



MARICOURT
CATHOLIC
HIGH SCHOOL
& SIXTH FORM CENTRE

WELLBEING GUIDE MIND, BODY & SPIRIT

INSPIRE
WITH
MARICOURT

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THE FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

The five ways to wellbeing are a great place to start keeping mentally and physically well. The five ways are daily acts that can benefit your mental health and wellbeing. They can be adapted to your circumstances. The five ways are Connect, Be active, Take notice, Learn and Give.

Connect



Connecting is all about developing and nurturing your social relationships. Having a strong support network can help you through difficult times in life and can combat feelings of loneliness and isolation. In times like this, when you may be isolating for long periods of time, it is important to stay connected to friends and family. One example could be:

- Making the most of technology – video chat apps like Skype and Facetime are a great way of staying in touch with friends, family and colleagues, particularly if you live far apart. Try to do this regularly. If you need to talk to someone there are helplines and apps at the end of the booklet.

Keep Learning



Learning new things throughout your life is great for improving your self-esteem and keeping mentally sharp. You could do this through trying something completely new or trying to return to activities you once did and always meant to pick up again.

Do a crossword puzzle or Sudoku, or play a challenging game. Learn a musical instrument or tik tok dance.

Be Active



Being active is a way of finding physical activity that you enjoy. Incorporating physical activity into your day to the best of your ability is an excellent way of developing your mental wellbeing and is something you can do to boost your mood, even when self-isolating.

Why not try: • A free online home exercise: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/10-minuteworkouts>

Take Notice



Notice is about reminding yourself to look at the small things in life, which is proven to improve your mental wellbeing. This may feel like a difficult task if you are isolating, and have been for a long time, but here are some suggestions:

- Develop a mindfulness habit, which can be done through free mindfulness apps for your phone. Or learn how to meditate- there are helpful apps and tips in the Spirit part of this booklet
- Be mindful in watching the news – if constant updates are making you feel anxious, take time away from social media or the TV.

Give



It is proven that people who volunteer their time in some way are much more likely to rate themselves as happy and feel more connected to their community. Now more than ever, acts of kindness can go a long way in helping yourself and others.

Why not try: • Helping a relative or neighbour who may not be able to visit the shops for groceries. Write a note to a relative or neighbour. Volunteer. Check in on a friend.

There is a strong pastoral team within Maricourt who work hard to look after the wellbeing of our pupils around these 5 themes. There is also a specific Wellbeing Team headed by Mrs Lawler and Mr Naughton. The Learning Mentors and Chaplain work with them to specifically deliver programmes to help pupils who have been identified to benefit from some extra support.

Maricourt seeks to support the physical and mental wellbeing of our pupils from the day they start in year 7 to the day they leave to go onto their next steps in life. As they grow and develop teenagers can face many different challenges. Alongside the curriculum we also want to help them to learn how to be resilient young adults and look after their own wellbeing based around their 'Mind, Body & Spirit.'

This workbook has been put together with resources from Childline, YoungMinds, Camhs and the NHS to provide suggestions to pupils and parents. There will be helpful tips, links, activities and apps to suggest self-help strategies or other organisations to contact for further advice. Some will be more useful than others but it is a place to start to learn how to look after yourself, get further support or help someone else.

| MIND





THE MIND

The Mind, Body and Spirit are all connected when looking after your Wellbeing. It is hard to separate them but often when you are experiencing Mental Health Challenges a good place to start is what is going through your mind.

Your mind is very powerful and has an effect on your physical responses to stress, worry and low moods. The brain is still developing when you are a teenager as you are in transition from childhood to adulthood, teenagers are ruled by the 'emotional brain.' Your actions and behaviour are guided more by the emotional and reactive amygdala and less by the thoughtful, logical frontal cortex. This can lead to sometimes misreading or misinterpreting social cues and emotions.

Your mind is always looking for familiarity and will look to prove you right. Your thoughts are fluid and run in and out of your mind every day and sometimes it is hard to challenge them or know when they are not helpful. Sometimes they get stuck in a certain pattern.

Humans have various needs that need to be met. Maslow's pyramid details the basic needs, the need for security, variety and to connect with others. Some of these needs drive us more than others depending on our stage of life and personality.

One helpful model to figure out your particular needs and drives is 'The Chimp Model.'

It is useful for you to look at the chimp model so you can work out what thoughts and emotions you are experiencing. Young people can quite often misread emotional cues and find organizing and communicating quite hard as your brain is still developing. You are also experiencing hormonal changes that can affect your thinking and behavior.

THE CHIMP MANAGEMENT MODEL

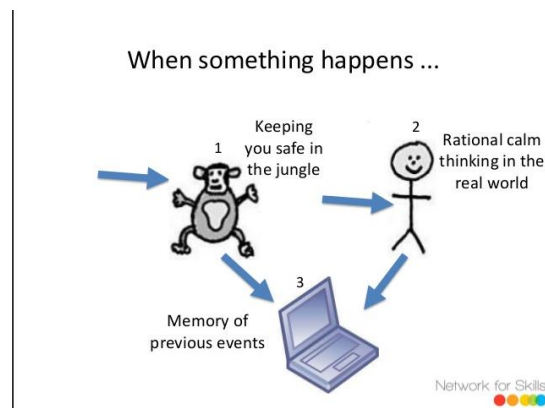
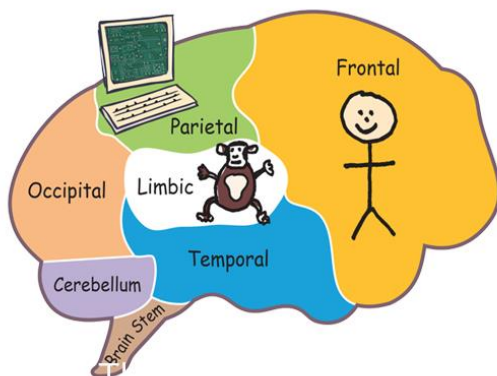
Simon Mundie from the BBC interviewed Psychiatrist Professor Steve Peters and he has summed up his theory perfectly in the following information.

“Psychiatrist Prof Steve Peters believes learning how to manage your “inner chimp” is the key to peace of mind, happiness and success – in sport and in life.

Steve has helped many elite sports people manage their inner chimp – from six-time Olympic champion cyclist Chris Hoy, to arguably the greatest ever snooker player, Ronnie O’Sullivan – and he explains how you too can harness the power of your inner ape.

What is the inner Chimp?

Steve has come up with a model of our how our minds work in which he identifies three systems:



1. The Chimp System

The first is the “chimp” system – so called because we share it with our cousins. This part of our brain is in play when we act impulsively, without regard for the consequences. Our inner chimp is emotional, greedy and lazy and with us from birth.

2. The Human System

When we are around two years old, a new system comes into the equation. As children we start asking “why?” We begin to get facts established and, by age four, use those facts in our decision-making. This is our “human” system: it’s the part of our brain that considers, rationalises, and empathises.

3. The Computer

The third system is the “computer”. This is the “back-up system” that stores our beliefs and behaviours as we form them – from when we’re very young right into adulthood. And as the human and the chimp in us make a decision on what to do, they refer back to these stored beliefs.

Essentially, one system is all about reason and logic (the human system), one is about emotional reaction (the chimp system) and one is based on established beliefs. These systems are constantly vying for attention and, biologically, the chimp – the animal instinct we're born with – has the upper hand.

If we let the animal in us rule the roost we'll find ourselves taking action or lashing out before we've had a chance to think things through – and this can lead to us saying and doing things we might later regret.



So how do we go about managing our inner chimp? Here are a few of Steve's top tips...

1. Don't fight the chimp, nurture it

The cyclist Victoria Pendleton, who Steve worked closely with, reputedly asked how to go about killing her chimp! But the truth is that none of us can banish our chimp – we're with him or her for the long haul. Instead of rejecting it, we need to nurture our inner chimp. This means talking to it and building a relationship with it. The chimp is part of us – it just needs parenting.

2. Let the chimp speak its mind

Part of the nurturing process is to let the chimp have its say. By allowing the chimp to process its emotion it then starts to settle, Steve says.

When the psychiatrist worked in British cycling he had a rule that athletes could come to him and "let their chimp out" – but they had to complain for 15 minutes non-stop. Nobody managed it. "The chimp actually gets exhausted," says Steve, "and thinks 'I can't even be bothered listening to myself!'" The chimp may be speaking but it's the human that's listening, and reason soon takes over.

3. But be careful who the chimp talks to

However, it's important that you choose your audience. If you need to let the chimp express itself immediately, "do it sensibly", says Steve. "Don't express yourself to the person who's engaged in this battle with you. Express yourself to a friend who's willing to listen."

