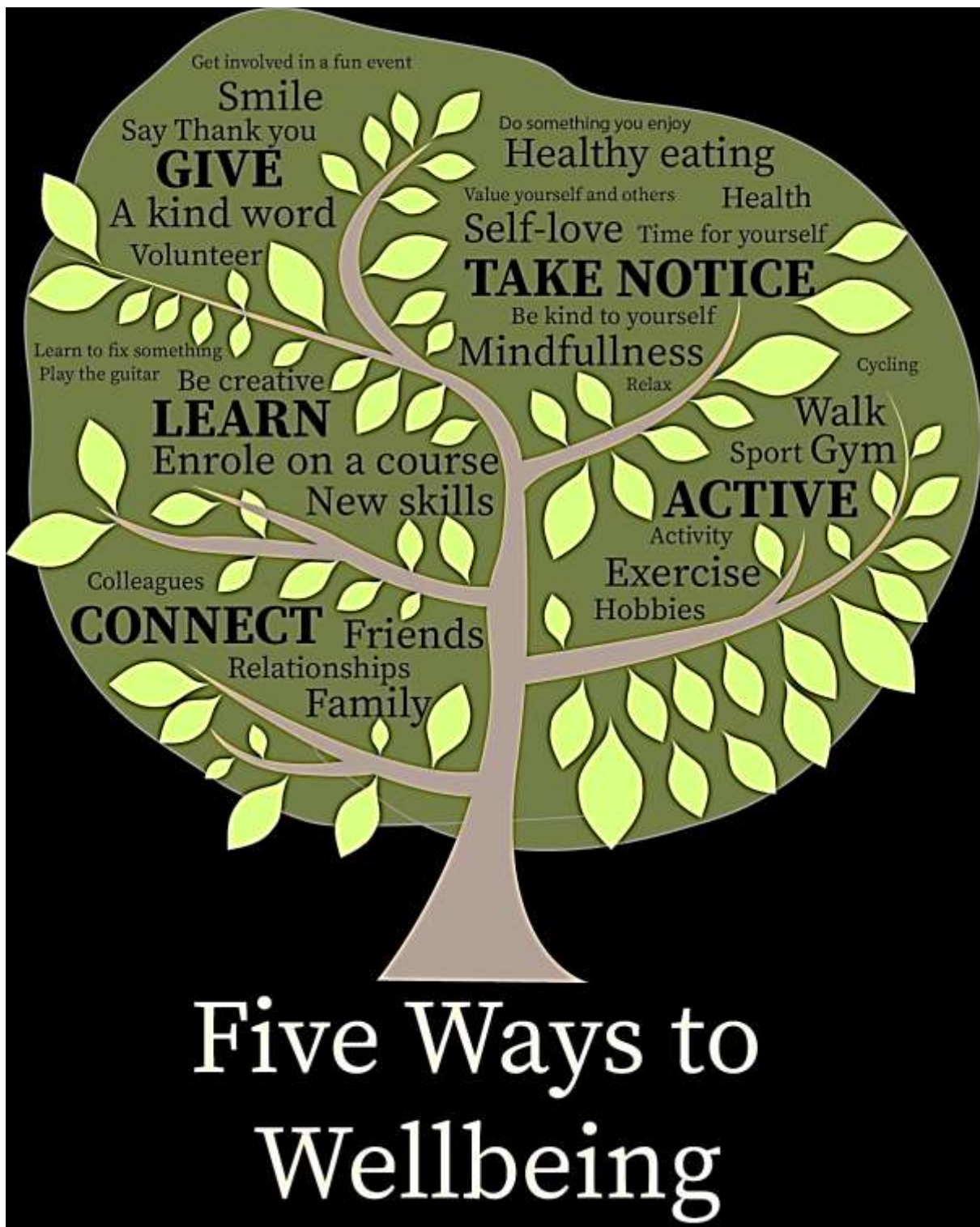


Mental Wellbeing Support for Parents



The pages below have been designed to offer parents some initial support and guidance when encountering some issues with their daughter's mental wellbeing.

