Creating a self-care plan

For young people in secondary schools or college

Supported by

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National Centre for
Children and Families

NOMINET

Just as we look after our physical health, it's important to look after our mental health. In fact, the two are closely connected.

Most of us will know what it's like to feel worried, stressed or low from time to time. We might be affected by our relationships with friends and classmates or things we see on the news, and we might feel worried about school or our home lives. This is understandable.

So how should we manage when we're having difficult feelings? There are lots of things you can do to look after your own mental health and wellbeing. This booklet will give you some ideas of things you can try, to help you find what works for you.

It's important to remember that **it's okay to ask for help**. Sometimes we need the support and advice of others. If you feel like you need more help, please talk to a trusted adult or use the AFC Crisis Messenger.

What is self care?

Self-care is all about what you can do to help yourself feel better or to keep yourself feeling good. It's a way that we can look after our own mental health and wellbeing.

Everyone's approach to self-care will look different. What works for you might not work for others. There are lots of different self-care strategies so you can try out different ones until you find something that works for you.The main thing is to find things you enjoy. Playing football, listening to music, reading. Sometimes having a long bath can be relaxing. Whatever works for you.

1. There are over 90 self-care strategies identified and written by young people on **On My Mind** so you can try out different ones until you find something that works for you.
2. Draw up a plan. Put aside some time every day for yourself and say what you will do.
3. Everyone has mental health. Talking almost always helps. Listening always helps others.

Here are some ways people describe self-care:

"Something that refuels us, rather than takes from us."

"Eating well and getting enough sleep"

"Something you enjoy that allows you to escape whatever is troubling you. Make sure you do at least one thing you like every day."

"Self-care isn't a selfish act; it is rather about knowing what we need to do in order to take care of ourselves. I don't take enough care of myself, I won't be

"You need to plan self-care. It won't just happen. Set some time aside to make a short plan."

Planning for self care

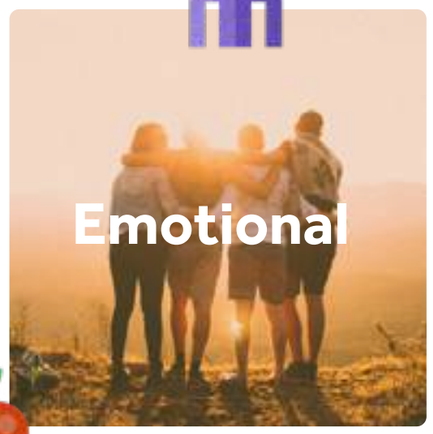
By creating a self-care plan you will be able to identify activities that you can use to support your mental health.

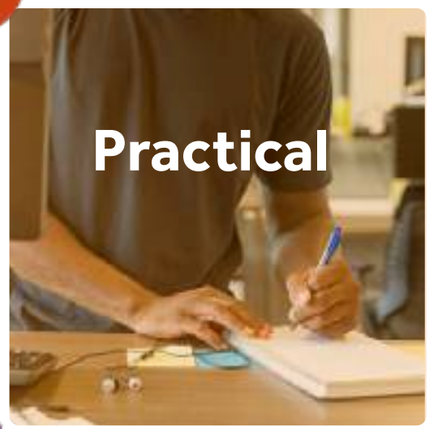
You can adapt your plan on a weekly or monthly basis depending on your schedule or priorities.

By breaking down your self-care approaches into different categories (physical, emotional, social and practical) you will be able to monitor and positively influence your wellbeing throughout your day.

We've included some activities that you may wish to try and included links so you can read how these activities have helped other young people when they feel low or anxious. If an activity works, keep doing it. If it doesn't, stop and try something else.

You may already have your own thoughts about what you'd like to try. It's up to you.





Physical activities

Suggested physical activities

1 . Eat a healthy diet

"I think it helped as I was taking care of myself and swapping processed food for healthier alternatives gave me more energy, which allowed me to take up more hobbies and socialise."

Read more about what young people have said about maintaining a healthy diet and avoiding certain foods.

2. Try some relaxation techniques

"The days can easily become busy and potentially be overwhelming, so having a few minutes in your day just to be aware of your breathing and become fully relaxed can calm the mind completely."

Read more about what relaxation techniques young people recommend.

3. Time away from technology

"You may think your phone is essential and without it there is nothing to do, but just see how it feels to take yourself away from it for a bit. It doesn't have to be for long but can make a whole lot of difference."

Read more about how time away from technology can help your mental health and wellbeing.

4. Exercise regularly for 30 minutes

"You can release any stress, anger or tension you have! Doing exercise is also refreshing and gives you time away from work, your phone or staying in doing nothing all day. Being active can help your mind and body to feel better!"