4. Go over things a few times

"Emotion takes a long time to process," says Steve. Sometimes we have to run over challenging things in our minds a few times before the chimp in us is able to accept them.

“It does mean the chimp will keep kicking off until it’s processing this emotion,” says Steve, but if you keep revisiting the same thing eventually the chimp will say, “Do you know what, I’ve said my bit now and I’m beginning to see it differently.”

5. Get your self-esteem from who you are, not what you do

We need to prevent our inner chimp from governing our self-worth, says Steve: “If my self-esteem is on the chimp system, which is what I achieve, then if I don’t achieve everything at the right level I’m always going to have low self-esteem,” he says. Also, no amount of success will ever be enough: “The chimp will chase success but once it’s got that it will redefine it.”

We don’t look at our friends and like them for what they achieve, Steve says, we like them for who they are. We should measure our own success in the same way. Are you a positive person who can motivate others? Are you kind? Do you have integrity? If you are measuring success against your values – rather than what car you own or how much you earn – then building self-esteem is in your own hands.

6. Spend ten minutes every day reflecting on whether you’re meeting your values

Once you are clear on what moral, ethical beliefs you hold, you can work out how to live up to these values. If, for example, your value is to respect others, then think about how you can demonstrate this. One example could be listening to others and accepting their opinions.

Actively reflect on whether you are living out each value successfully, says Steve, for “five or ten minutes a day”. This is putting the human system firmly in the foreground and forcing your chimp to take a back seat.

7. Smile to show the chimp who’s boss

There are some simple habits we can develop which actively help us to control our emotions and keep the chimp in check. One of these is smiling. We know that “our facial expressions are intricately linked to our mood state,” says Steve. If we’re happy we grin. However, research shows that by making a sad or a happy face “you actually evoke the mood starting to appear in your head.”

“Most of us when we get out of bed in the morning just naturally go with the mood we’re in, and often it’s not a great mood,” Steve says. Instead, ask what mood do I want to be in? Be proactive, put the right face on, and you’ll soon find that your mood starts to lift.

8. Do what works for you

We are all unique, says Steve, and we need to judge his advice for ourselves and whether it works for us. “If things resonate, great. If they don’t but it sparks ideas, go with your own ideas,” he says. The important thing is that we look after our psychological health and actively reflect. If the chimp model doesn’t resonate with you, find another approach, says Steve, but whatever you do, don’t do nothing.

Prof Steve Peters explains his model of the mind for young people in his bestselling book, called 'My Hidden Chimp'.

Your chimp needs what? Get to know you!

As a teen your Chimp system is bigger than your Human and Computer system as you are still growing into an adult. You may need help from the Wellbeing Team or your teachers to sometimes figure out what needs and drives motivate you. They will not all be positive but we can help guide you with tips and ideas of how to help develop your positive values.

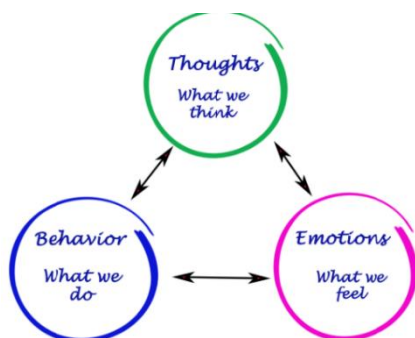
This will then help you with programming your human and computer parts of your brain to calm down your chimp and place positive belief systems in your mind about yourself and your attributes.

For example if your chimp is a worrier, it will be driven by your instinct to survive on a daily basis. By exploring what you perceive as a threat, by investigating your thoughts and re-balancing them you may find new ways of calming your 'chimp' down. Your Chimp may be driven by fitting in with your peers and doing things you do not really feel comfortable with. Or it could be driven by the need to win and be successful. Your Chimp drives and needs are a part of you and it is good to get to know yourself.

Exploring your 'chimp needs' and what drives you individually can help us support you in knowing more about your feelings and behavior. Is your chimp angry/worried/insecure/risk averse or prone to taking risks?

Resilience

Resilience is learning about what needs you have and what needs are not being met. Once you can learn more about this you can work on a certain area and build up your resilience and self-belief. In exploring things around your learning, coping and core-self we can help you learn what your achievements are and what helps you cope with issues and overcome things. What motivates you to keep on trying?



FEELINGS AND MOODS

Our thoughts feelings and behavior are all related to each other and feed each other. Feelings can be difficult to make sense of. Sometimes you do not even know why you feel like that. Sometimes things have happened that may contribute to the feeling. It is helpful to name the feeling, accept it and express it in some way. Your feelings are never wrong but how you express them is how it affects you and others. Quite often you can feel a number of them all at the same time. This is especially true whilst you are in your teenage years and your body and mind are developing whilst hormones are bouncing around at the same time.

If you can learn tips of self-care it can combat a few different emotions and help you to deal with things that you find difficult.

You could use Kooth's daily journal or the Childline mood journal to track how you are feeling. Or an app like Daylio. This then helps you to recognize triggers and perhaps plan for reducing or dealing with the triggers. You could use the Childline art box or expression wall to express some of the difficult feelings you have. Neuro love have lots of different suggestions to try to release feelings you have through creative activities, exercise, music, baking or relaxation techniques. Creating a written or artistic journal of your thoughts and feelings helps you explore your feelings and what helps you feel more relaxed and calmer. Talk to the Wellbeing Team to get more help and advice.

WORRY

Teenagers worry about a variety of things, the main topics being: high expectations (from themselves, family and school), the future, body image, peer pressure, self-criticism, brain development, education, hormones, puberty and the family.

Worry is linked to our thoughts and feelings of uncertainty. Our brains are wired to crave certainty and safety. Worry is an emotion of not feeling this safety and certainty. It is an emotional response that starts with our thoughts. It is normal and everyone experiences it at stages of their lives. We can move in and out of levels of worry in our lives.

You may need to reach out for help when worrying becomes a frequent, daily event about the same things and it stops you from doing things you used to do. If you start to experience panic attacks you may also need some additional support.

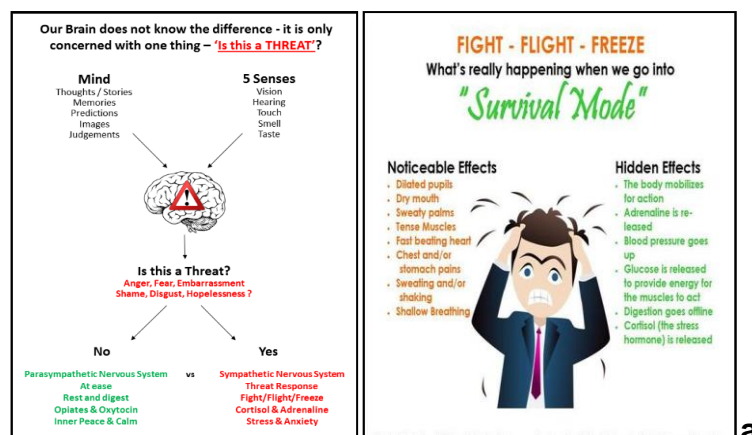
Thoughts can trigger our survival instinct - Fear

Our survival instinct is very important to us, it keeps us safe and helps us to perform. It was really important when we used to be hunters and gatherers when we were faced with predators. It is also called the 'fight, flight, freeze' instinct.

Nowadays our survival instinct is still important to keep us safe and to help us perform, however we can trigger it with anything we think is a threat, **not always** an actual danger. This could be something as simple as shame, guilt, fear or anger. If our thoughts make us feel stressed, fearful or uncertain, this feeling of not being safe will trigger the physical response. Adrenalin and the stress hormone, cortisol will be produced, your digestion will go on hold, your muscles may tense and your body will get ready to run fight or hide to help you survive. Check out the mindwell animation about fight and flight for more info at <https://youtu.be/01KFoSPYmMM>

This explains why when you worry or get stressed you may feel hot and sweaty, your heart may beat faster, you could feel sick, dizzy or get shaky arms and legs. You may even need to empty your bladder. Your mind is very clever and tells your body it needs more blood pumped to your hands and feet, it also puts everything else on hold and empties all areas it can. It is doing this so it can help you to run faster or fight better to get you out of this situation.

The first strategy to learn with dealing with worry and stress is to notice what is happening to your body when you worry. Once you recognise the signs that you experience, you can then try different things to try and calm your body and mind.



According to Childline tips to help manage your worry are...

