



# heads

stress  
essentials



**to Cool Heads.** This booklet is especially for you because young people can experience and have to cope with different types of stress than adults. It looks at the kind of things that might be stressful to you, and offers advice on how to deal with your feelings.

This booklet is aimed at 12–16 year olds, so you may find some sections more relevant to you than others.

**Part 1** of the booklet is about things that can make you feel stressed, with tips on what to do about them and ideas on where to look for help or access further information. It's divided into three main areas of your life – **You, Family** and **School**.

**Part 2** suggests ways to cope with stress generally and how to change your thinking.

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**what  
makes  
you  
stressed?**

Life can be full of things that can upset you or make you feel stressed. These can range from simple things, like losing your mobile phone, missing the bus or being told off, to bigger things, such as being dumped or getting bullied.

# STRESS and how it can

Stress can affect your emotions and the way you think and behave. Other people may notice changes in you before you do.

## For example, you might:

- have trouble concentrating or making decisions
- not want to see anyone or talk to people
- get angry easily – especially with yourself
- lose your sense of humour
- worry about the future
- stop enjoying things that are normally fun.





**Call 0808 802 2020**

**Look OK ... Feel Crap?**

For more information on stress and its causes, visit [www.lookokfeelcrap.org](http://www.lookokfeelcrap.org)

# Stress can make you feel

Stress can also affect you physically.

**For example, you might:**

- feel sick or need to go to the loo more often
- lose your appetite – or want to eat more
- feel tired all the time
- sleep a lot – or have problems sleeping
- have headaches or aching muscles
- cry easily.

A little worry can keep us safe but constant worry isn't good for you. Your mental wellbeing is just as important as your physical health, which is why you need to look after yourself properly. Living with stress all the time can increase your chances of becoming ill with depression or anxiety and of experiencing panic attacks.



# how you **see yourself**



## your body image

The way you feel about your physical appearance can affect how you feel inside.

There's a lot of pressure to be a certain shape and wear certain clothes but don't feel you have to compete, especially if that means spending money you haven't got on the 'right label'.

We are all different, with a mixture of strengths and weaknesses, and it's important to value being unique.



**what's important  
is that you're a  
healthy shape  
and size**

**The Lowdown**  
For more information on body image for young  
people, visit [www.getthelowdown.co.uk](http://www.getthelowdown.co.uk)

There will be times when you aren't happy with how you look, especially if you already feel down or are unsure about yourself. Don't put yourself down. What's important is that you're a healthy shape and size.

Your body may be going through changes, that's part of growing up, but lots of young people have trouble adjusting. Remember that others are changing too and it can help to talk to them about it, especially someone close.



