



**I AM OF 
LIMITLESS
VALUE. **

The Mental Health Booklet
by the Wellbeing Ambassadors

wellbeing
ambassadors

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Introduction

Hi everyone!

Welcome to the Mental Health Booklet – a resource full of advice, tips and activities for you to read and complete regarding mental health and wellbeing.

But first, who are we? We are the Wellbeing Ambassadors, and our aim is to help support you with your wellbeing, raise awareness and teach the importance of managing your mental and physical health. We do this by creating and providing resources you can access both in and out of school, as well as holding events you can participate in to learn more about mental health and wellbeing.

We have collaborated with the Digital Student Leaders, the Sports Ambassadors and the Anti-Bullying Ambassadors to create pages specialising in online safety, the benefits of sports and physical activity, bullying and where you can receive support both in and out of school.

We also have other articles written by the ambassadors themselves, looking into topics including body image, the science behind our minds, and anxiety. We also have colouring pages and mindful activities you can complete by yourself or with friends and form groups. We hope you can utilise this booklet as much as you need and hope that our advice enables you to make positive changes to your mental health and wellbeing.

You can talk to us in person by looking out for the green Wellbeing badge, or via Teams and email (studentwellbeing@aggs.bfet.uk). We will listen to any concerns you have and support you in having good wellbeing and managing your mental health.

A special thanks to Evie Armstrong in 11-5 for their design of the front cover of this booklet.





Science of the Teenage Brain

by Shloka Adluru, Y13

Teenagers. You know 'em. Bratty, ungrateful, self-conscious and risky little monsters who try to grow up too soon, would do anything for the approval of their mates and are generally just moody and a pain to be around. At least that's what many adults characterise us as. So often are teenagers demonised into this stereotyped mould that everything you do seems to be attributed back to your hormones. You may have felt invalidated in your struggles as society keeps telling you that you are being irrational and that you're making a big deal out of nothing. But your struggles aren't just a joke for some comedian to poke fun at, and no matter how much mum and dad may be struggling to understand you, just remember the problem isn't with you.

History of Adolescence

Adolescence. Everyone goes through this. That may sound obvious but if you ever of some older people say something like "in my generation, the kids were so much more disciplined" or "it's because kids these days are always on their phones" well, hate to burst their bubble but our teenage angst isn't simply some new phenomena.

All throughout time, the descriptions people have created for the transition from child to adult have seemed oddly similar to the ways people describe us teenagers today:

"The children now love luxury. They have bad manners and despise authority. They show disrespect for their elders and love to chatter in place of exercise. Young people now are tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when their elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up food and terrorize their teachers."

Can you guess who this quote is from? Or how long ago this was said? I'll give you a hint. This is BC. It was.... SOCRATES! Even the ancient Greeks were having a hard time with their youngsters.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUWIngTClcO>

The Animal Kingdom on Puberty

And it may surprise you to know that it's not just in humans either. Many different animal species go through similar changes as they mature. Scan the QR code to see a video of an adorable baby wombat turning into a havoc-wreaking teenage wombat.

The point is these feelings are normal and natural. And no mum it is not because of the time I spend on my phone (unless you think wombats are phone addicts)!

So why has mother nature cast such an evil curse on so many animals?

Well, firstly there is an evolutionary reason behind it. For many animals, detaching from their parents and going off to build new connections with others is vital e.g., to start your own tribe as lions do. So, teenagers tend to be more sensitive to social situations and sometimes it can seem that the opinions of our friends are so much more important than the opinions of family members (much to our parents' dismay). Many animals may also be more aggressive or irritable in order to "establish themselves in their herd or social group" says Ron Surratt, director of animal collections at the Fort Worth Zoo in Texas.



Image taken from www.sciencenewsforstudents.org

Peer Pressure and Social Interactions



Image taken from www.themeparktourist.com

Okay, so we may be riskier and more extreme in our actions, but adults take risks all the time! What makes us any different? Well, something unique to adolescents is the way they take more risks when others (especially others from their peer group) are around compared to when they are on their own. "Adolescence is the period of life in which we develop our sense of self..., particularly our sense of social self, that is how other people see us", says Professor Sarah-Jayne Blackmore. In her talk at the Royal Institution, she mentions a study showing that "adolescent mice drink more alcohol when with other mice." And we're not very different from these mice in terms of how much social pressure shapes our decisions (1).

The cool thing about teens is our heightened social skills, allowing us to process facial expressions better than people of other ages. That makes sense because I keep trying to explain to my dad that this skull emoji is of me dying of laughter and I was NOT trying to scare him).



But interestingly teens often tend to respond to situations using their amygdala the more emotional part of the brain whereas adults tend to use their rational prefrontal cortexes. This is because our prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for things like judgement and impulse control, isn't fully developed yet. In a study where teens and adults were shown pictures of different expressions, the teens were more likely to characterise one of the faces as anger whereas many of the adults identified it as fear. This could mean that we often misinterpret the intentions of those around us and act according to the negative assumptions we've made. (2)

Hormone Round-Up

'All right all right, I get it! How is knowing about the hormonal tendencies of a bunch of ancestors and other animals gonna help me with MY MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING!' I hear you ask. FEAR NOT, as the wise philosopher Laozi once said: "Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power"

So are you ready to master yourself? How exactly? Let's start with knowing your hormones:

Androgens:

Androgens are secreted by the adrenal glands and stimulate your glands in your skin to secrete oil. Soon after your sweat glands are activated, and you start giving off body odour. To many of us, this goes beyond just a physical change as our changing body can make us more self-conscious with the stress of social acceptance only contributing more to things like acne which keeps the cycle of low self-esteem going. (3)

Kisspeptin:

Kisspeptin is produced by the hypothalamus which triggers the pituitary gland to release the hormones testosterone, oestrogen and progesterone which stimulate our sex organs: ovaries for females and testes for males.

But these hormones don't just invoke sexual changes, they also cause us to become more sensitive to emotional stimuli, driving us to chase intense feelings (no wonder I was bawling my eyes out over how beautiful the front cover of this page is).

Dopamine

Affects the reward centres in our brain. In teenagers, rewarding stimuli fire us up more easily meaning we are more likely to take part in risky behaviour. We are also more likely to get into addictions such as drugs or even eating disorders.

Allopregnanolone:

Is a hormone released when someone is stressed in order to soothe the mind... Which is great! Unless you're a teen; whilst adults and children experience a soothing effect, in contrast, the same hormone induces anxiety in teens (wow, just great (-_-)). (3)

Melatonin & Cortisol:

Melatonin makes you sleepier, normally in adults, it's released at around 10 pm but a study shows that in teenagers this hormone is released somewhere close to 1 am! Cortisol helps us wake up and since our whole circadian cycle is delayed, we tend to love a good lie-in, so it's no surprise that when we're abruptly woken up to go to school, many of us are severely sleep-deprived. (4)

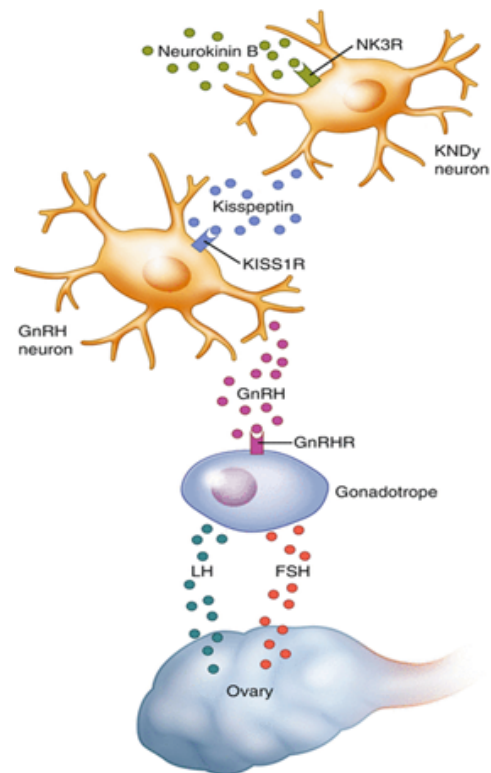


Image taken from link.springer.com

How to Get Through This!

