

WHAT WHEN TO DO WHEN YOU FEEL STRESSED



Dorset HealthCare
University
NHS Foundation Trust



April is Stress Awareness Month and so we thought we would share with you 30 ways for you and your families to manage stress, stay connected and promote good physical and mental health. There is one idea for every day of the month so you can try different ideas out and see what works for you. If the text is underlined then it is a link taking you to another page, make sure you right click and open in new tab!

Stress is normal and will happen throughout our lives. Our 30 ways of ideas on what to do when you feel stressed are not just for April, they can be used whenever you need.

This resource has been created by Education Mental Health Practitioners who work as part of the Mental Health Support Team in Schools. We are working hard to improve the health and wellbeing of children and young people in our local area.

Illustrations on front page - [@saskiafelsteadillustration](#)

1

FIVE FINGER BREATHING



When you feel like your mind is going a million miles a minute, this short exercise can help calm you and silence some of the worries you may be having.

Step 1: Place the index finger of one hand on the outside of the pinky finger on your other hand. As you breathe in, trace up to the tip of your pinky, and as you breathe out, trace down the inside of your pinky.

Step 2: On your next inhale, trace up the outside of your ring finger, and on the exhale, trace down the inside of your ring finger.

Step 3: Inhale and trace up the outside of your middle finger; exhale and trace down the inside of your middle finger.

Step 4: Continue finger by finger until you've traced your entire hand.

Step 5: Reverse the process and trace from your thumb back to your pinky.

2 54321 GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

This five-step exercise can be very helpful during periods of anxiety or panic by helping to ground you in the present when your mind is bouncing around between various anxious thoughts.

- 5 Look around you and name **five** things that you can see around you. Think about how that thing looks to you: the colours and shapes, etc.
- 4 Now focus on **four** things that you can feel. You might be able to feel your feet on the ground or your body as you sit on a chair. Or you may feel body sensations like an itch or your stomach rumbling.
- 3 Now name **three** things that you can hear around you. You may become aware of the traffic in the background or some birds chirping in a nearby tree.
- 2 Note **two** things that you can smell around you. You may notice the smell of grass or perhaps the smell of perfume. If you can't smell anything around you, then it can be helpful to name two smells that you like.
- 1 Think about **one** thing you like about yourself or one thing you have done that you are proud of.

3

This is about creating your happy place in your head that you can go to feel happier and safe.

SAFE

Where is your happy place?

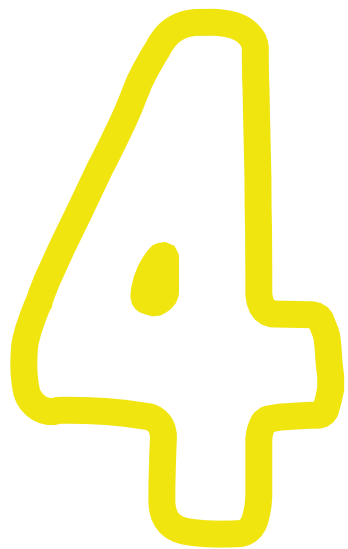
Think about the senses, what can you hear? What does it smell like? What can you see?



You can write this down, draw a picture of it or close your eyes to help visualise your happy place.

SPACE

When you are feeling worried or anxious you can return to this happy place to help feel calm and relaxed.



Dancing releases the neurotransmitter endorphins (also called happy hormones) which serve to reduce stress and cause our bodies to feel calm, happy and optimistic.

**DANCE
LIKE
NOBODY'S
WATCHING**



5

Sometimes just stepping outside and taking in your surroundings can help you feel calm and can help centre you.

GO OUTSIDE

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

WHAT DO YOU HEAR?

WHAT DO YOU SMELL?

WHAT DO YOU FEEL?

AND EXPLORE

6

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

You can change your mindset with your words. Get used to speaking kindly to yourself.