**what  
makes  
you  
stressed?**

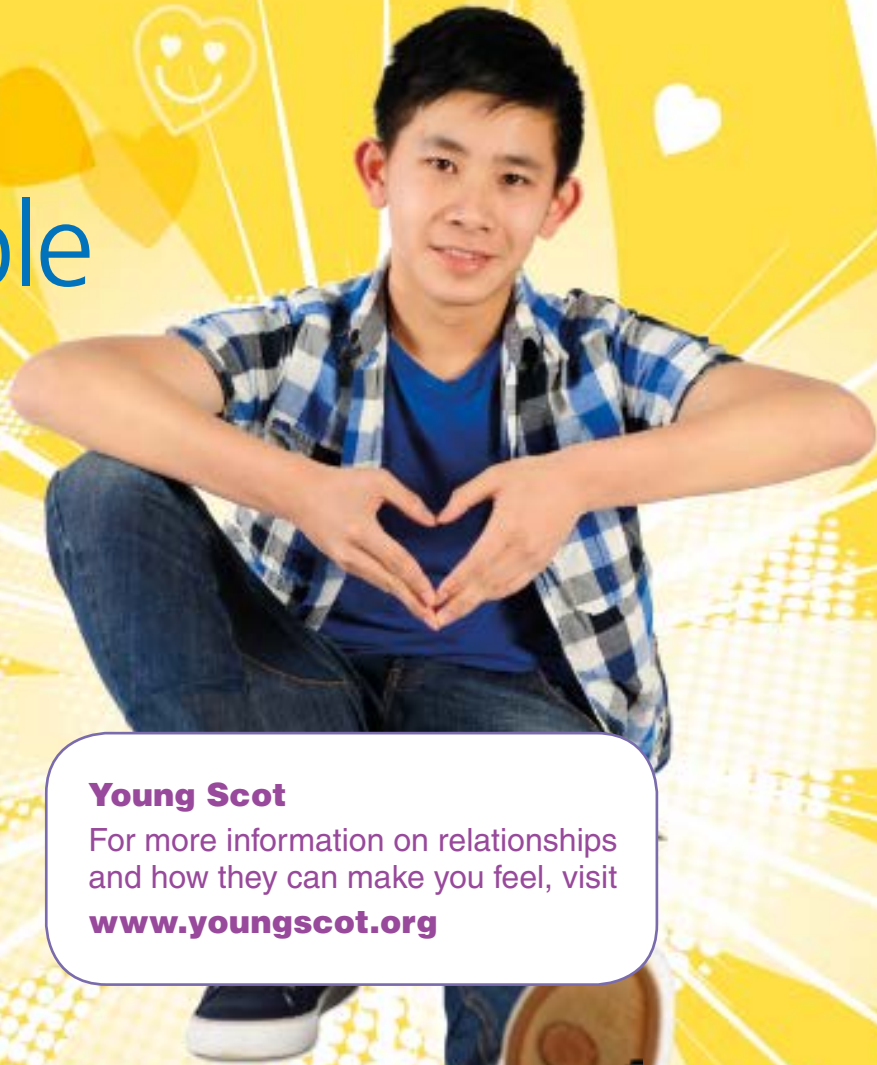


# you and other people

## relationships

Relationships can be full of fun, romance, excitement and intense feelings, but they can also be confusing, painful and infuriating too.

As you get older you will develop your own opinions, beliefs, values and preferences, and sometimes it can take time to become comfortable with your feelings towards others.



### **Young Scot**

For more information on relationships and how they can make you feel, visit [www.youngscot.org](http://www.youngscot.org)



## your sexuality

Understanding your sexuality can be a cause of stress. It can take time to work out how you feel about being male or female and who you fancy. Even if you're sure how you feel, you might find it hard to accept the label 'gay', 'lesbian',

'bisexual' or 'transgender'. You may be worried about other people knowing and how they'll react, but there is no rush to decide who you are. Our sexuality reveals itself as we grow up and learn to understand ourselves better.

### LGBT Youth Scotland

For more information for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people, and links to local groups, text **07786 202 370** for advice or visit **[www.lgbtyouth.org.uk](http://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk)**

**07786 202 370**



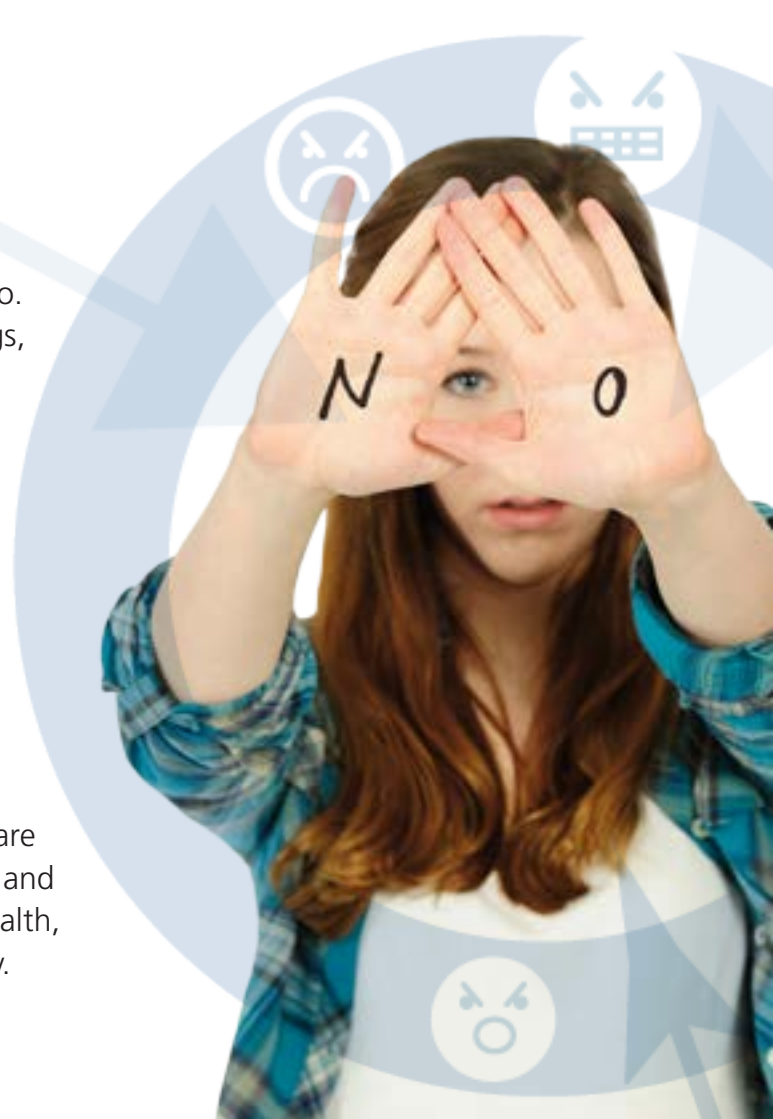
what  
makes  
you  
stressed?

