NHS
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Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

CAMHS
BRIGHTENING THE FUTURE



Contents

Page

3 What are ACEs?

4 About this booklet

5 What impact do ACEs have?

6 How do you feel with ACEs?

7 Brain dump!

8 Identifying your personal qualities

9 Examples of personal qualities

10 The people in your life

11 Flight, flight or freeze!

12 Window of tolerance

13 Your window of tolerance

14 Icebergs

15 My iceberg

16 The TOP TEN skills

17 The TOP TEN skills 1-4

18 The TOP TEN skills 5 -7

19 The TOP TEN skills 8 - 10

20 Identifying goals

21 How to focus in the age of distraction

22 Self care

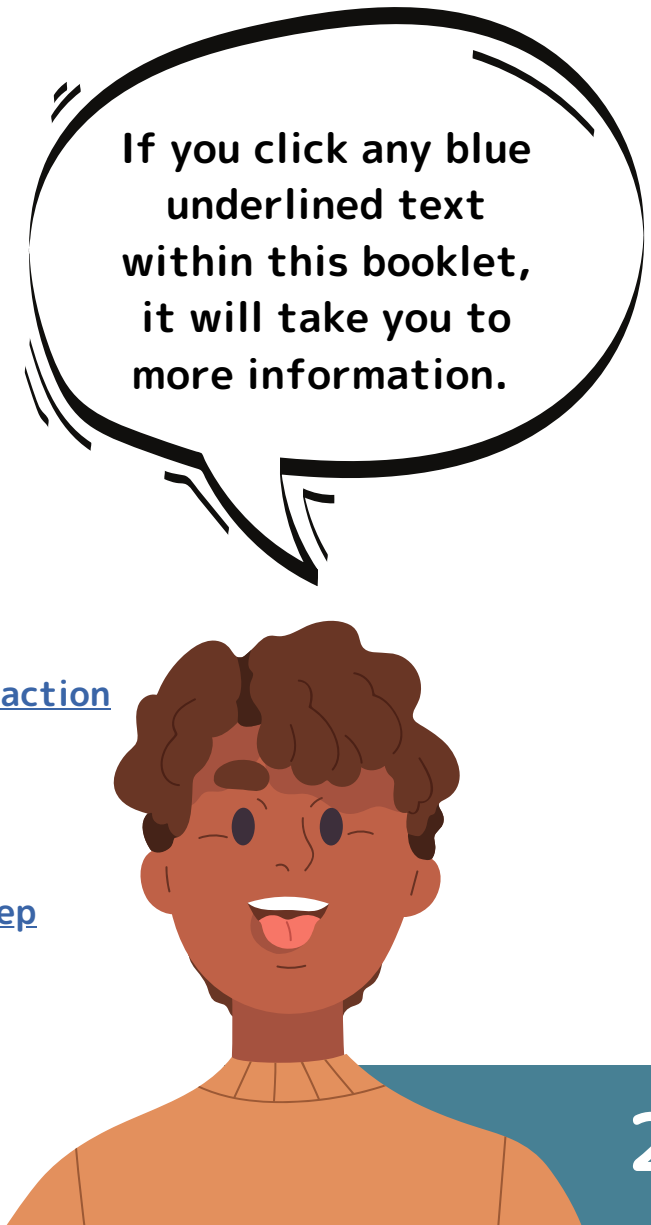
23 My self-care evaluation

24 12 steps for a better nights sleep

25 Any lasting thoughts?

26 Useful websites

27 Useful resources



What are ACEs?

