

Young Devon Wellbeing Toolkit

**Tips, Tricks and Techniques for maintaining positive
mental health during lockdown and beyond.**

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Our team are still contactable, delivering our Wellbeing services over the phone or by video-call. If you are struggling, and need to talk to someone, please email wellbeingenquiries@youngdevon.org and someone will get back to you as soon as they can. For anyone already receiving support through our

Wellbeing service, please email yes.exeter@youngdevon.org or call 07935364652 and leave a message with your name and contact details.

Young Devon Wellbeing Toolkit

"Mental health is not just the absence of mental disorder. It is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community"



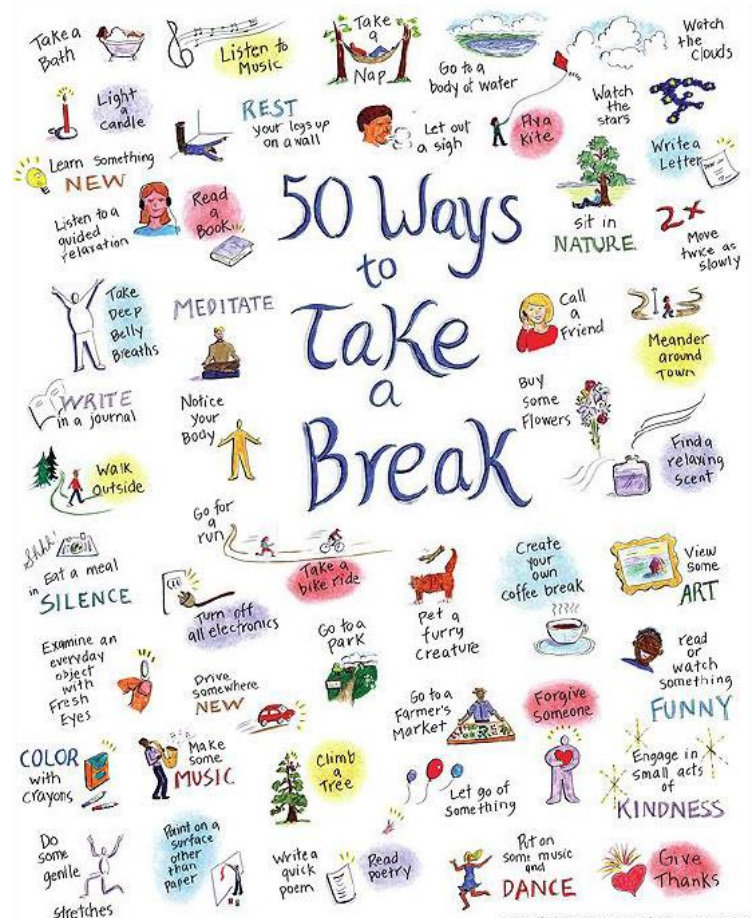
10 a Day

There are some key things that everyone can do to support their own positive mental wellbeing. These are 10 ways that we can all make healthy choices that are beneficial to our mental health. If you notice that you are having a difficult day check to see if there is something you could do to rebalance yourself.

Do more = Feel better

Doing more of the things that make you feel good actually gives you more energy. Try to notice the things that bring joy to your life (through achievement, enjoyment or closeness to others) and plan these in to your week. But don't forget about the things which are important to do and would cause stress or negativity if they weren't done (homework, hygiene etc).

By balancing the 'should dos' and the 'good to dos' you can maintain positive wellbeing.



What to do in isolation

Talk about your feelings and ask for help

It's important to talk about how you are feeling during this time, this could be family members, friends or support helplines. This is a difficult time and it is understandable and completely normal to feel that you need some extra support. At the end of this toolkit there is a list of lots of online and telephone support services that you can access from the comfort of your own home, via websites, online and via the phone.



Stay connected to those you care about



Keeping in touch will be more important now than ever as being in isolation can mean you have times when you are feeling lonely. There are lots of ways of using technology to keep in touch. Video calls are a great way of seeing the faces of loved ones (face time, what's app, skype, zoom etc). Sharing photos of what you've been up to via your social media accounts can help you to feel connected with those you care about. Netflix have just released Netflix Party so you can watch shows and movies along with your friends and chat about it in the comments, now you just need to agree what to watch. Then there is also the more traditional messaging or chatting on the phone which can also make a huge impact on how we're feeling.

