

Future Me resource pack:

Mental Health and Well-being

Get Started! 



Future Me resource pack:

About Future Me



New to Future Me Gloucestershire? First of all, thanks for joining us! Future Me Gloucestershire is funded by Gloucestershire County Council, and is made up of a team of Youth Representatives aged 16-25, each bringing our own experiences, stories and skills to share. We've created these resource packs, newsletters and social media profiles, using our collective experiences and skills to help support other young people to access the information and resources they need on a variety of topics, from health and well-being to education, employment and travel!

We want to be a platform that provides young people in Gloucestershire not only with everything they could need in the transition to adulthood all in one space, but to provide a platform that allows young people to make their voice heard, connect with each other and share their experiences. If you'd like to get more involved, follow us on social media, get engaged and get in touch if you're between the age of 14 and 25 and have any experiences of being a young person in Gloucestershire that you'd like to share. Let's work together on creating a young person and Child Friendly Gloucestershire! **-Ben**

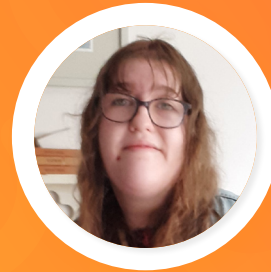
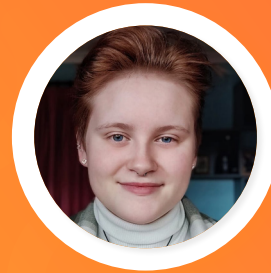
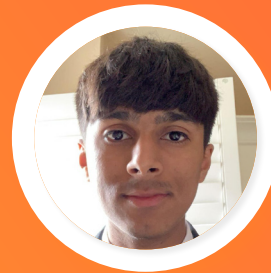


Future Me resource pack:

Our team



Here at Future Me, we have an incredibly diverse and talented team of young people between the ages of 16-25 producing every piece of content you see come from Future Me! With our diverse set of skills, talents and experiences, we're able to really make Future Me entirely for young people, by young people. **-Ben**



Future Me resource pack:

What's in this pack?



Welcome to the Future Me Gloucestershire resource pack on Mental Health and Well-being! Within this interactive PDF pack, you'll find a valuable and accessible suite of information and links to external services on a range of topics surrounding Mental Health and Well-being.

Whether you're seeking advice, information or help and support, you can use this pack to guide yourself to the appropriate resources, organisations and services that can help support you. We've designed these packs to be as easy to navigate as possible — simply follow the links through to the subject you're interested in and the information you're looking for.

Alongside these links to external resources, you'll also find written accounts, stories and experiences from young people within Gloucestershire, to reassure, encourage and inspire you. We're all in this together and it's important to remember, now more than ever, that everyone experiences challenges with their mental health. These challenges may be heightened by the difficult nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, lock-down and isolation. Never be ashamed of what you're feeling, and remember, you're never alone. **-Ben**

Immediate support

If you feel you are in an immediate crisis, an emergency or require urgent help, please follow the links below for services and organisations that can help, or call 999 for immediate emergency assistance.



Future Me resource pack:

Immediate support



Please be aware that this resource pack is not designed to offer immediate support if you are in a crisis situation. It is instead designed to direct you to external resources and share the personal experiences of young people. If you are in need of immediate support, or find yourself in a crisis situation, please either follow one of the links on this page or call 999 if you are in need of urgent help. -**Ben**

Local NHS services:

Link: <https://www.ghc.nhs.uk/our-teams-and-services/crhtt/>

Samaritans support line:

Link: <https://www.samaritans.org/>

Suicide prevention support app:

Link: <https://www.suicidepreventionapp.com/>

Suicide prevention support:

Link: <http://www.prevent-suicide.org.uk/find-help-now/stay-alive-app/>

Gloucestershire self harm help 5PM-10PM - doesn't appear on phone bill:

Link: <https://www.rethink.org/help-in-your-area/services/advice-and-helplines/gloucestershire-self-harm-telephone-support/>



Future Me resource pack:

How to use the pack



This resource pack PDF works in one of two ways, giving you a couple of options regarding how you'd like to navigate it. As with any PDF file, you can scroll through this document page by page to flick through all of the content in order.

However, there's another way to navigate this resource pack! Active buttons have been added throughout the PDF to allow you to navigate it as if it were a website. Simply hover over a button and click it as you would on the web, and it will take you to the corresponding section of the pack. This should allow you to easily and intuitively navigate this document and all of its content with ease. We've even included 'home' and 'back' buttons to allow you to return to the start or the previous page if you've not ended up at the right content for you. Check out the key below which illustrates what each of the buttons look like and what they do! **-Ben**

Home button:



Forward and back buttons:



Main section and experiences links:



Subsection links:



Future Me resource pack:

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Future Me resource pack:

Mental health and well-being

This resource pack is all about mental health, well-being and your safety and happiness. We've broken this topic down into six main sections, under which you can find sub-sections regarding everything you might need to know about mental health and well-being! Click one of the section buttons to get started, or scroll through the document to check out our resources in their entirety.



Keeping safe



Are you keeping safe? It's important to make sure that in all aspects of our life, we keep our safety and the safety of those around us in mind. Whether you have concerns about your safety at home, online or are struggling with self harm or suicidal thoughts, these questions will direct you to the appropriate resources and information you might need. -**Ben**

Self harm

Suicidal thoughts

Concerns about my home life

Keeping safe online

Further support

Helpful apps



Keeping safe subsection 1:

Self harm:



Young Minds estimate that self harm affects one in twelve people, with 10% of 15-16 year olds self-harming. Shocking statistics like this make it abundantly clear how vital it is to provide young people with resources that can educate and inform us. Self-harm is not simple and cannot be defined by one action or habit, but hopefully, we can provide a bit of clarity on a very complex subject. The links found here provide a starting point to help you understand your self-harm and what you can do to improve the situation. -**Beth**



Tic+ anonymous 1-2-1 online support and advice:

Link: <https://ticplus.org.uk/>

Gloucestershire self harm help:

Link: <https://www.gloucestershireselfharm.org/where-can-i-get-support/suicide-and-self-harm/>

Gloucestershire self harm help 5PM-10PM - doesn't appear on phone bill:

Link: <https://www.rethink.org/help-in-your-area/services/advice-and-helplines/gloucestershire-self-harm-telephone-support/>

Young Minds - informative sight and guide to CAMHS:

Link: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/self-harm/>

Learn about self-injury and how you can feel better without harming yourself:

Link: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/cutting-and-self-harm.htm>

Young Minds Matter Gloucestershire - support pack:

Link: <https://www.ghll.org.uk/parent%20pack%20Keep%20safe%20lets%20talk%20about.pdf>

Real experiences with self harm

Real experiences with self harm

Ben

James

Anonymous



Ben: Self harm

How have you experienced self harm?

My experiences with self harm were most prominent during my teenage years, but have cropped up from time to time throughout my life. The kind of self harm I inflicted upon myself at my lowest points weren't the typical kinds of self harm that are as obvious to identify. During periods of heightened depression, anxiety and poor anger control during different difficult parts of my life, I would self harm by hitting my head or knuckles against hard surfaces until I felt dizzy, as well as scratch at my skin. Self harm comes in many forms, and you may even feel as if a certain way you're behaving isn't self harm, but even things such as this can be exactly that. It's an incredibly difficult mindset to break, and one that was personally difficult for me growing up, but one I overcome with time, understanding, support and reflection.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with self harm?

I overcame my issues with self harm through open and honest conversation about what I was doing and how I was feeling, as well as support from professionals. Over the years I learned exercises to direct my feelings and energy elsewhere when I felt low, and eventually learned to better control and understand the emotions that lead to impulsive self harm. Having a creative outlet to express pent up energy and negative emotions, such as music and art, was a huge help for me too. Never underestimate the power of creative expression!

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing self harm?

- » *I believe with all mental health struggles, being open, honest and starting a conversation is key to improving your circumstances. It may feel like a difficult thing to do, but even if you need to call an anonymous help line to start with, it's crucial to tell people how you're feeling*
- » *Seek professional help - again, it might be hard, but you can never be sure just how much good a conversation with a professional or therapist can be. Never be ashamed to seek help!*
- » *Self harm can be an impulsive action. Learn exercises or make habits that allow you to direct your energy in another direction when you feel self harm compulsions crop up, such as an expressive creative hobby or physical exercise - anything that lets you release physical energy and/or express yourself really does help*
- » *When you feel thoughts of wanting to self harm crop up, try to make a list of all the things you're grateful for, and all of the positive things about yourself, too. With these kinds of lists, you might realise that you don't deserve to be experiencing what you're inflicting upon yourself*
- » *When you feel these kind of emotions come over you, practice breathing and muscle relaxation exercises. It may sound trivial, but these kinds of exercises genuinely do wonders to relax your mind in situations where you may feel compulsive or angry*



James: Self harm

How have you experienced self harm?

I have been self-harming for many years now to varying degrees of severity and frequency depending on my mental well-being, particularly relating to my anxiety levels.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with self harm?

I have tried many things to try to combat my self-harming, including talking therapy, psychology sessions, exercise and general distractions. No one thing has been 100% effective, but I do think you need a selection of tools to try and help yourself.

Without a doubt, reminding yourself and thinking about positive things and exercising are two very helpful strategies, as is general distractions.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing self harm?

- » *Admit it is a problem and Seek help*
- » *Tell a trusted person that you are self-harming*
- » *Accept help and try and create a support bubble which is non-judgemental and understanding*
- » *Try and find the best solution to help you*
- » *Realise it is not a quick fix, but hopefully will be overcome with time*

Anonymous: Self harm

How have you experienced self harm?

For the past 4 years I have suffered with depression and anxiety which has massively impacted on my life. I stopped going to school and just wanted to spend every single day in bed. I found I had no energy for anything. I suffered quite a bit with self harm and didn't want anyone to know. I had just closed down and didn't want to talk to anyone about it. It then led to quite a few suicide attempts and I started running away because I thought if I ran away from the problem it would go away. However, it never did.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with self harm?

I finally started to talk to someone I trusted (my support worker) about why I was feeling this way, and it felt like a weight was lifted off of my shoulders. They were then able to get me the help I really needed and I was referred to CYPs, which helped massively. Just having someone who wasn't my mum or dad who I could talk to was hugely beneficial. It can be hard at first to recognise that there's a problem and to ask for help, because I didn't want to seem weak, but then realised I was a strong person for asking for help.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing self harm?

