COPING STRATEGIES

If you're feeling overwhelmed or out of control, you might want to try different strategies to help calm yourself. This worksheet has lots of strategies cards which could be printed for future use. You could make a keyring or a coping strategies booklet.

We have a short video explaining how to make a booklet, just click or scan the QR code or head to the shorts section of our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@rise-ne

You might find that some strategies don't work for you and that is totally ok. Just give them a good practice and find which ones are best for you. You might find that they work one day but not the next. Which strategy will work for you may depend on what you are feeling and what you need at that point in time. The key is to practice strategies when feeling calm, so you know how to use them when overwhelmed.

To help figure out which ones are helpful for you, the strategies have been split into sections:

- Breathing and visualisation: simple breathing strategies to slow down your body. A lot of breathing strategies use visualisation which uses your brain to create a mental image to focus on. Quite helpful if you find sitting still hard.
- Grounding and distractions: Designed to help you get back to the present moment and focus on what is happening right now in your body or your surroundings. You're not worrying about the future or about things that have happened in the past, you put your full attention in to what you are doing right now.
- Active and alert: Uses your body to get rid of any build up of energy or providing your body with a burst of energy to feel more alert.
- Acceptance and kindness: let yourself feel the emotion in order to control it. There is no such thing as a bad emotion, it's what we do with it that matters. If we try to ignore and push feelings away they usually come back bigger and can explode! These strategies help us accept how we feel and help us realise that all feelings pass. They also help show ourselves and others compassion and kindness.

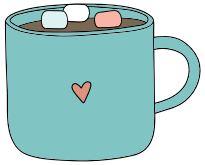
BREATHING AND VISUALISATION

Hot Chocolate Breathing

Pretend that you have your hands wrapped around a mug of hot chocolate.

Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds as though you are smelling the delicious chocolatey smell.

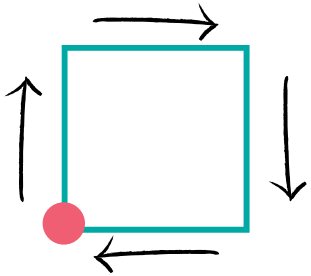
Then breathe out through your mouth for 4 seconds as though you are blowing it to cool it down.



Square Breathing

You can use your finger and trace around a square object, or trace an imaginary square with your finger.

Breathe in slowly for 4 seconds and out slowly for 4 seconds. Repeat if needed.



Happy Memories

When times are tough, think of a time when you felt happy.

Research shows we can boost our mood by reflecting on a positive memory.



Bumblebee Breathing

Sitting comfortably, gently place the tips of your pointer fingers in your ears and close your eyes.

Breathe in through your nose and then hum quietly as you slowly breathe out - like a bee!



Colour Breathing

Take a deep breath in slowly through your nose and imagine a happy, positive colour filling up your whole body.

Then breathe out slowly through your mouth and imagine blowing a negative colour away.

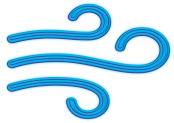
Repeat slowly until you feel calm.

2, 2, 4 Breathing

Research suggests that when we exhale longer than we inhale, it motivates our immune system and our bodies become more alert.

Perfect for a quick boost or if you feel like you are getting a cold.

Inhale for two seconds, hold for two seconds and exhale for four seconds.



Waves

Lie back gently on the floor with your feet out in front of you and place your hands on your stomach.
Breathe in through your nose and feel your hands rise up. As you slowly exhale, feel your hands go back down.



Imagine that your stomach is waves in the ocean and your hands are the boat. Feel the boat moving up and down on the waves as you breathe in and out.

Milkshake Breathing

Get a plastic cup with a straw.
Fill the cup halfway with water.

Breathe deeply in through your nose and breathe out slowly through the straw.

Blow small bubbles as you blow out very gently.

You should have calm rumbles of bubbles in your cup.



BREATHING AND VISUALISATION

Sun Breathing

Picture a bright, shining sun smiling at you. Breathe slowly and let the sun warm your face.

Imagine the sun warming your shoulders and back. Imagine the sun warming your arms. Continue to breathe in and out slowly and calmly.

