



# **A** **Changing Minds** **GUIDE TO LIFTING UP IN LOCK DOWN**

Self-guided activities and information to help you maintain your emotional and mental resilience during social isolation



# Contents

No matter who you are, or where you are spending your time during lock down, this guide is for you. The aim is to provide you with some helpful tools to keep you well during this difficult time. There is no need to print this guide, just find a comfortable space to try out some of the ideas, or use them to come up with your own. The following sections are included:

- The 5 Ways to Wellbeing
- Recognising how you feel
- Coping with worrying and unhelpful thoughts
  - Dealing with difficult emotions
    - Grounding techniques
      - Relaxation
    - Using positive self-talk
      - Beating boredom
  - 20 daily self-isolation tips
  - Where you can go for help

# The 5 Ways to Wellbeing

Just in the same way that there are steps you can take to maintain and improve your physical health, there are steps you can take to look after your mental health and wellbeing.

The New Economics Foundation researched this idea and came

up with 5 ways that you can take action to improving your wellbeing.

The following pages explain what each of the 5 Ways to Wellbeing are and give suggestions of how you can try them out yourselves at home.

## Connect

It is important to feel close to and valued by the people in your life. Finding new ways to build and strengthen your relationships with others can help you to improve your mood.

Here are some ideas:

- Phone or video call someone you are missing right now
- Play a game with someone you are living with
- Write some questions for your friends and family to get to know them better
- Create a household playlist of all of your favourite music and listen to it together
- Be brave and tell someone if you are not feeling ok

## Keep Learning

- Watch an online tutorial of an activity you have always wanted to try
- Research some interests
- Ask everyone in your household to teach you a skill that they have
- Book or app swap with someone for a day
- Rediscover an old hobby or passion from your past

Taking time each day to be curious or to learn something new can help to positively stimulate your brain and improve your wellbeing.

Here are some ideas:

## Be Active

There is a strong and positive connection between physical and mental health. Try to find a physical activity that works for you and your level of mobility and skill.

Here are some ideas:

- Find a fun way to recreate an outdoor activity indoors
- Commit to making the most out of your daily form of outdoor exercise
- Create activity stations in each room of your house and set goals to complete
- Put together a scavenger hunt for your household
- Take part in an online activity video of your choice

- Ask someone in your house if they would like help with a task or chore
- Create a window banner to share a kind message with your neighbours
- Tell someone the qualities they have that you like
- Give someone a smile
- Take some time to listen to someone who needs it

## Give

No matter how big or small, taking time to do kind things for others can make you feel happier, lift your mood and improve your own and others wellbeing.

Here are some ideas:

## Take Notice

Being more mindful by paying attention to how you think and feel in the present moment, and taking notice of your surroundings is a great way to reduce stress and worries.

Here are some ideas:

- Take time to focus on a puzzle, cross-word or mindful colouring activity
- Take pictures of your surroundings and make a digital collage or photo album
- Spend time outside noticing the movement of the trees, the plants and the sky
- Write or draw something to express your current mood
- Listen to your breathing