1. Self-harm
2. Mood swings and puberty
3. Anxiety
4. Bereavement
5. Exam stress
6. Eating Disorders
7. Sleep

Each page has some useful websites as well as a simple help guide. Often issues with mental wellbeing can overlap and the tips in any of the sections are transferable.

Please remember that if you have any concerns about your daughter's wellbeing, you can contact her Form Tutor, Head of Year or Head of Learning Community for help and support. We have a team of Learning Mentors who we can refer your daughter to if needed.

You may also want to contact:

- Your GP
- The Lowdown - <http://thelowdown.info> a free counselling service in Northampton.
- CAMHS Live and consultation line - www.nhft.nhs.uk/camhslive
A telephone line and online chat tool providing advice and guidance for parents, professionals and young people regarding emotional wellbeing and mental health difficulties. Open 9am to 7pm - 0300 1111 022 (option 1 and option 1)
- <https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/county/northamptonshire> - this site has a list of private counsellors based in Northamptonshire
- www.youngminds.org.uk - Call the Parents Helpline on 0808 802 5544

Coping with self-harm

A Guide for Parents and Carers



What is Self-Harm?

For many young people, self-harm can be a way to cope with difficult emotions. The physical pain of hurting themselves can feel like a distraction from what they are dealing with inside. The intention is often to punish themselves, express their distress or relieve unbearable tension.

Self-Harm can appear in many forms:

- Cutting the skin-usually on the arms or legs.
- Burning the skin.
- Deliberately punching or hitting themselves.
- Poisoning themselves with tablets or liquids.

Emotions/Experiences that make Self-Harm more Common:

- If the young person is suffering from anxiety or low mood.
- The young person has low self-esteem.
- They are being bullied.
- They have experiences emotional or sexual abuse.
- They are grieving.
- They are experiencing family problems.

Signs to look out for:

- They wear long sleeves even when it's hot.
- Bad bruises, cuts or burns.
- Blood stains on clothing.
- Becoming withdrawn.
- Avoiding friends and family.
- Outbursts of anger.

Services Available for Support:

- Please contact your daughters Form Tutor or Head of Year. They will be able to help and advise further. The Lowdown is also a service available to the young people in Northampton and they offer a free counselling service in which the students can self-refer. Please see the website in the box to the right for more details.

How You Can Help

- Offer them emotional support.
- Do not ask the young person to avoid self-harming.
- See if they would like to speak to someone and contact your daughter's Head of Year to look at the available options.
- Encourage them to find healthy alternatives: paint and draw on the arm in red ink, hold an ice cube in their hand until it melts, write down any negative feelings on paper and then throw the paper away use an elastic band around the wrist and flick it, have a code word between you both that signals that the young person has the urge to self-harm and then in the next 15 minutes do something together - after 15 minutes the urge will have gone away.



Useful Websites

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/childrens-mental-health/self-harm/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/self-harm/>

<https://thelowdown.info/>



Mood Swings and Puberty

During puberty your child's emotions may become stronger and more intense. Their mood might change more frequently, quickly and randomly.

Your child may have strong emotions that they've never experienced before. It's common for them to feel confused, scared or angry and not know why. They also might be more sensitive and become more easily upset than usual.

What's Behind the Mood Swings

Puberty and its changes; physically, socially, mentally and emotionally:
Example: lack of sleep; hormones; peer pressure; school demands; anxiety; stress; self-conscious; conflict.

Adolescent Brains

While your child's body is adjusting to all the new hormones, so is their brain. During puberty the brain starts strengthening parts that allow them to feel intense and complex emotions. However, the part of the brain that is responsible for regulating **emotions, deep thinking, reasoning and decision making** is often the last to develop. This can leave your child feeling like their emotions are out of control as they may not have the mental capacity to cope with them just yet, causing even more irritability and frustration.