» *My advice to others would be to speak up even if its not to your parents, but to a trusted adult, because they really can get you the help that you need, and make a difference in your life. It doesn't make you weak for accepting some help, as everyone needs a bit of help and support in their lives whatever age they are*

Keeping safe subsection 2:

Suicidal thoughts



Suicidal thoughts are one of the most torturous symptoms of mental health issues to deal with. The national charity, Mind, defines suicidal feelings as “having abstract thoughts about ending your life or feeling that people would be better off without you. Or it can mean thinking about methods of suicide or making clear plans to take your own life”. Suicidal thoughts can be misunderstood, and are a very difficult subject to talk about. Suicidal thoughts can range in extremity but should always be investigated. Looking to find help or helpful information could potentially ease any dangerous feelings you might be having. Below you can find a range of links and resources that can support you in researching how to identify and reduce suicidal thoughts. **-Beth**



Samaritans support line:

Link: <https://www.samaritans.org/>

Gloucestershire Suicide Partnership - urgent steps:

Link: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/public-health/gloucestershire-suicide-prevention-partnership/>

Tic+ anonymous 1-2-1 online support and advice:

Link: <https://ticplus.org.uk/>

The Calmzone helpline, open 5PM – midnight, 365 days a year:

Link: <https://www.thecalmzone.net/help/get-help/>

Sunflowers Suicide Support:

Link: <https://www.sunflowerssuicidesupport.org.uk/>

Mind explains what suicidal feelings are and what to do:

Link: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/suicidal-feelings/about-suicidal-feelings/>

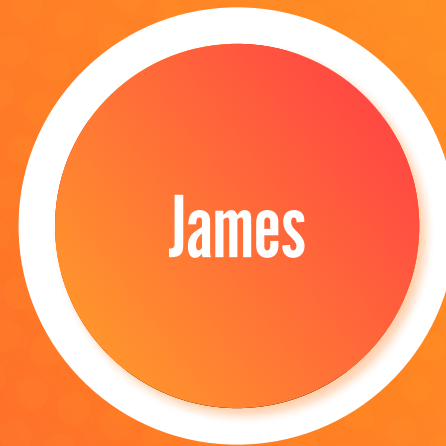
Suicide prevention app:

Link: <https://www.suicidepreventionapp.com/>

Real experiences with suicidal thoughts

Keeping safe - Experiences with suicidal thoughts:

Real experiences with suicidal thoughts



Ben: Suicidal thoughts

How have you experienced suicidal thoughts?

I have had several points in my life in which I have experienced suicidal thoughts, and on one occasion, a real impulse to go through with them. During my teens, difficulties both at home and school combined with my struggle with depression and anxiety leading to suicidal thoughts developing for me. None that I felt I had to act on, but in my head at the time, they were thoughts I wished I would act on. Later on in life, during my early 20's, a dip in my mental health led to suicidal thoughts once again returning quite prominently, leading to a situation in which the thoughts turned into impulses that I needed immediate help to tackle.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with suicidal thoughts?

I overcame my struggles with suicidal thoughts by being open, honest and accepting when I needed help. Always being open with my family and friends meant that, when I found myself in a crisis situation, they were there for me to stop anything dangerous from happening and to support me. I found that while it was hard to accept, speaking to a professional and eventually attending therapy and being prescribed anti-depressant medication was the best thing for me at the time, and really did wonders to help me understand and manage my feelings.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing suicidal thoughts?

- » *I believe with all mental health struggles, being open, honest and starting a conversation is key to improving your circumstances. It may feel like a difficult thing to do, but even if you need to call an anonymous help line to start with, it's crucial to tell people how you're feeling*
- » *Seek professional help. Again, it might be hard, but you can never be sure just how much good a conversation with a professional or therapy can be. Never be ashamed to seek help!*
- » *When you feel thoughts like this crop up, try to make a list of all the things you're grateful for, and everything you'd miss if you weren't here. Note down all the positive things about yourself, too. With these kinds of lists in front of you, you might realise you have far more to live for than you think*
- » *Practice breathing exercises. It may sound trivial, but taking your mind away from such dangerous thoughts though mindful breathing can really help, if only temporarily*



James: Suicidal thoughts

How have you experienced suicidal thoughts?

These thoughts came out of nowhere, with no warning or specific symptoms and signs. Apart from being extremely anxious and very depressed about my abilities, or lack of them (I thought), these thoughts suddenly appeared in my mind. They quickly got worse, and I knew I had to tell someone. It was extremely scary, and I couldn't understand why they would just appear, then wouldn't stop.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with suicidal thoughts?

I was quickly referred to psychiatry as an emergency case, and they immediately decided I needed medication to try and reduce the visions and feelings. This came along with talking therapy, psychology, mentoring, help and support and supervision from my family. The hardest part was not being allowed to isolate myself, because at that point I just wanted to be alone. I felt like I wasn't me. The medication took 3 long weeks to start working, but eventually the visions became less frequent, as did the suicidal thoughts. The whole episode lasted for over a year, a very long year, with some very low points. Increasing my exercise and focusing on frustration-busting activities was a real help, such as the gym, weights and boxing. Without the help and support of everyone around me, I might not be the person I am today.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing suicidal thoughts?

- » *Tell a trusted person as soon as you experience the thoughts, don't wait*
- » *Accept you need help and keep asking for it*
- » *Stay around others, don't isolate yourself*
- » *Remind yourself that the thoughts will end*
- » *Believe there are better times ahead*
- » *Don't feel you are a failure or a bad person*



Keeping safe subsection 3:

Concerns about my home life



Home should be a place associated with safety, warmth and comfort. However, this is not always the case, whether for a temporary period or a more permanent one. It is extremely difficult for a young person to feel they can ever relax when their home life is unstable and potentially dangerous or toxic. Moreover, it can feel impossible to improve home situations or find suitable help. This is why we have pooled some information that can help you figure out whether you should be concerned about your home life, and what you can do if this is the case. **-Beth**



Gingerbread - advice and support for single parents:

Link: <https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/information/>

NSPCC – spotting the signs of child abuse:

Link: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/spotting-signs-child-abuse/>

Gloucestershire Police advice for young people to get help and what comes next:

Link: <https://www.gloucestershire.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/caa/child-abuse/advice-for-children/>

LGBT Foundation – domestic abuse support:

Link: <https://lgbt.foundation/domesticabuse>

Gloucestershire family support and advice:

Link: https://www.glosfamiliesdirectory.org.uk/kb5/gloucs/glosfamilies/family.page?familychannel=1_1

Childline - family relationship information and advice:

Link: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/home-families/family-relationships/>

Keeping safe subsection 4:

Keeping safe online



In a world that is becoming more and more centred around online operations, a focus on online safety is imperative! The internet can be an extremely overwhelming space to navigate, and not everything is always exactly what it seems. However, with the right information, there is no need to worry or feel out of your depth. If you feel like you could improve your sense of online safety (whether this be on social media or just browsing the web) have a little look at the resources below. **-Beth**



Advice from the NSPCC on the risks of being online:

Link: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

South Gloucestershire children's partnership - advice on how to stay safe and knowing when you were being groomed and abused online:

Link: <https://sites.southglos.gov.uk/safeguarding/children/i-am-a-childyoung-person/staying-safe-online/>

Think U know - advice on sex and relationships on the Internet:

Link: <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk>

Childline - Ask Sam a confidential question:

Link: <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/ask-sam/bullying-abuse-and-safety?pagenumber=1&pagesize=25&selectedsubcategoryids=238>

Childnet - advice on where to get help:

Link: <https://www.childnet.com/young-people/primary/get-help>

Childnet - what should I do if someone online is mean to me? What is cyber bullying?:

Link: <https://www.childnet.com/young-people/primary/get-answers/what-should-i-do-if-someone-online-is-mean-to-me>

Childline's Zipit app, helps you to navigate intimate chats:

Link: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/sexting/zipit-app/>

Gloucestershire Police - online child abuse information and useful links:

Link: <https://www.gloucestershire.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/caa/child-abuse/online-child-abuse/>

Keeping safe subsection 5:

Further support



If you need further support with any of the topics we've covered within this section of the resource pack and couldn't quite find what you were looking for, here you'll find a few extra links to some more generalised support around the subject of keeping safe; this includes information on how to access NHS services, therapy and other mental health services within the county. **-Ben**



Accessing NHS services:

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/>

Finding therapies:

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-psychological-therapies-service/>

NHS Children and young people's service:

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-services-cypmhs/>

Mood self assessment:

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mood-self-assessment/>

Mental health services in Gloucestershire:

Link: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/covid-19-information-and-advice/advice-on-covid-19/looking-after-your-wellbeing/mental-health-services/>

Keeping safe subsection 6:

Helpful apps



For less immediate or severe circumstances surrounding mental health and keeping safe, here you'll find links to a handful of helpful apps we've discovered that could help you to understand and/or manage some of the issues you're struggling with, from the comfort of your own home. These apps are available on most smart phones and devices, and include helpful information on managing mental health, as well as tutorials and information on mindfulness and keeping positive! - **Ben**



The Calm Zone mental health and mindfulness app:

Link: <https://www.thecalmzone.net/>

Suicide prevention app:

Link: <https://www.prevent-suicide.org.uk/find-help-now/stay-alive-app/>

Headspace mental health and mindfulness app:

Link: <https://www.headspace.com/>

Moodpath mental health app:

Link: <https://mymoodpath.com/en/>

Relationships



Whether it's your family, friends or partner, relationships are a key part of all of our lives, and it's important to make sure you're keeping safe within them. If you feel like you are struggling within a relationship of any kind, whether that be at home, in school, with a boyfriend or girlfriend, or in dealing with isolation, loneliness or grief, this section will point you in the direction of the appropriate resources to help support you or someone you know. **-Ben**

Bullying

Concerns about my home life

Isolation and loneliness

Friendship

Grief and loss

I'm worried about someone else's mental health



Bullying



No one should ever have to 'put-up' with bullying. Bullying is never acceptable and the idea that it is just part of growing up is outdated and can be incredibly harmful to anyone's mental health. Whether you have or still are experiencing physical bullying, emotional bullying or online bullying, you can find advice in this section. Name-calling and teasing can often start off small but might escalate, with potentially dangerous consequences. If you are being bullied and are struggling with low self-esteem or even suicidal thoughts, you'll find plenty of resources to support you throughout this pack. -**Martha**



Gloucestershire County Council - advice on what to do if you are being bullied:

Link: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/children-young-people-and-families/what-to-do-if-you-are-being-bullied/>

Tic+ anonymous 1-2-1 online support and advice:

Link: <https://ticplus.org.uk/>

Childline - bullying, abuse, safety and the law:

Link: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/>

National Bullying Helpline - help and advice for children and adults dealing with bullying:

Link: <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/>

Help in South Gloucestershire with bullying and suggestions on what you can do:

Link: [https:// anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/if-youre-being-bullied/find-help-and-supportsites.southglos.gov.uk/mind-you/homepage/teens/a-z/bullying/](https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/if-youre-being-bullied/find-help-and-supportsites.southglos.gov.uk/mind-you/homepage/teens/a-z/bullying/)



Relationships - Experiences with bullying:

Real experiences with bullying



Beth: Bullying

How have you experienced bullying?

Primary school is where the bullying started. My year group was small and I was quite a sensitive child with an imagination, and the other students picked on me because they found it weird. I told my parents, but they just thought it was little children squabbling. This bullying continued into my secondary school. I lost myself and my imagination by trying to fit in. I struggled with my body image, my anxiety and I even resorted to self harming. I felt alone and I was always trying to change myself to fit in. My friendship group encouraged the bullying and sometimes joined in; I didn't realise that they were not my real friends. I then realised I was gay, and that made everything worse. I was the number one target, and I never told anyone because I thought it would make things worse. I lost my friends and had nobody.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with bullying?

It took one person to reach out for me to gain a friend, and she explained to me how wrong everything was. That friend turned into two, and they slowly started reminding me of the good things in life. They reminded me about the positives and helped me find myself again, and even encouraged me to accept myself as I am. They also encouraged me to talk to my family and the school so that they could help me and make my teachers aware of the situation.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing bullying?

