



Wellbeing in the Sixth Form
Bexley Grammar School

Sixth Form can be an understandably stressful time for students. It is important that you find a healthy balance when it comes to work and life. This pack gives you some information on how to promote a positive mental wellbeing.

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How can you improve your mental wellbeing?

Mental wellbeing describes your mental state - how you are feeling and how well you can cope with day-to-day life. Our mental wellbeing is dynamic. It can change from moment to moment, day to day, month to month or year to year.

If you have good mental wellbeing you are able to:

- feel relatively confident in yourself and have positive self-esteem
- feel and express a range of emotions
- build and maintain good relationships with others
- feel engaged with the world around you
- live and work productively
- cope with the stresses of daily life
- adapt and manage in times of change and uncertainty

Here are some ideas to stay mentally well and develop your ability to cope with the up and downs of life:

- Think about what is affecting your wellbeing
- Build positive relationships
- Take time for yourself
- Look after your mental health
- Look after your physical health
- Ask for help if you need it

Think about what is affecting your wellbeing

We're all different. What affects someone's mental wellbeing won't necessarily affect others in the same way. But we all have times when we have low mental wellbeing, where we feel stressed, upset or find it difficult to cope.

Common life events that can affect your mental wellbeing include:

- loss or bereavement
- loneliness
- relationship problems
- issues at work/school

At other times there is no clear reason for why we feel the way we do - which can be frustrating. There are some factors that may make you more vulnerable to experiencing a period of poor mental wellbeing such as trauma, social problems or long term health problems.

Build positive relationships

Connecting with others can help us to feel a greater sense of belonging and can help to challenge feelings of loneliness.

- Make time for the people you love. Keeping regular contact with friends and family, whether it's face-to-face, on the phone or by text, can strengthen your relationships.
- Think of the things you like to do, such as drawing or sport and look for local groups. Meeting others with a shared interest can increase your confidence and build your support network.
- Talk about the way you feel. Opening up to a trusted friend or family member can help you to feel listened to and supported. Just acknowledging your feelings by saying them out loud can help.
- Use peer support. If you're finding things difficult, talking to people who have similar feelings or experiences can help you to feel accepted. This could be online, such as Mind's Elefriends community, or at a peer support group.
- Volunteer at school or at a local hospice. Giving your time to those that need it can be extremely fulfilling and can help you to look at things from a different perspective.

"I find extremely supportive friends and family help [as well as] finding a fulfilling hobby: horse riding, walking the dogs and yoga."

Take time for yourself

At times you may feel guilty for spending time on yourself. But it's essential for your wellbeing and can help you to be more resilient.

- Try mindfulness. Focusing on the here and now can help you to become more aware of, and manage, your thoughts, feelings and surroundings. It can help you to enjoy life more and accept the world around you. See the BeMindful website for further information and details of local courses.
- Learn something new. Learning new skills can help boost your confidence and give you a sense of achievement. You could learn a new language, sign up for an art class or try a new recipe. It doesn't have to be something big.
- Do something you enjoy. Whether it's taking a long walk, playing an instrument or going to the cinema, it's positive for your wellbeing to do something that makes you feel good.
- Try relaxation techniques. Doing something that you find relaxing, such as listening to music, colouring in or having a bath can help to reduce stress and improve your mental wellbeing.
- Watch <https://youtu.be/cyEdZ23Cp1E> for relaxation tips
- *"I just found that I had to make room to be well. Sounds daft but give yourself some space - in my case I used mindfulness to help me gain control."*

Look after your mental health

If you're living with a mental health problem, taking steps to look after your mental health can help you improve your wellbeing.