# Recognising how you feel

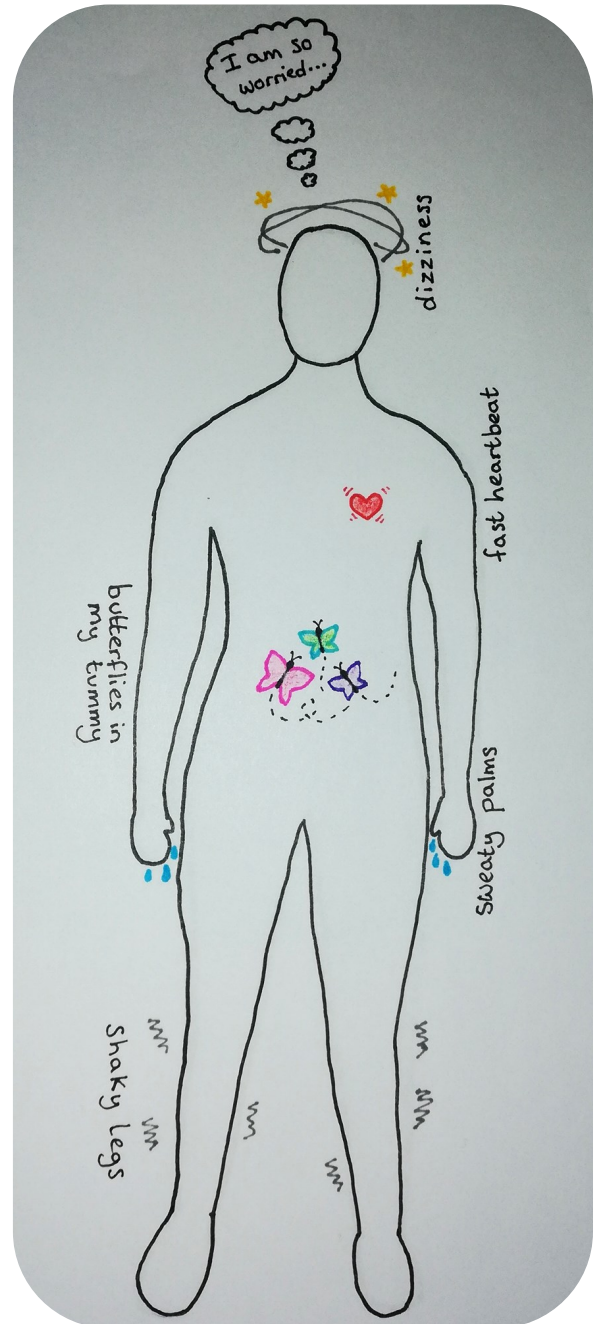
Sometimes before we can take the steps we need to improve our wellbeing, we need to take some time to understand how we are feeling. The next activities may help you to recognise how you feel:

## Body Mapping

A good way to explore experiences that are difficult to communicate or that you do not yet understand is to create a body map of your thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Draw an outline of a person, or trace around your body on a large piece of paper. When you experience something, find a creative way to show this on your body map. Think about where you are feeling this, what thoughts come to mind and try to describe the emotions using words, colours or images.

There is no right or wrong way to do this. Why not give it a try and see what you learn about yourself?



An example of a completed body map



# Mood Tracking

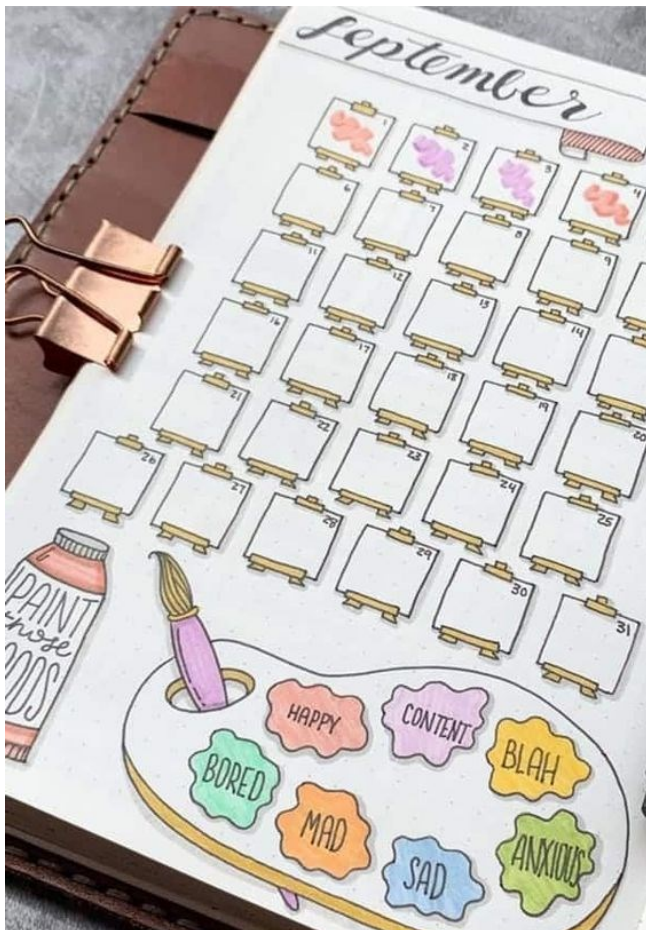
Recording your mood over a period of time can help you to notice any changes or patterns in your mood.

