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# Self-Help Booklet

We all go through times when things feel overwhelming. This guide is here to offer you simple, practical ways to take care of your mental and emotional health when you need it the most. Remember, it's okay to ask for help, and looking after yourself is the first step towards feeling better.







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## Managing Negative Thoughts

Negative thoughts can lead to unpleasant emotions. The good news is that we have control over our thoughts. If we can change negative thinking we can also change how we feel.

**Activity 3:** Read through the facts vs opinions task below and complete the grid on your self-help sheet to identify some of your unhelpful negative thoughts.

### Facts vs. Opinions

Facts are truths that we can prove and verify through science and research such as grass is green or the sky is blue.

Opinions are unique and individual. They're personal thoughts and ideas that can differ from person to person, even when we're looking at the same facts. So, while it's a fact that the sky's blue, some might think it's a lovely day while others might think it's not.

It is very important to separate facts from opinions. If you have a negative thought about yourself or a situation, it may be useful to write the thought down and note if it's a fact or opinion, just like this:

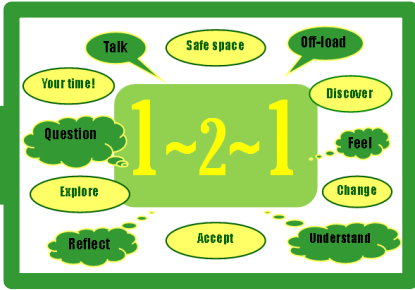
Your thought	Fact	Opinion
"Everyone hates me"	✗	✓

If a friend was struggling with negative thoughts, what advice would you give them? Think about how you would help them to feel better and treat yourself with the same kindness. **Activity 4:** Look at some of the compassionate statements below. In the speech bubble add a positive word or phrase you should tell yourself.

examples:

- "I'm doing my best right now."
- "It's okay to feel like this."
- "I'll take things one step at a time."





## Grounding Techniques

Grounding techniques are strategies we can use to calm our body and mind. **Activity 2:** Try the different techniques on these pages. Add the grounding techniques you like to your self-help sheet so you can be reminded of strategies to use when needed in future.

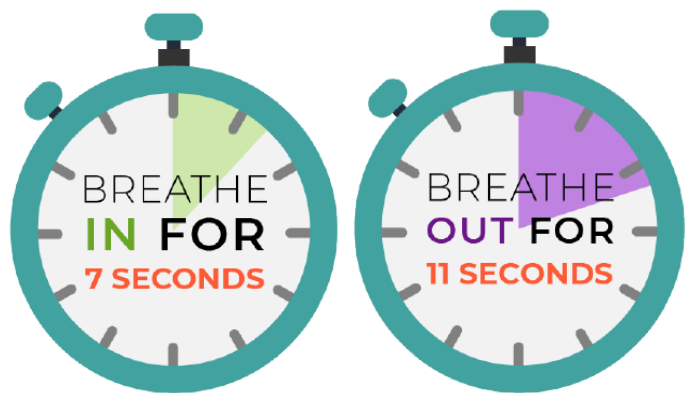
### 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

When feeling overwhelmed or anxious, it's beneficial to practice grounding techniques that bring your thoughts back to the present moment.



### 7/11 breathing

Breathing techniques are not just 'mind tricks', they produce a bodily response that lowers your emotional response in a very physical way.



Breathe  
in  
through  
your nose

Breathe  
out  
through  
your mouth



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## to Calm Your Mind



Place your hand on your belly. Take 10 deep breaths and notice your hand moving up and down as you breathe.



Close your eyes and spend one minute thinking about the happiest day of your life. Try to remember as much about the day as possible.

Close your eyes and think about how you are feeling. Happy? Sad? Mad? Think about how you know you are feeling that way.

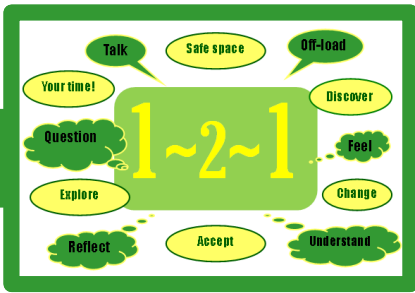
**FEEL  
YOUR  
FEELINGS**



Close your eyes and sit quietly. Notice the way your clothes feel on your body. Notice your top, trousers and shoes. Did you notice anything you didn't notice before?

