child?

Small pleasures can help you in a variety of ways:

- Social – taking time to meet a friend, or participating in a group activity, can help you feel more connected and be a great source of support.
- Sense of Achievement/Pride – making something or learning a new skill is a great way to feel good about yourself and give yourself a boost.
- Distraction – focused time spent on a hobby gives you a precious few minutes where you do not have to focus on your problems.
- Relaxation – small pleasures give you time out of your everyday life to relax and de-stress.

- Reframing – taking time out to enjoy a small pleasure can give you space to see a problem in different way which may help to find new ways to solve it.

Giving yourself time to enjoy small pleasures will help your child by:

- Giving you more energy to help them.
- Modelling to them how they can help themselves to feel a bit better.
- Shared small pleasures give positive connection time with your child.
- Some small pleasures may help your child to develop skills or overcome barriers. For example, people will often talk to you when you take a dog for a walk, this can help your child to increase their social confidence as they can talk when the focus is on the dog and not on them.

Activity

Take some time to reflect on the small pleasures you have in life?

1. What things bring you small pleasures?
2. What things used to bring you small pleasures day to day?
3. How have these small pleasures helped?
4. How can you make space for small pleasures in your day?
5. What new small pleasure can you try this week?

Strategies and resources to try

Small Pleasures - a short video on the finding small pleasures as a parent or carer: **bit.ly/44LaOHr**

Mind website link to information to support your physical activity and mental health: **bit.ly/47ah9xJ**

A short film listing an A-Z of suggested coping strategies to try: **bit.ly/3lBwUp7**

Headspace - an app providing guided mindfulness and meditation practice for everyday use: **bit.ly/43Joi5d**

BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't: **bbc.in/46HyBtb**

Values and goals

Often parents and carers will share that having a child who is experiencing mental health difficulties can feel very de-skilling, powerless and impact on lots of aspects of day to day life including a parent's sense of self, their achievements and identity as a parent and individual. Experiencing challenges in life can make it very hard for individuals to live a fulfilling life in line with their values and for parents this includes living in line with their values as a parent. When parents or carers are unable to meet their basic needs, look after themselves or manage their emotional responses it can lead to responding in ways that do not align with values. This can be distressing, upsetting and frustrating for parents, lead to increased self-criticism and shame and impact on overall wellbeing.

Focusing on values, goals and personal strengths can empower parents in these moments and support an overall sense of wellbeing.

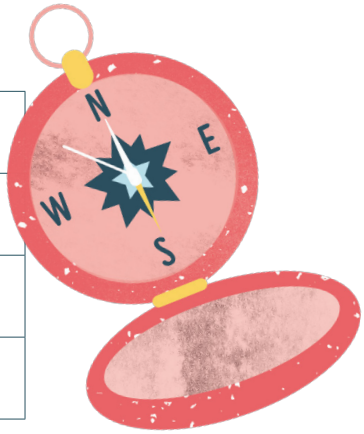
What are values?

Values are beliefs about what's important to you in life. A value is a life direction, an internal compass which guides us throughout life. Values are different to goals which have an end-point. Values are often life-long. Values give life meaning and purpose. Everyone's values will be different and can change over time. Often parents will develop values about the kind of parent they hope to be or how they hope to be remembered or seen by others.

Knowing our values will help us decide how to react to stress and distress. In spite of how we feel, we can still move in the direction and in line with our values. To identify our values, we can think about what it is in life that is really important to us, and what gives our life meaning and purpose.

To help you think about your values, spend time writing down the description of what your values look like and the importance of each with these categories

Family	**Marriage, relationships, intimacy**	**Parenting**
Friendship/ social life	**Self-care**	**Career and education**
Learning, growth and development	**Spirituality**	**Fun and Leisure**
Health and wellbeing	**Politics, environment and community**	**Morals**



Other questions to ask to help you identify your values:

- What legacy do you want to pass on?
- How would you like others to remember you?
- How would you like your child to describe you?

Some parenting values that others have described include kindness, self-compassion, integrity, responsibility, respect, honesty, flexibility and fairness.

Setting Goals

Having identified your values, you will have a greater understanding of the way in which you want to live life, the direction we want to progress towards. Setting goals in line with your values can help along the way. It is important when setting goals these are SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time specific. There are resources below that explain how to do this further.

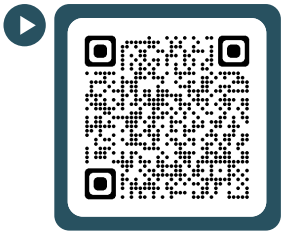
Having small, achievable goals that you can work towards during challenging times will give you a sense of achievement, accomplishment and can aid your wellbeing.

Activity

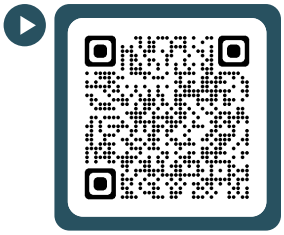
Take the time to consider what your values are in relation to the categories above. Once you have done this set a personal SMART goal which will help you to live in line with your values. This could be one specifically in relation to your parenting or a family SMART goal that you can all work towards together. You can use the **Getselfhelp.co.uk** SMART goal resource linked below to help you with this.

Strategies and resources to try

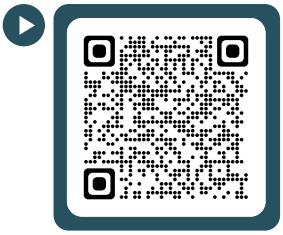
Values and goals - a short video on how to identify your values and goals as a parent or carer in order to support your wellbeing:
bit.ly/43G4Je8



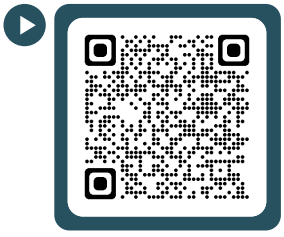
Values vs goals - a video by Dr. Russ Harris explaining the difference between values and goals and why they are both helpful:
bit.ly/456EazK



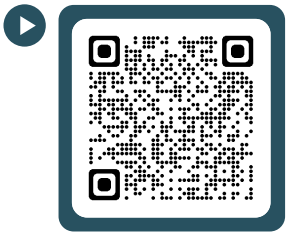
Setting goals - a short video explaining how to set goals with your young person:
bit.ly/3KiGv2H



Noticing your strengths - a short video explaining the importance of noticing personal strengths as a parent or carer and strategies to help achieve this:
bit.ly/453Riph



BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't:
bbc.in/46HyBtb



Noticing your strength

As a parent and carer, in order to identify meaningful values and goals and use these effectively, you need to be able to recognise times when you are living in line with your values and achieving your goals. This requires you to be actively on the lookout for the positives - when you do well, when you are able to achieve things despite the challenges and your strengths in these moments. As a parent it can be easy to be self-critical and during challenging times often the situations that don't go well or we don't manage are magnified, therefore, noticing positives and particularly your strengths is very important and empowering. We can learn to notice the positives as well as the negatives, even in difficult or painful experiences.