Imagine the sun's warmth spreading to your legs. Finally, feel the warmth all the way in your fingers and toes.

Slowly stretch your arms overhead and your legs and feet out in front of you.

Take one more deep breath in and out and slowly open your eyes.

Feather Breathing



Sit comfortably in a chair and imagine there is a feather in front of you.

Breathe in through your nose and breathe out slowly through your mouth to make the feather float.

Repeat this until you feel calmer.

Hand Breathing



Stretch out one hand so you have space between your fingers.

With your pointer finger on the other hand, trace up and down around your fingers.

Breathe in slowly as you go up and breathe out slowly as you go down

Find Your Happy Place

Find somewhere quiet where you won't be interrupted.

Imagine a place where you feel happy, grounded and safe. This may be somewhere you have been before or imaginary.

Engage all your senses: what can you see? feel? hear? smell? taste?

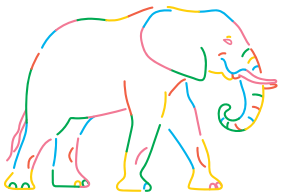


Elephant Breathing

Stand with your feet wide apart and your arms dangling in front of your body like an elephant's trunk.

As you breathe in deeply through your nose, raise your arms up high above your head.

Then slowly swing your arms down again as you breathe out through your mouth.



Birthday Cake Breathing

Sit in a chair with your hands on your belly. Turn your left hand into a fist and imagine that this is a cake.

Breathe in through your nose to smell the cake. Slowly count 1,2,3,4,5

Breathe through your mouth to blow out the candle. Slowly count 1,2,3,4,5.

Continue this for a few minutes until you feel calm.



Balloon Breathing



Sit comfortably on the floor with your legs crossed in front of you.

Imagine that there is a big balloon in your belly.

Place your hands over your belly.

Take a big deep breath in, sitting up straight and make your belly puff out as if it was a balloon filling with air.

Then exhale slowly like you are letting the air out of a balloon a little at a time.

As you let the air out, slowly roll your shoulders and bend forward. Repeat.

Bubble Breaths

Breathe in deeply and form a bubble in your mouth (your cheeks should be puffed out.)

Blow your bubble out of your mouth and push it away from you by blowing out hard and strong.

Do this slowly and picture your bubble floating away. Keep breathing in and out deeply.

Close your eyes and think about where else your bubble could go.

Can you blow it far away? Can you blow it to a friend? Imagine your bubble is returning to you.

Open your mouth and catch it for next time. Repeat.

BREATHING AND VISUALISATION

Butterfly Breathing

Sit on the floor with the bottom of your feet touching and the knees bent out to the sides.

Put your hands on your ankles and gently bounce your knees like you are flapping butterfly wings.

Close your eyes and breathe slowly and calmly. Be sure to take slow deep breaths in and out.

Pretend you are flying to your favourite place in the whole world. Imagine what it looks like. What do you see? What do you hear? What does it feel like? Imagine you are flying around, and you are happy and calm.

Now it is time to fly home, slowly flap your wings back home. Take a deep breath in and slowly exhale. Now slowly open your eyes.

Rainbow Breathing

Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, arms gently resting by your sides.

Slowly raise your arms and take a deep breath in. Try to breathe in until your hands reach each other over your head.

Breathe out slowly while lowering the hands. Visualize the beautiful rainbow you are making.

Repeat 5-10 times.

Each time you breathe in imagine you are adding another colour to your rainbow.

Once your rainbow is done slowly open your eyes.

Bubble Breathing

Imagine you are holding a bubble wand.

Breathe in deeply and then, as you breathe out slowly and gently, imagine you blowing bubbles into the room.

Imagine the bubbles are filled with peace or love or happiness and that you are filling the whole room with a peaceful and happy feeling.



As you keep breathing slowly and blowing your imaginary bubbles, feel your body become calm and relaxed.

Yoga Breathing (4, 7, 8)

Very relaxing and ideal for when we feel stressed or struggling to fall asleep.

Inhale for four seconds, hold for seven and exhale for eight.