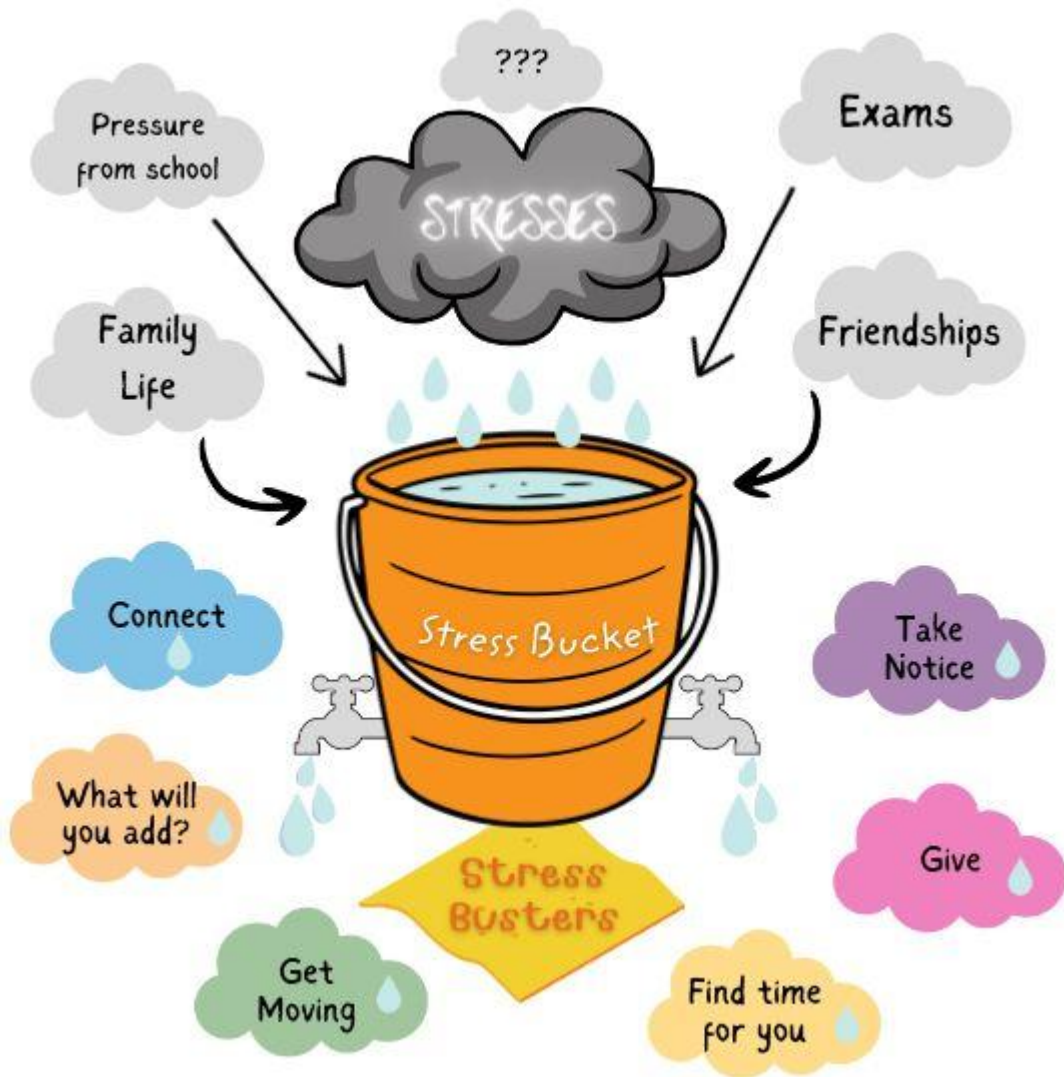
Sit quietly and place a small object in your hand. Notice how heavy the object feels. Think about what it feels like in your hands. Notice one new thing about this object.