- Tell people what helps. If certain treatments have helped in the past, tell your doctor. Let your friends and family know how they can support you, whether it's listening to you when you're having a bad day, helping you keep on top of your commitments, or being aware of your triggers
- Spot your early warning signs. If you can, try to be aware of how you're feeling, and if you can spot any signs you might be becoming unwell. These will be individual to you, but it can be useful to reflect on what these may be so you can get support for your mental health problem as soon as possible.
- Keep a mood diary. Tracking your moods can help you to work out what positively and negatively affects your mental wellbeing. You can then take steps to avoid, change or prepare for negative situations. You can create your own mood diary or try one available online such as moodpanda.com, moodscope.com, medhelp.org/land/mood-tracker and mappiness.org.uk.
- Build your self-esteem. Increasing your self-esteem can help you to feel more confident and able to challenge adversity.

Look after your physical health

Looking after your body can help to keep you mentally well. Making small, gradual changes can have a positive impact on your mental wellbeing - try to start with one or two things you feel able to do.

Moving - Our mental and physical health are closely linked. Taking up sport or exercise can help you feel better in lots of different ways.

Eating - Exploring how what you eat affects how you view yourself might help you to feel better.

Drugs and alcohol - These can have a negative effect on your mental wellbeing.

Sleeping - Getting too little or too much sleep can have a big impact on how you feel.

Set yourself a challenge - You could take up a hobby, join a class or volunteer your time for something you feel passionate about.

At times it can be hard to find the motivation to set goals for yourself, especially when you don't feel confident or worry about what other people may think. But it doesn't have to be something big. Making small goals such as trying a recipe or learning the days of the week in a new language can help you to feel more positive about yourself.

“Focus on 'small wins' don't chase big achievements. Do the little things and use it as a springboard whatever you can do be proud of it!”

Ask for help

Think about treatment options. If you're finding things really difficult, you might want to talk to your doctor about any support services in your local area. You might want to try counselling to talk through the things you're finding challenging with a trained professional.

- Don't pressure yourself to carry on as normal. Take small steps and if you are finding it difficult to cope on your own, don't be afraid to ask for help. For example, you may need support at work or help with day-to-day tasks.
- Plan for a crisis. When you're really unwell, it can be hard to ask for the support you need or figure out what support you want. Making a crisis plan while you're well can help you stay in control of your treatment, and mean other people know how best to help.
- Stay safe. If your feelings become overwhelming, and you have suicidal thoughts or you think you may self harm, remember that you can pick up the phone at any time of night or day and talk to the Samaritans.

Help at BGS

If you have a problem whilst at school your first port of call should be your form tutor. Your form tutor will be able to give you advice on your problem and point you in the right direction.

If your problem is linked to school work we may be able to offer a staff mentor. A mentor and your tutor will be able to offer support.

If you have concerns about your physical health we have a visiting school nurse. Alternatively you may wish to seek advice from your GP (see Nurse info below).

If you have concerns about your mental health we advise to access online support. A list can be found on the contact pages. We also have a school counsellor that some students can access. Access depends on the severity of your issues because she is highly oversubscribed. GP's can also refer you for specialist support.

Bexley School Nurse

Aim of the School Nursing service: The Bexley 5 to 19 service is delivered by school nurses and community nursery nurses (CNNs). They provide evidence-based interventions to support early identification; prevention and health promotion programmes to help children and young people achieve their full potential for physical, social and emotional wellbeing, gaining maximum benefit from their education.

Contact details for the Bexley 0 to 19 School Nursing service

Our single point of access number is 0300 330 5777 and email is: bromh.bexley0to19@nhs.net. A School Nurse Clinic is held on Tuesdays 3.30pm-5.00pm at the Erith Health centre 50 Pier Road, Erith DA8 1RQ.

Our website with online chat function is bexley0to19.co.uk.

The young people's website (also with online chat function) is healtheme.co.uk

Find us on Twitter: [@bexley0to19](https://twitter.com/bexley0to19) and Facebook: Bexley 0 to 19 [@childpublichealth](https://www.facebook.com/childpublichealth)





There are lots of external support services that are set up to support people with varying needs. Not all will suit everyone and so it is important you explore the variety of support networks on offer to you. There are a variety of ways you can make contact including online, over the phone, face-to-face, by email and by text.

