



How are you feeling and what can you do?

A signposting guide for young people

 mind Suffolk

How are you?



Did you know that by the age of six, your brain was already about 90-95% of adult size?

As you become a teenager, your brain will continue to grow and change, which can affect your behaviour and thinking. Your brain is working intensively to remodel in this period all the way into your early 20s.

This means that your brain isn't quite functioning as an adult's yet, but that's ok!

What's going on in my brain?

As we grow into a teenager, unused connections in our thinking brain are pruned back, while others are reinforced. This is to make way for new connections to form the adult brain.

Our prefrontal cortex, near the front of our brain, develops last. This is the decision-making part of our brain. It

plans, thinks, solves problems, controls impulses and considers consequences.

While this area of the brain is being remodelled, you may rely on your amygdala (we call it the security officer) for decision making. The amygdala is a primitive part of your brain responsible for our black and white 'flight, fight, freeze' survival response. It'll get you out of dangerous and sticky situations, but it's not ideal for rational thinking.

That's why teenagers often have a bad reputation for impulsive behaviour and poor communication, but there's actually major change happening in your brain.

You can take a look through this guide for support if you need it. There are hints and tips which might help you out if you're feeling rubbish, or even if you want to prepare for later!

I am having mood swings | I am irritable, cross and impatient | I have low moods

Do I need to meet my need for Food & Drink?

What kinds of food and drink should I choose to help me to stay well?

Regular, balanced meals and snacks plus enough water to make our pee a pale yellow can help to regulate our moods.

When we have large amounts of sugary foods or drinks, it can make us feel a rush of energy at the time, but later it leads to a crash. This makes us reach for more sugar, creating a cycle of highs and lows that can be hard to manage.

Making and sharing food that nourishes our bodies can be a good way to meet a lot of emotional needs at the same time. Be aware of reaching for treat foods when your mood is low - try and find another way to meet your needs and improve your mood.

Three things to do now to help bring you back to being well:

1. Drink water and be mindful of caffeine and sugar if you're already feeling unsettled
2. Eat a balanced meal or snack
3. Prepare some food together to share

Do I need to meet my need for Movement?

Moving our bodies helps us to release chemicals called endorphins, which come with feeling good, and burn off unhealthy amounts of stress hormones called cortisol which can make us feel tense.

Moving our bodies in a way we enjoy helps us to protect our brains. If we have a low mood, the first we can do is to move.

We need to raise our heart and lung rate to help protect our brain. Moving can be going for walk, riding your bike, going to the gym, playing sports or dancing in your kitchen!

Three things to do now to help bring you back to being well:

1. Remember what kinds of movement you have enjoyed before and do more of that, even if it is a little
2. If you feel you have been in one place for a long time, find ways to move to get the energy flowing around your body
3. Combine your need for movement with your need for connection, and plan to do some movement with a friend. It can be motivating and a lot more fun

I am having mood swings | I am irritable, cross and impatient | I have low moods



Do I need to meet my need for Sleep?

Sometimes, even when we think we are getting enough sleep, we are not getting the right kind of sleep. Make sure you are ready for sleep by having a bedtime routine, no matter how old you are!

The two kinds of sleep we need to have the right amounts of are deep sleep and REM (or dreaming) sleep.

Deep sleep repairs our minds and bodies, REM sleep helps us to switch off emotions from the day before.

To get the right kinds of sleep, make sure you have a good bedtime environment, a predictable routine to encourage your body to expect sleep and have had time during the day to process any thoughts so that you don't take them to bed with you.

A really good way to do this is to do something quiet and away from screens before getting ready for your bedtime routine, like drawing, talking to someone or writing a list of things that are in your thoughts so you can deal with them the next day.

Three things to do now to help bring you back to being well:

1. Make sure your bedroom is a calm space that makes you feel relaxed
2. Switch off screens a while before bed - ideally at least an hour
3. Make a routine that makes you feel ready for sleep, such as exercising or taking a shower



I am lonely | I have no one to talk to | I feel like I'm not part of anything

Do I need to meet my need for Community?

Spending time with others, particularly those we share something in common with, can help us to feel like we belong. This is good for our wellbeing and helps us to feel safe and secure.

Three things to do now to help bring you back to being well:

1. Find people who enjoy the same things you do. This could be choosing friends to be with who share similar interests or joining an organised group or team
2. If you can't find an organised group or team you fit into, you could start a group of your own
3. Join in with local community events to feel part of a group, such as litter picking or a sport



Do I need to meet my need for Emotional Connection?

