

Parent/Carer Support Guide to Using the CoRAY Resources

Supporting you to have helpful, open,
honest and empathetic conversations
with a young person about their
thoughts and feelings



The Charlie Waller Trust

The Charlie Waller Trust is one of the UK's most respected mental health charities, founded by the family of Charlie Waller, who took his own life in 1997 whilst suffering from depression.

The Charlie Waller Trust's mission is to educate young people and those with responsibility for them – so parents and carers, teachers, college and university staff, and employers – about their mental health and wellbeing. Our work extends to adults in the workplace, taking a whole organisation approach to developing a culture of positive mental health and wellbeing.



CoRAY

The CoRAY Project, based at the University of Oxford, worked with young people, researchers and clinicians to develop evidence-informed advice for dealing with difficult thoughts and feelings young people told us they most wanted support with. The CoRAY project has worked in partnership with the Charlie Waller Trust to develop lessons and resources.

The CoRAY project identified the following five themes that have formed the basis of a series of lessons to be delivered within school settings to pupils. Each theme has a briefing document and key recommendations, which you will find in the pack.

- Managing change and uncertainty
- Feeling lonely, isolated and disconnected
- Feeling bored, flat and unmotivated
- Feeling anxious about social situations
- Seeking help for mental health

Contents

This resource, accompanied by two videos, (**Managing change and uncertainty** and **Encouraging young people to seek help**), and a variety of other resources, aims to support parents and carers to have conversations with a young person about their mental health and wellbeing.

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This is an evidence-informed guide that has been developed by young people, researchers and clinicians from the **CoRAY Project**, based at the University of Oxford, in partnership with the **Charlie Waller Trust**. The guide contains evidence-informed advice for dealing with difficult thoughts and feelings around the five key themes that young people told us they would like support with.

This guide is designed to be used by parents, carers and anyone working with or supporting young people.



Supporting young people through the adolescent years

Supporting young people isn't always easy, and the adolescent years can be challenging. Having an awareness of some of the changes which take place in the brain and hormonally, which affect emotions and behaviour during adolescence, may help develop your understanding of their behaviour and support healthy conversations around mental health.

Changes in hormone levels and changes in the brain can affect the way adolescents think, feel and behave in several ways. The area of the brain responsible for emotions can become more reactive, whilst the area of the brain responsible for thinking and decision making is not yet fully developed. All these physical changes in the brain and body often result in changes in behaviour which can include risk taking, emotional outbursts, rejecting support and having more extremes of emotions.

At the same time, the approval of friends becomes increasingly important for a young person, as they become more independent from their parents or caregivers. This may result in young people rejecting parent or carer support and advice, preferring to listen to and be with their friends instead. As a result of changes in the release of the sleep hormone melatonin, sleep patterns can also change in adolescence, with young people going to bed later and feeling sleepier in the morning.¹

For more information on the adolescent brain, please see the **Resources** at the end of this booklet.

Dealing with stressful moments

Stress is a normal part of life. When we feel overwhelmed with stress, it's harder to manage emotions and communicate effectively with others. In young people, you may notice changes in the way they respond to you, either becoming angrier or upset, or withdrawing and not wanting to communicate. Trying to talk and reason with someone when they are feeling overwhelmed may not be the best time to try and resolve any concerns.



1. Arain, M., Haque, M., Johal, L., et al. (2013) Maturation of the adolescent brain. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*, 9:449-461. Coleman, J. (2018) My Teen Brain: Ten things you need to know about the teenage brain. Available at: http://jcoleman.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/JohnColeman_MyTeenBrain.pdf. Ehmke, R. (2022) Tips for Communicating With Your Teen: Keeping the parent-child relationship strong during a tricky age. Child Mind Institute. Available at: <https://childmind.org/article/tips-communicating-with-teen/>. Seigel, D. J (2014) *Brainstorm; the power and purpose of the teenage brain*, Scribe UK.

