

Positive Self-Talk- pay more attention to your inner voice and what is going on in your mind as this is the first step in improving your self-talk. Start to question your negative self-talk and the critical voice by replacing these negative thoughts with more balanced and positive ones. This will be difficult to start with but will become easier the more you practise. You need to learn to be kinder to yourself by changing the way you speak to yourself in your mind. Rather than being critical of yourself all the time, try to give yourself a break!

Imagery- when people feel stressed or worried about things, they often have a negative image in their mind which often contributes to them feeling even more stressed. Instead, imagine things going well and how you want them to go. Also, you can use imagery to help you feel less stressed by imagining somewhere you feel relaxed and calm- focus not only on what you can see in your relaxing place, but also on what you can hear, smell, touch or taste as this will make it feel more real to you.

Mindfulness - it is vital to try to slow down and pay attention to what is going on around you rather than constantly focusing on things that have happened in the past or worrying about things that may happen in the future. Most people exist on automatic pilot resulting in them not consciously being aware of what they are doing whilst they are doing it. We need to start being more aware of what is going on around us as well as ourselves.

Practise Self-Care- once you find activities and coping strategies that work for you then practise, practise and practise! The more we do things then the more likely they are to become a habit, so you don't have to consciously think about using the coping strategies as they will just come to mind. However, self-care is not something we do naturally therefore it is essential for us to practise. Think about what you can do to protect, maintain and improve your emotional health.

Further Support- Only some strategies have been discussed in this leaflet and it is important to find coping strategies which work for you. If you are concerned about your mental health, it is important to visit your G.P and enquire about the psychological support available within your area. Most people feel anxious about accessing support but remind yourself how the first step is always the hardest step. It is important to remember that we all have mental health and any one of us can go through times of difficulty.



Parental Self-Care

Parental Self-Care

Being a parent is extremely rewarding but it can be very tough and overwhelming at times. It is therefore important to try to find time for yourself and learn ways to manage your own emotional health.

Although it may seem you have little free time, it is essential to try to plan some time even if only for a short while. Activities such as spending time in a hot bath unwinding, chatting to a good friend over the phone, listening to some of your favourite music or even taking a breather for five minutes outside, can often do us the world of good. There are lots of things you can do to maintain your general wellbeing, such as making sure you look after your physical health by exercising, sleeping and eating well. All these factors will affect how you feel emotionally, as well as how you feel physically. It is therefore important to learn ways to look after your emotional health and some ideas of how to do this are discussed below:

The Fight or Flight Response- when you feel stressed your body will go into fight or flight mode and release hormones in response to feeling threatened, upset or angry. This will affect how you feel physically but it also affects which area of the brain you use. During fight or flight mode the emotional part of your brain will take over which results in reduced blood flow to the thinking area of your brain, in essence 'switching off' this thinking part. This can often result in you saying or doing things you don't mean when you are feeling stressed, upset or angry. During childhood and adolescence children's brains go through lots of developmental changes, with the emotional part of their brains developing first and the thinking part taking until their mid-twenties to finish growing. Due to this fact, children and young people will often react emotionally to things whereas sometimes they may be completely rational! It is therefore important for you to learn ways to manage your own emotional brain, by being able to calm yourself down and feel relaxed when you are feeling stressed.

Physical Activity- it is proven that regular exercise can make you feel good emotionally so try to get out of the house as much as possible. Exercising does not have to mean going to the gym every day but could be as simple as going out for a short walk. Try to make physical activity part of your daily routine as this will encourage your children to become more active too.



Regularly checking in with yourself- try to become more self-aware of what you do, your thoughts as well as how you feel. Regularly checking in with yourself throughout the day is one way of keeping check of how stressed you are feeling before things become too much. This is important to do, especially when around your children. Stress can quickly build up and children are very good at noticing when you are feeling stressed, which will make them feel distressed and perhaps react negatively.

Take Time Out- it is essential to take time out for yourself, even if only for five minutes. A change of scene or a change of pace can be good for your emotional health. This is essential to do when experiencing fight or flight mode as you need this time to calm down and enable your 'thinking brain' to switch on again.

Spend Time with Others- supportive relationships and spending time with others are essential for our wellbeing. Maintain your friendships and keep in touch with family as often people isolate themselves and withdraw when they start to feel stressed.

ACE Activities- ensure you have a balance of activities in your life which bring you a sense of achievement, make you feel close to other people, as well as activities which you enjoy. Try doing something you're good at as this will help to make you feel better.

Talk About How You Feel- talking about how you feel to someone who will be supportive is important. This will help you to maintain your emotional wellbeing and cope during those tough times. If you find it difficult to talk about how you feel, then find other ways to express yourself, such as through music, writing or creative activities.

Ask for Help- it is important to remember that asking for help is not a sign of weakness. It is part of you taking charge of your wellbeing by recognising that you are struggling. We all feel stressed and overwhelmed at times and this is okay. By asking for help other people may be able to offer you some good advice.

There are also several techniques which may help when you are feeling stressed. Soothing breathing or the 3,4,5 technique, involves slowing your breathing down, so that you inhale for 3 seconds, hold it for 4 seconds and then exhale for 5 seconds. This will help to control the physical symptoms of feeling stressed, caused by the fight and flight response. We need to get the physical symptoms of anxiety and stress under control to enable our thinking brain to kick-start again