Do things you enjoy

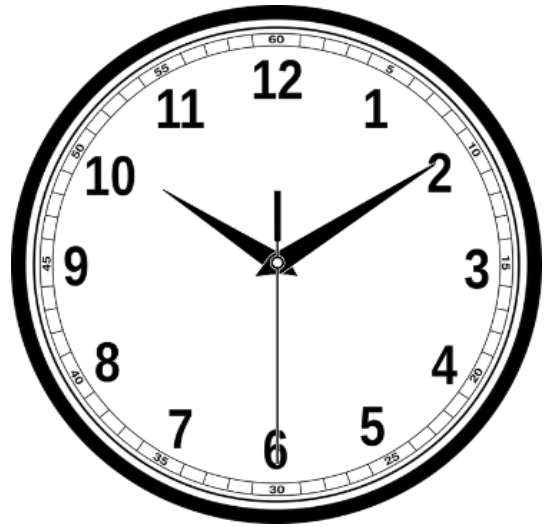


This could be something creative such as drawing, painting or colouring (Liz Climo, an illustrator, has created a free to download colouring book at adobe.ly/2U3suMF). It could be listening to music, singing or playing an instrument. You could make something by doing DIY, sewing or knitting. You might want to write poems or stories about how you're feeling or something completely fictional. Whatever you enjoy doing it's important that you get a regular dose of the feel good factor that we get when we do the things we love to do.

Create a new routine

Plan how you'll spend your time. It might help to write this down on paper and put it on the wall. Try to follow your ordinary routine as much as possible. Get up at the same time as normal, follow your usual morning routines, and go to bed at your usual time. Getting dressed can also help you feel better.

It's also important that you think about staying hydrated as well as eating well and regularly. This helps our bodies to have a steady level of energy which helps us to keep motivated and regulate our emotions. The change in your routine might affect your appetite, when you feel thirsty or what fluids you drink, setting an alarm or using an app might help remind you.



Stay physically active



Physical activity keeps us physically and mentally healthy, it helps us to stay motivated and releases positive endorphins which make us feel happier. Leaving the house daily to get fresh air and exercise such a walk or bike ride can be really beneficial. Being outside in the sunlight helps our body to get a dose of Vitamin D which is important for our bones, muscles and immune systems. Sunlight also increases the amount of serotonin our brain releases, serotonin is a hormone which makes us feel happy and calm.

However if you're unable to do this you can stay physically active at home, cleaning, going up and down the stairs and dancing along to music are all good ways to keep moving whilst at home. Youtube is a fantastic resource for free videos of workouts, search for your favourite type of exercise and you'll find lots of videos for dance routines, yoga, martial arts and many other types of activity.

Stay mentally active

Try something new, there are lots of different ways you can learn new things. Youtube is a great source of tutorials and how-tos or why not learn a new language with Duolingo. You can virtually visit somewhere new around the world via the internet. There are lots of museums, art galleries, zoos and aquariums that you can look around virtually. See what you can learn whilst you're there. If you like exploring new places Google map tours allow you to visit many amazing places in the world, explore Hollywood, walk around Rome or see what's happening in Sydney. Here are some of the best:

<https://thepointsguy.com/news/museums-you-can-tour-online/>

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/75809/12-world-class-museums-you-can-visit-online>

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/60704/15-amazing-places-you-can-tour-virtually>



Take a break!



Meditation, mindfulness and practicing your breathing can all help you to feel calmer and more relaxed. Apps like Calm and Headspace have free content which can help you to practise these skills.

If news stories make you feel anxious or confused, think about switching off or limiting what you look at for a while. It's best that you don't avoid all news and that you keep informing and educating yourself, but limit your news intake if it is bothering you, perhaps just check the news once a day. Make sure any information you are getting comes from reputable sources rather than social media, we recommend the NHS, WHO (World Health Organisation) and the Government websites.

Negative Thoughts

All or nothing thinking  Sometimes called 'black and white thinking' <i>If I'm not perfect I have failed</i> <i>Either I do it right or not at all</i>	Over-generalizing  Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw
Mental filter  Only paying attention to certain types of evidence <i>Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes</i>	Disqualifying the positive  Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another <i>That doesn't count</i>
Jumping to conclusions  There are two key types of jumping to conclusions: • Mind reading (imagining we know what others are thinking) • Fortune telling (predicting the future)	Magnification (catastrophizing) & minimization  Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophizing), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important
Emotional reasoning  Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true <i>I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot</i>	should must Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration
Labelling  Assigning labels to ourselves or other people <i>I'm a loser</i> <i>I'm completely useless</i> <i>They're such an idiot</i>	Personalization "this is my fault" Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault

NATs (Negative Automatic Thoughts) affect us all, they pop into our heads and can be really hard to ignore and even harder not to believe.