Things that can help

- ✓ **PAUSE before reacting to any behaviour.** This can be difficult as our own emotions can cause us to react quickly. Pausing can give the adult space and time to ensure they are calm before they react to what the young person is saying or doing.
- ✓ **Try to consider how the young person may be feeling and what might have prompted their behaviour.** They may be responding to a tense atmosphere at home or problems with their friends, for example.
- ✓ **Give the young person some space to calm down** before attempting to discuss with them what happened.
- ✓ **Setting examples of ways in which you manage yourself when you feel stressed** can teach the young person helpful ways to cope with stress.
- ✓ **When things are calmer, think about what helps you cope when you are feeling stressed and help the young person find what works for them.** Some people find going for a walk or calling a friend can really help in the moment. We're all different and what works for one person may not for another, so be prepared to experiment! For more ideas, see the Looking After Your Wellbeing and Resources sections at the end of this booklet and other ideas below.

These tips are partly informed by the work of Dr Dan Siegel and his explanation of stress and the brain. To find out more about what happens when we are stressed visit: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G0T_2NNoC68. To find support for managing stress see the **Resources** section at the end of this booklet.



Connecting with a young person

During adolescence, when there's so much change taking place in the brain and hormonally, finding the right time to connect can be particularly challenging, but it's important to keep connected. Finding a time where the focus is on something else, such as going for a walk, doing the dishes or driving the car, for example, might be helpful.² It might be that they are not ready to open up and you can always try another time. Emphasising to the young person that you are there to listen when needed, can help to keep the lines of communication open.

When a young person is open to support, try to give them your full attention and listen without attempting to judge or problem solve. This can help them to feel understood and valued by you. It might be difficult when we have advice that we feel needs to be given in the moment, but it is always worth checking if they would like your advice first; they might just need someone to listen.

Showing a young person that what they are feeling is understandable and normal can be important. You can do this by being empathetic, rather than dismissive. For example, if a young person tells you they do not want something to change, telling them to 'not worry about it' may suggest that you don't understand how they are feeling or think they are wrong to worry, which is more likely to result in them ending the conversation.

Instead:

- Show you understand how they feel** and let them know that it is OK to feel this way. This can help them to feel understood, heard and more likely to open up.
- Asking them to tell you more and being curious shows that you want to **listen and understand and that you really care about how they are feeling.**
- If you are struggling or feel uncomfortable with the conversation, be honest. An adolescent will pick up on this so it is ok to say **" I am finding this difficult or uncomfortable to talk about so I do understand if you might be finding it hard too."**²

This can be a helpful way of encouraging a young person to be open with you about how they really think and feel.

These tips are mainly informed by the **emotion coaching** model, which supports the development of empathetic relationships, fostering healthy emotional development.³

When supporting a young person who may have neurodiverse needs, being aware of their worries and understanding factors affecting their stress levels might be helpful.

2. Mental Health First Aid, 2017, available at: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2017/06/5-tips-talking-teenager>

3. Temple, S E. (2021) All Emotions are OK. EHCAP Ltd , Temple S E. (2021) Mindful Emotion Coaching and Family Wellness. EHCAP Ltd, Gilbert et al. (2021), Emotion Coaching with Children and Young People in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour, Wellbeing and Resilience. Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Lisitsa, E. (2022) An Introduction to Emotion Coaching. The Gottman Institute. Available at: <https://www.gottman.com/blog/an-introduction-to-emotion-coaching/>



“Emotion coaching can be relevant for all young people ... especially for highly sensitive young people with neurodiversities ... this is because these young people may be more susceptible to the effects of stress.”

(Temple, 2021)

For more information on emotion coaching, including a free book that introduces the model, see the links at the end of this booklet.

The CoRAY videos

Support can come in many forms. This guide shares tips to enable you to navigate conversations that support a young person with their thoughts and feelings around their mental health and wellbeing.

The CoRAY project has also produced two videos that are designed to support parents and carers to have conversations around ‘seeking help’ and ‘managing change and uncertainty’. These demonstrate how to start a conversation with a young person and use some of the advice given here.

