



Young People's Well-being Guide for Stressful Situations

**The
Children's
Society**

Young people's guide

Advice, ideas and tips from young people

The Children's Society has been researching young people's well-being for more than 15 years and over that time we've surveyed more than 39,000 young people on how they feel about their lives.

It's only by hearing directly from young people like you can we actually know what's going on, and work out how best to support people who might be struggling.

Every year we publish what we learn from young people in our Good Childhood Report, which you can find at **[childrenssociety.org.uk](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)**

This year we wanted to know what helped young people cope with the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown. To understand

this better, during spring 2020 we consulted with young people aged 8 to 19 across the country, in schools and in youth clubs. We asked them what advice they would give to other young people on how to cope – and that advice is shared in this guide.

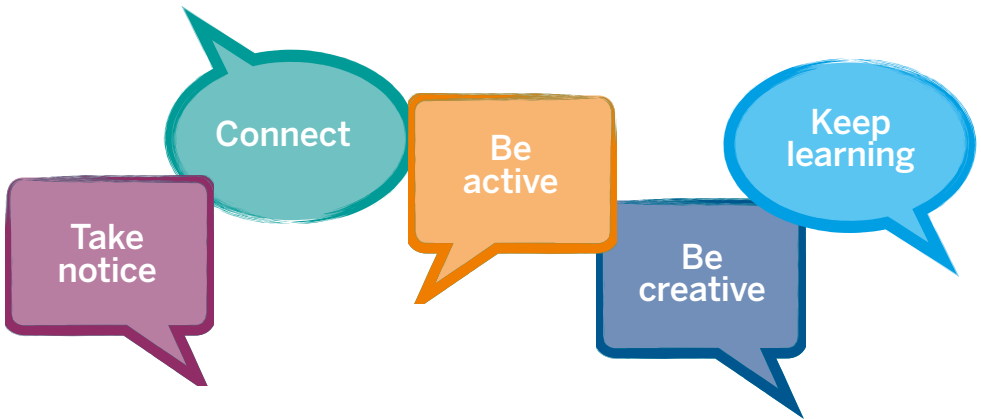
The young people we spoke with described lots of things that helped them cope and supported their well-being during the lockdown. The advice they gave could be useful in other stressful situations.



Five Ways to Well-being

In 2014 , we worked with an organisation called New Economics Foundation (NEF) to find out what children and young people can do to support their own well-being. This led to us coming up with the Five Ways to Well-being.

The Five Ways to Well-being are:



From what young people told us it is clear that there are many different ways that they cope in stressful situations. Things that may work for one person don't always work for another.

Some young people said that exercising helps, some young people felt that their own situation made it difficult to do things, whilst others were unsure.

'To be honest I am pretty introverted so I have no idea, maybe play games or something new.'

'Doing things you enjoy.'

If you find yourself worrying about the current situation or of what is to come, try to distract yourself with things to do. This could be baking, watching Netflix, TV, drawing, painting, crafting, FaceTiming friends, board games, quiz nights, self-care e.g. exercise, a walk, skin care, a bath or just simply eating some snacks you enjoy while playing a game on your phone.


These are the little things we enjoy that we usually don't have time to...'

Young person

Reflection activity

Before you continue, you might like to fill in this space with your own thoughts, ideas, drawings etc about what helps you cope in stressful situations or when you are feeling a bit low?

A large, empty rectangular box with a dark, hand-drawn border, intended for a reflection activity. The box is centered on the page and occupies most of the lower half of the page.

The image features a high-contrast, low-key photograph of two young people on a staircase. They are shown in silhouette against a bright, warm yellow background. The person in the foreground is wearing glasses and holding a smartphone. The person behind them is partially visible. A dark metal handrail runs diagonally across the frame. The overall mood is contemplative and modern.

Advice from
young people

Connect

Connecting with others is important for well-being. Young people told us how important it is to stay connected. Some examples they gave of staying connected are:

- Staying in touch with friends
- Speaking to family
- Speaking to a trusted adult
- Seeing people face to face
- Seeing people online
e.g. FaceTiming/video calls,
texting and using social media
- Talking through problems/
sharing how you're feeling
- Supporting each other

'Talking to a trusted adult.'

'If you can try and FaceTime as often as you can with your friends because personally it really comforts me. It isn't the same as seeing them in person but you are still seeing them.'

'Contact with other people. Hiding away and not interacting is the worst thing. You should definitely go out at least once a day even just to the front door because it makes so much difference.'

'Be vocal about your problems. Don't be scared to say stuff to people around you.'

'Keep in touch with your friends and be more social around the house. Play games with your family and spend time with them. Value the time you have with them, and don't be in your room all day as that can affect your mental health.'

'Talking to your friends regularly, either on the phone, video call or by texting.'

Friends are an important part of connecting, you can find a Young Persons Guide to Friendship on our website. childrenssociety.org.uk/good-childhood



Be Active

Being active and looking after our physical health are just as important as looking after our mental and emotional health – and the two are connected.

Young people told us how much staying active indoors and outdoors, and finding things they enjoy, helps them. The activities they mentioned they enjoyed included:

- Walking
- Running
- Cycling
- Keeping fit
- Trampolining
- Being outside
- Going to parks

'Please don't look at your phone all day. I sound like a mum or dad saying this, but it's bad for your mental and physical health. Get fresh air! We have gardens and pavements and parks for a reason!'

'Exercise and being outside helps more than I realised.'