INSTEAD OF

I AM NOT GOOD AT



THIS IS TOO HARD



I AM AFRAID I WILL
MAKE A MISTAKE



I CAN SAY

I AM NOT GOOD AT THIS YET
BUT I WILL LEARN

THIS WILL REQUIRE EFFORT
AND THE RIGHT STRATEGY

WHEN I MAKE A MISTAKE, I
WILL LEARN FROM IT AND GET
BETTER



7

DON'T FORGET TO TAKE A BREAK

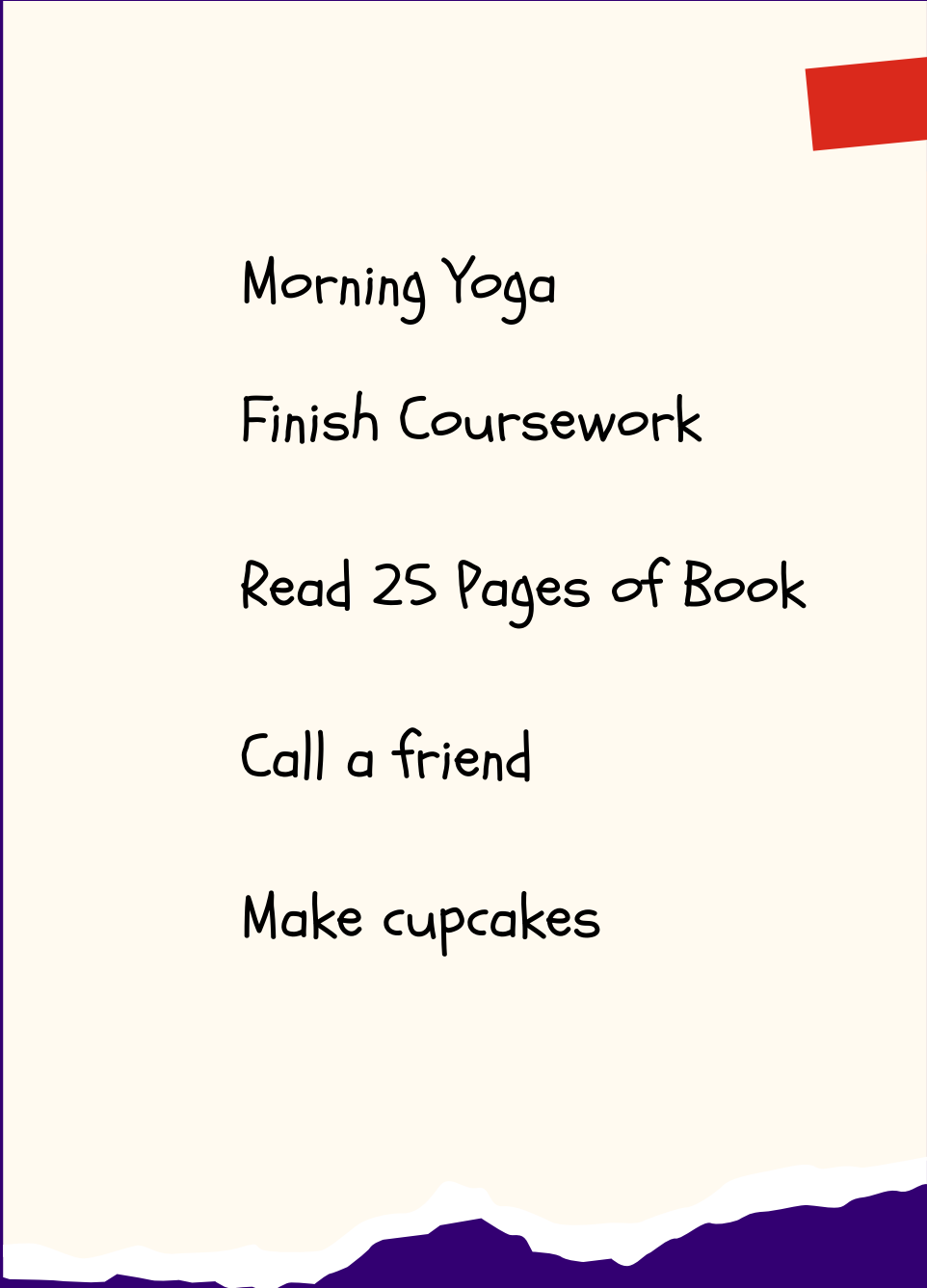


Sometimes the most productive thing you can do is rest.