In both films you may notice:

- The parent figures try to show they understand how the young person is feeling.
- The parent figures try to keep their feelings in check and really listen to what the young person is trying to say.
- Problem solving happens when a young person is ready, open to it and wants it.
- In the film about change and uncertainty, the parent recommends they try to focus on things they can control in the present moment. Research around this topic suggests it can be helpful to focus on what you can change in the here and now, rather than all the things you can’t control.
- The father figure is apologetic that he didn’t realise how difficult things had been. His honesty here helps strengthen the connection between them.

Seeking Help Video



Managing Change and
Uncertainty Video



We don't have to know all the answers and fix everything. If a young person can feel **listened to, understood and valued** in your interaction, it can help to reduce possible barriers to them opening up and being honest with you, both in this moment and in the future.

At the same time, if a young person is worried that they may be punished for what they need to talk about, they may not open up so easily. Creating an environment that enables them to feel that they can come to you about any type of worry, without fear of punishment, can enable a more open conversation.

Although the videos demonstrate conversations going smoothly, we recognise that there will, of course, be times when this won't happen and discussions won't go so well. Things won't always go to plan, and we can't always predict what stress we may be under at any given time. If the conversation doesn't go to plan or if things become stressful, taking some time to calm down before attempting to talk again can be helpful. Acknowledging this and reflecting honestly is just as important as 'getting it right'. Saying that you are aware the conversation didn't go as well as you had hoped and you would like to try again, can be just as helpful.

Empathy and **validation** can also be shown through our **body language** and **other non-verbal cues**. In the films you will notice:

- The body language is open.
- The tone of voice is calm and demonstrates curiosity.
- The facial expressions show the parent cares deeply about how the young person is feeling.

Contrast this with a parent or carer with their arms crossed and frowning deeply and you can imagine the conversations may have very easily ended with upset and frustration on both sides.



CoRAY key themes and tips for talking to young people about them

The following five key themes emerged as the most prevalent affecting young people recently. Starting on page 10 we will run through useful tips to support a young person if they are struggling with any of the following themes. Supporting resources and graphics for each theme can be found [here](#). Lesson plans have also been developed for mainstream schools and alternative provision settings, which may be worth discussing with your young persons educational setting to see if they have come across them so that these conversations can take place both at home and at school.



- 1) **Managing change and uncertainty**
- 2) **Feeling lonely, isolated and disconnected**
- 3) **Feeling bored, flat and unmotivated**
- 4) **Feeling anxious about social situations**
- 5) **Seeking help for mental health**

For each theme it can be helpful to start by looking at the resources for both young people and teachers yourself, which can be found [here](#). You may find some helpful tips from the **full briefings**, which give a detailed overview of the evidence base and examples of how the tips can be put into action.

You may also want to look at the **resources for young people**, which are the key messages broken down into accessible formats for a young person to read and understand.

Once you feel comfortable with the key messages of support, the time is right and the young person is open to talking about their thoughts and feelings, the guidance below should be useful in supporting the conversations you have.

The key is to open the conversation with **gentle curiosity and try to understand how they feel** before giving advice or problem solving, where possible.

Once the conversation has progressed, a young person may be more open to suggestions from you. This should provide an opportunity to look at **resources**, such as videos, podcasts and the **infographics**, either together or suggest they watch, listen and read them in their own time.

The themes below have been broken down into the top tips from **CoRAY**, followed by the **young person briefings**, so you can see what advice is given. We have also attached links to the **full briefing documents and relevant resources**, should you want to investigate each theme in more detail.

What to do when you are...

Finding it hard to cope with change and uncertainty

People respond differently to change and uncertainty; some react positively (eg excitement), whilst others react negatively (eg worry). It can be difficult to manage feelings of uncertainty and, at times, this can lead to distress and affect mental health.

Summary of the key recommendations for young people who are struggling with thoughts and feelings around coping with change and uncertainty:



1. Remember that uncertainty is a normal part of life

Uncertainty is very common in everyday life. It makes it difficult to predict, control or plan what decisions to make and how to act. As such, uncertainty often makes people worry, feel upset, uncomfortable, confused or frustrated. It is important to recognise that this is perfectly normal.