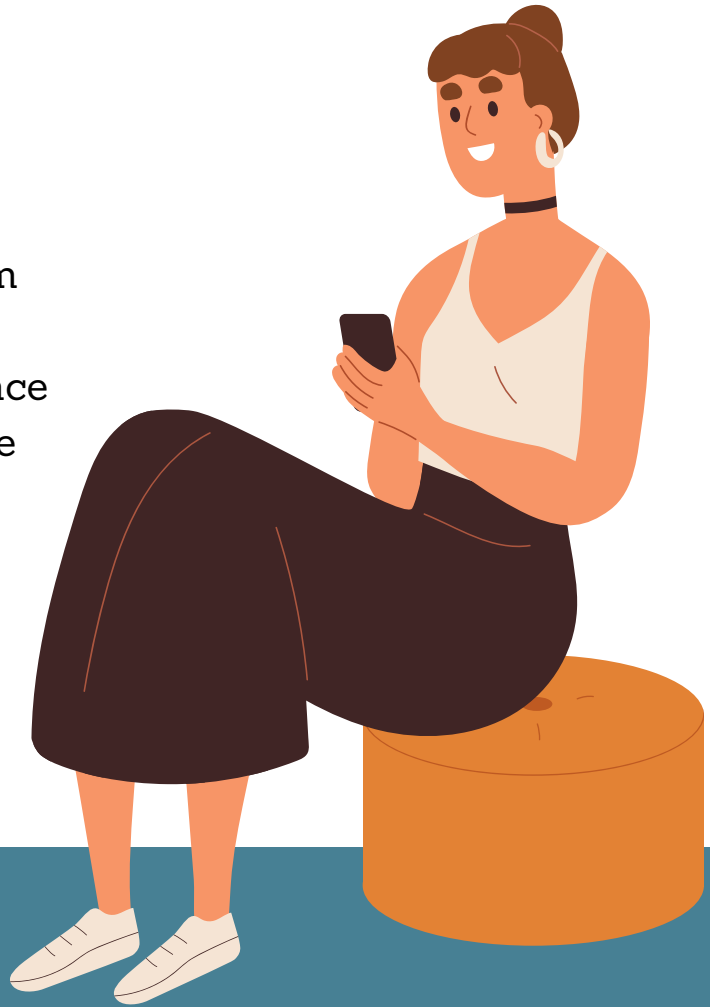
When we are growing up, the experiences we have can affect the development of our body and brain. This means that our mental health (including our thoughts, feelings and behaviours) can be changed by the experiences we live through.

If you are exposed to stress, over a long period of time during childhood, this can impact your physical health and disrupt healthy brain development which may impact the way we view and relate to ourselves, other people and the world around us.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are a range of events that are highly stressful, potentially traumatic situations, that occur during childhood and/or adolescence. These events may be one-off events or they may be repeated experiences.
Examples of ACEs include:

- physical abuse
- emotional abuse
- sexual abuse
- physical neglect
- emotional neglect
- bullying
- exposure to war or terrorism
- parental separation or loss
- exposure to domestic violence
- removal from a family home
- or living with someone

who uses alcohol
or substances, who has been to prison or has difficulties with their mental health



About this booklet

ACEs are something that may have happened to you. If you have experienced ACEs, this can be expected to impact on your emotional wellbeing. If you feel that you have experienced ACEs, you might need to pay attention to your own emotional and physical health.

Specialist CAMHS workers have thought about what information and activities you might find helpful and included these.

You can dip in and out of the booklet, working through the pages by yourself or you might want to discuss these with your CAMHS worker.

You might also want to share some of the information with the people you are closest to so they can understand and support you.



What impact do ACEs have?

Although some stress can be helpful for us, too much stress or too many adverse experiences can impact the way we view ourselves, other people and the world.

Experiencing ACEs can result in us viewing other people and the world as dangerous and chaotic. This can lead to us being on 'alert' all the time and on the lookout for danger. We might react more quickly and more strongly to things than some other people do. It might also impact on our sleep and mood. We might try to do things (that aren't that good for us such as smoking, vaping, taking drugs or using alcohol) to distract us from these difficult feelings.

The impact of ACEs on your mental health depends on a range of factors including the number and length of time you endured the experiences for and how severe they were.