Slimy Hands

Imagine you have a ball of slime in the palm of each hand.

Squeeze the slime as hard as you can as you breathe in.

Then breathe out and open your hands. Imagine that the slime has spread across your hands.

Repeat this a few times.



Rise and Fall

Sit in a comfortable position with your back straight.

Imagine you are rising and falling with your breath.

As you breathe in for 1,2,3,4. Slowly come to a standing position and stretch your arms into the sky.

As you breathe out for 1,2,3,4. Slowly come to a seated position with your arms relaxed by your side.

Coordinate your breathing with your rise and fall and continue for a few minutes.

Belly Breathing

Sit or lie comfortably, place your hand on your belly.

Breathe in deeply through your nose and feel your belly rise. Breathe out through your mouth as the belly relaxes back.



Tummy Breathing

Lie on the floor and place a stuffed animal on your stomach.

Breathe in deeply through your nose and feel the stuffed animal rise, and then feel it lower as you slowly exhale through your mouth.

Rock the stuffed animal to sleep using the rise and fall of your stomach.



BREATHING AND VISUALISATION

Back to Back Breathing

Find a partner and sit on the floor back to back. Sit tall and close your eyes if you want to.

Decide who will start, that person begins by inhaling deeply and then exhaling slowly, and then continues to breathe slowly and deeply.

Their partner should feel the expansion in their partners back each time they breathe in and then try to sync their own breathing so that both partners are breathing in time.

Dragon Breathing

Take a deep breath in. As you breathe out, imagine you are a powerful dragon, breathing fire over your surroundings!

Repeat this a few times.

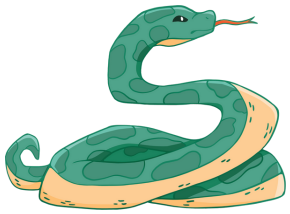


Snake Breathing

Take a deep breath in. As you breathe out, make a sssss sound and imagine you are a snake hissing.

Breathe in...

Sssssssssss



Lotus Breath

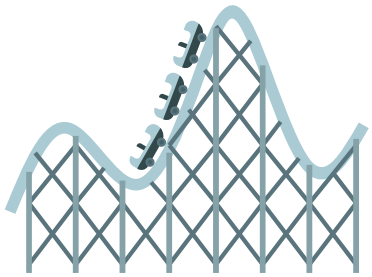
Hold your hands in front of you and imagine it is a beautiful lotus flower that opens in the day and closes at night. Open and close your hand slowly, feeling the sensations of the hand opening and closing, just like a lotus flower.

Now, breathe in time with the opening and closing. Breathe in while your hand opens, and breathe out while your hand closes. Focus on this for 5-10 breaths.

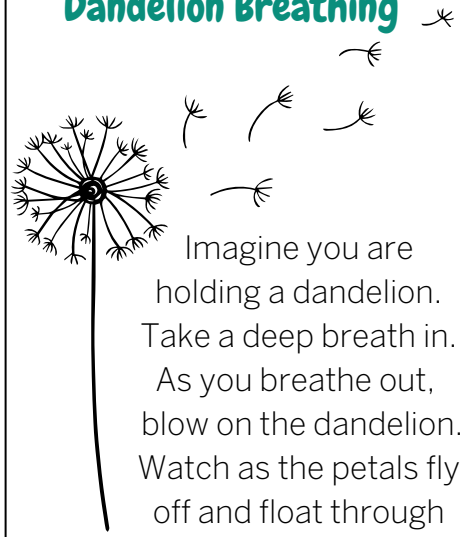


Roller Coaster Breathing

Take some deep breaths. As you breathe in, imagine you are going up a hill on a roller coaster. As you breathe out, imagine yourself whizzing back down the other side.



Dandelion Breathing



Imagine you are holding a dandelion. Take a deep breath in. As you breathe out, blow on the dandelion. Watch as the petals fly off and float through the air.

Volcano Breathing

Take a deep breath in and feel all of the tension in your body rising up to the top of your head.

As you breathe out, imagine all of the tension bursting out of your body like lava exploding out of a volcano.



Externalising Cat

When you notice your anxiety building up, find a nice quiet space and sit comfortably. Begin deep breathing.