Focus on your breathing and your body

Try to recognise negative thoughts

Give yourself time to worry

Talk about things

Keep a journal

Visit your doctor if you need to

A good place to start with continual worry, stress or low moods is to track how often it is happening and in what situations. This helps you spot any patterns of what is triggering you to have these feelings and thoughts.

Complete a worry diary

Try to complete a regular worry diary- how often is it happening? What situation does it happen in? How worried do you feel 1-5?

Worry diary
Please note - after recording each worry remember to refocus your thoughts back to the present moment.

Date and time	Situation	What is the worry?	How worried are you?	What type of worry are you feeling?

MindWell
www.mindwell.org.uk

My Worry Plan
Name: _____ Date: _____
Make a list of how I can make the worry smaller.

What is the worry?

How big is it?
1 2 3 4 5

Worry Time

One way of starting to control your worrying is to actually create daily 'Worry time'. Set aside a time (about 15 minutes) each day to tackle your worrying. Find a time that suits you. You can use this Worry time list to make a record of any worries you have during the day or night and then delay them until Worry time.

Write down all the things that are worrying you. Pick three that you can tackle. Write a quick action plan for each. Decide if other people can help you and what your next steps will be.

Check out NHS Mindwell Leeds for a worry diary template, worry list and worry time information. [MindWell resources - anxiety, worry and panic attacks | MindWell \(mindwell-leeds.org.uk\)](http://mindwell-leeds.org.uk)

AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS-‘ANTS’

Catch them, Collect evidence and challenge them

Complete a thought diary- Catch them

Remember you are not your thoughts and they are fluid and pass in and out of your mind. When you are growing up you become more aware of your thoughts and the next stage of your development is learning that you can challenge any unhelpful ones. What are my thoughts during these times of worry or stress? Try and catch the thought.

Mood diary

MindWell

www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk

Date	Situation or event What were you doing? Where were you? Who with? What were you thinking about? Be aware of what affects your mood.	Automatic thought What did you think?	Mood/sensations What were your feelings? How positive was your mood on a scale of 1-100	Unhelpful thinking style



Once you have caught them you can learn about these thoughts more as most of them will be what we call ‘ANTS’- automatic negative thinking.



They can fall into different categories of thinking- such as

- Focusing on the negative/Ignoring the positive
- Predicting the future/catastrophising/what if?
- Jumping to conclusions
- Taking things personally
- Mind reading
- Black and white thinking
- Perfectionism/'should' thinking

Challenge/Problem Solve

Once you learn what type of thoughts you are having regularly you can then try and challenge them with evidence. For example, if your regular thought is 'I am going to fail.' Have you failed already? Have you learnt from it? Are you trying your best? Could you ask for help? Could you revise more?

Then rebalance the thought- actually I may have got a lower score but I now know what area to concentrate on, I am trying my best...

There are worksheets you can use on the NHS Mindwell website. Get practising challenging those ANTS! Use the ten steps detailed on the following link:

[Challenge negative thoughts | MindWell \(mindwell-leeds.org.uk\)](https://mindwell-leeds.org.uk/challenge-negative-thoughts)

Also look to problem solving – what small changes can you make? Are these worries something you can fix or are they about the future? Look at making a plan to tackle the problems. A lot of worrying thoughts are because your thoughts are about the future instead of the present. Practice staying in the moment with mindfulness, grounding or meditation tips covered in the Spirit part of the handbook.

STRESS

From time to time, everyone feels stressed or anxious - these feelings are quite normal... and can be useful as they can act as warning signs and tell us that we need to slow down or to be careful and think about what we are planning to do. What are the signs and symptoms?

Stress and anxiety can make it hard to:

- Concentrate
- Make decisions

- Deal with frustration
- Control your temper
- Keep your sense of humour
- Or they can make a person feel restless and jumpy, to have problems sleeping, to feel breathless, to feel fearful, to have headaches or even to feel sick or dizzy.

Complete a stress diary and find out your triggers to stress.

[Take control of your stress | MindWell \(mindwell-leeds.org.uk\)](http://mindwell-leeds.org.uk)

When stress or anxiety builds up to the point that the feelings are really strong, some people can also have what are called “panic attacks”. They may “freeze” and be totally unable to deal with the situation that is worrying them.

Useful websites and Apps Steps for Stress and Worry

Practical ways for you to start dealing with stress.

Stressheads App - Stressheads turns your phone into a stress killing machine.

Flowy App - A mobile game designed to help manage panic attacks and anxiety.

MindShift App - Designed to help teens and young adults cope with anxiety.

Lantern App - A web and mobile-based platform that combines Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) techniques with advice from real experts.

Pacifica App - Daily tools for stress and anxiety alongside a supportive community. Based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and Meditation.

SAM: Self Help for Anxiety Management App - SAM is an app designed to help people understand and manage their anxiety.

Healthy Minds App - A problem solving App to help young people deal with emotions and cope with the stresses of being a student.

Breathe2Relax App - An app developed for stress management. It walks users through breathing exercises that help to reduce stress, stabilize mood, control anger, and manage anxiety. stressed or anxious.

STOP technique

If you are feeling stressed or on edge this quick technique can help you let go of anxieties and feel calmer. Say 'STOP' firmly to yourself. Breathe out fully. Drop your shoulders and unclench your hands. Count slowly from five down to one. Take a moment. Repeat if needed. Carry on with what you were doing, if possible.

Relaxation or Diaphragmatic Breathing

Breathing slowly and mindfully activates the **hypothalamus**, connected to the **pituitary** gland in the brain, to send out neurohormones that inhibit stress-producing hormones and trigger a relaxation response in the body. Practise this deep breathing technique whenever you feel anxious or feel your breathing getting shallower or heavier. It works by slowing down your breathing to help you relax.

- Sit comfortably in a chair if possible.
- Put your feet flat on the floor.
- Shoulders down and jaw loose.
- Back straight.
- Loosen clothes around your stomach area if convenient.
- Breathe in through your nose rather than your mouth.
- Breathe in to count of two, hold for a second and then breathe out to count of four. Breathe out smoothly and steadily.
- Repeat twice and then relax and carry on with whatever you were doing. Breathing should be more obviously from the stomach, not the chest, as your lungs expand and push your tummy outwards. To check you are doing it right put one hand just above your stomach and one on the chest. Try to keep the top hand fairly still. Only the bottom hand should move a lot as your lungs expand.

Watch a video about Diaphragmatic breathing on the MindWell website at www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/relaxation-breathing
[MindWell resources - anxiety, worry and panic attacks | MindWell \(mindwell-leeds.org.uk\)](http://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk)
[MOODJUICE - Anxiety - Self-help Guide \(scot.nhs.uk\)](http://www.scot.nhs.uk/moodjuice/)

Concentrate on one task

Find one thing that you can do now: put the kettle on, go for a short walk, put on calming music, or do a simple domestic task. Focus completely on the task, talking yourself through each step. Be aware of what is happening - such as the sound of the music, people walking past or the noise the iron makes. Try counting the sounds you can hear.

Positive self-talk

Be kind to yourself and learn positive self-talk. Learn to relax and Practise daily self-care. Doing creative things can help your self-esteem.

There are lots of suggestions for self-help strategies on different sites such as Youngminds, Childline or the NHS. You may need to ask the Mentors or a counsellor to help you learn how to use them. They are not a quick hit. It takes time to practise them and learn what works for you. They may not take your worries away but they will help you to manage them.



Create a positivity jar? Try Searching the Neuro Love website for tips on self-care or activities to try to help boost your mood.

Look in the mirror per day and say one positive thing about yourself.

ANGER

Childline and Young Minds give great advice...

They both explain how anger is something everyone feels sometimes. You may need extra help with it

- if it is affecting you all the time
- you are involved in destructive behaviour or
- you are hurting others.

There are lots of ways to help you cope.

Childline suggests things like an 'anger diary', breathing, exercising or talking to someone. Releasing aggression through things like using a stress ball, walking away, exercising or punching a pillow. Writing down what you want to say and destroying it.

Learning how to relax with meditation and mindfulness.

Talking to someone else to get a different point of view.

Youngminds suggest extra things like going for a walk, listening to music, doing something you enjoy, playing computer games, reading a book or having a hot bath.

Anger Diary

Before you can control your anger you must understand when and why you get angry, and how you behave as a result. This diary will help you identify your anger triggers and your anger responses. Look at the example below, and then use this log to record your own experiences with anger.

Before I Was Angry	Thoughts and Feelings	Behavior	Result
Monday, Jan. 30, 12:00 pm My boss told me I turned in my work late	Feeling upset. Thought: "She thinks I'm a horrible employee"	I went in my office and closed the door. Kicked the trashcan	Felt upset the rest of the day; didn't talk to boss

CALM ZONE

childline

There are lots of ways to feel calmer. It's about finding what works for you. Try some of our breathing exercises, activities, games and videos to help let go of stress.