8

Make a to-do list of things you want to get done today. Don't forget to make your goals achievable and to reward yourself when complete!

LET'S CRUSH TODAY!



Morning Yoga

Finish Coursework

Read 25 Pages of Book

Call a friend

Make cupcakes

9

CIRCLES OF CONTROL

Draw two circles, one inside the other. In the outer circle put all the things that you can't control and in the inner circle, put all the things you can control. Now focus on the inner circle and think of things you can do or put in place to help ease your worries. Some things will fall into both circles, for these think of what you can put in place to help manage your worries.



10 FOREST BATHING

In Japan, they practice something called forest bathing, or shinrin-yoku. Shinrin in Japanese means "forest," and yoku means "bath." So shinrin-yoku means bathing in the forest atmosphere, or taking in the forest through our senses.

This is not exercise, or hiking, or jogging. It is simply being in nature, connecting with it through our senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. Go to a park or wood and find a space to take it all in.

The sounds of the wood or park, the scent of the trees, the sunlight playing through the leaves, the fresh, clean air — these things give us a sense of comfort. They ease our stress and worry, help us to relax and to think more clearly.

11 PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Sit in a comfortable chair or lie on the floor or on a bed and make sure the whole of your body is comfortably supported including your arms, head and feet. Ensure you will not be disturbed by other noises. If you become aware of sounds just try to ignore them and let them leave your mind just as soon as they enter.

You can now close your eyes. Start to notice your breathing, take 2 slow and deep breaths and let the tension begin to flow out. As we breathe in we will tighten different muscle groups and as we breathe out we will relax them.

Let's start with our feet. On your next breath in, squeeze the muscle in your feet curling up your toes. As you breathe out, relax the muscle and let the muscles become heavy.

Bring your attention to your legs as you breathe in and tighten the muscles in your legs as you breathe out let your legs relax and become heavy.

Bring your attention to your hands as you breathe in and tighten the muscles in your fists. As you breathe out, notice your hands becoming heavy and relaxed.

Bring your attention to your face and squeeze all the muscles in your face as you breathe in and as you breathe out relax all the muscles in your face. Notice your face feeling relaxed. Let any tension go and feel your forehead become smooth.

Lastly, focus on your neck and squeeze your shoulders and neck muscles as you breathe in and as you breathe out relax your shoulders and neck. Feel your neck relax. Now your head is feeling heavy and floppy. Let your shoulders lower gently down.

Notice how your body feels as you begin to relax. Think about your breathing – your belly gently rising and falling as you breathe. Let your next breath be a little deeper, a little slower....

Now, you are feeling completely relaxed and heavy.



The Psychology Sisters | Podcast on Spotify explains what Progressive Muscle Relaxation is, how it works & when to use it for anxiety/stress. This podcast has a guided PMR exercise, too.

[SPOTI.FI/31W4WTH](https://open.spotify.com/show/31W4WTH)



12

CALL A FRIEND AND HAVE A GOOD CATCH UP

Having strong
social ties can
help you get
through
stressful times
and lower your
risk of
anxiety.





slide to power off

13

TRAIN YOUR BRAIN TO TURN OFF STRESS

Our nervous system has two parts: the sympathetic (activating, alerting, anxious part) and the parasympathetic part (calming, relaxing, restoring part).

Watch this video to find out different ways to turn on the parasympathetic nervous system in order to manage stress.