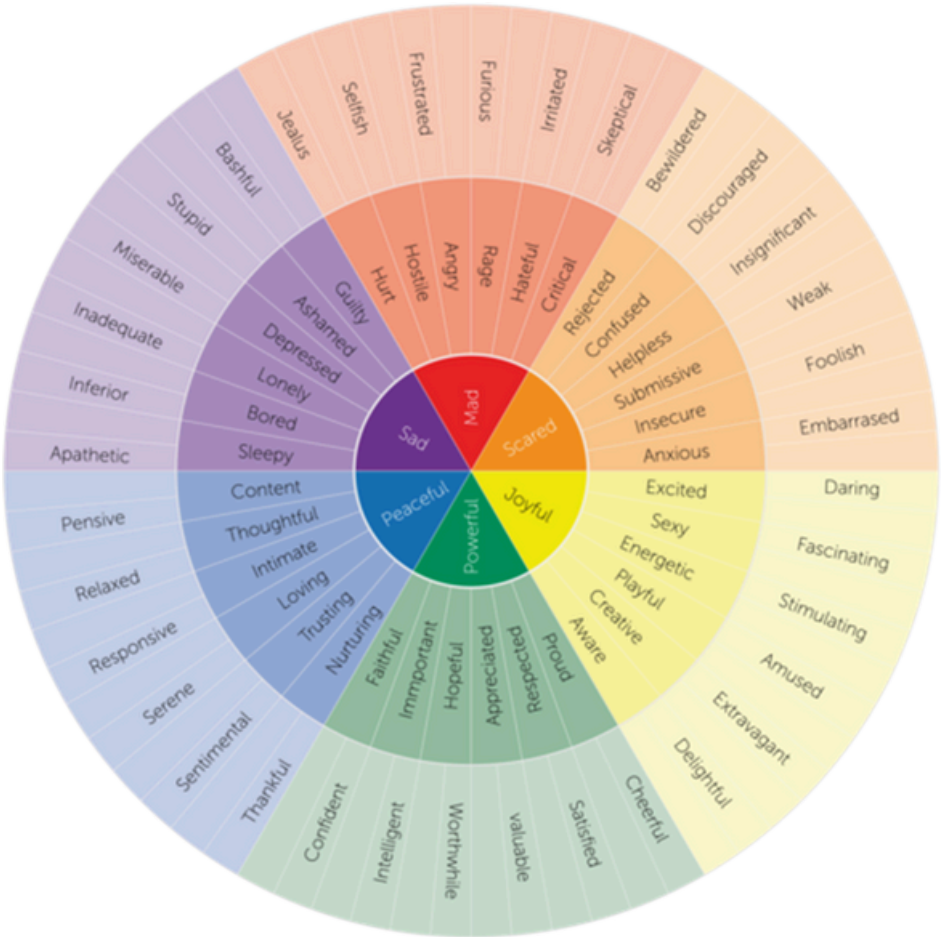
How do you feel with ACEs?

We've identified that you might feel 'on alert' all the time and this can be exhausting. It is helpful to be able to recognise and name our emotions as this can help us to manage our emotions.

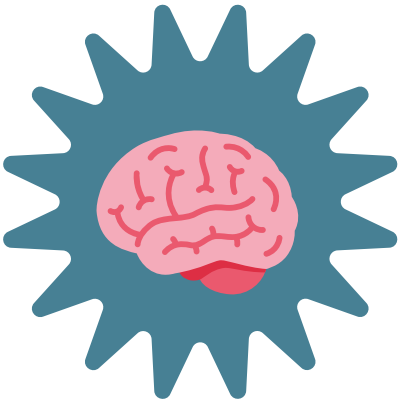
Are you able to stop and think "How I am feeling? Can I tell?"

(The Feelings Wheel below can help you identify how you are feeling)

What is making me feel that way?
What do I want to happen next?
Can I find the words to calmly express how I feel or do I just need to walk away for a while to get myself back to a calmer place?



Brain Dump!



