



# Mental Wellbeing Toolkit

A toolkit to help you manage your mental wellbeing

Created with support from the Hounslow IAPT Service



# Mental Wellbeing

The Positive Movement Project supports mental wellbeing through fitness and sport.

Mental wellbeing refers to our 'emotional health'—how we feel emotionally. Mental wellbeing relates to your thoughts and feelings and the way we cope and respond to the circumstances around us. Mental wellbeing is not the same as mental health—though the two can impact each other.

Having good mental wellbeing does not mean you will never experience negative or unpleasant thoughts and feelings. However, if we can learn to understand and manage those feelings, we can become better equipped to deal with day to day tasks, feel more confident in ourselves and maintain positive relationships with those around us.

Our mental wellbeing can be impacted by situations that are outside of our control whilst also being influenced by positive choices we make. This toolkit aims to support good mental wellbeing, helping you to understand and manage negative thoughts and feelings and to better cope when things don't quite go to plan.

# **Anxiety and Low Mood**

**Everyone feels anxious now and then, in fact, it is a way of protecting ourselves from perceived danger. The body reacts to 'danger' and prepares itself for that 'fight or flight' response.**

**However, anxiety can become unhelpful and prevent us from doing the things we want to do or from having fun. It becomes a problem when you begin to feel anxious in situations that do not present any real danger- for example at a party with friends or at home alone.**

**You may find that anxiety has you worrying about your problems excessively. It can manifest itself physically too, with sweating, raised heart rate, feeling dizzy etc.**

**Like anxiety, most people experience fluctuations in mood depending on the situations they are in and how they are feeling on any given day.**

**Mood problems can present themselves in a number of different ways- from feeling low to not being able to enjoy things you usually like, to feeling tired or agitated.**

**It is important when experiencing continued bouts of anxiety or low mood to contact your GP or seek support.**

# Make Time for Self-Care

One common misconception around self-care is that it is all about self indulgence. Self-care is not selfish.

Self-care is ensuring you take care of yourself so that you can be healthy and well enough to do all the things you need and want to do each day- whether that's meeting your work responsibilities or caring for your children.

As the saying goes, 'you can't pour from an empty cup'.

Self-care involves taking steps to remain physically and emotionally well.

What feels like self-care can vary from person to person. So it's important to take time to find what works for you.

# Mindfulness

**Mindfulness is our ability to pay attention to the present moment.**

**Techniques to practice being mindful can help us to manage our thoughts and feel calmer, which in turn can help to reduce the symptoms of anxiety and depression.**

**Mindfulness is something that comes with practice and can be as simple as trying to pay more attention to your surroundings, turning off distractions such as the TV or radio and listening to the sounds you can hear, taking time for art such as colouring or drawing or even just checking in with how your body is feeling at any given time.**