'Don't sit on social media all day, do things with family and go out for a walk.'

'Try and do a new thing every day, exercise, talk to friends. Don't sit around doing nothing all day because that leads to laziness, low energy levels and unhappiness.'

'Keeping active, running, cycling, going on the trampoline.'

Be Creative

Sometimes it's important to be creative and do things just for fun. Some of the things young people told us they enjoy included:

- Gaming
- Playing an instrument
- Doing more creative stuff
- Drawing
- Reading

'If they have an Xbox or PC they should get on and play because it really helps when you're bored and it's time consuming.'

'I've been trying to do more creative stuff with the time I have.'

'I've gone back to lots of hobbies that I ran out of time for with college and stuff but drawing is a big one that I started doing again. I stopped doing that for like a year, and reading I stopped doing

for a long time and I started doing that again as well.'

'I went back to an old hobby that I haven't done for a while - playing guitar. I haven't played in like over a year or something like that. So I'm really happy that I'm doing it again.'

'I have been developing a comic for ages, but I've never had the time because of all the school stuff to actually start doing it, and I've finally got around to doing that. And also, I kind of already started doing this beforehand, but the pandemic gave me the time to sit down and finish a bunch of costume stuff too, so that was cool.'

Keep Learning

As well as being fun, learning new skills or hobbies and challenging yourself can be really positive. Young people told us they had started to learn new things like:

- Baking
- Languages
- Playing a musical instrument or creating music
- Starting a project
- Starting a new hobby

'Actually been practicing with my mum to do cooking - new hobby for me.'

'Get a new hobby or learn a new skill.'

'I would say to try new things such as a new hobby like learning to cook/bake or a new musical instrument.'

'A big thing is definitely have a project to do. I know that not everybody can do a project or find the motivation for it, but I have a friend who was having a really hard time with this until he got a project to do and now he's much more chill, his mental health's in a better place. I've been having my projects that I've been doing. I think if I didn't have those I would be a bit lost, plus I still have schoolwork to do.'

'I've been trying to learn German for a while. I've started focusing in on that and doing a lot more of that. I probably should take up some of my old hobbies - so I might take a look at that actually.'

'To have a new task every day. This will therefore motivate you through the day.'

'Find something to do that you have a passion for.'



Reflect/Take Notice

Young people told us it is important to have time or space to think and take notice of how you feel. This might mean taking a break from being busy.

'Don't dwell on being sad. Study. Write your feelings down in a diary.'

'Stay hopeful and positive as much as possible and if you are feeling down let yourself be upset for a while and then work to try and be happy.'

'Ask for help if you need it. Take time to relax and chill out.'

'Make sure you're checking in with yourself and your friends. Make sure that you're trying to do things that keep you mentally sane because it's so weird, everyone's saying it's a weird time, and it is. So it's good to check in with yourself, like do some meditation, do some journaling, call a friend that you haven't spoken to for a while and just try and stay as present as you can.'





What else helps?

Alongside the Five Ways to Well-being, young people talked about other things that helped. It is not always one thing, it can be a mixture. Some young people found that creating a plan of ideas and activities helped.

'Digitally stay in contact with as many people as possible, it is good to hold communication for your mental health. Try and use the time to improve yourself by studying, exercising, or taking up a new hobby to pass time.'

'Keep yourself busy, keep up with schoolwork and exercise and try not to get bored, otherwise you start to think about the bad things in life.'



'Have a plan on how to fill your time and make good use of it while you are at home.'



'I would say make some structure. So I just went into pure chaos, time was an illusion and nothing ever happened until I started doing the morning sessions at [club] and that gives me a time to wake up, a time to go and talk to people and now I have a billion alarms set for every single task that I have to perform every day. It's about creating a structure, a thing that you do that marks the beginning and end of a day and the beginning and end of a week and that's what's helped me.'

'Keep busy and active. Put a timetable together to help with schoolwork and deadlines so you don't get mixed up.'

'Maintaining hobbies and things like that. That's what has helped me the most, even if it's just a five minute walk or you just go to the corner shop to get some loo roll or whatever. I think it's just important to get out, like I'm lucky because I have a park opposite my house, and we go for a walk there every day. And if there are other people in your house, try and socialise with them - I know you're with them all the time but it's important to have that physical social interaction as well as the social interaction over the internet.'

'Keeping a routine and having a project, because without any of those things I'd be totally lost because I don't actually have any school at the moment... Like [club] has been so helpful for me for keeping my sanity because it's really difficult at home for me sometimes and just having people who understand, people who are queer who I can reach out to and do social things with pretty much every single day has been the best thing, so I would be lost without it. So, I'd encourage people to look out for their local youth groups as well that have now moved online.'



Reflection activity

After reading the ideas in this guide, you might like to use this space for your own thoughts about new ways to support your own well-being, or things that you will keep doing.

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Who can help?

Everyone struggles with their well-being at some point, especially in stressful situations. If you are feeling low it is important to ask for help. This could include finding someone you trust and looking through this guide together, or talking about things you'd like to try to support your well-being.

If you'd like more help you can visit our advice hub for more information:

childrenssociety.org.uk/advice-hub

or contact Childline for free by calling **0800 1111**

or visiting their website **childline.org.uk**



Every young person should have the support they need in order to enjoy a safe, happy childhood.

That's why we run services and campaigns that make children's lives better and change the systems that are placing them in danger.

The Children's Society is bringing hope back to children's lives.

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