

#FLOURISH

A short guide by students to maintaining mental wellbeing for students, parents and caregivers



A bit about us...

Sutton Council Youth Council

The council was formed in 2017 by Councillor Alex Yip and is made up of representatives from the sixth forms of all eight secondary schools and colleges in Sutton Coldfield, with the aim of supporting what we believe to be the biggest concerns for the youth of Sutton.

In our inaugural year we have organised a Sutton Secondary School-wide own clothes day to fund local charity, Kids; a centre providing support for disabled children and their families in Birmingham.

We focused our winter projects on the most vulnerable in our community by hosting a quiz to raise money for charities for the elderly and helping the homeless by collecting for a local food bank.

Why Mental Health?

Students are among the most affected by mental health problems. As a group of 16-18 year olds, many of us have been affected by these issues, either directly or through friends and family who have suffered with mental illness.

We are now looking to raise awareness of mental health issues in schools and help students maintain good mental health with the help of the organisations listed below.

Twitter: @Sutton_youth
Email:
contactscyc@gmail.com



Information for students...

When it comes to mental health, we young adults are some of the most affected with **20%** experiencing a mental health problem in any given year. Thankfully, progress is being made by opening up the discussion about mental health. Most of us have a basic understanding but there are over **200** forms of classified mental illness.

Though we'll never be experts in all of them, it's worth knowing basic steps on tackling mental health issues and supporting those who have them.

AND BREATHE...

Make yourself as **comfortable** as possible, loosening any clothing that may restrict your breathing. If possible, lie down place both arms slightly away from your sides with your palms facing up. Keep your legs fully extended or knees bent with feet flat on the floor. If you are sitting, place your arms on the arms of the chair with feet flat on the ground.

Take regular and deep but comfortable breaths, in through the nose and out through the mouth. Some find it helpful to count to five as they inhale and exhale.



Most are aware of their 'normal' **stress levels**, able to pinpoint the causes of why they are feeling out of sorts and are able to acknowledge when they need help. Some find it harder to cope in times of high stress like exam season; it's impossible to know the full extent of what someone's feeling behind the front they may put up to friends. If you've noticed a mate acting out of sorts or becoming distant, **reach out** to them. Simply being a listening ear could be enough but don't be afraid to put someone in contact with organisations that could help (a list of helpful contacts can be found at the back).

THE AWARE METHOD

Many are familiar with first aid mnemonics like **ABC** (airway, breathing, compressions) but many find themselves unsure of how to help a friend or even themselves if suffering a panic attack.

Try the **AWARE** Method:

Accept the anxiety; do not try to fight your natural responses

Watch the changes in your body or perception

Act as normally as possible using the breathing techniques

Repeat the steps, do not be disheartened if you don't improve instantly

Expect to improve; a positive mindset will improve your recovery

Take a moment...



..TO COLOUR

Colouring is proven to increase mindfulness and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. Plus, it's fun!

Why don't you take a few minutes to colour in our emblem?

..TO REFLECT

Sometimes we don't pay enough attention to our mental wellbeing. Here's a 'mood diary' to get you started. Try colouring in the box depending on how you've felt, **red** for angry, **green** for sad, **yellow** for happy etc, and put a little comment about possibly influential factors.

	Monday	
	Tuesday	
	Wednesday	
	Thursday	
	Friday	
	Saturday	
	Sunday	

..TO READ A BOOK

Why not take a few moments to switch off and read something completely different or a self help book? There is a booklist about mental health issues specifically for **13-18 year olds** with advice and information about issues like anxiety, stress, OCD, and difficult experiences like bullying and exams. The books are all endorsed by health experts, as well as young people. You can be recommended something by a health professional, or you can visit your **local library** and take a book out yourself. There is huge evidence around the value of reading to support health and wellbeing, switching off and escapism, as well as the value of libraries as a different and free space that is both **welcoming** and **empowering** for you! Why not give it a go!

- Non-fiction titles include 'Can I Tell You About Eating Disorders?: A Guide for Friends, Family and Professionals'
- Fiction titles include 'The Perks of Being a Wallflower' and 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time'



..TO GET ACTIVE

Maintaining physical wellbeing can be highly **beneficial** to your mental health. Being in control of your own body can provide focus and direction when other aspects of your life may be causing you stress. Have you ever felt that you're stuck in that vicious cycle of doing nothing all day and feeling even more tired than you were before? Being cooped up inside for long periods of time can leave you fatigued and reluctant to get active. Taking time out of your day to exercise not only keeps you physically fit but also releases **endorphins**. Try taking a walk with friends or joining a team, here you're covering both your physical and social needs resulting in a more **positive** mental state. It's also important to maintain a healthy balanced diet, allowing yourself some indulgences but not falling into the stereotypical student trap of living on fast food. Trying and preparing new dishes can be stimulating and provide a welcome release from your studies.



Information for parents...

THE FACTS

- 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year. Half of them say that the associated isolation and shame is worse than the condition itself.
- 3 in 4 mental illnesses start in childhood
- For those aged 5 – 19, suicide is the most common cause of death.
- 70% of children and adolescents affected haven't had appropriate interventions at a sufficiently early age.