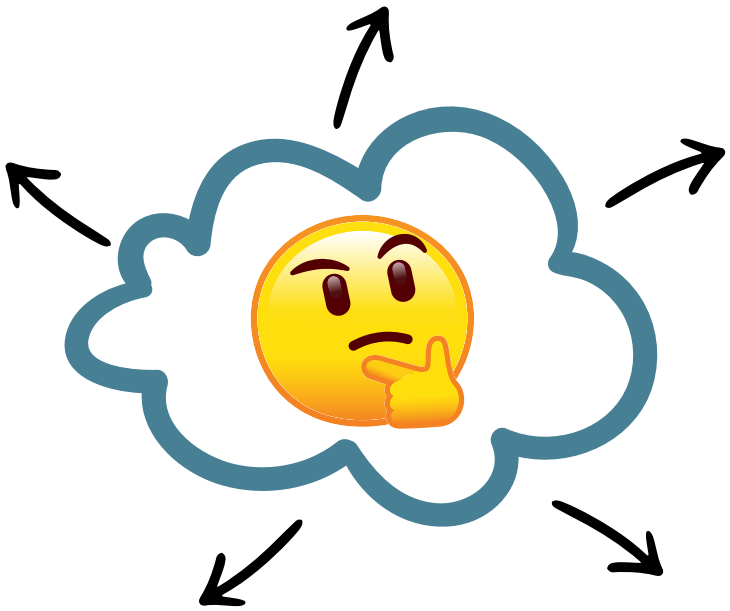
Note down or draw your thoughts below ..

If you're struggling for ideas, consider thinking about what questions you have for your Lead Professional or what do you think/feel about coming to CAMHS?

Identifying your personal qualities

Your personal qualities are how you could describe your character. These beliefs about yourself influence your attitudes and actions.

You can add your own below - if you're not too sure what your personal qualities are, take a look on the next page for some ideas.



Examples of personal qualities

Accepting
Accomplished
Brave
Balanced
Calm
Confident
Community minded
Curious
Dedicated
Devoted
Empathetic
Enthusiastic
Fair
Fit
Friendly
Generous
Grateful
Happy
Healthy
Honest
Imaginative
Independent
Individual
Joyful
Just
Kind
Knowledgable
Logical
Lovely
Mature
Motivated
Open
Optimistic
Organised
Patient
Peaceful
Positive
Respectful
Responsible
Results-Oriented
Secure
Self respectful
Spiritual
Team player
Tolerant
Trustworthy
Understanding
Unique
Visionary
Vital
Wise

The people in your life

We may come across people who are helpful and some who aren't. Who's helpful in your life?

Can you think about how they have been helpful?

Professionals



Family



School/Work



Friends



Others



Fight, flight, freeze!

When we see something scary, think frightening thoughts or feel in danger, our bodies can go into survival mode and prepare to protect us by taking action. This is called our fight, flight, freeze response.

Have a think about if you relate to any of the following examples below. If you can think of your own example, you can add this in the empty circle below.

Do you tend to be in fight, flight or freeze?

Fight	Flight	Freeze
Hitting	Running away	Shutting down
Using mean words	Unfocused	Isolating

Window of tolerance

What can you cope with? Each person has different things they can tolerate (or not).

Our "window of tolerance" can get bigger and smaller! Stress can shrink your window so we're more likely to become either hyperaroused (when your body kicks into high alert) or hypoaroused (when your body feels numb or underwhelmed) but there are ways to expand it too.

HYPERarousal

You may feel anxious, angry, out of control or overwhelmed. Your body wants to fight or run away.



WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

When you are in your Window of Tolerance, you feel like you can deal with whatever is happening in your life. You may feel a certain amount of stress and pressure but it doesn't bother you too much.

