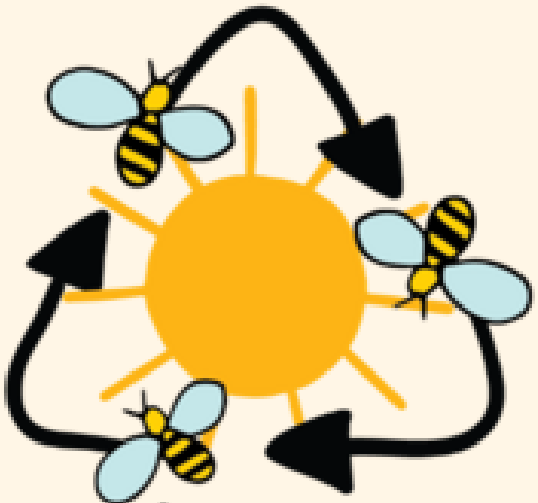
Support Guide for Young People Ages 16 - 18



CARE RESPONDERS

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This guide was created by the Care Responders team. It's here to teach you some ways of supporting yourself if you're going through a tough time with your mental health. It also shows where you and/or your parent or carer can get support.



Feel free to give feedback on the support guide!

What are we going to cover in the support guide?

1. **Immediate support**
2. **Understanding feelings and emotions**
3. **Breathing Exercises**
4. **Physical coping strategies**
5. **Sensory coping strategies**
6. **Useful information and contacts**

"keep your head high and ask for support if you need it, there are people out there that can help!"

- A member of the Care Responders Lived Experience Advisory Group

Immediate support

If you have taken an overdose, have physical injuries, or need urgent mental health support:

- Call **999** or go to the nearest **A&E** if you're in immediate danger.
- If you have physical injuries (like deep cuts or burns), contact **111 option/2** or **your GP**.

Understanding Feelings and Emotions

Feelings are your body's quick reactions to what's happening around you.
For example, you might feel tense when something stressful happens or relaxed when you're in a safe place.

Emotions are the labels we use to describe how we feel inside, like happy, angry, or worried.
Sometimes it's hard to tell what emotion you're experiencing, it can take time and practice to figure it out.

"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

Try noticing how your body feels. It gives clues about your emotions.

- Is your heart beating fast? Do you feel tired or shaky? Do you feel like you have a knot in your stomach?

Ask yourself what's happening around you. The situation can help you figure out what emotion fits.

- Are you facing a problem? Did someone say something nice?

The Wheel of Emotions:



Emotions are complex and personal, and this wheel is not the definitive way to understand them. It doesn't include every emotion or reflect how everyone experiences them, but it's a helpful guide to start exploring your feelings.

Try to think of **feelings** as the core colours in the centre - simple and foundational, such as red, blue, or yellow. **Emotions** are like the many shades and blends of those colours.
This wheel can help you move from the basic "primary" feeling at the centre to the more nuanced "shades" in the outer rings, giving a clearer picture of what you may be experiencing.

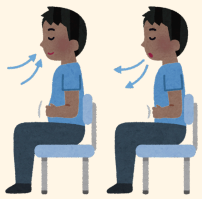
Write it down or say it out loud

- For example, "I feel tense, and I think I'm worried."

This can help you understand and express what you're feeling.

Be Patient: If you're not sure right away, that's okay. Sometimes emotions can be mixed or confusing. Keep practising, it will get easier over time.

Breathing Exercises



This section will guide you through some breathing strategies that can help you calm down when you're experiencing a mental health crisis.

4-7-8 Breathing Technique

4 **Inhale** through your nose for **4** seconds.

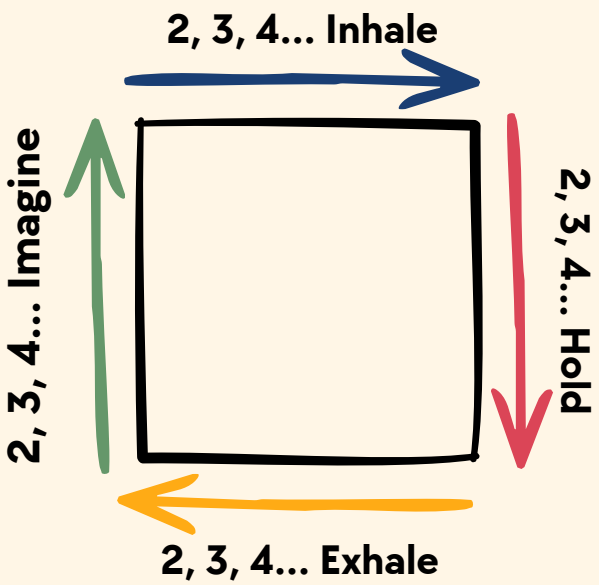
7 **Hold** your breath for **7** seconds.