A simple skill to help you notice your strengths is to write down three things you do well every day. This can be as an individual, a parent or in other aspects of your life. Noticing your strengths may feel challenging at first as it may not come naturally to you but by practicing it and writing it down it will start to become a more automatic skill that becomes a part of your day to day activity.

Top tips to notice your strengths:

1. Find a regular time towards the end of each day where you can spend 5 minutes reflecting on your day and your strengths.
2. Write them down - this can be in a journal or on your phone, however, writing them down can be a more powerful and visual way of seeing your strengths.
3. If you are struggling ask someone else to help you with this task and share what they feel you have done well that day.
4. On days where it has felt like you have not achieved what you wanted to due to circumstances out of your control, reflect on what you have still been able to do despite this. It may be as simple as meeting your basic needs or prioritising time for self-care to motivate your strengths.



Activity

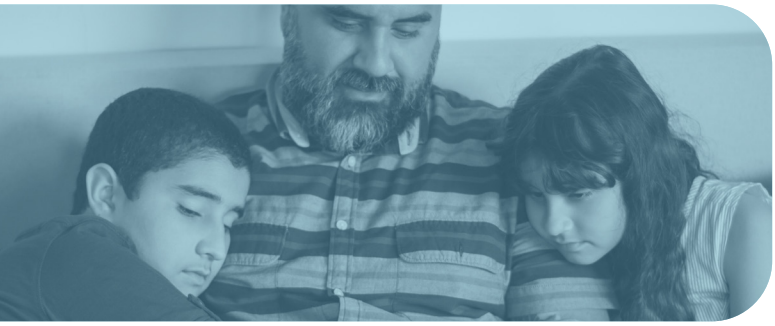
Why not try this as a family and be on the lookout for each other's strengths and achievements each day.

Strategies and resources to try

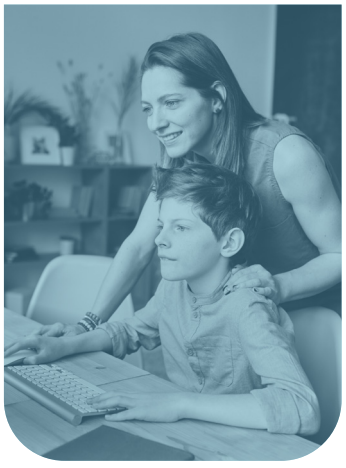
Values and goals - a short video on how to identify your values and goals as a parent or carer in order to support your wellbeing:
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Parent thinking traps (we all have them)

Throughout the day we will get lots of thoughts that come and go, whilst some are fleeting, others can become more fixed and go round and round our mind. Sometimes, some of the ways in which we think are 'unhelpful.' We can fall into thinking traps or 'errors' which can impact on our ability to cope. As human beings, this is completely normal but these thinking habits can be self-critical. Naturally parents can be particularly self-critical of their parenting too. During times of increased stress, individuals tend to get more caught up in their internal self-criticising thoughts and unhelpful thinking habits. This is particularly true for parents and carers who often might notice increased thoughts such as "I'm failing as a parent" or "If only I had done things differently", "It's my fault they are struggling", "I will never be good enough", "Others will judge me", or "They are a better parent than I am".

These thoughts can be stressful and upsetting, impacting our mood and anxiety. Whilst we cannot always control or eliminate our internal processes, we can learn to identify unhelpful thinking styles and notice them. Once you can notice them, then that can help you to challenge or distance yourself from those thoughts, and see the situation in a different and more helpful way.

Identifying thinking traps

1. All or nothing thinking

All or nothing thinking can also be described as 'black or white' thinking. It can occur in any situation where we sometimes decide that doing one thing would have made us a good parent, another a bad parent. For example, a parent or carer may think if they had visited a GP earlier then their child might have struggled in school less and that this makes them a bad parent.

2. Catastrophising

Catastrophising occurs when we focus on the negative aspects of a situation and consider the worst possible outcome. For example, we may think only about the negative future that awaits our child following a diagnosis, rather than focusing on the benefits of having received that diagnosis and the countless positive things to come in your child's life.

3. Overgeneralisation

Overgeneralisation occurs when we use one incident to make inferences on future events. We may go through one negative scenario or challenging conversation and assume that in the future, the same pattern will be followed. For example, if you found yourself losing your temper after your child had been rude to you, you may draw the conclusion, 'I'm always losing my temper', or 'my child is always going to be rude to me, I have failed.'

4. Personalisation

Personalisation is one of the most common thinking traps we fall into as a parent, where we attribute things going wrong for our child to ourselves. For example, our child may be struggling to concentrate in school and we blame ourselves for how they have been raised or how they act outside of school.

5. Discounting the positive

Discounting the positives is another extremely common thinking trap. When our child is struggling or we ourselves are struggling as parents, it can be very difficult to focus on all the positive things taking place. For example, it may be that we lose our temper following a dispute with our child and react irrationally. In that moment, we don't think about all the times we didn't react like that, the times we were able to stay calm or respond in a way more in line with our values as parents.

Once you are able to identify your specific thinking traps you can learn how to challenge or distance yourself from these thoughts.

Challenging thinking traps

All or nothing thinking

It can be helpful to think about the grey area in between, or consider the response on a scale, where 10 is the most flawless amazing parenting possible and 1 is the worst parenting possible. Where you might initially score yourself a 1 in how you responded to an argument with your child, on reflection, you may have tried to talk to your child about how they are feeling, you may have fed them, you may have taken them to school, you may have already tried speaking to a fellow parent about the situation etc. You may then re-evaluate your parenting as a 7 out of 10 as opposed to 'all' or 'nothing' thinking.

Catastrophising

In moments when we are struggling, it can be easy to think things are only going to get worse. Its helpful to consider your support networks and try to use the STOPP method (see the chapter on Emotion Regulation) to try and reach a more balanced perspective.