Contact	Phone number	Email	Other information
CRISIS/EMERGENCY/SUICIDE			
Police/ Ambulance Service	999	N/A	Contact when you or another is in immediate danger
YoungMinds Text service	TEXT 85258	N/A	Texts answered by trained volunteers and are free.
Samaritans	116123	jo@samaritans.org	www.samaritans.org
CALM	0800585858	N/A	www.thecalmzone.net
PAPYRUS	08000684141 TEXT: 07786209697	pat@papyrus-uk.org	www.papyrus-uk.org
BEREAVEMENT SERVICES			
CRUSE	08088081677	helpline@cruse.org	www.cruse.org.uk
SOBS	03001115065	sobs.support@hotmail.com	www.uk-sobs.org.uk
DEPRESSION			
Mind	03001233393 TEXT: 86463	info@mind.org	www.mind.org.uk
YoungMinds	08088025544	ymentquiries@youngminds.org.uk	www.youngminds.org.uk
The Mix	08088084994	N/A	www.themix.org.uk
Childline	08001111	N/A	www.childline.org.uk
ANXIETY			
Anxiety UK	08444775774 TEXT: 07537416905	N/A	www.anxietyuk.org.uk

No Panic	08449674848	N/A	www.nopanic.org.uk
CBT Online	N/A	N/A	www.getselfhelp.co.uk
SELF-HARM			
Self-injury Support	TEXT: 07800472908	www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk/tessform	www.selfinjurysupport.org.uk
EATING DISORDERS			
ABC	03000111213	N/A	www.anorexiabulimiaca.re.org.uk
b-eat	08088010677	help@b-eat.co.uk	www.b-eat.co.uk
PSYCHOSIS			
Rethink	03005000927	info@rethink.org	www.rethink.org
SaneLine	03003047000	N/A	www.sane.org.uk
Hearing Voices	01142718210	nhvn@hotmail.co.uk	www.hearing-voices.org
ONLINE COUNSELLING			
Kooth	N/A	N/A	www.kooth.com
LGBT+ SUPPORT			
LGBT Foundation	03453303030	helpline@lgbt.foundation	https://lgbt.foundation/
Stonewall	N/A	N/A	https://www.stonewall.org.uk/
SUPPORT FOR PARENTS/CARERS			
Parent Support Group	07908101767	admin@psg.org.uk	www.psg.org.uk
Parentline	08088002222	N/A	https://www.familylives.org.uk
Parent Zone	020 7686 7225	info@parentzone.org.uk	www.parentzone.org.uk

childline

ONLINE,
ON THE PHONE,
ANYTIME
childline.org.uk
0800 1111



Apps

There are many Apps you can download that have ideas of how to self-help and information about support.



CRISIS/EMERGENCY/SUICIDE
StayAlive (http://www.prevent-suicide.org.uk)
BEREAVEMENT SERVICES
Child Bereavement UK (http://childbereavementuk.org/our-app)
Apartofme (https://bounce.works/apartofme/)
DEPRESSION
MindTools (http://www.mindtools.org)
BASE (http://www.solentcamhs.nhs.uk)
HeadSpace (www.headspace.com)
Moodometer (http://myhealthapps.net/app/details/363/moodometer)
ANXIETY
SAM (http://sam-app.org.uk)
Youper (http://www.youper.co/start-now)
SELF-HARM
CALM HARM (http://www.stem4.org.uk/calmhalm/)
EATING DISORDERS
Recovery Record (http://www.recoveryrecord.com/)
Rise Up Warriors (http://www.recoverywarriors.com/app/)
PSYCHOSIS
Emoods (http://emoodtracker.com)



Healthy Diet, Healthy Mind

Knowing what foods we should and shouldn't be eating can be really confusing, especially when it feels like the advice changes regularly. However, evidence suggests that as well as affecting our physical health, what we eat may also affect the way we feel.

Improving your diet may help to:

- improve your mood
- give you more energy
- help you think more clearly.

