

Mental Health and Wellbeing Support



A Guide for KS4 Students

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What Is Mental Health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through to adulthood.

Life often throws challenges our way and it isn't about coping alone or holding things in. It's about finding positive ways to deal with things that might be difficult, overcoming physical and mental challenges and looking after yourself.



Managing Anxiety

Firstly, try to limit your exposure to news sources which are covering the coronavirus issue as this only serves to feed fear.

Try practising the **APPLE** technique which encourages you to **Acknowledge, Pause, Pull back, Let go and Explore...**

Acknowledge – Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind.

Pause – Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Just pause and breathe.

Pull back – Tell yourself this is just the worry talking, and this apparent need for certainty is not helpful and not necessary. It is only a thought or feeling. Do not believe everything you think. Thoughts are not statements or facts.

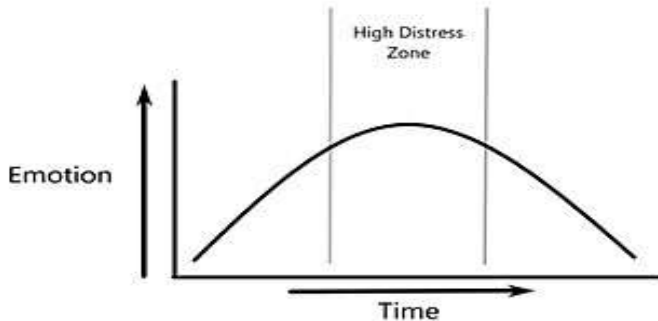
Let go – Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond to them. You might imagine them floating away in a bubble or cloud.

Explore – Explore the present moment, because right now, in this moment, all is well. Notice your breathing and the

sensations of your breathing. Notice the ground beneath you. Look around and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch, what you can smell. Right now. Then shift your focus of attention to something else – on what you need to do, on what you were doing before you noticed the worry or do something else – mindfully with your full attention.

Difficult Emotions

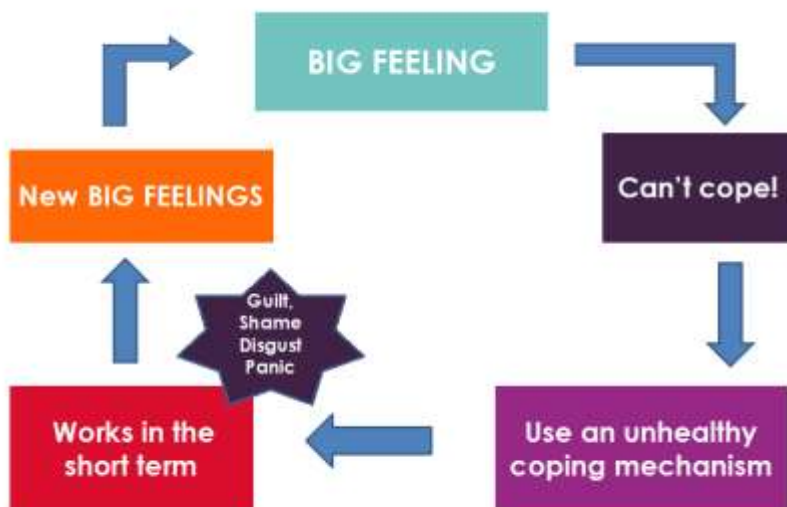
Over the next few days, weeks and months, a lot of people will be feeling many difficult emotions, facing new worries that this COVID-19 crisis has created, as well as dealing with feelings that were difficult before coronavirus struck. During times of social distancing, you may find yourself 'sitting with your emotions' more often and may not have access to tools that could distract you from uncomfortable feelings.



How do Feelings Become Difficult to Cope With?

One of the most important things to know about emotions (positive or negative) is that they have a beginning, middle and an end. Emotions come in waves and nudge us towards an 'urge' or action.

However, because they do not allow people to properly process their emotions, unhealthy coping mechanisms cause the feeling to get bigger and bigger each time. On top of that, guilt and shame caused by the behaviour can add to their distress. This can lead to a vicious cycle.



The most critical point in the wave of emotion is the **middle**, labelled as the “high distress zone”. The high distress zone is the point at which:

- You feel the urge to carry out your behaviours.
- The thoughts you do have tend to be extreme and feel absolutely true.
- There may be some loss of perception of time, where it might feel like you have always felt this way and always will feel this way.
- You may feel very disconnected from the present moment and be lost in your mind or in the past or future.
- You may feel strong and uncomfortable physical sensations.

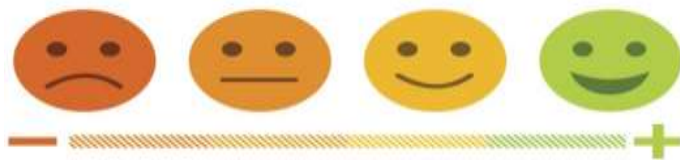
What can you do about it?

The main aim is to get through the wave and to “**sit with**” and “**tolerate**” distress. If you do absolutely nothing, the wave will pass in time. **Nothing lasts forever.**

However, there are ways you can speed up the process and reduce the duration and intensity of distress. Some helpful things that people have used to tolerate their distress is to grade it and make an action plan for each of those scales.