Imagine your anxiety manifest into a cat sitting on your lap. It is full of worries and fears and looks tense.

Continue your deep breathing and after your next exhale say to yourself "May my cat be calm."

After you say this imagine the cat begin to relax. Do this as many times as you need until it is fully at ease in your lap.



GROUNDING AND DISTRACTIONS

Mind Games

When we cannot do anything about our thoughts and worries, then it is sometimes useful to distract ourselves.

You could play:

- What would you do if...: you had a superpower, won the lottery?
- A-Z: Find 5 things for every letter of the alphabet.
- 10s - 10 colours in the room, 10 Disney films...



5, 4, 3, 2 ,1

5 things I can see

4 things I can hear

3 things I can smell

2 things I can touch

1 thing I can taste

Be a Tree

I am firmly planted. I feel my feet rooted to the ground. My back is a strong trunk helping me feel stable in the moment. I feel my toes connecting with the ground. My arms are my branches. I feel them reach out into the world.



Reorientation

Get connected with the here and now. Say and finish these statements:

My name is...
I am in...
Today is...
The season is...
The weather is...
I am wearing...
I can see...



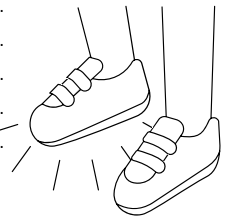
I am Here

Trace your hand on a piece of paper.
Press your hand into the handprint.
Notice how your hand feels as you press.
Feel your hand connect with the table.
With the room.
With this moment.

Stomp, Stomp, Blow

Inhale deeply.
Stomp your left foot.
Stomp your right foot.
Exhale deeply.
Feel your foot connect with the ground.
Blow away those anxious thoughts,

Stomp. Stomp. Blow.
Stomp. Stomp. Blow.
Stomp. Stomp. Blow.
Stomp. Stomp. Blow.
Stomp. Stomp. Blow.
Stomp. Stomp. Blow.



Count the Colours

Pick a colour to focus on, e.g., purple.

How many purple things can you see?

Close your eyes, how many purple things can you imagine?

Why not count the rainbow colours?



Connect with Nature

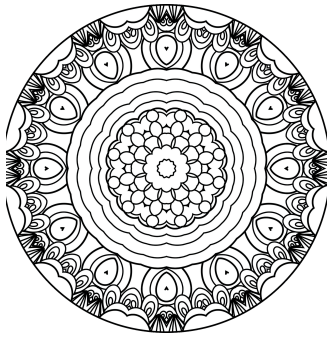
Take a walk or sit in an outdoor space. Take some time to notice what you can see around you. What can you hear? Notice any smells in the air. Feel the wind or sun on your face.



GROUNDING AND DISTRACTIONS

Colouring in

Take a mindful moment to sit and concentrate on colouring, notice the colours you are using, the shades and textures. Be in that moment, concentrate solely on what you are creating.



Alphabet Search

A B C D E F G
H I J K L M N
O P Q R S T U
V W X Y Z

Look around the room and try to find an object that begins with each letter of the alphabet. Doing this can take your mind off your worries and help you to feel calmer.

Fact Finder

Choose a topic that you know a lot about or are learning about. Think of as many facts as you can about this topic.

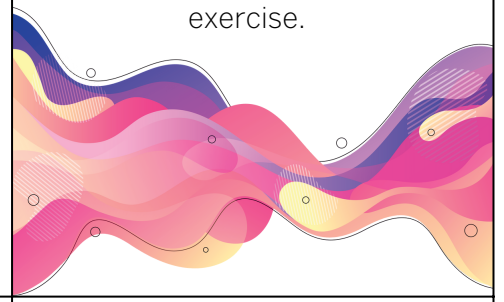
Using our brains keeps our minds healthy and helps us to feel good too.

Doing this can also help distract your mind from any worries.



Flow Activity

Try a flow activity.
Flow is a state of mind that occurs when a person is totally immersed in an activity. E.g., reading, drawing, colouring or exercise.



Power Hug

Tap your left hand on your right shoulder.
Tap your right hand on your left shoulder.
Squeeze yourself in a hug.