Explore their websites for more tips and helpful videos on breathing, grounding and coping with stress....

[Feelings and emotions | Childline](#)

[Taking care of yourself | Childline](#)

[Anger | Childline](#)

[Anger and Mental Health: Find Help Guide \(youngminds.org.uk\)](#)

[Teen aggression and arguments - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

LOW MOODS

Everyone has times when they feel upset or down - it's normal to feel like this.

Sometimes, when it lasts for longer than two weeks, it may be depression.

Depression is a lot more common than you think. It can affect people of all ages and in many different ways. What are the common signs and symptoms?

- feeling hopeless or worthless
- a loss of appetite
- feeling very tired or on the other hand, agitated and unable to concentrate on anything
- finding it hard to sleep, to study or to find pleasure in hobbies
- avoiding friends or feeling like they want to harm themselves.

Useful websites and apps

Moodtools App - Aid for depression. Designed to help combat depression and alleviate negative moods.

Moodkit App - Designed to help people with anxiety or depression improve their mood.

T2moodtracker App - Allows people with anxiety, brain injury, depression, post-traumatic stress, or stress to monitor their moods and their general well-being.

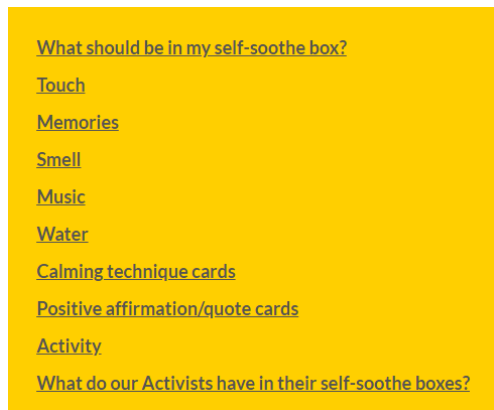
What's Up? App - Coping strategies for depression, anxiety, anger, stress and more. Information and a place to make your own notes.

If you find that your moods have been low for a long period of time and that you are tired all the time and finding no fun in anything it may be time to ask for some help. Sometimes things happen in life that can cause overwhelming feelings and stress.

Tips to try are...

- Keep a journal

- Talk to someone
- Exercise
- Eat well
- Try relaxation or self-care suggestions- what lifts your mood?
- Create a self-soothe box
- Or try a gratitude journal

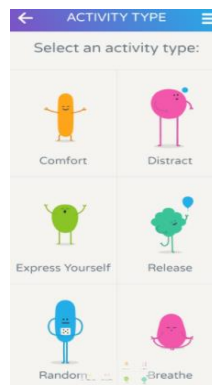


SELF-HARM

Continual depression or some sort of trauma can sometimes lead to thoughts of self-harm.

There are a lot of misconceptions about self-harm. It is best to think of it not as an act of wanting attention but as an act of asking for help with overwhelming feelings. If you find that you are feeling the urge to self-harm please speak to an adult.

They can then support you in investigating the triggers for self-harm and finding different ways of expressing those feelings. The first place to start is to keep a journal of the times you feel the urge and the situation it is occurring in.



The free calmhalm app is excellent in supporting this and can provide you with a self- monitoring graph and details of how to get support. It also gives you lots of suggestions of what to try instead to release the overwhelming feelings you have.

Children and Mental Health Services [CAMHS] provide the following information on Self-Harm

Self-harm is 'self-poisoning or self-injury, irrespective of the apparent purpose of the act'. Self-harm is 'a way people cope with overwhelming feelings of pain and distress. By hurting themselves they may feel better for a while and be more able to cope with their lives'.

Cutting triggers your body's chemistry - Endorphins are released to help the body deal with pain and stress and cause an actual high designed to cover over real physical pain. When you self-harm, your brain is flooded with endorphins, which gives you a rush, and a sense of calmness and relief that makes you feel like everything is ok. Some people claim the high can last up to 90 minutes, but what happens when that high wears off? Unfortunately, people can crash.

People who self-harm describe it as a way to;

- express something that is hard to put into words
- turn invisible thoughts or feelings into something visible
- change emotional pain into physical pain
- reduce overwhelming feelings or thoughts
- have a sense of being in control
- to escape traumatic memories
- have something in life that they can rely on
- punish themselves for their feelings and experiences
- stop feeling numb
- create a reason to physically care for themselves
- express suicidal feelings and thoughts without taking their own life.

Although it often isn't, self-harm can sometimes be a person's way of asking for attention. If so, it is important to remember that there is nothing wrong with wanting attention, and that deep distress can get in the way of someone's ability to be direct about what they need.



THE SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Changes in eating/sleeping habits</i> • <i>Increased isolation from friends/family</i> • <i>Changes in activity and mood, e.g. more aggressive/withdrawn than usual</i> • <i>Lowering of academic grades</i> • <i>Talking about self-harming or suicide/suicidal ideation</i> • <i>Becoming socially withdrawn</i> • <i>Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope</i> • <i>Wearing long sleeves, tights/legging's, trousers even in hot weather</i> 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cuts, scratches or burns that may not be accidental</i> • <i>Changes in appearance, sudden /drastic weight loss/gain</i> • <i>Signs of depression, such as low mood, tearfulness or a lack of motivation or interest in anything</i> • <i>Self-loathing and expressing a wish to punish themselves</i> • <i>Signs of low self-esteem, such as blaming themselves for any problems or thinking they're not good enough for something</i> • <i>Signs they have been pulling out their hair</i>

What can we do to help others?

- Try to be non-judgemental.
- Stay calm and try not to be shocked as you will add shame to the person.
- Let the person know that you are there for them and listen attentively.
- Encourage them to talk about their feelings.
- Try to have empathy and show interest in their distress.
- Let them be in control of their decisions.
- Clarify whether there are immediate needs for medical attention.

- Remind them of their positive qualities.
- Offer to help them find support.

What does not help?

- Trying to force change by telling them to stop doing it.
- Tell them off - "what did you do that for?" "oh don't be silly"
- Blame the person for your own shock and upset
- Panic or try quick solutions.
- Either ignoring their injuries or overly focusing on them.
- Labelling self-harm as 'attention seeking'.
- Believe that a young person who has threatened to harm themselves in the past will not carry it out in the future.

Tips if you self-harm.

- Try waiting before self-harming, walk away from the situation and distract yourself, the more times you postpone self-harm the distress will start to come down naturally by itself.
- Use a red felt tip pen to mark where you might usually cut.
- Put elastic bands on wrists, arms or legs and flick them instead of cutting or hitting.
- Draw a ginger-bread person and with red pen cut where you would like to cut.
- Hit pillows or cushions or have a good scream into a pillow or cushion to vent anger and frustration.
- Rub ice across your skin where you might usually cut or hold an ice-cube in the crook of your arm or leg.

If you self-harm to express pain and intense emotions, you could:

Paint, draw, or scribble on a big piece of paper with red pen

Start a journal in which to express your feelings

Compose a poem or song to say what you feel

Write down any negative feelings and then rip the paper up

Listen to music that expresses what you're feeling

If you self-harm to calm and soothe yourself, you could:

Take a bath or hot shower

Pet or cuddle with a dog or cat

Wrap yourself in a warm blanket

Massage your neck, hands, and feet

Listen to calming music

If you self-harm to release tension or vent anger, you could:

Exercise vigorously—run, dance, jump rope

Punch a cushion or mattress or scream into your pillow

Squeeze a stress ball or squish Play-Doh or clay

Rip something up (sheets of paper, a magazine)

Make some noise (play an instrument, bang on pots and pans)

helpguide.org

If you self-harm because you feel disconnected or numb, you could:

Call a friend (you don't have to talk about self-harm)

Take a cold shower

Hold an ice cube in the crook of your arm or leg

Chew something with a very strong taste

Go online to a self-help website

Video links –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTrgehlFz1w&t=6s> – a young person's journey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4cPCcJ6o88> – a parent's journey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKGciUB8OSq> – responding to self-harm

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kT5cr-HTTEQ> – things can change

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8U8HyftKH1Q> – Russell brand

Helpful websites -

<http://www.harmless.org.uk>

www.mind.org.uk

<https://www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/>

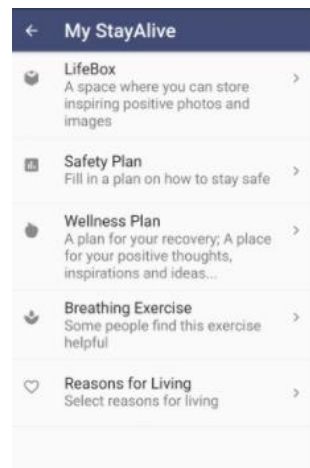
<https://www.elefriends.org.uk/>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/cutting-and-self-harm.htm>

Self-harm is not an illness. It is the name for what people do when they hurt themselves deliberately. There are different reasons why people self-harm, mostly to do with coping with difficulties in their lives. Self-harming can range from minor to serious injury.