Read more about the wellbeing benefits of physical exercise, walking and sport.

5. Dance

"If you need to find a way to let off some steam or put yourself in a good mood, put on your favourite songs and have a little boogie in the living room. Even small movements make a big difference."

Read more about how dance can help you manage your wellbeing.

Emotional activities

Suggested emotional activities

1 . Develop friendships that are supportive

"Being with people who make you feel confident and good about yourself can really boost your mental health. Having a laugh really helps me to feel happier."

Read more about the benefits of spending time with supportive people.

2. Be kind to yourself

"Self-kindness won't necessarily stop your thoughts or feelings from being difficult, but it might provide some small comfort in the midst of them."

Read more about self-kindness and self-compassion.

3. Write three good things that you did each day

"I enjoy reflecting but often jump too quickly from one thought to another. Writing things down helped me to arrange my thoughts, and now I can go back and reflect on those thoughts."

Read more about how writing things down can help manage difficult thoughts or feelings.

4. Talk to a friend about how you are coping

"Ringing for a chat helps you get away from how you're feeling."

Read more about spending time with friends and the value of trusted relationships.

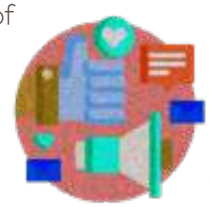
Social activities

Suggested social activities

1 . Talk to your friends online or find an online support group

"Everyone communicates in different ways, and sometimes it can feel easier to talk about what's on your mind via an online chat. You may find this quieter and less pressurising than face-to-face conversation."

Discover a range of online support groups to help if you're feeling low or anxious.



2. Take part in a photography challenge with your friends

"Photography allows me to look closely at things, and let myself see the beauty in tiny little things. If I don't have a camera with me, it is easy to walk fast and stay stuck inside my own head, but if I have a camera, I start looking out, dragging me out of my own head."

Read how photography can help your wellbeing including some simple tips for taking a good photo.

3. Create a playlist with your friends

"I think it helped because it removed me from the issues which were bothering me. I was able to just enjoy the music rather than having to think about anything else."

Read about how music can lift your mood.

4. Join a local youth group

"'Finding a group of people with similar interests to me really helped my confidence and helped me make new friends."

Read how joining a youth group has helped other young people.

Practical activities

Suggested physical activities

1 . Organise your day

"Writing a list and organising yourself will help to prevent stress. I like to write all of the big things I have to complete on a piece of paper and it makes them feel so much smaller."

Read how organising your day can help your mental health.

2. Try to get showered and dressed each morning

"It gives you the best foundation to feel good...little things you sometimes forget to do when you're feeling bad...have I drunk enough water today? Have I brushed my teeth? There's apps that help you to remember all those basic things that are important but often go out the window when I'm feeling rubbish."

Read advice from other young people about maintaining personal care and hygiene.

3. Set some goals for the future

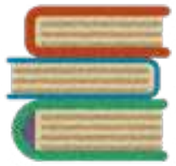
"Goal-setting can give you some extra motivation and encouragement, if you feel you need it. It may also help with your daily routine, giving you something to work towards to get you through the day."

Learn more about how to set achievable goals especially if you are struggling with your mental health.

4. Create a revision timetable

"'Just make sure that you don't push yourself too hard or stress yourself. But do take time to research things you enjoy too- not just your school work!'"

Discover more about creating a revision timetable and managing stress at moments such as exam tests or results.



5. Learn a new language or skill

"I have found learning British sign language to be a great distraction when I'm feeling low or anxious. Learning something new gives me a great feeling of accomplishment."

Read more about how learning languages or new skills can help your wellbeing.

Chosen activities

Physical
Chosen activites:

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3.....

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Emotional
Chosen activites:

1.....

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Social
Chosen activites:

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Practical
Chosen activites:

1.....

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1. What are the main things that cause you worry, stress or anxiety?

2. Have a look at these self-care tips. Which five could you try?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

3. Are my activities balanced?

4. Will anything get in the way of these activities

5. Everyone has mental health. Talking almost always helps others. Who can you talk to if things get too difficult?

Other resources for young people

View and download these for free either by clicking on the images above or by visiting: www.onmymind.info

Where can I find support?

If you or someone you know needs help right now, you should, if possible, try to talk to a parent or carer or a trusted adult such as your GP.

If talking to an adult is not possible, you can find a list of organisation which offer 24 hour support by text, email and phone on our Urgent Help page or below:

Do you need help right now?
The AFC Crisis Messenger text service provides free, 24/7 crisis support for young people across the UK

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis and need support, you can text **AFC** to **85258**.

childline
Call: 0800 1111
email | online chat

SAMARITANS
Call: 116 123
email | visit | write

Emergency Services
Call: 999