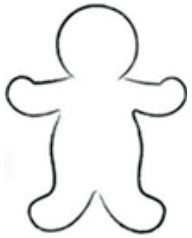
Affirm yourself by saying
"I am present in this moment"

Tap. Tap. Squeeze.
Affirm. Tap. Tap. Squeeze.
Affirm. Tap. Tap. Squeeze.
Affirm



Body Scan

Forget everything else and focus on your body.



1. Get in a comfortable position.
2. Bring your attention to your feet, what can you feel or notice?
3. Don't try to change anything, just notice it and move on.
4. Work your way up your entire body, noticing the feelings in each part.

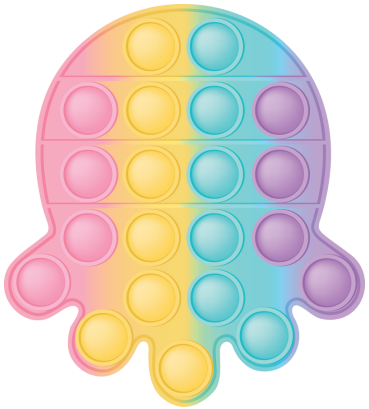
Music

Music can be a powerful way to change feelings. Why not make an uplifting playlist, sing, dance, play an instrument?



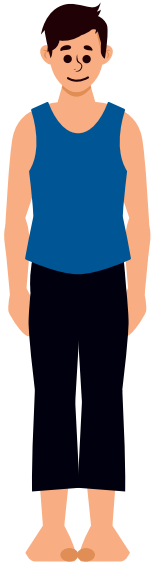
Fidget Toys

Fidget toys can help self-soothe, instilling focus and enabling concentration,



GROUNDING AND DISTRACTIONS

Stand Tall



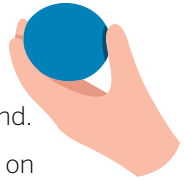
Stand up straight.

Pull your shoulders back.

Plant your feet into the ground.

Breathe deeply.

Object Focus



Hold an item in your hand.

Put all of your attention on just this one item.

Notice everything there is to notice about it.

What colours do you see?

What textures does the object have?

Does it make a sound?

How does it feel in your hand?

How does it feel if you poke or squeeze it?

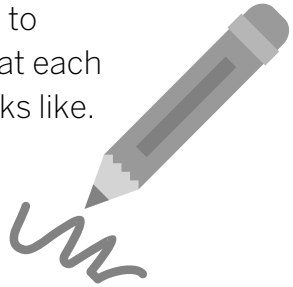
Notice everything.

Surrounding Sketch

Take a pen or pencil and some paper.

Sketch out what you can see around you.

Take time to notice what each object looks like.



Tongue Twisters

Distract your mind by trying out a tongue twister! Have a go at some of these:

1. Red lorry, yellow lorry (repeat as many times as you can without making a mistake!)
2. If a dog chews shoes, whose shoes does he choose?
3. Selma sells seashells by the seashore.

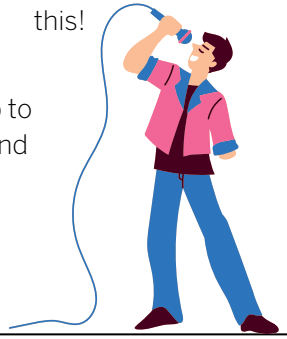


Sing Along

Listen to a song you like and focus on singing along. Take notice of the words and see how many you can get right!

Challenge yourself to remember more of the words next time you do this!

This can help to take your mind off your negative thoughts.



Mindful Eating

Take a piece of food that you enjoy, such as a piece of fruit.

What does it look like?

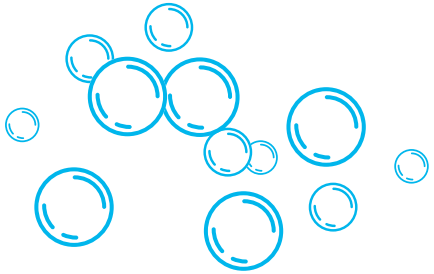
What does it smell like?