It doesn't mean that one person's struggles are not valid or important or that nothing can be done. Try to help a young person hold in mind that **uncertainty doesn't mean the worst will happen.**

2. It might not be possible or helpful to get rid of uncertainty

Working out whether something is in or out of a young person's control can be a helpful first step. Help the young person to **recognise that some things can't be controlled** and trying to accept that can help.

3. Try not to avoid uncertainty altogether

Try **not to avoid uncertainty** altogether, so that there is an opportunity for the young person to learn that it can be coped with. Help a young person to recognise things they may be doing which may seem to help in the short term, but make uncertainty feel worse in the long run and lead to more worry – **avoiding situations**, for example. Let a young person go at their own pace – everyone is different.

4. Focus on what you are doing right now and on things you enjoy

When the mind drifts into 'what if' scenarios or thinking too much about the future, it is important to **recognise that thoughts may come and go** and then to **re-focus on what is happening right now**. Help the young person to practice taking part in an activity that brings enjoyment or a sense of satisfaction.

Doing enjoyable things together might also be a nice way to connect and model simply enjoying the moment together.

5. Make a set 'worry time'

Making a dedicated '**worry time**' can be helpful for **managing uncertainty** and worry more generally. This means having a set time each day (ideally well before bedtime) to sit down for a limited amount of time (maximum 30 minutes) to talk or think through any worries with a clear focus on coming up with possible solutions and a plan. If a worry comes up at another time, instead of engaging in it further, make a note of it and 'park it' until the next 'worry time'.

It can also be helpful to help a young person to establish plans and routines in parts of their life that can be controlled to bring in more certainty elsewhere.

Where worries relate to real-life problems, it can be helpful to problem solve possible solutions and create a plan of action for them, eg creating a revision timetable to help manage exam worries.

A final tip from the film

This film demonstrates how a young person is struggling with the idea of moving to college and wants to do something else. Through **opening up** and **empathising** with them, the parent figure was able to help them work through what they felt and thought and only when asked did they talk about their own experience. It can be helpful to resist mentioning your own experiences when listening and focusing on what a young person is talking about to show you really are listening, unless the young person asks you and wants to know, as in this example.

The film also showed how the parent tried to understand what the young person was feeling to help him see that it was OK to feel that way. With this, she gently supported him to give it a go, rather than avoiding the situation altogether. Avoiding a situation may feel like it helps in the short term, but sometimes means we don't get the opportunity to learn how to handle these situations or to discover that we can cope.

What to do when you are...

Feeling lonely, isolated or disconnected

It is normal to feel lonely at times. Most people experience loneliness at some point in their lives, such as when going through a period of change. It can be linked to someone's perception of the number of friends they feel they do or don't have or who they can trust. It is coupled with a range of painful feelings and emotions, such as sadness, anger, pain and frustration.

Summary of the key recommendations for young people who are struggling with their thoughts and feeling lonely, isolated or disconnected:



1. Reach out to other people where you can

Helping a young person to think of ways they can **reach out to others** can help with feelings of loneliness, isolation and disconnection. It does not mean they have to talk about their problems but connecting to others in small ways can help.

Young people have said they value being **connected to their community** by **helping others**, eg friends, family or neighbours, so maybe focusing on things that the young person likes to do and finding ways to help others could be a good start.

2. Focus on building the relationship with other people that you want

Talking to the young person about **who they already have in their life that they might be able to connect with** can be a helpful starting point.

Comparing ourselves to others can be very common when it comes to friendships. Try to help the young person **think about what they want from a friendship** and what sort of friend they would like to be.

Useful resource: Watch the drama series **It's Not That Deep** as a starting point for discussions around friendships and the qualities of a relationship that matter to the young person. This might help them to recognise and feel confident about what they do and do not want in a friendship.

3. Look out for what helps you to feel more connected and do more of it

Feeling connected is about the quality of the interaction for a young person. The most important thing is to pay attention to what works for them – what they find most enjoyable and/or makes them feel most connected to others. Supporting them to find ways to do more of this can be helpful.

4. Try different things to see what works best for you

When you have established what activities the young person enjoys, it can be helpful to support them **to find like-minded friends who enjoy these activities** too. This may involve encouraging and supporting them to try a new group with someone they know who may also enjoy it, or trying something new where they can make new friends who enjoy the same things they do. There might also be local online groups or activities they could join, as well as attending face to face groups. Remember, this may take time and patience.