<p style="text-align: center;">Eating regularly</p> <p>If your blood sugar drops you might feel tired, irritable and depressed. Eating regularly and choosing foods that release energy slowly will help to keep your sugar levels steady.</p> <p>Slow-release energy foods include: pasta, rice, oats, wholegrain bread and cereals, nuts and seeds.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Quick tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eating breakfast gets the day off to a good start.• Instead of eating a large lunch and dinner, try eating smaller portions spaced out more regularly throughout the day.• Avoid foods which make your blood sugar rise and fall rapidly, such as sweets, biscuits, sugary drinks, and alcohol.
<p style="text-align: center;">Staying hydrated</p> <p>If you don't drink enough fluid, you may find it difficult to concentrate or think clearly. You might also start to feel constipated (which puts no one in a good mood).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Quick tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's recommended that you drink between 6-8 glasses of fluid a day.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water is a cheap and healthy option.• Tea, coffee, juices and smoothies all count towards your intake (but be aware that these may also contain caffeine or sugar).
<p style="text-align: center;">Managing caffeine</p> <p>Caffeine is a stimulant, which means it will give you a quick burst of energy, but then may make you feel</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Quick tips:</p>

<p>anxious and depressed, disturb your sleep (especially if you have it before bed), or give you withdrawal symptoms if you stop suddenly.</p> <p>Caffeine is in: tea, coffee, chocolate, cola and other manufactured energy drinks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you drink tea, coffee or cola, try switching to decaffeinated versions. • You might feel noticeably better quite quickly if you drink less caffeine or avoid it altogether.
<p style="text-align: center;">Getting your 5 a day</p> <p>Vegetables and fruit contain a lot of the minerals, vitamins and fibre we need to keep us physically and mentally healthy.</p> <p>Eating a variety of different coloured fruits and vegetables every day means you'll get a good range of nutrients.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Quick tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh, frozen, tinned, dried and juiced (one glass) fruits and vegetables all count towards your 5 a day. • As a general rule, one portion is about a handful, small bowl or a small glass. • For ideas on how to get your 5 a day, visit the NHS Choices website
<p style="text-align: center;">Eating the right fats</p> <p>Your brain needs fatty acids to keep it working well. So rather than avoiding all fats, it's important to eat the right ones.</p> <p>Healthy fats are found in: oily fish, poultry, nuts (especially walnuts and almonds), olive and sunflower oils, seeds (such as sunflower and pumpkin), avocados, milk, yoghurt, cheese and eggs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Quick tip:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to avoid anything which lists 'trans fats' or 'partially hydrogenated oils' in the list of ingredients (such as some shop-bought cakes and biscuits). They can be tempting when you're feeling low, but this kind of fat isn't good for your mood or your physical health in the long run.

Eatwell Guide

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving contains

Energy	Fat	Saturated	Sugars	Salt
1946kJ 250kcal	5g	1.3g	34g	0.9g
	LOW	LOW	HIGH	MED
12.5%	7%	6.5%	38%	15%

of an adult's reference intake
Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/ 167kcal

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance of healthier and more sustainable food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.



Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.

Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.



Eat less often and in small amounts

Per day 2000kcal 2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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Self Help activity

What is in your stress bucket?

Empty everything that is in your head concerning work, study, home and general life into your Stress Bucket:



There is a tap on your stress bucket to release any stressors that can be removed.

Now ask yourself the following:

1. Do I have any evidence to support my feelings about the stressors in my container?

2. What can I change?

3. What can't I change and need to accept?

4. What needs my urgent attention?

5. Can anyone help me?

Helpful and unhelpful coping strategies

People react differently to stressful situations. Below is a list of what would be considered helpful strategies for when your stress bucket is full. Try to be honest with yourself and check off the appropriate response for each of these. If there are other helpful ways that you deal with stress, please add them to the other section.

Response	Never	Sometimes	Often	Would like to try
Meditate				
Mindfulness				
Exercise				
Listen to music				
Rest/sleep				
Watch TV				
Go to the cinema				
Read				
Work on puzzles or play games				
Walk				
Go to the Gym				
Steam room/Sauna				
Create a work timetable				
Recreational activity				
Creative Self-expression				
Time outside eg garden				
Socialise with friends				
Talk to people				
Engage in a hobby				
Other:				

Listed below are some unhelpful coping strategies for stress. Try to be honest and check off the appropriate response for each of these. If there are other unhelpful ways that you deal with stress, please add them to the other section.