Overgeneralisation

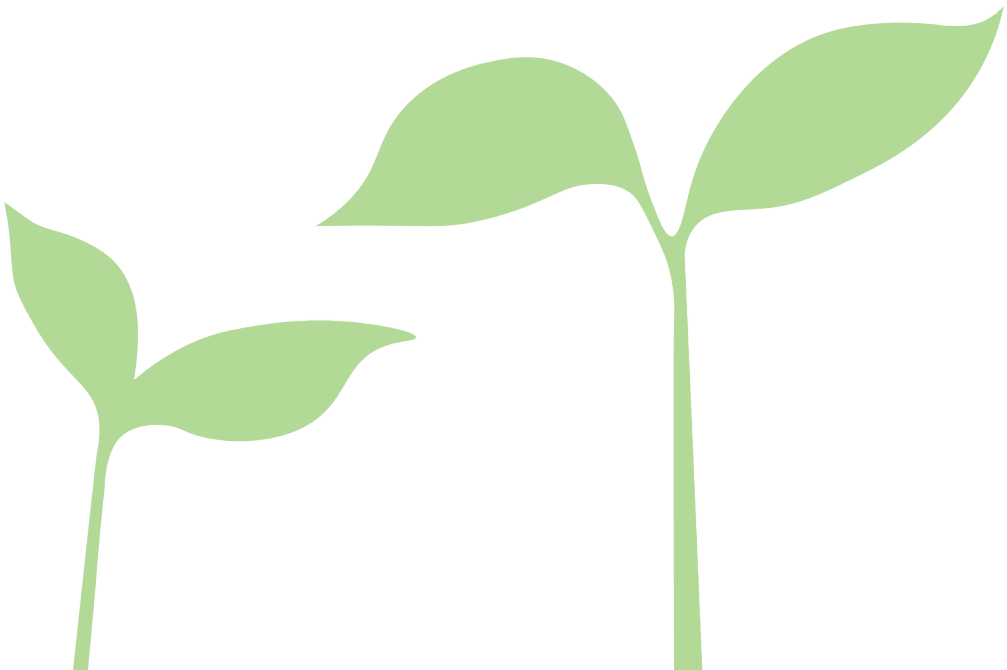
It can be helpful to think about what you might say to a friend or fellow parent struggling in a similar situation. You might tell them how great they're doing or recommend a different approach that worked for you. Rather than viewing a single event as an invariable rule, one failure does not predict future failure!

Personalisation

This ties into guilt, and it can be helpful to consider the other reasons why this might be the case, maybe the way in which a subject is taught is difficult for your child to understand, or doesn't appeal to their learning styles. Whilst there isn't always someone to blame, responsibility lies with your child as well as everyone else involved in their lives, their friends, teachers, health professionals, extended family. It is not all on your shoulders, and it's important to remind ourselves of this from time to time.

Discounting the positive

Noticing and valuing the positives is important, and whilst it can be challenging, will lead to more gratitude and appreciation for ourselves as parents.



Strategies to distance yourself from thinking traps

The following strategies can help to decrease the noise of your thoughts in order to keep them at a distance:

"I'm having the thought that…"

When a self-critical thought such as "I'm failing as a parent" comes up in your mind, say "I'm having the thought that I'm failing as a parent," thereby creating some space between you and the thought, and noticing that it is simply a thought and not a fact about yourself.

Naming the story

If all of your mind's favourite self-critical thoughts were put into a book or movie, what would it be titled? Give the story a name such the 'bad parent' story. Then, each time this story shows up, name it, "Aha, there's the 'I'm a bad parent' story again!" and then channel your energy into doing the task you're completing at the time.

Imagine leaves on a stream

This exercise allows you to practice distancing yourself from your constant flow of thoughts. Whilst sitting quietly and focusing on your breath, when a thought pops up, imagine placing it on a leaf on top of a stream, and watch it gently sail away (You can listen to the 'Leaves on a Stream' exercise below).

What are the benefits of distancing and challenging thinking traps

- Feeling less stressed.
- Feeling more in control.
- Being able to focus and problem-solve more easily.
- Support your wellbeing and avoid developing you own mental health challenges.
- Gain a more accurate perspective of your challenges and strengths.
- Regulate your emotions better in stressful moments.
- Spend more time focusing on your child, and less time focussing on the negatives.
- Be more able to prioritise your own self-care.

The whatsup mental health app provides more information on thinking traps and provides useful ways to track your thinking habits and challenge them when needed.

Strategies and resources to try

Parent thinking traps - a short video on how to identify common thinking traps for parents and carers. The video will also provide strategies to overcome these common thinking traps as a parent or carer in order to support your wellbeing:
bit.ly/44QUV2s

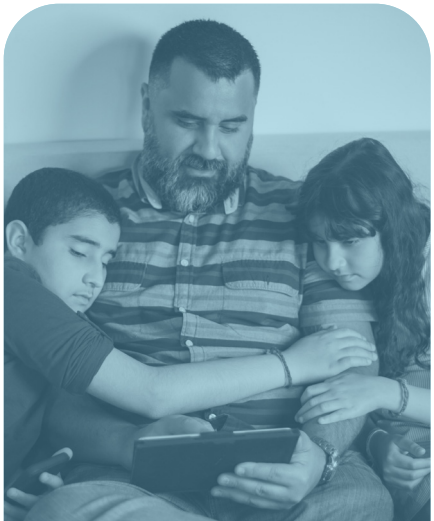
What's Up? - the mental health app, informed by cognitive behavioural therapy that provides a range of guided self-help strategies and allows you to track your thoughts, feelings and behaviours:
bit.ly/3YagJ6y

Headspace - an app providing guided mindfulness and meditation practice for everyday use:
bit.ly/43Joi5d

BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't:
bbc.in/46HyBtb

Leaves on a Stream - a video on mindfulness:
bit.ly/44wXoxU





Tackling worries

Problem solving and how to cope with 'what if' worries

Being a parent of a child with mental health difficulties can bring lots of day to day challenges, worries and problems. Parents have shared they can spend a lot of time worrying about these challenges which can then often leave parents feeling stuck, overwhelmed or powerless to know how best to manage these. One of the most important techniques for parents with children with mental health difficulties for both themselves and their child is problem-solving. The reasons why problem solving is good:

- It is simple and straightforward life skill to understand and use.
- It works. Research has shown it can be effective for mental health difficulties.
- It can empower parents to practically overcome challenges and move forward.
- It encourages parents to confront problems rather than avoid them.
- It's a life skill all the family can use for day to day problems.

We dont all learn this skill by default as we grow up. Some people need support to learn how to do this.

What is problem-solving?

It's a simple technique to help solve problems. This method helps you go through a step by step approach in a calm, objective way to determine a useful solution to your problem. Instead of the problems going around in your head, it helps break them down so they are less overwhelming and stuck. Problem solving can empower families to see ways of solving problems and supporting positive change.

Steps to problem-solving

Identify the problem.
Do this as early as possible.

Define the problem.
Be precise; only one problem at a time. Break it down into smaller steps and decide what you need to action first.

Explore the potential solutions by brainstorming without judgement.
Write down as many ideas as you can that might help solve the problem, no matter how silly they seem - don't dismiss any possible solutions. Consider the pros and cons of each possible solution. Choose one of the possible solutions that looks likely to work, based on the advantages and disadvantages.

Action a solution; decide on one of the solutions.
Plan out step-by-step what you need to do to carry out this solution. What? When? How? With whom or what? What could cause problems? How can you get around those problems? Is this realistic and achievable? Then do it and carry out the plan.