You can record your mood as often as you like, but keeping regular intervals may be helpful. This could be hourly over a day, or daily over a week, month or even a whole year.

Here are some ideas to help you get started:



A mood wheel with examples of words to use in your mood tracker



Mood tracker colouring idea from [artisthue.com](http://artisthue.com)



Mood tracker journal idea from [sidereallife.com](http://sidereallife.com)

# Coping with worrying and unhelpful thoughts

Although it is common to worry, sometimes our anxious thoughts can become overwhelming and have a negative impact on our lives.

## Challenging unhelpful thoughts

Unhelpful thoughts can change how we view a situation, and often make us focus on the worst case scenario, even when it isn't likely to happen. For example:

**"I need to present my work in our video lesson tomorrow and I know I am going to mess it up and everyone will laugh"**

To overcome your unhelpful thoughts try following these 3 steps:

1. Think about the unhelpful thought and describe the...

worst thing that could happen	<i>I forget everything and embarrass myself</i>
best thing that could happen	<i>It goes really well; I remember everything and I get an applause at the end</i>
most likely thing to happen	<i>It goes OK; I forget one or two things but no one notices</i>

2. If the worst thing happens, would it still matter...

1 week from now?	<i>Probably a little bit to me</i>
1 month from now?	<i>Probably not</i>
1 years from now?	<i>No, I would have forgotten about it by then</i>

3. Using the above information, describe your...

unhelpful thought	<i>I'm going to mess up and everyone will laugh</i>
helpful thought	<i>I'm going to try my best and people won't notice little mistakes</i>



There are many different types of unhelpful thoughts. The flow diagram below may help you to recognise the ones that you use and offers suggestions of ways to overcome them:

START

## Different types of unhelpful thoughts

Try to move your blame away from yourself, or another, by writing a list of alternative reasons for why the experience you are focusing on has happened.

Does your thought point blame at yourself or another person?

Y

N

Have you made an assumption about what someone is thinking or feeling?

Y

To avoid jumping to conclusions, think about only the facts that you know about the situation that is on your mind, rather than making predictions of the future.

Filtering thoughts often means ignoring the positives, challenge yourself to find 3 positive thoughts about the situation or experience you are thinking about.

Y

Are you focusing on only the negatives, rather than the whole picture?

N

Does your thought include the words "Always", "Never" or "Everyone"?

Y

You may be overgeneralising, so ask someone you trust to look at the evidence and see if they are able to come up with a different conclusion.

Try to think of an example where a similar situation has worked out just fine as a reminder that the worst is not always the most likely to happen.

Y

Has your thought jumped straight to the worst case scenario?

N

Do you challenge helpful thoughts with the thought "Yes, but..."?

Y

Unhelpful thoughts are only able to be changed when you are willing to try changing them. When you are ready, find what works for you!

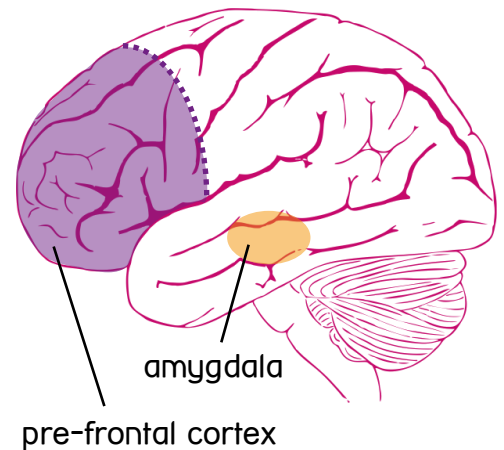
N

If you have not found what you are looking for that is ok, more information is available at:

[mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/](http://mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/)

# Dealing with difficult emotions

To help make sense of difficult emotions it can be useful to remember where they come from. Your brain usually regulates your thoughts, feelings and behaviours, but when we are faced with difficult emotions our more logical brain area (the pre-frontal cortex) gets taken over by the emotion centre of the brain (the amygdala).