Response	Never	Sometimes	Often	Would like to try
Act violently				
Yell at someone				
Overeat				
Do not eat for long periods				
Drink excessive amounts of alcohol				
Drink lots of coffee				
Smoke				
Kick something				
Throw something				
Drive fast in a car				
Pace up and down				
Bite your fingernails				
Take non-prescribed tranquilisers				
Take non-prescribed valium or other drugs				
Procrastinate				
Withdraw from family and friends				
Other:				

Compare the number of helpful and unhelpful responses. If your unhelpful responses outnumber the helpful ones, you may have reason to be concerned about your stress level. You could try some of the helpful strategies to reduce your level of stress. **Remember it is all about a healthy balance.**

Relaxation

It is important to make time to relax and do activities that are enjoyable. This can help to reduce your anxiety levels by calming the body and mind. It can also help you to sleep. Without taking the time to unwind, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and stressed.

Relaxation can involve doing something that you enjoy, or just being by yourself. Good examples might be reading a book or having a bath. Exercise also particularly effective at helping us to relax. What you do doesn't really matter. Try to choose something that you will look forward to and that gives you a break. Doing an activity that you enjoy will also give you less time to spend worrying. Here are a list of activities that might help you to relax.



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Suggestions:

- Do some exercise (e.g. swim, cycle)
- Read a book
- Watch your favourite TV show
- Go to the cinema
- Do something creative (e.g. draw, paint)
- Visit a friend or family member
- Have a bath

Try to add some of your own ideas into the box below. You will know what works best for you.

Try to find

time to relax every day. This might seem difficult, but it is worth making time for. It can help you to feel a lot better. There are audio relaxation guides available that you might find a helpful support.

Controlled breathing

This simple technique involves focusing on and slowing down our breathing patterns. Many people find this simple exercise very relaxing. It can be particularly helpful for those who feel dizzy or light headed when they feel worried or stressed. This sometimes happens because people's breathing changes and gets quicker when they feel distressed.

This can be an uncomfortable and unpleasant experience. It can make people even more on edge, and a vicious cycle can occur. Learning controlled breathing exercises can help you to manage these feelings more effectively. It can also help to give your mind and body a chance to calm down.



Remember, you can use this exercise to help you relax at any time. You could even use it to help you get off to sleep. However, it is particularly useful if you ever feel light-headed, dizzy or faint.

How to help someone who is having a panic attack

The aim of this is to calm the person and get them to slow their breathing rate.

Getting the person to breathe out is more important than them breathing in. They are already taking in too much Oxygen.



Raise and lower your arm in time with the intended breathing rate. Get the person to watch your arm and slow their breathing to match it. Ask them to breathe with you.



Talk calmly and keep things very simple



Give reassurance that they will soon feel better, that you will stay with them until help arrives, or they feel better.



Try to ask them to without taking a deep breath, hold your breath and count to three.



When they get to three, breath out and say the word relax.



Repeat the three second cycle



Try and give the person a task to focus on. For example naming different colours starting with a letter.



Once they have calmed down:
Continue to breathe in a smooth manner
Pay attention to breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth
Breathe in and out of your stomach
Continue to breathe this way until all symptoms of over-breathing have reduced or disappeared

'Deep breath, cup of tea, long walk': nine ways to stay calm in a crisis'



A scientist's step-by-step guide to what to do before, during and after a stressful experience

If you're feeling under pressure, put down the stress ball and go for a walk.