## peer pressure

It's up to you to make decisions that feel right for you – whatever other people may say or do. A lot of pressure to do things (like taking drugs, drinking, smoking or having sex) can come from people you think of as friends. But real friends respect each other for who they are and won't try to push you into doing something you're not sure about.

Having **sex** is a big decision. Ignore what other people say – it's your body and your choice. Remember, it's illegal to have sex until you're 16, whether with the opposite sex or the same sex.

Don't feel pressured into taking **drugs**. Most are illegal. You don't know how they'll affect you and they can damage your mental and physical health, as well as relationships with friends and family.



People might push you to drink **alcohol** or **smoke**, but it's illegal to buy alcohol, cigarettes or tobacco until you're 18. And do you really know the harm alcohol and cigarettes can do to your health?

Think about what is best for you.

- Find ways to explain firmly and clearly why you're saying 'no'.
- Practise your comeback lines.
- Stick to your guns – eventually people should stop asking.
- Think about whether you want to hang out with people who pressurise you.

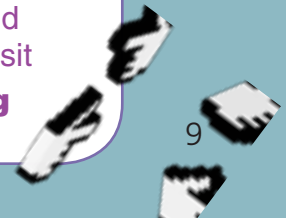
## Legal highs

You might have heard your friends or other people talking about 'legal highs'. A legal high is a chemical or substance that causes a 'high'. It has similar effects to known illegal drugs and is not licensed or advertised for human use.

A big concern about legal highs is that people can never know for sure what they contain and some might contain substances that are actually illegal. Legal highs can also have very different effects on users and can be stronger than known illegal drugs. This means the risk of harm or overdose is high. Just because you may think a substance is 'legal', this doesn't mean that it's safe.

### Young Scot

For more information and advice on legal highs, visit [www.youngscot.org](http://www.youngscot.org)



what  
makes  
you  
stressed?





## being bullied

No one has the right to make you feel bad or scared. Bullying happens for all sorts of reasons – it might be just because you're better at something, you're new to the school or you're seen as 'different'.

### **respect me**

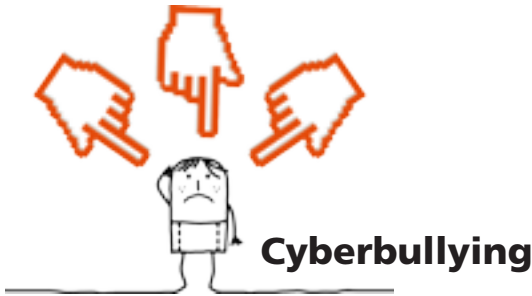
For more information and advice if you're being bullied, and how to stop it, visit.

[www.respectme.org.uk](http://www.respectme.org.uk)

**There's never any excuse for bullying, whether it's physical, verbal, online or by text. And it's not your fault.**

People respond to bullying in different ways, but it's important to tell someone you trust so they can help you. If you're being bullied it may be hard to talk about, so why not try writing a letter, email or text explaining how you feel? Or get a friend to speak to your parents, a teacher, or an older brother or sister.

Maybe you're the one doing the bullying, perhaps without realising it. Do you react to worries and problems by taking it out on other people? The tips in **Part 2** of this booklet might help you find other ways to cope.



## Cyberbullying

It's a form of bullying to use social networking sites, chatrooms or instant messaging to spread rumours about someone. So is uploading inappropriate pictures, posting offensive comments and sending abusive texts to someone's mobile. It can also be a criminal offence.



### Beat Bullying

For immediate support from another young person or counsellor if you're very upset from being bullied, visit [www.beatbullying.org](http://www.beatbullying.org)

Take steps to keep safe:

- Use privacy settings and tools to block other people. Be careful about giving out personal information and passwords.
- Don't post or send something you wouldn't say in person.
- Always report cyberbullying. Mobile phone providers and networking sites take it very seriously and will want to help.



what  
makes  
you  
stressed?