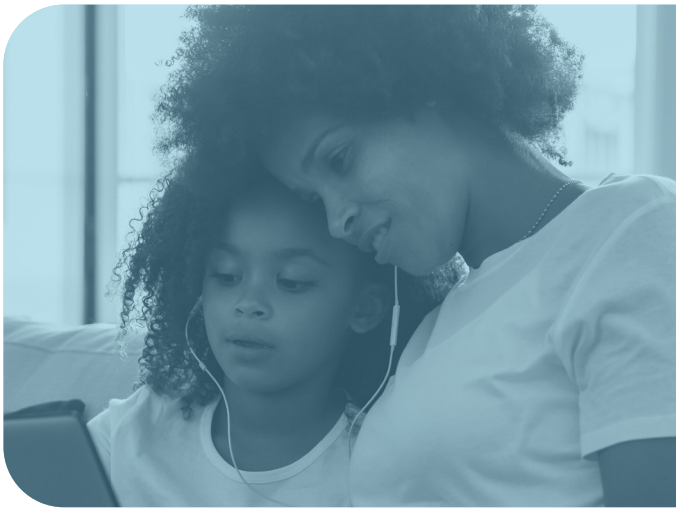
Learn from the action.
Review how it went. Was it helpful? Did you achieve what you set out to achieve? If not, how could you have done it differently? Did you achieve any progress, however small, towards your goal? What have you learned?

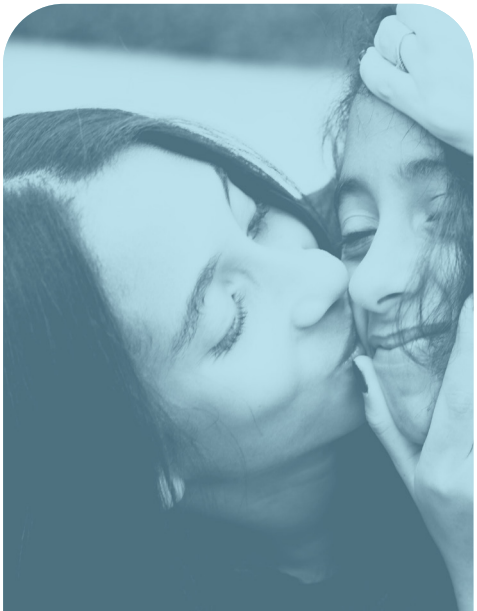
Top tips for problem solving:

- **Problem solve when you are calm:** It is important to use the problem-solving techniques when you are feeling calm. Generating solutions to problems in moments of high stress or when you are feeling very overwhelmed can be challenging as it is hard for any of us to think clearly when we feel this way. You may need to use other strategies in the manual first to help to be in a calmer state of mind to use problem solving effectively.
- **Problem solve with others:** Going through problem solving steps with someone else can also be useful to help gain a wider perspective and generate more solutions. Two minds are often better than one!
- **Focus on worries that can be changed:** It is important to make the distinction between worries that can be helped using problem-solving and those that cannot. Problem-solving won't help hypothetical or 'what if' situations. Those are things that you can't do anything about. The situations that you can do something about that relate to current problems are where problem-solving is possible.

The book 'How to cope when your child can't' by Shafran, Saunders and Wellham providing some useful examples of worries that parents report that problem solving can be useful for and those when it can't.







Examples of what concerns can be helped by problem-solving?

Concern	Current, practical? Can you do something about this (Y/N)	Helped by problem-solving (Y/N)	Comment
You are worried that your child is becoming increasingly lower in mood. You are worried that your child will harm themselves.	Y	Y	Problem-solving will help you find solutions as to how best to take this forward and who to speak to about this for support. Problem-solving can also be helpful to some extent in terms of making sure you have taken all the steps you can to reduce the chance of harm.
You are exhausted from staying up with your child to help get him/her to bed at night.	Y	Y	Problem-solving will help find solutions to you being exhausted and come up with alternative strategies.
Your child is becoming avoidant and upset about attending school	Y	Y	Problem-solving with help you find solutions as to how best to your child with this, who to speak to and what strategies you could try.
You might become ill in the future.	N	N	This is a 'what if' worry so problem-solving is unlikely to be that helpful.
Others might judge you for your parenting	N	N	This is a 'what if' worry so problem-solving is unlikely to be that helpful.
Your child is friends with someone you think is a bad influence and likely to get them into trouble.	N	N	This is not something that is within your control- it's not a problem you can solve.

What can I do for my hypothetical worries?

Hypothetical worries can be very difficult for parents as you can't do anything about them. In these situations, it is helpful to try and change your reaction to the situation rather than the situation itself, basic techniques such as worry time and journaling can be useful techniques to aid this. See our video on worry time for more information on this. Other topics in the manual can help with this such as emotion regulation, guilt and responsibility, stress and coping, empathy and compassion and ways of thinking.

Problem solving is a fantastic life skill that you can also model to your children to help them learn their own ways of coping with day to day problems and mental health difficulties. Why not give it a go with your child and problem solve difficulties together.

Strategies and resources to try

Problem solving - a short video on how to use problem solving as a parent or carer to support yourself and your child:
bit.ly/3QdhbPs

How to cope with 'what if' worries - a short video on how to identify 'what if worries' as a parents and carers. The video will also provide strategies to manage worries:
bit.ly/43IT66h

Problem solving worksheet a useful worksheet by Getselfhelp.co.uk to help you problem solve worries:
bit.ly/43PKXNp

What's Up? - the mental health app, informed by cognitive behavioural therapy that provides a range of guided self-help strategies and allows you to track your thoughts, feelings and behaviours:
bit.ly/3YagJ6y

BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't:
bbc.in/46HyBtb

Multitasking and time management

Parents and carers are faced with multiple day to day tasks and challenges. Many parents describe multitasking as their 'default mode' and it can often seem that multitasking is the only way that parents and carers can control the busy day to day lives and get through the list of tasks that need to be completed. This can be magnified when their child is sad, needs so much of their time to comfort them or requires additional planning to attend appointments for mental health support around school and work commitments.

Despite how reliant parents are on multitasking, the research tells us that multitasking is actually unhelpful. Although some tasks may not require as much demand as others, by trying to do multiple tasks at once it is just too much. The last time you forgot something was probably because you were multitasking. Multitasking can make us feel as though we aren't doing anything well and can actually make us feel more out of control and reduce our sense of achievement.

Furthermore, when we are tired, overwhelmed or more stressed, which is often the experience for many parents and carers with children with mental health difficulties, it becomes even harder to focus on multiple tasks and multitask.

Rather than focusing on multitasking, it can be helpful for parents and carers to focus on time management skills instead.

Time management

We often default to multitasking because there is more to do than the time we have. Parents have shared when life is particularly challenging, that they can feel so overwhelmed by everything they have to do that they don't know where to start. Time management focuses on increasing efficiency with the time that we have to prioritise what we should get done. The 'Eisenhower' is a time management matrix in which you divide tasks into important tasks, not important tasks, urgent tasks and not urgent task to help organise your time and prioritise where to start. It can be quick and easy to use. When thinking about your tasks for the day you might find that some boxes have more tasks in them than others.

Here is an example below:

	Urgent	Not urgent
Important	• Getting food for the family • Completing work deadline • Picking up child from school	• Responding to a message from a friend • Arranging a dentist appointment • Looking after yourself
Not important	• Washing and ironing clothes	• Cleaning the car • Sorting the cupboards • Responding to a social media post

Activity

Have a go at doing a time management grid yourself.

