

It is currently an unsettling time for lots of people. This may be especially difficult if you already have lots of worries. This may also be difficult if the things you currently do that you enjoy, or help you to feel better, have to stop for a while or are postponed.




Hello...

While it is definitely ok to feel worried about these things and disappointed if things have to change, there are still ways we can help ourselves to feel calm and in control even when things around us are difficult.

There are some suggestions in this pack, including ways to help us to feel mentally well, information about relaxation activities, and some suggestions to help yourself if your emotions become overwhelming. There is also a list of support services, the majority of which can be accessed online or by telephone.

If you are worried about the coronavirus or have any questions about it but don't know who to ask, there is information available via:

<https://young.scot/campaigns/national/coronavirus>



See you soon!

Keeping Mentally Healthy

Be kind to yourself

Often we are much less kind to ourselves than we would be to a friend or family member. Encourage yourself rather than criticise, and forgive yourself for making mistakes or getting things wrong, this only makes us human.

Rest and relax

Take time out to rest and relax. You could try some relaxation and breathing techniques to help calm your mind. There are plenty of suggestions online if you're looking for inspiration.

Eat well

Eat regularly. Eat lots of fruit and vegetables and drink lots of water. Although it is good to prioritise nutritious foods, don't feel bad for just eating what you enjoy either.

Challenge our thoughts

Thoughts are not facts. Although how we feel is always valid, the thoughts we have aren't always true or helpful to us so it can be good to challenge these. Is there any evidence of this thought being true? Are you trying to interpret a situation without all of the evidence? What would you say to a friend if they had these thoughts? Would this be important in a year from now? Or even 5 years?

Learn a new skill or practice a hobby

Do the things you enjoy! This might seem obvious, but often when we are stressed we can forget to do the things that make us happy. Learning a new skill can also help us to feel happier, gain a sense of achievement and potentially meet new people. Or maybe you have a hidden skill you have forgotten, like playing an instrument when you were younger.

Do exercise that you enjoy

Staying active helps to reduce stress and make you feel better. This might be engaging in traditional activities such as kicking a football or running, or more creative activities such as dance (even if it's on your own!) or yoga, or even setting up an assault course in your back garden or circuit training in your bedroom.

Connect with others

Stay in touch with friends and family – even if you can't meet up in person, you can call, text or FaceTime your friends or even write them an old fashioned letter! Or instead spend time with your pets.

Get creative

Draw, paint, sculpt, write, play! Creativity can help us to feel calm and have fun. Don't worry about making something 'good' – just do it for the fun of it.

Sleep well

Get into a healthy sleep routine – including going to bed and getting up at the same time each day. It's also helpful if you do the same things before bed each night to help to prepare you for getting sleepy. This might include reading, having a bath, or a warm drink. If you struggle to sleep, try a relaxation technique before bed. Try not to use screens before bed too, the light will keep you awake.

Accepting how we feel

Sometimes we try to deny how we really feel, over analyse why we may feel something, or think that we 'shouldn't' feel a certain way. This can actually make things feel worse. Instead focus on accepting how we are feeling and let it wash over us like a wave. Allow your feelings to come and go, notice them, and let them go again, it will pass. Be kind to yourself.

Relaxation Techniques

The **fight-or-flight response** is a reaction to perceived danger, whether that danger is real or not. This “danger” does not only apply to physical threats, but also threats to your emotional well-being. For example feeling embarrassed or the fear of doing something out of the ordinary. The fight-or-flight response prepares your body to confront (“fight”) or run away (“flight”) from a threat by making changes to your body, such as increasing your heart rate and making you breathe quicker.

This reaction is normal and helpful in situations where there is a real threat, but can be unhelpful when the threat isn’t really going to hurt us. We can counteract the fight or flight response with the **relaxation response**. As you might imagine, the relaxation response puts your body at rest, helping to stop some of the unpleasant effects of fight or flight.

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing is one of the most versatile and easy-to-use relaxation skills. Additionally, the discreet nature of deep breathing makes it a good choice for many situations, as other people won’t know you’re doing it.

Why Deep Breathing Works

The fight-or-flight response triggers symptoms throughout the body, including rapid and shallow breathing. Deep breathing works by deliberately taking slow and deep breaths, which reverses this symptom and triggers a relaxation response. When taking deep breaths, our bodies are better able to exchange carbon dioxide for oxygen, which results in a slower heart rate, lower blood pressure and consequently, a feeling of relaxation.

