



**Ormiston  
RIVERS  
Academy**

# WELLBEING

Self-care guide for students





During this pandemic you may have experienced a mix of emotions, some of which are positive and some of which are negative.

Managing your feelings in a healthy way is an important skill to learn. We have put together a self-care pack to help you do this.

This pack is filled with useful ideas and contacts should you need more professional support.

# Self Help Strategies

## Time away from technology

Sometimes technology and social media can be a lifeline but sometimes they can be completely overwhelming and it feels like notifications and messages are never ending.

When we feel like we are constantly attached to everyone and all that is happening in the wider world it can become exhausting. That's one of the reasons why lots of people find time away from social media a really important part of their daily self-care (even if it does feel weird at first!)

*“As much as I love my phone and everything I use it for I feel like I'd be much less anxious without it.”*

There are, ironically, a range of apps which can help you manage your use of technology if you feel you spend too much time on social media.

*“I find that I sleep better when I stop looking at my phone earlier in the evening.”*

## Useful Apps

**Mute** [justmuteit.com](http://justmuteit.com)

The newest app in this genre, Mute tracks screen-time and pickups, and logs your “detox streaks” with an emphasis on celebrating the latter.

**Moment** [inthemoment.io](http://inthemoment.io)

Moment sets daily limits on your usage, and will even try to force you off the device with a barrage of notifications if you choose that option.

**Space** [space-app.com](http://space-app.com)

Space starts with a quiz to assign you a phone-user “type” (from Rabbit Hole Wanderer to Sticky Social Mitt) and then helps you set goals to change your habits.

**Hold** [holdstudent.com](http://holdstudent.com)

Aimed at students, Hold tracks how much time they spend not using their phone, and converts that into points to be redeemed for real-world rewards.

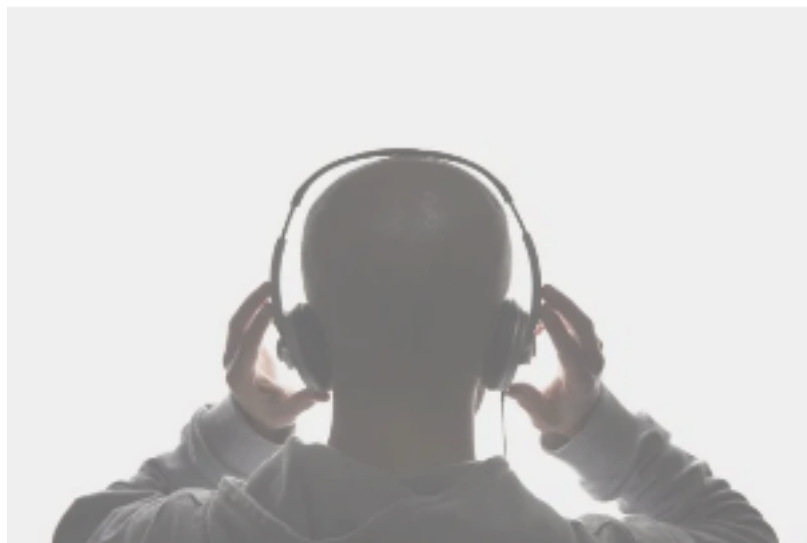
**Forest** [forestapp.cc](http://forestapp.cc)

Forest takes a different approach: starting the app plants a virtual tree, which grows for as long as you don't quit the app (and thus use other ones), but dies if you exit.