	Urgent	Not urgent
Important		
Not important		

Top tips to time management:

Awareness of coping mechanisms:
It can be important to notice what your default coping strategies are when you become overwhelmed by tasks. Do you procrastinate, avoid specific tasks, overwork or have preferable tasks you prioritise above others?

Be present:
Practicing mindfulness and emotional regulation strategies can help you implement time management more effectively.

Looking after yourself is important:
Tasks that help you meet your basic needs and look after yourself should be placed in the important box. If you are not looking after yourself it is much harder to complete tasks efficiently.

Notice what you are doing:
Sometimes when we have so many tasks to do we can find it hard to notice all the tasks we have achieved. Recognising our achievements and small successes can improve our mood and give us a sense of achievement. This can actually make us more motivated so we can achieve more.

Be compassionate and kind to yourself when we can't get things done.
There are lots of things that can get in the way of us getting everything we need to get done. Sometimes it's just not achievable, there is too much to do or you are overtired. Having a child with mental health difficulties can make life unpredictable at times and you may need to prioritise them before other tasks you have planned even when you have used the time management matrix. It can be easy to be self-critical but it is important to be kind to yourself in these moments and recognise when you have done everything you can do.

Strategies and resources to try

Multitasking and time management - a short video on how to manage time more effectively as a parent or carer in order to support your wellbeing and the needs of your child: bi**t.ly/3DUq8pD**

Pacing - a short video on how to pace as a parent or carer in order to support your wellbeing whilst managing day to day tasks and challenges: **bit.ly/3NOCWlJ**

BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't: **bbc.in/46HyBtb**

Pacing

When considering how to manage your time, pacing activities can be an important skill to help you prioritise the demands of tasks and your wellbeing as a parent.

Pacing is a self-management technique that aims to balance energy and rest. It is simple but it really works! Although, this is a skill often used by those with chronic physical health problems, it is a valuable skill for parents day to day in order to manage the demands of life without overdoing this or risking burnout. It is a particularly important skill during times of significant challenge as a parent or if you have additional physical or mental health difficulties yourself. As a parent when you have increased threat you might be more likely to kick into overdrive to try to manage the threats and challenges facing your family but this can lead to burnout. If you are burnt out it will make it particularly hard to function day to day and support yourself.

Why Pace?

- Pacing helps you to take a break before you need to.
- Pacing may reduce the severity and duration on burnout.
- Pacing may reduce feelings of frustration and low mood and help regulate your emotions.
- Pacing may prevent you relying on unhelpful coping strategies.
- Pacing can help you be more efficient whilst also taking care of your own needs as a parent.
- Pacing can help you feel more in control.

The four steps to pacing include:

1. Break up tasks into smaller parts.

2. Gradually increase the amount you do - start with tasks that feel manageable.

3. Take frequent short breaks - this might even be small moments to ground yourself with breathing techniques or muscle relaxation.

4. Being realistic about what you can do based on your energy levels and mental and emotional capacity.

These steps may be used separately, but they will often overlap.

Remember: By using a baseline for your abilities, you can organise activities in a way that supports your wellbeing, giving you more control. You can carry out tasks that previously caused you discomfort with more ease. The baseline should be used on ‘good’ days and ‘bad’ days; initially you may find it hard to limit yourself on good days!

The spoon theory is a helpful analogy to help you to think about pacing. We all have so many spoons a day, different tasks will take up so many of our spoons and on days where we are more exhausted, unwell or have demands on us some of our spoons might also be taken up already. Once we have used up all our spoons we will struggle to complete tasks. Being mindful of how many spoons you have used in a day can help you to plan and pace tasks whilst being kind to yourself and looking after ourselves in order to better look after your child.



Strategies and resources to try

Multitasking and time management - a short video on how to manage time more effectively as a parent or carer in order to support your wellbeing and the needs of your child: bi**t.ly/3DUq8pD**

Pacing - a short video on how to pace as a parent or carer in order to support your wellbeing whilst managing day to day tasks and challenges: **bit.ly/3NOCWlJ**

BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't: **bbc.in/46HyBtb**

Acceptance

Sometimes, despite parents and carers very best hopes, efforts, time and energy and despite the desperate desire to alleviate their child and young person's pain, there are problems that can't be solved. You might not be able to take away their mental health difficulties, physical illnesses, their sensory issues, you can't make friends for them, change their temperament or genetics or the outcome of their grades, you can't change their past or what others have said to them and the hurt others have caused. Putting time and energy into trying to change what can't be fixed and fight it can be very distressing and emotionally and physically exhausting for parents. There's so much out of parent and carer's control and this can lead to feeling powerless.

Acceptance can be a powerful tool for parents and carers in these circumstances to help them move forward and provide comfort.

Shafran, Saunders and Welham provide a helpful way of understanding acceptance. 'What we definitely don't mean here is what's often meant when someone says flippantly, 'just live with it'. Neither 'acceptance' nor 'just living with it' make any sense if they mean being passive or just giving up. Acceptance is not giving up. We choose to think of acceptance as an active state, that we come to by engaging with the reality of the problems our child experiences in a way that also accepts our own need to survive, and even, maybe, to thrive. It means daring to accept what is, now, and it can be transformative'.

Why is acceptance important?

- Experts suggest that acceptance is the healthier option in times of hardship. Trying to resist or avoid certain difficult experiences can cause further psychological harm.
- It provides more choice and control in situations that are out of control by focusing on what can be controlled rather than what can't.
- Acceptance helps us to be more flexible in our thinking and can therefore, actually sometimes help us find solutions we weren't aware of or generate a different path to move forward.

What can you accept?

- **Accept the thing you cannot change in the present** - In order to do this, you need to identify what is out of your control.
- **Accepting your own present reactions, thoughts and feeling** - Having a child who is suffering is incredibly hard. And there's no escaping that, to some extent, the range of excruciating reactions you might have - devastation, fear, confusion, exhaustion, irritation, anger - will reflect this.

How to find acceptance

Often when we try to change things that we cannot fix we spend a lot of time focusing on the past or future. Acceptance encourages us to focus on accepting the contents of the present moment.

1. The first step to find acceptance is noticing your resistance.

How do you resist experiencing difficult situations, thoughts or feelings? Do you avoid, distract yourself, over plan and prepare to find a fix. The first step to acceptance is recognising how you avoid it.

2. The second step to cultivating acceptance is being mindful and present.

Mindfulness is a powerful and effective skill that can help parents and carers to be present in the moment to help harness a sense of acceptance.

Mindfulness is all about paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally.

Often when we think about mindfulness, we picture a person in a calm and relaxed state of meditation for several hours as this is often the image presented within the media. However, mindfulness is about being present and drawing attention to whatever emotions and thoughts you are experiencing in the moment and recognising when we get distracted or our thoughts drift away from the present. It therefore, can be relaxing however, it can also encourage us to be present with difficult thoughts and feelings too.

Simple mindfulness exercises for you to practice can include body scans, focusing on your breath or the sounds around you. Different mindfulness exercises work better for different people so it is important you take the time to try different exercises to work out what suits you. There are lots of app, videos, scripts and resources online that you can try.