# feeling lonely

It's normal to feel lonely at times. Maybe there's simply nobody else around. But often it's because you don't feel there's anyone you can talk to, or that the people you usually talk to won't understand what you're going through or how you're feeling.




**Call 0800 83 85 87**

## **Breathing Space**

There is a section on the Breathing Space website under 'Your Mood' with advice for anyone feeling lonely.

**[www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk](http://www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk)**

A young man with brown hair, wearing a blue plaid shirt and a blue beanie, is sitting on a brick wall. He has a thoughtful or slightly sad expression. The image is framed with a rounded rectangular border.

**Make the most of opportunities to meet new people. Activities where you have interests in common, like sport or music, are good for building friendships.**

# extreme responses to stress

## eating disorders

Stress can affect your attitude to food as well as your eating habits. Sometimes this can lead to eating disorders like anorexia, bulimia and bingeing.

It is usually very difficult for people with eating disorders to get better on their own, so it's important that you find professional help and support as soon as possible.

There are lots of ways you can get support and treatment. Talking to family and friends, or to a doctor or nurse, can help you cope.



**Call 0845 634 7650**

### **Beat**

For online support if you are unhappy about your weight or your eating habits, visit [www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk)



what  
makes  
you  
stressed?



## self-harm

Self-harm is often a way of coping with painful and difficult feelings and distress. You may harm yourself because you feel overwhelmed and don't know how else to deal with things. The reasons why people may harm themselves will differ from one person to another.

**It can also be stressful if someone close to you self-harms. Try to talk to them about it and understand how they are feeling.**



Self-harm can take many different forms and cutting is the most common. A lot of people who self-harm can find it difficult to talk about it. But there is help available, including friends and family. You are not alone, even though you may feel like you are.

worried?

or just need to talk call

Childline  
0800 1111

For information on self-harm, or to chat online with other young people or a counsellor, visit [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

what  
makes  
you  
stressed?

# suicide

When things seem really bad, you may think about ending your own life. Suicidal thoughts can be the result of problems, feelings and experiences building up to the point where death seems the only option.

## worried?

or just need to talk **call Papyrus**

For support for you, your friends and your parents if you are feeling suicidal, visit [www.papyrus.org.uk](http://www.papyrus.org.uk)

Talk to someone as soon as possible if you feel like this – a family member, friend or someone else you trust. You could also speak to your doctor or another professional, or call a helpline.

If you are worried someone close to you is feeling suicidal, listen to them (without judging), try to reassure them and encourage them to get support.

**0800 068 41 41**

# family



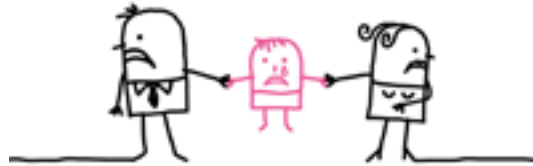
A safe and calm home environment where you enjoy your time with your family can stop you getting stressed. But of course real life isn't always like that.

How people behave with each other changes all the time. Sometimes you get on fine, sometimes you annoy and upset one another.



what  
makes  
you  
stressed?

# family breakdown



However old you are, it's upsetting if your parents or guardians split up. You might get angry or sad, or just feel numb. That's normal. It can take a while to figure out how you feel. Try not to blame either of them – and especially not yourself.

If your mum or dad finds a new partner, it can be hard to get used to them being with someone else, especially if their partner has a family as well. Try to remember things should get easier.

Tell your school what's happening at home so they know you're going through a tough time that could affect your school work.

## Young Scot

There is a section about separation and divorce on the Young Scot website under 'Information' then 'Health and relationships'.  
[www.youngscot.org](http://www.youngscot.org)

**Talk to both of your parents about how you feel and how much time you want to spend with each of them.**



## not enough 'me time'?

When you're growing up, you need your own space and time to yourself. But it can be hard for your family to understand that.

Why not talk to your parents about how much privacy you need. Get them to speak to your brothers and sisters and set new rules about going into your room uninvited. Respect their privacy and hopefully they'll respect yours.

But be realistic – other people have to share the same house or bedroom.

### Get the Lowdown

There is a section on this website under 'Relationships' about space and privacy.

[www.getthelowdown.co.uk](http://www.getthelowdown.co.uk)



what  
makes  
you  
stressed?