PREVENTION OVER INTERVENTION

It's important to start the conversation about mental health at an early stage; **thoughts** and **feelings** shouldn't be taboo. Being open at home can serve as a release for students who may be under high levels of pressure at school or struggling with relationships outside of the home.

Maintaining a routine, praising your child and talking to them about their wellbeing are small steps that can have a big impact on their mental health.

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

It's important to note times of the year when your child may feel stressed or anxious. Exam periods, approaching coursework deadlines, transitioning to a new year group, even something as seemingly small as delivering a presentation in class can be a trigger. It seems obvious to say 'pay attention to your child,' but sometimes it's all too easy to put behaviour down to being a teenager; it's about spotting behaviour changes and triggers to see if your child is receiving the full support they require.

There are some signs that, if appear repeatedly, may be worth seeking further help with. These include your child being quieter, irritable, increasingly private or shut off, unfocused or uninterested in previous passions. Maybe they've quit a once beloved sports club with little explanation; it might be worth a talk.

Listen and empathise and don't make anyone wrong about their feelings. Just being there and listening without even offering advice is oftentimes the best way to support. Give your child time and patience and signpost to other organisations who are better trained to help.

Relating

The people around you offer a valuable pool of support so it's important to put time into strengthening those connections.

Give it a go:

- Meet up with someone you haven't seen in a while
- Turn off distractions to chat with friends or family about your day

Exercising

Regular activity will provide an endorphin boost and increase confidence.

Give it a go:

- Find an activity that suits you and your schedule
- Swap the car on short journeys and cycle or walk to work



Awareness

Taking time to switch off autopilot and 'be in the moment' is a great tool to combat stress.

Give it a go:

- Pay attention to your senses — what can you see, hear or feel around you?
- Choose a regular point in the day to reflect



Giving

Holding out a helping hand makes other people happy and will make you feel happier too.

Give it a go:

- Share your skills or offer support
- Ask friends, family or colleagues how they are and listen without judgement



10 KEYS TO HAPPIER LIVING

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Find out more about the 10 Keys to Happier Living at actionforhappiness.org



MHFA England

Visit mhfaengland.org to learn about Mental Health First Aid and how you can support a friend, family member, colleague or student with their mental health

Trying out

Learning new things is stimulating and can help to lift your mood.

Give it a go:

- Take on a new role at work or school
- Try out a new hobby, club or activity that interests you



Direction

Working towards positive, realistic goals can provide motivation and structure.

Give it a go:

- Choose a goal that is meaningful to you, not what someone else expects of you
- Remember to celebrate progress along the way



Meaning

People who have meaning in their lives experience less stress, anxiety and depression.

Give it a go:

- Prioritise the activities, people and beliefs that bring you the strongest sense of purpose
- Volunteer for a cause, be part of a team, notice how your actions make a difference for others

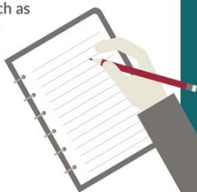


Resilience

Although we can't always choose what happens to us, we can often choose our own response to what happens.

Give it a go:

- Find an outlet such as talking to friends or writing it down
- Take action to improve your resilience skills



Emotions

Positive emotions can build up a buffer against stress and even lead to lasting changes in the brain to help maintain wellbeing.

Give it a go:

- Take time to notice what you're grateful for and focus on the good aspects of any situation
- Set aside time to have fun

Acceptance

No one is perfect. Longing to be someone different gets in the way of making the most of our own happiness.

Give it a go:

- Be kind to yourself when things go wrong
- Shift the focus away from what you don't have and can't do, to what you have and can do

Useful contacts...

CHARITIES & ORGANISATIONS

Young People's Health (AYPH)
www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk
Telephone: 0207 922 7715



Early Intervention Foundation
www.eif.org.uk



Heads Together
www.headstogether.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation
www.mentalhealth.org.uk



**BETTER
PATHWAYS**
Positive about mental health

Mind
www.mind.org.uk



Place2Be
www.place2be.org.uk
Telephone: 0207 923 5500
Email: enquiries@place2be.org.uk

Rethink Mental Illness
www.rethink.org
Telephone: 0300 5000 927
Email: info@rethink.org / advice@rethink.org



YoungMinds
www.youngminds.org.uk
Telephone: 0808 802 5544

Pause.

Reading Well - Books on Prescription
<http://reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription>

Forward Thinking Birmingham
www.forwardthinkingbirmingham.org.uk
Drop-in Centre: Pause
Monday - Friday: 8am-8pm, Saturday & Sunday: 10am-3pm
Access Centre Number: 0300 300 0099



APPS

7 CUPS - Online therapy and emotional support
PACIFICA - Audio lessons and activities to tackle stress, anxiety and depression
CALM - Mindfulness
RECHARGE - Sleep tracker and boosting activities
CALM HARM - For tackling the temptation to self-harm

**IT'S OKAY TO
NOT BE
OKAY**
#FLOURISH

Designed and edited by:

Evie Barker Y13
Marcus Harrington Y12
Jamie Babington Y12

And finally: however you are feeling, remember that you absolutely are not alone. Many of us have been through what you may be feeling, there is a lot of support available and it's okay to not be okay!