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

Sometimes young people feel so bad about their life that your thoughts can go quite dark and sometimes your thinking can go to life is just too difficult. If you ever feel like this please reach out to an adult you trust. The website PAPYRUS is there to help you and your families. There is a hotline and also a free app called 'STAYALIVE'.



Childline suggest to get support, try talking to someone, making a safety plan like the one on their page or use the stayalive app. Learning Breathing techniques and using your senses can also help. Follow the tips on the Childline page detailed below.

The Stayalive app has more helpful tips and support numbers to help anyone feeling low or experiencing dark thoughts.

Useful websites

[Coping with suicidal feelings | Childline](#)

[CALM Homepage - Campaign Against Living Miserably | CALM, the campaign against living miserably, is a charity dedicated to preventing male suicide, the biggest single killer of men aged 20-45 in the UK \(thecalmzone.net\)](#)

[Home | Papyrus UK | Suicide Prevention Charity \(papyrus-uk.org\)](#)

Useful video

<https://youtu.be/vFJeRUgqT9Y>

Further Help

If you find you are struggling with your thoughts or feelings please contact one of the Wellbeing Team in school for support or check out our wellbeing resources which gives various suggestions of who to contact. In an emergency contact:



Physical Wellbeing

DISCOVER
WITH
MARICOURT

www.maricourt.net

BOOSTING PHYSICAL WELLBEING

There are a number of ways in which we can improve our physical wellbeing. Remember it is ok to make small changes initially then build on these to form new healthy, positive habits.

Eat well. Forget about dieting, just eat healthy. ...

As a teenager, your body is going through many physical changes – changes that need to be supported by a healthy, balanced diet.

By eating a varied and balanced diet you should be able to get all the energy and nutrients you need from the food and drink you consume, allowing your body to grow and develop properly. Some important nutrients to be aware of are:

iron
vitamin D
calcium



Eating healthily doesn't have to mean giving up your favourite foods. It simply means eating a variety of foods and cutting down on food and drinks high in fat and sugar, such as sugary fizzy drinks, crisps, cakes and chocolate. These foods should be eaten less often and in smaller amounts.

If you're watching your weight, a healthy, balanced diet is the way to go. Dieting, skipping breakfast or starving yourself doesn't work.

Get active. Be more active every day....



How much physical activity should you do to keep healthy?

- aerobic exercise
- exercises to strengthen their muscles and bones

Children and young people aged 5 to 18 should:

- aim for an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a day across the week
- take part in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity across the week to develop movement skills, muscles and bones
- reduce the time spent sitting or lying down and break up long periods of not moving with some activity. Aim to spread activity throughout the day. All activities should make you breathe faster and feel warmer

What counts as moderate activity?

Moderate intensity activities will raise your heart rate, and make you breathe faster and feel warmer.

One way to tell if you're working at a moderate intensity level is if you can still talk, but not sing.

Examples of moderate intensity activities:

- walking to school
- playground activities
- riding a scooter
- skateboarding
- rollerblading
- walking the dog



What activities strengthen muscles and bones?

Examples for young people include:

- gymnastics
- rock climbing
- football
- basketball
- tennis
- dance
- resistance exercises with exercise bands, weight machines or handheld weights
- aerobics
- running
- netball
- hockey
- badminton
- skipping with a rope
- martial arts
- sit-ups, press-ups and other similar exercises



Stay hydrated. ...



Aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluids a day – water and lower-fat milk are both healthy choices.

Even unsweetened fruit juice is sugary. Your combined total of drinks from fruit juice, vegetable juice and smoothies shouldn't be more than 150ml a day – which is a small glass.

For example, if you have 150ml of orange juice and 150ml smoothie in one day, you'll have exceeded the recommendation by 150ml.

Get a good night's sleep.



A minimum of 8 to 10 hours' good sleep on school nights is recommended.

Here's how to make sure you are getting enough sleep to stay healthy and be well rested for school:

- Limit screens in the bedroom
- If possible, do not have a mobile, tablet, TV or computer in the bedroom at night, as the light from the screen interferes with sleep.
- Having screens in the bedroom also means you are more likely to stay up late interacting with friends on social media.
- Try to have at least an hour of screen-free time before going to sleep.
- Exercise for better sleep
- Regular exercise helps you sleep more soundly, as well as improving your general health.
- You should be aiming for at least 60 minutes' exercise every day, including aerobic activities such as fast walking and running.
- Exercising out in daylight will help to encourage healthy sleep patterns, too.
- Cut out the caffeine found in drinks such as cola, tea and coffee. Too much caffeine can stop you falling asleep and reduce the amount of deep sleep you have.
- Have a good routine

- Have regular bedtime routine. Doing the same things in the same order an hour or so before bed can help them drift off to sleep.

- Talk through any problems

- Avoid long weekend lie-ins

What is an eating problem?

Lots of people have different eating habits. You might eat loads one day, be less hungry another day, or go through phases of wanting to eat more or less healthily. But that doesn't mean you have an eating problem.

But if you're focussing a lot on controlling what or how much you eat, or if you have urges to eat and then make yourself sick (bulimia), these are signs you could have a problem.

All kinds of things can cause eating problems or disorders. You might develop an eating problem when things don't feel right in other parts of your life, especially if you're feeling worried, stressed or feeling out of control. Images we see online and in the media can add to the feeling that we have to look a certain way, or be a certain weight which may not be healthy for our body.



Symptoms of eating problems;

- losing appetite
- eating when not hungry
- obsessing about your body (e.g. being too fat, or not muscly enough)
- eating only certain types of things or following fad diets
- being afraid of gaining weight
- dramatic weight loss or gain
- making yourself sick

- no longer enjoying eating socially or leaving the table quickly (to be sick or hide food)
- focusing on buying or cooking food for others
- feeling secretive about eating
- being secretive about/preoccupied with food
- being self-conscious about eating in front of others

If any of the symptoms above are affecting your everyday life, **it's a good idea to talk to someone about how you're feeling**. You might have an idea about what an eating disorder looks like, but not everyone experiences the same difficult eating behaviours, and your weight on its own does not determine whether you have a problem.

Being able to control how much or what you eat might give you a feeling of order, but it can lead to more serious issues. If you are worried at all, please reach out for help.

Some eating problems can become serious mental health conditions that need professional help to diagnose and treat. In very serious cases and without the right kind of support and treatment, they can even cause death, which is why it is so important to speak to someone if you are struggling with your eating so that you can get the help you need to recover. It might feel really difficult, but you can get through it and you deserve to get better.



What to do about eating problems;

- **Talk to someone you trust.** If you think you might have an eating disorder, telling someone about it can feel quite hard but talking about it is the first step on their road to recovery.
- **Speak to your GP for advice.** Sometimes learning to eat normally again can be hard work, so getting help can you get the support you need. They might suggest talking therapies that you and your family can try, to help you figure out and deal with the issues that have triggered your eating problem. They may also want to measure your weight to assess your BMI (Body Mass Index)

– it's ok to be nervous about this, but just remember they don't want to judge you, they only want to help.

Relaxation

Relaxation techniques provide beneficial ways of dealing with stress.

- The Power of Yoga for Anxiety



How does yoga relieve anxiety? Researchers theorize that the mindful movement and breathing done in yoga activates the relaxation response. Therefore, yoga moves us out of the sympathetic nervous system (“fight or flight”). Hence, it moves us into the parasympathetic nervous system (“rest and digest”) system.

Stress-busting relaxation techniques;

Pause - make time during the day to take breaks or pauses. Pausing throughout the day can prevent stress from building up.

- Stop what you are doing.
- Look out of the window.
- Let your shoulders drop.
- Stretch.
- Allow your mind to calm down.

If you find yourself in a stressful situation such as a difficult phone call, a crowded train journey home or a looming essay deadline, give yourself time afterwards to relax.



Breathing exercise for stress

This calming breathing technique for stress, anxiety and panic takes just a few minutes and can be done anywhere.

You will get the most benefit if you do it regularly, as part of your daily routine.