How to practice mindfulness:

1. Take a seat. Find a place to sit that ideally feels calm and quiet for you.

2. Set a time limit. If you are new to mindfulness, choose a short time such as 3-5 minutes.

3. Notice your body. Make sure you are stable and, in a position, so you can stay there for a while.

4. Feel your breath. Your breath can be a powerful anchor. Follow the sensations of your breath as it goes out and as it goes in.

5. Notice when your mind has wandered. When you notice this simply bring it back to your focus of attention and to the breath.

6. Be kind to your wandering mind. Don't judge yourself or focus on the content of your thoughts you get distracted by. Just come back to the present.

Often parents and carers share that it is challenging to engage in mindfulness when life is so busy. Here are some top tips for mindful parenting:

- Be realistic.
- Make mindfulness activities small and make adaptions.
- Fit mindfulness into what you are already doing - mindfulness can involve a minute of checking in with your body and adjusting your posture, you can be mindful as you go for a walk, on the school car run or when you are eating and listening to music.
- Consider how can you prioritise this and persevere.
- Ask others to help to support you to have time to do it.

The third step is using acceptance through practice.

Remember: learning to pay attention and to accept the moment, it is a skill. It takes regular and consistent practice.

Strategies and resources to try

Acceptance - a short video on finding acceptance as a parent and carer, what acceptance is and strategies to help you achieve this:
bit.ly/43Wghu0

A coping strategy film on breathing techniques:
bit.ly/3UyD3Vk

Passing Clouds - a guided mindfulness video:
bit.ly/3R2EdsB

Leaves on a Stream - a video on mindfulness:
bit.ly/44wXoxU

The struggle switch - a short video by Dr. Russ Harris about how to drop the struggle and find acceptance:
bit.ly/43Nuqcz

Headspace - an app providing guided mindfulness and meditation practice for everyday use:
bit.ly/43Joi5d

Bloom CBT Therapy and Journal an app providing guided useful cognitive behavioural therapy strategies for day to day use:
bit.ly/44LbMmV

Mind - resources regarding simple mindfulness exercises and tips to support wellbeing:
bit.ly/3Yez1n0

BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't:
bbc.in/46HyBtb

Empathy and compassion

Being a parent is not always easy and we are often self-critical and harsh on ourselves. We might be full of 'shoulds' or 'musts', we might tell ourselves that we are not doing enough or blame ourselves when things go wrong. If we have a child who is experiencing mental health difficulties, this self-critical voice can feel even louder. Too much self-criticism can lead to us feeling guilty, miserable and unmotivated. Showing ourselves empathy and compassion in difficult times, instead of criticizing ourselves is so important and can help us to feel more motivated, healthier and happier.

What is self-compassion?

- Showing the same compassion towards yourself as you would show to friends and family, especially when you are going through a difficult time or if things don't go as planned. What would you say to them in the same situation?
- Offering yourself kindness and compassion when you fail or make mistakes and recognising that it is a very normal and necessary part of being human - whoever said you were supposed to be perfect?
- Recognising when you are in a difficult situation and thinking about how you can comfort and care for yourself - this might be by allowing yourself to take a break, doing something you enjoy or taking a walk. We all need a little time to ourselves every now and then and this does not make us selfish.
- Observing any negative, judgemental or critical thoughts that you have about yourself with openness and without judgement rather than trying to ignore them.
- Challenging our self-critical thoughts and creating more helpful, kind thoughts, as you would do for a friend or family member.

An exercise in self-compassion:

Being kind to ourselves doesn't always come naturally and can take practice before it becomes a habit. Writing a letter to ourselves can encourage us to express empathy, compassion and acceptance for the part of yourself you are criticising. The following suggestions for writing a letter may be helpful:

- Identify something about yourself that you often criticise - it may be a feeling that you should cope better than you do, or it could be you feel inadequate, jealous, lazy or anything else.
- Write down what it is about yourself that leads to self-criticism and describe your feelings.
- Imagine what someone who loves you unconditionally would say about this part of yourself? Write about this part of yourself in a more compassionate and kind way.
- Think about how your past experiences, your genetics, your circumstances or your health may have contributed to the part of yourself you are criticizing. Remind yourself that those things are not always your fault.
- Think about what constructive changes you can make to help you to manage this part of yourself a little better. Remember, small steps can lead to big changes.
- When you have finished your letter, put it somewhere safe and then come back to it and re-read it with kindness and compassion. Maybe you would like to add to it?

Strategies and resources to try

Empathy and compassion - a short video explaining the importance of empathy and self-compassion as a parent and carer, with strategies to help achieve this:
bit.ly/3KmCmuJ

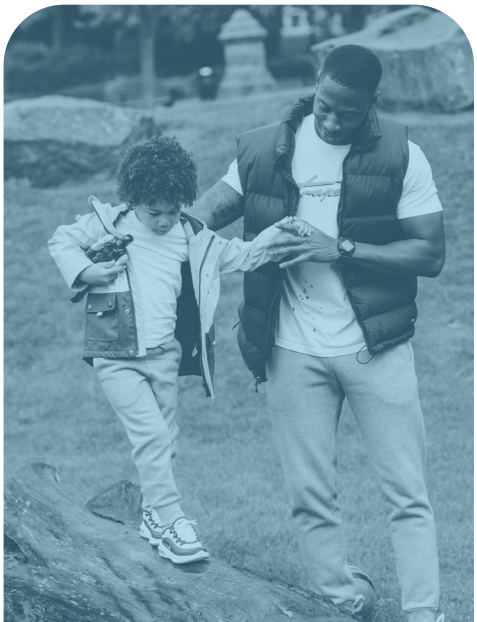
Headspace - an app providing guided mindfulness and meditation practice for everyday use:
bit.ly/43Joi5d

Bloom CBT Therapy and Journal an app providing guided useful cognitive behavioural therapy strategies for day to day use:
bit.ly/44LbMmV

Further resources on self-compassion:
Self-Compassion.org

BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't:
bbc.in/46HyBtb





Guilt and responsibility

Guilt is a common concept to most parents where they can often describe feeling they are not doing enough for their child. Parenting a child with a particular emotional, developmental, behavioural or other need is especially challenging and can magnify this sense of guilt further as it can heighten a parent's sense of feeling out of control.

What is guilt?

Guilt is the feeling of worry or unhappiness that you have because you have done something wrong, such as causing harm to another person. Feelings of guilt are heightened when we feel we have broken our moral standards. Although, guilt can often be triggered when thinking about past events, worrying can make people feel guilty about situations that haven't even happened yet. This is known as anticipatory guilt and it is surprisingly common.

Responsibility and guilt

Challenges with feelings of responsibility can bring lots of difficult feelings and thoughts for parents. Many parents can feel responsible for their child's difficulties which can evoke feelings of upset, regret and an overall sense of guilt for parents day to day. The sense of responsibility in a situation will vary with each parent's circumstance but feelings of responsibility is often evoked in situations when there is a greater need for control. Sadly, parents don't have as much control as they would like in many situations for their children. So, they cannot be held responsible. We cannot always pin point the reason behind a child's mental health difficulties and always control the many factors contributing to it. Even when responsible, parents can often think they have more responsibility than they do which can lead to significant pressure, expectation, self-criticism towards themselves which can ultimately magnify guilt. Feelings of guilt and over responsibility can feel very lonely, isolating and distressing for parents and can impact on parent wellbeing.