HYPOarousal

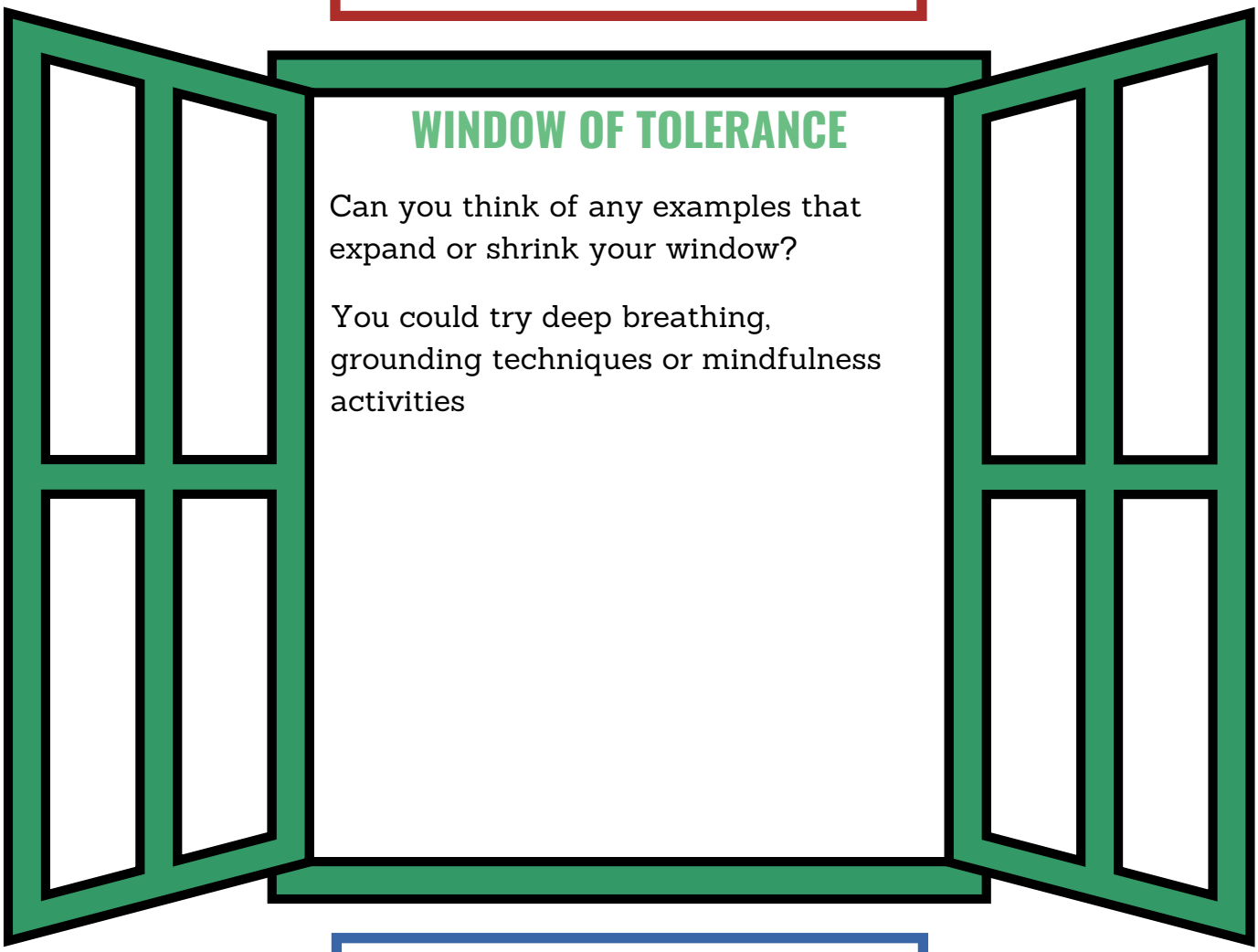
You may feel spacy, zoned out, numb, frozen, like your body wants to shut down. .



Your window of tolerance

HYPERarousal

because of....
where you are or what you are doing
who you are with
what you are sensing



WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

Can you think of any examples that expand or shrink your window?

You could try deep breathing, grounding techniques or mindfulness activities

HYPOarousal

because of....
where you are or what you are doing
who you are with
what you are sensing

Icebergs

We all experience difficult feelings from time to time however there is usually more to what we're feeling than what others see on the surface.

Below is an example of an iceberg when someone is feeling angry. People may see someone shouting and lashing out but miss what is happening on the inside, causing them to behave this way.

Anger iceberg



My iceberg

Have a go at creating your own by choosing an emotion you feel often (i.e. sad, angry, worried).

I was feeling
on the surface • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •



But this is what I was really feeling underneath












The 'TOP TEN' skills

The Top Ten skills are 10 tips that can help you on a day to day basis.

Maybe highlight the skills you already do and circle the ones you are going to try?

1. Stop and think is a very important skill to learn and can be used in lots of different situations. This skill is also about seeing when things might be getting a bit risky and taking a moment before you act to give yourself time to think through decisions



2. What's it like: This skill allows us to take a moment to think about what it might be like for other people. This could be any person: a friend, a stranger or a family member. What might it be like for them in this situation? What might they be thinking / feeling?