You can do it standing up, sitting in a chair that supports your back, or lying on a bed or yoga mat on the floor.

Make yourself as comfortable as you can. If you can, loosen any clothes that restrict your breathing.

If you're lying down, place your arms a little bit away from your sides, with the palms up. Let your legs be straight, or bend your knees so your feet are flat on the floor.

If you're sitting, place your arms on the chair arms.

If you're sitting or standing, place both feet flat on the ground. Whatever position you're in, place your feet roughly hip-width apart.

- Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it.
- Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from 1 to 5. You may not be able to reach 5 at first.
- Then, without pausing or holding your breath, let it flow out gently, counting from 1 to 5 again, if you find this helpful.
- Keep doing this for 3 to 5 minutes.

What is 'fight, flight or freeze'?

Any book you read about stress will refer to 'fight or flight' or 'fight, flight or freeze' as a survival mechanism that prepares you to either fight for survival or run away when you're threatened.



It's your body's automatic response to danger – a series of dramatic physical changes designed to give you a burst of energy and strength. Once the danger is over, systems return to normal and you become physiologically relaxed again.

The physiological changes

When your body goes into the fight or flight state, the following changes happen automatically:

- Heart: Your heart begins to beat faster and harder to pump blood containing oxygen and sugar to your major muscles to use for energy. You may feel your heart beating as you breathe more rapidly.
- Lungs: Your breathing rate increases and your airways dilate. More oxygen enters your blood.
- Ears: Your hearing and all of your senses become more acute.
- Eyes: Your pupils dilate to help you see better. Your peripheral vision is also heightened.
- Brain: Mental activity and alertness increase for quick decision making.
- Blood: Your blood flow to muscles will increase to prepare for flight. The blood will thicken to increase the availability of clotting factors and immune system cells in case of an injury.
- Legs and arms: Sugars and fats are converted for use as energy and sent to your major muscles to help you to fight or run away.
- Skin and sweat glands: Sweating increases. Hands and feet often feel cold as blood supplies are diverted to the brain and muscles. Hairs stand on end as we experience goose pimples. Skin can turn pale.
- Salivary glands: There is a decreased flow of saliva. Your mouth can feel dry.

- Gut muscles: Gut activity slows as blood supply is reduced. This can affect digestion and cause digestion issues.
- Spleen: Contracts and empties red blood cells into the circulation.
- Kidneys: Reduced urine formation.
- Liver and fat tissue: Glucose and fats mobilised for energy to fuel the muscles.

These responses are regulated by the sympathetic nervous system and by hormones such as cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenalin which are released into the blood stream.

The process occurs very quickly and is not a conscious decision.



Physical threats

An ancient response to physical threats, fight or flight would have been very valuable to our prehistoric ancestors, as they faced physical danger many times throughout their short lives.

It still helps to protect us by heightening awareness and helping us deal with emergencies. For example, it enables us to react very quickly and slam on the brakes when someone runs in front of the car. However, once the acute stress is over, our bodies quickly return to normal.

The problem is that these days most of us are more likely to have to cope with psychological threats and stressors, like pressure of deadlines, traffic queues, delays, disagreements at work and office politics. They're not situations where physical aggression or running away are the best answers – and yet our bodies react as if we're facing physical danger: with the fight or flight response.

Psychological threats

Our psychological threats and stressors are different for each of us, based on our experiences, coping mechanisms, how we view life, our rules and beliefs, values, boundaries and measures of what's too much and out of balance.

As modern life becomes more pressured and complex, we add more and more psychological triggers to the list.



Constant threats – chronic stress

With the fight or flight physical changes, you're wired for action. You're ready to face the threats and do your best. Things that can trigger the fight or flight response:

Feeling threatened by:

- being asked to do things you don't want to do
- being asked to do things you can't do
- working overtime
- exams
- unwanted change

Perceived threats or fears:

- not being accepted
- being embarrassed
- being laughed at
- being rejected

Some psychological threats and stressors:

- pressures of deadlines
- traffic queues
- disagreements at work
- office politics

We can be in and out of this fight or flight state many times throughout a day. This means we can be 'wired up' almost constantly – with dangerous consequences for our health.

The worst problem is the response to psychological triggers, to simple, not truly life-threatening events. Often, there's no defined enemy to fight or run away from, and yet your body is on the alert and keyed-up for action. It's left with the hormones and chemicals that would have otherwise been quickly removed or used up during the physical reaction it expected. The fats released which are not used are likely to be restored in the lining of the arteries. This can increase blood pressure, making the heart work harder to pump blood around the body.

Stress also inhibits the immune system, making you more vulnerable to colds, flu, fatigue and infections.

[illegible]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpolpKTWrp4> - Anxiety explained for teens video.

| SPIRIT

| EXPLORE
WITH
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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'SPIRIT'?



When we are talking about wellbeing, the terms “mind” and “body” are easy to understand but when we include “spirit”, things become a bit hazy!

Spirit refers to that part of us that looks at the deeper questions of life and searches for meaning and purpose within the life that we live. Religion and faith are one aspect of that but not the whole picture!

It also refers to something really mysterious at the heart of who we are. You can't put your finger on it, you can even find it hard to describe but words like “inner peace,” “contentment,” and “true happiness” come close.

Everyone, religious or not, asks big meaningful questions in life:

- Why am I here?
- Where am I going in life?
- What will I do with my life?
- Do I have a purpose?
- What kind of person ought I to be?
- Is there more to life than this?
- Is there a God?
- Why is there so much suffering in the world?



For many people, the answers to these questions are often found through their participation in a religion or faith. And they will take part in rituals and traditions within their faith that will guide them through their lives.

So people talk about having a “spirituality.” They will do and take part in activities that get them in touch with themselves or with God, which will help bring a deeper meaning to their lives. So meditation, prayer, walking in nature, yoga, going to Mass or religious services are examples of how many people do this.



And you, as a young person, have a spirituality! You ask the above questions (and lots more!!) and search for those answers in many different ways in your life. And you will no doubt be looking for inner peace and contentment too...sometimes in a religious way and sometimes not.

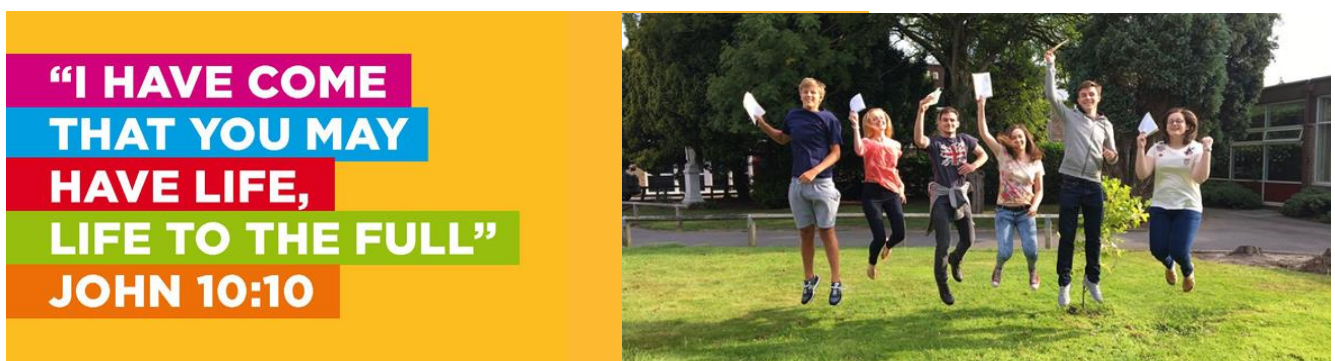
Maricourt and spiritual wellbeing

As you will probably have guessed, the “spirit” part of wellbeing is an important part of Maricourt’s vision for you. We are a Catholic school and our Catholic faith invites us to believe that the fundamental answers to life can be found through a person, Jesus Christ. But we do not impose this on anyone...it is an invitation.

For at the heart of Catholic education is the belief that each person *should be valued, respected and loved for who they are, regardless of religious belief.*

And part of this vision is that we, as a Catholic school, should do everything to nourish your body, mind and spirit so that you can be happy, healthy and “live life to the full.” (*Jesus in the Gospel of John*)

SO HERE ARE SOME RESOURCES THAT WE BELIEVE WILL HELP YOU NOURISH YOUR SPIRIT!



**“I HAVE COME
THAT YOU MAY
HAVE LIFE,
LIFE TO THE FULL”
JOHN 10:10**

MEDITATION

One of the great causes of stress and anxiety today is busyness. We never stop going...and going...and going. You know the feeling – you are always doing something; going to lessons, doing homework, browsing social media, gaming, going to the gym and lots more.

