Support Guide for Children Age 5 - 11

CARE RESPONDERS

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Young People's Mental Health Research Centre
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This guide was made by the Care Responders team to help you look after yourself when things feel hard. It also shows where you and your parent or carer can get support.



Feel free to give feedback on the support guide!

What's in the support guide?



"Be kind to yourself, this isn't your fault."
- A member of the Care Responders Lived Experience Advisory Group

Immediate Support

If your child has taken an overdose or needs urgent medical help, call 999 or go to the nearest A&E department.

If your child has physical injuries such as cuts or burns, contact 111 or your GP for advice.

If you need urgent mental health support or advice, phone our 111/option 2 or request an immediate GP appointment.

"Reaching out for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. You are not alone."

- A member of the Care Responders Lived Experience Advisory Group

Breathing Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are like a toolbox for your feelings. It shows you ways to handle big emotions, like being upset or worried.

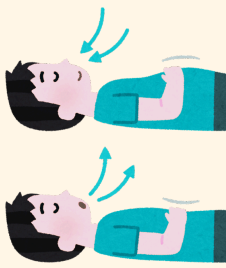
Flower Breathing

Pretend you are holding a flower

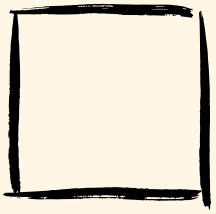
Breathe in like you are smelling the flower, count to 3

Breathe out through your mouth like you are blowing the petals

Square Breathing



1. Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds
2. Hold your breath for 4 seconds
3. Breathe out through your mouth for 4 seconds.
4. Pause for 4 seconds and think about the square



Physical Coping Strategies

Physical coping strategies are things you can do with your body to help you feel better when you're upset or worried.

Hand Tracing





- **Hold one hand open** like a star ⭐
- Use a **finger** from your other hand to **trace** around it
- Keep going until you've traced **all 5 fingers**
- **Repeat**

Relaxation

1. **Find a Comfy Spot:** Sit down or lie down somewhere you like.
2. **Tighten and Relax:** Start with your toes. Squeeze them tight, and then let them relax.
3. **Breathe:** When you squeeze, breathe in. When you relax, breathe out.

Do the same with your legs, belly, hands, arms, shoulders, and face.



Sensory Coping Strategies

When you're feeling upset or stressed, these quick sensory coping strategies can help you feel better.

The Scribble Storm:
Take a red or black crayon and scribble as hard as you can on a piece of paper until you're tired. Then, rip the paper up!



The Ice Melt:
Hold an ice cube in your hand. Notice how cold it feels and watch it slowly turn into water.



Warming Hands:
Rub your hands together really fast, like you're trying to warm them up.

Grounding Technique

5 things you can **see** (like a chair, a tree, a phone)

4 things you can **touch** (like your clothes, your hair)

3 things you can **hear** (birds, a ticking clock, traffic outside)

2 things you can **smell** (a flower, hand soap, fresh air)

1 thing you can **taste** in your mouth (take a sip of water)

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is like having superhero senses to think of a place you feel safe and calm.

Close your eyes and think about a **place you feel safe**

Maybe it's the **beach**, somewhere from a **book**, or a place you really like!



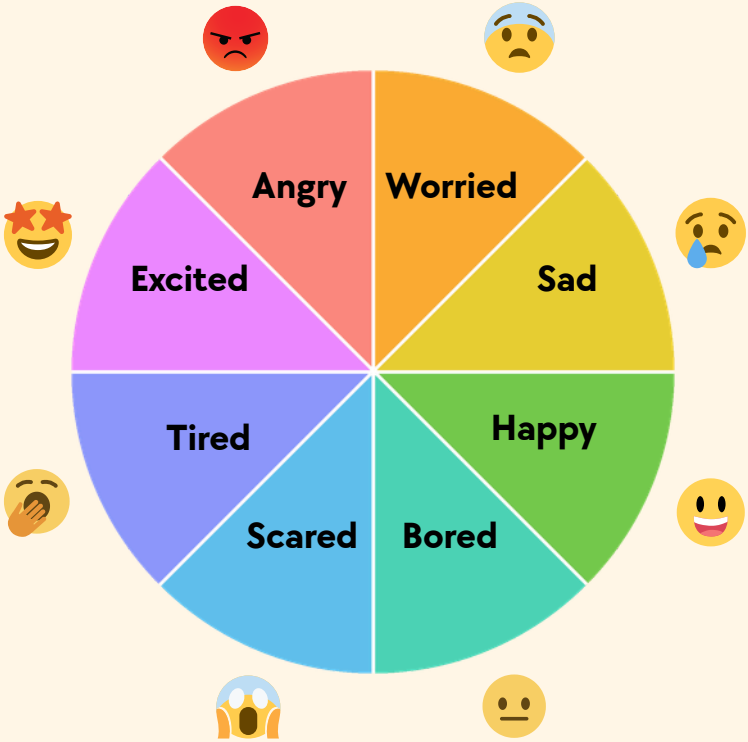
What can you **see**?
What can you **hear**?