3. Ask for help: This skill allows us to practise asking for help from trusted people. This is an important skill to learn if you are not used to asking for help or letting people know when you might be struggling or finding something hard.



4. Stay calm: This skill is all about keeping your emotions and feelings in check. When our emotions get out of control, it can be very hard to think especially planning out ways to cope. It can be hard to see consequences and it can be hard to stop ourselves reacting in negative ways. So if you feel yourself getting worked up remember to try and 'stay calm'.



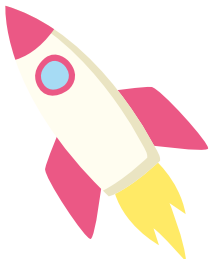
5. Don't give up: This skill is all about not giving up when things are difficult. This could be applied in lots of situations (school, work, friends) or generally anything that makes us feel like we should give up. This could include times where we are trying to make our life better and things aren't easy or going to plan. The key is 'don't give up'



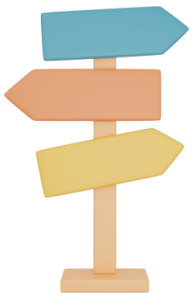
6. What if: This skill helps us to think about what might happen to us if things go well but also if they go wrong. It's important to use this skill when we are doing something we already know is risky. It's easy to think about how things will go if everything goes to plan. We don't always think about what will happen to us (and the people we care about) if things go wrong.



7. My future: This skill gets us to think past the 'now' and start to think about how our actions might affect our future. It gets us to think about goals and reminds us to think about who we might want to be in the future: how our actions now might affect our future self.



8. The Path: This skill is helping us to think about our actions now and identify if our decisions we make today are taking us towards or away from the person we want to be in the future. This skill can be used with any decision, big or small, and gets us to think about the bigger picture. This can be used with other skills such as 'Stop and think' and 'My future'.



9. Be kind: This skill is all about being kind to yourself and the people around you. We are often our worst critics and the voices in our head that tell us negative things (about ourselves and other people) are not always right. This skill is about treating yourself (problems and successes) with kindness. We can use this skill to be kind to other people and help them to see the good parts of themselves.



10. Pat yourself on the back: It can be very hard to notice when you do things well or accept other people noticing and telling you. However, this skill is very important for your self development. You have to be able to notice when you have challenged yourself and made a positive move forward (even if it didn't work out as you planned). You need to say well done to yourself for even trying.



Identifying goals



What is a goal? A goal is something you want to be, to do or to have. Something you are aiming for in the future.
We have added an example for you.

<u>What do you want?</u>

- *I want to start attending school again*
-
-

<u>How are you going do it?</u>

- *Create small, achievable steps. For example: discuss with school reasonable steps to achieve this.*
-
-

<u>How do you know you've achieved it?</u>

- *I would be at school full time*
-
-

<u>What could get in my way?</u>

- *I wake up too late*
-
-

<u>How could I get past it?</u>

- *Set several alarms and ask mum to wake me up too*
-
-

How to focus in the age of distraction

Managing your space

Spend 10 mins a day decluttering
eg take one small space and remove anything you no longer use or need

Clear away all distractions

Do 1 thing at a time

Take a technology detox

Try to decrease time spent on

- TV
- Social media
- Mobile
- Computer Games

Your phone will usually tell you how long you've spent on tech. Can you set a timer to reduce your time online by 5 minutes per week?

Try to increase

- Spending time with friends and family
- Getting creative
- Reading a book



How to work

Take regular breaks if possible
Use a timer
Work in focused bursts
Try to get away from a computer if possible

Take time to reflect and review

What are the 3 most important things to do today?
What did I do well today?
What will I focus on tomorrow?

Create Habits

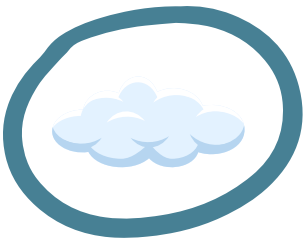
Have breakfast
Stretch or walk
Have a to do list
Shower

Self-care

Self-care is something we do to for ourselves to make us feel looked after and good about ourselves.
We can have different ways we look after ourselves, from personal hygiene to relaxation and mindfulness.