5. Friendships and relationships can be hard work, but don't give up!

Supporting a young person to understand that friendships take time to develop and that it's important to keep working at relationships, can be helpful.

Sometimes relationships don't work out and that's OK. Sometimes we expect too much from others, and sometimes they expect too much from us. It is important not to give up on relationships completely just because there are some challenges, as long as you feel you can deal with them alongside the positives that come from the relationship.



What to do when you are...

Feeling bored, flat and unmotivated

Feeling bored, flat and unmotivated are common feelings, and were particularly common during the pandemic. However, difficulties with motivation and boredom can also be associated with depression or low mood.

Summary of the key recommendations for young people who are struggling to cope with feeling bored, flat and unmotivated:



1. Think about what is important to you

Help the young person to consider and note down what is important to them, for example, friends, family, community and/or the environment. Next, look at planning activities that fit with these things, so they keep doing more of what they value and enjoy.

Research has found that doing things that fit with our personal values, like community, close relationships and personal development, are particularly linked to a sense of wellbeing.

2. Spend time doing more of the things that are important to you

Support the young person to take small steps and make a start, as positive feelings and motivation usually come later. They can start by:

- Developing a plan** that is achievable.
- Building opportunities** into their daily or weekly routine.
- Celebrating** any successes!

3. When you feel unmotivated, start doing something anyway

Recognise any progress. Help the young person to focus more on the process and what they have learnt/developed rather than just on achieving an end goal. They will be likely to feel more motivated to keep going in the long run.

If an activity didn't work out (it was hard to get started/they didn't enjoy it), try and help the young person notice what got in the way and think about/**write down some ways to do it differently.**

4. Notice and pay attention to how it feels to do what you are doing

Support the young person to try and 'get out of their own head' when doing an activity. Paying attention to what is going on around them (eg sounds, smells, tastes), can help people to be in the moment, instead of focusing on the thoughts in their mind.

5. Be kind to yourself

Try to help the young person to **notice and address any negative 'self-talk'** that is getting in the way of enjoyment or motivation. This could be thoughts like:



Avoiding judgemental language like 'I should' or 'I have to' or 'I ought', and replacing with words like 'I want to' or 'I will do', can also help.

What to do when you are...

Feeling anxious about social situations

Worrying about social situations can involve being afraid of being judged by others, feeling self-conscious in public or being concerned about meeting new people. Self-consciousness peaks during adolescence and concerns about socialising can lead to problems in development and functioning, including education, relationships with others and self-esteem.

Summary of the key recommendations for young people who are struggling to cope with feeling anxious about social situations:



1. Notice what you think, feel and do in a social situation - it can take some time but is a useful step in helping you to manage when feeling anxious

People who feel anxious about social situations usually experience negative thoughts and ideas about how they come across to other people.

For example, 'I sound really stupid', 'People won't like me', 'Everyone will look at me and I will go red'.

You can help the young person to start to recognise how they **think, feel and behave** in social situations. When talking about a social situation that they have felt anxious about, these questions may be helpful:

- ? What did you think might happen in that situation (eg 'Everyone would laugh at me')?
- ? How did you think other people saw you (eg 'They thought I looked stupid')?
- ? Were you more focused on what was actually happening or were you focused on yourself (ie were you self-conscious)?
- ? What did you do to try and make yourself feel safer, ie were there things you did to stop what you feared happening from taking place or to make it feel less bad (eg avoided eye contact, didn't talk to many people, monitored what I was saying)?

Together, you can begin to help the young person **become more aware of what happens for them when they feel uncomfortable**. They may notice similar experiences across different social situations, or each may be very different.

2. Get out of your own head in social situations, instead focus on what is going on around you right now

Help the young person practice **noticing what is going on around them** in everyday life, such as what they can see and hear when going for a walk, for example.

Getting into the habit of noticing what is going on around them in less challenging situations can help the young person when it comes to **'getting out of their head'** in more challenging social situations.