Okay, I've just thrown a bunch of problems at you but now what is the solution? Are we just destined to be miserable for this period of our lives? Whilst this segment isn't going to magically improve your well-being here are a few tips to try and tackle your biology and take at least some control over this turbulent part of your life. These tips will have a number before them to refer back to which issue it is addressing from the problems we discussed earlier:

(1) Peer Pressure

It's easy to think that we would never fall into a trap like smoking or using drugs, and for the most part that is probably true... until you're in the heat of the moment with a bunch of your mates cheering you on to do something you aren't entirely comfortable with. It doesn't have to be something as extreme as drugs but often our brains are so hardwired to want to fit in that we can get mixed up in the wrong crowd, leaving us with regrets later on.



Many adults in your life may have just told you that a simple "no" will do the trick but psychologists say that one way to combat peer pressure is to know about pluralistic ignorance. Say you're in a group when someone pulls out an alcohol bottle and suggests that everyone starts having some, you may assume that everyone else doesn't have a problem with it and you are the only exception when in reality, the majority of the group may agree with you but be too scared to admit it. If you are the first to admit your discomfort, you may find that you aren't the only person after all. A study in 1988 showed that a group of college students who learned about pluralistic ignorance drank less than those who didn't.

(2) Communication

When you are talking to others, especially those who aren't the same age as you e.g. your parents, it is easy to feel like you're just talking to a brick wall and that they won't understand you. Remember the other person probably also feels the same frustration that you are. It's okay to have different ways of thinking, but to avoid conflict it's best to try and explain your thought process and intentions and encourage the other to do the same. For example, if your parents won't let you go to a party, their intention is probably not to cut out your fun but rather because they are worried about your safety. Perhaps they would let you go to the party if you reassured them of what you intend to do at the party. Try not to assume the worst of others and talk to them; this will relieve the stress of you having to guess what someone else is thinking and will improve your relationships with the people you love the most.

(3) Stress

Stress, in good doses, is great to sharpen your thinking in times of need, making you alert and ready to deal with what you're faced with. Prolonged stress on the other hand can damage your brain function in the long run. But don't worry, you can lessen your stress with your own secret weapon:

ENDORPHINS. These are happy hormones that you can create yourself DIY style by getting into good habits like exercising, meditation, or any hobby that you have which is creative, fun or relaxing (like expanding your rock collection – 'tis not a hobby for the soft-minded I tell you!).

A healthy diet can also encourage a good microbiome of bacteria to live in your gut which in turn causes the secretion of happy hormones like dopamine which can increase your mood.

If you feel you need more support, then the websites listed at the bottom are great for just that.

(4) Sleep

Limit your phone usage before bedtime. As you probably heard countless times before, the blue light interferes with sleep. You can use an app called forest which restricts you from going on other apps on your phone, it even has the option to choose different calming noises such as rain for you to play, and meanwhile, a cute little tree will grow in the background. If you go on other apps your tree will die so hopefully you won't be tempted to use your phone. Even better if you leave your phone in a completely different room so you won't even have the thought. Perhaps make it a family habit so you feel more motivated not to break this rule.

You should go out and get some fresh air and exercise for at least 3 hours a week to help tire you out before bed.

Routine is key, it's a way of signifying to your body "Hey if I'm taking a warm bath and then reading a book, you know what comes next, sleep". If you are inconsistent, your poor body won't be able to predict when you should feel sleepy. Try not to sleep in on the weekends (impossible I know) because this lack of consistent sleep times can lead to what's called "social jetlag" which is why on Mondays, you will feel horrible having to wake up earlier than the previous two days.

The teenage mind may be hectic but out of the chaos you can find bouts of energy and passion. Young people are open-minded and adaptable so take this time as a time to explore and get to know yourself. When things get difficult there's no shame in reaching out for support. There are millions of people who are going through the same struggles as you or have been through them already so you can ask them how they coped with their struggles.



Image taken from imgflip.com

Extra Support

- BBC ACTION LINE – Has links to many great sources of support:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1NGvFrTqWChr03LrYlw2Hkk/information-and-support-mental-health-self-harm>

- NHS teen guide for sleeping: <https://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/our-services/hospital/sleep-medicine-department/how-to-sleep-well-for-teenagers.aspx>

- CHILDLINE: <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/contacting-childline/>

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(10) Q&A: The Neuroscience of the Teenage Brain - with Sarah-Jayne Blakemore - YouTube

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(10) Why Are Teens So Moody? - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdKfVqHES0k>

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Puberty in the Animal Kingdom:

Wait...Animals Go Through Puberty Too? - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIaLE-i3kHI>

Sweet Tiny Wombat Turns His House Upside Down When He Becomes A Teenager | The Dodo -

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Manifestations of Anxiety

by Mairead Biswas-Graham, Y10

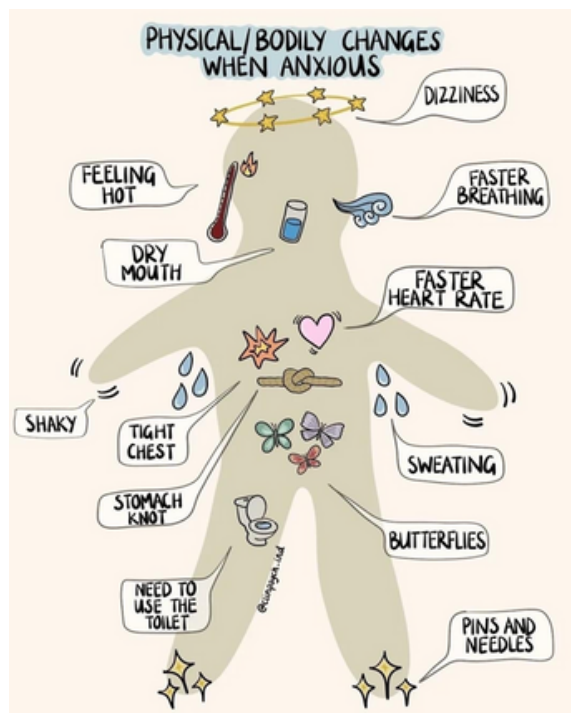
Anxiety is defined as feelings of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. During your time at school, you may have feelings of anxiety. This is common, especially during your adolescent years - so don't be afraid to acknowledge your emotions. Anxiety disorders are mental health conditions, that can be diagnosed, that take feelings of anxiety to the extreme. Even though you may not be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder you may feel anxious at times due to stressful situations, new spaces and more. It's important to know what to do when these emotions come onboard, what they feel like and how to address them; so here is a guide to managing anxious emotions.

What does anxiety feel like- physically?

It's commonly known that when you have feelings of anxiety you feel anxious, but there are also physical signs of anxiety that are important to look out for as they affect health and daily life. Some physical manifestations of anxiety include:

- Stomach pain, nausea, digestive trouble
- Insomnia or other sleep-related issues
- Headaches
- Trembling or shaky limbs
- Rapid breathing or shortness of breath
- Increased heart rate or pounding heart
- Weakness or fatigue
- Muscle tensions/pain
- Sweating

These symptoms may be affecting your day-to-day life, so it is important to acknowledge what you feel and try and find the source of the problem, to help find a solution.