When NATs strike try challenging those thoughts by asking:

Is this thought helpful?

Is this fact or opinion?

What evidence is there?

What advice would I give a friend?

Is there another way to see this?

How would someone else see this?

Now try to think of more realistic and positive thoughts

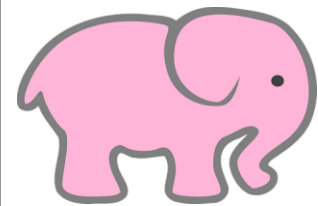
PSYCHOLOGYTOOLS FREE

@ <http://psychologytools.com>

Change your thoughts using Positive Self Talk.

Don't think about pink elephants! It's almost impossible to do, as our brains will naturally think of the thing we're trying to not think about. Now think of a blue rhino...did the pink elephant disappear?

It's a lot easier to replace a thought than it is to get rid of a thought. Create a positive mantra which you can think about instead.



Self Esteem & Gratitude Journals can be a good way of showing your brain all the positive things that are happening so you can challenge any NATs.

Writing down positive things that happen, things you have achieved, things that were fun or proud moments force us to focus on remembering the positives rather than being overwhelmed by negative thoughts.

Self-Esteem Journal

MON.	Something I did well today...	
	Today I had fun when...	
	I felt proud when...	
TUE.	Today I accomplished...	
	I had a positive experience with...	
	Something I did for someone...	
WED.	I felt good about myself when...	
	I was proud of someone else...	
	Today was interesting because...	
THUR.	I felt proud when...	
	A positive thing I witnessed...	
	Today I accomplished...	
FRI.	Something I did well today...	
	I had a positive experience with (a person, place, or thing)...	
	I was proud of someone when...	
SAT.	Today I had fun when...	
	Something I did for someone...	
	I felt good about myself when...	
SUN.	A positive thing I witnessed...	
	Today was interesting because...	
	I felt proud when...	

Worry

It's completely normal to worry about things, it's something everyone does. But sometimes the worrying can happen too often or can be felt too strongly and this can make it difficult to feel positive or do the things you want to do.

Try to notice the difference between thinking about something and worrying about something, does your body feel different, are your thoughts more negative?

If so trying to minimize the amount of time you spend worrying could be a useful thing to do. Think about what you can control and what you can't, you could even create your own control circles like the one on the right.

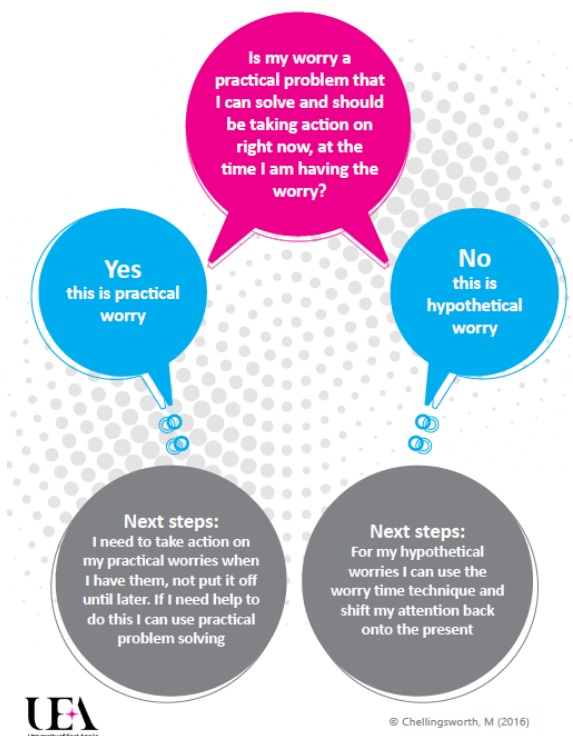


Worry Time

Schedule 15-30 minutes worry time each day during the morning or afternoon. That will be your worry time. It's best not to schedule worry time right before you go to bed as this can make it more difficult to fall asleep.

During the day if you feel worried you can tell yourself 'I can let those worries go for now, I'll worry about them in worry time' or you can write them down for later. This could be on paper, on your phone or using the free Worry Time app. This can really help to get them out of your head so you can then turn your attention to something else. Try not to worry about worrying outside of your worry time! You won't be perfect at this, nobody is but it will make a difference.