## Managing Stress

Imagine each person has an invisible bucket inside them. Throughout the day, different stresses – whether from school, friends, family, or life in general – are added to the bucket like water. For some, these might be small stresses, but they can still add up. If there's too much stress and the bucket overflows, it can lead to feeling overwhelmed.



The key to managing stress is to have outlets – healthy ways to let some of the stress out before the bucket overflows. Self-love acts like taps, helping to release the stress bit by bit. **Activity 5:** Complete your own bucket, add what is causing stress at the top and what you are going to do to release the stress at the bottom. Use the self-love page 7 to help you think about how you can release your stress.



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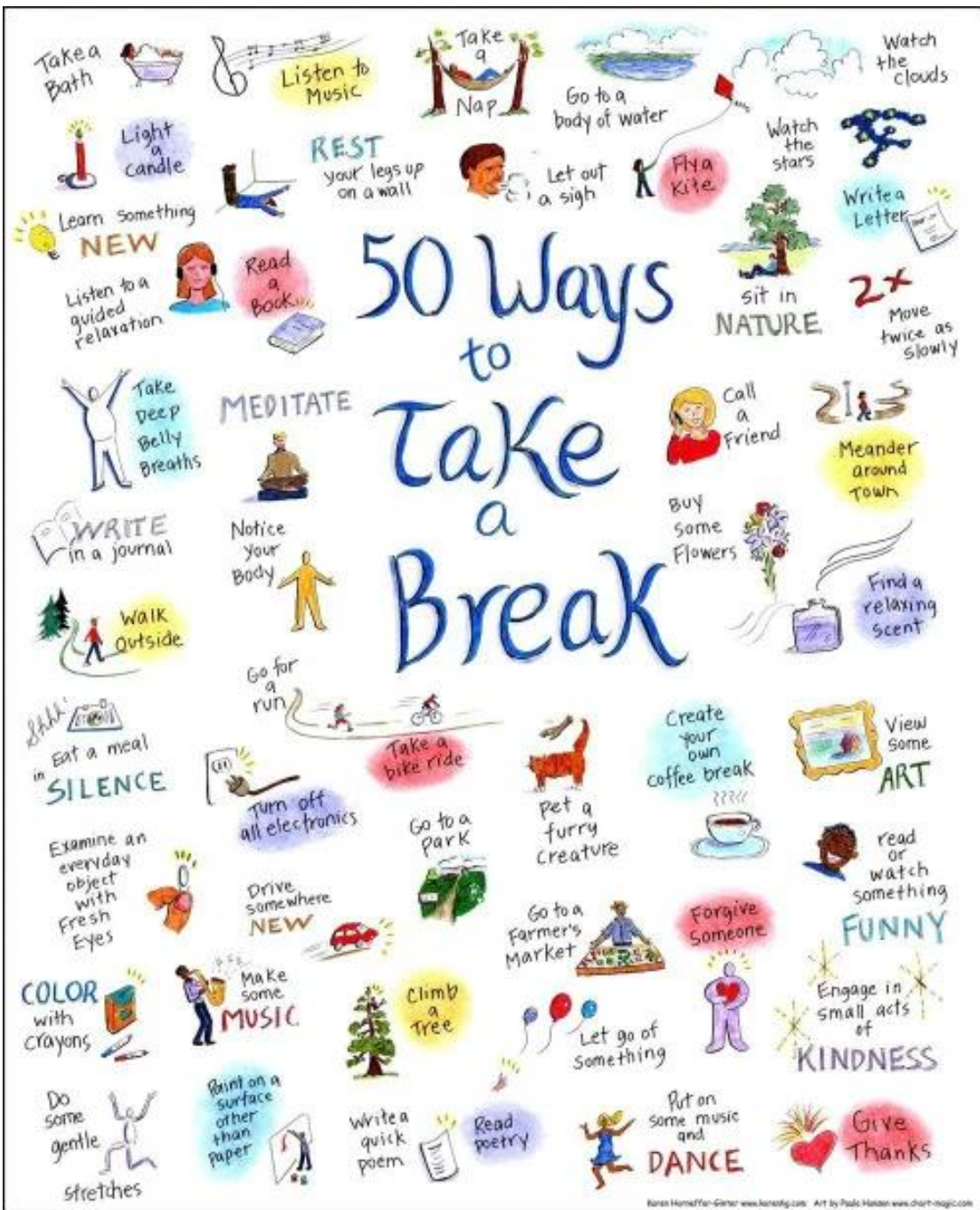