[BIT.LY/3VYG60W](https://bit.ly/3VYG60W)



14 WELLNESS JOURNAL

Writing can help you clear your head and make important connections between thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Sometimes all you need to get going with writing is to describe what you did today, what you thought about, or what happened in the world today; you might find that you have a lot more to say on the topic than you thought!



☐ TUE ☐ WED ☐ THU ☐ FRI ☐ SAT ☐ SUN

DATE : / /

SUBJECT :

affirmations & gratitude...

When you're out of ideas and feeling down about your abilities or your self-worth, try writing affirmations (e.g., "I am a kind person" or "I have a lot of talent"); you'll find something to write about and as a bonus you'll get a boost to your wellbeing!

Simply write about the people and aspects of your life that you are grateful for. Gratitude may help relieve stress and anxiety by focusing your thoughts on what's positive in your life.

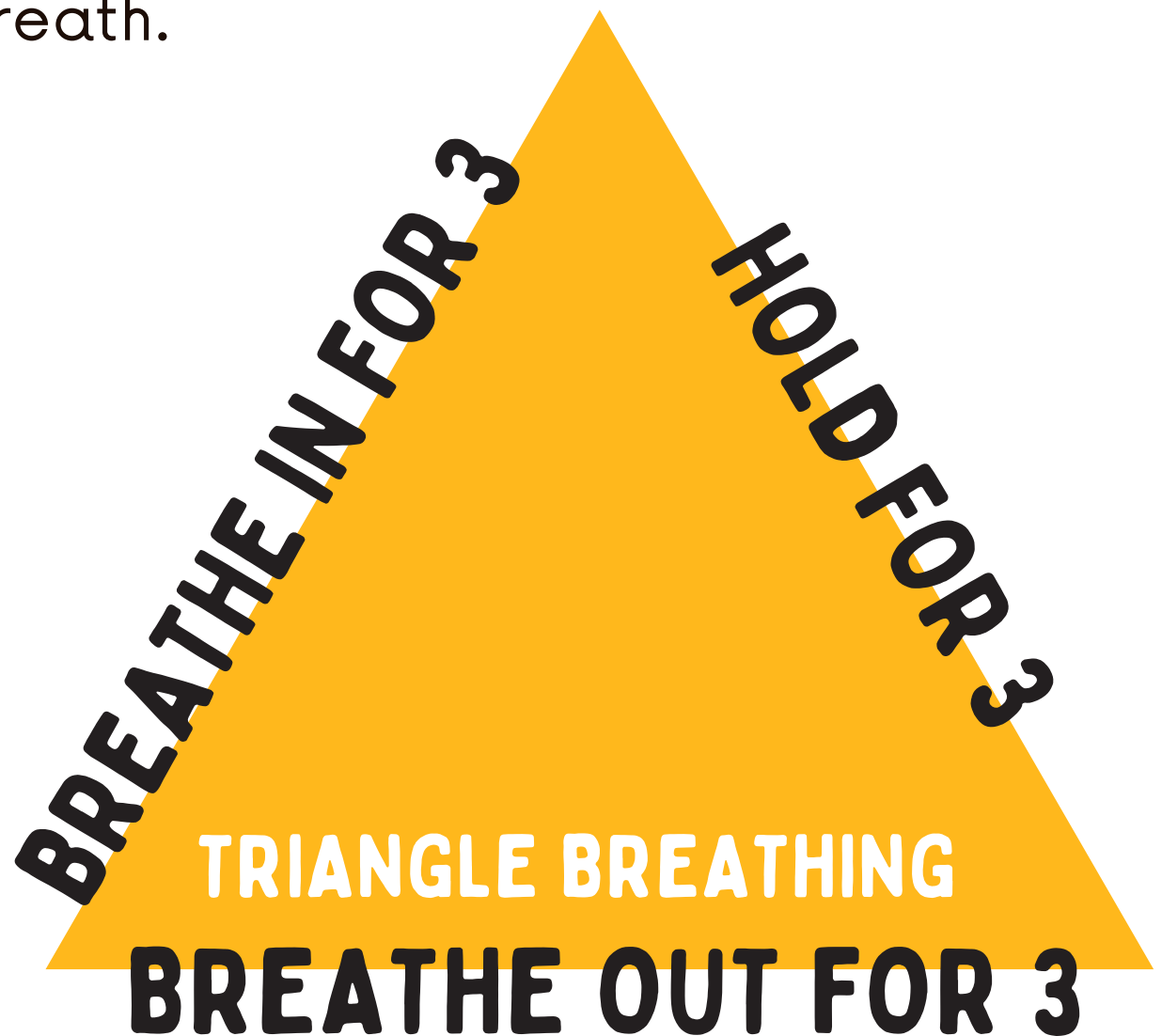
15 BREATHING EXERCISES

Deep breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body. This is because when you breathe deeply, it sends a message to your brain to calm down and relax. The brain then sends this message to your body. Try the triangle breathing method. Start at the bottom left of the triangle and work your way around the whole triangle to complete one full breath.



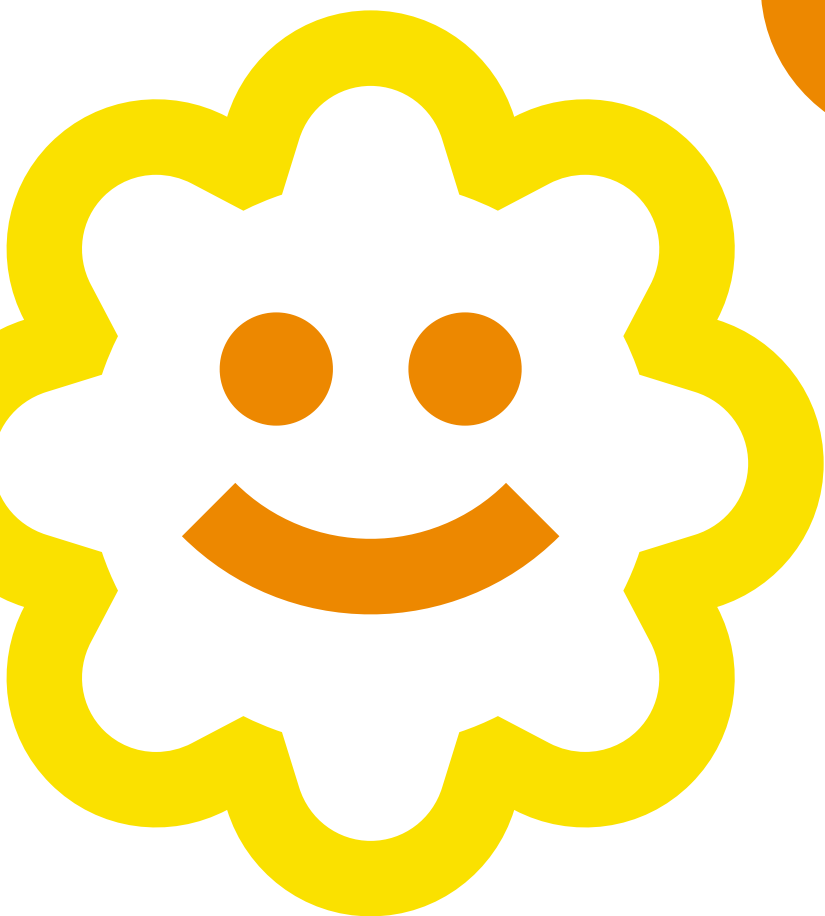
If you need more ideas or tips on breathing, this podcast talks about why knowing how to modulate and be aware of your breathing can be so important as a stress management skill.

[SPOTI.FI/2QTEUMH](https://open.spotify.com/show/2QTEUMH)



The Destress Podcast talks about laughter and positive emotions that can help with high stress, hard work and outside negative influences. In this episode, explore the value of focusing on the positive aspects of your life to your mental and physical health.