- » *Don't hide what's really going on because you think it will get worse by talking to someone. Talking to someone will always help, even if the bullying doesn't stop, you still have them to talk to rather than keeping it to yourself*
- » *Don't lose sight of who you are or change yourself for others. If others don't accept you for you, then they don't deserve you in their life*
- » *Ask the bully if they're okay - you might be surprised, I found out later on that the person who was bullying me the most was having a really tough time at home*
- » *Changing yourself to fit in will only make you feel worse*



Ben: Bullying

How have you experienced bullying?

While it was a long time ago now, when I was in secondary school I was regularly bullied. I was picked on, insulted and physically abused on a regular basis during my time at school, with several severe incidents over the years, such as an attack being filmed and uploaded to YouTube. While this feels like a distant memory now, I can still vividly remember the feeling at the time, so I know first hand how difficult it can be to deal with bullies.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with bullying?

Being open and honest about what I was experiencing with teachers, my family, friends and support network helped massively. While the issues did persist for a long time, persistent reporting of the incident lead to action being taken, such as my bullies being moved to a different class. Having friends who stuck by me in school, and a family that fought hard for something to be done about what I was experiencing, was the biggest factor for me. While there was change made and some issues resolved, I did eventually end up leaving the school system for both this, and a variety of other reasons; This isn't something to be ashamed of, and in a worst case scenario, it may feel necessary.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing bullying?

- » *I think talking, being open and honest and seeking help are the best ways to counter bullying. You may feel afraid to, but raising the issues you're facing with your teachers, family, friends and support network is crucial to halting the bullying process*
- » *Keep your friends close, make sure they're aware of what's happening*
- » *Push for change. Don't settle for anything less than action being taken against your bullies by your school. Get your parents involved and make sure your teachers know what's going on*
- » *Try to avoid your bullies, hang out with your friends and walk home in open spaces with other people around you. In my opinion, avoiding conflict if possible is always the preferable approach*



Concerns about my home life



A safe home fulfils the basic human right to shelter. But a safe home should also provide so much more than this: it should be somewhere that you can have your own space, where you feel comfortable to express yourself and where you are supported by a network of healthy relationships. Whether you live with your parents, your wider family, with a partner or with friends, there can be times where you start to feel concerned about your home life. This section will provide you with contacts and advice for these kinds of worries. Are you concerned about a family member, or trying to process the breakdown of your parents' relationship? Perhaps you and your household need some extra support? Here you'll find signposts to useful resources, and also information about domestic abuse and neglect. If you are in immediate danger of domestic abuse, you should call 999.

-Martha



Practical tips for building stronger families:

Link: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/building-healthy-family-relationships>

Parenting and bereavement support:

Link: <https://www.familylives.org.uk>

Confidential helpline and live online chat:

Link: <https://www.familylives.org.uk>

Group work and 1-1 support for young people who are experiencing domestic abuse:

Link: <https://www.gclass.org.uk/support-for-young-people/>

Help for young carers, victims of domestic abuse and alcohol and substance abuse as well as young people with a parent in prison:

Link: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/helping-families>

Advice about living in care, step families, parents in prison, being adopted and more with an emergency helpline:

Link: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/home-families/>

Isolation and loneliness



The COVID-19 pandemic has led to another, more silent epidemic: an increase in loneliness. It can be difficult to process these feelings as a young person. We are continually told that these are supposed to be our care-free years, the time of our lives that should be filled with fun, social events and the company of a great friends. All of this has been turned on its head by the pandemic. Being unable to make genuine and meaningful connections with others can be very harmful to our mental health. Are you trying to navigate feelings of loneliness and isolation without a roadmap? Here are useful links and real life stories that can help reassure you that you are not alone. It can feel like a big leap, but there are small, practical ways to help you slowly ease feelings of loneliness and reconnect with others. -**Martha**



The rise in teen loneliness and how to help:

Link: <https://www.jonnyshannon.com/blog/the-rise-in-teen-loneliness-and-how-to-break-free>

What can young people do to combat loneliness?:

Link: <https://www.mghclaycenter.org/parenting-concerns/teenagers/why-are-teens-so-lonely-and-what-can-they-do-to-combat-loneliness/>

Why you may feel lonely and steps to take:

Link: <https://www.themix.org.uk/sex-and-relationships/friendship/im-lonely-4526.html>

Help when you're feeling lonely for young people:

Link: <https://www.ghll.org.uk/Primary%20social%20isolation.pdf>

Help when you're feeling lonely for teens:

Link: <https://www.ghll.org.uk/Teen%20isolation%20%283%29.pdf>

Friendship



The media often focuses our attention on the quest for romantic relationships, but arguably, the most enriching relationships we form through life are with our friends. There's nothing quite like a great friend! Perhaps you have a big group of friends who socialise regularly, or perhaps you have just a handful of a few, tight-knit friends. Every friendship is different, and it's important not to compare your own number or type of friendships with others. It's also not unusual to feel friendless. You might struggle to connect to others, so here you'll find some advice on forming new friendships. Whoever your friends are, there are some fundamental things that all healthy friendships should include, including mutual respect and an emotional balance that benefits both people. Do you find that a friendship is leaving you exhausted? Perhaps a friend is pressuring you to act a certain way, or to pay for their things. Friendships can sometimes turn sour, but there are things you can do to help improve or remove yourself from the situation. **-Martha**



Evening social groups in Gloucestershire for anyone aged 16 or over:

Link: <https://glo-active.co.uk/social-groups/>

The Friendship Café provides youth and community-based activities that focus on young people and their families from diverse backgrounds:

Link: <https://thefriendshipcafe.com/>

Woodcraft Folk in Gloucestershire offer a place where young people can grow in confidence and learn to understand how to value our planet and each other:

Link: <https://woodcraft.org.uk/>

Gloucestershire Youth Support team office accessible programs of activities that help young people develop skills and social confidence:

Link: <https://youthsupportteam.co.uk/services/activities-team>

New friends network is a community social group which focuses on developing opportunities to link with the local community:

Link: <https://www.yourcircle.org.uk/Services/13780/New-Friends-Network>

Top tips for making friends and starting conversations:

Link: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/friends-relationships-sex/friends/top-tips-making-friends/>

Real experiences with friendship

Relationships - Experiences with friendship:

Real experiences with friendship



Harry: Friendship

Harry - My experience with friendship/low mood

I believe friendship is important when struggling with a low mood or depression. When I was depressed and not feeling myself, my friends helped me get through my depressed state. It's good to talk to your friends rather than keep things in, my friend convinced me to talk rather than keep what I was feeling in, which made me feel more like myself and happier. Friends will always be there for each other, always make up with each other and are important when you're experiencing tough times.

How did your friendships help overcome the challenges experience with low mood?

One challenge I faced with my friendships was struggling to not have them around once they went to college. The best way I found to overcome this was to meet up every weekend, see each other regularly and have lunch together. If you don't see your friends regularly, it can become harder to keep that friendship going.

What advice would you give to other young people regarding friendships?

- » *Always talk to your friends, it can sometimes be easier than talking to your teachers or elders about your problems*
- » *If you can't talk to your friends, find someone such as your teachers, elders, parents or guardians about your problems*
- » *If you're struggling to find friends, try to find a club or something like that to join, anything you enjoy. Joining in may help you to find people who like what you like, which gives you a conversation starting point when making new friends. An example of this could be simply asking someone who likes football "what teams do you support"*



Martha: Friendship

Harry - My experience with friendship/low mood

I'm now 25 and have a small but very supportive group of close friends. If you'd asked me about my friendships 10 years ago, it would have been a very different answer. I found secondary school very overwhelming and really struggled with low self-esteem. I was often paranoid that my classmates didn't like me or even notice me, which itself became a barrier to forming friendships. I found things got much easier in Sixth Form, as I was able to mix with a new group of people who seemed to be more on my wave length. Although moving to University was another transition that overwhelmed me to start with, it was here that I met some of my very best friends. Although I can count my good friends on one hand, I CAN count on them and they on me.

How did friendship help you?

I was patient with myself and enjoyed the 'safe space' of home when I got back from school. I enjoyed the company of my family, neighbours and pets! My self-esteem slowly improved. This seemed to happen naturally as I became happier in my own skin. I tried to separate my negative experience with forming friendships at school from other environments: it can be really helpful to have a fresh start, and I have felt successively more confident when socialising with each transition in my life, into Sixth Form, University and then the workplace. Each environment has given a clean slate and has introduced me to some wonderful people who continue to enrich my life!

What advice would you give regarding friendship?

- » *Try to manage negative, unhelpful thoughts. If a social interaction feels traumatic, it's all too easy to over-analyse it and convince yourself that there is something wrong with you. This simply isn't true, and life is too short to let one uncomfortable encounter occupy too much thought*
- » *Give people a chance! Consider that the people you meet might also feel shy or anxious when making friends. If someone seems cold or uninterested, don't be too quick to write that relationship off. It might just take you both a little longer to feel comfortable in each others company*
- » *Ask questions. It's sometimes hard to know what to say to someone you don't know very well. Try asking questions about them and their life. Don't forget to answer questions too and give a bit of detail about yourself as well. Great friendships are built on an open, honest dialogue, with both people giving the other time to speak and share*



Grief and loss



Everybody experiences grief in a unique way. What is universal is that losing a loved one has been identified as one of the most stressful events that anyone can experience in life. And although it is an experience that we all have to face, this kind of devastating grief is not something we grow up expecting to deal with in our teens or twenties. The Covid-19 pandemic has created a severe increase in the number of children and young people experiencing loss. If you have lost a parent, grandparent, friend or family member, because of Covid-19 or something else entirely, there are networks of support that you can approach to get help with your grief. You may find it easier to talk about your feelings with a professional who is removed from your scenario.

-Martha



Winston's Wish supports children and young people after the death of a parent or sibling:

Link: <https://www.winstonswish.org>

Young people's personal experiences of grief and their top tips:

Link: <https://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health/looking-after-yourself/grief-my-personal-story-38141.html>

Child Bereavement UK – helps young people up to the age of 25 to rebuild their lives:

Link: <https://www.childbereavementuk.org>

Where to find help after a bereavement in South Gloucestershire:

Link: <https://edocs.southglos.gov.uk/bereavementguide/>

Childline - ask Sam a confidential question about bereavement:

Link: <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/ask-sam/your-feelings-asksam/grief2/>

Find out about bereavement due to traumatic death by seeing and hearing people share their personal stories on film:

Link: <https://www.healthtalk.org/bereavement-due-traumatic-death/overview>

I'm worried about someone else's mental health



When you notice that someone you care about is struggling, it is normal to feel powerless. It's hard to know what to do to help, especially if you think that your efforts might push that person further away. The fact that you care about them is a huge gift to that person, and although they might not be able to find the words to thank you, they are likely to be very grateful for your support. When supporting the mental health of another, it's very important to protect your own well-being. If you find that you are frequently putting that person's well-being before your own, or that you are sacrificing all of your energy to put them first, this could be a sign that some professional support is needed, whether that's for someone close to you, or even a more distant connection, such as a classmate, colleague or neighbour. **-Martha**



Helping someone with an eating disorder:

Link: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/eating-disorders/helping-someone-with-an-eating-disorder.htm>

Advice about helping someone with a variety of different mental health problems:

Link: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else/>

Facts to help educate yourself on mental health:

Link: <https://www.rethink.org/Factsheets/8817/Supporting%20someone%20with%20a%20mental%20illness%20factsheet>

What to do if you are concerned that a loved one may need professional help:

Link: https://www.mindcharity.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/are_you_worried_about_someones_mental_health_factsheet.pdf

10 things to say to someone with depression and urgent help option:

Link: <https://www.headstogether.org.uk/10-things-to-say-to-someone-with-depression/>

Real experiences with worrying about others...

