

## Getting Going, Feeling Good

Life is full of ups and downs, that's normal. Some days feel easier than others but there are small, daily actions that can help to make a big difference to how we manage with the wobbly times.

### Make a routine and stick to it!

We've all heard about the 5 a day message for fruit and veg to promote a healthy body; well, this is a 5 a day for our mental health.

Choose 5 actions to help each day run a little more smoothly. It's a good idea to choose actions that fit in with our usual routines; this will make them more manageable.

E.g.

- 1. Wake up and stretch.** Have a really good stretch **before** getting out of bed. A couple more stretches once you're up is good too.
- 2. Spruce yourself up.** You are precious so take good care of that precious body, keep it clean, brush your teeth, brush your hair, this is basic self-care but we can overlook it when we are feeling wobbly.
- 3. Put fuel in the tank.** Have something to eat and drink – our bodies and brains need both food and drink to work well, this will help us feel more balanced and help us think more clearly.
- 4. Take notice.** You can do this at any time, whilst you are brushing your teeth, whilst you are having a drink, whilst you are walking to school. Just take the time to notice how being in that moment feels; the tastes, smells, sounds, sights and textures.
- 5. Think a happy thought.** Choose a positive affirmation, a mantra or make a collection of feel good quotations. Even if you don't really feel it, tell it to yourself, say it out loud. You are in control of you so you decide your own narrative.



## Parents and Carers

**Lead by example.** The best way to get your teenager to adopt positive behaviours is to demonstrate how and when to use them.

**Speak your thoughts.** Mistakes are normal for all of us, as is getting angry, sad, scared or any other feeling so show them this. Say how you are feeling and talk through what healthy coping strategy you are going to try to help manage that tricky feeling. Update them on how you are feeling and how it felt to use the strategy.

**Choose your moments.** If your teenager is in the grip of a tricky emotion then they cannot hold a reasoned conversation with you, their brain is overwhelmed and the rational part is offline. You need them to be calm in order to communicate successfully.

**Team work.** When we are overwhelmed by emotion we are dysregulated, we might be able to calm ourselves down to self-soothe, or we might need help. Notice what helps your teenager, a warm hug, time, holding their hand, listening, a walk maybe. Be ready to support without comment.

**Breathe.** Controlled breathing actively calms a dysregulated brain. It is a great way of stimulating the vagus nerve which carries messages to and from the brain; in this instance, the controlled breathing sends soothing messages to a brain. Try breathing in through the nose for a count of 5 and out through the mouth for a count of 7. Repeat. You can extend the length of the breath but a few of these 5:7 breaths will be a great start. Sit with your teenager and do this together.

## More to try

Visit [www.learnhappy.org.uk/try-it-out/](http://www.learnhappy.org.uk/try-it-out/) or search 'LearnHappy' on YouTube for the Learn Happy video channel.

**Strategies from sessions – see the website for the accompanying video or activity description.**

Stop and take a breath.

Safe and happy place.

5,4,3,2,1 sensory grounding.

Write it down.

Eat something with your full attention.

Create a Doodle Draw.

Milkshake Breathing.

Listen! Collect 10 different sounds.

Bubbles visualisation.

Knuckle count.

Finger breathing.

Foot/hand scan.

Ready for sleep.

Glitter bottle visualisation.