[SPOTI.FI/31JCUC7](https://open.spotify.com/show/31JCUC7)



**16 POSITIVE
EMOTIONS**



17

STRESS ON THE BRAIN

Have a listen to this music video made by students who talk about stress, trauma, the effect on your brain and tips to help stay calm in stressful situations:



[BIT.LY/3BZN8PQ](https://bit.ly/3BZN8PQ)



Stress on the Brain was made by a group of students from New River College (Islington), working with SoapBox Youth Centre.

18



The Destress Podcast brings ideas about ways to deal with stress. In this episode, Peace Mokoreen talks about colouring and how that helps to alleviate stress and relax the mind.

[SPOTI.FI/39BGUJL](https://spoti.fi/39BGUJL)



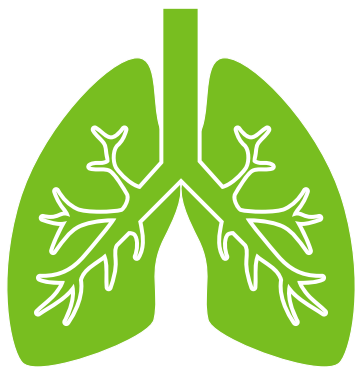
GET CREATIVE

Doing something creative that you enjoy like cooking, baking, art or photography can take you away from the stress at hand. Getting creative requires focus, concentration and physical activity which helps relax and refocus your mind.



19 THE 4 STEP REFRESH

This is a great way to start your day. If you can't do it every day, try doing this every Monday for that new week refresh feeling!



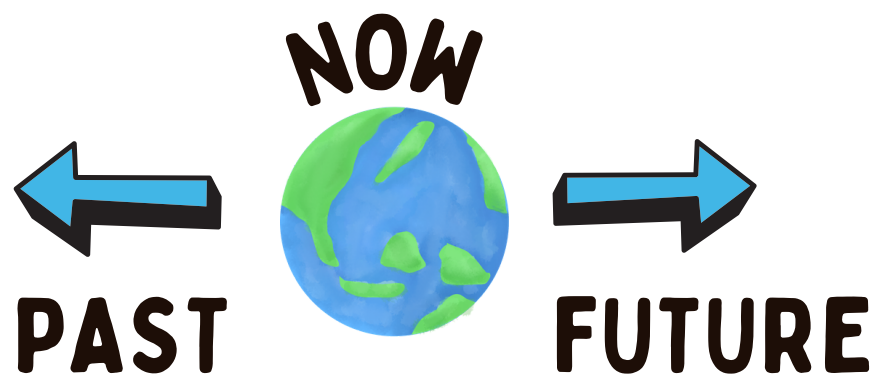
1. BREATHE

Focus on your breathing to help settle your mind.



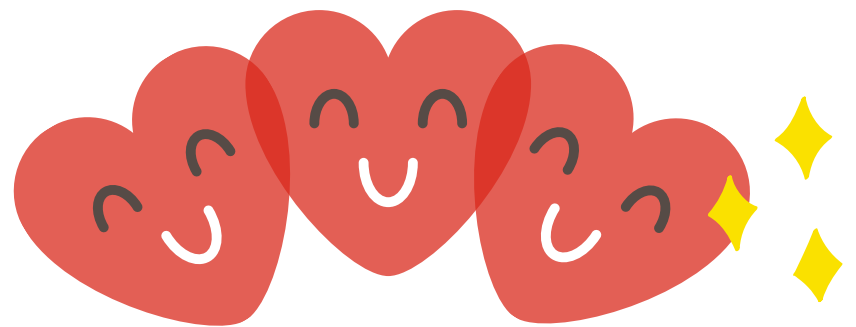
3. FEEL POSITIVE!

Let go from any harmful thoughts and feelings and redirect your thinking to be positive.



2. BE MINDFUL

Let go of thoughts about the past and worries about the future. Be in the present moment.



4. SPREAD THE JOY!

Share your positive energy with others.