Then during your worry time think back about the things that had worried you. You can write them all down and try to categorise them into practical worries (problems you can solve) and hypothetical worries (what ifs). Writing the worrisome thoughts down can be therapeutic in and of itself but it can also help you recognise the things you can control and the things you can't.



Managing Anxiety

If you're feeling anxious or worried, bring your attention back to the current moment with this simple grounding exercise. Notice the following around you:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Grounding is a technique that helps keep someone in the present. It helps to reorient a person to the here-and-now and moment.

Grounding skills can be helpful in managing overwhelming feelings or intense anxiety.

For lots of young people it is really important to have things that they can do in the moment if their anxiety or worries are really difficult to cope with.

Mindfulness can be really useful for coping with anxiety. Different techniques will appeal to different people. It is important is that everyone finds a strategy that works for them.

The following sites give practical ideas of things that you could do.

***Get Self Help**
(www.getselfhelp.co.uk)
Self help ideas

***Headspace**
(www.headspace.com)
Meditation and mindfulness

***Moodjuice**
(www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk)
Help with emotional problems

SIX WAYS TO PRACTICE GROUNDING

with anxiety + intense emotions



body

lay on the ground,
press your toes into
the floor, squeeze
playdough



5 senses

wear your favorite
sweatshirt, use
essential oils,
make a cup of tea



self-soothe

take a shower or
bath, find a
grounding object,
light a candle



observe

describe an object
in detail: color,
texture, shadow,
light, shapes



breathe

practice 4-7-8
breathing: inhale
to 4, hold for 7,
exhale to 8



distract

find all the square
or green objects in
the room, count by
7s, say the date

Breathing

Knowing how to control your breathing can help to reduce the physical symptoms that anxiety can cause.

When anxious lots of people notice their breathing changes. Our hearts start beating faster and want to send more oxygen to our muscles so we can run away or fight as a way to survive. However if we don't use this oxygen up through activity it can build up and lead to panic symptoms. By slowing your breathing you control the amount of oxygen you take in and slow your heart rate which then makes it easier for you to calm yourself and re-engage your rational brain.



Smell the flower



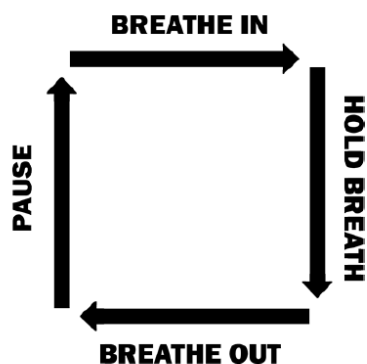
Blow out the candle

Smell the flower, blow out the candle

This is a good technique for younger children and help them o practice inhaling through their nose and exhaling through their mouth. The longer they are able to exhale the more their heart rate will reduce.

Hand breathing

This is a technique which can be easily and subtly used under desks or wherever you are. Inhale while tracing up your finger and exhale whilst tracing down your finger. This also has the added benefit of being sensory and something you can focus on while practicing mindfulness.



Square breathing

This can be done whilst drawing a square or tracing one in the air. Time each side of the square as 4 seconds. So each square breath will take 16 seconds.

Sleep and Relaxation

Sleep Hygiene

Sleep can make a big difference to our resilience, our ability to manage our emotions and maintain positive mental health.

Good sleep habits are shown to improve our mood and concentration. However for every hour of sleep missed there is a 14% increase in unpleasant emotions and feeling as well as a 50% increased chance of feeling sad or hopeless.



Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day (even on the weekends!)



Don't go to bed feeling hungry, but also don't eat a heavy meal right before bed



Avoid caffeine consumption (e.g., coffee, soft drinks, chocolate) starting in the late afternoon



Develop a relaxing routine before bedtime – ideas include bathing, music, and reading



Expose yourself to bright light in the morning – sunlight helps the biological clock to reset itself each day



Reserve your bedroom for sleeping only – keep cell phones, computers, televisions and video games out of your bedroom



Make sure your bedroom is conducive to sleep – it should be dark, quiet, comfortable, and cool



Exercise regularly during the day



Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillow



Don't have pets in your bedroom



Bedtime

Progressive Muscle Relaxation. This activity will help your child become aware of the sensations throughout their body, and it's a great way to begin relaxing the body for sleep. Read the following script slowly, allowing time for practice.

Close your eyes, and pretend that you're holding two juicy oranges—one in each hand. Start to squeeze the oranges by making fists. Squeeze hard to get all the juice out. Notice what your fists feel like when you squeeze hard. Now let go of the oranges, and let your hands rest. Notice how good it feels to relax your hands.