What is guilt?

Under normal circumstances, when someone feels guilty for something they have done there are actions that can be taken to try to 'repair' the harm such as apologising or elevating distress caused to another. But when it comes to feeling guilty for not being a 'good enough' parent, a different approach may be needed.

1. Notice your guilty thoughts and the situations that lead to these.

Feelings of guilt and over-responsibility are often driven by guilty thoughts so identifying these thoughts and the situations that drive these is often the first step to overcoming it.

Examples of guilty thoughts often follow 'I should or shouldn't', 'if only' or 'I am' statements:

'I shouldn't have got so angry'

'I should have remembered to organise that'

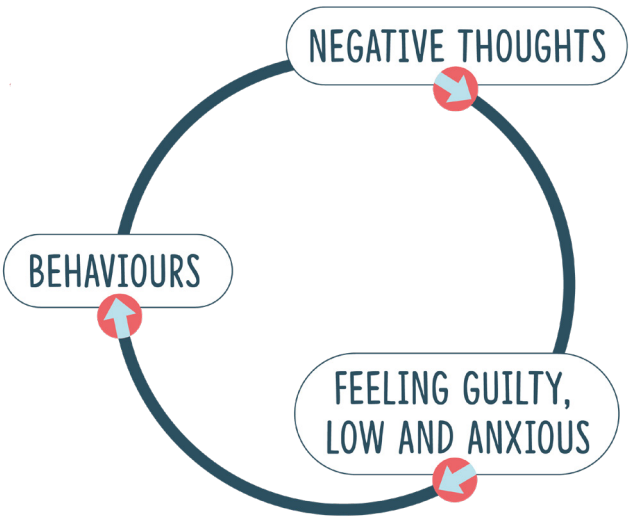
'I should be spending more time with my child'

'If only I had helped them with their homework'

'I am a bad parent'

'I am a failure'

These guilty thoughts can lead to feeling guilty, sad or worried and impact what we do. We might spend time dwelling on a guilt thought, withdraw from others, stop engaging in activities important to us or get tasks done. This can lead to more negative thinking, guilt or a sense of over responsibility.



2. Rules vs guidelines

A helpful strategy is to look at your rules, 'shoulds' and 'musts', are they reasonable? It is not humanly possible to be a good parent all the time, to fix your child's problems. Are you trying your best under incredibly difficult circumstances? You can work out if your rules, 'shoulds' and 'musts', are reasonable by talking to other parents whose children are in same situation as yours.

Rules and guidelines:

Even better than having rules, 'shoulds' and 'should-nots', is to think about guidelines. The difference between rules and guidelines is that rules break and guidelines bend. After breaking a rule, you feel guilty.

Transforming rigid rules into flexible guidelines can help you live your life with less guilt, but it takes practice.

Rules	Guidelines
I should always make a healthy dinner for the kids.	I can try to make a healthy dinner for the kids but sometimes an unhealthy take out is ok.
I must always be there for the kids physically and emotionally.	I prefer to be there for the children when I can but sometimes it just isn't possible.
The children's needs should always come before mine.	I prefer to put children's needs before mines but its ok if sometimes that can't happen.
I should make sacrifices for the kids.	Sometimes I will need to make sacrifices for the children, but it is a choice.
The children's happiness comes before mine.	It is ok to sometimes put my happiness first.

Transforming rigid rules into flexible guidelines can help you live your life with less guilt, but it takes practice.

3. Are you as responsible as you feel?

Feeling guilty or responsible does not always mean you are guilty or responsible for the situation as sometimes you might be taking on too much responsibility. Responsibility pie charts help us to gain a realistic perspective of how much responsibility we can hold in a moment. It is a useful tool to challenge unrealistic or distorted thinking about feared events or responsibility for situations that have already happened and further can be used to help people understand and manage their sense of guilt.

There are 3 stages to responsibility pie charts:

Step 1: How responsible do you feel?

Step 2: Write a list of all the other factors that can take some responsibility

Step 3: Allocate percentage of the pie chart to each thing on the list (up to 100%). Give a percentage to all other things first, ending with yourself. Then draw the pie chart.

The resources below will show you how to do this step by step with an example. Why not try it yourself?

3. Focus on what you have done, not what you haven't

Feelings of guilt and over responsibility can make it harder to notice what we are doing well as a parent and make us more likely to focus on the things we get wrong. We can be on the look out for when we fail and this can give us an inaccurate perspective on how well we are doing as a parent of a child with mental health difficulties. It is important to take the time to notice your achievements or when you manage a situation well. We recommend reflecting on three things you did well in a situation or each day to help notice this more.

4. Be kind to yourself, what would you say to another parent?

Often, we are much better at being kinder to others than ourselves. It can be helpful to ask yourself what you would say to a friend, family member or another parent who had gone through what you have. Some parents find it helpful to write a compassionate message to themselves and read it back when thoughts of guilt arise.

5. Look after yourself

Looking after yourself can fall to the bottom of the to-do list of life. It is important to take time for small pleasures, to try and manage your own emotions and to invest time to think differently but guilt can stop us from doing that. It can feel wrong to put your own needs above your child's in the short term, even if in the longer term you know rationally it is in your child's best interest.

Strategies and resources to try

Guilt and responsibility - a short video explaining the impact of guilt and responsibility on parent and carers and ways to manage this: **bit.ly/3OLAoqt**

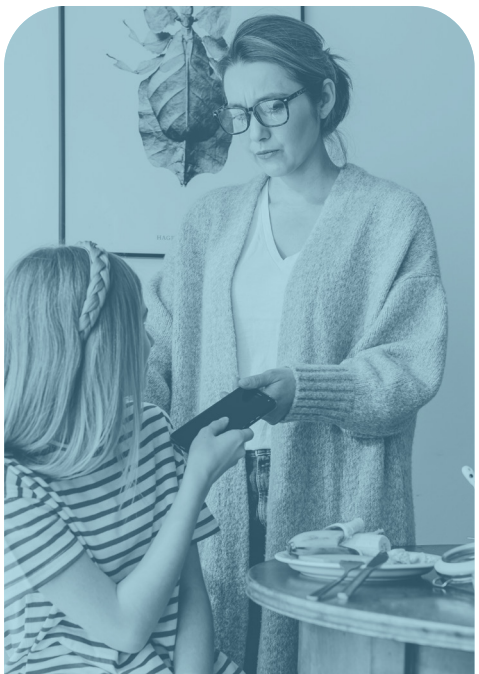
Responsibility pie chart - a self-help worksheet for using responsibility pie charts: **bit.ly/454gj3O**

Empathy and compassion - a short video explaining the importance of empathy and self-compassion as a parent and carer, with strategies to help achieve this: **bit.ly/3KmCmuJ**

Small Pleasures - a short video on the finding small pleasures as a parent or carer: **bit.ly/44LaOHr**

What's Up? - the mental health app, informed by cognitive behavioural therapy that provides a range of guided self-help strategies and allows you to track your thoughts, feelings and behaviours: **bit.ly/3YagJ6y**

BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't: **bbc.in/46HyBtb**



Mantras, memes and inspirational quotes

Understanding where inspiration comes from can help you to harness it when it strikes

Research has found that when reading a motivational quote, it can trigger the reward system in the brain responsible for making us feel good. The releasing of endorphins that we haven't earned, can make us instantly satisfied and are less likely to get on with the task at hand.