Relationships - Experiencing worries about someone else:

Real experiences with worrying about someone else



Beth: Worrying about someone else

How have you been worried about someone else's mental health?

A lot of my friends have had issues with mental health and I have always wondered what the best way to support them was. I have always been able to pick up on social cues very well, and I know when something isn't right. With this knowledge comes great concerns and worries as to how to handle certain situations.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience when worrying about someone else's mental health?

I've made many mistakes when talking to and helping my friends out. I soon learnt to talk to them as soon as I could and ask them what they needed. I learnt to be honest with them and to be accommodating to their needs. I learnt that gentle encouragement was best, and that forcing them into doing something was only going to make the situation worse.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing worries about someone else's mental health?

- » *Talk to them and ask them if they are okay*
- » *Don't assume what they need, always ask them instead of telling them*
- » *Don't make it about you, make sure you listen to what they need to say*
- » *Encourage them to talk to their family or a doctor if it's serious*
- » *Don't treat your friend like an alien after they have told you something — it's taken them a lot of courage to open up, tell them that you're proud of them*
- » *Remind them that they can always come to you. People with mental health struggles tend to need constant reassurance that things are okay, and that they can talk to you, even if they have asked you something multiple times before*



My anxiety



Anxiety comes in many forms and can be an incredibly challenging experience to deal with. It's important to remember that anxiety is something everyone experiences from time to time — it's nothing to be ashamed of. Whatever kind of anxiety you're experiencing, whether it relates to your health, social life, Covid-19 or any other kind of anxiety, the following sections will help guide you to the appropriate resources and services to help you. **-Ben**

[Health anxiety](#)

[Social and general anxiety](#)

[Covid-19 anxiety](#)

[How do I manage my anxiety?](#)

[How do I get help with my anxiety?](#)



My anxiety subsection 1:

Health anxiety



The NHS simple definition of health anxiety is: “when you spend so much time worrying you’re ill, or about getting ill, that it starts to take over your life.” Health anxiety can often be misunderstood or not properly picked up on. If you feel like you might be struggling with health anxiety, these resources might be relevant to you, and give you some means to deal with it. It may also be helpful to show these resources to any close friends or family you have so they are better equipped to empathise with what you’re going through. **-Beth**



Get confidential advice and support from a school nurse in Gloucestershire by text message:

Link: <https://www.ghc.nhs.uk/our-teams-and-services/school-nursing/chathealth/>

What Health anxiety is and how to help:

Link: <https://talk2gether.nhs.uk/health-anxiety/>

Health anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Link: <https://www.gloucesteroutofhours.nhs.uk/health-anxiety-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

Young Minds Matter - worries about health resource pack:

Link: <https://www.ghll.org.uk/teen%20health%20anxiety%20%281%29.pdf>

What it's like to develop health anxiety and where to get support:

Link: <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-its-like-to-develop-health-anxiety/>

When does health anxiety become a serious problem?:

Link: <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/-/media/CCI/Mental-Health-Professionals/Anxiety/Anxiety---Information-Sheets/Anxiety-Information-Sheet---08-What-is-Health-Anxiety.pdf>

Health anxiety: a self-help guide:

Link: <http://www.selfhelpguides.ntw.nhs.uk/bsmhft/leaflets/selfhelp/Health%20Anxiety.pdf>

Real experiences with health anxiety

My anxiety - Experiences with health anxiety:

Real experiences with health anxiety



Ben: Health anxiety

How have You experienced health anxiety?

I've experience my fair share of different kinds of anxieties and mental health conditions throughout my life, but health anxiety has always been the most consistent and hard to manage. While I never used to deal with health anxiety, after I was diagnosed with Epilepsy, the anxiety developed quickly and started impacting my day to day life - it got to a point where I could barely be alone without irrationally feeling like something terrible was going to happen to me; it was a really challenging situation to try and overcome.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with health anxiety?

It was all about taking baby steps. I managed to find a therapist on the NHS and began taking some anti anxiety/depressant medication while I worked on improving my situation. Bit by bit, I worked on techniques for rationalising the thoughts I was having while taking small steps to build my confidence, such as going from panicking when I was alone at night to being alone for a certain period of time, eventually working my way up to kicking it all together!

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing health anxiety?

- » *As with any mental health condition, talk about your experiences! Find someone you can talk to and engage with, have a conversation about it - it might help more than you think to get a second opinion*
- » *Take a step back: are your thoughts about your physical health rational? Could there be an explanation less severe than the one you are imagining?*
- » *Try breathing exercises and muscle relaxation techniques - this really helped me while I worked on improving my physical health anxiety*
- » *Take baby steps. Don't try and kick your anxiety all at once! Make little bits of progress and work your way up to your bigger goals*
- » *Seek professional help if your health anxiety becomes too much - it may be a hard thing to bring yourself to do, but therapy can do wonders for both depression and anxiety. It sure did for me!*

Robyn: Health anxiety

How have you experienced health anxiety?

I do have some periods of experiencing poor mental health episodes after having encephalitis. Every few months I do have blips which make me feel anxious and depressed, and although these are getting further apart, they do get me down. My sixth form tutor didn't always recognise when I had poor mental health episodes, so it wasn't always easy to be open about it. I was given anti-psychotic medication which helped after the encephalitis, but the side effects made me feel worse.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with health anxiety?

I found a GP that understood. Every few months, he gave me medication due to complications after an operation, but he understands that if I want to carry on without medication, then that's my choice. I know that won't work for everyone, but I prefer to still feel like me while being supported by friends and family.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing health anxiety?

- » *Let people know how you're feeling*
- » *Let people know how you want to be supported*
- » *It will pass and I've learned that it will come in cycles*

My anxiety subsection 2:

Social and general anxiety



The NHS defines social anxiety as “a long-term and overwhelming fear of social situations that usually starts during the teenage years”. Social anxiety can be incredibly difficult to process, especially when you really want to take part in social activities, but are forced to miss out because of a horrid anxiety that feels unavoidable. Hopefully, these resources can help you look into social anxiety, what causes it, and how you can reduce or manage it. They should also remind you that this is a very common form of anxiety (often accompanied by other forms), so you are not alone in your feelings. **-Beth**



What social anxiety is and how to help:

Link: <https://talk2gether.nhs.uk/social-anxiety/>

Dealing with anxiety and panic attacks:

Link: <https://www.ethicalminds.co.uk/dealing-with-anxiety-panic-attacks-effectively-in-cheltenham-gloucestershire/>

Social anxiety groups in Gloucester:

Link: <https://www.meetup.com/topics/social-anxiety/gb/e6/gloucester/>

Social anxiety services details in Gloucestershire:

Link: <https://www.yourcircle.org.uk/Services/10362/Let-s-Talk>

Ways to cope with social anxiety:

Link: <https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/anxiety-stress-panic/anxiety/>

Real experiences with social and general anxiety



Beth: General/social anxiety

How have you experienced social anxiety?

Over the past few years, I have struggled with managing my anxiety regularly. Feeling anxious is challenging in itself, and when one is left to deal with it alone this challenge is only exemplified. Often in educational or professional settings, my anxiety has been particularly noticeable to myself, whether I've been sat in a classroom or serving a guest at my place of work. In this situation it hasn't really felt possible to completely remove myself from the situation so my anxiety has been left bubbling below the surface, all the while inhibiting my ability to focus or feel comfortable. I have found it very easy to let these feelings take control of my composure and ruin whole days or even weeks, which is why it is so important to try and learn how to rationalise and be kind to my anxiety when I feel overwhelmed or uncomfortable.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with social anxiety?

This is still a work-in-progress and I have not fully mastered managing my anxiety. However, over time I have developed a few coping strategies that can alleviate particularly extreme anxious episodes I experience. I try to remain compassionate towards myself rather than critical, this means I am less likely to spiral and become anxious about the fact I am anxious. I also try and rationalise my anxiety to myself, attempting to become objective to the situation I am feeling anxious about. I remind myself that just because I am feeling like something might go terribly wrong, this is very unlikely, and even if it does, it won't be nearly as bad as my anxiety wants me to believe.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing social anxiety?

- » *Tell someone about it! I have often found that a catalyst for making my anxiety worse is feeling isolated or alone in it. Simply letting someone (whom you feel safe with) know that you are experiencing anxiety can release some mental pressure and tension. It also means you might feel like coping in the situation isn't solely your responsibility*
- » *Utilise breathing exercises! The simplest form of mindful breathing can be spending 30 seconds consciously breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth. I often talk myself through breathing calmly by saying "in" and "out" when I inhale and exhale. A steady, controlled flow of oxygen will help your mind rationalise and see the situation clearly*
- » *Be kind to yourself! Try and treat yourself in the same way you would treat a friend experiencing the same feelings. Try to avoid a critical narrative towards yourself and remind yourself that just the fact you are functioning at this moment is a win*



Ben: Social anxiety

How have you experienced social anxiety?

Social anxiety comes in many forms, and while I have been free from social anxiety for a long time now, during my teen years it came in the form of difficulty engaging with other young people my age, a fear to leave my own house and terrible anxiety regarding being alone or out in public. These days, I'm the complete opposite socially; an outgoing extrovert through and through, but I know first hand through my teenage experiences just how debilitating and horrible social anxiety can be to experience. But you CAN come out the other side a new person!

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with social anxiety?

With my social anxiety, it was all down to open, honest conversation about my feelings, support from professionals, family and friends, and gently tackling my issues in small steps, bit by bit. For example, I didn't just go from not leaving the house to roaming the streets alone, I had to build myself up over a long period of time, such as simply walking up the road and back, or being around a couple of other young people. This was something that took a long time, but through the support I had and the plan in place, I overcame my social anxiety by the age of 17. Now 25, I've never struggled with it again.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing social anxiety?

- » *I believe with all mental health struggles, being open, honest and starting a conversation is key to improving your circumstances. It may feel like a difficult thing to do, but even if you need to call an anonymous help line to start with, it's crucial to tell people how you're feeling*
- » *Work on your anxiety in small steps, bit by bit. Try introducing yourself into social situations slowly, only tackling small aspects of your anxiety at a time. This is far easier than attempting to simply 'switch off' your social anxiety*
- » *When you feel social anxiety coming over you, practice breathing and muscle relaxation exercises. It may sound trivial, but these kinds of exercises genuinely do wonders to relax your mind in situations of panic and anxiety - don't be afraid to give it a go!*
- » *Remind yourself that it WON'T be like this for you forever. It can be easy to get yourself stuck in the mindset of "this is it forever", but it's not; it doesn't have to be. You can overcome your issues, and you will with the right steps*



Beth: Social anxiety

How have you experienced social anxiety?