8 Slowly **exhale** through your mouth for **8** seconds.

Repeat this process 3-4 times, allowing yourself time to settle and refocus.

Square Breathing Technique

1. **Breathe in** through your nose for 4 counts.
2. **Hold your breath** for 4 counts.
3. **Breathe out** through your mouth for 4 counts.
4. **Imagine** drawing a square with each step.



Physical Coping Strategies

Physical coping strategies can help lower the body's stress response and provide a healthy outlet for intense emotions.

Exercise

Go for a walk, run, or ride your bike. Physical activity releases endorphines which can improve mood.

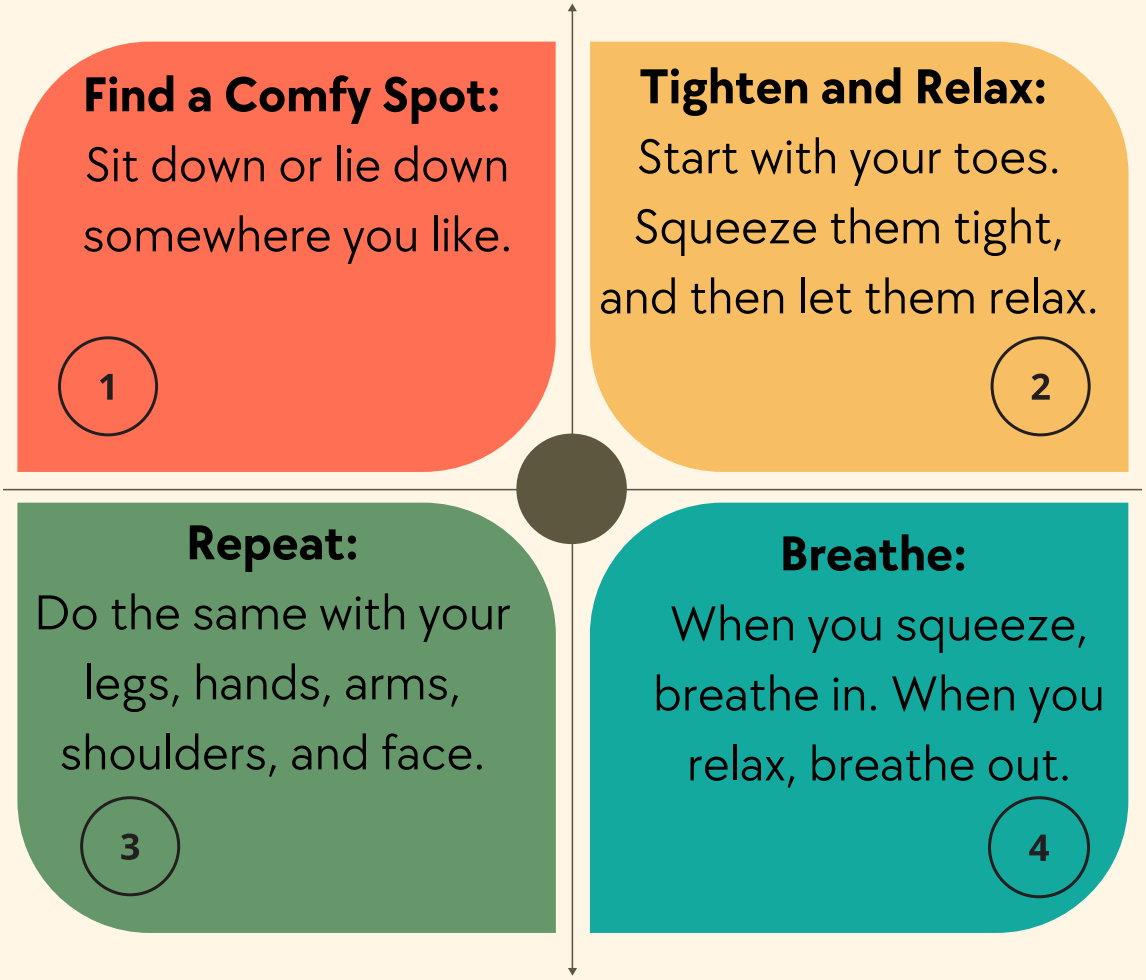
Creative activities

Draw, paint, write in a journal, or create something that expresses how you're feeling. This helps process emotions in a healthy way.

Music

Create a playlist of songs that make you feel calm or happy. Music can lift your mood and help you relax.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Notice the difference between tension and relaxation as you move through your body.

Sensory Coping Strategies

When you're feeling upset, stressed, or overwhelmed, focusing on your senses can help you feel calmer and more grounded. Paying attention to what you can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste helps bring your focus back to the present and can make intense emotions feel more manageable.

Grounding Technique

Bringing attention back to the present moment can help reduce feelings of panic and anxiety, allowing you to regain a sense of control and safety.