In order to regain control and reactivate your pre-frontal cortex, you could try some of the coping strategies explained on the next pages:

## Panic attacks:

If you think you may be having a panic attack, try being AWARE:

A

ACKNOWLEDGE that you are starting to panic and try to ACCEPT that you are afraid, without resisting

W

WAIT where you are for a moment to give yourself time to think before jumping into action too quickly

A

Take ACTION as soon as you are ready, by breathing long deep breaths and telling yourself this will end soon

R

It is normal to feel additional waves of panic and okay to REPEAT the steps above as many times as you need

E

All panic attacks END! You cannot make the end happen but you can make yourself comfortable while you wait

## Anger:

Try to remember that it is okay to be angry, as long as you don't take it out on yourself, others or objects. Instead you could:

Tell someone how you are feeling using a firm voice rather than shouting loudly	Use your energy to complete a chore that you really hate	Walk away from the situation and tell someone where you are going
Go for a fast walk or run until you feel calmer	Throw a pair of balled-up socks against the wall	Scream or shout into a pillow or duvet

## Sadness:

Sadness is normal, but when it becomes too difficult to manage, try working through these steps:

1. Visualise or draw your sadness as a rainstorm
2. For each drop of rain try to identify one thing that is causing your sadness
3. Add an umbrella and beneath it identify anything that you know makes you feel happy
4. Now focus on the umbrella and try out some of your ideas
5. Remember that although you cannot stop the rain, there are many things you can do to stay dry. Ask for help if you need to.



# Grounding techniques

Grounding techniques are used to bring your attention back to the present and physical moment. These exercises are often most useful when you are

caught up in your negative thoughts and emotions and need to find a way to break that cycle. Here are some examples you can try out yourself:

## 54321 Senses

Pause where you are and take a moment to notice:



5 things you can see

4 things you can hear



3 things you can touch

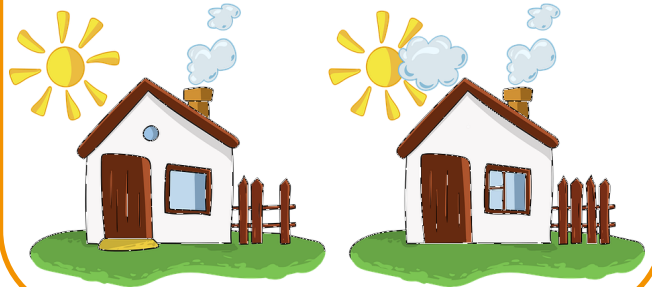
2 things you can smell



1 thing you can taste

## Spot the difference

Find or make your own puzzle:



## Savour it

Find something that you like to eat and try the following:

- Feel its weight and textures
- Breathe in to smell the food
- Touch the food to your lips
  - Place the food on your tongue and notice its taste
- Savour each sensation before finally eating it

# Relaxation

Exploring relaxation can help you look after yourself when you're not feeling your best. Relaxation can also help to improve your physical health.

Have a look at these tips and ideas to see how relaxation can fit into your daily life. Don't worry if some ideas don't work for you, just enjoy those that do.

## Take a break

Taking even a few minutes away from your normal routine can give you enough space to feel calmer. You could:

- Read a book or a magazine
  - Run yourself a bath
  - Watch a short video
  - Play with a pet

Relaxation doesn't have to take up lots of your time.

## Try active relaxation

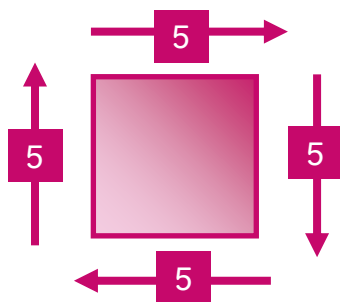
Relaxation doesn't always have to mean sitting still, gentle exercise can help you relax too. You could:

- Take a walk around your house or outside, making sure to go at your own pace.
- Look for an online class you'd like to try, such as Pilates, yoga or gentle stretching.

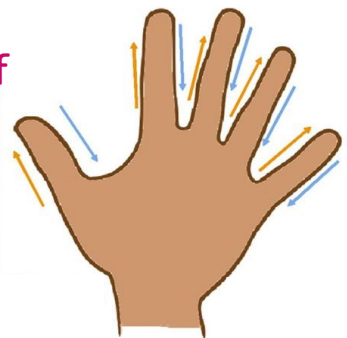
## Focus on your breathing

Learning to breathe more deeply can help you feel a lot calmer. Here are 2 exercises you can try:

**Square breathing** - breathe in for 5, hold for 5, breathe out for 5, hold for 5 and repeat.



**Finger breathing** - take 5 long breaths in and out, while slowly tracing a line around each of your fingers with the index finger of your other hand.