I developed social anxiety from a very young age and didn't know enough about it to know that it was a problem. It developed really quickly, I felt like everyone was judging me, and I was always scared that people were going to leave because I would do something wrong. It got so bad that I didn't form friendships because I was so scared all the time. I couldn't be near people without my chest tightening and my heart rate going up, and all of this developed into a panic disorder.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with social anxiety?

My English teacher started to notice very early on. One day it got so bad that she had to take me out of class and find me a quiet room. She then knew that something was wrong, and took the rest of the school day off to try and talk to me. She referred me to the school counsellor, who then referred me to the NHS. Through counselling I gained the confidence I needed, found the friends that would support me and learnt to control my intrusive thoughts.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing social anxiety?

- » *Looking back, I wish I had told someone sooner. I knew it was a problem and that I needed help. Always try to talk to someone sooner rather than later, even if it seems like it's only a small thing*
- » *Try not to let other people's thoughts on the matter dictate what you need. If you need help, it's okay, even if others around you don't see it as a problem*
- » *Try to become aware of the thoughts that are going on in your head. Writing things down can really help distinguish what's in your head and what is real*



James: General/social anxiety

How have you experienced social anxiety?

I have suffered from anxiety for most of my life, with periods of extreme anxiety. I have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder which has made me realise I need to learn to live with it, as it won't be disappearing anytime soon.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with social anxiety?

My ways of coping and living with anxiety are varied, but I do live by the idea that if you don't need to do something that causes you a huge amount of anxiety, then try to avoid it or remove it from your life. As a result, I never go to the supermarket at busy times to do a large shop. There are alternatives: online shopping, corner shops, or you can go later in the day when it is quieter. I have also learnt that talking through your anxieties can help you to rationalise and reduce some of them. Activities like yoga and mindfulness also help reduce your anxiety levels, even if only for a short period, but for that period you feel calmer, less agitated and in a better place.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing social anxiety?

- » *Seek help*
- » *Talk about how you feel and take support where it's offered*
- » *Realise that it's not a failing, it's not your fault if you're an anxious person, don't be embarrassed, accept it and learn to live with it or overcome it*

My anxiety - Experiences with exam and study anxiety:

Alice: Exam anxiety

How have you experienced exam anxiety?

Exams were always a difficult period of time for me, as I would always feel extremely anxious to the point where both my physical and mental health were at their lowest. Prioritising school and exams over your mental health is a very slippery slope... the more I would postpone self care, the harder it would be afterwards to pick myself back up again. During exam season, my sleep schedule would be non-existent – I went to bed extremely late yet woke up at the crack of dawn to revise again. I used to think that sleeping, exercising and eating would take time away from revising, which is completely wrong because, for me, ideal mental health is about balance.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with exam anxiety?

Balance. The word that completely changed everything for me. I never understood how some people could be so calm around exams when I would be getting stress rashes. Luckily, the people who noticed my change in behaviour were able to reduce my school timetable and help me to adapt my revision timetable, leaving dedicated time for exercise and socialising, which made all the difference both mentally and physically. Exams and grades may feel like the most important thing in your life but they're not your purpose and they don't define you. No grade or university place is worth mental ill-health.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing exam anxiety?

- » *The beginning of getting help could be making sense of what you are going through... I didn't even realise that what I was doing was wrong! Keeping a diary can help you to identify negative thoughts and understand what you need to do to counteract them*
- » *Re-start! I found it best to get perspective, whether that be taking a day to step back when you feel yourself getting overwhelmed and acknowledging unhealthy habits or just making time to watch a film you really love!*
- » *Look out for each other... You're all going through this together, support your friends now so that you can enjoy the summer when exams finish!*



Anas: Exam anxiety

How have you experienced exam anxiety?

Without realising, I found that I experienced a lot of pressure and anxiety when it came to exams. It was a feeling that I assumed was normal, however, it only got worse as I grew older and participated in more exams at a higher level. I still experience exam pressure to this day, but I have found various techniques and methods to relax myself when I'm in these situations.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with exam anxiety?

As I was spending a lot of time worrying about the exam the night before, I found that I struggled to get to sleep and would therefore be tired the night before the exam – which added more strain to myself. Personally, I found that getting more sleep and keeping a balanced sleep schedule each night helped me remain more relaxed when I was experiencing exam pressure.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing exam anxiety?

- » *Meditation - Regular practice of meditation can help decrease stress levels astronomically! A free app that I use is called 'Smiling Mind'. It offers short, two to three minute long meditations that help to clear your mind. I use it to help calm my pre-exam nerves, and it's made a positive difference to my results*
- » *Listen to your favourite music - Listening to music that you enjoy can help to decrease levels of the stress hormone cortisol in your body, which can help to counteract the effects of stress. Listening to your favourite tunes is also an easy way to incorporate a portable coping strategy into your daily routine*
- » *Exercise - Exercise is a great way to cope with any stress that you may be struggling with. I find that if I exercise before an exam, it helps to calm my nerves. and then exercising after I've completed the exam helps me to let go of the stress that's built up during it*

My anxiety - Experiences with exam and study anxiety:

Amy: Study anxiety

How have you experienced study anxiety?

Whilst every year is important those in exam years such as myself have had to balance learning new content with the uncertainty of exams. My 6th form experience has been so far from the norm, my first year of A levels ended abruptly on a random day in March and I had to learn key first year content from a computer. My second year is mostly filled with uncertainty over what will happen with my A levels and how they could affect my future.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with study anxiety?

The situation of course isn't over but I've learnt that there are people there to support me and that no matter how stressful this situation there are ways around it. I've learnt to use technology to my advantage, devote parts of my day to school like I would in normal lessons and not to be afraid to ask for help.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing study anxiety?

- » *Remember you're not alone, everyone at school right now is in the same situation as you, talk to your friends and classmates and check up on each other*
- » *Talk to a teacher/school counsellor if you are struggling, they're here for you even if it is virtually!*
- » *Devote a certain time of day to your lessons/school work*



My anxiety subsection 3:

Covid-19 anxiety



As the increasingly common phrase goes: these truly are unprecedented times. Collectively, we as young people have gone through an incredible amount of disruption and stress over the last year as a result of this pandemic. It is completely natural to be feeling anxious at this time, whether it be about your personal health or the seemingly uncertain future. Hopefully, these resources can provide a little bit of help when it comes to figuring out the nature of Covid-19 anxiety to help you navigate a situation that can feel increasingly nonsensical. **-Beth**



How to deal with Covid-19 anxiety:

Link: <https://www.themix.org.uk/mental-health/anxiety-ocd-and-phobias/how-to-deal-with-corona-anxiety-35761.html>

How to help others during the Covid-19 crisis:

Link: <https://www.themix.org.uk/work-and-study/volunteering/how-to-help-others-during-the-corona-crisis-35913.html>

Gloucestershire out of hours - health anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic help:

Link: <https://www.gloucesteroutofhours.nhs.uk/health-anxiety-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

Gloucestershire Young Minds Matter - Covid-19 help:

Link: <https://www.ghll.org.uk/teen%20health%20anxiety%20%281%29.pdf>

Help and support for teenagers with OCD during COVID-19:

Link: <https://www.ghll.org.uk/help%20for%20ocd.pdf>

My anxiety subsection 5:

How do I manage my anxiety?



Managing your anxiety can feel like an incredibly overwhelming task. Anxious feelings are so powerful that they sometimes feel impossible to ease or contain. Despite this, the truth is that there are many ways you can manage your anxiety to varying degrees. This might be daily practices such as breathing exercises, mindfulness or working on your thought process when you feel anxious. Here you'll find resources that hopefully will make managing your anxiety a more attainable goal. -**Beth**



Tic+ anonymous 1-2-1 online support and advice:

Link: <https://ticplus.org.uk/>

Self-care and anxiety:

Link: <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/>

Therapy Comics - treatments for anxiety in an illustrated form:

Link: <https://www.therapycomics.com>

Tips on gaining confidence and blasting anxiety:

Link: <https://riseabove.org.uk/topic/my-mind/>

Resource pack on managing anxiety during the pandemic:

Link: <https://www.ghll.org.uk/Teen%20GAD%20Mag%20%281%29.pdf>

Advice on antidepressants and taking medication as a form of managing anxiety:

Link: <https://healthtalk.org/experiences-antidepressants/taking-other-medicines-with-antidepressant-sleeping-tablets-medicines-for-anxiety-antipsychotics-mood-stabilisers-and-over-the-counter-remedies>

How to manage anxiety and panic attacks:

Link: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/self-care/>

Anxiety management strategies:

Link: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety/treatments-for-anxiety/anxiety-management-strategies>

My anxiety subsection 6:

How do I get help With my anxiety?



Often times, a symptom of anxiety can be the feeling of isolation - you might feel increasingly alone, stressed and/or nervous. It is easy to feel during these times that help isn't available and that the burden of anxiety is the sufferer's responsibility to deal with alone. However, this is not the reality. Here you will find reliable resources that can aid you in getting the help you need for your anxiety or anxious feelings. -**Beth**



Tic+ anonymous 1-2-1 online support and advice:

Link: <https://ticplus.org.uk/>

Get confidential advice and support from a Gloucestershire school nurse by text message:

Link: <https://www.ghc.nhs.uk/our-teams-and-services/school-nursing/chathealth/>

Gloucestershire NHS - getting help for anxiety:

Link: <https://www.ghc.nhs.uk/conditions/anxiety/>

Seeing the GP: advice and tips for young people:

Link: <https://www.healthtalk.org/seeing-gp-advice-and-tips-young-people/overview>

A collection of websites that provide information to support young people and families:

Link: <https://www.camhs-resources.co.uk/websites>

Explanations for anxiety and tips for helping yourself and guidance for friends and family:

Link: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/treatment/>

My anxiety - Experiences in finding help with anxiety:

Real experiences in finding help with anxiety



Harry



Harry: Finding help with my anxiety

What has your experience with finding help with anxiety been?

I used to be nervous about going out, and always thought people were judging me and staring. I was worried when walking, scared people would think that I'm not doing something right. It made me feel nervous and paranoid all the time, making me struggle to eat and feel really ill.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience finding help with anxiety?

I started to take small steps to improve my anxiety. I began with going to the local shop with my mum a couple of days a week, and working my way up. I moved on to going to town on the bus and to the shops and back, taking little steps to work my way up. My main support came from my mum, as I felt more comfortable speaking to her than anyone else in the world.

What advice would you give to other young people seeking help with anxiety?