## caring for someone

You may have to look after someone in your family because they're ill, have a disability or problems with alcohol or drugs. Worrying about someone else can be very stressful.

Being a carer can be hard work and take up time you could be spending on schoolwork or having fun with your friends.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. There's nothing to be ashamed of if you're struggling to cope. There are lots of people who can provide support and things like 'respite care' so you can have a proper break.



### **YCNet Interactive**

For more advice for young people who look after someone else, visit [www.youngcarers.net](http://www.youngcarers.net)

## moving home

It can be stressful to have to adapt to a new place to live, especially if this is in a different area and you leave your friends and school behind.

Just remember that things will get easier once you've settled into the new place and got used to a different routine.

**It can take time to make new friends. Keep in touch with your old friends – they'll miss you as much as you miss them.**



**Call 0141 226 4441**

**Who Cares? Scotland**

For more advice for young people in care, and to share stories and information, visit [www.whocarescotland.org](http://www.whocarescotland.org)



**what  
makes  
you  
stressed?**

# tests school and exams

and 😞  
exams



School can make you stressed sometimes as a lot can be expected of you. But school forms an important part of your life when you're growing up and it can be an exciting time, with lots of opportunities. It's the place where you make friends and learn to do new things.

It's normal to feel nervous, exams can test how you cope with pressure and the results can have an impact on the choices open to you. But try to keep calm. Some of the relaxation exercises in Part 2 of this booklet may help.



## tips to fight exam stress

- Don't leave everything to the last minute. Plan your revision timetable so you have a manageable amount of work to do each day. A wall chart can be useful.
- Find somewhere quiet to study. Let other people in your house know you're revising so they can offer support and encouragement but won't disturb you.
- Don't be afraid to get help. Tell your teacher if you're struggling with something, or ask how to break up revision into manageable chunks.
- Include regular breaks in your plan. Enjoying time off with friends or family, or doing stuff on your own, will relax you and make it easier to concentrate when you get back to the hard work.
- Look after yourself – eat healthily, get enough sleep and do some physical activity regularly. And remember, exams are not your only chance at success in life. Not doing well in exams doesn't mean you're a failure.



what  
makes  
you  
stressed?

# being excluded from school

Exclusion from school can be stressful.

- Try to stay calm and in control. Getting aggressive will make things worse.

## **BBC Bitesize**

For some great revision resources for your Standard Grades or Highers, visit [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize)



- Talk to someone you trust about how you feel.
- Think about why you've been excluded and how to stop it happening again.
- Move on with your life, whether you are reinstated or change schools.



# worried?

or just need to talk call

**ChildLine**

For advice on exams or tests, or even school in general, talk to someone in confidence at ChildLine on the number below.

# 0800 1111



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makes  
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ways to  
tackle  
stress

When you're feeling stressed, you risk neglecting your physical needs, like eating properly and getting enough sleep.

# look after yourself

## get active

It might be the last thing you feel like doing, but doing different types of physical activity or exercise can distract you from whatever's bothering you.

Fresh air will help you relax and sleep better too.

### Active Scotland

For information on physical activity opportunities in your area, visit [www.activescotland.org.uk](http://www.activescotland.org.uk)



**If you feel physically fit and well, it's easier to cope with stress.**

You should try to do at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day and try to cut down on the amount of time that you spend sitting down, watching TV or playing video games. You don't need to do it all at once, just be active enough to get your heart beating faster and for your breathing to become heavier.

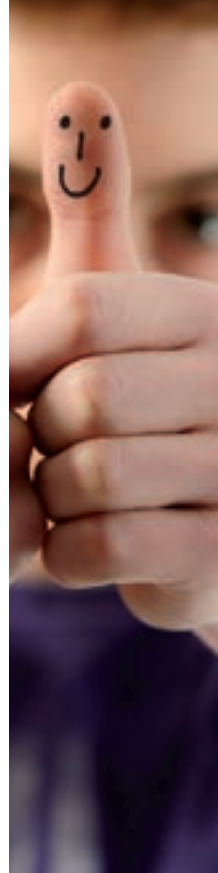
### **Take Life On**

For information on how to get active and eat healthily, visit [www.takelifeon.co.uk](http://www.takelifeon.co.uk)



Do something you enjoy, like:

- walking the dog
- riding your bike
- skateboarding or roller-blading
- going for a walk with friends or family
- taking part in your favourite sport
- doing activities at a club.



# eat healthily

What you eat can affect your mental wellbeing. Your eating habits can change when you're stressed, but not eating properly can make you feel worse and affect your concentration and energy levels.