Types of self-care

Areas of self-care can include physical, emotional, social, personal and space. Below we have provided some examples of self-care for each type and we have left some space for you to add your own thoughts and ideas.



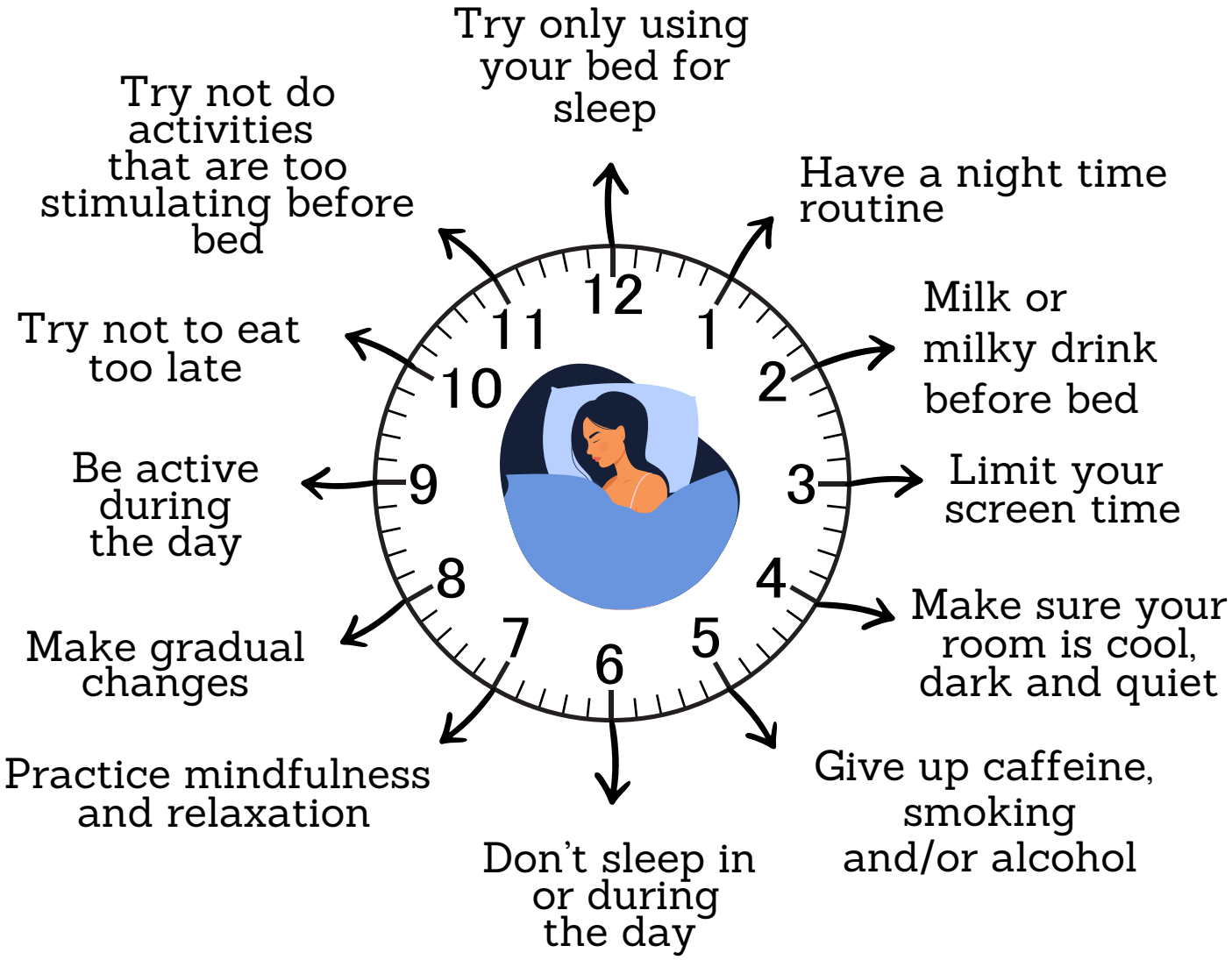

Physical	Emotional	Social	Personal	Space
• Sleep • Stretching • • • •	• Stress management • Mindfulness • • •	• Boundaries • Asking for help • • • •	• Spirituality • Hobbies • • • •	• Clean room • Safety • • • •

My self-care evaluation

Why not complete the following self-care evaluation? You can tick as many boxes as you would like.