Sharing an emotional connection with someone else is important for our mental health and wellbeing.

We need a someone in our lives that we can talk to and feel we are accepted for who we are.

Three things to do now to help bring you back to being well:

1. Notice who makes you feel good. Spend more time with people who make you feel good about yourself
2. Spend time with a pet. This could just be talking to them, training them or taking care of them
3. Spend quality time with someone who cares about you. This could be something fun like gaming, a walk, or creating something new

I feel like I need a lot of attention | I'm doing things to get a reaction

Do I need to meet my need for Attention?

We all need to give and receive the right amount of attention to keep us feeling positive and content.

You might be told you are attention-seeking with your behaviour, but this is often because you are 'attention-needing'.

Attention is so important to humans that we might seek or accept negative attention when positive attention isn't available, so it is important that we find it and share it in healthy ways.

Three things to do now to help bring you back to being well:

1. Exchange healthy attention with someone else - spend time together away from screens
2. Speak to the important people in your life about having more one-to-one time to chat and do something fun together. Building relationships can help you to feel supported and heard if you are finding things hard
3. Find a way to give someone else attention, such as doing something with them that they are interested in or listening to them talk. This can help people feel understood



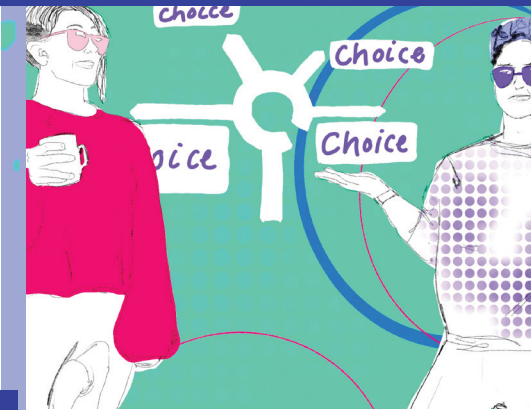
I am finding it hard to feel safe in new situations and places | I find change difficult

Do I need to meet my need for Security?

When we feel safe and secure, it is easier to think clearly and manage our emotions. We can help ourselves to feel safe and secure by recognising things that make us feel safe and making sure we have more of these in our lives.

Three things to do now to help bring you back to being well:

1. Think about what makes you feel secure and make an effort to do this more. This could be finding a cosy space to relax, listening to music or talking to someone who helps you to feel safe
2. If you feel worried about something, make a plan that helps you to feel safe. For example, you could use a planner to space out tasks and times
3. Breathe in, hold it, and breathe out for longer. This helps to activate our calming systems that tell our brain 'all is ok'



Do I need to meet my need for Control?

To meet our need for control, we need to have some influence over our lives and the decisions we make. There are some things that we can have decisions over, but there are also some things that are outside of our control.

Three things to do now to help bring you back to being well:

1. Having safe ways of feeling in control can help to overcome feelings of being out of control, such as finding a positive distraction
2. We like to have choices in our lives. Making decisions about music, clothes or how we spend our free time can help us to feel more in control
3. Sometimes we have to do things we have no control over. But controlling the way you approach it can help you feel more in control about it

I feel upset by other people's actions | I feel unsettled, worried or anxious

Do I need to meet my need for Privacy?

We all need to take time out for ourselves. This means stepping away from screens and having time to reflect and process our thoughts, learn from our experiences and make sense of the world around us.

Three things to do now to help bring you back to being well:

1. Build some time into your day to allow your thoughts to wander. You could look around you, listen to music, doodle or daydream
2. Think about ways to look after yourself and your space. Taking care of yourself can help you to process thoughts from a busy day
3. What are your hobbies? Do you have things you like to do that are away from screens? This could include such as listening to music, walking the dog, exercising, drawing or journalling. These types of hobbies give us time to think and reflect, particularly at the end of a busy day

I feel I can't do things | feel like I have no motivation and low moods

Do I need to meet my need for Achievement?

It is important to feel we are achieving things, stretching, learning and growing as a person.

Achievements can be everyday tasks like helping to get the dishes washed after dinner or bigger milestones like completing a homework project.