Mood Swings vs Depression

It's important to keep in mind that severe and prolonged mood swings may be a sign of depression or a mental health issue.

Three key areas to help distinguish between normal mood swings and something more serious include:

- Duration – moods lasting more than two weeks.
- Severity – significant changes in behaviour, feelings and thoughts.
- Impact – affecting many areas of their life (home, school and friendships).

If you're noticing these signs, it's important to talk with your child and seek support from your GP.

How You Can Help

- Be patient with your child.
- Be careful not to compare or put time limits on situation/events that may have triggered their mood.
- Remember each child is different and so will their needs.
- Don't be ashamed to ask for help e.g. a friend or a professional in the field.
- Most of all it's okay to say sorry if you are the trigger to their mood.



Useful Websites

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/information/young-people/wellbeing/resources/depression>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/children-depressed-signs/>

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/mood-swings-and-puberty>



What is Anxiety?

Most of us worry sometimes – about things like friendships or money – and feel anxious when we're under stress, like at exam time. But afterwards we usually calm down and feel better. But when you're not in a stressful situation, and you still feel worried or panicky, that's when anxiety can become a problem.

Signs

- Feeling nervous, on edge, or panicky all the time.
- Feeling overwhelmed or full of dread or out of control.
- Having trouble sleeping.
- Low appetite.
- Finding it difficult to concentrate.
- Feeling tired.
- Heart beating really fast or thinking you're having a heart attack.
- Having a dry mouth
- Feeling faint, trembling, wobbly legs.

Useful Websites

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/get-help/free-anxiety-resources>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/anxiety/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/>

How You Can Help

Talk to your daughter about anxiety, what is happening in her body and why it happens. Many young people don't know what they are feeling when they are anxious, and it can be very frightening and overwhelming. They might even think they are very ill or that they are having a heart attack.

- Tell your daughter it will be okay, and the anxiety will pass. It can be helpful to describe the anxiety as a wave to ride or surf that gets smaller after it peaks.
- Help her to **breathe deeply and slowly**, in through their nose for three counts and out through their mouth for three counts.
- Give her a hug or hold her hand if she will let you – touch can be soothing.
- It can help to talk about finding a safe place in her mind – somewhere that she feels relaxed and happy. It may be a grandparent's or friend's house or a holiday beside the sea which they can picture when 'wrong thoughts' come into their head or they are feeling anxious.
- Encourage your daughter to notice what makes her anxious. Talking it though can help but she could try keeping a diary to see if she can identify triggers.
- Help your daughter to maintain a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise to reduce the levels of stress hormones, good sleeping habits, calm bedtime routines, limited screen or computer time in the evening and a healthy diet.





Dealing with Bereavement and Grief

For most of us, bereavement will be the most distressing experience we will ever face. Grief is what we feel when somebody we are close to dies. Everyone experiences grief differently and there is no “normal” or “right” way to grieve.

Children and young people are likely to experience a range of physical responses to the loss of someone close, including:

- **Behaviour and mood**
- **Appetite**
- **Sleep**
- **Regression**
- **Illness**

They may show the following emotional responses:

- **Shock**
- **Denial**
- **Anger**
- **Bargaining**
- **Guilt**
- **Depression**
- **Acceptance**



How You Can Help

- Clear, honest and age-appropriate information.
- Reassurance that they are not to blame and that different feelings are okay.
- Normal routines and a clear demonstration that important adults are there for them.
- Time to talk about what has happened, ask questions and build memories.
- Being listened to and given time to grieve in their own way.



Local Support Services

Child and Adolescent Bereavement service

Telephone: 01604 545131

Curse Bereavement Care

Telephone: 07772 428532

Useful websites

<http://www.childbereavement.org.uk/>

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

<http://www.cruse.org.uk/home>

Exam Stress

Thoughts and worries about exams may be present for young people at any time however, **exam stress** is a feeling of pressure that many young people feel coming up to exam time. It usually occurs during the revision period before exams and immediately before the exams themselves.