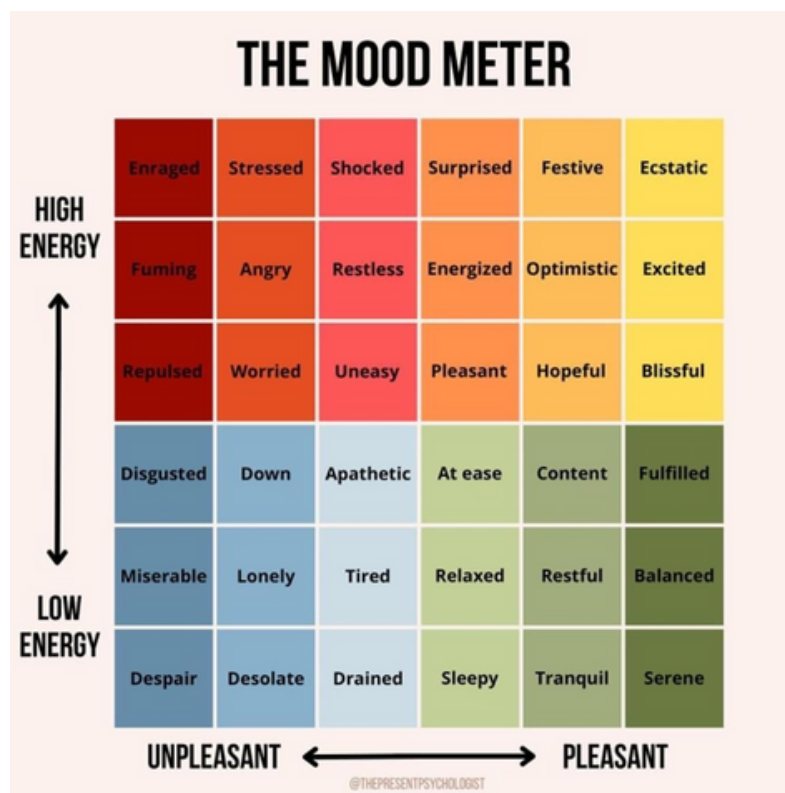
If the physical symptoms of anxiety are long term and make your day-to-day life much harder then you may want to speak to an adult/teacher and go to a nurse or doctor, this could even be a school nurse if you aren't comfortable going to a hospital.

Most of the time these symptoms of anxiousness can be solved with self care and addressing your feelings. Self-care for anxiety includes:

- Prioritise sleep — Try to get as much sleep as possible, sometimes more sleep can resolve and reduce symptoms, if not fully resolving your issues feeling rested can help you cope with symptoms. Getting enough sleep is very important for your health so your body can function normally and efficiently.
- Be physically active — if you are able to you should try to increase your exercise, this can help reduce stress and improve your physical health. Even just being outside in nature can help improve your mental health.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine — these substances can be very harmful to a teenage body but they also worsen anxiety so should be avoided.
- Try relaxation techniques — Yoga, meditation, deep breathing and all other relaxation techniques are all practices that help relax the body and can be beneficial in reducing anxious emotions.

Overall the best thing you can do for yourself is to accept that you may be having uncomfortable emotions, learning more about them, how to treat them and how to cope are the best ways to come out of the struggles in your life with an improved mindset and a happier sense of self.

To help understand your emotions you can use this mood metre:





Body Image

Body Image and becoming body positive is something that we all struggle with, and in order to love ourselves and our bodies, we need to become more accepting of what we look like as well as become more confident in ourselves so that we can appreciate who we are: as individual, beautiful people. Here are pieces written by the Wellbeing Ambassadors that were featured in our Body Image newsletter issue, to reciprocate the message of truly loving ourselves.

Body Confidence

"Who said women have to be perfect? There's no such thing as that. It's all about your confidence in yourself and your body. And that makes you beautiful." (Anon.)

Body confidence is something that many people struggle to maintain in their lives, especially in a society today where the media is exploding with constant streams of images of the 'perfect body', descriptions of the 'ideal woman/man' and traits that make a person 'cool'.

It's paradoxical as body confidence is one of the key attributes that people should aim to nurture, but instead, it is often shut down and not considered important. People, especially teenagers, constantly put themselves down as societal pressures force them to set unbelievably high expectations of themselves, but it's important to remember that we are all just natural human beings, and our bodies are just our bodies that are working hard to keep us alive. We have to be thankful for that.

Sometimes, we have to step back from the cascade of societal demands and tell ourselves that we will love our body no matter what we or others perceive of our body. We all have imperfections and as humans, we have a natural tendency to criticise our imperfections, but when you look in the mirror, try to let go of all these things.

"What you will see is just you, without judgement. That is the first step towards transforming your experience of the world." (Oprah Winfrey)

Consider loving yourself as the greatest revolution. Always remember to treat yourself and your body like it belongs to someone you dearly love. It is hard, but with dedication, we can all come to accept the right we have to feel confident in our own skin.

Normalisation

We all think and feel about our bodies and about the way we look. However, if we feel that we do not match up to certain standards, or that we are not 'good enough' in some ways, it can affect us negatively and take a toll on our mental health.

There are many factors that may influence body image in children and young people, including the media and social media, their parents, and their peers. Sometimes, a negative body image or body dissatisfaction can influence a young person in many ways. This includes having lower self-esteem, lowering levels of confidence and some also developing anxiety and depression. People react to these situations differently but there are some common signs to look out for in young people and children. Some feel overly worried about how they look, and others cover up parts of their body because they feel self-conscious.

From a young age, we are led to believe that our body isn't beautiful enough, or enough at all. But the body is not an object for others' pleasure or to be restrained to fit society's beauty standards. Your body holds many qualities. Qualities far beyond size and shape.

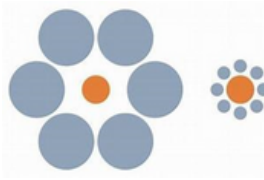
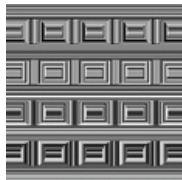
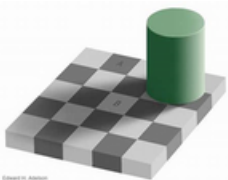
From a young age, we are led to believe that our body isn't beautiful enough, or enough at all. But the body is not an object for others' pleasure or to be restrained to fit society's beauty standards. Your body holds many qualities. Qualities far beyond size and shape.

While there is a lot of pressure around you in society and social media, you should steer away from the negativity and stop feeling insecure and self-conscious. It is important that you accept yourself as every one of us is different and beautiful in our own way. Let us normalise the different body types, whether we are short or tall and whatever our skin colour may be, don't try to change the way you look, don't compare yourself to others. Just enjoy being you.

The Science of Body Image

Take a look at the following optical illusions:

- 1) Which square is darker? A or B?
- 2) How many circles are in the following images?
- 3) Which circle is bigger? Left or right?

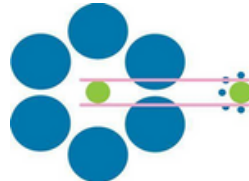
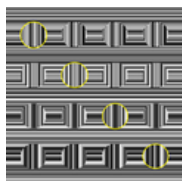
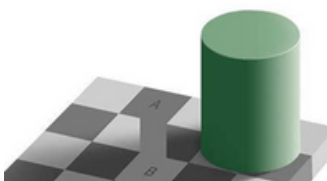


Now before the answers are revealed, consider the following:

- How do you think you compare with other people?
- What parts of yourself do you want to change?
- Who is it that you are most afraid of disappointing from the way you look?

Here are the answers to the optical illusions:

For image 1, both squares are the exact same colour, in image 2 there are 16 circles and for image 3 both circles are the same size!



So how do these optical illusions manage to work?

Well, our brain is incredible and part of seeing our world isn't just sensing it through our eyes but also perceiving what we are seeing as our brain constructs an image or an idea based on what the eyes see. This is why instead of seeing things in isolation, your brain tends to look at the surroundings on the lookout for any patterns or changes it sees:

- In image 1 our brains take the pattern of the checkerboard and lead us to assume that B is meant to be a white tile and A, a black tile so it distorts what we actually see to fit in with this logic and pattern.
- In image 2 rather than looking at the lines in isolation, our brain builds a 3D image by perceiving the abrupt changes in lines as corners, but once the circles are pointed out, it is very difficult to unsee.

- In image 3, our brain compares the relative sizes of the surrounding circles to determine how big or small the circles are. The circle on the left looks small in comparison to the larger blue circles that surround it and vice versa for the circle on the right.

If you failed to spot these optical illusions, that is completely normal and is a sign that your perception is working as it should. However, despite this ability being often amazing, allowing us to do things like recognising the faces of our families even after changes such as makeup, these abilities can also cause us to unfairly compare ourselves with what we see around us and create inaccurate and unattainable standards for what is “normal”.

There are major issues with this way of developing our perception of beauty:

1) Beauty is simply based on majority perceptions in a particular community and is subject to rapid change. From the ancient Greeks and people in the Italian renaissance who preferred more plump bodies on women to people in the roaring twenties who preferred a more “boyish” look with minimal curves to now the era of “slim thick” where hourglass figures have become more desirable. Whatever the majority of people say is beautiful now becomes our burden to live up to. One day something is beautiful, the next day it's not. Your body is not a trend and it is not your body's responsibility to keep up with these arbitrary and superficial evaluations of beauty.