From conflicts with colleagues or family, frustrations at work, or even being stuck in traffic – our daily lives are not short on

stress. These common upsets – “psychosocial stressors” – incite our emotions, and our brains are equipped with strategies to help regulate them: we might use self-control to override the instinct to focus only on the negative, or reframe stressful situations in a different light to make them less distressing. As we've adapted to the digital age, we've adopted habits that hinder the brain's efforts to regulate emotion. Just five nights of looking at a computer screen for two hours between 9pm and 11pm can lead to a rise in negative emotions the following morning, and instant communication through smartphones tempts us into a state of incessant vigilance. Your brain records things as you perceive them, not as they actually happen. So if you launch a colossal stress reaction every time someone nudges you on the train, or you read an annoying news headline, or discover you've run out of milk, your brain will record your day as having been inordinately stressful when in reality it was quite ordinary. Over time, an overactive emotional brain has trouble bouncing back. But there are ways to cope. Learning how to anticipate a stressful situation, how to reduce the intensity of your reaction, and how to speed up your recovery can significantly lighten your stress load.



1 Do some gentle morning exercise

In 2015, [researchers from Berlin](#) found that in a group of young men, exercising at moderate intensity reduced the cortisol response to psychological stress that happened 90 minutes later. Exercising may also help alleviate anxiety when faced with a sudden, unpredictable shock – in [a 2018 study in Maryland, US](#)

volunteers who exercised at moderate intensity for 30 minutes, were less startled when given an electric shock to the back of the arm without expecting it, an hour after the workout, compared with those who had not exercised.

2 Spend time with a close friend

[A 2003 Zurich study](#) found a group of healthy young men had a smaller stress response to a psychologically stressful experience if they had spent time with a best friend immediately beforehand. Humans have evolved in tribes – we are hard-wired to feel safer around human connection.

3 Start the day with time outside

Observing the natural world may help you recover faster from subsequent stressful experiences, according to [a 2013 study by researchers from the University of Essex](#). In the study, people looked at pictures of nature, so even if you can't head out to a garden or park, simply looking at scenes on your laptop can do the trick.

4 Remember to breathe

Several studies demonstrate slow, deep breathing is calming. Most recently, [researchers from Georgia, in the US, observed](#) that 15 minutes of deep breathing reduced reactivity of the nerve network that is active during the stress response in veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder.

5 Take control

Believing you are in control of your environment can help curb your stress reaction. As you walk into a stressful situation, remind yourself what is under your control – the length of time you spend in a room, what you will or won't say to somebody, for example. Or if being stuck in a traffic jam is stressing you out, take steps to improve your immediate environment, for instance by planning what you'll listen to, or using props to make your seat more comfortable.

6 Pour a brew

Tea has anecdotally been associated with stress relief, but this has seldom been tested scientifically. But in a [head to head comparison](#) of black tea with a different



caffeinated drink, each containing 72mg of caffeine, researchers at University College London discovered tea drinkers recovered faster after stress.

7 Immerse yourself in something else



When you leave an emotionally stressful scene, you might have physically left it but your mind is often still there, replaying the scene on loop. Find an activity that stops your mind from wandering – anything absorbing that you enjoy (even playing a game on your phone). In 2002, [researchers from the University of California](#) put healthy volunteers through a mentally stressful experience. Half were allowed to rest afterwards while the others were given something demanding to do, requiring their full attention – it was this group who relaxed faster.

8 Go for a walk

After a particularly stressful experience, head for a walk or other low intensity exercise. For the rest of the day, move at every opportunity, so you're physically tired by bedtime. Keep it gentle – lighter exercise is best after stress, as it reduces the stress hormone cortisol, while intense exercise can raise its levels. Your heart may not appreciate an all-out workout after a bout of intense stress, either. A 2016 [study spanning 52 countries](#) found exercising vigorously while you're emotionally upset or angry can triple your risk of a heart attack. If you can be around nature while you exercise, even better. Exercising on a cycling machine while listening to birdsong or looking at a nature video reduced perceived stress more than exercising alone. If you're short on time, even a 15-minute walk can calm you down.

9 Write it down

During a distressing experience, your emotions colour your perception of the event. If you revisit the scene without these emotions, the same event can appear very different. When you're calmer, write down what happened as if you were a third person observing the scene. When you put your experience into words, you omit emotions and sensations that are irrelevant to the story. As you record the event on the page, you rewrite its memory in your head.