

Activity Pack

to develop Emotional Fitness



Introduction

The last year at school can be a stressful one. Your teenagers are more prone to mood swings and outbursts during this period as exam pressures and stresses loom. This guide is designed to help you and your teenager navigate their emotional fitness, that will sometimes feel like the whole family is living on a rollercoaster.

Building up a bank of ideas and tools to build their emotional fitness for this period but also to support them with emotional regulation throughout life. Mental Health is something we all live with and all need to strengthen at times in our lives. We hope this pack will help you and your teenager along the way. If you need any further advice and guidance, please email the team using the addresses below.

What helps!

- Work with your child to find out what revision style works for them and start thinking about this early, so you and they feel prepared
- Encourage your teenager to take revision breaks and find balance between studying and doing things they find relaxing and enjoyable
- Make sure they are eating and drinking at regular intervals
- Encourage them to take some time off to revise and wind down
- Reassure them – reinforce that you are and will be proud of them no matter what happens, promote a sense of perspective – and don't add pressure
- Remain positive and hopeful!
- Set aside one to one time so they can talk to you about any worries
- Let them know their feelings are valid and normal, but also offer support and solutions where possible
- Anxiety is often worse at night and first thing in the morning, and this means it is useful to encourage a good consistent bedtime and early morning routine
- Work with them to develop relaxation techniques
- Look out for signs that they are struggling – more mood swings than normal, out of character behaviour such as overly quiet or manic at times. If they eat less or don't want to engage with activities that used to interest them

Contacts for support – The Oasis team:

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Overwhelming Emotional Bucket

We all live through each day filling up our emotional bucket. If you imagine filling this bucket with a splash of water after every emotion you encounter it's going to get full pretty quickly. All of these things no matter how big or small fill up our buckets. However, everyone has a different sized emotional bucket so some people's will fill up quicker than others. If we allow our bucket to get too full it can feel like we are going to explode, and all those emotions will overflow.

If you feel as if your emotional bucket is getting full you need to release some of the water at the bottom. To do this you need to practise self-care – find an activity that relaxes you, helps you feel better about yourself, makes you get into a flow or helps to unwind.

When we feel like our buckets are too full it is important, we use practise self-care to empty our stress buckets before it overwhelms us.



Write a list of all the things that fill your emotion bucket and then a list of all the things you could do to empty it.

.....

.....

.....

.....

How to manage exam stress

What are we talking about?

Lots of people will struggle with a school issue at some point and most people feel worried and stressed about tests and exams. You are not alone. If you notice that you're feeling worried a lot of the time, or that your worries are getting in the way of everyday life (such as going to school, seeing friends or doing activities you enjoy) this is probably a sign you need to tell someone how you are feeling and get some help

What might exam stress look like?

- Problems with sleep (difficulties getting to or staying asleep, waking up very early in the morning or having nightmares)
- Avoidance of anything to do with school, studying or exams, OR overworking; spending long periods of time revising, not wanting to take breaks or do other activities, especially hobbies
- Comparing yourself to others and worrying about not doing as much or achieving as much as other people.
- Having lots of "what if" thoughts (such as "what if I fail and don't get into college/ university?") which can mean you feel too worried to try things
- Becoming more easily upset
- Feeling tired and as though you have no energy
- Struggling with concentration and motivation; feeling hopeless ('what is the point?')
- Having physical (body) feelings such as a racing heart rate, quicker breathing, upset tummy, feeling sick, feeling dizzy or faint, sweaty hands
- Not looking after yourself (not eating enough/ eating too much, not showering or washing regularly, not being physically active)

What to do:

- Tell someone how you are feeling no matter what your worries are. There will be someone who will listen and try to support you
- Although worrying feels horrible, remember these feelings will pass and the physical sensations cannot harm you. Remind yourself that you have been anxious before, that those feelings passed, that you coped and were ok. If you need to, use activities, such as watching TV, spending time with friends, reading, making things and listening to music, to help manage until you feel a bit better
- Look after your physical, mental and emotional health by:
 - Eating and drinking regularly
 - Getting enough sleep
 - Being organised; planning and pacing work
 - Taking regular breaks from revision and studying, including having study free days
- Have down time; do hobbies and spend time with friends and family
- Taking part in regular physical activity

Self Soothe Box



When we are feeling anxious, low or distressed we can get caught up in negative thoughts and how bad we are feeling. It can be helpful to have your very own self-soothe box, which you can fill with different things to distract you and help you to feel better in those moments. The idea with this box is to include things which soothe all five of our senses, helping us to feel better in all sorts of ways and take us out of our head and how we are feeling.