- Try to have three meals a day with a couple of healthy snacks in between.
- Drink six to eight glasses of water every day.
- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.

## The eatwell plate

You can find the eatwell plate in the food and diet section here: [www.nhs.uk/Livewell](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell)



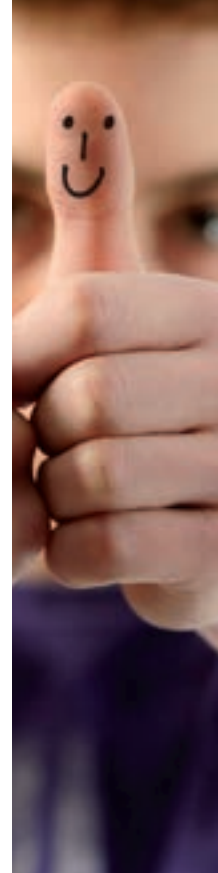


# sleep well

Stress can stop you getting enough sleep – and that can make you feel even worse.

Why not try the following:

- Write your thoughts down just before you go to bed. It can help clear your head.
- Keep a pen and paper handy. Make a note of things that wake you up during the night.
- Try breathing exercises to reduce tension and worries that keep you awake.



it's good  
to **talk**

Some people don't like asking for help. You might not want to burden other people with your troubles, or you may be worried about how they'll react.

It's important to find the right person to talk to and to plan what to say.

It's hard to cope on your own and bottling up your worries adds to your stress, but talking about how you feel can put you back in control. The tough bit can be getting that conversation started.



## who to talk to

The right person to talk to will depend on the situation, but you need to feel comfortable with them. Remember that your friends and family care about you and will want to help.

worried?

or just need to talk

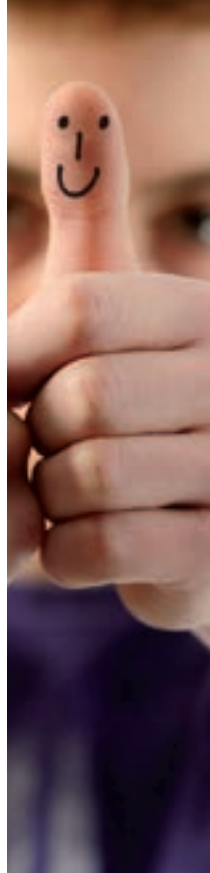
call  
**ChildLine**

**0800 1111**

- Choose a good listener, someone you trust not to judge you or laugh at you.
- Pick someone who's known you for a while and understands what you're really like.
- Stressed about something in particular? Try speaking to a person who has had a similar experience.

### **Youth2Youth**

For more information and to talk to other young people online, visit [www.youth2youth.org.uk](http://www.youth2youth.org.uk)



## what to say

- Find a time that suits you both. You don't want to be rushed or distracted.
- Write down what you want to say beforehand – how you feel and what makes you feel like this.
- Make it clear what help you want. Just someone to listen and be there for you, or advice and ideas?

**Choose a place you feel safe to have the conversation, where you won't be interrupted and it's OK to get upset or angry.**



**This could be somewhere private or really busy, so you won't be overheard.**

# clear

## your head

When stress builds up, you need to distract yourself and give yourself a break from worrying. Everyone has their own way of clearing their head of the things that are bothering them. You know what makes you happiest and most chilled – or maybe you could try something new.

ways to  
tackle  
stress

## do what you enjoy

You know what makes you happiest and most chilled.

- Listen to your favourite music – something slow to help you unwind, or a more upbeat track you can dance around to.
- Watch a TV programme or film you like – especially one that makes you laugh.
- Read a book – escaping into a good story is a great way to switch off.
- Spend time with your pets – stroking a pet can calm you down.
- Lose yourself in a favourite hobby.
- Just being with friends and family can be fun and can take your mind off things.

### **Community Service Volunteers**

For information on volunteering opportunities for young people over 16, visit [www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk)



## help other people

Helping others can make us feel better about ourselves, so why not try volunteering?

It's also a chance to make friends outside your usual circle, and to learn new things.

### **The Prince's Trust**

For information on volunteering to help other young people, visit [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)



# learn to **manage better**

As well as getting help from other people to deal with what's stressing you out, changing the way you think and behave can make you feel better. Even if your problems are outside of your control, you can change the way you respond to them.

ways to  
tackle  
stress

# change your thinking

Are you tougher on yourself than anyone else is? If you concentrate on things you don't feel good about, you'll feel even worse.