How to Use Deep Breathing

- Sit back in a comfortable position. You can close your eyes, but it isn’t necessary.
 - Breathe in slowly through your nose. Time the inhalation to last 4 seconds. It's fine to go slower, if you prefer.
 - Hold the air within your lungs, but not to the point of strain – a few seconds is a good target to aim for.
 - Slowly exhale through your mouth. Time the exhalation to last around 6 seconds. Repeat the breathing cycle for at least 2 minutes. Practice for 5 to 10 minutes for greater benefits.
- Tip: imagine you are breathing out through a straw when you exhale

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) requires a greater time investment than deep breathing and it’s a bit less discreet, but its effects can be very powerful. During PMR you will tense and then relax small groups of muscles in your body, one-by-one. This process will teach you to recognize what tension feels like and practice releasing that tension from your muscles.

Why Progressive Muscle Relaxation Works

During the fight-or-flight response your muscles will unconsciously become tense. If you make a point to pay attention, you feel this change all throughout your body. With enough time, this tension can cause muscle pain and soreness. PMR works by increasing awareness of the tension that occurs during stress, and then consciously releasing that tension. This process creates a feeling of relaxation—both physically and emotionally.

How to Use Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes if you’re comfortable doing so.
- Beginning at your feet, notice how your muscles feel. Are they tense, or relaxed?
- Tightly tense the muscles in your feet by curling your toes. Hold the tension for 5-10 seconds.
- Release the tension from your feet, and allow them to relax. Notice how different the states of tension and relaxation feel.
- Move up your body, repeating the cycle of tensing and relaxing each group of muscles. Be sure to practice on the following groups of muscles: *legs, pelvis/bum, stomach, chest, back, arms, hands, neck, and face*.
- Practice *daily*. PMR does not have to be used “in the moment” because its positive effects are long lasting, but it should be used regularly.

Regular practice of PMR will create a lasting feeling of relaxation that extends beyond the 5-10 minutes it takes to complete the exercise. PMR is a bit more complicated than some other relaxation techniques, so you could use a guide from YouTube or some of the relaxation apps available to help (such as Smiling Mind, or Clear Fear).

Visualization / Guided Imagery

Visualization uses the power of the mind to evoke positive emotions. It works, quite simply, by imagining a relaxing scene in great detail. Maybe it sounds silly or too simple, but trust us: **it works.**

Why Visualization Works

Here's something you can try now: Think of your favourite food. Really think about it. Close your eyes, and imagine it's sitting on the table in front of you. Imagine how its smell, texture, and taste. Don't just think about it for a few seconds and move on. Imagine the food as if it's real.

If you were at least a little bit hungry, you probably just became hungrier. Maybe your mouth is even watering. This example shows us the direct connection between our thoughts and our bodies. Visualization takes advantage of this same idea to influence our emotional state.

How to Use Visualization

- Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. You'll get the best results if you close your eyes for this technique, but you don't have to.
- Think of a place that's calming to you. Some ideas are a warm beach, a secluded mountaintop, or a cosy coffee shop, or maybe just your bedroom at home.
- Begin to imagine your chosen scene. Don't just think about it in passing—really imagine the scene. Imagine what you would see, hear, smell, feel, and taste. For example, if you choose a beach, imagine the way the sand feels between your toes, the sound of waves crashing on the shore, and the smell of salty air.
- Set a timer for 5-10 minutes and allow yourself to get lost in the scene. Remember that this time is about your relaxation and nothing else.

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness can be described as consciously paying attention to our senses and our feelings, without further judgement. Mindfulness meditation is one exercise of many based upon the idea of mindfulness. In mindfulness meditation, you will focus on the present moment by turning your attention toward the cycle of breathing, and all the sensations that come with it.

How to Use Mindfulness Meditation

- Find a comfortable place to sit, with few distractions. If you are sitting on the floor, cross your legs. If you're in a chair, place your feet on the ground. Sit in an upright, but comfortable position.
- Turn your attention toward your breathing. Try to notice everything about it, from the feeling as it travels through your nose or mouth, to the sensation of it filling your lungs. Notice how it feels when you exhale and the air slowly returns to the atmosphere.
- When your thoughts start to wander—which they eventually will—simply acknowledge that this has happened and turn your focus back to your breathing.
- Set a timer and practice! 5 minutes is a good starting point, but aim for longer practice sessions as you progress.