How does it feel?

How does it taste?



Worry Bubbles



Imagine your worries floating around you inside of bubbles.

Take a moment to notice the worry... then POP the bubble and watch the worry disappear.

Pet Power

If you have a pet, spend some time playing with them, or cuddling them. Focus all of your attention on your pet.



What are they doing?

What sounds are they making?

How does their skin or fur feel to touch?.

ACTIVE AND ALERT

Chair Push Ups

Sit with your feet flat on the floor. Push your bottom up from the seat of the chair with flat palms.

Hold for 5-10 seconds and repeat if needed.



Squeeze

Squeeze all your muscles and breathe in. Hold it in for a count of 10. Breathe out slowly as you relax your muscles. Repeat.



Try imagining you are squeezing lemons in the palms of your hands.

Palm Push

Face your palms together

Push them firmly

Hold for 10 seconds

Repeat



Finger Pull

Put one hand palm up and one hand palm down.

Touch your fingers together and curl so they are locked together.

Pull them apart and hold for 10 seconds.



Active Relaxation

Relaxation doesn't have to mean sitting still, gentle exercise can help you relax too.

Take a gentle walk, try yoga, pilates or gentle strecthing.



Exercise

Exercise can help to clear our minds, refocus and provide a release of built-up emotions.

Go for a run, a bike ride, do some skipping or push ups on a wall.



Splash

When you are feeling anxious or panicked, splash your face with cold water.



This can calm your heart rate and give you a mental reset.

Water



Slowly drink some cold water. Let the calmness flow in and the anxiety flow out.

Focusing on the feeling as it goes down your throat can distract your mind from worry.

ACTIVE AND ALERT

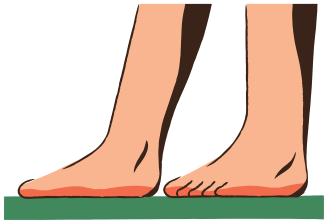
Spell Your Name Workout!

A: 5 push ups
B: 50 jumping jacks
C: 20 crunches
D: touch toes 7 times
E: 15 air punches
F: 10 arm circles
G: 10 squats
H: 30 jumping jacks
I: 10secs run in place
J: 15secs run in place
K: 5 cartwheels
L: 10 hops (each leg)
M: 15 squats
N: 10 push ups
O: 10 air punches
P: 10 toe touches
Q: dance for 1 min
R: 30secs march
S: 10 hops (each leg)
T: Jump 10 times
U: spin around 7 times
V: 3 cartwheels
W: touch toes 5 times
X: 20secs plank
Y: 10secs wall sit
Z: dance for 30 secs



Pace it Out

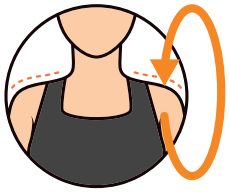
Help your body get rid of anxious feelings by pacing back and forth.



Go as fast or as slow as you like, taking time to feel the sensations in the soles of your feet.

Shoulder Rolling

Choose a comfortable sitting position. As you take a slow deep breath in through your nose raise your shoulders up towards your ears.



Breathe slowly out through your mouth, lowering your shoulders as you exhale. Repeat slowly, rolling your shoulders up and down in time with your breath.

Pillows

Use a pillow to take out some of your frustrations and get out all of your built-up energy in a safe way.



Squeeze a pillow
Shout / scream into a pillow
Punch a pillow

Bear Hug

Spread your arms out wide. Wrap them around yourself and gently squeeze to give yourself a big bear hug.



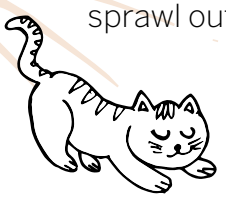
Hand Massage



Use your thumb and fingers from one hand to massage the other hand.
As you do this, notice how it feels in each part of your hand.

Cat in the Sun

Take a deep breath and stretch out your body. Imagine you are a cat, stretching in the sun. Feel the warmth of the sun on each part of your body as you sprawl out.



