

MON

TUES

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MAKE IT COUNT.

**MENTAL HEALTH IS
NOT EXTRACURRICULAR.**



Mental Health
Foundation

Guide for pupils

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. Being mentally healthy means that:

- we feel good about ourselves;
- we can make and keep positive relationships with others;
- we feel able to manage our feelings rather than feeling overwhelmed by them;
- we have interests or hobbies that we enjoy;
- we feel hopeful and positive about the future.

Good mental health helps us to cope with life's ups and downs and to ask for support from others when we need it.

MENTAL HEALTH SPECTRUM

Mental health and mental illness are part of a scale or 'spectrum' just as physical health and illness are. Many things can lead us to move up and down the spectrum at different times of our life.



Examples of things that might harm our mental health are:

- having friendship difficulties such as lots of arguments;
- feeling under pressure at school, such as during exams;
- feeling worried about the health of a family member;
- being bullied – in person or online.

Some things that might protect and improve our mental health are:

- having a close friend you trust, or a supportive friendship group;
- having a teacher or other staff member at school you can go to if you need help;
- enjoying time at home with your family;
- having hobbies or interests you enjoy taking part in;
- eating a healthy diet and getting plenty of sleep.

It is important to remember that, just as our mental health can suffer during difficult times in our life, it can also recover.

TOP TIPS FOR HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

DAY TO DAY . . .

There are some things that we can all do which have been shown in research to help keep our minds healthy – they are called **The Five Ways to Wellbeing** and are described here:

CONNECT

-  Make time each day to spend with your family
-  Visit a friend or family member who needs support or company
-  Speak to someone new today
-  Arrange a day out with friends you haven't seen for a while
-  Call your friend instead of messaging
-  Go to a party or social event instead of staying at home

BE ACTIVE

-  Try to use the stairs and not the lift
-  Walk or cycle to school
-  Offer to take a neighbour's dog for a walk
-  Run round the park or use the outdoor gym/trim trail
-  Use an app to count your daily steps
-  Offer to do the ironing every week and set a time limit

GIVE TO OTHERS

-  Ask your friend how they really are, then really listen to the answer
-  Say thank you with a smile
-  Offer to lend a hand if you see someone struggling
-  Volunteer with a local group
-  Arrange a treat for you and a friend or family member
-  Phone a relative as a surprise

BE AWARE

- ? Take a different route to school
- ? Try out yoga or meditation
- ? Pick a time each day to breathe deeply and be aware of your surroundings
- ? Play a piece of music and put all your energy into listening
- ? Turn off all your social media for 30 minutes a day
- ? Visit a place where you can be still for a few moments

KEEP LEARNING

- 🔍 Visit a museum, gallery, or a place of interest
- 🔍 Learn how to fix your bike
- 🔍 Get a family member to show you how to cook a meal
- 🔍 Teach yourself the basics of another language
- 🔍 Learn to play a musical instrument
- 🔍 Start a new hobby or restart one you had before

Also, don't forget to:



EAT A BALANCED DIET

Eating regular meals and ensuring you don't skip breakfast is just as important for your mental health as it is for our physical health. Ensure you eat 5 fruit and veg a day, avoid foods which are high in sugar and drink plenty of water or other non-sugary drinks.



GET PLENTY OF SLEEP

Start preparing for bedtime at least an hour beforehand. Try and establish a regular bedtime routine such as having a relaxing bath or shower beforehand and ensuring your room is dark and not too hot or cold. Avoid any screen (TV, laptop, computer, phone) usage for an hour before bedtime as the light from the screen can keep your brain alert and not ready for sleep.

WHEN TIMES GET TOUGH . . .

Remember that it is normal to go up and down the spectrum of mental health at different times in our lives. Here are some things you can do to support yourself when things get tough:



TRY WRITING DOWN HOW YOU FEEL

Some young people find keep a 'mood diary' helpful to record how they feel on different days and identify any patterns which might explain what is upsetting them.



REACH OUT TO OTHERS WHO ARE STRUGGLING

If you know that someone else in your friendship group is also finding things difficult, reach out to them and see if you can support each other. Helping someone else can help you feel better too.



BE KIND TO YOURSELF

When times are hard, it's important to be extra kind to yourself just as you would be kind to a friend in need. Think about what you might find comforting – re-reading a favourite book, playing some favourite music, watching a film you enjoy with a friend or parent/carer, going for a walk to clear your head.



SPEAK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST

One of the most important things you can do is to speak to someone rather than 'bottling up' your feelings inside yourself. Choose a close friend, family member or a teacher or other school staff member to share your worries with



ASK FOR HELP

If you continue to struggle, and especially if you have any thoughts about hurting yourself, speak to a member of school staff or ask your parent/carer to book a GP appointment for you. If you don't feel comfortable talking to someone directly, you can call the **Samaritans** on 116 123 or **Childline** on 0800 1111.

Remember there shouldn't be any shame in asking for help, in fact it's a sign of courage.

FIND OUT MORE...

Use the resources below to find out more about mental health and wellbeing:

The **Mental Health Foundation** website has a useful A-Z of key mental health topics: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z>

Young Minds provide useful information for young people and their parents about mental health, seeking treatment and the mental health system: <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

Childline have lots of advice about managing different feelings as well as their phoneline which is open 24 hours a day <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/>

Kooth provide counselling support both face to face and online <https://kooth.com/>

Mind have a whole range of information and support information for children and parents on their website: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/>



mentalhealth.org.uk

 [mentalhealthfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/mentalhealthfoundation)

 [@mentalhealth](https://twitter.com/mentalhealth)

 [@mentalhealthfoundation](https://www.instagram.com/mentalhealthfoundation)

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