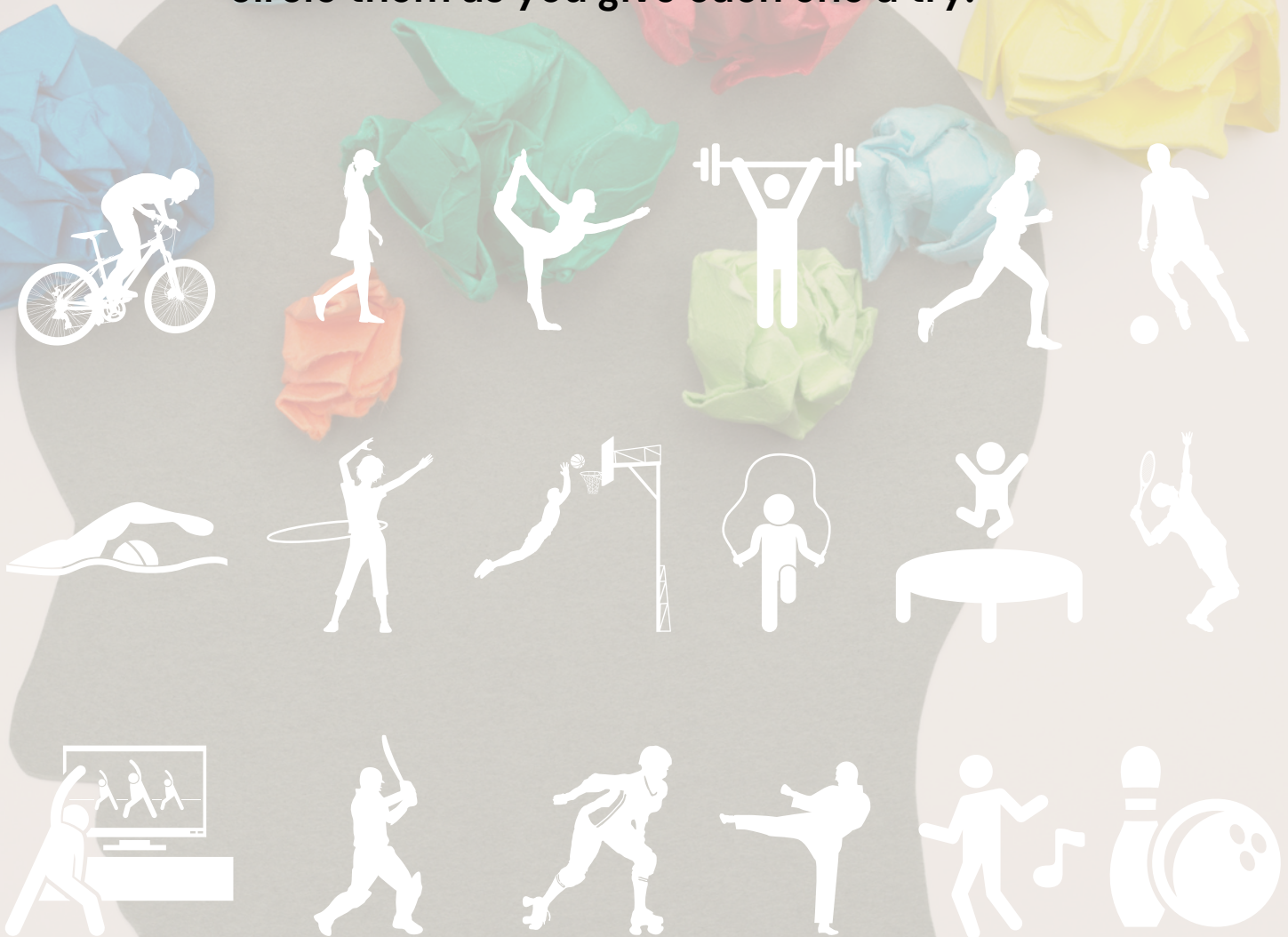
**Meditation and yoga are also practices that can help you become more mindful, helping participants to connect with their breathing and focus on the present moment.**

# Move Your Mood

Being physically active can have a positive effect on our mental wellbeing. There are lots of different things you can do to get active. From taking a walk to riding a bike, going for a swim or run or even dancing around your living room– moving can help you feel good!

Many studies have shown the benefits of exercise on mental health and wellbeing. Exercise can contribute to better sleep, improve your mood and help manage feelings of stress and anxiety. You may find an improvement to your self-esteem as you achieve new goals and feel better physically. Physical activity can also help you connect with other people if you partake in group classes or clubs.

Try to fit some more physical activity in your week and see what it does for your mood. We've listed some ideas to get you started, circle them as you give each one a try.