One of the secrets to wellbeing is taking the time to stop. And this is where meditation plays an important role. Meditation is an age-old practice that has become popular once again because of how rushed and frantic life has become.



It is the practice of stilling your mind and body so as to become totally present in the moment. Breathing is an important part of meditation. By slowing your breathing and remaining focused on it for a certain amount of time, this allows your mind to rest and helps you to become more relaxed.

Mindfulness meditation is one of the most popular ways of meditating at present. And you don't have to be a really holy person or a guru to meditate; all you need is the desire to give it a go!

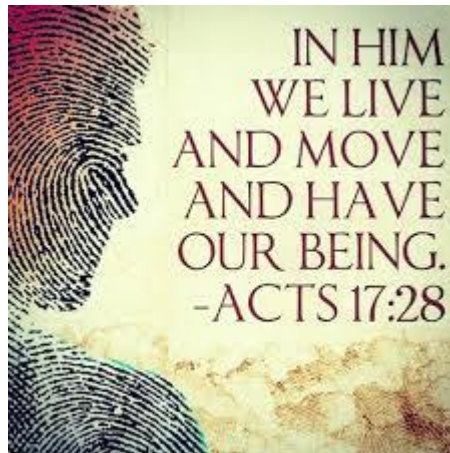
How do I meditate?

- Find a quiet place without any distractions. Sit in an upright position with your back straight and your feet on the ground.
- Close your eyes, become aware of your breathing and observe how you breathe...observe the breath going in through your nose and out through your mouth. Throughout the meditation, you will remain focused on your breathing as this will allow you to stay in the present moment.

- You will get distracted!! Your mind does not like to stay still. When distractions do happen, notice them and then focus your attention once again on your breathing.
- You won't become an expert meditator overnight! It will take time. For your first effort try 5 minutes and build it up over time.
- You will feel that it is a waste of time. That is the whole point...to stop and waste time, allowing yourself to simply be still.
- At the end of the meditation, slowly open your eyes and take a moment to notice where you are and how you feel.

Christian Meditation

Whereas the above meditation is focused on yourself, Christian meditation is a practice that involves a person inviting God to be with them while they meditate. The main purpose is to become focused on God's presence in and around them, so as to allow God to heal and change what it is that is causing them to stress and worry.



No words are used. The person simply allows themselves to sit still in the God's presence and to allow that presence to transform them.

So you can do all of the above steps but you can add the following into the meditation:

- As you become aware of your breathing, remember that God is always present; in you, around you and with you. Invite God to be with you as you meditate.
- You can begin to use a mantra as you breathe. A mantra is a word or phrase that is repeated over and over. Again, this helps you to focus your mind. A classic mantra in the Christian tradition is the Aramaic phrase "Mar-a-na-tha" which translates as "Be with me, Lord Jesus." So when you breathe in, use the phrase "Mar-a" and when you breathe out, use the phrase "na-tha". This will create a rhythm to your meditating.

- At the end of the meditation, you can say a short prayer to thank God for being with you during the meditation and to help you to always be aware of his presence in your day.

More information and resources:

To learn the basics of meditation:

<http://mindfulnessforteens.com/guided-meditations/>

Christian Meditation:

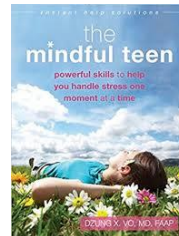
<http://www.cominghome.org.au/>

Apps on Google Play and Apple store:



Book:

The Mindful Teen by Professor Dzung.



PRAYER

For many people, belief in a higher power is really important, whether they are part of a religion or not. A significant number of people would also say that believing in a higher power has helped them cope with some of the most difficult times in their lives. For most, they refer to this higher power as God.



Our Catholic faith invites us to believe that God is not something distant or unknowable but, instead, God is a *someone* who is personal and close to us. This God was revealed as a Father and, for Christians, we know what God is like through the life of Jesus Christ.

And his life showed us that God wants to be in a relationship with every person, to be involved in their daily lives and to be with them and for them in whatever circumstances they find themselves in.



What is prayer?

Prayer is simply a way of communicating with God. This is not as easy as it sounds – how do you speak to someone you can't see?

But many people will attest to the fact that when they prayed, they felt changed afterwards or found an inner strength to deal with their situations and circumstances. They would also claim that they felt a presence with them as they faced difficult times; a presence that gave them hope and courage for what they faced.

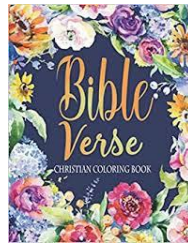
There are a number of studies that have shown that prayer benefits people's mental and physical health but that is not why we pray. These are the side effects of prayer on people's lives but the aim of prayer is to connect in a deeper way with God.

Your idea of prayer may be saying set prayers like the *Our Father* or asking God for things. But just like there are many ways of communicating with a friend, there are also many ways to pray.

So how can I pray?

In the previous section, you read about one form of prayer called Christian meditation.

Prayer does not have to be complicated. Think about the things that you love to do; you will have hobbies and interests that you really enjoy. Amazingly, you can pray while doing something you love! Here are some examples...



- **If you love art:** You could purchase a teen/adult colouring book that is scripture based. These books have illustrated pages with an inspiring quote from the Bible that can match your mood, feeling or state of mind. You simply ask God to be with you, to inspire you and calm you as you colour in the page.

Alternatively, you could paint and pray – create a picture that captures your low feeling or mood and ask God that, as you do this, you can feel better and more hopeful.



- **If you are creative:** Make your own prayer space! Some young people like to make a space in the corner of their bedroom and put a cloth on a table, with a candle (a battery candle is best), some religious items or prayer cards. You could make your own prayer jar – each day, you could write a prayer on a piece of paper about how you are feeling and add it to the jar.



- **If you like wearing accessories:** You could make your own prayer beads that can be worn around your neck or your wrist. You can get beads and string from most art and crafts shops. So at the start of a week, try to name the worries that you are having and let a bead symbolize each worry. Each day of the week, hold the bead and pray that God will help you deal with that worry and overcome it. Some young people like to take the bead off when they feel that their worry has gone and, by the end of the week, they can see that their worries have got less and less. If you want to be really creative, you could make your own set of Rosary beads.



- **If you like the outdoors:** Go for a prayer walk. There is something about nature that brings us closer to God; the fresh air, smells and sounds of the natural world does lift our spirits. So go for a walk in your favourite places or somewhere new and, as you walk, chat to God (not out loud!). Or simply take in what you see, spend time looking at nature, stop now and again and listen and allow nature to refresh you. Remember, creation is the work of God's hands so when you are in nature you are close to God. No words have to be used.



- **If you enjoy music:** You probably have lots of music on your phone that reflect your different moods and the emotions that you feel. So listen to those songs that match your current mood, asking God to let them lift you and give you the comfort you need. There is also a large variety of Christian music (rap, hip-hop, rock, modern pop) available on music streaming platforms – songs that are prayers in themselves. Music and songs are a great way for God to communicate with us – the Bible has a songbook that contains 150 songs!
- **If you love exercise:** If you are in the gym, running in the park or cycling in the countryside, the rhythm of your exercise can become the rhythm of your prayer. You could listen to podcasts or apps that are prayer-based while exercising. Use the rhythm of your workout to repeat phrases that are prayers; if you were worried about an exam, you could repeat the phrase “God keep me calm” with each of your strides while running. If you are doing circuits, each circuit could represent a different concern or worry you may have so you can then pray at each of them whilst doing that particular work-out.



If you love your phone:

- There are countless prayer apps that you can download to your phone. You can listen to your prayer app anytime – walking to school, doing exercise or before you go to sleep at night.

Part of a community

All religions have some form of communal worship. Many find it helpful to join with other people in religious services as they feel a great sense of belonging, solidarity and connection as they pray. Both the praying and being with others bring great benefits both spiritually and mentally.

For Catholics, the Mass is the central form of worship. In the Mass, many people find great comfort in listening to the readings and receiving the Eucharist. They feel close to God in the church and going regularly creates a sense of rhythm and balance to their lives.



Even if the idea of going to Mass does not seem that attractive to you, you won't know until you try! You could attend a Mass in your local parish on a Sunday (bring a friend!) or find out if there is a youth group in your parish that you could join. Some young people like to take part in their Mass – reading, playing music, singing, giving out communion; all these can help you feel part of a praying community that can lift your spirit and feed your soul!

Looking back over your day



At the end of our day, it is not uncommon for us to have a think about how our day has gone. We might remember specific events or persons and how they made us

feel or act. There might also be something that we have to do tomorrow that is preoccupying our thoughts too. This can also form part of your prayer.