A step-by-step guide:

1

Get an empty box from around the house (an old shoe box works well) or you can buy one from a craft shop

2

Decorate the box inside and out with anything you like - it could be coloured, painted, decorated with wrapping paper, fabric or decoupage. Make something that appeals to you!

3

Collect items together that are meaningful to you, or you know will help you feel better. Remember these should be soothing for all five senses. **Here are some ideas:**

SEE

Photos of fun memories, snow globe, glitter jar, DVD's of your favourite films or TV shows, a reminder of funny or inspiring YouTube videos

HEAR

Your favourite music, songs that you know lift your mood, recordings of a friend's voice, audio book

TOUCH

Bubble wrap, a teddy bear, a pillow, soft woolly socks or blanket, nail varnish

SMELL

Favourite perfume or body spray, candles, a fruity bubble bath or soap.

TASTE

Dried fruit or nuts, hot chocolate, sweets, your favourite chocolate

4

Here are some other things that you can include to help, as a distraction or to keep you occupied: activity books (colouring, crosswords, wordsearch, sudoku), art and craft materials, notebook or diary and a pen

5

Try to think of anything else you can include which you know you enjoy or would help when you are struggling

When you use these items, or if you choose to do something else that works, try to make sure you pay attention to your physical senses: see, hear, smell, taste and touch. Look around you and notice what you see (colours, shapes, light or shadow, movement), what you hear (nature sounds, sounds in the room, near and far), what you smell or taste (including from the environment around you), and what you can touch right now wherever you are, as well as items from your self-soothe box.

Control your thoughts

Being overwhelmed during your last year at school can cause you to over think and worry. It is important to remember that a thought is simply just that.....a thought! Just because you thought it doesn't mean it is real or true. During this challenging year it is important to .. **RECOGNISE, CHALLENGE & CHANGE**



RECOGNISE

I don't know anything and won't be able to get the marks I need - I'm may as well not bother.

.....

CHALLENGE

This isn't true, its just a thought, I have no evidence to base this on.

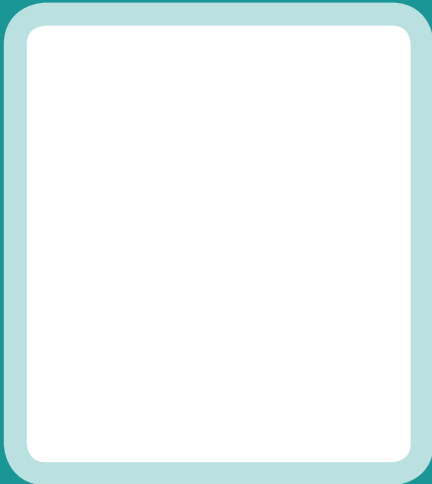
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CHANGE

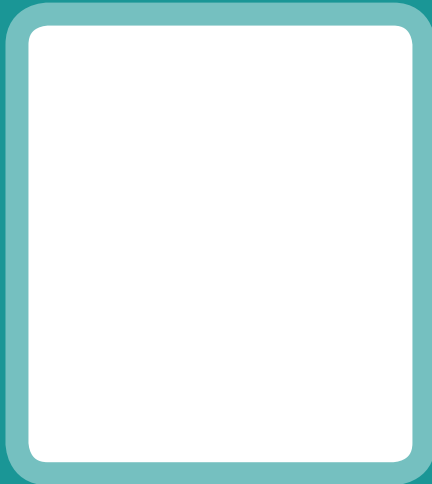
I am doing my best, I can get through this, I can and should ask for help if I feel I need to.

You can use this template to Recognise, Challenge and Change your thoughts when you need to. Or you could simply use this as a conversation structure to work through with someone you trust. Another way is to use this within a journal of your thoughts or on a board in your room. The important thing is to work through to reframing thoughts into positive ones.