You can stay here a little longer or come back when you need it

Feelings Wheel

Sit with a trusted adult and talk about how you are feeling



Other Fun Activities



- Pretend to be a stretching cat or a tall giraffe. Stretch and breathe deeply to relax.
- Dance to your favourite song.





- Watch your favourite TV show or read a book.
- Listen to your favourite songs.

- Draw or colour pictures to show how you feel.
- Play with clay or Play-Doh.

- Play fun games like Twister or Jenga.
- Eat your favourite snack.

"I know it seems really hard right now and you feel so alone, but there are people out there who want to help and you don't have to go through this alone."

- A member of the Care Responders Lived Experience Advisory Group

My Safety Plan (Younger Children)

My name: _____

Date: _____

Who helped me make this plan: _____

1. When I am starting to feel upset

Things I notice when I am not feeling OK:

☐ I feel worried ☐ I feel angry

☐ I feel sad ☐ I want to be on my own

☐ My body feels different ☐ I think about hurting myself

☐ Something else: _____

My warning signs are:

_____

2. Things I can try myself

When I notice these signs, I can try:

☐ Take some slow breaths ☐ Listen to music

☐ Draw, colour or make something ☐ Play a game

☐ Go somewhere calm ☐ Do something I enjoy

☐ Use something that helps me feel grounded

☐ Think about something that has helped before

☐ Something else: _____

The things that help me most are:

_____

3. Keeping me safe

When I am very upset, an adult will help me stay safe.

The adults who will help me are:

_____

Things that might not be safe for me when I am very upset:

_____

What my adults can do to help:

_____

My Safety Plan (Younger Children)

4. People who can help me

If I am still feeling upset, I can tell:

My first person: _____

How I can tell them: _____

Another person I can tell: _____

How I can tell them: _____

I can use these words: "I'm not feeling safe and I need some help."

I can also show someone this plan or use another way of communicating if talking feels difficult.

5. If things get worse

If I feel that I might hurt myself or cannot keep myself safe:

Step 1: Tell an adult straight away.

Step 2: Stay with a safe adult and go somewhere safe.

Step 3: My adult will contact:

If there is immediate danger or I cannot be kept safe: My adult will seek urgent emergency help (999/A&E).

6. Who and what I care about

People, pets, places or things that are important to me:

❤️ _____

⭐ _____

🌈 _____

Something I am looking forward to: _____

7. My plan

What I want adults to remember about helping me when I am upset:

The most helpful thing someone can say or do is: _____

The least helpful thing is: _____

My plan will be reviewed on: _____

My child-friendly safety plan should be kept: _____

_____

Support for Young People

- **Childline**: Call 0800 1111, send a message, chat online with a counsellor one-to-one, or visit www.childline.org.uk

- **Soluna by Kooth**: App and online mental wellbeing platform for young people. It is a free, safe space to access one-to-one support and content to support wellbeing, and connect with others.

- **BEAT Youthline**: Offers online chat and telephone support to young people struggling with an eating disorder – call 0808 801 0677 (open Monday to Friday, 3pm – 8pm). Visit https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/

- **The Proud Trust**: Supports LGBTQ+ young people through youth groups, mentoring, and online resources. Call 0161 660 3347 or visit www.theproudtrust.org

- **CAMHS**: If you are already being seen by CAMHS, call your CAMHS worker (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm). Follow your safety plan (request a physical copy of this if you don't have one already). If you are open to CAMHS and don't have a Safety Plan, contact your case manager or the duty worker to create one.

Support for Everyone

- **YoungMinds Parents Helpline**: A free and confidential service for parents and caregivers concerned about a child or young person's mental health. Advisors offer emotional signposting and support. Call 0808 802 5544 (Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays from 9.30am – 4pm, and Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9.30am – 6pm). They also have a webchat service (Monday to Friday, 9.30am – 4pm).

- **Samaritans**: Call 116 123 for the Samaritans listening service for children, young people, and adults. Visit https://www.samaritans.org/

- **Mermaids**: Provides support for transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse young people (up to 25 years old) and their families. Call 0808 801 0400 or use their webchat (Monday and Wednesday from 10.30am – 6pm, and Tuesday and Thursday from 1pm – 8.30pm). Visit www.mermaidsuk.org.uk.

- **FFLAG (Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)**: Offers support and information to LGBTQIA+ young people and their families. Call 0300 688 0368 (Wednesday and Thursday from 10am – 8pm, and Friday and Saturday from 10am – 6pm) or visit www.fflag.org.uk

- Call **NHS 111**, option 2. If you need urgent mental health support but it is not an emergency, call NHS 111 and select the mental health option (available in most areas). Trained professionals can help you access the right support.

- Call **999** for emergency help if there is an immediate risk to life, serious injury, or someone cannot keep themselves safe. You can also go to the nearest Accident & Emergency (A&E) department.