- » *Talk about how you're feeling. Find the people or person you trust the most and are comfortable with, such as a parent or friend, as they can be much easier to talk to. They can help you find advice if you can be honest and open with them. They're not going to laugh at you if they're someone close to you. It's important to remember that they're there for you, and that you'll find it easier to talk with them than others*
- » *Remember you're not the only one in the world who's got these issues, there are lots of people experiencing the same thing, and you're not alone*

Keeping well



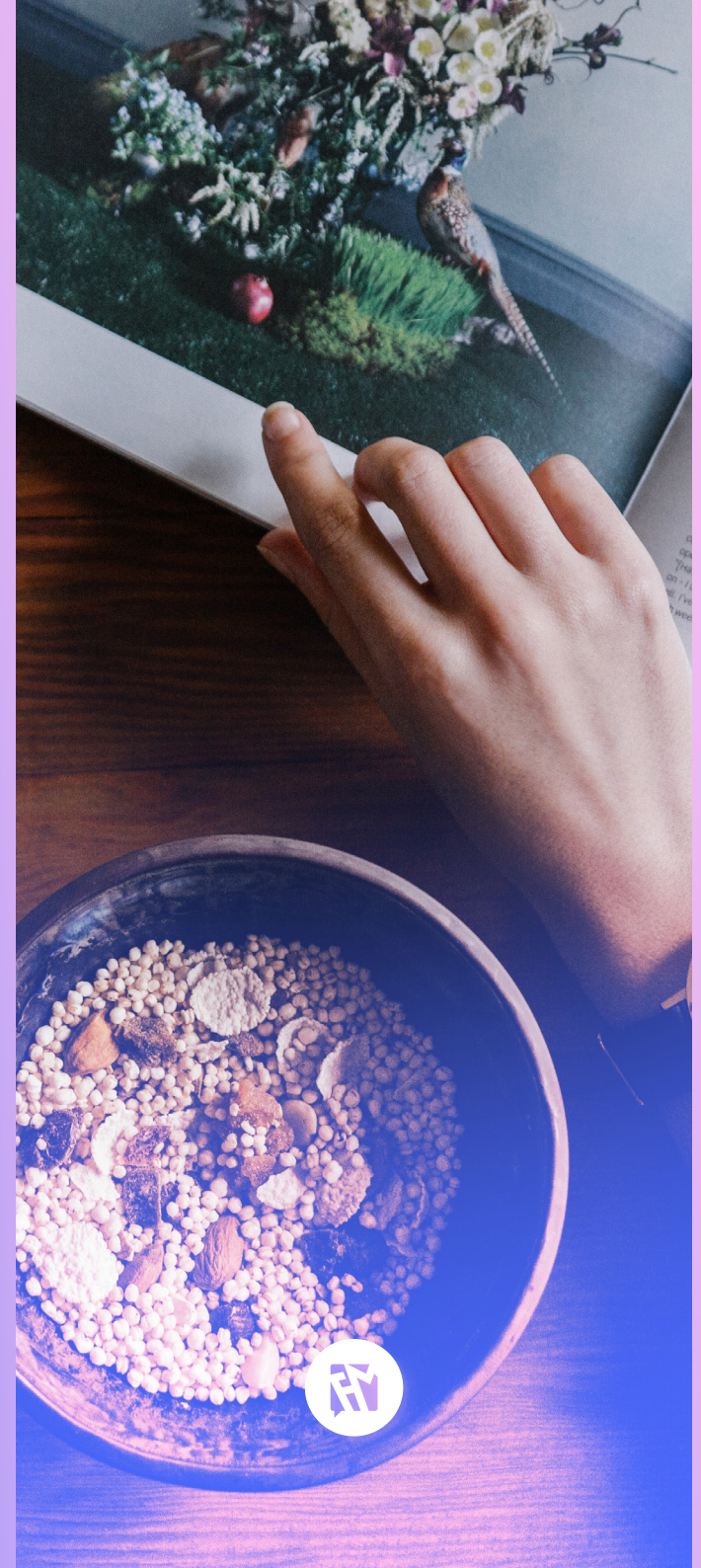
Keeping well is about paying attention to the simple things, that are in our control but are easy to let slip. Everything from your sleep pattern, exercise routine and diet can affect your overall mental health and well-being. It can be particularly difficult to keep up a good routine, keep well and stay motivated during the pandemic, but you can find plenty of advice, resources and information on keeping well and motivated through the sections below. **-Ben**

My sleep pattern

Keeping fit

Eating well

Boredom and motivation



My sleep pattern



A consistent sleep pattern is often neglected, but is vital in protecting your mental and physical health, and your quality of life in general. You may wonder what a normal sleeping pattern is, and whilst everyone's body functions slightly differently, it's imperative to get between 8-10 hours sleep (if you are 14-16 years old) and 7 to 9 hours as an adult.

There are a number of factors that can affect your sleeping pattern, which you will be able to learn about in this section. These factors include stress, what we eat and the environment in which we sleep. Sleep enables the body to repair and forms the foundations for the following day's productivity. Think of your sleeping pattern as one of the pillars that holds the structure of your life. If it is inconsistent, broken or too short, your everyday life may be negatively affected and harder to maintain.

-Alice



NHS advice on how to get to sleep:

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/>

10 top tips for a good sleep:

Link: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/ten-top-tips-good-sleep>

More healthy sleep tips:

Link: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/how-get-good-nights-sleep>

17 proven tips to sleep better at night:

Link: <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/17-tips-to-sleep-better>

Simpler tips to help you sleep better:

Link: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/sleep/getting-better-sleep.htm>

NHS - app suggestions to help you sleep:

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/sleep/>

Real experiences with sleep patterns

Keeping well - Experiences with sleep patterns:

Real experiences with sleep patterns



James: Sleep patterns

How have you experienced difficulties with your sleep pattern?

I have always had severe sleep difficulties, even as a newborn baby I could not sleep unless in motion to lull me to sleep, or would become so exhausted that I would cry myself to sleep. By the time I was 2, I was on medication to help me sleep, and over the years this has been changed to stronger versions of that medication. It's likely that I'll never be able to sleep without medication, but know how important sleep is. Until I changed to higher doses of strong sleeping medication, I was failing to develop academically, my growth was hindered and my behaviour was badly affected. I was overly emotional and very irrational as a result.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with your sleep pattern?

I was desperate for sleep, I even pleaded for medication from the doctors and so did my school. I was so sleep deprived that I could barely function. Initially, I had to try a sleep deprivation program to try and reset my sleep pattern, which was a total failure, making myself and my mum more exhausted than ever. I had to be made to stand up just to stay awake before my bedtime, in a desperate attempt to avoid strong sleeping medications. Everything failed. I resorted to medication which I knew would be for the rest of my life, but it has been worth it. I have progressed so well academically since, and continue to do so, growing into a healthy and fit young man. I will never sleep as well as many others and I don't do the classic 'teenager lunch time wake up', but I do get a solid 6-7 hours most nights, and I can manage on that.

What advice would you give to other young people seeking help with their sleep pattern?

- » *Keep a diary of your sleeping habits*
- » *Get into good bedtime habits, like coming off of social media/screens and listening to calming music before bed*
- » *If you really do have a sleep problem, speak openly and honestly with your GP, as there are many causes other than just a sleep disorder. Show them your sleep diary and tell them what you have tried*
- » *If you really are sleep deprived through no fault of your own, there will be help available*
- » *Make sure you are not the cause of your lack of sleep*

Lily: Sleep patterns

How have you experienced difficulties with your sleep pattern?

During the first lockdown and throughout 2020, I noticed that my sleep schedule/sleep pattern was worsening. Without the structure of school/college, it felt easy at first to stay up later as it would not have any consequences. This was pretty normal, as my friends and siblings were doing the same too. As the lockdown continued however, my sleep schedule became extreme, and I was unable to sleep at night. This affected my motivation and energy massively, as I was constantly sleep deprived and could only manage to sleep for a couple of hours in the evening before waking up again.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with your sleep pattern?

As I was approaching the start of the new school year in August, my sleep pattern was still very poor so I realised I would have to change it. Changing my sleeping pattern was extremely difficult at first, as I had to go against what my body wanted me to do and go to bed when I was wide awake or stay up when I was extremely tired. Eventually, I was able to start sleeping at night again.

What advice would you give to other young people seeking help with their sleep pattern?

- » *Changing your sleep pattern is very demanding on your body, so be patient with yourself. If you slip up one night and oversleep/do not sleep enough, it is okay*
- » *Changing your sleep habits by a few hours to even minutes daily is an easier way to reach your goal than trying to change your sleep pattern completely overnight*
- » *If you continue to struggle, reach out to your local GP. They may be able to give you medication that can help reset your body clock.*

Keeping fit



It may seem obvious that you need to keep fit, however, it can be hard to know how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Like your sleeping pattern, keeping fit forms the foundations of your productivity, and in order to make the most out of every day and to ensure that you have a long and happy life, it is vital that you find a way of keeping fit that works for you. This section provides some helpful pointers.

Keeping fit can help energise your body, maintain your emotional health, and help you fight stress and illness. Exercise is an effective way of relaxing, as it can take your mind off the stress of school or work. It is recommended to get outside and to move your body for at least half an hour each day. You'll find that exercise can also help you to meet new people, and once you find a routine that's right for you, keeping fit will become easy to maintain. - **Alice**



The skills you need - caring for your body:

Link: <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/healthy-body.html>

The science of weight and health:

Link: <https://www.self.com/story/the-science-on-weight-and-health>

How 11 to 16-year-olds should keep fit:

Link: <https://www.getthegloss.com/article/100-years-of-fitness-11-20>

Join a collective movement to motivate you to keep fit:

Link: <https://wecanmove.net/get-involved>

7 feel-good apps that will improve your life:

Link: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/health-fitness-apps>

Real experiences with keeping fit

Keeping well - Experiences with keeping fit:

Real experiences with keeping fit

Beth



Beth: Keeping fit

What experience have you had regarding keeping fit?

I would consider myself a fairly active person. I go on multiple walks a day and go on a 30 minute run most mornings (4-5 times a week). I also enjoy cycling and swimming when weather permits. I find that a lot of movement is crucial in terms of managing my mental health in particular. Lots of fresh air can help alleviate when I'm feeling anxious or depressed, moreover, getting up in the morning to run can help prevent feeling a lack of motivation or productivity during the day. However, aside from family walks when I was younger, I was not always particularly active or fit. I struggled with confidence issues that prevented me from feeling comfortable running in public, and often just did not want to bother getting up and going out (which is a pretty normal feeling to experience). I think the most important thing to keep in mind if you want to improve your fitness is to do what you enjoy, for as long as you enjoy it, regardless of how long or short this might be.

How do you go about keeping fit?

To get into running without being halted by feeling self-conscious, I started going on runs in the earlier hours of the morning. If I plan on going on a run, I'll get up at around 7am when there's less people around. It's also cooler so if you aren't used to cardio, this can help with overheating. I feel I am able to enjoy the activity a lot more when the world is more peaceful. Waking at this time is also helpful for me as it allows me to feel more productive throughout the day, however I completely understand that this might not suit a lot of people.

What advice would you give to other young people when it comes to keeping fit?

- » *Find something that you enjoy! There's a lot of pressure to go to the gym or do lots of intense working out/cardio in today's fitness culture. However fitness is not defined by the amount of calories you burn or the mass of muscle you build. Fitness is also subjective to each individual regardless of gender or body type. If you find a short walk most days is what's most enjoyable for you, then don't pressure yourself into doing anymore than is comfortable for you. This approach is much more sustainable than trying to overachieve for a short time, only to inevitably lose motivation and burn out*
- » *Aim to improve your fitness for your health and well-being rather than to change your appearance! If you change your motivation for staying fit from physical goals such as losing fat or gaining muscle to simply taking care of your body, fitness becomes a lot less stressful. You can stay fit in a way that truly suits you, rather than in the way you have been told is necessary to achieve your goal, which may not be enjoyable for you. How healthy or fit you are is not defined by your body type, so try and pursue fitness because you love your body, not because you hate it*



Eating well



Keeping fit comes hand-in-hand with eating well, which can be difficult when there is so much temptation to eat sweets and junk food! Eating well means having a balance of the right amount of each food group – every food group is important, but must be eaten in moderation. A balanced diet also includes fluids. It's important to stay hydrated, but it's just as important to be sensible with the type of fluids you choose; so try to stay away from too much caffeine and sugary drinks, which can cause mood swings and affect your sleeping pattern.

