

# Managing Difficult Feelings





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## Trigger Warning

This booklet talks about difficult thoughts and feelings, including self-harm and suicidal thoughts.

If anything you read makes you feel upset or if you are having thoughts of self-harm or suicide, please tell a trusted adult straight away.

There is a list of helplines and organisations you can talk to at the back of this booklet.

## When your brain is under stress...

The brain has different systems, like a team that works together. The **thinking part of the brain** (prefrontal cortex) helps with decisions, thinking clearly and looking forward to the future. The **emotional part of the brain** (amygdala) is an alarm system and reacts fast to things like stress and danger.

When you're calm, these systems work together. When you're overwhelmed or stressed, the emotional brain can take over and release stress chemicals like adrenaline.

This makes the emotional brain very active and the thinking brain quieter, so clear thinking becomes harder.

This can make it feel like:

- There's no way out
- The pain will never end
- Nothing else will help

These thoughts can feel very real and convincing in the moment. Everything can feel permanent, even though it isn't. The brain may start offering extreme solutions to escape the pain.

Because the alarm system works fast:

- Thoughts can appear suddenly
- BUT**
- They can fade as the brain calms down.

Young people's brains are still developing, which means they can **change and heal** - especially with support.

## What are suicidal thoughts and feelings?

If you are having suicidal thoughts, you may think it's the only way to escape what you feel is an impossible situation, you just want things to stop getting worse.

You are not alone! Many young people have experienced or are going through these types of thoughts and feelings, even if they don't show it. Thinking about suicide is more common than we realise.

Don't be afraid to **TALK**

**T**alk to an adult you trust about how you are feeling

**A**sk for support

**L**isten to advice and try any self-help tips suggested

**K**eep yourself safe, know who to contact if things get too tough

You may feel...

...hopeless...  
useless... guilty  
...no point living...

you've let  
people down...

that everyone  
would be better  
off without you...  
...desperate ...

...alone...  
overwhelmed ...

frightened...  
confused...too  
much emotional  
pain...

numb...  
physically ill...

## Why do I feel like this?

People will think of suicide for different reasons and it can be hard to identify and understand where these thoughts and feelings come from.

The trigger could be anything. A difficult life event, feeling under too much pressure, or several small things that have built up over time. Sometimes there is no reason.

It's okay to feel this way right now. But remember it won't last forever. Try to give yourself space before acting on these thoughts and feelings, so you can find the support you need.

There is always other options and solutions out there.

**Exam stress**  
**Loss and bereavement**  
**Bullying, violence or abuse**  
**Falling out with friends or family**  
**Embarrassment or pressure on social media**  
**Gender or sexual orientation**  
**Had a big disappointment**  
**Too much pressure**  
**Serious illness**  
**Anger**



## How can I stay safe right now?

### In Crisis?

If you feel you cannot keep yourself safe from harm, or have a suicide plan that you are going to act on, you need to **talk to someone straight away** and seek help.

Contact the **CAMHS ReACH team**. A parent or carer can ring, or you can do this yourself if you're over 16 years old.

Available between 9am - 8pm, seven days a week

Tel: 01924 316200

If you're over 18 years old, contact the Adult Mental Health team

Tel: 01924 316900.

Ring your **GP** (they also have an out-of-hours service) or ring **NHS 111**. Be honest and tell them how you are feeling.

If you need urgent medical treatment, go to **A&E** or call **999**.

The people answering these calls are friendly and are used to helping people talk about difficult things.

Remove anything that you could use to harm yourself.

Ring the **Samaritans** free, any time, from any phone on 116 123 or email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

Even situations that seem impossible right now can feel different if you remind yourself that these feelings will pass and that you have ways to get through this painful time.

## Things that may help

Remember that strategies work best when used as soon as you notice the thoughts and feelings. Try not to let them build up. Below is a list of things that may help...

Talk to someone you trust. Sharing how you feel means you are already seeking support. This is a positive step forward.

Contact a helpline, found at the back of this booklet, they will listen and help you find your own way forward.