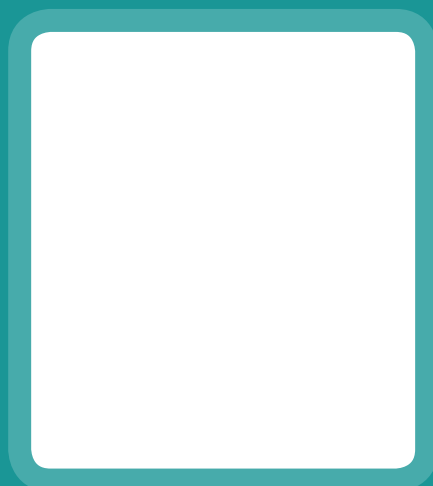
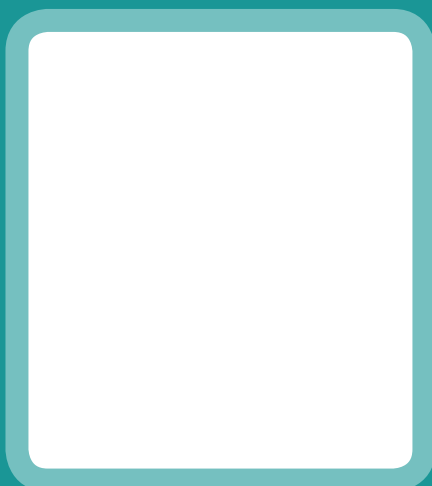
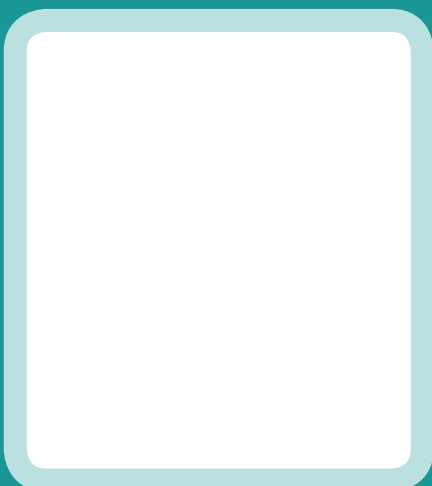
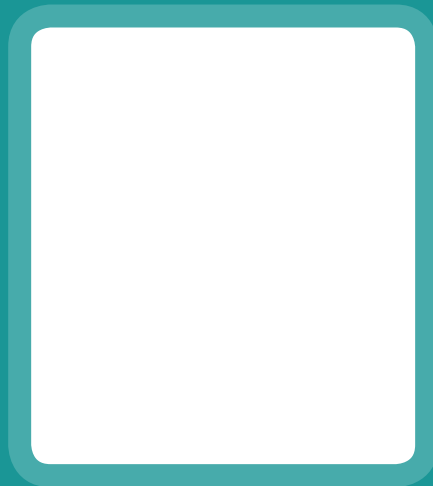
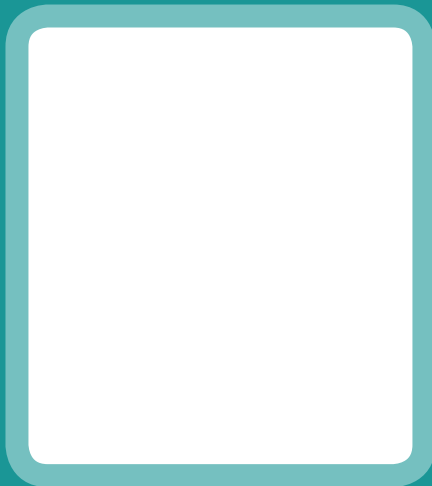
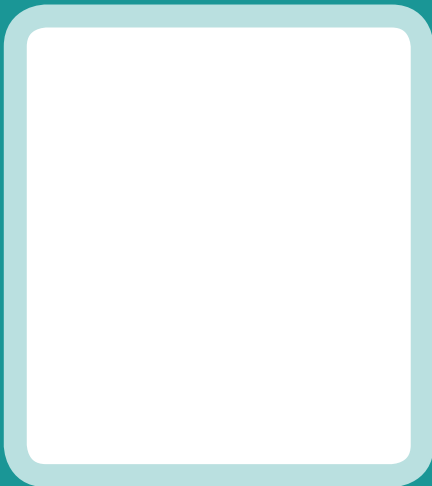
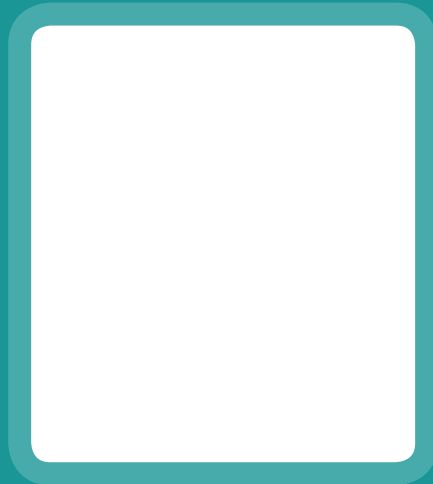
RECOGNISE