This has two benefits:

1. They will be less focused on their anxious thoughts, feelings and images of themselves (these often aren't a reliable guide to how anyone really comes across).
2. They can notice how people actually react to them (usually much less negatively than they think) and then they can use that information to judge how they really come across in social situations.

Practising this with a young person can be a great opportunity to connect, enjoy the benefits yourself and model noticing what is going on around you.

3 Discover how you really come across in social situations by testing out your fears rather than basing your views on how you feel inside



It is important to help the young person to test out their fears by **giving things a go** and **seeing what they find out**.



There are three steps to this and it's important that you do all three of them.

Step 1: Make a list of the social situations they want to be comfortable in

You can start by helping them to **make a list of the social situations they want to be more comfortable in**. Then ask what they predict/think will happen in these situations.

To make difficult social situations manageable, people often do things called 'safety behaviours.' **A safety behaviour is something you do because you believe it will keep you safe from judgement/negative evaluation**. For example, looking at your phone to stop someone talking to you (more examples are in the briefing document [here](#)).

Step 2: Try out some situations you would usually avoid

Avoidance and other safety behaviours can **keep a young person stuck** and prevent them from learning new things about their fears and might mean they miss out on having positive social experiences. Helping them to **try out a couple of situations they would usually avoid, without using their safety behaviours**, could be a helpful step.

This might include, for example, approaching a friend at a social event and starting a conversation.

You can then support the young person to reflect on how it has gone. Consider asking:



Step 3: Think about what you might say to a friend

Even if the young person didn't feel able to start the conversation, **thinking about what they might say to a friend can be a helpful question.**

When things haven't gone so well, rather than going over and over a situation in their head after it has happened, **try to encourage the young person to engage in a different activity that will focus their mind on something more enjoyable.** Encouraging them to know they can try again is important.

What to do when you...

Want to get help or support for your mental health

Many young people don't seek and access support, either informally (eg from friends or family) or formally (through services). Young people face a wide range of barriers to seeking and accessing help. Many young people do not know when or how to seek support, or do not feel comfortable seeking help, despite there being potential sources of support available.

Summary of the key recommendations for young people who are struggling to speak out and seek support:



1. Ask for help if a problem is getting in the way of your daily life

It can be difficult to know the difference between **what is 'normal' and what is 'a problem'** in relation to mental health.

It may be a problem when thoughts, feelings and behaviours are getting in the way of day-to-day life in any way (eg causing distress, making it hard to do things, interfering with eating or sleep). If this is happening, then it is worth speaking to someone to get some support.

Speaking out is the first step to seeking help. Therefore, helping the young person understand that **it is OK to speak out and seek support**, is vital. Reassuring them you are there to listen and support can be comforting and may encourage the young person to continue to open up to you.

You will notice in **the film** that the father is curious and wants to find out more. He is genuine in his apology for not realising things were the way they were, and this created an opening for a deeper connection. You don't need to have all the answers, but you can show you are there, just as he did, through your ability to listen, validate and empathise before attempting to problem solve.

2. It can be hard to put your feelings into words

It can be difficult for a young person to **know what to say to others** if they are worried about their mental health.

Helping the young person to develop and practise some conversation openers is a great next step.

These examples might help:



Embarrassment can make it feel difficult to talk about mental health. Believing other people will think or act negatively can make it harder to open up about mental health difficulties.

3. Asking for help is a good thing

There is also perceived stigma and sometimes shame around disclosing mental health concerns.

Worries about being seen as attention-seeking or weak, feeling pressure to be able to cope, adding stress to family members, upsetting or angering people and losing status in a peer group, are all examples of the potential barriers to a young person seeking help.

Therefore, it is important to demonstrate that **it is normal to ask for help** and to make it clear that **it is OK (and indeed, a brave thing)** to ask for help.

Being aware of your own feelings and expectations can be important when you are supporting a young person. This is where **emotion coaching** can be a helpful tool to use.

4. There are different types of help available for you to choose and try - it is your choice!

Many people do not know where to go for help or who to talk to about a possible mental health problem.

