



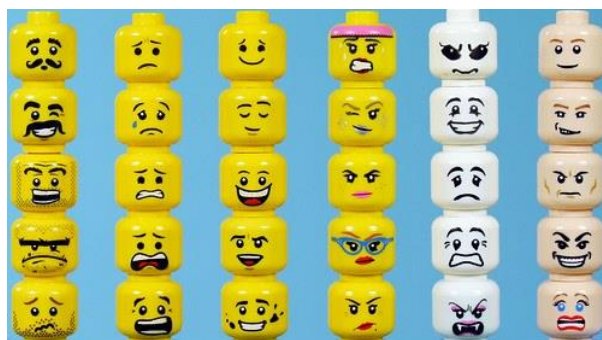
Keep Thriving Through Winter

With the long, dark nights and cold weather it is easy to start feeling down. You may feel more pressure with shorter days, but we have some great tips to help you.

This guide will explore some of the more common issues that you may be experiencing, from exam stress to bullying, friendship worries and negative thoughts and provide some useful guidance to help you thrive through the winter months.

It may seem hard to believe, but everyone struggles in one way or another. Maybe they are worrying already about the exams this school year, or perhaps they are struggling with their friendship groups. It may even be that there are problems outside of school that they don't want anyone to know about. Although it is important to recognise that there may be hidden issues with other people around you, the most important thing you can do is make sure that YOU are OK.

Getting to know you!



Are you sometimes happy, but sometimes sad, sometimes lost in your own thoughts, sometimes wishing they would just go away? At times are you full of energy and other times curled up on your bed? There are so many emotions that we all experience that sometimes we wonder how we even got out of bed.

So why is this? When we recognise the patterns in our behaviors we can make sure our basic needs are covered, so the difficult days become a little more manageable. Maybe more sleep is needed, or snacks throughout the day. Exercise may be the answer, but so may taking time out. Once you know understand what works for you, you will have the power to take control!

But it's not me! It must be everything else

There will always be things outside of your control. What you can control is how you manage situations and respond to them. Here we will look at tips for some common challenges. Many of these skills are transferable, and if you need help, there is plenty of support available to you.

Exams

It's not just the big exams, all exams and tests can cause worry and distress throughout the school year. Some schools expect you to do more than others, but as this isn't something you can control, you need to try and focus on what is happening for you and how you manage your worries.

Get your timetable - knowledge is power, when you know which exams you have and when, you can start to plan how to use your time. If you are feeling overwhelmed or don't know how to start, ask for help. You may not want to, but it really can help.



Create your very own daily timetable - what are you going to revise, and how long you will spend on each topic? Reflect on your strengths and weaknesses. If you have a topic you really struggle with, make sure you have ones you enjoy either side on the timetable so that you don't get disheartened.

Be realistic - spending all day everyday staring at your books is not going to work. You need to take breaks and not just a 5 minute break, a real one - try to build in time with friends or family, or just go for a walk on your own. The longer you study for, the more breaks you need!



Remember that what works for your friends might not work for you. Everyone has different ways of learning, and revision is no different, some people like to just read, others like quizzes, or making up rhymes to remember the information. If you don't know what works for you, try different approaches and see what sticks. Some examples you could try include flashcards, studying with friends, watching online tutorials, looking at past papers, teaching someone else, creating mind maps and for some people they find it beneficial to set a timer, 20 minutes intense study, 5 minute break and then keep repeating.

Eat properly, drink enough and get a good night's sleep!

OK, you have your timetable, you've had a good nights sleep, you've eaten a good breakfast, you have followed all the rules. so why do you feel so worried?

It's quite simple, you want to do well.

If you find yourself approaching the exam time and it's all becoming too much, speak to a friend, or seek out a trusted adult. Sometimes just expressing how we are feeling in the moment is enough.

Once you have finished the exam you will have to wait for your results, and this time can cause worry too. You just need to remember two things, you did your best on the day, and regardless of your results, you will have options.



Friendships



Many young people feel isolated without friends, but friendship itself can also be isolating. Friendships, for most people are absolutely critical, and for those that think they aren't interested in having a friend, I am sure you have someone who you can talk with, or share interests with. Ultimately that is what friendship is about.

We often think our friends should be the same age as us and go to the same school, but that's not always the case and the sooner we learn what we want in a friend, the sooner we can make meaningful connections.