Some Signs and Symptoms

Young people who experience stress may:

- Worry a lot.
- Feel tense or anxious.
- Experience headaches or/and stomach pains.
- Struggle with sleep.
- Experience irritability.
- Loss interest in food or eat more than normal.
- Not enjoy activities they previously enjoyed (withdrawn or disengaged).
- Appear negative and low in mood.
- Feel worried or hopeless about the future.



Useful Websites

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/healthy-eating-teens.aspx>

How much sleep teens need -

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Childrensleep/Pages/teensleeptips.aspx>

Advice on exam stress -

<http://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/school-learning/exam-stress/>

Benefits of physical activity -

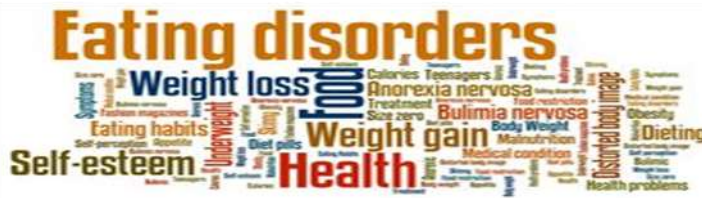
<http://www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Fitness/Pages/Fitnesshome.aspx>

Exam stress and pressures -

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/school-college-and-work/school-college/exam-stress/>

7 TIPS FOR MANAGING EXAM STRESS REACH OUT.COM

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE	FOR PARENTS/CARERS
1. Stay organised with to-do lists and study timetables	1. Give them time off chores and non-urgent family stuff
2. Take regular study breaks	2. Encourage them to keep doing the activities they did before exams
3. Have a dedicated study space	3. Help them set up a study space and make sure the rest of the family understands
4. Have a long term goal	4. Chat with them about what they want to do after exams
5. Get as much sleep as possible	5. Remind them to go to bed at a regular time each night
6. Remember your health: eat well and stay active	6. Go on study break walks with them and try to cook wholesome meals
7. Talk to the people around you	7. Make a time to chat to them and let them vent



What are Eating Disorders?

Eating disorders involve extreme disturbances in eating behaviours – following rigid diets, bingeing on food in secret, throwing up after meals, obsessively counting calories. They are very complicated and more than just unhealthy dietary habits. At their core, they're attempts to deal with emotional issues and involve distorted, self-critical attitudes about weight, food, and body image. It's these negative thoughts and feelings that fuel the damaging behaviours.

People with eating disorders use food to deal with painful or uncomfortable or emotions. Restricting food is used to feel in control. Overeating temporarily soothes sadness, anger or loneliness. Purging is used to combat feelings of helplessness and self-loathing. Over time, people with an eating disorder lose the ability to see themselves objectively and obsessions over food and weight come to dominate everything else in their lives.

Why does someone get an Eating Disorder?

Eating disorders can be triggered by many things. These might be significant life events, like moving house or school, parents splitting up or someone close to the person passing away. They could be things like stress from school work or trouble with their friendship group. People may also experience pressure from their peers, social media and things like adverts that makes them worry about the way they look and feel the need to change themselves and look different.

General signs to look out for:

- Preoccupation with and/or secretive behaviour around food.
- Self-consciousness when eating in front of others.
- Low self-esteem.
- Irritability and mood swings.
- Tiredness.
- Social withdrawal.
- Feelings of shame, guilt and anxiety.

How You Can Help

Talk to your child and listen without judgement. Ask if things are okay, if there's anything they want to talk about and if there's anything that would help? Make sure they know you're always there to listen and support them no matter what they're going through.

Seek support. Speak to your GP, health professional or school who can advise the best support services.

Look after yourself. The consequences of eating disorders affect the whole family – seek help and support for yourself and anyone else who needs it.

Learn about eating disorders. Having knowledge can help you understand why your child is behaving like they are and lets them know you care.