## Listening to music

A lot of young people we spoke to said listening to music helped them manage their feelings in several different ways:

- Listening to music you know you enjoy to help improve your mood
- Listening to music really loudly to release built up tension/ anger
- Listening to music similar to the emotion you're feeling to release pent up emotions
- Listening to music that is the opposite to what your feeling e.g Calming music when you are feeling anxious to help soothe yourself



## Distraction techniques

Having distraction techniques can help you to focus on something else when you're in a panicked, anxious or distressed state. Although it may seem like a difficult thing to do, it can become a useful and healthy way of coping with the situation. Here are some ideas that you could try out, or ask your close friends and relatives to do with you when you need support:

- Counting things around you (e.g how many blue things are in your room)
- Doodling or colouring
- Counting backwards from 10, then from 25, and then 50
- Focussing on your breathing, by breathing in for four, holding your breath for four and then breathe out for four ([link to meditation tile](#))
- Imagine a place where you feel safe, and then imagine the sounds you can hear in that place

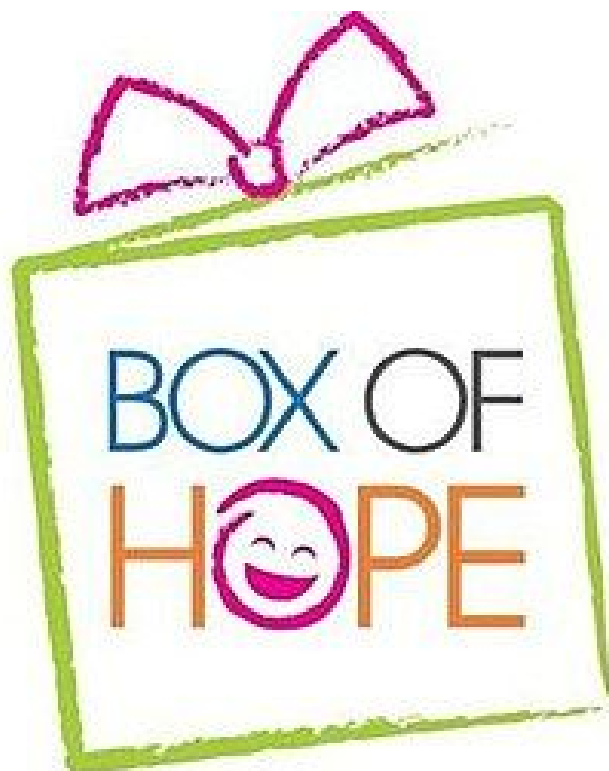
Many people, in an attempt to distract themselves from a painful situation or release some pressure, do turn to unhealthy distraction techniques, such as self-harm, and struggle to overcome this habit.

If you have felt this urge, it's really important to speak to someone, be as kind and understanding towards yourself as possible, and remember that you need and deserve support with what you're going through. The NHS has a free [Calm Harm](#) App which encourages users to distract themselves from self-harm, and a GP or mental health professional can recommend healthier replacement techniques, such as holding ice cubes or flicking an elastic band.

## Hope Box

A hope box (or a whatever-you'd-like-to-call-it box) is a place to put special memory items or little trinkets, such as photos of an important day, concert or train tickets, gifts or notes that friends or family have given, or even receipts for things you'd like to remember enjoying. You could put in letters from your friends with words of encouragement, or birthday cards from loved ones. Some people might like to include smells that make them happy, such as a perfume tester or some dried lavender.

Whether it's a stress toy that calms you down or an emergency chocolate bar, anything that helps you feel better in a moment of need can go inside. You can find guidance on how to create a hope box online from organisations such as [Papyrus UK](#) and [Box of Hope](#) and there are also [virtual hope box apps](#) available.





## Spending time with friends

Sometimes when we are feeling low or anxious it can be really easy to slowly stop getting out and seeing our friends as much as we used to. For some people, it can be really helpful to try and break that habit by purposefully spending more time with friends and people you get along with.

‘Ringing for a chat helps you get away from how you’re feeling’.

There are lots of things you can do with your friends including:

1. Have regular film nights or start a book club.
2. Go for long walks or exercise together.
3. Host a games night or play games together online.
4. Make dinner together - each bringing a dish!
5. Volunteer or attend a class or course together.

Making new friends can sometimes be difficult especially if you've recently moved or started studying somewhere new.