20 HAVE A LAUGH!

Laughter is a proven mood enhancer. Take a laughing break with friends and family or watch your favourite comedy show and see how quickly you feel in a better frame of mind.



21 MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is taking notice of how your body feels and what you see, smell and taste. Maybe you even feel emotions in your body, perhaps through a tightness somewhere or a good sensation. Here are some ideas on how to practice mindfulness:

LISTEN TO A CALM PIECE OF MUSIC

Colours of Nature Music



Mindfulness means "awareness" and "being present". This podcast talks about how mindfulness meditation can help with attention and concentration, as well as develop skills to deal with depression and anxiety.

SPOTI.FI/3TX10YC



LOOK AT A PICTURE

Click here to find a picture a day, with thinking, writing and drawing activities to match.

TRY GARDEN YOGA

Use this easy guide to try out garden yoga!

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS BREATHING

Mindfulness Breathing.

TRY THIS MINDFULNESS CHALLENGE

Mindfulness Challenge

22 MINDFUL BREATHING

Feel more settled and calm by spending a few minutes focused on your breathing. Watch this 3-minute Mindful Breathing mindfulness meditation created by Stop, Breathe & Think.



[BIT.LY/2PT0XRK](https://bit.ly/2PT0XRK)



23 SWITCH OFF FROM SOCIAL MEDIA



I'M HAVING
A DAY OFF

Sometimes it can be hard to wind down and relax when you use Facebook/Instagram/Snapchat as there is just so much to look at and think about. Taking regular time outs from social media allows you more time to do other fun stuff and lets you not get overwhelmed or suffer from FOMO!

24 SMELL

We all know the pleasure that comes from an enjoyable smell, whether it's the fragrance of a flower or a food or a scent we associate with good memories. Studies have now found that certain smells can help the brain send messages to areas of the nervous system which help you relax.

Find out more: The top 7 essential oils for stress relief and how to use them



The Destress Podcast shares a tips about how to use aromatherapy to relax and treat yourself to a spa-like experience.

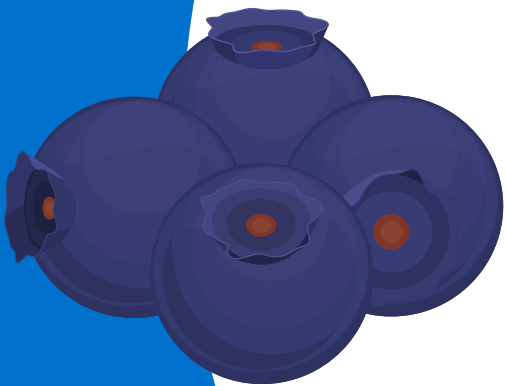
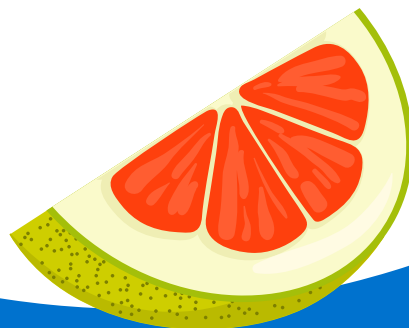
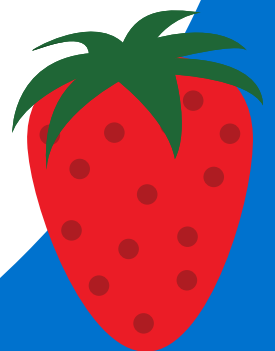
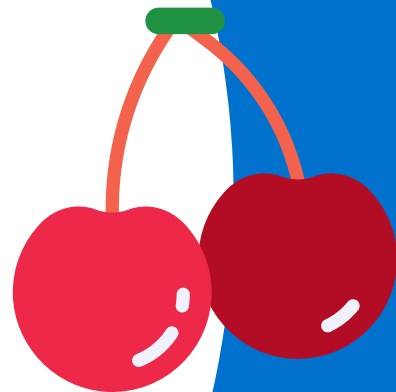
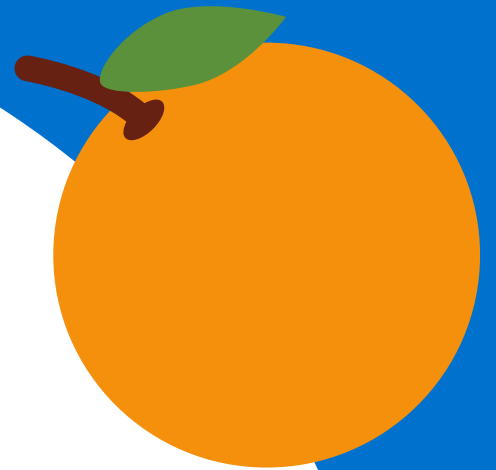
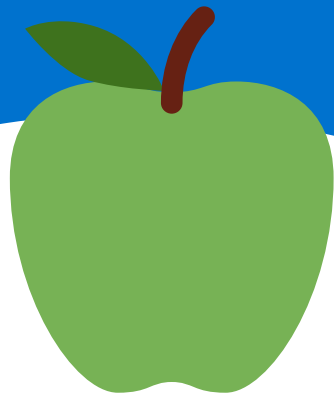
[SPOTI.FI/3D9HPDT](https://open.spotify.com/show/3D9HPDT)