There is a prayer known as the *Prayer of Examen* and it essentially is a way of sitting with God at the end of the day, chatting about how your day has been and looking ahead to the next day. You can do this by sitting quietly in your room before you go to bed and chatting to God using these steps. As you do this, notice your feelings and moods and let God know these – be honest!

- *What were the good things that happened today?*
- *What was challenging for me today?*
- *Do I need to ask forgiveness for anything?*
- *What do I need for tomorrow?*

By doing this each day, you will appreciate each moment and become more aware of yourself, others and God in your life.

More information and resources:

Art and Prayer:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Books-Christian-Colouring/s?rh=n%3A266239%2Cp_27%3AChristian+Colouring+Books

<https://www.prayerideas.org/prayer-painting-meditate-pray-art/>

Being Creative:

<https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/prayer-spaces-at-home>

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/SarahCoggins/youth-ministry-prayer-ideas/>

Music:

<https://www.eden.co.uk/christian-music/>

Prayer Apps:

Click to Pray



The Bible in One Year



Lectio 365



Reimagining the Examen



Youth Groups:

<https://www.animateyouth.org/>

<https://www.youth2000.org/>

AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

When things aren't going our way or we find ourselves caught up in a wave of negative emotions, it can be very difficult to see anything positive. If this happens day after day, eventually our outlook on life will become less positive and we can become stuck in a cycle of negative thinking.



Choosing gratitude:

A technique that can help ensure you have a more positive outlook in life is an attitude of gratitude. Studies have shown that when you express gratitude, it lifts your mood and leads to an increase in happiness.

By adapting an attitude of gratitude, you are choosing to express appreciation for all the things that are good in your life.

Does this mean you can't have a bad day? Not at all. Life is not like that but this gratitude attitude will ensure that you see the bigger picture. And it is a choice you will need to make – even if you feel everything is going wrong, this technique involves you choosing to look for the positive and being grateful for it. There is always something to be grateful for, even when life is not going your way.

This will not come naturally at first. You may find yourself slipping back into negative thinking but if you keep practicing it, you will eventually get into a habit of doing it. And then it will feel very natural to be grateful for what you have in life.

Our faith reminds us that we should also express gratitude to God for what we have in life. The Bible is full of examples of people praising God for the good things they have even when they are suffering or life seems like a trial. Believing in God brings hope that regardless of how bad things get, God will still bring some good from it.

Ways to develop gratitude:

- **Keep a gratitude journal:** Writing down what you are grateful for each day will help your mind to keep focused on the positive. It can be easy to dwell on the bad things that happen but being able to look back in your journal will help you to see there are so many good things to celebrate. Each night, try to take a moment of quiet and record what you are grateful for in your day. It is a great way to end the day on a positive note.



- **Express your gratitude:** Don't keep your gratitude in a journal – express it! When someone does something nice for you, make sure you show them your appreciation. Take the time to tell those who truly matter to you how much you love and appreciate them. Write thank you notes, compliment others, buy someone a gift, write a nice post on someone's social media or celebrate others successes. By doing this, you will increase your own happiness and feel more connected with others.



- **Notice the small things:** Too often we can be focused on the big achievements in our lives but ignore the small successes we have. We also can become too

preoccupied with what we don't have and forget what we already have. Slow down and notice the little things in life that bring you the most enjoyment – savour them and enjoy them. It could be a good meal, a fun family night-in, a cosy bed, a warm house, a walk with the dogs or a good film. By doing this, you will notice that life is full of wonderful moments and the habit of noticing this will lift your spirits.

- **Prayers of Gratitude:** Take time to thank God for life itself, for the people who show you love and acceptance in your daily life and for those moments in your day that brought you happiness. Once again, by making this a habit, you will begin to notice God more in your everyday life, leading to a sense of hope and comfort when times get tough again.



More information and resources:

Websites:

<https://www.caremerseyside.org.uk/adopting-an-attitude-of-gratitude/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/small-habits-that-can-benefit-your-mental-health/#practising-gratitude>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/gratitude.html>

Books:

Gratitude Journals are available on Amazon.



KINDNESS

“Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”

– Mother Teresa



Kindness is choosing to do something that helps others and often means putting other people's needs before our own. Instead of being a self-ish act it is a self-less one.

It has been proven that showing kindness to others has a deep impact on our physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Studies have shown that it reduces stress, improves our emotional health and give us a sense of gratitude.

Kindness is at the heart of our Catholic faith. It was what made Jesus reach out to the poor and the outcasts in society, it motivated Catherine McAuley to start a House of Mercy in Dublin for the women and children living in poverty and it is the core of Christianity's teaching on loving our neighbour. Jesus, the night before he died, washed his disciples' feet at the dinner table – he was making the point that a true Christian was someone who served others and put others' needs before their own.

By showing kindness to others, we build relationships and connect with other people. We, as humans, are made for relationship so this fulfils a deep need within us. And kindness can lead to further acts of kindness, which leads to a kinder community and society.



How to be kind to others

There are many ways to show kindness to others but here are some ideas for you:

- Do fundraising for a charity
- Check in on a neighbour who lives alone.
- Tell a family member how much you love them.
- Give compliments to others
- Write a positive message on someone's social media feed.
- Do chores around the house.
- Let someone go ahead of you while waiting in line
- Make the dinner

- Bake a cake for a friend
- Donate clothes to a charity shop
- Let someone else pick what to watch on TV
- Pray for someone
- Give someone money with no expectation to receive it back.
- Buy a homeless person food and a hot drink.

Be kind to yourself

It is also important that you look after yourself too. You cannot be kind to others if you are not taking care of your own needs. The previous sections on Mind and Body will have given you plenty of information about how to look after yourself.

More information and resources:

<https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-ideas>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week/kindness-matters-guide>

DEALING WITH LOSS AND GRIEF



When we experience the loss or death of someone we love, it can be devastating. It can turn our world upside down and leave us with many questions. Everything that seemed so secure in life now seems very shaky. When you lose someone close to you, it's natural to feel sad, depressed, worried or angry. Everyone reacts in their own way.

Grief is an emotional response to a loss. You might be grieving because of:

- the death of a family member, like a parent, grandparent or sibling
- the death of a friend, or someone you knew at school
- the death of someone by suicide
- a change in a relationship
- an illness of someone close to you, like cancer or dementia

- the loss of a relationship, like someone moving away or no longer being in your life regularly
- the loss or death of a pet animal

Many of these events also trigger questions about the meaning of life and the unfairness of death. Why do good people suffer? Is there life after death? Is there a God?

How should I grieve?

There's no right or wrong way to grieve. You might feel angry, sad or depressed, or even guilty or relieved. You might be numb and not feel anything. The way you grieve might be influenced by your culture, beliefs, or how your family and community understand loss.

How you react might be different to how other people around you react. You might not feel anything for a while, and may experience delayed grief. There might be some occasions when you are expecting it, like when you experience one of many 'firsts', such as your first Christmas without that person. Or these feelings might catch you unaware sometimes. Grief can come up at any time.

You may question the existence of God or the goodness of God and have deep feelings of anger and resentment towards God. Again, these feelings and emotions are normal and it is important that you voice them to God in prayer.



There are some things that you can do to help you deal with your loss:

- Talk to someone – this could be a parent, a friend, a teacher, progress leaders, learning mentor or chaplain. Let them know how you are feeling and they will take care of you.
- Counselling – this is another option that could be organised by your GP. It is often called “talking therapy” and many people find it really helps them to express their feelings and emotions.
- Prayer can be a great source of comfort – if someone has died, you could take part in the funeral service if you felt able. You could also speak to God about how you feel and ask for help and comfort to get you through this difficult time.

- Write a letter to the person you have lost telling them all the things you want to say to them.
- Write a letter to someone who is supporting you, so they know what you are going through.
- Keep a diary or journal of how you feel.
- Express yourself through paintings or pictures.
- Write a song or poem.
- Create a memory box full of pictures and items which remind you of good times you had with the person you have lost.

Rainbows in Maricourt



The learning mentors and chaplain lead a programme in school called Rainbows. This programme takes place over a 12-week period and students work in a group to examine and process the losses they have experienced. Rainbows helps build self-esteem, trust, confidence, resilience and promotes positive emotional/mental development. It is a great programme and students who have completed the programme have really enjoyed being part of it. For more information, speak with the learning mentors and the chaplaincy who would be happy to help.

More information and resources:

Websites:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/grief-and-loss/>

<https://www.ataloss.org/>

<https://rainbowsgb.org/>