Lets look at some friendship myths

1. Friendships should last a lifetime - Absolutely not. Some people do have those lasting connections and that is amazing, but most friendships eventually fizzle out, and that's OK. It doesn't mean you did something wrong, or they stopped liking you, it's just that people change. Allowing yourself the freedom to explore new opportunities to make connections with new people isn't a reason to feel bad, this should be celebrated and we should all encourage each other to do this.

2. True friends don't argue - Yes they do! Friends should argue because this is how you learn to explore new ideas and concepts within a safe space. You can also learn so much about each other through working through those struggles that it will actually strengthen the friendship in the long run.

3. A faded friendship is lost forever - So that fizzled friendship does not mean the end. You might lose touch with a friend as you go to different schools, but later in life you may meet again and that friendship may re-spark.

4. Losing a friend isn't that bad - When you fall out with a friend and you can't work through the struggles, or you just realise one day that your friend is no longer around, it hurts, a lot. You are allowed to acknowledge this feeling as it is very real.

5. Good friends know what I need - No they don't, not always, good friends share what they need, when they need it.

The truth about friends is they are hard work. Friendship doesn't just magically happen, you have to put in time to develop a friendship and maintain it. You need to demonstrate patience, kindness and understanding but also maintain your boundaries. The happiness of your friend should never come at the expense of your own, and you should not feel disheartened when your friend excludes you from plans with others. But friends are important, they can help you in times of need, they will make you laugh more than any others, they will support you to grow your interests and explore new opportunities. Friendships are about honest exchanges, during both the highs and the lows.

So what if you are struggling to make friends?

This is the hard part.

You need to put yourself out there, so try some of the following:

1. Smile at people as you walk past or in class, show people that you are ready for connections.
2. Try small acts of kindness, if you see someone sat on their own, go and say hello. They may not have the courage to approach someone themselves.
3. Try joining some clubs or activities that take your interest. This may be face to face, in or out of school, and there are many clubs online.
4. Try joining in conversations, your contribution is valid
5. Listen to what others are saying, show an interest.
6. Compliment others, it makes us all feel good when someone says something nice.



Bullying

How do you determine the difference between someone being unkind and someone bullying you?
Let's take a look at the anti bullying alliance definition (It's only 15 seconds long!)

<https://youtu.be/XHPGU4EPLvc>

It is recognised that bullying can take place by anyone towards anyone. For many young people, it is hard to acknowledge but they are being bullied by those they consider to be friends.

So what can you do if you are being bullied?

Tell someone - If it is taking place in school they do need to be made aware as they can support you to ensure that it stops. You may find it easier to confide in a family member or someone else that you trust, but you must recognise that for you to get help, they may need to share this information.

Once you have taken this step, it may feel worse for a while. You may feel uncertain about what may happen next. You may get called a snitch, and you may feel resentful towards those trying to help, but it will get better.



Some schools may want to try a restorative approach, although they may not call it that. This where they ask you and your bully to meet, supervised, to explore what happened, and how it made you feel. This is an opportunity not just for you to share, but for the bully to learn, and understand, and hopefully offer genuine apologies. This approach is not for everyone, but it can be beneficial, especially if you are feeling unsure about moving around the school as you are worried that it may start again.



It doesn't matter what I try, it will never be enough

This is your internal dialogue or internal voice you may have heard it referred to. When you are constantly receiving these negative thoughts you can take two actions, listen to them, believe them and allow them to become your narrative for life OR you can say no, I am better than these thoughts, I am worth more than these thoughts and actively work to change them.

This is probably the biggest challenge you will ever face. You are fighting yourself, and there is reasons why your thoughts are like this, this can include things others have said to you, things you have experienced, and even things you have seen can all make your thoughts become very negative.

If these are the thoughts you are hearing, no matter how impossible it seems, you can change it round. The first step is wanting to change it, but how? Lets look at 6 steps!

1. Talk to someone - admitting to these thoughts is a huge step, but if you can do this, you are no longer alone, and that is really powerful

2. Listen to those thoughts and tell them no, and then compliment yourself, and it can be about anything. You might not believe it straight away, but keep pushing back the negative thoughts with a compliment and overtime your negative thoughts will lose their power

3. You've seen those positive quotes so use them - when that voice says you cant do something, respond with a 'I've got this' or 'I believe in me'. Its really simple, if someone you knew was saying I can't, what would you tell them?