Go somewhere or see someone who makes you feel safe.  
If that feels too difficult, call them.

Take 5 minutes at a time. Try to distract yourself, distractions are a short term solution to help you slow your thoughts down and focus on something else for a while.

### **Sit somewhere comfy and turn on your senses, start by finding**

5 things you can see

4 things you can hear

3 things you can touch

2 things you can smell

1 thing you can taste



### **Do something physical...**

Pop bubble wrap, dance, sing, stomp your feet (with shoes on), have a pillow fight with the wall, go for a walk or bike ride, or even clear out a drawer!

### **Do something creative...**

Write how you're feeling or write about something totally different, do a blog or poem, read, draw, colour, knit, play a computer game, or cook something to eat.

### **Choose what you can cope with, here and now.**

Don't try to solve problems alone, ask for help!



**Write down what's worrying you or making you feel like this, as this can help.**

Use your imagination to try and see what you can do that will change these unhelpful thoughts and feelings into helpful thoughts and feelings.

**Unhelpful thoughts:**

Someone has posted a hurtful lie about me on social media. Everyone will have seen it. What if they believe it and start laughing at me or my friends fall out with me?

**Helpful thoughts:**

This person has done it to other people before, they are a bully. My real friends won't believe it and if other people see it, so what! I can sort this out. I'm not alone and know where to get help if I need it.

What are the things that worry me?

How do I change these unhelpful thoughts and feelings to helpful ones?

**My Plan**

# How do I cope in the future?

Take one day at a time!

Remember it's ok NOT to be ok **sometimes**.

Write a **journal or blog** of your moods, thoughts and behaviour. Could you share this with someone you trust to see if there is a pattern?

There are trusted **websites** that offer different ways to cope found at the back of this booklet.

If you try one of the strategies, but that doesn't seem to help, **don't give up**, keep trying as some take practice. You can still overcome these difficult feelings.

Recognise **we don't have control** over everything, such as people becoming ill or how other people behave.

**Be kind to yourself**, don't put yourself down.

Create a positive mantra such as 'I can do this' or 'I've got this' and repeat it every day.



Plan something to do each day - set yourself **small goals!**

**Try to...**

Go out in the **fresh air.**

**Meet up** with friends or family (even though you may not want to).

Spend time with **your pet.**

Allow yourself to **cry.** It's a natural way to reduce emotional pain and stress.

Find out about **Mindfulness**, it can help change the way you feel.

**Exercise** more. It's a great way to improve your mental health because it releases chemicals that help improve your mood.

Create and use your **personal self care box** (found on page 12)

**Do whatever works for you!**



## Getting Started

**Write down a list** of things to look forward to, like seeing someone who makes you laugh or who you care about. Stick these notes around your room and house to remind you.

**Make a routine.** This will help change your mind set and keep you active. Get up early, have a shower and get dressed even if you don't have anywhere to go.

**Eat and drink plenty of water.**

**Try to get 9 hours sleep.** Good sleep helps our mental health in so many ways. It helps to turn devices off one hour before you go to bed, as the blue light keeps our body awake.

**Find a purpose.** Find a reason to get out of bed. Try a new activity or do something nice for someone

## Create a self-care box

Find and decorate a box, fill it with things that make you smile and remind you of the positive things you've got.

You could add photos, a book, event or football match tickets. Add something to keep your hands busy such as a stress ball, nail varnish, puzzle or colouring book, pens, even a piece of silky or furry material.

Make a list of people and helplines you could contact for support. Create a playlist of your favourite uplifting songs, as music can help us connect with our emotions.

A scented candle or fragranced shower gel can instantly change your mood. You can treat yourself by adding a packet of hot chocolate or a bar of chocolate.

Make your box as unique as you are!