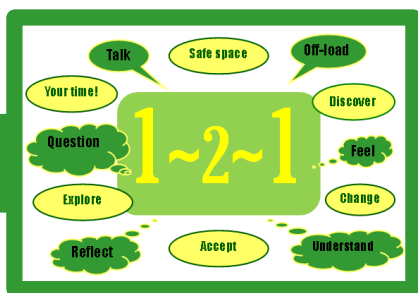
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# Self-Love

## Self-love

When we're busy, facing challenges, or going through changes, we often forget to look after our own well-being. Just as we take care of our physical health, it's equally important to take care of our mental health. Self-love, often called self-care, is all about what you can do to help yourself feel better or maintain your well-being.





## Physical Health

**Activity 6:** Read the three posters on exercise, eating well and sleep hygiene. On your self-help sheet write down one thing you think you could change or do to ensure you are looking after your physical health.

### Types of exercise:

Exercise can be fun- find what suits you!

- Dance
- Yoga
- Stand-up Paddleboarding
- Jogging
- Weights
- Walking
- Rock climbing
- Boxing/Martial Arts
- Geocaching
- Roller Blading
- Sports

### Benefits of exercise:

- More energy to do tasks
- Build muscle and strength
- Helps your heart and lungs
- Improves your memory and attention
- More motivation to be healthy.
- Supports your immune system.
- Stable emotional and mental health

### How to stay motivated to exercise:

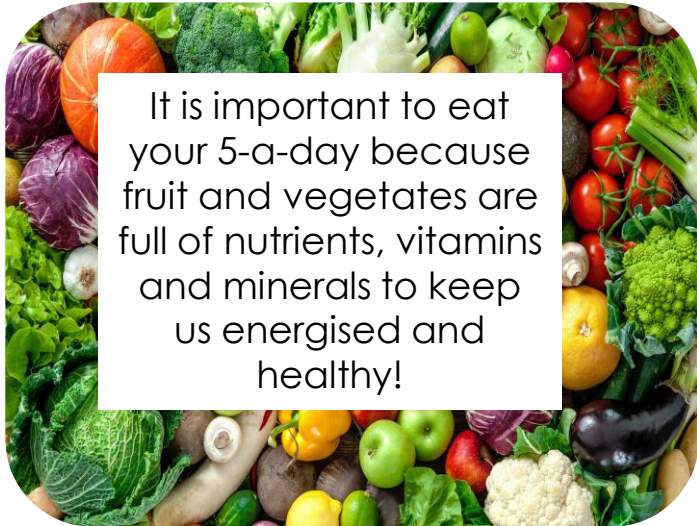
- Exercise with music
- Schedule workouts
- Choose a physical activity you enjoy
- Be proud of your efforts and small progress
- Limit screen time in favour of something active
- Reward yourself with healthy snacks
- Set achievable goals
- Use a step counter to count your steps.