CHALLENGE



CHANGE



Kindness and compassion

**FAO
PARENTS**

Here are 3 ways to be compassionate when you're concerned about your teen.

Have compassion for yourself

Take care of yourself first. Being compassionate doesn't mean you have to put your needs aside. Self-compassion lays the foundation for healing. You'll feel happier, less depressed, less angry, and be more prepared to handle the problem. Treat yourself as you would a close friend in a difficult spot. Acknowledge that you are suffering. Rather than criticise yourself, think about ways that you can give yourself comfort. Remind yourself that everything in life is temporary. Give yourself the care that you need.

Share your story

Sharing your own story about a time that you felt stressed can help bridge the gap between you and your child. Let them know that you've had similar feelings when you were their age. Even though you most likely handled your stress in a healthier way, your child will get to know you as a person, not just as their parent. By sharing your story, it doesn't mean you condone your child's actions. You will, however be sending them the message that you are there for them when they need you most.

Take time to understand

We all want to alleviate the suffering of our kids. Sometimes positive changes can happen right away. Sometimes we need to practice patience. In either case, take time to truly listen and understand how your teen is feeling. Recognize their suffering and educate yourself on their issue. Understand the best way to help for your child. Do what you can to encourage your teen to make better choices. Support their efforts to change. They will feel more positive and be more motivated when you treat your child with compassion. *Cathy Taughinbaugh*



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a technique used to focus your awareness on the present moment, while acknowledging and accepting your feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.

To be 'mindful' means to pay attention to the moment; to focus on the here and now, and be more aware of how the here and now is affecting the 'whole' you.

- This has real benefits as the present moment is often a lot less stressful than the fears and worries you have about the past or the future
- Mindfulness practice doesn't try to 'do' anything to you, or force you to believe anything
- Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally, with kindness and curiosity
- The great thing is that learning mindfulness is simple! It can be practiced by anyone, anytime, anywhere
- For further information on practicing the principles of mindfulness, see the resources on this page

Websites:

mindfulnessforteens.com
smilingmind.com.au

Apps:



Mindfulness
Daily



Calm



MyLife
Meditation



Headspace



Smiling Mind

Ms Locket is trained in Mindfulness
please get in touch for any advice



A - Z of coping strategies

Here's a list of 26 ideas, strategies and techniques that might help you if you are feeling worried or stressed.

Not all things work for all people but you won't know until you try. You'll also need to practice and use these several times so you get the hang of them.

A **ACTIVITY:**
Do something you enjoy



B **BREATHE:**
Take deep breaths in and long slow breaths out

C **CREATE:**
Find creative ways to express yourself, for example paint, draw, dance or sing

D **DISTRACT:**
Keep yourself busy

E **EXERCISE:**
Get moving through physical activity or sport

F **FRIENDS AND FAMILY (AND PETS!):** Spend time with loved ones



G **GOAL SETTING:**
Break things down into small steps and focus on one thing at a time



H **HELPLINE:**
Call for confidential help, advice and support (see the back of this leaflet)

I **ICE:** Cool down, have a shower, lower your temperature to help calm things down

J **JOIN IN:** Don't isolate yourself; connect with those around you

K **KEEP THINGS SIMPLE:** Prioritise what you need to do and let go of the rest

L **LOOK FOR LESS HARMFUL ALTERNATIVES:**
What else can you do? Write a list of other options

M **MUSIC:**
Listen to your favourite tunes



N **NURTURE AND NOURISH:** Look after yourself by eating and drinking

O **OUTSIDE:** Get some fresh air to clear your mind. Go for a walk



P **PROBLEM SOLVE:**
Can challenges or barriers be overcome? Who or what can help you with this?