Thinking more positively about yourself will boost your self-esteem and make it easier to cope with stress.



**There are things  
I'm better at than  
other people**

**Stop  
thinking**

- **I'm a failure**
- **No one loves me**
- **I can't do my homework**
- **Everyone else is better than me**



**Call 08457 90 90 90**

**Samaritans**

To speak to specially trained people ready to listen at any time, call **08457 90 90 90** or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

**[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)**





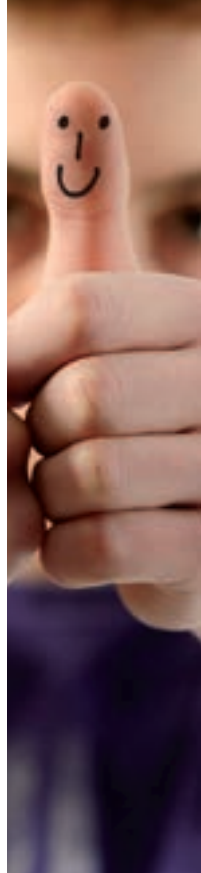


**There are things  
I can do well**

**I've actually got  
some good friends**

**There's some  
homework I'm  
OK at**

Write down what you like about yourself. Have you done something you're proud of? Add it to the list. Make a note if someone praises you or pays you a compliment. Look back on this when you're having a bad day.



**ways to  
tackle  
stress**

## be assertive, not angry

Try not to lose your temper when you feel stressed. Shouting and hitting out might release some tension, but it often doesn't help in the long run.

Anger isn't a very good way to communicate how you really feel or to let people know you want help. Being more assertive works much better.

- People aren't mind-readers. You need to tell them what you're thinking and be clear and open about your feelings.
- You have a right to be heard – and a responsibility to speak up. If you don't, you could end up feeling ignored and resentful.



- Keep calm when you're saying your piece. Raising your voice can frighten people or make them react aggressively.
- Make sure that what you want is fair to others as well as yourself. Be prepared to meet people halfway.
- Remember that it's OK to say 'no' and people should respect your decision.

### **YoungMinds**

There is a section on anger and keeping calm in the children and young people section of the Young Scot website under 'What's worrying you?'

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)



## tackle problems systematically

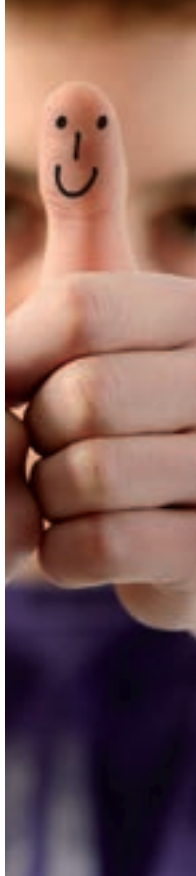
Stress can twist your thoughts so you can't think straight. This makes it harder to deal with problems.

Write things down. Make a note of how you felt when you got stressed, what caused it and what made you feel better. You can use it next time – and see what progress you're making in dealing with stress.

Put your worries into perspective. Ask yourself: 'What's the worst that can happen?' 'How likely is that?'

- Break big problems down into smaller ones and think about what steps you can take to tackle them. Write these down and tick off each step you achieve.
- Imagine a friend has similar problems. What advice might you give them?

Sometimes you need to take a step back to see things clearly.



ways to  
tackle  
stress

# Learn to relax

If you can take time out every day to relax – it can stop stress building up and help you cope.

## Exercise 1 – breathe



**Breathe in gently for 10 seconds, hold it for two seconds then breathe out for 10.**

**Repeat at least three times.**

**Use a watch to time yourself or count the seconds in your head.**



Try these exercises. They can ease tension, calm you down and boost your concentration. You can do them just about anywhere – no one will notice.



## Exercise 2

### – island escape

Close your eyes and imagine a peaceful place, like an island.

Choose your own special place, then for a few moments imagine you're really there.

**Listen to your favourite music – something slow to help you unwind, or a more upbeat track you can dance around to.**

ways to  
tackle  
stress

## Exercise 3 – move your body

Do each of these (or as many as you can manage) three times before moving onto the next one.