	I am doing well with this	This could be better	I would like to improve this
• Do you have things to do that can keep you busy and stop you being bored?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you have things in your life that makes you feel like you are good at something?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you feel like you belong or are a part of something outside of your family (i.e. club, community, group)	☐	☐	☐
• Do you have a basic routine to your day?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you make time for yourself?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you get a good night's sleep?	☐	☐	☐
• Are you happy with your relationships?	☐	☐	☐
• How do you feel about your mood?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you worry about things?	☐	☐	☐
• Do you have plans for the future?	☐	☐	☐

12 steps for a better night's sleep



Our clinicians within CAMHS have created a bunch of articles all about sleep. You can read this on Health for Teens.

www.healthforteens.co.uk/lifestyle/sleeping/

Any lasting thoughts?

Note down any thoughts you may have in here...

Here are some ideas if you get stuck..

How do you feel now you've completed this booklet?

Do you feel any different from when you started this booklet?

Think about how you are feeling/thinking now?(*before seeing us)*

Have you taken anything away from this booklet?

Useful websites

All of these services can help you.

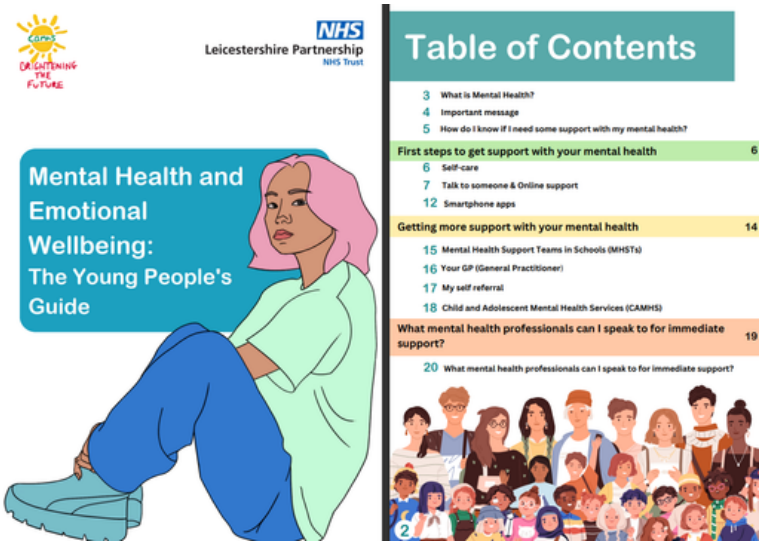


Health For Teens - www.healthforteens.co.uk/
Health for Teens is an online service provided by the NHS that covers large area of health and wellbeing. Their site has many different articles, quizzes and local information.

Young Minds - www.youngminds.org.uk
Young minds is a mental health charity for younger people. Their website has different articles, useful resources, and online crisis messenger. You can also text YM to 85258.

Tellmi - www.tellmi.help/
Tellmi is a digital mental health service for anyone over the age of 11 that is available across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland free of charge. It is a safe, anonymous app where you can talk about absolutely anything to people your age and in-house counsellors.

Child Line - www.childline.org.uk/
Childline is a counselling service. Their website provides a free online counselling service. They also have a free phone support service on 0808 808 4994.



Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing: The Young People's Guide

A 22 page long resource booklet for young people created by CAMHS. Click here to view the booklet or scan the QR code above.



While you're waiting

A 13 page self-help guide created by clinicians within CAMHS for young people awaiting treatment. Click here to view the booklet or scan the QR code above.

For more mental health support, click here or scan the QR code on the left.