2) In the age of social media, our ability to recognise what an average body looks like has significantly decreased. Being bombarded with images of people with a specific body type has led our brains to conclude that these people have normal bodies. That's to say that the people you see on social media have unnatural bodies (although the use of photo editing and filters can be quite prevalent), but when you're eyes see only one type of body and isn't well acquainted with the fact that other types of bodies exist, it makes you feel that any part of you that deviates from this so-called “normal” is wrong and ugly.

3) Many beauty and diet brands feed off of your fear of rejection which can lead to a concerning number of people, especially young people, trying these quick solutions that mostly don't work or can harm you. A healthy solution is different for each individual and can't be found through misleading videos and posts that are mainly concerned with profits and clicks.

So, what can you do now?

Well, a few simple paragraphs on the science of how you feel about your body won't improve your self-esteem overnight since as often is the case, no amount of logic and facts can truly change your feelings. However, understanding how common such a feeling is and why insecurities arise can help you somewhat rationalise the situation and help create an environment for yourself so your brain can start the journey to self-love. That could mean:

- Surrounding yourself with people who accept you for who you are and help you see the value in you that you are missing.
- Following more social media influencers with diverse bodies or bodies similar to yourself
- Researching more into how photoshop can be used to alter photos so that you know to be sceptical when looking at the pictures online or in magazines
- Learning a bit about your anatomy and genetics.

Whichever way you go about it, remember that once you understand why you are the way you are, you can use your psychology to your advantage instead of battling against your mind and beating yourself up over a problem that is universally present in all humans.



Love is the absence
of judgment.

Dalai Lama XIV

sublimity

Coping and Coping Mechanisms

Here are some articles from a previous newsletter based on coping and how you can deal with coping through a tough time. We look at individuality, coping itself as well as coping mechanisms and things you can do to ground and take care of yourself.

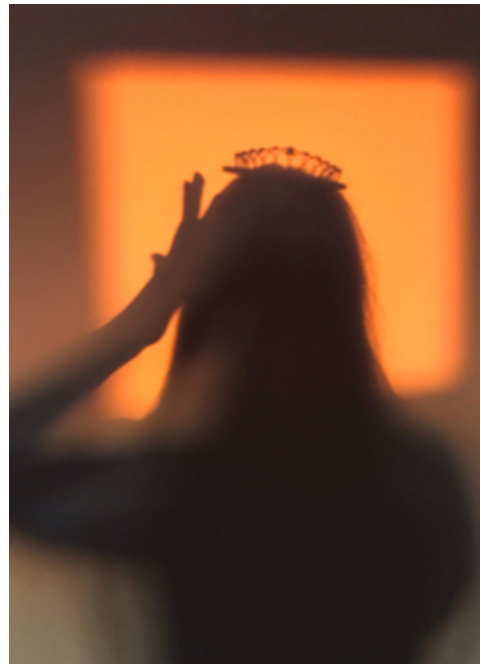
Individuality

Definition:

1. The quality or character of a particular person or thing that distinguishes them from others of the same kind, especially when strongly marked.
2. Separate existence.

In a world filled with expectations, the rise of the internet/social media and school or friendship pressures, individuality can be hard. We're so easily influenced by our peers and environment that sometimes it can just be easier to blend into the background and follow conventions. Yet in doing so, we lose a part of our identity. The world is filled with people from all walks of life and not one of us is the same; if that were the case, life would be extremely dull.

Therefore, individuality and standing out from the crowd shouldn't be something that's hushed or swept under the rug, in fact, it should be encouraged. Do what makes you feel happy whether that's playing sports, binge-watching your favourite series, photography, baking, dancing, anything. It doesn't matter if other people think that the clothes you wear are odd or whether your favourite style of music is the complete opposite of your friends - we all have something that makes us different, that makes us special. Sharing our differences and experiences with others is important not just for instilling confidence in ourselves but our peers as well.

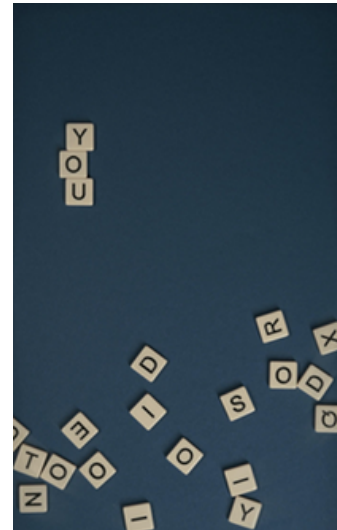


What are the benefits?

1. Increased productivity and innovation: Individualist cultures are more likely to encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, both at home and in the workplace.
2. Greater self-concept: Individualism is linked with a healthy sense of self-concept – an internalised concept regarding one's personal identity, strengths and abilities. What is important to the individual, and believes in their own self-worth.
3. Greater autonomy: Individualism means an increased level of autonomy in the work context, where people are much less likely to be led by managers or the majority view of society as a whole.

Trying something new can also be a great way to find your tribe and build confidence in yourself and your interests. Why not try...

- A new sport
- A different style of music, film or book that you've not considered before
- Baking/cooking a new recipe
- Taking up a musical instrument (or a new one)
- Sewing
- Crafts
- Meditation
- Visiting a new place
- Learning a new language or about a new culture



Don't be afraid to embrace that spark of individuality and don't worry about straying from other's ideals. Do what makes you feel content. Be bold, be confident, be yourself.

Coping: Acceptance, not Resistance

Life is full of pain. But most of us are never taught how to acknowledge this, let alone to effectively face and experience it. Because of this, despite having the very best intentions, we tend to respond to pain in ways that backfire and turn it into suffering.

A common response is to resist the pain. We pretend that everything is fine, even though we are despairing within. We suppress our emotions, deny our needs, or reject our authentic responses to events. We apply judgments to events, like "This should not be happening," "This is bad," or "I shouldn't be feeling this way."

Resisting makes the pain bigger, stronger, and more intractable. It adds a layer of suffering on top of the pain, keeping us stuck in narratives about ourselves and the world, and trapped in emotions like despair, anger, shame, and unhappiness.

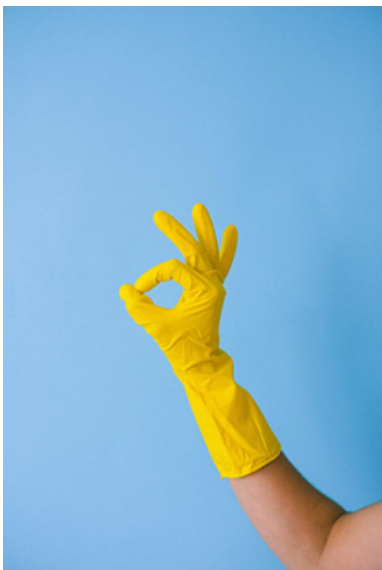
There are many ways to resist reality.

We resist ourselves as we are by rejecting our authentic selves, comparing ourselves to others, and holding ourselves up to an impossible standard.

We resist other people as they are, wanting them to be different, weaving tales about how if they would only just change, our lives would improve forever.

And we resist the world as it is. We want things to be different from what they are. We want our loved ones to not be sick, we want a shorter commute, we want the past to be different from what it was. All of these desires are completely normal and acceptable. However, resistance does not change it. It only leads to suffering.





The antidote for resistance is acceptance. When we accept reality for what it is - especially when that reality is something that we desperately do not want to be true - we give ourselves the gift of peace and freedom. From this place of acceptance, we can also change what is within our control: learning how to live with it, healing from it, making it better, and using its lessons to help us help others.

To accept something does not mean that you approve of it. It means that you are committed to no longer spending your energy fighting its existence. In making this decision, we allow the pain to run its course. We free ourselves up to see a bigger picture beyond the immediate challenge. And we can move past the experience, learning from it and letting it go, in order to find peace and freedom.

To move from resistance to acceptance, try taking these steps:

- Acknowledge what you are resisting

What element of reality are you fighting right now: yourself, your emotions, another person, an event or experience? Write it down and acknowledge it, and bring your attention to how this resistance is creating more pain and suffering for you.