25 FOOD AND MOOD

Watch this video to get
8 tips on how to
manage your mood with
food

BIT.LY/2PWE6RK



26 HELP YOURSELF

Know where to look or who to talk to when you are feeling overwhelmed with stress. Youngminds, Kooth and Childline all have great resources for you to look at and numbers to people to reach out to if things get too much.



MEDITATION

Meditation is about quietening the mind. Not reacting; just noticing. Even a minute can make a difference. Taking some time to look at the clouds is a simple way of helping us feel more connected to the present moment and the world around us.

Find a comfortable spot. Start by lying on the ground looking up at the sky. This could be in your garden or through your window.

Let yourself rest while you watch the clouds pass through the sky. Become aware of the spaciousness and openness of the sky. If thoughts, emotions, or sensations arise, allow them to pass as effortlessly as the clouds.

You could use this Cloud Spotting Guide to notice the different clouds in the sky!



The Destress Podcast shares how meditation can help with stress throughout life. Allowing your mind to focus and your thoughts to be reorganised can be a powerful tool to cope with hard times but also to build resilience.

[SPOTI.FI/3LR6ALC](https://open.spotify.com/show/3LR6ALC)

28 EXERCISE

All Yoga Disco

Yoga Morning Fresh

15 minute TikTok dance party!

15 minute Dua Lipa dance party!

Minecraft | A Cosmic Kids Yoga Adventure

Evermore dance workout

Trolls | A Cosmic Kids Yoga Adventure





Exercise increases your overall health and your sense of wellbeing, which puts more pep in your step every day. But exercise also has some direct stress-busting benefits. It pumps up your endorphins. Physical activity may help bump up the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins.



29

REMEMBER: IT'S TOTALLY OKAY TO TAKE A BREAK.

Take time to recharge. Do something pleasurable or relaxing for a little while such as reading, watching TV, spending time with your pet, or taking a shower.

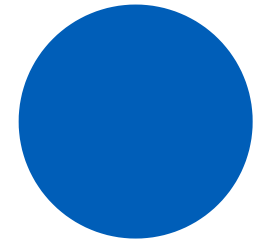


30 SLEEP ROUTINE



Why is a sleep routine so important? Humans are creatures of habit. We LOVE routines because they are predictable, reliable and help us feel supported. A sleep routine is where you have the same process of getting ready for bed each night and then go to bed, and to sleep, at the same time each night. By doing this same set up every single day, your body learns when it's time to chill out and wind down now. You'll feel your muscles relaxing, your brain quietening down and sleep coming easier each time.

DON'T
FORGET
TO



YOU'RE DOING GREAT!