Next, pretend like you're sitting on the beach. Squeeze your toes as if you are trying to pick up sand between them. Hold onto the sand by squeezing *even tighter*. Now, let go of the sand, and relax your feet. Notice how your feet feel different when you let them rest.

Finally, pretend like a fly landed on your nose. You want to get it off, without touching it with your hands. Scrunch up your face, wiggle your nose, just go crazy! Keep moving your face so the bug will fly away. Now, stop, and let your whole face relax. Pay attention to how it feels.

Parents

It can be really difficult to know the best way to support your child if they are struggling with their mental health. The following websites offer information as well as advice lines to get support yourself.

Family Lives – www.familylives.co.uk

Young Minds – <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-lounge>

Young Minds Parents Survival Guide

You and Your Child

- Make sure they know you love them and are proud of them. Even when things are busy or stressful, and it feels like you are in survival mode, a word or a hug can reassure them a huge amount. Praise them for what they do well, and encourage them to try new things.
- Be honest about your feelings - you don't have to be perfect. We all get things wrong and shout or say unkind things from time to time. If this happens, say sorry to your child afterwards and explain why it happened, they will learn from you that it's OK to make mistakes and that it doesn't make you a bad person.
- Be clear about what is and isn't acceptable - and tell them why. Children need to know what is OK and what isn't, and what will happen if they cross the line. Follow through on what you say as otherwise they may get confused or stop respecting the boundaries.
- Own your own role - you are the parent, so don't be afraid to take tough decisions. If your child sees you are scared of their reaction and always give in to them, it can make them feel very powerful, which can be frightening. Children need to know that you are there to keep them safe.

Helping Your Child

- Worrying or difficult behaviour might be short-lived, so give it some time. All children go through stages of feeling anxious or angry and they can show this in lots of ways, for example, tantrums, crying, sleeping problems or fighting with friends or siblings. They might be adapting to a change in the family or in their school life, or just trying out new emotions, and will generally grow out of worrying behaviour on their own or with family support.
- Talk to your child: Even young children can understand about feelings and behaviour if you give them a chance to talk about it. Take it gently and give them examples of what you mean, for example, 'When you said you hated Molly, you looked really angry. What was

making you so cross?', or 'When you can't get to sleep, is there anything in your mind making you worried?'

- With older children, they might not want to talk at first. Let them know you are concerned about them, and are there if they need you. Sending an email or a text can work better if this is the way your child likes to communicate.
- Ask your child what they think would help - they often have good ideas about solving their own problems.
- If you can, talk to your child's other parent about your worries, when the child is not around. They might have a different take on what's going on. Try and sort out how to deal with the behaviour together so you are using the same approach, and can back each other up. Children are quick to spot if parents disagree, and can try and use this to get their own way.

Looking After Yourself

- If your child is having problems, don't be too hard on yourself or blame yourself. Although it can be upsetting and worrying if your child is having a bad time, and it makes your relationship with them feel more stressful, you are not a bad parent. Children often take it out on those closest to them, so you might be feeling the effect of their very powerful emotions.
- If you had a difficult time growing up yourself, or have had emotional problems or mental health problems, it can be very worrying to think that the same thing might happen to your child. But the love and care you show them and the fact that you are trying to help will protect against this. Getting help for them and perhaps for yourself too can give them the best chance of feeling better.
- If things are getting you down, it's important to recognise this. Talk to someone you trust and see what they think. Many people go on struggling with very difficult situations because they feel they should be able to cope, and don't deserve any help.
- It's easy to say take some time for yourself but in reality this may not feel possible. You might be too busy, exhausted or hard up for exercise or hobbies. But even a night in with a friend, a DVD box set or your favourite dinner can help.
- Go to your GP if things are really getting on top of you. Asking for some support from your doctor or a referral to a counselling service is a sign of strength. You can't help your child if you are not being supported yourself. Some people worry their parenting will be judged and their children will be taken away if they admit they are struggling to cope. This should only happen if a child is being abused or neglected and the role of professionals is to support you to look after your child as well as you can.

How to support your child if they are feeling anxious about coronavirus



It's understandable for children and adults to feel concerned or anxious about this virus and it is natural for parents to want to support and protect their children. You might do this in many different ways – giving them a hug, playing a game or having a chat. The most important thing is for your child to know that you are there for them, ready to help them if things get hard. We hope these tips help you support your child at this time.