Mantras, memes and inspiration quotes are words or phrases that are used to promote positive feelings or general wellbeing. Research shows mantras can be good for mental health and many describe how holding onto mantras to get through time of significant challenges can be powerful and important. In therapy, children can often share mantras that have been passed on by their parents and how they hold onto these in times of difficulties. Mantras, memes and quotes can therefore be a brilliant but simple tool for parents and carers.

Why we love mantras, memes and inspirational quote:

- They can help gather difficult thoughts.
- They help keep a sense of perspective.
- They provide a sense of comfort, connection, company and hope.
- They can provide a sense of direction when we feel stuck.

Parents and Carers have shared how helpful they find these when supporting a child with mental health difficulties. Here are some of the mantras and quotes families have previously shared:

'You are doing the best you can at this time'

'There is a light at the end of the tunnel'

'Tomorrow will be a better day'

'There is always something to be glad about'

'If you lie on a rock for long enough
you get used to it'

'She will get there in the end'

'Positive vibes only is not a thing. Humans have a wide range of emotions and that's ok'

' The past can hurt, but the way I see it, you can either run from it, or learn from it…'
- The Lion King

'Everyone is doing the best they can'

'Empathy is fixing' - Vivek Patel

'They are not giving you a hard time; they are having a hard time'

'If I am not good to myself, how can I expect anyone else to be good to me?' - Maya Angelou

'Your present circumstances don't determine where you do: they merely determine where you start'

Mental health is not a destination but a process.

There is hope even when your brain tells
you there isn't - John Green

Always remember you matter, you're important and you are loved, and you bring to this world things no one else can - Charlie Mackesy.

You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only choice you have - Bob Marley

Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, when one only remembers to turn on the light. - Dumbledore

There is no such thing as being a perfect parent. So just be a real one.

Other bite-size memorable sayings that can be helpful are:

- One step at a time.
- Let it go, let it go (To the Frozen tune').
- Just keeping swimming.
- This too shall pass.
- I'm only human.
- Slow progress is still progress.
- Take a deep breath.
- Keep calm and carry on.

The website Action for Happiness and the book How to cope when your child can't, by Shafran, Saunders and Welham, have a useful set of posters that can serve as a quick boost and reminder of some of the strategies to help when times are tough. There are also apps that can send you daily notifications of mantras and inspirational quotes.

Understanding what inspires you can be a useful tool during challenges in life and an important source of comfort for parents and carers.

Activity

Spend time thinking about the phrases or sayings that help you through the tough times. Discuss this with your families and share the phrases you have with each other for inspiration. You can put these in places you will see regularly day to day to remind you.

Strategies and resources to try

Mantras, memes and inspirational quotes - a short video explaining importance of Mantras, memes and inspirational quotes for parents and carers:
bit.ly/3qyGEZ0

What's Up? - the mental health app, informed by cognitive behavioural therapy that provides a range of guided self-help strategies and allows you to track your thoughts, feelings and behaviours:
bit.ly/3YagJ6y

Action for happiness website has a range of posters and useful mantras and memes:
ActionForHappiness.org

BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't:
bbc.in/46HyBtb

Connect

What you can do with your child, family and others

There are many benefits to connecting with others, including improvements to our physical, mental and emotional well-being. This is why it is one of the NHS' five ways to wellbeing.

Humans are social creatures and we depend on each other to thrive. Way back when we were hunter-gatherers, we simply wouldn't have survived for very long without the support of other people. Thousands of years later, we still need each other.

When you are a parent and carer of a young person with a mental health difficulty it can often feel lonely and the day to day challenges can prevent you connecting with others.

Here are top tips to remember to promote connection as a parent and carer

Remember you are not alone. Parenthood is exhausting at the best of times, and it is not shameful to struggle at times.

With your child and family

- It's important to set clear boundaries with your child. Watch the video below on setting boundaries with your child to see how to do this.
- Set aside problem free time together.
- Problem solve difficulties together.
- Use the strategies in this manual together.
- Set family goals and celebrate small successes. Try and take joy in the small things. Celebrate little wins, and appreciate when your child sings, laughs or smiles.

With others

- Connect with others who can relate. Talk to other parents of children with mental health difficulties – this can help to normalise your experience.
- Have problem-free time with others.
- Keep your own interests and focus on the small pleasures.
- If those around you offer to help out, give yourself permission to say yes.

With professionals

- Draw upon your child's support team. Talk to their GP, teacher, School Counsellor, paediatrician, therapist, or even drama or sports coach. No questions are silly questions. It is always better to have asked about something that is causing you concern or worry to share perspectives.
- Receive professional support for your own mental health if needed.

Additional strategies and resources

Videos:

Setting boundaries with your child - a Hampshire CAMHS video: **bit.ly/3CKSrVY**

The NHS 5 Steps to mental wellbeing: **bit.ly/3roRzop**

A short film explaining the 5 ways to wellbeing: **bit.ly/2H6uDU1**

The basics of self-care - a short film explaining the basics to parent self-care: **bit.ly/3qciBPC**



Podcast:

BBC podcast on how to cope when your child can't: **bbc.in/46HyBtb**



Websites:

BBC Parental mental health and parent wellbeing: **bbc.in/456GlmY**

Hampshire CAMHS: **HampshireCamhs.nhs.uk**

Mind charity: **Mind.org.uk**

Get self help:
GetSelfHelp.co.uk

Parent toolkit - supporting your wellbeing BBC:
bbc.in/3Ykh3zM

NSPCC mental health and parenting: **bit.ly/47aThtY**

Samaritans: **Samaritans.org**

Parent mental health young minds: **bit.ly/3DBnGnt**

Books:

How to Cope When Your Child Can't
by Shafran, Saunders and Welham (2022)

The overcoming book series:
Overcoming.co.uk

Apps:

Headspace - an app providing guided mindfulness and meditation practice for everyday use:
bit.ly/43Joi5d

What's Up? - the mental health app, informed by cognitive behavioural therapy that provides a range of guided self-help strategies and allows you to track your thoughts, feelings and behaviours:
bit.ly/3YagJ6y

Bloom CBT Therapy and Journal an app providing guided useful cognitive behavioural therapy strategies for day to day use:
bit.ly/44LbMmV







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Our email is: **Communications@spft.nhs.uk**



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