As well as using these techniques, it's also important to look after our physical wellbeing, especially during times of stress. This will in turn help support our emotional health too. This means making sure we exercise daily by doing something we enjoy; eating well, including making healthy choices and drinking enough water; taking breaks to catch up with friends and do the things we enjoy; and getting enough sleep each night.

If despite trying all of this, we ever feel like stress or anxiety are taking over our lives, or becoming too difficult to manage on our own, then it can be important to get extra help and have a chat with someone we trust. A good place to start would be our family, a trusted adult at school or our GP.

Coping Strategies

Sometimes we can develop unhealthy or even harmful coping strategies in an attempt to help us deal with big emotions. Below are some alternative suggestions based on the feeling you may be trying to find. Always be careful to use these safely and find what works best for you.

To help to feel calmer and connect with yourself:

Use the '5 things' activity to help ground yourself - think of 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 you can smell and 1 you can taste/something that is good about you

Focus on your breathing – remember breathe in through your nose and out through our mouth, imagine you are breathing out through a straw

Eat something strong or sour – like fizzy sweets or strong mints

Play with playdough, blue tack or clay

Hold something cold or warm and focus on the feeling of this

Spend time with your pets – take the dog for a walk if you can

Give yourself a hand or foot massage

Make yourself a den out of pillows or sheets you can sit and relax in

To help to release big emotions, for example when feeling frustrated:

Scream or shout, you can use a pillow if you are worried about the noise

Sing aloud or dance to energising music

Play an instrument, or make one from pots and wooden spoons

Keep your recycling to one side and spend time flattening or stamping on the packaging

Punch a punch bag or pillow

Watch something you know will make you laugh – like cat videos on YouTube

Rip up or screw up old newspaper

Eat crunchy foods – such as carrots

To help communicate how your feeling and feel in control:

Keep a journal – this can be words or images. You can also use it to track your mood and even share this with others.

Draw, paint or sculpt your feelings. You could make a representation of your feeling and even give it a name.

Write a poem or song about how your feeling

Write a letter to help others understand how you're feeling. You could give it to someone you trust when you're finished.

Make a sign for your bedroom door that lets the rest of your family know how your feeling and what you need. For example, a red card might mean you're feeling angry and need to calm down, or a blue card might mean you're feeling sad and would like to talk.

Make a list of all of the things you have achieved in the last week. These can be seemingly small things like getting out of bed for school on time, or bigger things like doing well on a test, or helping out a friend with a problem.

Make a to-do list or timetable and break your day into manageable chunks or activities. Remember to do the things that make you feel good.

Do something you know you are good at and will help you feel a sense of achievement – like researching things online, completing a crossword, playing computer games, or even cleaning!

Write down any negative thoughts you have and challenge them. Is there any evidence of these being true? Are you trying to interpret a situation without all of the evidence? What would you say to a friend if they had these thoughts? Would this be important in a year from now? or even 5 years? If you know the 'hot cross bun' technique, you can use this too.

Remember there is also support available online and through some apps on your phone. If needed you could try these:

Clear Fear app to support anxiety management

Calm Harm app to support the management of self-harm

Kooth www.kooth.com/

Free and anonymous online counselling and support for young people.

Childline

0800 1111 or www.childline.org.uk

Panic attack solver

Panic attacks **cannot hurt you.**

It will pass. You are **safe.**

Repeat to yourself – **This will pass, I am safe.**

Breathe – in through your nose and out through your mouth – slowly. Use the star on the back if you are struggling with this.

Repeat to yourself – **This will pass, I am safe.**

Focus – look for something in the room you can focus on. Or close your eyes and picture your ‘safe space’.