Informal support might be helpful from a parent or carer, a friend, a member of school staff, another trusted adult or helplines/mental health support organisations, and formal mental health support might be accessible through the school or a GP.

Sometimes we may not be the person they feel comfortable speaking to. Accepting this and helping the young person consider other sources of support can be helpful.

It is important to help the young person realise there are options to choose from and to realise it is OK to try different ones until one feels right. It is also OK to use different types of help at different times.

5. Find out what options are available to you

Working with the young person to **research the different options available for support can be helpful** (just as they started to do at the end of the **Help Seeking film**).



Asking what the young person is concerned or hesitant about may help you decide how best to seek help. They may be worried about face-to-face interactions, so an online or telephone appointment may be a better option, for example.

Knowing what to expect after asking for help is important. Talk to the young person about what might happen next and where possible, involve them in the decision making and action planning.

ChildLine is available 24/7 both online at **childline.org.uk** and on the phone **0800 1111**, supporting young people up to the age of 19. They also have a variety of online resources available.

Looking after your own wellbeing

Looking after your own mental health

When thinking about how you can support a young person, your wellbeing is just as important as theirs. If we don't take care of ourselves, it is much harder to be there and positively support someone else. It is important to remember that you are doing the best you can with the tools and challenges you have in any given moment.

Recognising that you are important and allowing yourself time to take care of YOU, is essential to being the best version of yourself you can be. Taking time to take care of yourself helps with your own mental health and wellbeing, sets a good example to the young person, and also ensures that you will be more able to support the young person when they need it.

Seeking help and support for your mental health and wellbeing, as a parent or carer

There are times when we all need support, particularly when challenging situations affect us emotionally, and developing your own support network is important. Remember, it's OK to ask for help – talking to someone can ensure you get the support you need. You may already have one or more people you can turn to, or you may need to find support in other ways.

You might already know who you want to talk to. Some possible ideas that might be helpful are:

- A family member**
- A friend or colleague**
- Your manager**
- Your GP/doctor**
- A counsellor**
- Online support services and charities**



Words of support from the Charlie Waller Trust

10 top tips for supporting your and a young person's wellbeing from parents who have gone through it

- Above all, accept and try to understand the young person's difficulties – educate yourself as much as possible about their mental health challenges.
- Until a young person has the right help and support in place, remember that many of the everyday behaviours may be driven by their mental health needs.
- There is no one right answer. It takes time to work out the best support and interventions that will work for your family. Be patient.
- Forgive yourself if you say or do the wrong thing. You will be learning alongside the young person and doing the best that you can.
- There are times when you need to trust your instincts – remember that you know the young person better than anyone and that you are a crucial part of their support team.
- Hold on to hope, no matter how difficult things seem. Just being there, listening and offering hope is the most important thing you can do.
- Be kind to yourself. If you don't look after yourself first, you won't be able to look after the young person.
- It's OK to feel however you feel – sad, angry, upset, numb. Go with it, but if the negative feelings last for too long, get help.
- Find simple little things to help you cope – meet a friend for a coffee, play a sport you love, go for a walk. Giving yourself permission to take time out for yourself will help you care for the young person.

If you find you need support:

- Ask for and accept help from professionals, family members or support groups – you don't have to do this alone.

References and further reading

Resources

Other organisations providing support to young people and families include:

CHILDLINE

0800 1111 (free 24hr)

childline.org

Confidential listening for anyone aged 18 and under.

SAMARITANS

116 123

samaritans.org

jo@samaritans.org

For confidential emotional support 24/7.

STUDENTS AGAINST DEPRESSION

studentsagainstd Depression.org

For information and self-help material.

PAPYRUS

papyrus-uk.org

Suicide prevention and support.

THE MIX

themix.org.uk

Essential support for under 25s.

YOUTH ACCESS

youthaccess.org.uk

Mental health info and guidance for 11- to 25-year-olds.

ANNA FREUD

annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care

Useful ideas for looking after yourself.

BEAT

0808 801 0711

beateatingdisorders.org.uk

(youthline for under 18's)

Help and information about eating disorders.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST LIVING MISERABLY (CALM)

0800 585858

thecalmzone.net

A free, confidential and anonymous helpline and webchat service, for anyone struggling or in crisis.