Minimise talking about diets and body shape. This can be an extra sensitive subject for someone with an eating disorder.

Useful Websites and Videos

<http://www.beateatingdisorders.org>

<https://seedeatingdisorders.org.uk/page/young-people>

<http://www.anorexiabulimiare.org.uk/>

<https://youtu.be/P12I9kmuTSY>

<https://youtu.be/MprkgCuCu80>



Why is sleep important for teenagers?

Not getting enough sleep can have a detrimental effect on your teenager's emotional health as well as their physical health so it's important to help them to get at least 8 hours a night.

There are many benefits of a good night's sleep. They include:

- giving the body an immune system boost to fight off infections
- help regulate body weight
- prevents medical conditions such as diabetes
- can boost mental wellbeing



Useful websites

www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/sleep-tips-for-teenagers/

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.sleepcouncil.org.uk/advice-support/sleep-advice/common-sleep-scenarios/sleep-for-teenagers/








www.happymaps.co.uk/age-group/secondaryschool/secondary-sleep









How can I help?






- Limit screens in the bedroom - encourage them to have an hour away from the screen before bedtime
- Turn their phone off at night or leave it in another room so they aren't tempted to answer messages in the early hours of the morning
- Encourage your teenager to exercise regularly, particularly outside in the daylight
- Reduce or cut out the amount of caffeine they drink, especially in the evening as this prevents them from sleeping
- Don't let them eat too much before going to bed as this can cause discomfort which can stop them sleeping
- Try to keep a regular bedtime routine
- Talk through any problems they might have to put their minds at rest before they go to sleep. Encourage them to write down their worries or make a to do list before going to bed
- Avoid long weekend lie-ins as it can disrupt the body clock



Stop, think and relax apps

 <p>Blue Ice</p>	<p>BlueIce is an evidenced-based app to help young people manage their emotions and reduce urges to self-harm. It includes a mood diary, a toolbox of evidence-based techniques to reduce distress and automatic routing to emergency numbers if urges to harm continue. This app is provided free by the NHS.</p>
 <p>Calm</p>	<p>The Calm app features meditation, sleep aid, gentle movement and stretching and music designed to help you focus, relax and sleep. ... New sleep stories are added weekly. Plus, there are more than 100 guided meditations covering sleep, anxiety, focus, stress and gratitude</p>
 <p>Calm Harm</p>	<p>Calm Harm is an app designed to help people resist or manage the urge to self-harm. It's private and password protected. This app is provided free by the NHS.</p>
 <p>Catch It</p>	<p>Learn how to manage feelings like anxiety and depression with Catch It. The app will teach you how to look at problems in a different way, turn negative thoughts into positive ones and improve your mental wellbeing. This app is provided free by the NHS.</p>
 <p>Chill Panda</p>	<p>Learn to relax, manage your worries and improve your wellbeing with Chill Panda. The app measures your heart rate and suggests tasks to suit your state of mind. Tasks include simple breathing techniques and light exercises to take your mind off your worries. This app is provided free by the NHS.</p>
 <p>distrACT</p>	<p>The distrACT app gives you easy, quick and discreet access to information and advice about self-harm and suicidal thoughts. The content has been created by doctors and experts in self-harming and suicide prevention. This app is provided free by the NHS.</p>
 <p>Happify</p>	<p>Happify includes science-based activities and games which can help you overcome negative thoughts, stress and life's challenges. 86% of people who used Happify regularly report feeling better about their lives in 2 months. Please note you can get access to some support in the free version, but Happify plus is a paid for service.</p>