## Be kind to yourself

If a friend was upset, you wouldn't want them to beat themselves up over it. You may have advice that you know they find helpful - or sometimes all they need is a hug.

The same applies when you are upset. You may feel you are judging your emotions, leading to you piling up more difficult feelings. Or you may just feel sad. Perhaps you want comfort, and don't really know where to find it or how to ask for it. Sometimes it might be hard to know what you need!

You could try treating yourself differently, offering kindness to yourself. This could be in the form of calmly 'telling' yourself or your difficult thoughts a kind thing. You could pick out something you're proud of, and remind yourself of it, or you could say something nice to yourself that you know others often say to you.

It's important to try not to argue with your negative inner voice - this might make it worse. Instead, you could gently repeat an affirmation, either out loud or in your head.

This could be something like **'let whatever you do today be enough'**, or **'I don't have to change myself'**. Whatever works for you, whether it's simple or complex.

You could make yourself A Positive Affirmation Jar. Fill your jar with positive affirmations. "I am great", I am a good friend", "I am a strong believer".





# Meditation

Meditation is an ancient practice, and has links with mindfulness, as well as with numerous religions and cultural traditions.

Meditation is designed to help train attention and awareness, and promotes mental and emotional clarity. There's lots of different ways to do it, and many find that focusing the mind on a particular object, thought or activity helps them achieve a calm state. Lots of people also find that meditation helps them regulate their breathing, which can minimise the activity of the sympathetic nervous system, which is the part of us responsible for the 'fight or flight' stress response. As a result, many people report feeling reduced symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression or pain and increased feelings of wellbeing, peace and self-perception. At the very least, it can encourage you to take time out for yourself.

A quick mindfulness meditation involves breathing in for four seconds, holding your breath for four seconds and then breathing out for four seconds. You can also try steady deep breaths, breathing out for longer than when you breathe in, which can particularly help if you're trying to fall asleep or calm yourself down.

There are many beginner guides to meditation on [YouTube](#) and [free meditation apps](#) you can find online which may help you build meditation into your daily routine.



# How to get a good night's sleep

A minimum of 8 to 9 hours' good sleep on school nights is recommended for teens. Here's how to make sure your teen is getting enough sleep to stay healthy and do well at school.

## **Limit screens in the bedroom**

If possible, don't have a mobile, tablet, TV or computer in the bedroom at night, as the light from the screen interferes with sleep. Having screens in the bedroom also means you are more likely to stay up late interacting with friends on social media.

## **Exercise for better sleep**

It's official: regular exercise helps you sleep more soundly, as well as improving your general health. You should be aiming for at least 60 minutes' exercise every day, including aerobic activities such as fast walking and running. Exercising out in daylight will help to encourage healthy sleep patterns, too.

## **Cut out the caffeine**

Drinks less caffeine – caffeine found in drinks such as cola, tea and coffee – particularly in the 4 hours before bed. Too much caffeine can stop them falling asleep and reduce the amount of deep sleep they have.

## **Don't binge before bedtime**

Eating too much, or too little, close to bedtime can lead to an overfull or empty stomach. This can be a cause of discomfort during the night and may prevent sleep.

## **Have a good routine**

Ensure you have a regular bedtime routine. Doing the same things in the same order an hour or so before bed can help them drift off to sleep.

## **Create a sleep-friendly bedroom**

Ensure you have a good sleeping environment – ideally a room that is dark, cool, quiet and comfortable. It might be worth investing in thicker curtains or a blackout blind to help block out early summer mornings and light evenings.

## **Talk through any problems**

Talk to your parents, sibling or friend about anything you're worried about. This will help you put your problems into perspective and sleep better.

OR you could jot down your worries or make a to-do list before you go to bed. This should mean you're less likely to lie awake worrying during the night.

## **Avoid long weekend lie-ins**

Try not to sleep in for hours at the weekends. Late nights and long lie-ins can disrupt your body clock and leave you with weekend "jet lag" on Monday morning.