1. **Talk** to your child about what is going on. You could start by asking them what they have heard about coronavirus.
2. **Try** to answer their questions and reassure them in an age appropriate manner. Remember, you do not need to know all the answers, but talking can help them feel calm.
3. **Explain** to your child that it is natural to worry sometimes and everyone does it. This feeling, like all feelings, will come and go.
4. **Don't** try to shield your child from the news, as it's likely they will find out somehow from school, being online or from friends.
5. **Be aware** that your child will often copy your behaviour, so if you are feeling anxious or overwhelmed, you may need to limit how much you express this in front of them.
6. **Reassure** your child that it is unlikely they will get seriously ill, and if they do feel ill you will look after them. Your child might be concerned about who will look after you if you catch the virus. Let them know the kind of support you have as an adult so that they don't feel they need to worry about you.
7. **Give** some practical tips to your child about how they can look after themselves. For example, show them how to wash their hands properly, and remind them when they should be doing it.
8. **Keep** as many regular routines as possible, so that your child feels safe and that things are stable.
9. **Spend** time doing a fun activity with your child (e.g. reading, playing, painting, cooking) to help reassure them and reduce their anxiety. This is also a great way of providing a space for them to talk through their concerns, without having a 'big chat'. For activities ideas, visit our [starting a conversation with your child guide](#).
10. **Encourage** your child to think about the things they can do to make themselves feel safer and less worried. Help them find things that distract or relax them.
11. **Be aware** that your child may want more close contact with you at this time and feel anxious about separation. Try to provide this support whenever possible.
12. **Remember** to look after yourself too. If you are feeling worried, or anxious about coronavirus, talk to someone you trust who can listen and support you.



Talk to someone you trust

On World Mental Health Day 85% of the young people asked said their advice for a friend struggling with their mental health was to talk to someone. They were clear this didn't need to be a professional but it needed to be someone they trusted.

- *Talking to a friend or family member
- *Talking to a helpline
- *Talking to a trusted professional – a GP, teacher or another adult.



Knowledge is power!

Young people tell us that it is really useful to have more knowledge about mental health as it can help them to recognise their triggers and to understand what is happening for them and why. There is lots of really helpful, easy to access information available, ranging from Inspirational TED Talks about Mental Health (available through YouTube or the TED App) to specific websites dedicated to mental health.

The following websites have information about mental health and wellbeing, as well as a range of magazine articles, message boards and forums. Young people using these sites have told us that sharing similar concerns and experiences with other young people can break some of the stigma and help them to feel less isolated.

- Kooth – www.kooth.com
- ChildLine – www.childline.org.uk
- Mind – www.mind.org.uk
- Young Minds – www.youngminds.org.uk



Support for Specific Challenges

In Devon there are a range of organisations that provide specialist support for young people experiencing specific challenges.

Bereavement

Balloons - <http://balloonscharity.co.uk>

Children and Families in grief - <http://www.childrenandfamiliesingrief.co.uk>

Pete's Dragons - www.petesdragons.org.uk (Specifically for bereavement through suicide)

Jeremiah's Journey - <https://jeremiahsjourney.org.uk> (Plymouth only)

Bullying

Bullying UK - www.bullying.co.uk

Crime

Young Victims of Crime - 08082 810155 www.youngdevon.org or wellbeingenquiries@youngdevon.org

Devon Rape Crisis - <http://www.devonrapecrisis.org.uk>

Domestic Abuse

Splitz - <https://www.splitz.org/devon.html>

First Light - <https://www.firstlight.org.uk>

Divorce / Separation

Relate - www.relate.org.uk

LGBTQI

Intercom Trust - www.intercomtrust.org.uk

Proud 2 Be - www.proud2be.co.uk

Substances

Y-Smart - www.y-smart.co.uk

Staying safe online

CEOP - www.thinkuknow

Young Carers

<https://devoncarers.org.uk/>

If you are in crisis or in an emergency you can contact

- Your GP
- Accident and Emergency
- Ambulance
- Police

Crisis support – online or telephone support

- ChildLine – 0800 1111
- Samaritans – 116 123
- Young Minds Crisis Messenger – Text YM to 85258
- The Mix Crisis Messenger – Text The Mix to 85258

During this difficult and challenging time, we just want to say to you to keep strong and it will all be worth it in the end! There are thousands of us finding it difficult and boring at the moment but keep yourselves healthy and follow the rules and we'll all soon be able to get out and meet our friends, go to the beach and have an amazing summer but to do this we must keep persevering and push on! You're doing great, keep it up! - Young Devon Youth Council