# Breathe

**Our breathing can have an impact on our physical state.**

**When our breathing rate is elevated, a number of physiological changes occur. Whether we gasp because we are frightened, become a little breathless when we are shocked, light headed when we feel panicked or even experience tingling sensations when we are nervous– our breathing has had a part to play in this. The way we breathe is a massive factor in the physical sensations we experience when we are anxious.**

**We breathe in to obtain oxygen, breathing out carbon dioxide. Our body is able to naturally maintain optimal levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide– in part due to how fast and deeply we breathe. For example, when we exercise, we breathe faster and more deeply to replace the oxygen being used.**

**Being anxious causes an increase to our breathing rate. This is due to our physical fight or flight response to a perceived threat. However, when we increase our breathing rate without physical exertion we breathe out too much carbon dioxide. This is what leads to those symptoms of dizziness, light headedness, tingling and feeling weak.**

**Continually 'overbreathing' can leave you feeling 'on edge' and in turn you're likely to respond to stressful situations with anxiety and feelings of panic.**

**Being able to gain control of your breathing, by slowing down your breathing rate, can aid you in combatting these feelings.**

# **Develop a Better Breathing Habit**

**Find somewhere comfortable to either sit or lie down, such as a chair or bed.**

**Inhale for for 4 seconds**

**Hold this breath for 2 seconds**

**And then exhale, releasing the breath across 6 seconds**

**Pause slightly before inhaling again**

**While doing this, hold a hand on your stomach and feel it rise as you breathe in. You want to ensure you are breathing from the stomach rather than the chest.**

**Try to practice each day, at a time you can relax, free from distraction.**

**Practicing this will help to develop a more relaxed breathing habit.**



# Make A Plan

When we are feeling low, the simplest of tasks can seem difficult to do. Negative thoughts can impact the things we enjoy doing. Completing activities can give us a sense of achievement and routine that may help to keep negative feelings at bay, or help us to manage them.

Have a think about some things you'd like to do or get done this week. Include activities that bring you joy such as meeting a friend for coffee or watching a film with a family member, and activities that give a feeling of satisfaction- like tackling that pile of ironing or cleaning the car. Schedule it in and you're more likely to commit to it.

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

# Worry Time

Our worries can seem overwhelming and like they consume our time. Rather than try to ignore our worries or process them all at once, it may help to postpone your worries to a designated time. This allows you to focus on other things rather than allowing worries to take over.

Designate a 15–20 minute slot for your 'worry time'. As worries pop up in the day, write them down and then in your worry time, if they are no longer a concern, cross them out. Otherwise, take the time to write and process your thoughts around the worry, identifying whether the worry is something you can take action about or if you are worrying about something that may not happen in the future.

*Worry-Time Thoughts*

# The Stress Bucket

Imagine you have a bucket and every time you feel anxious or experience stress, the bucket slowly fills up. As it fills up, it gets heavier to carry, it may even spill over!

Finding activities that can help lighten the load, can make the bucket easier to carry and manage the stress you experience. Use the stress bucket below to jot down the stresses you have that fill the bucket and the things you can do to release some of that stress.



# Acts of Kindness

Doing things for others can actually make you feel good. Performing an act of kindness stimulates the production of serotonin, (a 'feel good' chemical that helps us feel happy) endorphins (increases the feeling of pleasure and is the brain's natural pain killer) and oxytocin (the 'love drug' that aids social connection, lowers blood pressure and increases self-esteem)

An act of kindness doesn't have to be a massively grand gesture, it can be smiling at a stranger, holding a door open for someone, sending a friend an uplifting message or volunteering with a local group.

For each act of kindness you perform, colour in a petal on the flower below and see your kindness bloom.



*Colour in and see your kindness in full bloom*

# Self-care Quiz



There are no right or wrong answers; simply respond as you see fit and see what you discover about yourself.

- Score 2 points for each 'Yes', 1 point for each 'S / Sometimes' and 0 point for 'No'.

	Yes	S	No
1. I am up-to-date with my health check-ups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I am happy with my physical fitness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I eat well nutritionally most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I have plenty of sleep and feel well-rested	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I take regular breaks from my work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I say "No" to others when I need to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I have forgiven my past mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I know what I am passionate about	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I have things to look forward to in my life	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Your total score \_\_\_\_\_

What did you learn about yourself?



