

Emotional Check-In Cards for Teens

Simple, printable tools for daily use at home or school

Naming a feeling is the first step to managing it, but for many teens, and especially neurodivergent teens, that naming is the hard part. These twelve colour-coded cards give young people a low-pressure, visual way to show how they're doing without having to find the right words on the spot.

Use them at a set time each day, during a wobble, or whenever a check-in feels useful. There are no right or wrong answers, and pointing counts just as much as talking.

How to use them

- **Print and cut out** the cards on the following pages — four per page, all the same size. Card or laminate them to last.
- **Keep them somewhere easy to reach** — a bag, a desk, the fridge, or a feelings corner.
- **Let the teen lead.** They can point, circle, or talk. Pressure to explain often shuts a check-in down.
- **Pair the cards.** “How am I feeling?” + “How big is it?” + “What might help?” gives a full picture in seconds.
- **Respond with curiosity, not fixing.** “Thanks for showing me” lands better than jumping straight to solutions.

A gentle note: these cards support everyday emotional check-ins. They aren't a substitute for professional help. If a young person is in distress or at risk, please reach out to your GP, school safeguarding lead, or a support line.

Printing tips

- **Print on A4, single-sided, at 100% scale** (uncheck “fit to page” for true card size).
- **Colour printing is best**, but the cards still work in greyscale.
- **Laminate or pop into wallet sleeves** for daily handling.



How am I feeling?

Point or circle the closest one

- 😊 Good — calm, settled, okay
- 😐 Meh — flat, tired, unsure
- 😟 Worried — anxious, on edge
- 😫 Overwhelmed — too much
- 😡 Frustrated — angry, fed up



How big is it?

1 = tiny · 5 = huge

- 1 small — I can carry on
- 2 noticeable, but okay
- 3 hard — I need a moment
- 4 really hard — I need help
- 5 too much — help now



Where do I feel it?

Feelings show up in the body

- Tight chest or fast heartbeat
- Knot or butterflies in tummy
- Clenched jaw or shoulders
- Hot face, shaky hands
- Heavy, tired, or floaty



What might help?

It's okay to ask

- A quiet space or a short break
- A drink of water or a snack
- Movement — walk, stretch, fidget
- To talk, or not talk right now
- Help with something specific



Reset toolkit

Try one — no wrong choice
Breathe in 4, hold 4, out 6
Name 5 things you can see
Press feet into the floor
Cold water on your wrists
Step outside for fresh air



Sentence starters

When words are hard
“Right now I feel...”
“I think it started when...”
“What I need is...”
“I’m not ready to talk, but...”
“Can you help me with...?”



Energy check

How full is my battery?
 Full — ready to go
 Okay — pacing myself
 Low — running on empty
 Flat — I need to recharge
What would top me up?



My warning signs

Spotting it early helps
Getting snappy or quiet
Can’t focus or sit still
Wanting to hide away
Tummy ache or headache
Everything feels “too loud”



My calm-down kit

Things that help me

Music or headphones
A fidget or soft object
Drawing, writing, or gaming
Time with a pet or person
A favourite quiet spot



Who can I tell?

You don't have to cope alone

A parent or carer
A trusted teacher or tutor
A friend who gets it
A school counsellor
A helpline if I need one



One small step

Tiny counts

One thing I can do next...
Drink water · take 3 breaths
Move to a calmer space
Message one person
Pause — the rest can wait



Something good

End on a kind note

One thing that went okay today
One person I'm glad about
One thing I'm looking forward to
One kind thing about me
It's okay if it's small

NeuroEmpower offers coaching, parent support, and neurodiversity training across the UK. For tailored support, get in touch at info@neuroempower.org.