## Get creative

- Try painting, drawing, making crafts, playing a musical instrument, dancing, baking or sewing.
- Try not to worry too much about the finished product, just focus on enjoying yourself.

## Listen to music

- Listen to your favourite songs. Turn up the volume and dance or sing along. Put your headphones on and close your eyes.
- Focus on the music, and let other thoughts fade away. Can you hear any new instruments? Can you notice a new lyric?

## Try some guided imagery

Guided imagery is a relaxation technique that uses positive mental images to change how you feel.

There are plenty of different versions that you can choose from, depending on what you like. You can listen to podcasts, find online videos or search for a script to read to yourself or someone else.

The following is part of a script from a visualisation called:

**‘Mindfulness script for sleep’**

## Spend time outside

- Make use of the spaces you have at home by sitting in the garden, on your balcony or opening a window to let in the breeze.
- Use the time you can each day to go outside if you are able

## Do a tech check

- Try turning your phone off for an hour (or a whole day if you're feeling brave).
  - Step away from the TV/ device, or have an evening where you don't check your social networks. Use the time to try something else on this page.

**Take a moment to get comfortable in your bed.**

**Make sure you're lying down.**

**Now, close your eyes.**

**Begin by taking a nice big deep breath, in through the nose...and out through the mouth.**

**And again.**

**Feel your body sink into the mattress.**

**We're now going to imagine we are switching off all of our muscles to help our brain get ready for sleep...**

# Positive self-talk

## Compliments

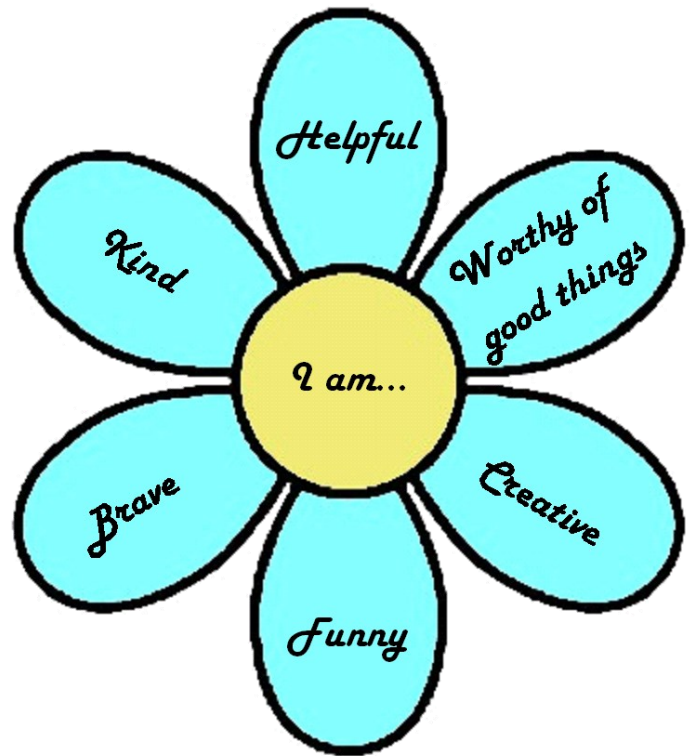
You can replace your negative self-talk with positive self-talk by using compliments. Try to come up with 3 qualities you like about yourself. If you find this difficult, ask someone you trust to give you 3 instead. Then you can give them 3 back.

Try to avoid focusing on appearance or possessions and focus on personal qualities:

**I am thoughtful and funny**

**You are an inspiration to me**

**I am glad you are my friend**



An example of a compliments flower with 6 different qualities

## Positive affirmations

A positive affirmation is a short phrase that describes the way you'd like to feel about yourself. It should be a confident, positive statement such as:

**I am kind and brave**

**I believe in myself**

**I am worthy**

**Today is a good day**

Find an affirmation that connects with you, write it down, and display it somewhere you will see it every day.



An example self-affirmation poster. The creator has written their affirmations and positive ideas on their favourite object.