Try having a go at naming:

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

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

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

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 and Relaxation

Mindfulness can help to bring your focus back to the present moment, reducing feelings of anxiety and overwhelm.

Find a Quiet Spot: Choose a place where you can sit or lie down comfortably without distractions.



Focus on Your Breathing: Close your eyes and take slow, deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth. Pay attention to how the air feels as it moves in and out of your body.

Notice Your Thoughts: If your mind starts to wander, that's okay. Gently bring your attention back to your breath or the present moment.

"Be kind to yourself, this isn't your fault."

- A member of the Care Responders Lived Experience Advisory Group

Engage Your Senses: Take a moment to notice what you can feel, hear, or smell around you. Grounding yourself in your senses helps you stay present.

Start Small: Begin with just a few minutes, or even a few breaths, and build up over time. The goal is to practice regularly, not for a set amount of time.



Self-soothe Box

A self-soothe box is a personalised collection of items that help you relax and feel calmer when you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

Here are a few ideas about what you could include:

Stress ball

Soft fabric

Achievement reminders

Sour sweets

Notepad and pen

Childhood teddy or blanket

Future goals

Chewing gum or mints

Headphones

Photos of friends, family, or pets

Your favourite scent (like hand cream)

Wind chimes

Fidget toys

Use your self-soothe box whenever you're feeling anxious or need a moment to reset.

Understanding Your Mental Health

Making Sense of a Crisis

A mental health crisis doesn't just affect how you feel emotionally. It can affect your **thoughts**, your **body**, and your **behaviour**.

Thoughts	Body	Behaviour
Racing thoughts	Difficulty sleeping	Avoiding people
Overthinking	Headaches	Staying in your room
Finding it hard to focus	Feeling sick	Crying
Expecting the worst	Tiredness	Taking risks
	A racing heart	Losing motivation

Common Phrases Used in Services

Confidentiality?
Information is private unless there are safety concerns

CAMHS?
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

Inpatient?
Staying in hospital to get extra support

Support network?
People around you who care about you and can help



Discharged?
A service feels you no longer need their support

Safety plan?
Things we can do to help you stay safe

Healthy Minds?
Adult mental health services

My Safety Plan (Young People)

My name: _____
Date: _____
Who I made this plan with: _____

This plan is for times when things feel overwhelming or I don't feel safe. I can use it myself, and I can show it to someone else if talking feels difficult.

1. How I know things are getting difficult

Things I notice when my mental health is getting worse:

☐ My mood changes
☐ I withdraw from people
☐ I feel overwhelmed or unable to cope
☐ I stop doing things I normally enjoy
☐ My thoughts become more negative
☐ I feel like things won't get better
☐ I think about hurting myself or ending my life
☐ Other: _____

My early warning signs are:

_____

Things that tend to make things worse for me:

_____

2. Things I can do to help myself

When I notice my warning signs, I can try:

☐ Give myself some space
☐ Watch something familiar
☐ Do something creative
☐ Use breathing or grounding techniques
☐ Distract myself with something I enjoy
☐ Write down what I'm thinking or feeling
☐ Remind myself that the feeling will pass
☐ Other: _____
☐ Listen to music
☐ Go outside / get some fresh air
☐ Exercise or move around

The three things most likely to help me are:

_____

What might make it difficult to use these strategies, and what could help?

_____

My Safety Plan (Young People)

3. People I can turn to

Someone I trust and can talk to:

Name: _____ How I can contact them: _____

Another person I can contact:

Name: _____ How I can contact them: _____

A professional/team supporting me:

Name/team: _____ Contact: _____

If talking feels too difficult, I can:

□ Text/message someone □ Show them this plan

□ Use an agreed word, phrase or emoji □ Write it down

□ Ask someone else to tell them for me

□ Other: _____

4. If I am struggling to stay safe

If my distress is increasing or I feel I might hurt myself, I will:

1. Move somewhere where I am not alone.
2. Tell _____.
3. Use one of my coping strategies above.
4. Contact _____ if I still don't feel safe.
5. If I cannot keep myself safe, an adult/support person will help me access urgent professional help.

Things that can be made less accessible when I am struggling:

Any changes to the environment should be agreed with me wherever possible and should aim to be the least restrictive way of keeping me safe.

5. What helps other people support me

When I'm really distressed, it helps when people: _____

It doesn't help when people: _____

Something I want people to understand about me is: _____

My Safety Plan (Young People)

6. Things that matter to me

People I care about: _____

Things that are important to me: _____

Things I am looking forward to: _____

I want to get through difficult moments because:

_____

7. My support plan

Who will check in with me? _____

How often? _____

What should happen if things get worse? _____

When will we review this plan? _____

My important contacts

My mental health team: _____

GP: _____

Local crisis team: _____

Emergency: 999 / A&E if there is immediate danger or I cannot be kept safe

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.