In the resources we have researched, you'll be able to find a variety of suggestions and advice to help you get that balanced diet and signpost you to further advice. -**Alice**



Simple tips to show you how to plan, enjoy, and stick to a healthy diet:

Link: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/healthy-eating/healthy-eating.htm>

NHS advice on eating a balanced diet with recipes and tips:

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>

What does healthy eating actually mean?:

Link: https://www.breastcancer.org/tips/nutrition/healthy_eat

World Health Organisation facts about a healthy diet:

Link: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/healthy-diet>

50 foods that are super healthy:

Link: <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/50-super-healthy-foods>

The official Eatwell guide:

Link: https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/camden/cd/files/eatwell_guide.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2UPgtEphdEVDgleZHB4sBAwVxRf3to4dgq0vYnhC3agF4Ley3Zgu5-jRo

Find eating disorder support near you:

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Eating%20disorder%20support/LocationSearch/341>

Keeping well subsection 4:

Boredom and motivation



Admitting that you are bored is the first step to changing your habits and finding something that motivates you. Many people are bored because they lack interest, have lost the capacity to renew an interest, or maybe even because they feel as though they're stuck in a rut and need to seek change.

If you struggle with this, it can sometimes help to get yourself moving, whether that may be going on a walk, connecting with friends, doing things that used to make you happy, being creative or making sure you get enough sleep and eating properly.

If you are looking for more specific advice and suggestions on what to do and tips on how to self-motivate, these resources will help you. Something that is really important is not to be so hard on yourself! You will find your motivation again, because boredom can easily be caused by lack of direction. So, by spending a few minutes identifying your goals, desires and passions, you can simply set your internal compass straight and regain your motivation! -*Alice*



Young people's self-care tips for self isolation:

Link: <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/young-peoples-self-care-tips-for-self-isolation/>

120 clubs and societies in Gloucestershire:

Link: <https://www.localpages.co.uk/gloucestershire-clubs-&-societies-1.html>

How to get your motivation back:

Link: <https://advice.theshineapp.com/articles/10-things-that-steal-our-motivation-and-how-to-get-it-back/>

Fitness apps to motivate you into exercise:

Link: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/health-fitness-apps>

A motivating TED Talk about saying yes to everything:

Link: https://www.ted.com/talks/shonda_rhimes_my_year_of_saying_yes_to_everything

How to find a new hobby:

Link: <https://www.futurelearn.com/info/blog/find-a-new-hobby-lockdown>

Keeping well - Experiences with boredom and motivation:

Real experiences boredom and motivation



Harry: Boredom and motivation

How have you experienced boredom and a lack of motivation?

Sometimes I struggle to be bothered to even get up, I just want to stay in bed, especially on a Sunday! I've become very bored at times during lockdown, because I've not been seeing my friends. When you're alone without friends, it feels like there's no point going out, and I've been sat at home feeling more bored because of this. Sometimes I can't be bothered to do anything during lockdown, as it feels there's no point. It gives me a lack of motivation, and it's hard without other people there, especially friends.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience with boredom and a lack of motivation?

To keep myself motivated and overcome my boredom, I've set myself personal goals for each day to keep me motivated. I've made a rota of things to do, and have set personal objectives to get myself out of the rut of boredom.

What advice would you give to other young people experiencing boredom and a lack of motivation?

- » *Set personal goals each day to motivate yourself*
- » *Make a rota of things to do for each day*
- » *Try and find a competition, challenge your mate or set a goal that you can work on together. Set challenges for yourself and your friends to get involved in, even if it has to be online*
- » *Find more ways to hang out with your friends online. Make sure to keep in contact with them even if you don't meet them in person, it will keep you more upbeat and as a result more motivated*

Lifestyle choices



However you choose to live your life, there's always ways in which you could help improve your health and mental well-being through either simple or more challenging lifestyle changes. Through the following sections you'll find information on exercising, eating healthily and screen time, as well as links to the relevant support, services and information on drugs, alcohol and smoking. -**Ben**

Drugs

Alcohol

Smoking

Screen time

Exercise and healthy eating



Lifestyle choices subsection 1:

Drugs



Drugs and addiction is a topic that we learn about at school. Learning about the dangers of drugs, and how they can take the lives of young people and devastate their families is important. But this narrative can be undermined as we become independent and start meeting new people and exploring the world around us. The person who offers you drugs might look nothing like the stereotype that you were warned about at school. They might be charming and charismatic. You might become reliant on a drug and think that you are in control, but it's crucial to remember that drugs, which are unregulated, can never be controlled or managed by users. This makes every drug-taking scenario a risk. It's never too late to seek help, and remember that these resources and organisations will help you without judgement or charge.

-Martha



Honest information about any drug:

Link: https://www.talktofrank.com/?fbclid=IwAR0RTtUtfucNReBG3fSwwJMBQuPn3WIOO4CxQJYp_10XI5kSTggI8Ao9Jb8

Gloucestershire Drug and Alcohol Service:

Link: <https://www.yourcircle.org.uk/Services/12905/CGL-Gloucestershire>

Young Gloucestershire on helping you find ways to make a positive change:

Link: <https://www.youngglos.org.uk/young-people/practical-support/the-link/substance-misuse>

Find out about the experience of drugs and alcohol, by listening to people share their personal stories on film:

Link: <https://healthtalk.org/drugs-and-alcohol/overview>

Articles about spotting the signs and having the conversation you need to stay healthy and safe:

Link: <https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/drugs-alcohol/>

Alcohol



Unlike other drugs, it is legal in the UK for anyone over the age of 18 to buy and consume alcohol. Drinking is normalised in the world around us. You might have been encouraged to have your first drink by a friend, family member or even by an advert. Arguably, it is harder to resist the potential dangers caused by unhealthy drinking habits, exactly because alcohol is easily available in our society. It's important not to forget that drinking can become addictive, can harm your body, and that it is illegal and dangerous to drink and drive. You also have less control over your body and thoughts when drinking, meaning you can become vulnerable to other dangers. If you are 18 or above, the key is to know your limits and to frequently check-in with your mental health when drinking. Here are useful links to resources and organisations that promote a healthy relationship with alcohol, and also support people who are struggling with their drinking habits. **-Martha**



Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service - Gloucestershire:

Link: <https://www.changegrowlive.org/drug-alcohol-recovery-service-gloucestershire>

Read about other young people's experiences with drugs and alcohol:

Link: <https://healthtalk.org/drugs-and-alcohol/alcohol-and-risks-to-self-and-others>

South Gloucestershire Drug and Alcohol Service:

Link: <https://www.dhi-online.org.uk/get-help/adult-drug-alcohol-treatment/south-gloucestershire-drug-and-alcohol-service>

Getting the facts about alcohol and how it affects the body, as well as where to get help for yourself or if you're concerned about someone else's drinking:

Link: <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/alcohol.html>

Risks associated with drinking alcohol under age from a doctor's point of view:

Link: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice/underage-drinking/know-the-risks-of-drinking-alcohol-underage>

Real experiences with alcohol

Lifestyle choices - Experiences with alcohol:

Real experiences with alcohol

Martha



Martha: Social drinking

What experience have you had with alcohol?

My move away to University felt like an opportunity to 'remodel' myself and cross an invisible threshold into a more adult space. Everything that was fun also seemed more dangerous now: the addictive compulsion to misbehave became a hive-mentality for the student population. For me, alcohol became a social crutch for the better part of a year. I finished my first year at University feeling incredibly hollow, haunted by some hazy memories of alcohol-fuelled nights out. It is a horrible feeling to have a blank space in your memory, unable to remember who you were with and how you got home.

How did you overcome your challenges/experience finding help with social drinking?

The summer holiday after my first year at University was an important decompression time for me. When at home, I rarely felt like drinking, and if I did, it was only in moderation. I reflected that I didn't feel connected to most of the others around me at Uni, and wasn't proud of the way I had failed to balance my studies and social life. I made a resolution to take more ownership of the decisions I made to say 'yes' or 'no' to a drink. My further two years at Uni were transformational; it wasn't too late to find my true friends and have genuinely happy, sociable time, feeling far more like myself.

What advice would you give to other young people who socially drink?

- » *Get to know your own body's capacity for alcohol. What's manageable for another person might be far too much for you*
- » *If you do take it too far, don't punish yourself for it. Try and identify the point at which things took a turn for the worse*
- » *Talk to other people at the party. It may surprise you that there are a lot of people in the same position as you, who only keep on drinking because of the same social expectation. Seek out those who are confident to say 'I've stopped drinking now'. You might make a much more genuine friend in the process!*
- » *Take it seriously. If you pass out or throw-up from drinking, take the time you need to rest, but don't just dismiss it as 'normal'. Instead, check in with your mental health, and consider whether you might need to lay off the drink for a while*

Smoking



It is legal in the UK for people age 18 and over to buy cigarettes, e-cigarettes and tobacco. A lot of people start smoking at a much younger age, and cravings can quickly escalate occasional smoking into a daily habit. Although cigarette packets now graphically display the consequences of smoking on the body, it is easy to ignore these warnings when cravings set in. Perhaps you find smoking or vaping helps you manage stress, subdue your appetite or fit in with your friends if they're smoking. Whatever reason you identify, there are things you can do to reduce your reliance on smoking. This section shares some helpful advice and links to support services. The benefits of quitting smoking can transform your health, and it's never too late to consider quitting. -**Martha**



A helping hand to stop smoking in Gloucestershire:

Link: <https://www.h1sglos.org/our-services/stop-smoking/>

Local stop smoking services and what to expect:

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree/help-and-advice/local-support-services-helplines>

What to do if you are finding it difficult to quit smoking:

Link: <https://smokefree.gov/quit-smoking/pick-your-path/i-want-to-quit>

10 tips to help you quit smoking:

Link: <https://www.nicorette.co.uk/getting-ready-to-quit/10-tips-to-stop-smoking>

Real experiences with smoking

Lifestyle choices - Experiences with smoking:

Real experiences with smoking



Anonymous: Smoking

What are your experiences with smoking?

I started smoking when I was 16. Looking back I realise it was because I had started sixth form and I wanted to fit in with my friends. Furthermore, when I started my first job I was around loads of people who also smoked and this made me go from a 'social smoker' to a smoker. Now almost 3 years on I really wish I had made a different decision.

How did you overcome the challenges surrounding smoking?

I now am at a point here I would like to quit. This is because of the obvious health issues linked to smoking, but also because of how expensive it is. By considering the cons of smoking I have been able to realise that quitting would be the best thing to do. I have started by cutting down how many I smoke a day and trying to get rid of the habitual nature of it. But it is extremely difficult.