# Beating boredom

Just in case you are running low on ideas to keep you entertained, our Changing Minds team and young volunteers have shared some ideas of their own:

Play a board game

Design a puzzle or maze

Follow a yoga video online

Finally finish that book

Make some homemade ice lollies

Build a fort

Camp in your back garden

Create a new recipe

Make a model out of your recycling

Have a cuddle and a chat with someone

Make your own jewellery

Find animals in the clouds

Paint some positive words on rocks

Watch old family videos

Go for a twalk (walk and talk)

Play charades



# 20 daily self-isolation tips

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #1

*Create a checklist of activities you can do every day to help boost your mood and physical wellbeing. Make sure you tick them off every day to keep the blues away!*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #2

*Try spending each part of your day in a different location within your home/room for a 'change of scenery'!*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #3

*Every evening, write down (or say out loud) 3 positive things that happened in your day; it will really help you to maintain a happy mindset.*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #4

*Set a limit on your exposure to the news & social media - and stick to it!*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #5

*Turn washing your hands into a 'mindfulness activity' to help you get out of your head and into the present moment.*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #6

*Take an online tour of a museum you have always wanted to visit!*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #7

*Keep a journal to document this experience, and to help you process your emotions about it. It would be an amazing thing to look back on one day.*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #8

*Make sure you get some fresh air every day, even if that's just sitting next to an open window for 10 minutes with a cup of tea.*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #9

*Try to keep your room/home/workspace tidy & clean; research shows that outer order contributes to inner calm.*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #10

*Create a folder of your favourite memes and refer to it whenever you need a boost. Laughter is a game-changer!*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #11

*Feeling fed up with constant Corona-related conversations? Book in a call with someone you haven't seen in a while; it's a great opportunity to catch up on what has been going on in your lives, so you can talk about something other than the current situation!*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #12

*Be kind to yourself.*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #13

*Give yourself a hug every now and then, especially if you are unable to have physical contact with other people due to isolation measures. It actually releases some of the same chemicals as hugging someone else!*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #14

*It's ok to take a day (or days!) off, whether that's a day off work, off social media, off cooking, off worrying, off being productive, off anything else that feels like too much. Listen to your body and mind, and what they need.*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #15

*Try to incorporate lots of anti-inflammatory foods (like ginger, turmeric, leafy greens, garlic, berries, seeds and nuts) into your diet. They can boost your mental as well as physical health!*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #16

*Have a go at one of those yoga videos on YouTube - it can just be a slow, stretch-based one or a more dynamic one, whatever you feel like. It is great for getting out of your head and into your body.*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #17

*Make yourself a playlist of the happiest, most upbeat songs you can think of, and then sing & dance all of your frustrations & fears away!*

*#danceeveryday*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #18

*Throw a virtual dinner party! Send out an invite to a group of friends/family, get dressed up in your glad rags, cook dinner, maybe even light a couple of candles, and eat together via video.*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #19

*If you ever feel overwhelmed by everything that's going on "out there" in the world, shift your attention to 3 things you can directly control and focus on actions related to these things.*

## SELF-ISOLATION TIP #20

*Lots of great musicians, DJs, clubs etc. are doing free live concerts and even mini music festivals online. Get your "front row seat" and enjoy!*

# Where you can go for help



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

0800 1111

Get help and advice about a wide range of issues, call, talk to a counsellor online, send an email or post on the message boards.



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

08088 023455 or 84001

Free information and support for under 25s in the UK. Get advice about sex, relationships, drugs, mental health, money & jobs.



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

08088 084994

The UK's leading support service for young people. Here to help you take on any challenge you're facing. Talk online, or our free, confidential helpline.



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

116 123

We offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way – about whatever's getting to you. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week



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

YoungMinds is the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.

(For the parents helpline call 0808 802 5544)

## Remember...

In an emergency you should call 999 or go to A & E

If you are ever unsure of what to do, you can always speak to someone you trust like a friend, family member, teacher or GP.





Newport Mind is a registered charity  
No. 1036964

100-101 Commercial Street, NP20 1LU  
Tel: 01633 258741  
Email: [enquiries@newportmind.org](mailto:enquiries@newportmind.org)  
[www.newportmind.org](http://www.newportmind.org)