**Scrunch your toes tightly for a second, then relax.**

**Bend your feet up so your toes leave the ground, then relax.**

**Squeeze your arms into your sides, then relax.**

**Hunch up your shoulders, then relax.**

**Push down on the floor with your feet so your calves tense up, then relax.**



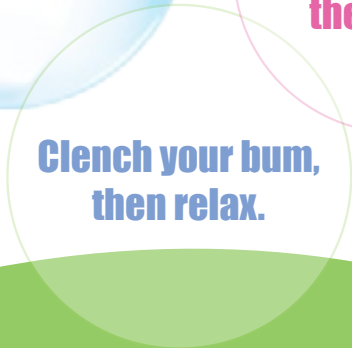
**Clench your fists,  
then relax them.**



**Tense your thighs,  
then relax.**



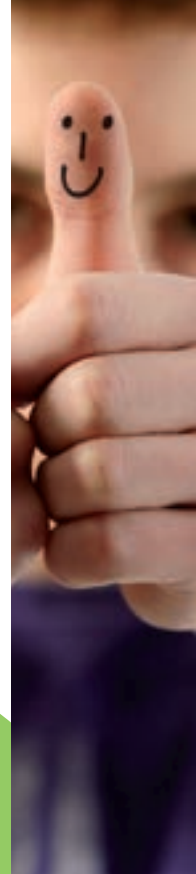
**Tense your  
tummy muscles,  
then relax.**



**Clench your bum,  
then relax.**

## what doesn't work

It's a myth that drugs, alcohol and smoking (tobacco or anything else) relieve stress and help you relax. You might get a temporary boost but they damage your physical and mental health and can actually increase stress levels.



**ways to  
tackle  
stress**

# where to go **for help**



**Information about websites, social networks and telephone support that you might find useful is given throughout this booklet.**

## **no access to a computer?**

You can get some of the same information in leaflets and booklets from places like libraries and community centres. You can also get free internet access on computers at most local libraries.

There are helplines to ring for one-to-one support and most calls are free.



## general advice and support

**Most of the signposting in this booklet offers helpful information.**

**Many organisations also provide personal support through their website or social networks.**

### **Samaritans**

For specially trained people ready to listen at any time. Call **08457 90 90 90** or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)  
**www.samaritans.org**

### **ChildLine**

For interactive tools and games to deal with stress, visit **www.childline.org.uk**

### **Breathing Space**

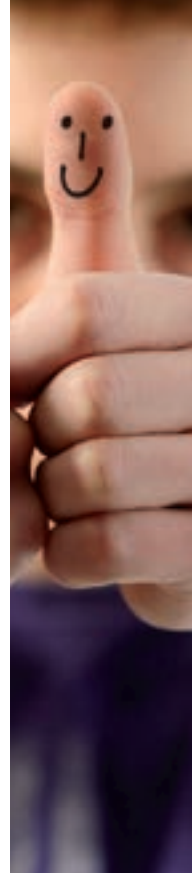
To talk to experienced advisers, call **0800 83 85 87** between 6 pm and 2 am. Lines are open every night and all weekend.  
**www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk**

## information for parents

**Your parents may not understand what's worrying you or know much about the things that make you stressed. They may find this booklet and the various websites helpful.**

### **Children 1st**

For factsheets for parents on things like self-harm and advice on relationships with teenage children, visit **www.children1st.org.uk/shop**



**ways to  
tackle  
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### **Hands on Scotland**

For practical information, tools and activities to respond helpfully to troubling behaviour and to help children and young people, visit [www.handsonscotland.co.uk](http://www.handsonscotland.co.uk)

### **ParentLine Scotland**

For help with family problems, phone **08000 28 22 33** or visit [www.children1st.org.uk/services/46/parentline-scotland](http://www.children1st.org.uk/services/46/parentline-scotland)

### **YoungMinds Parents' Helpline**

For advice for parents if they're worried about you, call the helpline on **0808 802 5544** or visit [www.youngminds.org.uk/for\\_parents](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents)

**There are organisations to support you and your family when you face particular problems. Here are a couple:**

### **Families Outside**

For support for families affected by someone being imprisoned call the helpline on **0500 83 93 83** or visit [www.familiesoutside.org.uk/kids](http://www.familiesoutside.org.uk/kids)  
There is a young people's section available.

### **Scottish Families Affected by Drugs**

For local support groups for families affected by drug use, call **08080 10 10 11** or visit [www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk)

We are happy to consider requests  
for other languages or formats.  
Please contact 0131 314 5300 or email  
[nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net](mailto:nhs.healthscotland-alternativeformats@nhs.net)

stress essentials – learn to tackle stress and keep a **cool** head

[www.stepsforstress.org](http://www.stepsforstress.org)