- Give yourself space to feel your emotions

If you have been resisting, you have likely been suppressing or denying your emotions. Try journaling, talking to a friend, or working with a therapist. In allowing yourself to bring these to the surface and feel them, you create the possibility for peace. It's like a thunderstorm: the lightning, thunder, and rain have to happen, to wash away the chaos and welcome in the sense of renewal.

- Act as if

Acceptance is such a radical departure from the resistance that we often do not know how to behave. Imagine a version of yourself who has completely accepted reality for what it is. What would this self do in this moment? Keep that avatar close, checking in to help you steadily choose responses in line with your commitment to acceptance.

- Recognise that pain is part of life

In accepting this deep truth, we can welcome a greater sense of peace and self-acceptance. There is nothing wrong with us. We are simply doing our very best.

Coping Mechanisms

Coping mechanisms are the strategies – conscious or unconscious – that people often use when facing difficult, unpleasant emotions. Healthy coping mechanisms can help people adjust to difficult situations while helping maintain their emotional well-being. Unhealthy coping mechanisms on the contrary often provide relief and short-term gratification but will lead to overall negative consequences. It is important to be mindful of what behaviours you lean towards when in stressful situations, learning to actively switch to using healthy coping mechanisms will provide more benefits in the long term.

Healthy coping mechanisms come in two main types: problem-based coping and emotion-based coping.

Problem-based coping is helpful when you need to change your situation- perhaps by removing the stressful thing in your life. Essentially targeting the 'problem' in your life. However, targeting this problem cannot always be done. On the other hand, emotion-based coping is helpful when you need to care for your feelings when you do not want to change the situation or cannot change the situation due to circumstances that are out of your control. For example, if you are grieving the loss of a loved one, taking care of your emotions in a healthy way is incredibly important.

Examples of healthy problem-focused coping skills include:

- Asking for support from a friend or a professional
- Engage in problem-solving
- Create a to-do list (making an action plan for solving your problem)
- Establish healthy boundaries
- Work on managing your time better.

In problem-focused coping skills, you might decide to eliminate the source of your stress- tackle the problem head-on. In some cases that may mean changing your behaviour or creating a plan that helps you know what actions to take. Sometimes, especially when you are younger, you cannot always control or get rid of the problem, so focusing on your emotions is a great way to cope with stress. These emotion-based coping mechanisms may soothe you, help you face your emotions directly and help you change your mood, cheering you up after a bad day or stressful situation.



Examples of healthy emotion-focused coping skills include:

- Care for yourself - spend time in nature, take a bath, drink tea, and do things that make you feel good such as painting your nails, doing your hair, or reading a book.
- Engage in a hobby - colouring, drawing, listening to music etc
- Exercise - do yoga, engage in a recreational sport, go on a walk
- Focus on a task - clean the house, cook a meal, make a snack, garden, read or solve a puzzle
- Practice mindfulness - list the things that make you feel grateful, meditate, journal, or look at pictures to remind you of the things that bring joy
- Use relaxation strategies - practice breathing exercises, play with a pet, enjoy aromatherapy, squeeze a stress ball, use a relaxation app, try progressive muscle relaxation, or write in a journal.

Supporting and helping others through difficult periods

by Samhita Kanala, Y10

The important people in your life will sometimes experience challenges and heartbreaks. As a family member, friend, or even colleague, you'll likely want to let these people know you care for them when they're struggling and are going through difficult times. You want these people to know you're there for them, even if all you can do is offer some small comfort.

Here are some ways to help someone:

Seeing the world as others see it:

We must be willing to acknowledge our perspective and attempt to know the situation that someone is experiencing through their perspective. Seeing someone else's perspective will enable us to connect to the person and help us understand their feelings better.

Understanding another's feelings:

To understand someone else's feelings, we must be in touch with our feelings. It's important to have an understanding of emotions. But it's also important to put aside our thoughts or our own opinion when empathizing. This will enable us to focus on what the person is feeling.

Being non-judgmental:

Judging has become such a part of our thinking patterns that we are rarely even aware of why and how we do it. However, judgment creates distance and disconnection. Non-judgment is a skill we can practice. It starts with ourselves. For instance, we can practice being non-judgmental by embracing ourselves when we make mistakes or don't measure up to our expectations. We also can practice speaking to ourselves with compassion and realize that others are experiencing hard times like us. This will enable you to help the person feel comfortable and help them know you are trustworthy.





Activities

Breathing Techniques

By Anya Nayar

If you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed, focusing on your breathing can help to centre you. Here are some ideas of some exercises you could try:

Deep Breathing

1. Get comfortable. You can lie on your back in bed or on the floor with a pillow under your head and knees. Or try sitting in a chair with your shoulders, head, and neck supported against the back of the chair.
2. Breathe in through your nose. Let your belly fill with air.
3. Breathe out through your nose.
4. Place one hand on your belly. Place the other hand on your chest.
5. As you breathe in, feel your belly rise. As you breathe out, feel your belly lower. The hand on your belly should move more than the one that's on your chest.
6. Take three more full, deep breaths. Breathe fully into your belly as it rises and falls with your breath.

Breath Focus

1. Close your eyes if they're open.
2. Take a few big, deep breaths.
3. Breathe in. As you do that, imagine that the air is filled with a sense of peace and calm. Try to feel it throughout your body.
4. Breathe out. While you're doing it, imagine that the air leaves with your stress and tension.
5. Now use a word or phrase with your breath. As you breathe in, say in your mind, "I breathe in peace and calm."
6. As you breathe out, say in your mind, "I breathe out stress and tension."
7. You may try to visualise what peace and calm/stress and tension look like (eg breathing in full, clear, blue air and breathing out red, stressed, hot air)

Counting Breaths

1. Sit comfortably on the floor or in a chair.
2. Breathe in through your nose. As you do it, count to five.
3. Breathe out through your nose to the count of five.
4. Repeat several times.

You could also try this with 4-7-8. Breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 7, and breathe out for 8.

Perhaps also try this coupled with the technique of naming 5 things you can see, 4 you can hear, 3 you can touch, 2 you can smell and 1 you can taste. (e.g. for the first breath of 5 in, name 5 things you can see. On the next breath of 5, name 4 things you can hear etc)

Body Scan/Muscle Relaxation

1. Lie comfortably.
2. Take a few deep breaths to relax.
3. Breathe in. Tense the muscles of your feet.
4. Breathe out. Release the tension in your feet.
5. Breathe in. Tense your calf muscles.

6. Breathe out. Release the tension in your calves.
7. Work your way up your body. Tense each muscle group. This includes your legs, belly, chest, fingers, arms, shoulders, neck, and face. Imagine each muscle is relaxing and releasing all tension.

Lion's Breath

(this is a common yoga practise, and may feel strange at first – keep trying it and one day it may feel more normal!)

1. Come into a comfortable seated position. You can sit back on your heels or cross your legs.
2. Press your palms against your knees with your fingers spread wide.
3. Inhale deeply through your nose and open your eyes wide.
4. At the same time, open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue, bringing the tip down toward your chin.
5. Contract the muscles at the front of your throat as you exhale out through your mouth by making a long “ha” sound.
6. You can turn your gaze to look at the space between your eyebrows or the tip of your nose.
7. Do this breath 2 to 3 times.