What advice would you give to other young people regarding smoking?

- » *Consider the cons before starting to smoke*
- » *Seek help if you need help quitting*
- » *Create an action plan by giving yourself a date when you want to quit completely*

Screen time



Does your phone feel like an essential item to you? Do you turn to screens and social media whenever you have free moment? You aren't alone. Screens have become a key part of our lifestyles, facilitating everything from online learning and home-working, to how we socialise, find information and meet people. Combine this amount of screen time with TV and Gaming habits, and it's easy for the majority of your time to be swallowed up by the internet. It's important to know the dangers of letting this alternative, digital reality get out of balance. Social media sites are arguably engineered to be additive, stimulating reward hormones in the brain. But why then does social media often leave users feeling unsatisfied? There are things you can do to put yourself in control. This section includes some helpful pointers and resources to help you get that balance right. **-Martha**



BBC News - tips on how to limit excessive screen time:

Link: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-46758809>

Five tips for supporting young people to balance screen time:

Link: <https://pwxp5srs168nsac2n3fnjyaa-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Internet-Matters-Guide-Digital-Diet-Balancing-Screen-time.pdf>

10 strategies for reducing your screen time:

Link: <https://www.calendar.com/blog/10-strategies-for-reducing-your-screen-time/>

How to use the screen time function on an Apple product:

Link: <https://support.apple.com/en-gb/HT208982>

Lifestyle choices - Experiences with screen time:

Real experiences with screen time



Lifestyle choices - Experiences with screen time:

Anna: Screen time

What are your experiences with screen time?

Screen time is something that I have personally found really difficult to manage and this has negatively impacted my sleep pattern and my school work. This would leave me feeling very stressed and anxious that I was falling behind in school. The distraction of social media meant that I was going to sleep far too late and finding the following day difficult as I was so tired. However, I never felt concerned about this as a lot of my peers were also like this. It was only when I started to make small changes that I realised how important managing screen time is.

How did you overcome the challenges surrounding screen time?

When something is so engrained into your daily life, it can be hard to break these habits. It is something that I am still trying to deal with, but I have begun to use ways to help. For me, I set myself a time when I put my phone away and fall asleep. By doing this I can manage my time more and make sure that I'm getting enough sleep. Also, when studying, I use apps which restrict my phone's usage, so I won't get distracted and will be able to complete all of my tasks. This means that I feel more in control of my life and on top of my daily tasks.

What advice would you give to other young people regarding screen time?

- » *Set times in the day when you will put your phone down*
- » *Remind yourself of the cons of being on your phone too much*
- » *Tell yourself when you will be going to sleep, so you know when you need to put your phone away*



Exercise and healthy eating



'One size fits all' is not a term that can be applied to exercise and healthy eating! Getting to know your own body, its needs and metabolism are all key to establishing a positive relationship with your diet and fitness. It can take time to work this out and arrive at a place of balance with your body. Low self-esteem, bad past experiences and diagnosable conditions can all come into play when considering diet and exercise. Caring for your body can unlock potential in all aspects of your life, and could transform your mental health. It's important to go about it in a balanced and moderate way. Here is a selection of links to resources and guidance that will help you think through your relationship with exercise and healthy eating. If you are struggling with an eating disorder, or think you might be, visit this pack's 'Help with Eating Problems' section for more information. **-Martha**



Gloucestershire advice on what small changes you can make to your diet that will help:

Link: <https://www.hsglos.org/our-services/healthy-eating/>

Why is healthy eating important and how much do I need to eat?:

Link: <https://www.bupa.co.uk/health-information/nutrition-diet/healthy-eating>

Skills you need – caring for your body:

Link: <https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ps/healthy-body.html>

Find eating disorder support services near you:

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Eating%20disorder%20support/LocationSearch/341>

50 foods that are super healthy:

Link: <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/50-super-healthy-foods>

Easy ways to eat well and move more:

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life>

Real experiences with exercise and healthy...

Lifestyle choices - Experiences with exercise and healthy eating:

Real experiences with exercise and healthy eating



Anna: Exercise and healthy eating

What are your experiences with exercising and healthy eating?

I have always appreciated the benefits of living a healthy life and sport is one of my biggest passions. However, as I have got older, the busy nature of daily life can make it hard to ensure that I am living well. Personally, my biggest issue is making sure I am eating the right food to properly fuel my body. I have a part time job and having my own money makes it so much easier to order takeaway rather than eat a nutritious meal. Fast food and takeaways are delicious and convenient but leave me feeling unhealthy and worried about the impact on my body

How did you overcome the challenges surrounding exercise and healthy eating?

I started to remind myself about the positives that come from eating well! I listen to a lot of podcasts about sports and these help me feel motivated. In terms of managing my diet, a big help is making myself eat regularly and not skipping meals so that I suddenly feel hungry later in the day. Feeling hungry makes fast food so appealing - to me anyway. I have also started cooking at home. I am not the best cook but it is enjoyable to cook and eat food that I have prepared. It also helps me to be more conscious about the food I am consuming. As a result, I am saving a lot of money.

What advice would you give to other young people on exercise and healthy eating?

- » *Add up how much you spend on fast food – it shocked me and is a great motivator to make a change*
- » *Diet and exercise are linked, so aim to be positively maintaining both*
- » *Research quick and easy meals that will be far more nutritious than ordering*
- » *Eat regular meals*

Support from professionals



Some issues are too difficult to tackle alone. Even with the right support network, you may feel you need the help of a professional, whether that be due to the nature of your experiences or simply because you don't have friends and family that are involved or experienced enough to meet your needs. You should never feel ashamed or scared to reach out and find professional support, whether that's regarding anxiety, depression or any other mental health worries. Through the following sections, you'll find links to the relevant services and organisations that can help provide you with the professional support you need. **-Ben**

Help with anxiety

Help with depression

Help with eating problems



Help with anxiety



If you are struggling with anxiety and want to find help to make a change, know that you are not alone. There are a number of effective and supportive resources available. If you are concerned that you are developing a mental health problem, you should seek the advice and support of your GP as a matter of priority. However, we have also provided details on services and organisations that offer help and support directly to individuals with mental health difficulties and worries, for example, Tic+, Mind and the local Samaritans to name a few. Asking for help is not only brave, but also vital for maintaining good mental health and/or recovering from ill-health.

Talking to someone you trust about your feelings is a great way to start, but we understand relationships between friends and family are not always straightforward. If you do not have someone to talk to, there are many other ways to gain support, such as the online community. -**Alice**



Tic+ anonymous 1-2-1 online support and advice:

Link: <https://ticplus.org.uk/>

Free, safe and anonymous support – an online mental well-being community:

Link: https://www.kooth.com/?fbclid=IwAR30kxtmREGllhk-Yhtn_laN97O8jKcq31C9ETsgcqohmmsO7DW68gCRTdEnxiety

A safe and confidential space to share experiences and gain support from community and qualified professionals:

Link: <https://www.qwell.io/?fbclid=IwAR11SX7Kg890iHM9j5XZ4BzGZdoLfqbnf72rOnSLnEDoRZk6cRwdwZaspVU>

A guide to know what support is available to you:

Link: https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/?fbclid=IwAR2LX3D1CMorAat5hCys8dRbA9ieX5GGL8NsiKGUAXhC_tNdKI4DrrbSSJA

Gloucestershire NHS - getting help for anxiety:

Link: <https://www.ghc.nhs.uk/conditions/anxiety/>

Seeing the GP: advice and tips for young people:

Link: <https://www.healthtalk.org/seeing-gp-advice-and-tips-young-people/overview>

One-to-one chat and crisis messenger:

Link: https://www.themix.org.uk/?fbclid=IwAR10mxkAtKjLPBuXBP6PbdEF1QAurO_eBqku39OCznnvAVNY10asr32D_j4:

Support from professionals
subsection 2:

Help with depression



Depression can be debilitating for those that experience it, but there are many effective treatments available that can help you manage your depression symptoms. Firstly, it should be a priority to contact your GP, who can recommend a course of treatment to ensure that you will get help as soon as possible. They may suggest lines of treatment that include: medication, therapy and techniques that may be the most effective for you.

Sometimes the beginning of your journey to seek help could be making sense of what you are going through by reading about it online. We hope that we've provided you with links to resources that inform and help you as you reach out to your GP, therapist, school counsellor or to a charity.

-Alice



Tic+ anonymous 1-2-1 online support and advice:

Link: <https://ticplus.org.uk/>

How to ask for help when you're depressed - five tips for reaching:

Link: <https://www.bridgestorecovery.com/blog/how-to-ask-for-help-when-youre-depressed-5-tips-for-reaching-out-and-finding-treatment/>

10 ways to reach out in a mental health crisis:

Link: [https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/how-to-reach-out#2.-When-you-dont-have-close-people-nearby:-I-know-we-dont-talk-much-Im-going-through-a-tough-time-and-I-feel-like-youre-someone-I-can-trust.-Are-you-free-to-talk-\(day/time\)](https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/how-to-reach-out#2.-When-you-dont-have-close-people-nearby:-I-know-we-dont-talk-much-Im-going-through-a-tough-time-and-I-feel-like-youre-someone-I-can-trust.-Are-you-free-to-talk-(day/time))

Things from the NHS that you might find useful:

Link: <https://www.mindmate.org.uk/im-a-young-person/coping-common-issues/do-you-feel-very-low-or-extremely-sad/>

Parent pack – helping your teen with low mood:

Link: <https://www.ghll.org.uk/Parent%20pack%20low%20mood%20.pdf>

Self-help guides and tools:

Link: <https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/professional/index.asp>

Help with eating problems



Anyone can be affected by an eating disorder, which is why it's crucial to understand factors that are commonly associated with them, so that you can know when and where to find help. The first person to approach is your GP. Your GP should be able to give you advice about treatment, and may refer you to other local professionals in Gloucestershire. Alongside this, here are some resources that provide further information, including a helpline.

If you are worried on behalf of somebody else who you think might be struggling with an eating disorder, these resources may help. -**Alice**



Beat eating disorders – helplines and email support as well as downloadable resources and recovery stories:

Link: <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/support-services/helplines>

Find eating disorder support services near you:

Link: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/other-services/Eating%20disorder%20support/LocationSearch/341>

How to contact the eating disorder centre in Cheltenham:

Link: <https://www.ghc.nhs.uk/our-teams-and-services/eating-disorders-glos/>

Community well-being service – Cheltenham and Tewkesbury:

Link: <https://www.yourcircle.org.uk/Services/13419>

Helping someone with an eating disorder (friend or family's point of view):

Link: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/Feating-disorders/helping-someone-with-an-eating-disorder.htm>

Contact us:

We need you!



Are you between the age of 14 and 25 and have any of your own experiences with any of the topics covered in this resource pack? If so, we need you! We'll be updating these packs every so often with new resources and personal experiences from anyone who's willing to share them. Sharing our experiences and learning from other people's experiences can be incredibly empowering. If you'd like to share one of your experiences, or have any feedback regarding our resource packs and the links to other organisations we've shared, get in touch with us via one of our social media channels below, or via email. We can't wait to hear from you! Let's work together on creating a young person and Child Friendly Gloucestershire! -**Ben**

futureme@gloucestershire.gov.uk