Grounding – do the **5 things** exercise

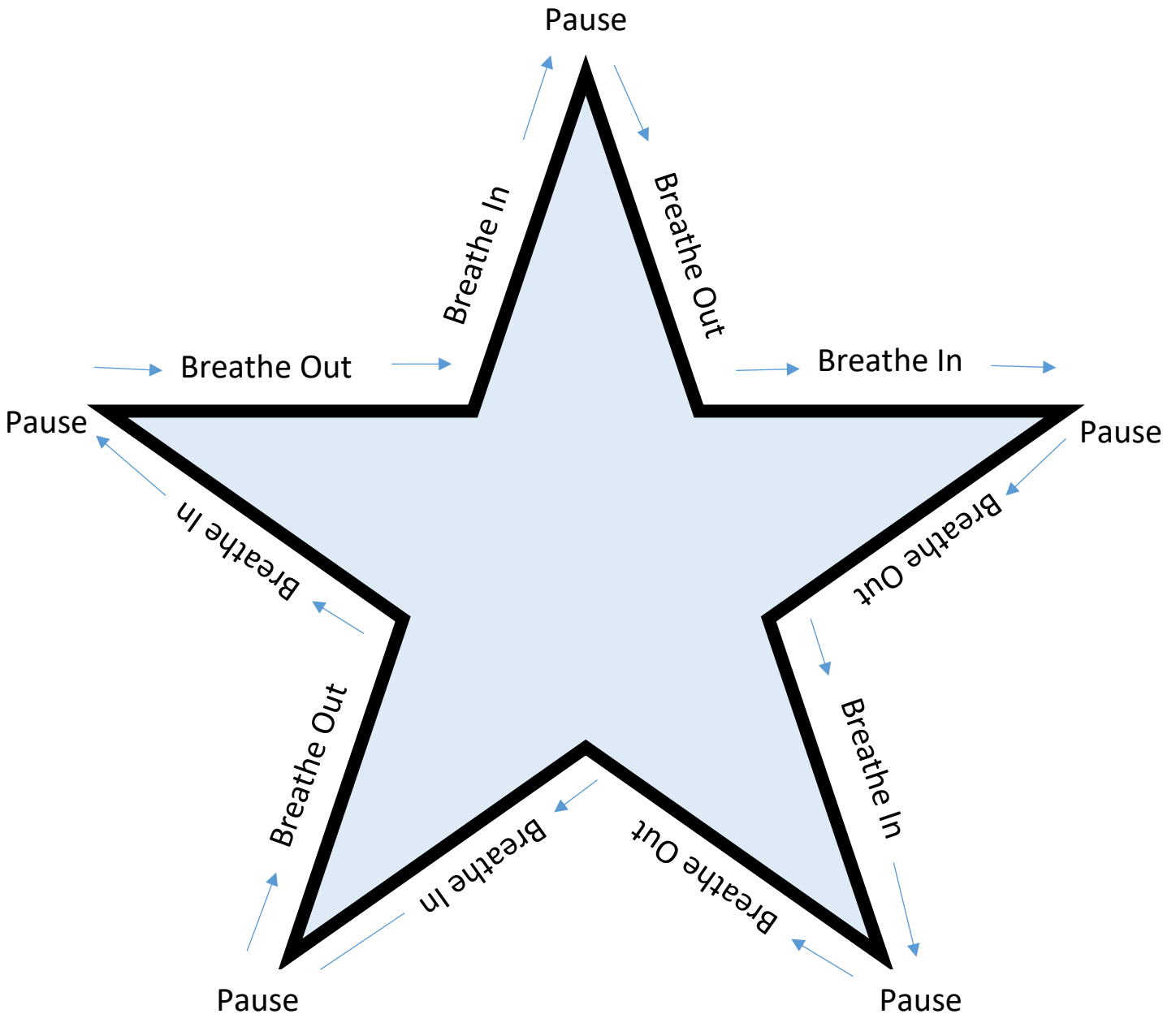
- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste/something good about you

Distract yourself – recite times tables or name an animal beginning with each letter of the alphabet.

Repeat to yourself – **This will pass, I am safe.**

Star Breathing

- Slowly trace the star outline with your finger
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth
- Imagine you are blowing out through a narrow straw



Repeat to yourself – **This will pass, I am safe.**

This is a list of some potential services that may be available both locally and nationally. These services are not being recommended but just made known as potentially available for you to assess the suitability of for yourself. Some details may not be up to date.

Your GP should always be your first point of call for support. If you ever feel you or your young person is in crisis, take them to A&E.

General Mental Health and Emotional Support

Clear Fear app to support anxiety management
app available from apple store and google play

Kooth <https://www.kooth.com/>

Free and anonymous online support for young people.

Childline

0800 1111

childline.org.uk

Free 24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK.

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)

<https://www.thecalmzone.net/> (webchat available)

0800 585858 (open 5pm – midnight)

Helpline for people in the UK who are down or have hit a wall for any reason, who need to talk or find information and support.

Samaritans 24-hour helpline: 116 123 (freephone)

jo@samaritans.org

samaritans.org

Emotional support for anyone feeling down, experiencing distress or struggling to cope.

Health for Teens - <https://www.healthforteens.co.uk/> Website full of information around health and wellbeing for young people

Young Minds <https://youngminds.org.uk/> The YoungMinds crisis messenger service also provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis you can text YM to [85258](https://www.nhs.uk/111).