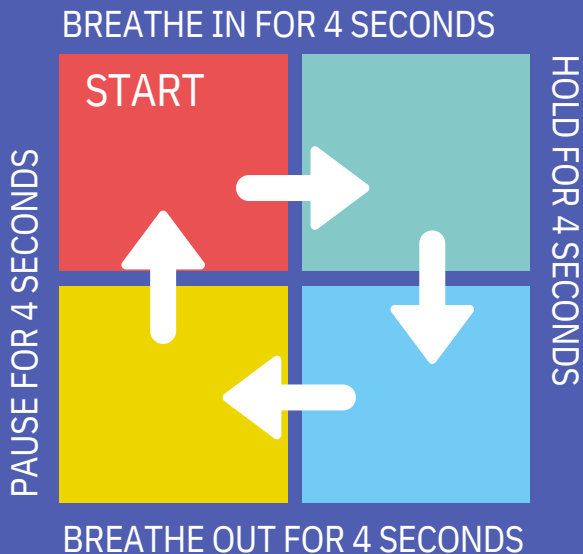
# Calming breathing

When we are anxious our breathing gets quicker, when our breathing is calmer our brain will start to feel calmer too!

## Rectangle Breathing

Draw or trace a square with your finger and count your breaths as you move round.

Follow the steps below and repeat 3 times.



## Creating a safety net

A safety net is there to help you if you start to struggle, it can help you put things in place so you can get the right support when you need it.

It's easier to put together a safety net when you are calm.

Why not ask someone to help you? But make it 'yours'.

Try to identify what triggers your thoughts and feelings that are linked with these difficult feelings or self-harming thoughts.

What can you put in place to reduce these triggers? (an example is staying off social media on a night).

Make a list of things to lift and calm your mood (watch your favourite film or football team, photography or focus on your breathing).

Write down those who are important to you and things you are good at. Read these out loud and repeat if you are feeling low.

Identify things that can help you stay safe (use positive distractions or stay around people).

Make a list of family, friends, professionals, and helplines you can contact, add their contact details to your 'safety net', also save them in your phone (if you have one).

# My personal safety net

I start to feel like this when: .....

.....

I will reduce the risk of feeling like this by: .....

.....

I will lift or calm my mood by: .....

.....

I will tell myself: .....

.....

I can help me stay safe by: .....

.....

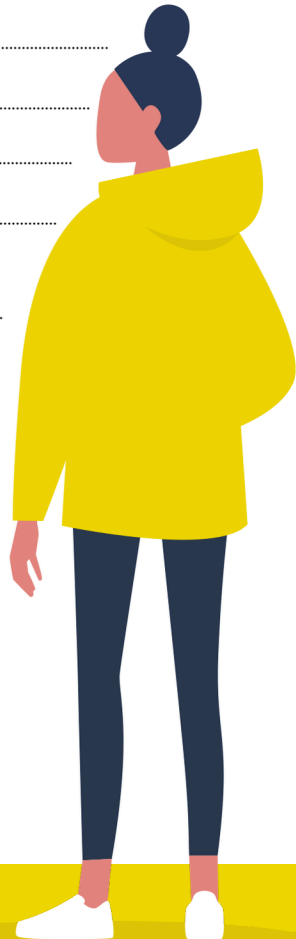
I will call or talk to: .....

.....

I will get help from these people  
and places: .....

.....

Keep a reminder of the people  
and things you love, feel good  
messages, photos and videos on  
your phone, put them in your  
wallet or around your room.



**HEAD  
STRONG**



Colouring sourced from: [www.youthscape.co.uk](http://www.youthscape.co.uk)

# Here to help

## **In crisis?**

If you need urgent medical treatment, go immediately to A&E or call 999. If you have a suicide plan and are going to act on it contact the ReACH team. A parent/carer can ring if you are under 16 or you can do this yourself if you are over 16 years old. Ask for mental health support. Available between 9am - 8pm, seven days a week.

Tel: 01924 316200.

Over 18 years old? Contact the Adult Mental Health team on  
Tel: 01924 316900.

## **Contact your GP or call NHS Direct free on 111**

A 24 hour helpline who provide health advice and access to out of hours GP.

## **Papyrus Hopeline**

[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

Offer online text or phone support to young people.