# Self-care Bingo

Take time for self-care, try some of these and see how they make you feel. You can add more of your own!

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Take a stroll at the park	Drink more water	Go for a walk in nature	Take a break	Go to bed earlier
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listen to a guided relaxation	Eat 5 portions of fruit or vegetables in a day	Take a nice bubble bath or a hot shower	Learn a new skill	Practice Yoga
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Go on a solo date	Listen to music	Listen to a podcast	Practice gratitude	Try a DIY Project
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Watch the sunrise	Read a book	Explore a new city	Watch your favourite movie	Pamper yourself
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get some sunlight	Start a new hobby	Write out your goals	Organise your wardrobe	Watch the sunset

# Keeping Track

Keeping track of your moods can help you gain a better understanding of what triggers your mood to change, when you become more fearful and when your symptoms bother you less.

Try tracking this week and see if there are any triggers for low mood as well as times that you were able to improve your mood. Include details around the situation, what emotions you felt and how it affected you.

*monday*

*tuesday*

*wednesday*

*thursday*

*friday*

*saturday*

*sunday*

# The Five Senses

One mindfulness exercise involves using your five senses to focus on your environment instead of your thoughts, helping to calm your mind.



**5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE**



**4 THINGS YOU CAN FEEL**



**3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR**



**2 THINGS YOU CAN  
SMELL**



**1 THING YOU CAN TASTE**



# Thoughts are Not Facts

The negative thoughts and feelings that we have and hold about ourselves can impact the choices we make and affect our daily lives- one negative thought can spiral into catastrophising.

As much as we may believe something to be true, our thoughts are not facts.

Get into the habit of challenging your negative thoughts, put them on trial! Have a go here- enter your negative thought, rationalise with the evidence for and against and reach your verdict.

Negative Thought

Evidence For

Evidence Against

Verdict

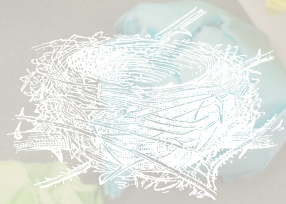


# Spend Time in Nature

Spending time out in nature can benefit both physical and mental wellbeing. The positive impacts can include improved mood, reduced feelings of stress, increase in physical activity and feeling more relaxed and calm.

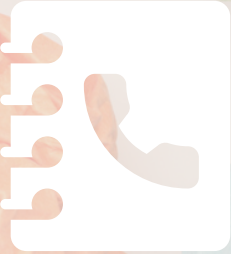
Go for a walk and take time to appreciate your surroundings.

What can you find on our nature hunt?



# Social Connection

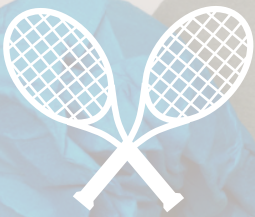
Feeling socially connected to others and forming good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. A good relationship can help you feel a sense of belonging and improve your self-worth, provide support and allow you to share positive experiences as well as enabling you to support others too.



