

Self-care for mental and emotional wellbeing

Grounding and Calming Yourself

Many people find it hard to 'be' in the present moment. The following are suggestions drawn from mindfulness practice to help you anchor yourself to the present and calm yourself.

Breathe

Make yourself comfortable, either sitting or lying down and become aware of your breathing. Imagine your breath coming through the floor and the furniture into your body. Notice the breath travelling right through your body and imagine yourself rooted to the furniture, the ground and the planet as you continue to inhale and exhale.

Another way of trying to calm yourself is to slow down your breathing through counting. Sit or lie comfortably and close your eyes. Become aware of your own breathing – in and out. If you can, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Begin 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

Sit in a comfortable place and position and choose a small object to hold. First **look** at the object, take time to really observe its shape, colour, structure and texture. **Feel** the details of the object as you hold it. Experience 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 and **feel** the different sensations you are experiencing. 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 as many things as you can about where you are sitting at the moment, particularly focusing on your five senses – things you can see, hear, feel, taste, smell.

Eat mindfully – being aware of the taste, texture and smell of what you are eating. Closing your eyes and making the most of the experience. Small pieces of chocolate and raisins work particularly well for this.

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 how you'd like your life to be and creating a board or sheet of paper to inspire you. Choose inspiring quotations, pictures or anything at all that will help you set goals and will encourage you to move towards them.

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. 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 something new. Following a recipe that is a bit challenging can keep you focused and distracted. Make sure you have permission, help and/or support from parents or whoever is looking after you.

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. Help 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.

Free apps:

Headspace – meditation - https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/headspace-meditation-sleep/id493145008?ct=NL_SC01_PT022_WW&mt=8&ign-itsct=NL_SC01_PT022_WW&ign-itscg=10200

Oak – meditation and breathing - https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/oak-meditation-breathing/id1210209691?ct=NL_SC01_PT022_WW&mt=8&ign-itsct=NL_SC01_PT022_WW&ign-itscg=10200

Ten Percent Happier – for calm, insight and sleep - https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/ten-percent-happier-meditation/id992210239?ct=NL_SC01_PT022_WW&mt=8&ign-itsct=NL_SC01_PT022_WW&ign-itscg=10200

These are general strategies. If you need more structured support, the NHS has a list of apps you can download, which you can browse here: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/>

Mrs Bellman has also sent a list of sources of help to all students. Please check your email for details.