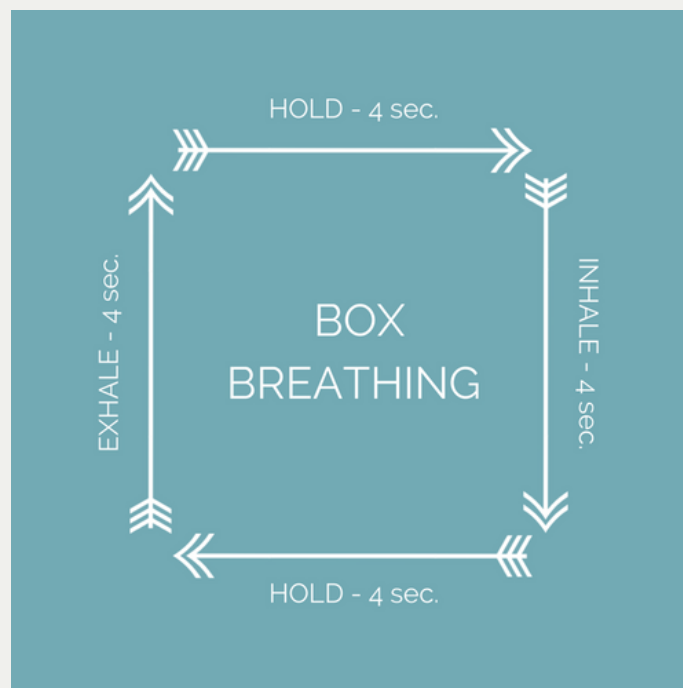
Alternate Nostril Breathing

1. Lift up your right hand toward your nose, pressing your first and middle fingers down toward your palm and leaving your other fingers extended.
2. After an exhale, use your right thumb to gently close your right nostril.
3. Inhale through your left nostril and then close your left nostril with your right pinky and ring fingers.
4. Release your thumb and exhale out through your right nostril.
5. Inhale through your right nostril and then close this nostril.
6. Release your fingers to open your left nostril and exhale through this side.
7. This is one cycle.
8. Continue this breathing pattern for up to 5 minutes.
9. Finish your session with an exhale on the left side.



Box Breathing

Follow the box around and count your breaths. Repeat until you feel calmer.



Finger Breathing

Use your own hand and follow the diagram. Breathe in as you move up your finger and down as you breathe out. Move your finger to the speed of your breaths, not the other way round.



Positive Affirmations

by Aleena Atif, Y11

Positive affirmations are phrases and statements that are repeated to challenge negative thoughts and encourage positive changes in your life. The benefits to them are motivating you to act; concentrating on your goals; and strengthening your feeling of self-worth.

20 positive affirmations:

- 1) I can do anything I put my mind to.
- 2) I can handle whatever comes in my way.
- 3) Asking for help is a sign of strength.
- 4) My future is bright.
- 5) I am constantly improving.
- 6) I have the potential to succeed.
- 7) I will make the most of this day.
- 8) I am proud of myself.
- 9) I have many gifts and talents.
- 10) There is no such thing as failure, only experience.
- 11) I do not need validation from others.
- 12) I deserve good things.
- 13) I am great today and will be even better tomorrow.
- 14) I don't need to worry because I can always try again.
- 15) There is no reason for me to compare myself to others.
- 16) I strongly believe in myself.
- 17) I am special.
- 18) I am worthy.
- 19) I am enough.
- 20) I love myself.



Grounding Hobbies

by Divine Raphael, Y11

Grounding hobbies are hobbies that can improve your mood and make you feel a little more relaxed. In this way, they can help you feel calmer which is beneficial for day-to-day activities.

These include hobbies such as:

- Journaling
- Gardening
- Listening To Music
- Reading
- Knitting
- Dancing
- Hiking
- Colouring
- Cooking
- Baking

Try some of these out to destress and ground yourself in order to get yourself into the right mindset for whatever comes after.



Form Group Activities

by Divine Raphael, Y11

Here are some activities you can do with your form during form times and with your friends.

– Complimenting

Each person in the form should write one nice thing on a piece of paper about somebody else in the form.

– Breathing Activities

Try breathing exercises such as the ones previously listed in this booklet. This will help prepare you for the day by getting you in touch with your senses.

– Scrapbooking

Each person should get a scrap piece of paper and write or draw anything that represents your feelings. This will help you express how you are feeling. This can be private, or you can choose to share it.

– Music

You can ask your form tutor to play relaxing, calming music on YouTube and spend form time in a quiet, calm atmosphere. You could even make a form playlist of happy and calming songs that everyone contributes to.

– Reading

Each person in the form can bring in a book to read during form time. You can ask your form tutor to play music in the background or you can choose to read in silence.

– Friendly Conversation

Voluntarily, people in the form can speak about what they do when they feel upset or frustrated. If you do not want to speak, you can choose to write it down or just think about it.

These activities can often be done together, such as scrapbooking and music, or instead, you can choose to do a few at one form time such as music, breathing activities and reading.

Practising Gratitude

by Aleena Atif, Y11

Gratitude is “the quality of being thankful; the readiness to show appreciation for and return kindness.” In our busy day-to-day lives, we often work on autopilot. We forget the need to slow down and appreciate the little and big things; to take a deep breath and count our blessings. By being mindful of what’s around us, we can recognise, focus and be grateful for everything that we usually take for granted. Practising gratitude can humble us so we can start to cherish the things and people in life that deserve to be treasured.

Gratefulness often comes with many benefits other than more self-awareness. These include improved sleep and physical health; increased empathy; and enhanced self-esteem (to name a few). But the question is, how can we practice gratitude? You’ll be glad to know that in reality, it’s not that difficult.

Practising gratitude doesn’t require a grand act of sacrifice – rather, it comes with small actions and changes you can make to your normal day. Some small ways you can become more grateful are:

Starting a gratitude journal - simply write down 3 things you’re thankful for before sleeping.

Give yourself a goal to **compliment at least one person every day**.

Make a gratitude jar – write down one thing you’re grateful for on a daily or weekly basis and collect them in the jar as a reminder of all the good in the world.

Volunteer or donate something to a good cause.

Say thank you more – this can strengthen relationships and show other people that you value them.

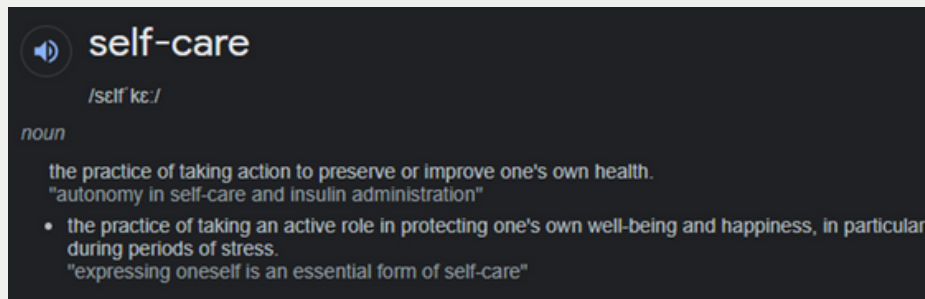
Spend time with loved ones and remind them how much they mean to you.

Smile! The likelihood is that people will smile back, while also making you feel more confident and happier.



Student-friendly Self-care

by Precious Udediba, Y10



Above is the dictionary definition of self-care. There are many other definitions as well, including a multidimensional, multifaceted process of purposeful engagement in strategies that promote healthy functioning and enhance well-being. In essence, these definitions are explaining that self-care is a conscious decision one makes to promote their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Self-care methods

One way to take care of your well-being is to always get enough sleep and try to have a consistent sleep schedule. Research suggests that a bad sleeping pattern could make it difficult for you to control your emotions and communicate with others, so it can interfere with your social life. Having a regular sleep pattern has been suggested to boost your immune system, strengthen your heart and improve memory, so has major benefits in the long term.

Another way you can implement self-care is by creating a journal or scrapbook. Every memory you put on a page reminds you of those happy memories and those things you have accomplished and are yet to accomplish. It also helps to manage negative emotions by recognising the things that trigger them and learning to control them.

Listening to music is also a form of self-care. Music boosts the brain's production of dopamine, which helps reduce feelings of anxiety or stress. It also helps your heart- research shows that blood flows more efficiently when music is played and music also increases the serotonin and endorphin levels in the blood. Watching your favourite childhood TV show or film is also good for your well-being. Rewatching an old favourite creates a sense of nostalgia, and nostalgic reflections make you feel more optimistic, reaffirm your social connections and allow us to forget about the burdens of today and go back to a time when you were happiest.

