

Some self-care activities

These are suggestions of ways to support children's emotional and mental well-being. What works well will differ between individuals depending on their age, interests and personality. They are designed to work at home with inexpensive materials.

Grounding and Calming Exercises

Many people find it hard to 'be' in the present moment. The following are suggestions drawn from mindfulness practice to help anchor yourself to the present and calm yourself. If you are using these with children, it is helpful to talk them through the stages of the exercise slowly. It can be fun to do these together!

Breathe

One way of trying to calm yourself is to slow down your breathing through counting. Sit or lie down so that your body feels comfortable and relaxed. Close your eyes. Become aware of your own breathing – in and out. If you can, begin to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Start to match your breathing to a count of three in and three out. After a while, increase this to four and then, again after a while, to five.

Senses

Choose a small object to hold. Then sit in a comfortable place and hold your object. First **look** at the object, take time to really observe its shape and colour. Then notice the **feel** of the object as you hold it– its structure and texture. **Notice** the details of the object. Think about the sensations on your fingertips or the palms of your hands as you hold and touch it. Now close your eyes and **listen** to everything around you. Notice sounds – whether nearby or more distant. Notice the silence in and around the sound. Finally, with your eyes still closed become aware of your own body **feels**. Notice any tension, tightness or tingling. Be aware of your breathing.

Focusing

Develop the activity above by taking the object to a table along with paper and pencil or pens. Try and draw it, really looking at each detail and being as accurate as possible. Don't focus on the quality of the drawing, but rather, on the quality of your looking and observation. Enjoy the process rather than getting caught up with what you are producing.

Using your senses

Write down or talk about things you notice where you are sitting at the moment, particularly focusing on your five senses – things you can see, hear, feel, taste, smell.

Eating mindfully

Choose something small to eat – a small piece of chocolate or raisins can work well. Take your time to become aware of the taste, texture and smell of what you are eating. Closing your eyes and make the most of the experience.

Relaxing Activities

The most relaxing activities are often those which absorb us without being too intellectually taxing.

Colouring

Invest in a book or find downloadable colouring pages online. Alternatively, create lettering, drawings or patterns yourself and colour them in.

Collage

Use words, phrases, images and/or photos to create your own collages with things cut from magazines or newspapers or printed from the computer.

Make a Mood Board

Develop the collage idea above by thinking about things you like and which are special to you (family, friends, hobbies, interests, hopes, dreams etc). Create a collection of words, images and photographs and use these to create a 'mood board' for your life. Think about putting your name in the middle and perhaps choose some inspiring quotations to add in..

Learn a new skill

There are loads of online tutorials you can use to teach yourself a new skill such as knitting, origami, crochet, calligraphy... or to make something using things you are likely to have around the house, for example, this sock bunny for Easter

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TU1gAK4RhFA>

Start a journal

Writing in or creating a journal is recognised to be a really positive way of processing thoughts and feelings. Don't worry if you haven't got a brand new book, you can use any paper and start where you are. You could try and create a list journal, a bullet journal or a journal of your thoughts and feelings (google ideas for these). Listing things you are grateful for is proven to make you feel better so a gratitude journal might be helpful in lifting your spirits. With younger children this can be done with pictures rather than words. For older children, creating an art journal, using colour, texture and creativity can also be very therapeutic. See <https://mindfulartstudio.com/how-to-start-an-art-journal> and <https://artjournalist.com/how-to-start-an-art-journal> for some ideas.

Active Relaxation

Relaxation doesn't have to involve sitting still. Here are some ideas of things you can do without going too far from your own home.

Get up and dance

Choose some of your favourite songs and get dancing. Moving to music that you love can lift your mood and give you a natural high. Choose songs which have lyrics that inspire and encourage you.

Make or bake

Cook together. Following a recipe that is a bit challenging can keep you focused and distracted.

Lend a hand

Do something positive to help or support someone else. Write to or make a card for someone you know who might be lonely or who might need encouragement at this time. Do some jobs together in the house or garden or send a friend an encouraging text or message.

Grow something

Sow some seeds or bulbs and look after them. Watch them grow. Use windowsills or the garden to experiment with growing your own food. Salads are an easy starting point and seeds and anything else you need are readily available online.