**Phone a friend**



**Meet for coffee**



**Play sports with others**

**Sit together with family at mealtimes**



**Volunteer for a local community project**



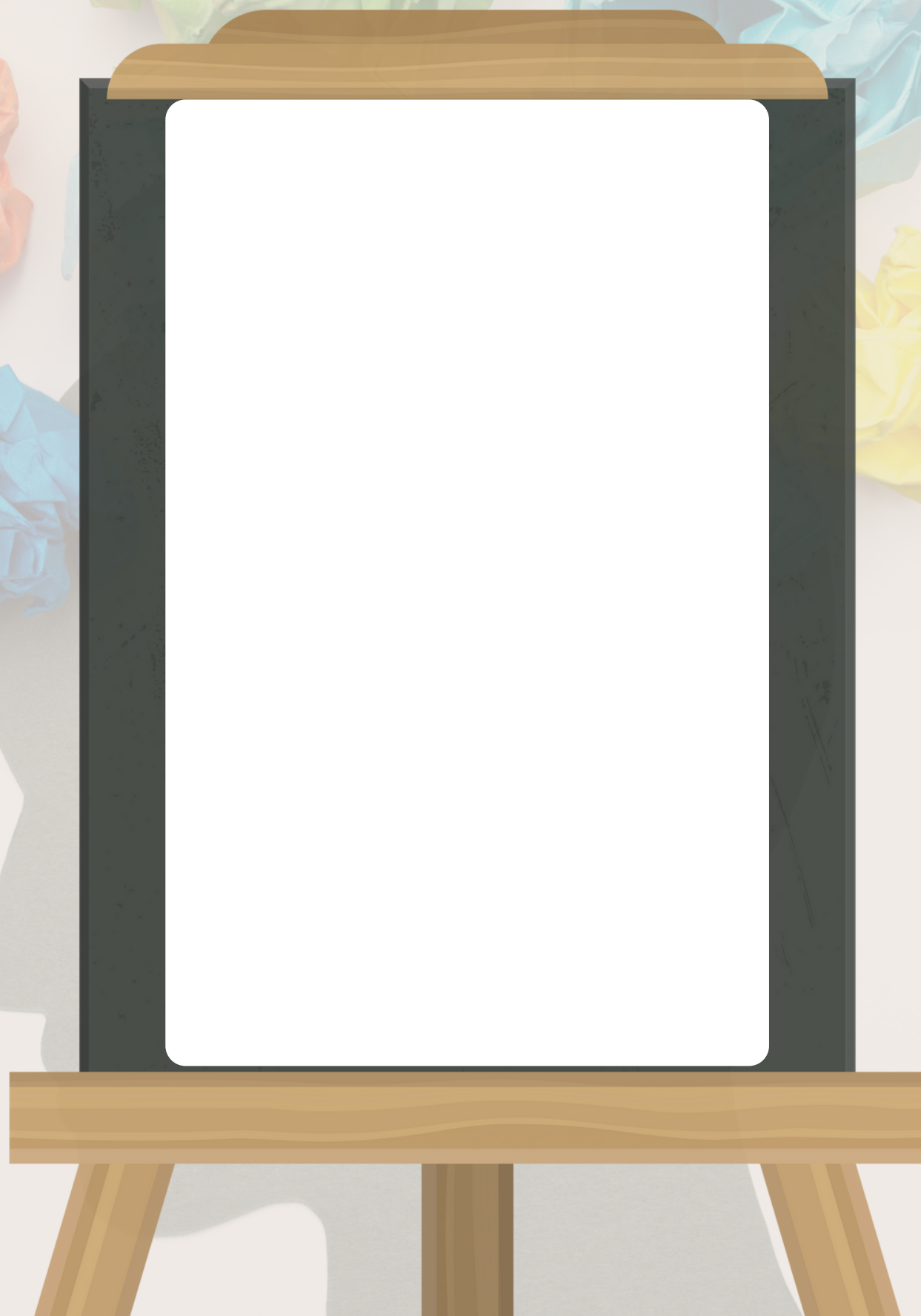
**Use apps such as 'FaceTime' or 'Skype' to stay connected**



# Get Creative

Getting creative can reduce stress and anxiety. By focusing on a creative activity we can achieve a meditative-like state that helps us to manage our thoughts and feelings.

Have a go at getting creative, there are no rules! Use the easel as you see fit.



# Learn a New Skill

When we learn a new skill we may feel a sense of achievement and in turn feel an improvement to our self-esteem. It provides an opportunity to connect with others and provides focus and a sense of purpose.

You could sign up for classes in your local area or via an online course, attempt to cook from a new recipe, use video tutorials to complete a DIY project etc. Try to find an activity that brings you joy.