Self-care shouldn't be a long process, it can be as short as 5 minutes. Any time you have alone with no distractions is going to be beneficial. Remember that self-care would be whatever makes YOU feel happiness, if you want any more suggestions here are some:

SELF-CARE in 5 minutes

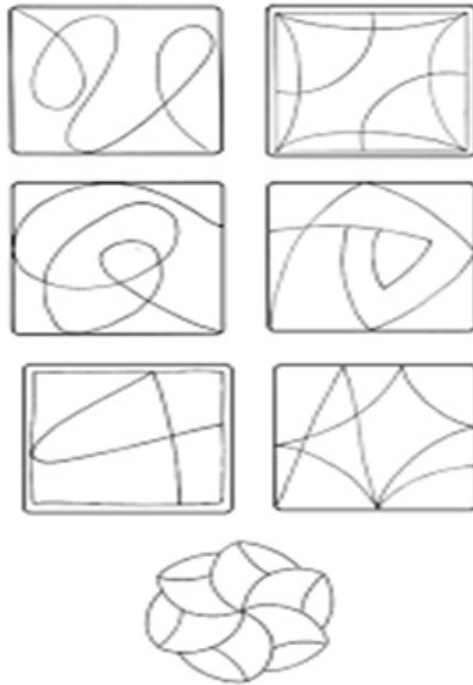
Self-care doesn't have to be complicated. It can be as simple as completing little tasks so you have time to relax later. So put down that studying for a bit: we've curated a list of self-care tips you can complete in less than five minutes.



Scribble Page

pages by Srihita Kanala, Y12

Below is some space for you to try out these doodles to ease your mind:



Doodle Page

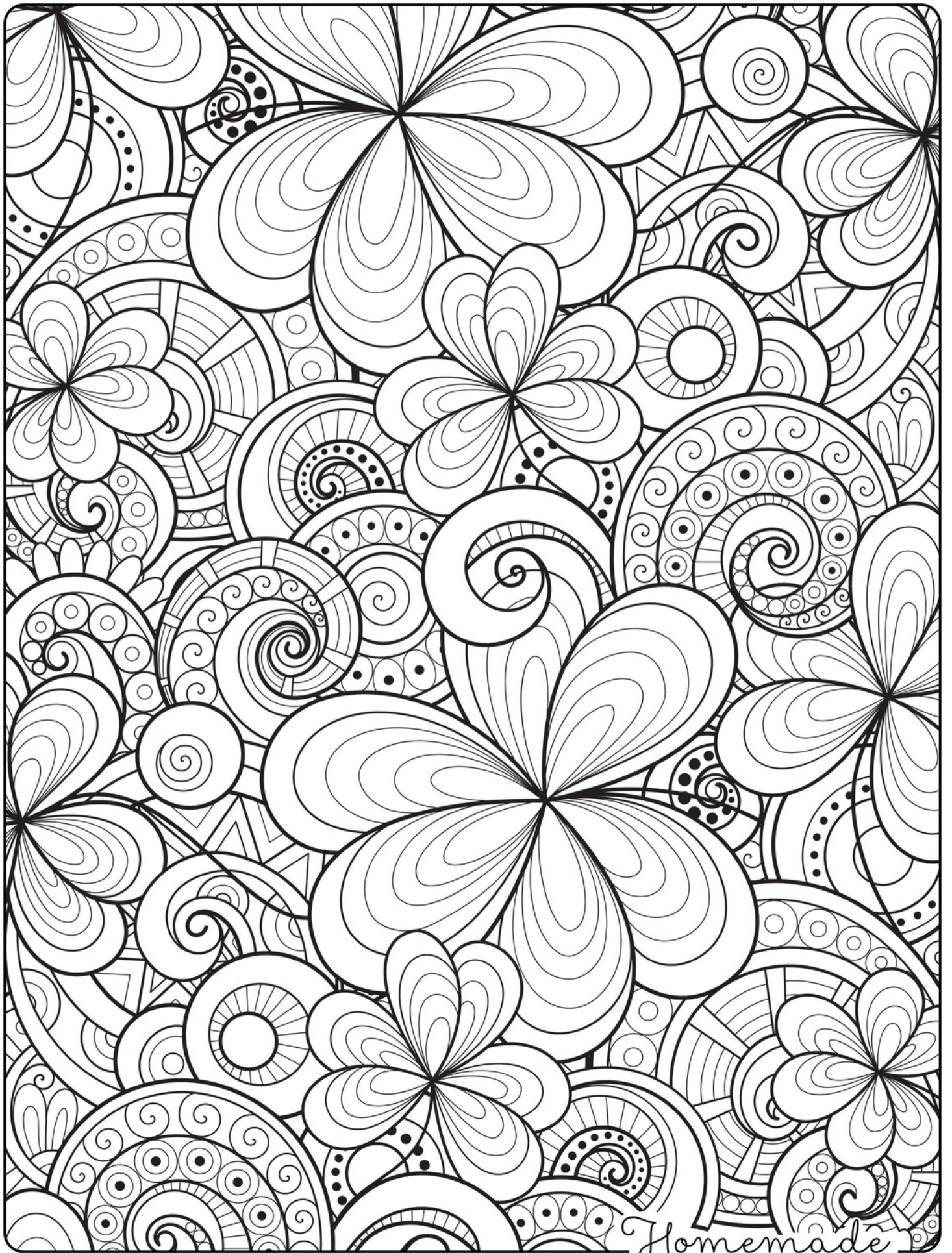
Doodle to your heart's content!











Homemade
GIFTS MADE EASY





Digital wellbeing

Here are some general tips and pieces of advice from our Student Digital Leaders:

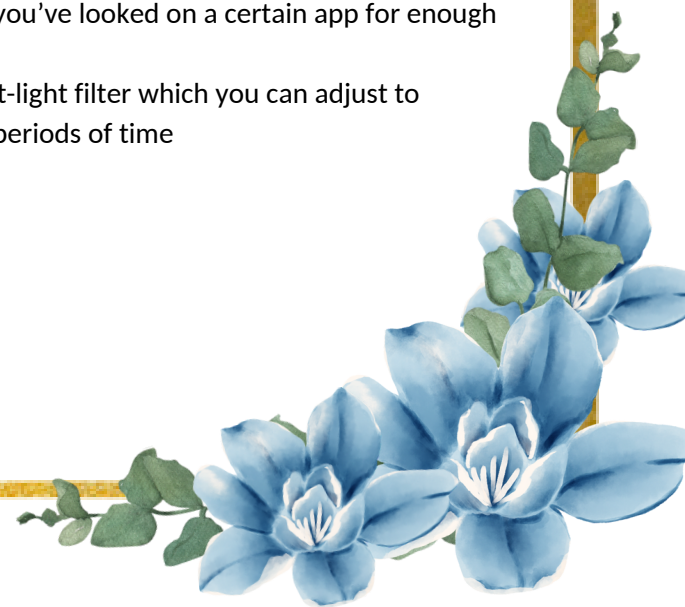
General digital wellbeing:

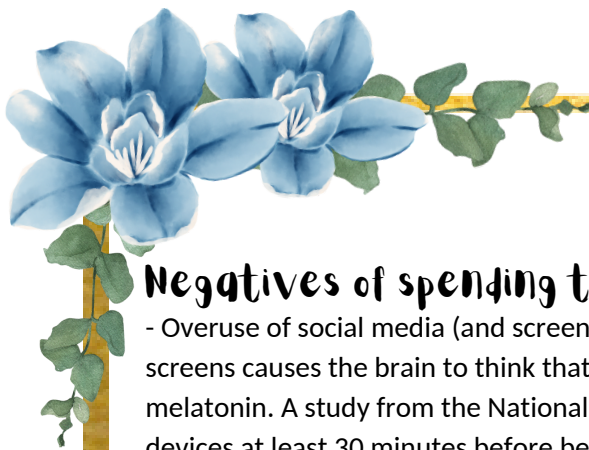
- Remember that anything you post online contributes to your digital footprint – once you put something onto the internet, you lose control over who sees it and where it is saved, even if you delete your original post
- Because of this, it's important to ensure that you would be happy for anyone to see the things you post, even if they aren't the people you're posting it for – for example, remember that a future employer may be able to see things posted under your name

Staying safe online:

- Where to report safety concerns:
 - o In-school, you can speak to your form tutor or senior tutor about safety concerns that you may have encountered online
 - o Outside of school, there are resources such as Childline and CEOP for concerns to be reported to
- If you come across content that you don't want to see, remember that accounts can be blocked or certain videos can be marked as "not interested" so less similar content will be shown on your feed in the future
- Avoiding wellbeing/safety issues online:
 - o If you see someone spreading negative messages online, report and/or block them, but don't interact or argue with them – this is generally the response they want to get out of you, and might lead to them becoming more hostile or offensive. The best thing to do is to ignore them and report the situation