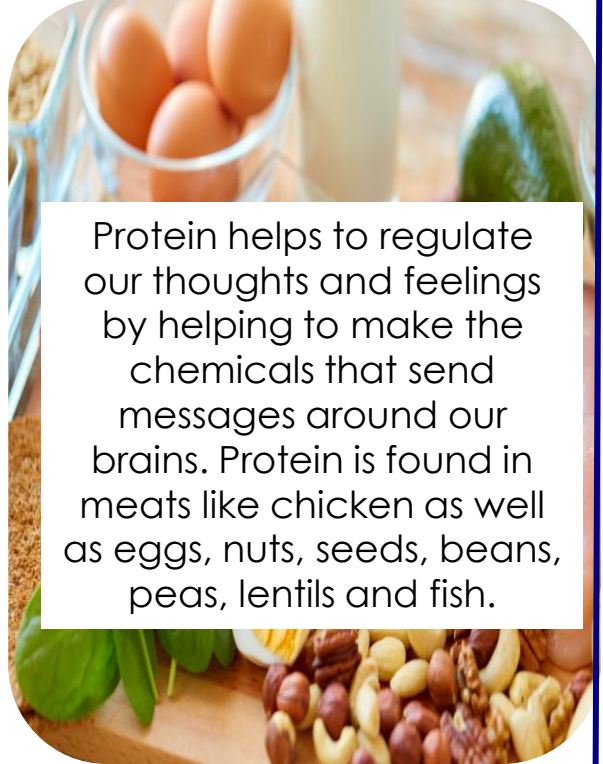
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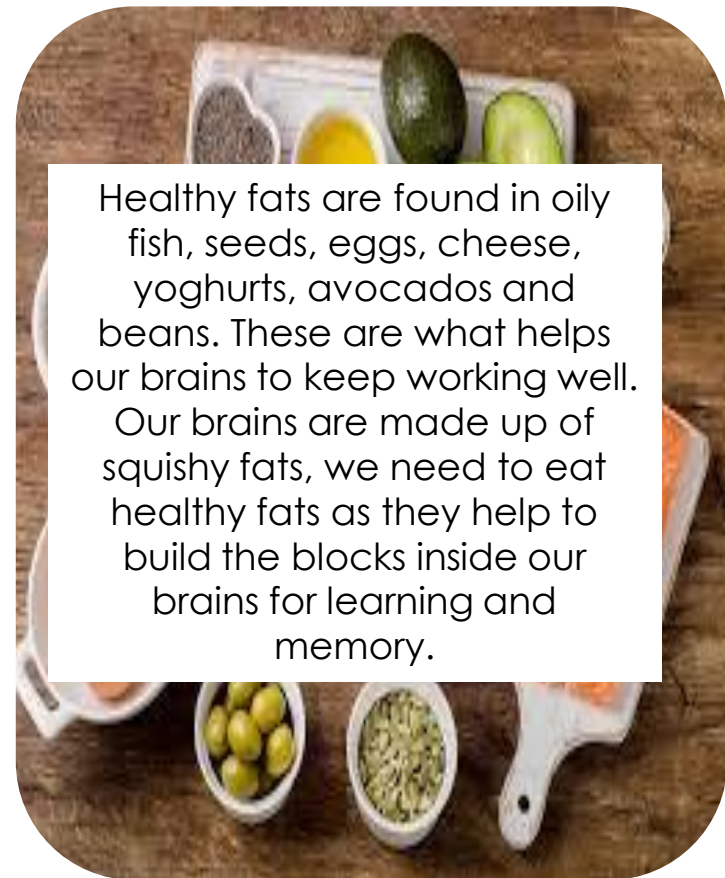
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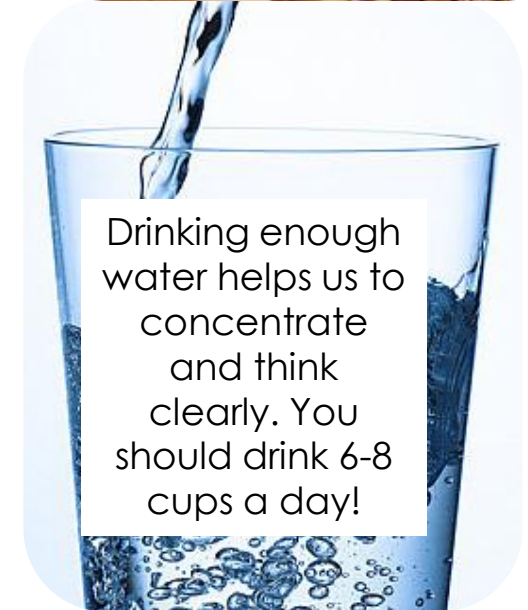
It is important to eat your 5-a-day because fruit and vegetables are full of nutrients, vitamins and minerals to keep us energised and healthy!