 <p>Headspace</p>	<p>Headspace is your guide to mindfulness for your everyday life. Learn meditation and mindfulness skills and develop tools to help focus, breathe, stay calm and create a balance in life.</p>
 <p>Insight timer</p>	<p>Insight timer is a free meditation app providing guide meditations, sleep music tracks as well as talks by experts in the field.</p>
 <p>Mee Two</p>	<p>The MeeTwo app provides a safe and secure forum for teenagers wanting to discuss any issue affecting their lives. You can anonymously get advice from experts or other teenagers going through similar experiences in areas such as mental health, self-harming, relationships and friendships. This app is provided free by the NHS.</p>
 <p>MindDoc</p>	<p>MindDoc (previously known as Moodpath) helps you track your emotional state to detect patterns and identify areas for improvement. It checks in on you and provides regular mental health reports. It offers a range of courses, meditations, sleep aids and other resources. If you're struggling with depression or anxiety MindDoc will help guide you toward emotional wellbeing.</p>
 <p>NHS Go</p>	<p><u>NHS Go</u> - The NHS Go app provides young people with confidential health advice and greater access to health information. You can find local services in some areas and learn about health and your rights as a user of the NHS. This app is provided free by the NHS.</p>
 <p>Pzizz</p>	<p>The Pzizz app helps you quickly calm your mind, fall asleep fast, stay asleep, and wake up refreshed. It uses "dreamscapes" – a mix of music, voiceovers and sound effects designed using the latest clinical research – to help you sleep better at night or take power naps during the day. This app is provided free by the NHS.</p>
 <p>Smiling mind</p>	<p>Smiling Mind is a meditation app for young people. It has been developed by a team of psychologists and uses mindfulness to boost calmness, contentment and clarity. Mindfulness meditation has been shown to help manage stress, resilience, anxiety, depression and improve general health and wellbeing.</p>
 <p>Stop, breathe & think</p>	<p>Stop, Breathe & Think is marketed as an “emotional wellness platform” for teens and young adults (“the 'under 25' generation”). The app offers basic information on mindfulness, meditation, thoughts, stress and the effects of stress on the body. It offers daily reminders to “check-in”.</p>

 <p>Student Health app</p>	<p>The Student Health App provides easy access to more than 900 pages of reliable health information all in one place. The content has been created for university students by NHS doctors and is regularly updated. Use the app to reduce your worries, feel more confident and get the support you need at what can be a challenging time for any student. This app is provided free by the NHS.</p>
	<p>Superbetter is a game for those aged 13+ played in real life to build resilience and success. Playing superbetter unlocks heroic potential to achieve goals that matter. Helps to tackle challenges including anxiety and depression.</p>
	<p>ThinkNinja is a mental health app designed for 10 to 18 year olds. Using a variety of content and tools, it allows young people to learn about mental health and emotional wellbeing, and develop skills they can use to build resilience and stay well. This app is provided free by the NHS during the coronavirus crisis.</p>
 <p>Thrive</p>	<p>Thrive helps you prevent and manage stress, anxiety and related conditions. The game-based app can be used to relax before a stressful situation or on a more regular basis to help you live a happier, more stress-free life. This app is provided free by the NHS.</p>
 <p>Togetherall</p>	<p>Togetherall is an online community for people who are stressed, anxious or feeling low. The service has an active forum with round-the-clock support from trained professionals. You can talk anonymously to other members and take part in group or 1-to-1 therapy with therapists. This app is provided free by the NHS.</p>



Useful Websites

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/moodzone-mental-wellbeing-audio-guides/>

Mental wellbeing audio guides - these short audio guides are designed to be listened to when experiencing issues like low mood, anxiety or sleep problems.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H7u39exKW4OtOOwUSZCcss3x6OBhMEqYz/view>

A parent's guide to building body confidence - booklet pdf

<http://www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk/covid-anxiety-stress-resources-links/>

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/mental-health-needs/>

More useful for teachers?

<https://sleepcouncil.org.uk/advice-support/sleep-advice/common-sleep-scenarios/sleep-advice-for-teenagers/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/feelings-and-symptoms/sleep-problems/>

<https://www.gosh.nhs.uk/medical-information/procedures-and-treatments/sleep-hygiene-children>

<https://www.annafreud.org/parents-and-carers>