Three things to do now to help bring you back to being well:

1. Write yourself a list of things you would like to do and see if you can tick them off as you go along. Start with things that are easy to tick off, such as getting a glass of water and drinking that glass of water!
2. Do something for yourself that somebody normally does for you. This can help you to feel like you have achieved something by yourself
3. Think of things that other people say you are good at and set yourself small, achievable goals

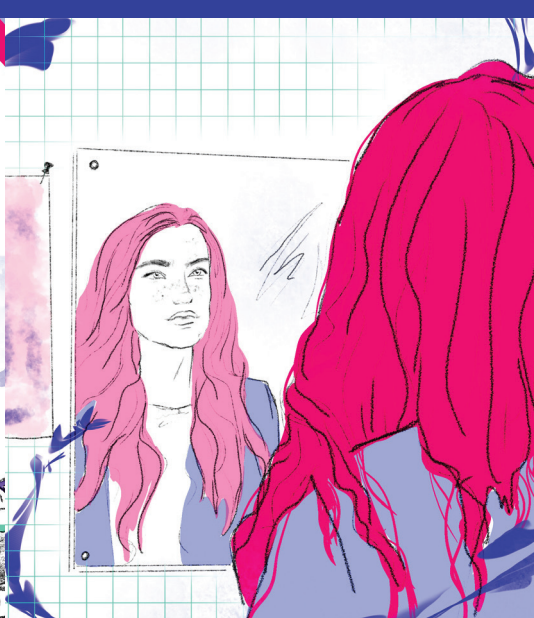


Do I need to meet my need for Status?

We all need to feel valued and that our efforts and contributions are appreciated by other people. Feeling appreciated and recognised is important for our self-esteem and is connected to our sense of meaning and purpose.

Three things to do now to help bring you back to being well:

1. Recognise other people's efforts when working in groups. When you give other people recognition for things that they have done, they will be more likely to do the same for you
2. Think about times when other people have recognised your efforts
3. Speak to others in your life about things that make you feel valued- and things that you do that are helpful. Can you do more of these things?



No one listens to me | I don't want to be here anymore

Do I need to meet my need for Meaning & Purpose?

Meaning and purpose is all about having motivation or a driving force behind the things that you do.

Finding meaning and purpose gives us the bigger picture of why something is important. This helps to motivate us and gives us the ability to overcome challenging things.

Three things to do now to help bring you back to being well:

1. Feeling stretched and challenged by new things helps to give us meaning and purpose, so try to find a new challenge or support someone else to learn something you know how to do
2. Being connected to a wider community with a common goal helps us to see that we are part of something bigger, such as helping to look after the environment
3. Feeling that we are needed by others gives us a lot of meaning and purpose, such as helping to feed pets, looking after wildlife or being part of a bigger group with a common goal (like Suffolk Mind!)

Need more support?

If you feel you need further support for your wellbeing, there are many organisations local and national who can support you

Local organisations

Suffolk Mind Call 0300 111 6000 or visit suffolkmind.org.uk

Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing Hub Call 0345 600 2090

Healthwatch Suffolk Visit healthwatchsuffolk.co.uk

Inspire Suffolk Call 01473 353194 or visit inspiresuffolk.org.uk

The Mix Visit themixstowmarket.org

Teenage Mental Health Visit teenagementalhealth.co.uk

Homestart Call 01473 621104 or visit homestartinsuffolk.org

4YP Call 01473 252607 or visit 4yp.org.uk

PACT Call 07856 038799 or visit parentsandcarerstogether.co.uk

School counsellor If you are in school, college or university they might have an on-site counsellor. To find out more, ask your head of year, mental health lead, SENCO or pastoral lead

National organisations

In case of an emergency or life threatening situation call 999. If you need urgent medical advice but it is not an emergency then you can call 111.

| **CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)** offer support to young males struggling with low mood, self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Call 0800 585858 from 5pm - 12am or visit thecalmzone.net

| **Childline** If you are concerned about yourself or a child in your family you can call for confidential, free support. Call 0800 111

| **Child Bereavement UK** have advice on managing grief and local services. Visit childbereavementuk.org

| **Kooth** provides free, anonymous online counselling for 10 - 25 year olds. Message counsellors from 12pm - 10pm Monday to Friday and from 6pm - 10pm Saturday to Sunday or visit kooth.com

| **Papyrus Prevention of Young Suicide** offer support through their helpline (HOPEline UK) to those under 35 years old that are having thoughts of suicide. Call 0800 068 4141 from 10am - 10pm Monday to Friday and from 2pm - 10pm Saturday to Sunday, text 07786 209 697 or visit papyrus-uk.org

| **SHOUT** Free 24/7 texting service with trained crisis volunteers for those who feel at danger to themselves or anyone else. Text 85258 or visit giveusashout.org

| **Samaritans** Free confidential support 24/7. Call 116 123

| **Self Harm UK** offer support to individuals (14 - 19 year olds) dealing with and recovering from self harm, including online group sessions. Visit selfharm.co.uk



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