PAWS

P - Pause and think

A - Always take 3 deep breaths

W - Walk away if you're still mad

S - See an adult for help

ACCEPTANCE AND KINDNESS

Rip!

Get all the anxious or angry thoughts out of your mind by writing them down.

When you've written them all down, rip the paper into tiny pieces and put it in the bin.

Rate it!

When you notice your worries, rate it on a scale of 0 to 10.
0=not worried at all
10=most worried you have ever felt.



Set a time for 1 minute and do some deep breathing. Remind yourself that this feeling will pass. Rate your worries again and repeat if needed.

Amazing Me

Write down or say out loud 5 amazing things about yourself:

Be Thankful

Remembering all the good things in your life can help you through tough times. Try every day to think of something you are thankful for...



I am thankful for this person...
I am thankful for this place...
I am thankful for this experience...
I am thankful for this mistake...

Share the Love

Tell someone what you like about them, or pay them a compliment. Being kind to others will not only make them feel good - it will make you feel good too!



Smile

Have a go at smiling at people when you pass them in the corridor or on the street. Smiling has been proven to boost your happiness and can spread joy to others too!



Space

Take a moment and have some space by yourself, allow your emotions to come around and sit with them. Breathe through the emotions and take time.

- Lie on your bed
- Go to a safe space
- Hide under a blanket
- Create your own calming space



Positive Power

Take time each day to notice something good that has happened. This could be something big or small.



Recognising the good things helps us to feel more positive about our lives.

ACCEPTANCE AND KINDNESS

Thoughts Aren't Facts

Just because you think it, does not make it true.

Can you pop your green glasses to challenge and change your thought? Is there another way to think about the situation?

If it is true, how will you cope? Will it matter in a week's time? A month's time?



Take a break

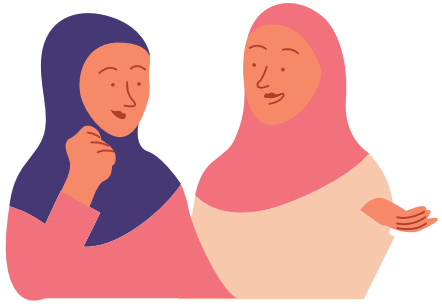
Take some time away from your normal routines or thoughts.

Read a book, have a bubble bath, bake, go for a walk or get creative!



Talk to someone

Trusted friends, family, school staff or contacting a helpline can help when we struggle



Acceptance

Feelings are not good or bad. Pushing feelings away can make them come back even stronger.



Accept your feelings and allow them to be there. When we stop rejecting our feelings, they can be easier to live with.



Worry Time



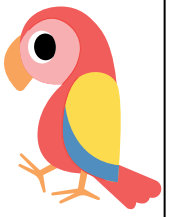
Create a worry box or jar, or use a worry monster if you have one.

Set aside time every day to worry, e.g., 6pm, for no more than 30 mins.

Whenever you have a worry, write it down, put it in your worry box and let it go.

When it is your scheduled time, problem solve your worries. If you can't do anything about them give yourself permission to let them go!

Poisonous Parrot



Imagine you've been given a parrot. It doesn't have any knowledge or wisdom; it just repeats things in a parrot like way.

However, this parrot is a poisonous parrot. It has been trained to be unhelpful to you – commenting on your life and being mean.

We wouldn't put up with this parrot, but we can put up with being very mean to ourselves.

Next time you are mean to yourself, imagine it is the parrot and say
"I don't have to listen to it"
and then go distract yourself.



Sometimes when we are anxious, angry or down we can be quite mean to ourselves.

Imagine sharing these self-criticisms with your kindest friend. What would they say to help you? Hear these words and let yourself believe them.

Sitting with strong emotions



Sit comfortably and begin by doing deep breathing. As you breathe, slowly acknowledge your emotions.

Notice where you feel them in your body - a headache? Shaking? Tense?

When you notice these sensations, say to yourself, or out loud *"I feel..."* and name the emotions e.g., stress, anger.

Follow this sentence with *"I feel..."* and name the body sensation, e.g., tense, tired, a headache.

Do a round of deep breathing. Repeat this exercise four more times. It is fine if you repeat an emotion or sensation.