## RECIPE CHALLENGE

LEARN TO COOK SOMETHING NEW AND POP THE RECIPE BELOW



# Further Support

If you are struggling with your mental health, then it is good to let your GP know. If experiencing thoughts you cannot control or suicidal thoughts then please visit your local A&E department where trained professionals can support you.

There are many charities who can offer support, advice and information.

YOU CAN CONTACT SAMARITANS ABOUT ANYTHING THAT IS UPSETTING YOU- THEY ARE AVAILABLE 24 HOURS A DAY, 365 DAYS PER YEAR. YOU CAN CALL 116 123 (FREE) OR EMAIL [JO@SAMARITANS.ORG](mailto:JO@SAMARITANS.ORG)

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION HOTLINE IS A SUPPORTIVE LISTENING SERVICE FOR ANYONE WITH THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE. OPEN 24/7 ON 0800 689 5652

YOU CAN CONTACT SANELINE IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM OR SUPPORTING SOMEONE THROUGH THEIRS. CALL 0300 304 7000 (OPEN 4:30PM-10:30PM EVERYDAY)

IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING YOU CAN CALL THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST LIVING MISERABLY (CALM). ON 0800 58 58 58 (5PM-MIDNIGHT EVERY DAY)

UNDER 35 & STRUGGLING WITH SUICIDAL FEELINGS OR SUPPORTING A YOUNG PERSON WHO MAY BE STRUGGLING, CONTACT PAPYRUS HOPELINEUK ON 0800 068 4141 (WEEKDAYS 10AM-10PM, WEEKENDS 2PM-10PM)

IF YOU'RE UNDER 25 AND STRUGGLING, YOU CAN CALL THE MIX ON 0808 808 4994 (3PM-MIDNIGHT EVERY DAY)

YOU CAN CONTACT SWITCHBOARD IF YOU IDENTIFY AS GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL OR TRANSGENDER. CALL 0300 330 0630 (10AM-10PM) ALL PHONE OPERATORS IDENTIFY AS LGBT+

IF YOU LIVE IN WALES, YOU CAN CALL THE COMMUNITY ADVICE AND LISTENING LINE (C.A.L.L.) ON 0800 132 737 (OPEN 24/7)

# Useful Websites

For more information and advice regarding mental health and wellbeing, please visit these websites.

This list is not exhaustive but may provide a starting point for further support.

[HTTPS://WWW.NHS.UK/EVERY-MIND-MATTERS/](https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/)

EVERY MIND MATTERS CAN HELP WITH ADVICE, TIPS AND ACTIONS FOR BETTER MENTAL WELLBEING

[HTTPS://WWW.MIND.ORG.UK](https://www.mind.org.uk)

PROVIDES ADVICE & SUPPORT & CAMPAIGNS TO RAISE AWARENESS, IMPROVE SERVICES & PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUNGMINDS.ORG.UK](https://www.youngminds.org.uk)

A MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS

[HTTPS://WWW.RETHINK.ORG](https://www.rethink.org)

PROVIDER OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN ENGLAND

[HTTPS://MENTALHEALTH-UK.ORG](https://mentalhealth-uk.org)

SUPPORTS PEOPLE AFFECTED BY MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

[HTTPS://WWW.HEADSTOGETHER.ORG.UK](https://www.headstogether.org.uk)

CAMPAIGN TO TACKLE STIGMA AROUND MENTAL HEALTH & FUNDRAISE FOR NEW MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

[HTTPS://WWW.THECALMZONE.NET](https://www.thecalmzone.net)

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST LIVING MISERABLY (CALM) PROVIDES FREE HELPLINE & CHAT, EMPOWERS COMMUNITIES AND CAMPAIGNS TO SPREAD AWARENESS OF SUICIDE & ITS IMPACT

[HTTPS://WWW.BACP.CO.UK/SEARCH/THERAPISTS](https://www.bacp.co.uk/search/therapists)

A LIST OF THERAPISTS PROVIDING PRIVATE SERVICES



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