



5 ways young people can cope with stress



Children and young people can experience stress when they are **overwhelmed**, **worried**, or **under pressure**. Occasional stress is a normal part of life and can even be productive. But prolonged exposure, like daily anxiety experienced during a global pandemic, can greatly impact both their **physical** and **mental health**.

Some common signs and symptoms of stress are:



Difficulty concentrating



Fatigue



A noticeable change in behaviour
e.g. Irritability, angry outbursts or avoiding normal activities.



Change in appetite



Difficulty Sleeping

We want to ensure all young people and children feel supported. Here are **five ways** you can help them deal with stress and anxiety:

1. Facing Their Fears



Our thoughts can be frightening. When experiencing sustained threats, we might overprocess potentially dangerous situations until our anxiety makes us avoid the problem.

Encourage young people to discuss their fears and anxieties about the return to the 'new normal'. This will allow you to discuss the worst-case scenario and offer guidance on how to tackle any challenges ahead.

If a young person with an existing mental health condition has established coping mechanisms or a support plan, they should be encouraged to engage with these.

2. Use Breathing Exercises



Mindful breathing is an effective grounding technique that relaxes the mind and body. Teaching young people in your care to practice and use breathing exercises will help them to cope in stressful situations. When using breathing techniques, it can help to visualise success. For example, if a young person is anxious about going to school, encourage them to think things like "I can make it to my next break. I can make it to home-time" while breathing.

Try the Rule of 4: Breathe in for 4 – Hold for 4 – Breathe out for 4

3. Practice Daily Mindfulness



Mindfulness means being aware of the present moment and focusing on the body, breath, sensations, and surroundings. This is another effective grounding technique that children and young people can practice.

Finding just 10 minutes a day to focus on mindfulness can make a major difference. Encourage them to practice when they wake up in the morning, before they sleep, at lunchtime, or even on the way to school. Try downloading an app that plays relaxing music, sounds, or guided meditations designed to help practice mindfulness and relaxation.

Some young people have said they use creative activities such as colouring, painting, or music to help harness mindfulness.

4. Switch Off

In recent times, we've had to rely on screens more than ever. Playing Fortnite, watching YouTube, and browsing Instagram can be fun, but it is important to get the balance right. Encourage young people in your care to unplug and take regular breaks from screens.

This healthy habit lets young people connect more with the people around them, which will help them feel supported.

5. Talk It Out

Talking about our worries is the most powerful tool in our self-help toolbox. When young people talk about their worries, they can often make sense of them and see things from a new angle. Remember to regularly check-in to see how they are feeling. Ask open questions and take time to listen and discuss worries in detail.

Avoid the temptation of immediately reassuring them that everything will be fine. Instead, discuss the worst-case scenario and then spend time working backwards with a step-by-step discussion of how to solve the problem. This allows a young person to form problem-solving skills. Having a caregiver take the time to listen can also make a big difference to a child's emotional development, and will help build strength, resilience, and trust.

It's important that young people can identify their trusted adults and engage with their support networks if they are struggling with mental health. Make sure they know who they can talk to about anything that worries them.

Information, Advice and Guidance

Parents, carers and professionals can learn more at [Young Minds](#)

Parents, carers and professionals can contact [Family Lives](#) (formerly Parent Line)

Parents, carers and professionals can contact the [NSPCC helpline](#)

For online safety information visit [Our Safety Centre](#)

If you have immediate concerns about the safety of a child or young person you should contact the emergency services on 999