4. If you are feeling hopeless, and cannot see good in your future, pause and reflect on why. We call this catastrophising. This is when something has happened to us, and our thoughts have become distorted so we are seeing everything through a worst case scenario lens. When we reflect and consider what has actually happened and recognise our beliefs we can see how we have leapt to our current thought place, and start to change it to reflect the truth.

5. Be kind to yourself. This takes work and practice and it is not easy. You can get to a better place and there will be set backs, but you can do it.

6. Continue talking to people. No one is fed up with hearing about it, no one thinks you should just get over yourself.



So what is a trusted adult anyway?

A trusted adult is simply, an adult you trust. They could be a member of your family, or a family friend, a teacher, or a neighbour, a youth worker, or even your GP. The key here is it is someone you feel able to speak with, to be open about how you feel, even if you don't know why you feel that way. Remember we spoke previously about control, speaking to an adult is you taking control.

They may say they don't know how to help, they may need to seek advice from someone else, or maybe they want you to speak with someone who is better equipped to help. This all depends on what you need, but also what you want.

You will be aware of safeguarding, and that sometimes when you open up if there are significant concerns this has to be shared, but you know everyone is there to help, and only ever acting in your best interest. Do not let this be a reason to hold back from sharing, and do not feel embarrassed. We know many young people do not want to share because they think people will think are stupid, or attention seeking, but it is not true. If it is a worrying you, people want to hear and they want to help.

And now it's Christmas!

Here are our tips for this Christmas season!



1. Honesty

Christmas is a time to get involved, but sometimes you just don't feel up to it. Just be honest, sometimes you just need to put yourself first!

2. Pyjamas!

Christmas is the season for hanging out in your pyjamas. Just take a day to chill and relax.

3. Get outside

I know we just said to take a day out in pyjamas, but just don't do it everyday. Some fresh air will help clear your mind and gentle exercise can improve your mood.

4. Don't believe everything you see

So many perfect memories being created everywhere, at least that's what we are shown on TV, social media, even the pictures our friends send us directly. Just remember not everything is as it seems.

5. Talk

If it is all getting too much find someone to talk with. A friend, a family member or even one of the services listed at the bottom of this newsletter, there are many people ready to listen.

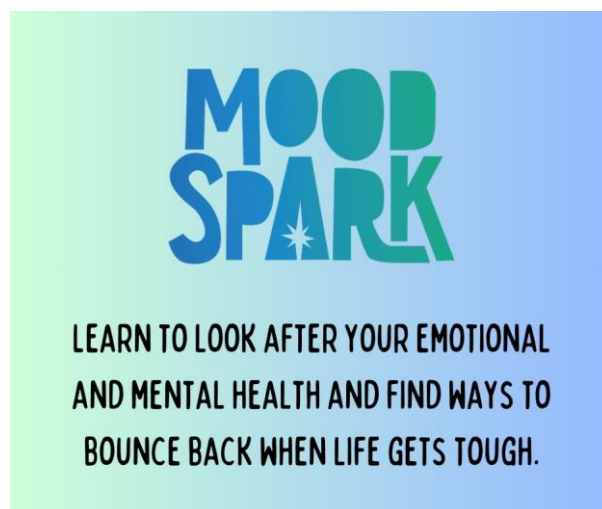
6. Give yourself a gift

You don't have to go out and buy yourself something, but you could treat yourself to an early night, a long morning lay in bed, a bath, a hot chocolate, whatever you choose, make sure you choose it just for you.

Websites



1 - <https://goodmentalhealthmatters.com/for-young-people>



2 - <https://moodspark.org.uk/>



FIND OUT WHAT'S NORMAL, HOW TO COPE
WITH ANY BUMPS ON THE ROAD AND WHERE
TO GO TO GET HELP IF YOU NEED IT.

3 - <https://www.kentyouthhealth.nhs.uk/>



IT'S NORMAL FOR CHILDREN TO FEEL ANXIOUS OR STRESSED
ABOUT SCHOOL.

WHETHER IT'S EXAMS PRESSURE, ISSUES WITH FRIENDS,
BULLYING OR WORRIES ABOUT LIFE AFTER SCHOOL, THERE'S LOTS
OF CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN THAT CAN IMPACT HOW THEY FEEL.