Relate <https://www.relate.org.uk/>

Youth Access <http://www.youthaccess.org.uk/>

NSPCC

helpline (adults): 0800 800 5000

helpline (children and young people): 0800 1111

help@nspcc.org.uk

nspcc.org.uk

Specialises in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children.

Head Meds <https://www.headmeds.org.uk/> - information around medications that could potentially have been offered to your young people.

Ditch the Label <https://www.ditchthelabel.org/> anti bullying charity providing advice and support

Kidscape <https://www.kidscape.org.uk/> charity providing help with bullying

Reading Well <https://reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/young-people-mental-health> A website with links to potentially helpful books that may support your young person

Bereavement

Cruse Bereavement Care <https://www.cruse.org.uk/> helpline: **0808 808 1677** – you can also self-refer for bereavement counselling in Derby by contacting: 01332 332098 or emailing Derby@cruse.org.uk

Hope Again <https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/>

Child Bereavement UK <https://childbereavementuk.org/> The support team can be contacted by phone **0800 02 888 40** and email: support@childbereavementuk.org

Winstons Wish <https://www.winstonswish.org/>

Self harm and suicide prevention

Calm Harm app to support the management of self harm
app available from apple store and google play
app from - Stem4 <https://stem4.org.uk/> Support and advice

Papyrus <https://papyrus-uk.org/> Helpline: 08000684141

NSPCC

helpline (adults): 0800 800 5000

helpline (children and young people): 0800 1111

help@nspcc.org.uk

nspcc.org.uk

Specialises in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children.

Harmless - <http://www.harmless.org.uk/>

The tomorrow project <http://www.tomorrowproject.org.uk/>

Support After Suicide - <https://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/>

Online safety

Think u know – online safety information for young people <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Child Exploitation and Online Protection <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

BBC Own It - <https://www.bbc.com/ownit> - the 'own it' app is also available from the app store or GooglePlay

Eating Disorders

If you are concerned around eating difficulties, it is important that you first visit your GP.

Beat <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk> The UK's eating disorder charity. They have online support groups and a helpline: 0808 801 0711

First Steps <https://www.firststepsed.co.uk/> Derby based support charity

NHS eating disorder information - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Eating-disorders/>

ASD and sensory difficulties

Derbyshire Autism Services <https://www.derbyshireautismservices.org/>

Autism Support - Derby Council <https://www.derby.gov.uk/education-and-learning/special-education-needs-disabilities/diagnosis/autism/index.html>

National Autistic Society <https://www.autism.org.uk/>

The curly girl project <https://thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk/>

Sensory Integration Network <https://www.sensoryintegration.org.uk/What-is-SI>

Autism Education Trust <https://www.autismeducationtrust.org.uk/>

Substance misuse and addiction

Frank - <https://www.talktofrank.com/>

Aquarius - <http://aquarius.org.uk/derby>

Turning Point - <https://www.turning-point.co.uk/>

Health for Teens <https://healthforteens.co.uk>

LGBTQ+

Derbyshire LGBT+ <https://www.derbyshirelgbt.org.uk/>

Mermaids UK – <https://www.mermaidsuk.org.uk/> support line: 0808 801 0400:

Mon-Fri, 9am - 9pm

Stonewall - <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

Gender Identity Development Service <http://gids.nhs.uk/>

Young Carers

Derby Young Carers www.derby.gov.uk/youngcarers 01332641017

Barnardos <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/helping-families/young-carers>

The Children's Society <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/youngcarer/home>

Carers Trust <https://carers.org/about-us/about-young-carers>

Parents

In addition to the above support, in some situations where parents are concerned around their families wellbeing, it can potentially be helpful for the parents to also access their own support.

NHS Every Mind Matters <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters>

Young Minds Parent support helpline 0808 802 5544

Mind <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Build Sound Minds - <https://minds.actionforchildren.org.uk/> Information for parents to support the mental health of their young people

Parenting and Family Support- Family Lives (formerly Parentline Plus)

Helpline: 0808 800 2222

familylives.org.uk

Support to anyone parenting a child

Relate <https://www.relate.org.uk/> (national) [The relationship people](https://www.relatederby.org.uk/)

<https://www.relatederby.org.uk/> (local)

Citizens Advice <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>

Woman's Aid <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>

Family Action <https://www.family-action.org.uk/>