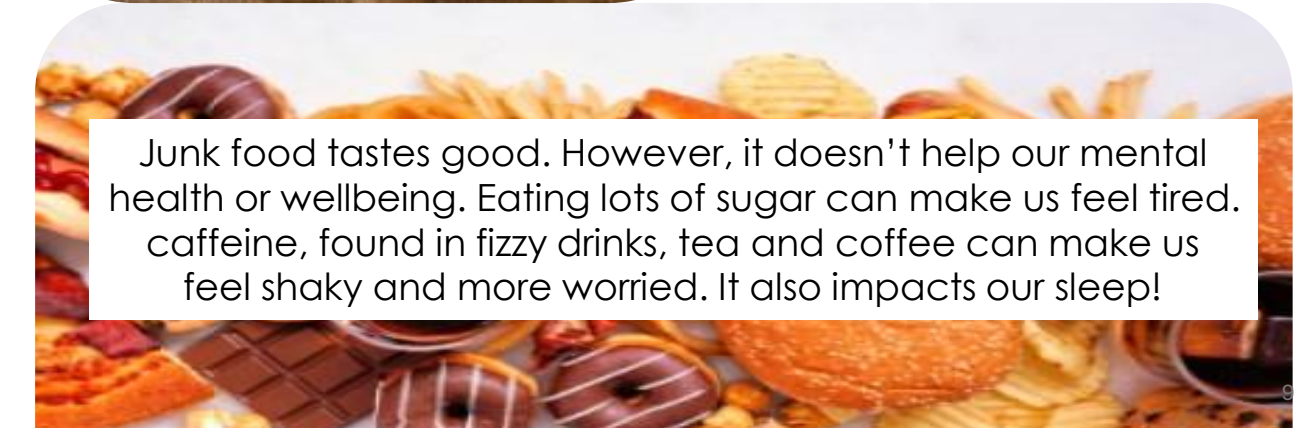
Protein helps to regulate our thoughts and feelings by helping to make the chemicals that send messages around our brains. Protein is found in meats like chicken as well as eggs, nuts, seeds, beans, peas, lentils and fish.



Healthy fats are found in oily fish, seeds, eggs, cheese, yoghurts, avocados and beans. These are what helps our brains to keep working well. Our brains are made up of squishy fats, we need to eat healthy fats as they help to build the blocks inside our brains for learning and memory.

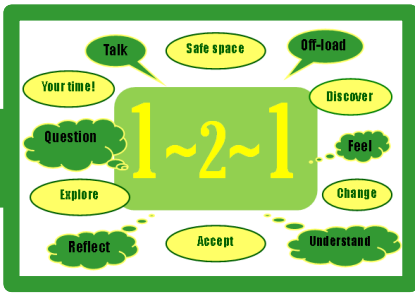


Drinking enough water helps us to concentrate and think clearly. You should drink 6-8 cups a day!



Junk food tastes good. However, it doesn't help our mental health or wellbeing. Eating lots of sugar can make us feel tired. Caffeine, found in fizzy drinks, tea and coffee can make us feel shaky and more worried. It also impacts our sleep!





# SLEEP HYGIENE

## HELPFUL TIPS TO HELP YOU SLEEP

What is sleep hygiene? "Sleep hygiene" is used to describe good sleep habits. Many of us don't pay attention to our sleeping habits but they are essential.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS

**FIX A BEDTIME AND AN AWAKENING TIME**  
The body "gets used" to falling asleep at a certain time, but only if this is relatively fixed.

**AVOID NAPPING DURING THE DAY**  
Or make sure you limit the nap to 20-30 minutes.

**AVOID CAFFEINE 4-6 HOURS BEFORE BED**

**EXERCISE, BUT NOT BEFORE BED**  
Strenuous exercise within two hours before bedtime can interfere with your ability to fall asleep.

### YOUR SLEEPING ENVIRONMENT

**USE COMFORTABLE BEDDING**  
Find comfortable bedding and a good temperature to keep the room well ventilated.

**BLOCK OUT ALL DISTRACTING NOISE**  
Also eliminate as much light as possible.

**RESERVE THE BED FOR THE TWO S' s: SLEEP AND SICKNESS**  
Don't use the bed as a study space. Let your body know that the bed is associated with the 2 S' s.

### GETTING READY FOR BED

**TRY A LIGHT SNACK BEFORE BED**  
Warm milk and foods high in the amino acid tryptophan, such as bananas, may help you sleep.