WE WANT EVERY CHILD TO FEEL HAPPY IN MEDWAY.

4 - [Child mental health / Medway Council](#)

Talk to someone today



A CONFIDENTIAL TEXTING
SERVICE FOR YOUNG
PEOPLE AGED 11-19. YOU
CAN TEXT ABOUT ANY
CONCERNS OR HEALTH
ISSUES ON 07520 618850.
AVAILABLE MONDAY TO
FRIDAY, 9AM TO 5PM.

5 - If you are in Kent [ChatHealth / Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust \(kentcht.nhs.uk\)](#)



AN ONLINE MENTAL WELLBEING COMMUNITY FOR ALL
10 – 25 YEAR OLDS. WE OFFER FREE ONLINE
COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT INCLUDING SELF-HELP
TOOLS, ARTICLES, JOURNALS, MAGAZINES,
DISCUSSION BOARDS AND ACCESS TO FULLY
TRAINED COUNSELLORS ONLINE 365 DAYS A YEAR.

6 - [Kooth](#)



Need support now? Text
'Kent' or **'Medway'** to
85258 for in-the-moment
help. We are here for
everyone, any age, 24/7.
www.releasethepressure.uk

7 - [Release the pressure](#)



8 - If you are in Medway send a message to and chat with a school nurse 07480 635 786

If you are finding it really difficult, you may wish to talk to a trusted adult, or get in touch with one of these services.



Porchlight  NHS

THE BEYOU PROJECT CONNECTS YOUNG PEOPLE IN KENT AND MEDWAY WHO ARE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS, NON-BINARY OR ARE QUESTIONING THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND / OR GENDER IDENTITY.

WE OFFER A SAFE, WELCOMING AND NON-JUDGEMENTAL SPACE WHERE YOUNG LGBTQ+ PEOPLE CAN MEET TO SOCIALISE, HAVE FUN AND HELP EACH OTHER.

9 - [The BeYou Project](#)

MIND AND BODY IN KENT SUPPORTS CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 13-25 AND IN MEDWAY YOUNG ADULTS AGED 18-25 WHO ARE SELF-HARMING, AT RISK OF SELF-HARMING OR STRUGGLING WITH THEIR MENTAL WELLBEING.

WE HELP YOU FIND POSITIVE WAYS TO MANAGE DIFFICULT THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS, WORKING WITH SMALL GROUPS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND IN THE COMMUNITY.

withyou

10 - [*Mind and Body*](#)



PORCHLIGHT ADOLESCENT WELLBEING SERVICE (PAWS) IS A SERVICE FOR 13-18 YEAR OLDS IN ASHFORD, DOVER, DEAL, FOLKESTONE AND THANET WHO ARE EXPERIENCING ANXIETY, A BREAKDOWN IN FAMILY COMMUNICATION, OR A BREAKDOWN IN RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR SCHOOL OR PEERS.

11 - [*Porchlight Adolescent Wellbeing Service \(PAWS\)*](#)

THE KCHFT SCHOOL HEALTH TEAM SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGHOUT PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL.

YOU MAY BE FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO MANAGE AND UNDERSTAND YOUR FEELINGS. YOU MIGHT EXPERIENCE A WIDE VARIETY OF DIFFICULTIES INCLUDING LOW MOOD, DIFFICULTY SLEEPING, LOSS OF APPETITE, DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING OR MIGHT BE AVOIDING SCHOOL.



12 - [*Emotional health and wellbeing | Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust \(kentcht.nhs.uk\)*](#)

AS PART OF THE MEDWAY COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE EMOTIONAL WELLBEING SERVICE WE OFFER SHORT TERM THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED BETWEEN 5 TO 19 WHO LIVE IN MEDWAY.

OUR SERVICE IS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE RECENTLY STARTED TO DISPLAY EMOTIONAL WELLBEING CONCERNS. THESE CAN INCLUDE BUT NOT LIMITED TO: LOW MOOD, FEELING ANXIOUS, STRESSED, ANGER, LOW SELF CONFIDENCE.



13 - [*Emotional wellbeing :: Medway Community Healthcare*](#)

This Sway has been developed by the
i-Thrive and Participation team at Kent County Council,
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