Time away from technology:

- There are many apps/websites/phone features that can be used to give you a good balance
 - o Apps like Flora and Plantie can help you stay focused
 - o Headspace for guided meditation
 - o Calming or Stress relief playlists
 - o The screen-time function on your phone can be utilised to ensure you aren't spending long periods of time using technology each day – they can remind you to take breaks if you've been using your phone for a long period without stopping, or suggest that you've looked on a certain app for enough time today
 - o Most phones and screens have blue-light settings/a night-light filter which you can adjust to protect your eyes when looking at a screen for prolonged periods of time
- 




Negatives of spending too much time on technology:

- Overuse of social media (and screens in general) can cause problems with sleep, as the blue light from screens causes the brain to think that it's still daytime, suppressing the production of the sleep hormone melatonin. A study from the National Sleep Foundation recommends that you should stop using electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
- A lack of validation from social media, excessive comparison with others, or cyberbullying can have massive implications for children's mental health, increasing the risk of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.
- If social media is overused, it can impact real-life social skills through a lack of face-to-face interactions and can cause damage to real-life relationships.
- There is a lot of inappropriate content on social media that children can be exposed to, including violent, aggressive, and explicit images/videos.
- A fear of being 'out of the loop' can make teenagers vulnerable to peer pressure that might lead them to this content.

Alternative things you can do:

- Mindful Colouring (use the pages in this booklet!)
- Reading
- Sleep!
- Exercise/Go for a walk
- Self-care activities
- Baking activities
- Clean your room/declutter
- Journaling
- Meditating/yoga

Positive accounts on Social Media:

- Tik Tok Accounts:
 - o ONEPLANET. ONELOVE.
 - o BAKINGENVY
 - Instagram Accounts:
 - o @worry_lines
 - o @flabjacks
 - o @positivelypresent
 - o @beamingdesign
 - o @zeppelinmoon
 - o @Thehappynewspaper
- 



Physical Wellbeing

Written with the Sports Ambassadors

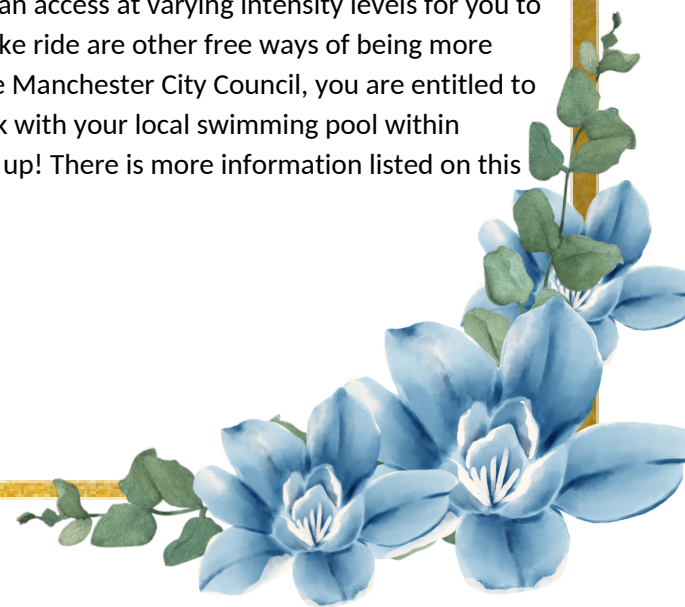
As well to our mental wellbeing, physical wellbeing is just as important. Exercise has been shown to lower your blood pressure, release endorphins, lower adrenaline and generally boost your self-esteem, which in turn helps improve your social skills and relationships. Moreover, keeping yourself fit and active enables you to become less tired throughout the day, and has been shown to improve mood as well as reduce stress and improve the quality of sleep you receive.


Here are some tips to start being more active and to help incorporate exercise into your daily life:

- If you are not used to being very active should start slowly – with small amounts of physical activity and gradually increase the duration, frequency and intensity of exercise over time.
- Choose physical activities that are suitable for you, depending on the context of your daily life to make sure you can achieve a good balance of exercise.
- You should also consider how intensive your physical activity should be. Depending on your age and relative level of fitness, the intensity that is suitable for you may vary. For example:
 - o Mild physical activity may include gentle stretching, walking or swimming.
 - o Moderate physical activity may include brisk walking, dancing, gardening or household chores.
 - o Vigorous physical activity may include running, fast cycling, fast swimming or moving heavy loads

Ways to improve mindfulness include yoga, deep breathing exercises, walking, and meditation. You can also improve your mood and physical health by doing running, dancing and/or swimming. Also, team sports are a great way to improve social wellbeing, through being surrounded by other people and studies show exercising with partners or teams has a much greater impact on mental health than exercising alone. Simply going on a walk after school, taking the extra time to walk to school or even walking to the Devisdale at lunch to take part in the school's many sports clubs can all dramatically improve your overall mental wellbeing.

You also don't have to spend lots of money on being active – there are many exercise videos on YouTube as well as videos on yoga, meditation and lots of sports you can access at varying intensity levels for you to choose from. Going on regular walks, jogging or going on a bike ride are other free ways of being more active. Furthermore, if you are 16 or under and live under the Manchester City Council, you are entitled to swim for free during the school holidays – make sure to check with your local swimming pool within Manchester (not the Trafford region) and get yourself signed up! There is more information listed on this website: <https://bit.ly/3MaTHVq>





Anti-Bullying

Written by the Anti-Bullying Ambassadors

• What is bullying?

Bullying is usually defined as unwanted, repetitive behaviour, which is intended to hurt someone. It falls under four main categories:

o Social

▫ Also referred to as relational bullying, this is concerned with hurting people's reputations or relationships. It includes exclusion, humiliation and the spreading of rumours.

o Physical

▫ Physical bullying involves hurting a person or their possessions.

o Verbal

▫ Verbal bullying can be anything from name-calling to threatening, whether it's written or said.

o Cyberbullying

▫ Cyberbullying is bullying online and can encompass fraud, stalking, grooming, intimidation etc.


Bullying can have many long-lasting effects – on both physical and mental health. Some of these impacts include stress, low self-esteem and loneliness, which can go on to develop into depression, anxiety and other disorders.

Where to go if you think you or anyone else is being bullied:

In school:

- o the Sharp System- <https://altrincham.thesharpsystem.com/>
- o the Anti-Bullying Ambassadors
- o form tutor/ senior tutor

Outside school:

- o Kooth- <https://www.kooth.com/>
 - o Childline- <https://www.childline.org.uk/>
 - o NSPCC- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/bullying-and-cyberbullying/>
 - o National Bullying Helpline - <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/about.html>
 - o any trusted adult
- 



Links and Resources

For more resources, please use this link:

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/>

Mental Health

Young Minds – <https://youngminds.org.uk>

Samaritans - <https://www.samaritans.org/> or 116 123

Kooth – <https://kooth.com>

Mind - <https://www.mind.org.uk/> or 0300 123 3393 (Infoline)

Talkshop Trafford – talkshop@trafford.gov.uk or 0161 912 2453

Substance Misuse

Talk to Frank – www.talktofrank.com or 0300 123 6600

Early Break – www.earlybreak.co.uk

Home

NSPCC – www.nspcc.org.uk or 0800 800 500

ChildLine - <https://www.childline.org.uk/> or 0800 1111

The Hideout - <http://thehideout.org.uk/>

Karma Nirvana – <https://karmanirvana.org.uk> or 0800 5999 247

Sexual Health and Wellbeing

Brook – www.brook.org.uk

LGBTQIA+ Support

The Proud Trust – www.theproudtrust.org or 07813 981338

42nd Street – <http://42ndstreet.org.uk> or 0161 228 7321

Online Safety

CEOP – www.ceop.police.uk

UK Safer Internet Centre - <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/young-people>

NSPCC - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/> (for the hotline, refer to NSPCC above or ChildLine if 18 or younger)

National Bullying Helpline - <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/> or 0300 323 0169





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