ANXIETY UK

03444 775774

anxietyuk.org.uk

Support services to help with anxiety.

MIND

mind.org.uk

Mental health charity offering advice on mental health.

YOUNGMINDS

youngminds.org.uk

Mental health charity offering advice to children, young people and families.

SHOUT

Text 85258

You'll then be connected to a volunteer for an anonymous conversation by text message.

NSPCC ADULT HELPLINE

0808 800 5000

nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/our-services/nspcc-helpline/

If you are worried about a young person, you can call them for free advice.

NHS mental health services

MENTAL HEALTH HELPLINES

nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/

24-hour NHS urgent mental health helplines for people of all ages in England.

NHS EVERY MIND MATTERS

nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/

Advice and tips to help look after your mental health.

You can look for local support in your area here: **Hub of Hope**

Thank you and stay in touch



We hope you have found the information in this booklet useful in supporting you to have conversations with a young person about topics related to their mental health.

For additional resources and support around supporting a young person's mental health and wellbeing, the **Charlie Waller Trust** has a range of free and downloadable resources and support for parents, carers and anyone working with young people at: charliewaller.org

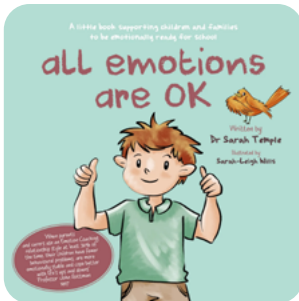
For specific support around parenting and caring for young people, Charlie Waller has set up the **PLACE Network**. The PLACE Network aims to develop, promote and sustain parent and carer support and involvement in young people's mental health across the UK. Parents and carers with lived experience of supporting a young person with mental health issues and professionals with an interest in parent support meet monthly to share practice and ideas.



Adolescent brain resources

Books

- Temple, S E, All Emotions are OK (2021), EHCAP Ltd



For a free copy of All Emotions Are OK, which shares some useful strategies to help us understand how we can connect with young people, click on the image or visit the link below. The book teaches us about stress and introduces the emotion coaching model. Visit <https://allemotionsareok.wpcomstaging.com/product/download-all-emotions-are-ok/>

- Seigel, D. J (2014) Brainstorm; the power and purpose of the teenage brain, Scribe UK
- Gilbert et al. (2021), Emotion Coaching with Children and Young People in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour, Wellbeing and Resilience, Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Coleman, J. (2018) My Teen Brain: Ten things you need to know about the teenage brain. Available at http://jcoleman.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/JohnColeman_MyTeenBrain.pdf

Stress and the brain

- Seigel, D. J. (2017) Dr Dan Seigel's Hand Model of the Brain. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-m2YcdMdFw>
- Harvard Centre on the Developing Child: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu>

Emotion coaching resources and links

- To find out more about emotion coaching and to train as an accredited emotion coach, you can visit www.mindfulemotioncoaching.co.uk. There are a variety of accessible videos and an e-learning platform.
- Visit the Gottman Institute: <https://www.emotioncoachinguk.com> and <https://www.gottman.com/blog/an-introduction-to-emotion-coaching/>
- www.emotioncoaching.co.uk

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- Gilbert et al. (2021), *Emotion Coaching with Children and Young People in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour, Wellbeing and Resilience*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
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- Lisitsa, E. (2022) *An Introduction to Emotion Coaching*. The Gottman Institute. Available at <https://www.gottman.com/blog/an-introduction-to-emotion-coaching/>
- Mental Health First Aid, 2017, available at: <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2017/06/5-tips-talking-teenager/>
- Seigel, D. J (2014) *Brainstorm; the power and purpose of the teenage brain*. Scribe UK
- Seigel, D. J. (2017) Dr Dan Seigel's Hand Model of the Brain. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-m2YcdMdFw>
- Temple, S E. (2021) *All Emotions are OK*. EHCAP Ltd
- Temple S E. (2021) *Mindful Emotion Coaching and Family Wellness*. EHCAP Ltd

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