**USE RELAXATION TECHNIQUES AND DON'T TAKE YOUR WORRIES TO BED**

**GET INTO YOUR FAVORITE SLEEPING POSITION**  
Don't toss and turn in bed. If you think it's been more than 30 minutes, get up, and do a relaxing activity (try light reading)



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## Digital Detox

Research has increasingly shown that excessive screen time can contribute to a range of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and poor sleep quality. The constant comparison and pressure associated with social media can worsen feelings of not being good enough, leading to decreased self-esteem and increased anxiety. A digital detox offers an opportunity to break free from these cycles, fostering a healthier relationship with technology and promoting overall well-being. **Activity 7:** Answer the questions on your self-help sheet to reflect on your personal experience with the digital world.

What Are the **RISKS OF UNHEALTHY SOCIAL MEDIA IN TEENS ?**

- Increased Anxiety & Depression**  
*Constant comparison and pressure to fit in can harm self-esteem.*
- Sleep Disruptions**  
*Late-night scrolling can disturb natural sleep cycles.*
- Cyberbullying**  
*Negative interactions online can cause emotional distress.*
- Addiction**  
*Overuse can lead to compulsive behavior and screen dependency.*

### Tips for your first social media detox

If you're curious about trying a social media detox, here are some of my top tips:



#### Think about distractions

Try doing your first detox at a time where you know there will be plenty of other stuff to distract you. I found it a lot easier to forget about my phone when I had other things to focus on.



#### Tell your friends and family

You don't want anyone thinking you've disappeared off the face of the Earth! Plus, that way you can make sure to stay in contact with the people who mean the most to you via text, call or in person.



#### Silent mode and Do Not Disturb are your best friends

You won't be distracted by notifications and you can set it so that calls from important people (mum, dad, best friend etc.) will still make a sound.



#### Remember you don't need to be available 24/7

If you can't reply to that message right now, save it for later. If you can't answer that call, don't. If you're not in the right headspace for the group chat, mute it for a few hours.



#### Turn off your notifications

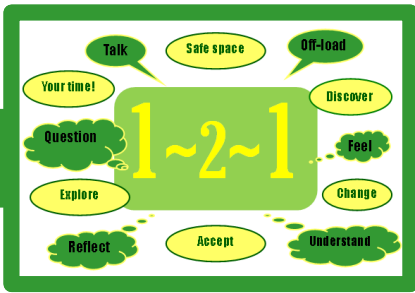
Turn off your social media app notifications so that you only see your notifications when you actually log in to the app. This stopped me from being tempted to check my phone every time I heard the \*ding\* of a notification. It also made me feel more in control of when I use my social media.



#### Don't be too hard on yourself!

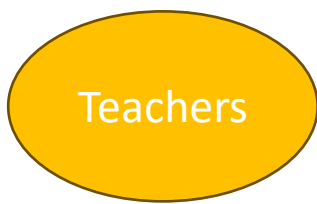
Most of us have grown up surrounded by screens and social media. We can't imagine a world without it! It's really hard to avoid something that is so part of our daily lives. Start your detox small – an hour first thing in the morning or before you go to bed, then work your way up. Something is always better than nothing.





## In School Support

You're not alone! If you're feeling low, talk to someone you trust. **Activity 8:** Look at the support you have within school. Think about who you could speak with and add it to your self-help sheet.



### School Nurse Support:

**Want to speak with our school nurse at school?** Our school Nurse, Joanna, offers 121 sessions every Tuesday P4.

**Want to speak with a school nurse outside of school?** Contact the number on the poster to get advice for your wellbeing:



### 121 Support:

Need to speak with a member of the 121 Team in school about your wellbeing or mental health? Self-refer using this email address: [121team@stbcc.org](mailto:121team@stbcc.org)



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## Out of School Support

**Want to know more about wellbeing or want some wellbeing advice?** Check out these great wellbeing services for young people:



**Want to take an active role in your wellbeing?** Check out what wellbeing projects Off The Record have to offer:



**Want to talk to someone about your wellbeing outside of school?** Talk to a safe adult who can support you with your wellbeing:



**Worried about your mental health safety and need to talk to someone immediately:**