Call 0800 068 4141

Text HOPE to 88247 or

email [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org)

**Samaritans** Free, any time, from any phone on 116 123  
Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

## **SHOUT**

Text SHOUT to 85258.

Free, confidential, 24/7 text messaging support service for anyone struggling to cope.

## **ChildLine**

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

Free, any time, day or night for help with any worry (under 19's). Call 0800 1111, email or use the online 1-2-1 counsellor chat.

## **Grassroots Suicide Prevention**

[www.prevent-suicide.org.uk](http://www.prevent-suicide.org.uk)

Download the 'Stay alive' app.

## **Heads Above the Waves**

[www.hatw.co.uk](http://www.hatw.co.uk)

Online advice, support and strategies for young people suffering from depression and self-harm.

## **Alumina**

[www.selfharm.co.uk](http://www.selfharm.co.uk)

A free, online 7 week course for young people struggling with self-harm (10-17yr olds).

### **Head Strong**

[www.beheadstrong.org.uk](http://www.beheadstrong.org.uk)

Information, stories and videos to support your mental and emotional wellbeing.

### **Mindout**

[www.mindout.org.uk](http://www.mindout.org.uk)

Online instant message service that's confidential and anonymous to support the wellbeing of LGBTQ+.

### **Mind**

<https://sidebyside.mind.org.uk/>

A safe place to listen, share and be heard.

### **Doc Ready**

[www.docready.org](http://www.docready.org)

Helps you prepare to talk about mental health to a GP.

### **The Mix**

[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

Helpline 0808 808 4994.

In crisis? text THEMIX to 85258.

Online one to one chat plus a counselling service (25yrs and under)

### **Young Minds**

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

Emotional wellbeing support/ advice for children and young people.

### **BEAT**

[www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk](http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk)

Support and advice around eating disorders, also one to one web chat and phone support.

### **Hope Again**

[www.Hopeagain.org.uk](http://www.Hopeagain.org.uk)

for bereavement support.

### **Victim Support**

[www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)

Call 0300 3031971.

Practical support for anyone (including those under 18yrs) who has been affected by crime.

### **Inspiring Futures**

Call 0300 123 1912.

Young people/adults (under 25yrs) confidential drug and alcohol support service in Wakefield.

### **Free To Be Me**

Email: [freetobeme@kids.org.uk](mailto:freetobeme@kids.org.uk)

Call: 01924 683 890

Provides a safe space for young people to feel comfortable to explore their identity (disability, neurodiversity or LGBTQIA).

### **WF-I-CAN**

[www.wf-i-can.co.uk](http://www.wf-i-can.co.uk)

Offers trusted information, support and self-care tips on a range of topics and worries. There's also monthly challenges and a gallery to share your creativity.

### **Talking Therapies**

Call 01924 234860 for local support around anxiety, low mood etc: for over 16yrs.

### **Compass RISE**

Wakefield children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing service.

Text BUZZ to 85258 for text or messaging support or download the Wakey Wellness App.

### **Night OWLS**

Call free on 0800 148 8244

Text 07984 376950

Online chat: [wynightowls.org.uk](http://wynightowls.org.uk)

Confidential support line, 8pm-8am every night for children and young people living in West Yorkshire.

### **Youth Hubs**

[www.wakefieldfamiliesaltogether.co.uk](http://www.wakefieldfamiliesaltogether.co.uk)

Provide support around health and wellbeing, and access to activities and groups for young people delivered by Youth workers.

### **Spectrum**

[www.spectrum-sexualhealth.org.uk](http://www.spectrum-sexualhealth.org.uk)

Provide free confidential sexual health and pregnancy support and advice.

### **School Nurse**

School nurses can provide support and advice on a range of topics and worries.



Apple



Google

Special thanks to the young people from Stripes, Youth Parliament, Young Healthwatch, Kidzaware and colleagues from Young Lives Consortium who supported the development of this booklet.

*Please Note: The information within this booklet is correct at time of printing (May 2026)*