For instance, if your distress is at a 3/10, you may be able to get through it by ringing a friend, writing in a journal, taking a bath, or doing some colouring. If it’s at a 7/10, you might need to do something completely different, such as ring a helpline such as ChildLine (**0800 1111**) or contact a close family member to let them know you’re struggling.

Over the next few days, it might be helpful to put a plan together about how you might tolerate your distress at each level. Share it with family and friends.



Anger

We all feel angry sometimes, often when there's a good reason. Uncontrolled anger can be harmful, but you can learn to manage it.

What is Anger?

Anger is one of a range of emotions that we all experience. It's okay and perfectly normal to feel angry about things that you have experienced.

Anger can start to become a problem when you express it through unhelpful or destructive behaviour – either towards yourself or other people.

If you find yourself doing these sorts of things, it might be a sign that you need some support:

- Hitting or physically hurting other people.
- Shouting at people.
- Breaking things.
- Losing control.
- Spending time with people who get you into trouble.

- Constantly ending relationships or getting in trouble at school.



Outward Aggression

Do you often find yourself being aggressive towards other people?

Are you frightening or worrying yourself, or those around you with your behaviour?

Inward Aggression

Do you tell yourself that you hate yourself, that you are useless, that you don't deserve things?

Do you shut yourself off from the world, deny yourself things that make you happy or self-harm?

Passive Aggression

Do you behave passive-aggressively towards other people?
Do you ignore people, refuse to speak to them, or are you often sarcastic or sulky?

Why Do I Feel Angry?

Everyone feels angry sometimes - and we all have different triggers. You may experience anger in situations where you feel powerless, or frustrated. This could be because of problems at home or school, or if you have fallen out with a friend, or had a breakup with a partner. You might start to feel angry if you feel misunderstood by people around you, like your parents, or if you are confused about your sexuality.

But sometimes, you can feel angry and not know why. This could be the result of lots of stress and different pressures building up around you. Or, it could be because of something that happened to you in the past. Recognising the types of situations which trigger your anger is the first step to figuring out what is causing it and finding a way to make things better

How can Anger Affect me?

When we get angry, it can be hard to think things through – especially if that anger seems overwhelming or uncontrollable. And, if we feel angry a lot of the time – in other words, if we get into constant patterns of thinking angry thoughts about ourselves or others – it is hard to take a step back and communicate in a healthy and productive way.

We may tense up and clench our teeth. Our hearts pump faster, our stomachs might churn, and we may clench our fists. These are useful early warning signs that we are getting wound up.

Sometimes, it can be difficult to recognise just how much anger you are feeling, and how it is affecting you. This might be because you have lots of things going on in your life.

After getting angry about something you might start to feel guilty about it, and this can make you feel worse.

How can I Manage my Anger?





Relaxation

Over time, you will learn to manage your anger better yourself. When you feel angry or stressed you can try out different relaxation techniques to help you calm down, such as:

- Going for a walk.
- Listening to music.
- Taking deep breaths.
- Doing some exercise.
- Doing something you enjoy - skateboarding, painting, swimming.
- Talking to someone about how you are feeling.
- Playing computer games to take your mind off it.

- Reading a book.
- Having a hot bath.

Handling Conflict

If you have a problem with someone, think about what you want to say beforehand and how you want to get your point across. Listen to their point of view and calmly put yours across too.

If you feel your anger levels rising, walk away from a situation to calm down, rather than saying or doing something you might regret later. You can learn to manage your anger and find techniques that work for you.

Get help for anger

WRITE IT DOWN

KEEP A NOTE OF HOW YOU'RE FEELING:

- What happened that made you angry?
- How did you respond? Did it help?
- How did you feel afterwards?
- What else is on your mind?
Is there something making you feel worried, scared or alone?

TALK IT OUT

It helps to talk about how you're feeling. Try saying:

"I've been feeling really wound up recently and I'm starting to think something might be wrong. Can I talk to you about it?"

"I want to talk to you about something that's been bothering me."

Helplines and Services Available

YoungMinds Crisis Messenger

- Provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis.
- If you need urgent help text YM to 85258.
- All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors.
- Texts are free from EE, O2, Vodafone, 3, Virgin Mobile, BT Mobile, GiffGaff, Tesco Mobile and Telecom Plus.

ChildLine

www.childline.org.uk

- If you're under 19 you can confidentially call, email or chat online about any problem big or small.
- Freephone 24hr helpline: 0800 1111
- Sign up for a childline account on the website to be able to message a counsellor anytime without using your email address.
- Chat 1:1 with an online advisor.

Youth Access

- www.youthaccess.org.uk
- A place for you to get advice and information about counselling in the UK, if you're aged 12-25.

The Mix

- www.themix.org.uk
- If you're under 25 you can talk to 'The Mix' for free on the phone, by email or on their webchat. You can also use their phone counselling service, or get more information on support services you might need.
- Freephone: 0808 808 4994 (13:00-23:00 daily)

Kooth

- <https://www.kooth.com/>
- Kooth, is an online counselling and emotional well-being platform for children and young people, accessible through mobile, tablet and desktop and free at the point of use.

Shout

- <https://www.giveusashout.org/>
- Shout is the UK's first 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere. It's a place to go if you're struggling to cope and you need immediate help.
- Text Shout to 85258

Wellacre's Mental Health and Wellbeing policy

- <https://www.wellacre.org/our-academy/wellacre-academy-policies/>
- A wide range of information, sources of support and possible referrals which support Mental Health and Wellbeing for our school community.