Q **QUIET TIME:**
Keep things calm and peaceful around you

R **RELAX:** Chill out; remind yourself that it won't always be this hard

S **SUPPORT:** Who's around you that you can lean on for more support?

T **TEXT:** Contact a mate or someone you trust

U **USE YOUR TALENTS AND STRENGTHS:**
Focus on what you do well and do more of it

V **VISUALISE:**
A calm or happy place



W **WRITE IT DOWN:**
Keep a diary, write a letter or a blog. Get it out of your mind and onto paper

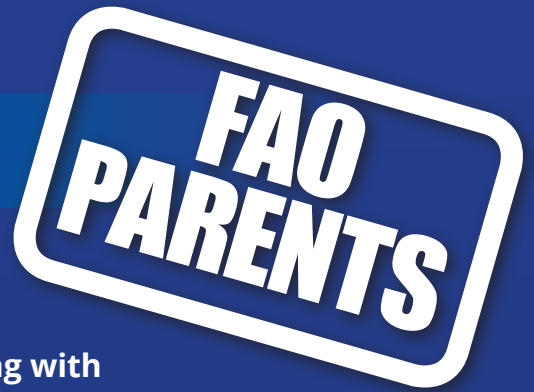
X **XBOX OR OTHER GUILTY PLEASURES:**
It's ok to have downtime



Y **YOU CAN DO IT!**
You can cope, you will get through this. Believe in yourself

Z **ZZZZZZZZZZ:**
Sleep on it. Don't make any sudden decisions

Sleep



Lots of people find getting to sleep, staying asleep or waking up a real problem. Disrupted, broken or not enough sleep can really impact on your mood and coping with daily life. Sleep is important for growth and development. Teenagers aged 13-18 years should regularly sleep 8-11 hours per 24 hours. If you are experiencing regular problems with your sleep, it might be time to ask for some help.

Things that make sleep harder:

Here are some of the most common factors which effect sleep:

- Your bedroom may be too noisy, messy, too hot or too cold
- Your bed may be uncomfortable
- You don't have a regular sleep routine
- You aren't getting enough physical activity/exercise
- You may be eating too late and finding it hard to get off to sleep because you're full
- You're going to bed hungry and wake up too early because you're hungry.
- Drinks containing caffeine, such as tea, coffee and energy drinks
- Illness, pain, or a high temperature
- Feeling worried or low in mood
- Overthinking and having a busy brain
- Physical problems – illness or disability which mean you experience pain
- Medications that affect sleep

What to do:

- Create a calming and peaceful environment. Rooms that are dark and cool are best for sleep
Decluttering your room could help make your room more relaxing and help you think clearer
Keep your bedroom a stress-free place to be and do things that are stressful elsewhere
Your bedroom needs to be a place you come to relax (if possible)
- Aim to have a regular bedtime routine and sleep pattern - this includes going to bed and getting up at the same time every day
- Try not to nap during the day
- Avoid drinking caffeinated drinks (tea, coffee, energy drinks) before bed
- Try not to drink too much before bed and go to the toilet as part of your routine
- Avoid exercising right before you go to bed
- Exercise during the day
- Make sure you're as organised as you can be for the day ahead so that you are not worrying or thinking about what you have to do or what you might need

Sleep jar or diary

Often when we are trying to settle down for the night our thoughts go into overdrive, its quiet and our minds use this lack of distraction as an excuse to shout and make us over think and lose perspective. Writing or verbalising your thoughts before bed can really help rest your mind.



You could:

Get create and create a sleep jar or box – write down and fold up your thoughts inside on small note paper

Make voice notes and then delete them (try to avoid looking at the blue light on your phone it will disrupt your ability to sleep)

Keep a sleep diary that sits beside your bed each night and is exclusively for your night thoughts

Try writing a positive counter thought next to it – such as: I haven't prepared enough for my exams/ 'All I can do is my best, I need a good nights rest and feel better for it in the morning'

You don't have to look through these thoughts again, you could delete or throw them away. But sharing any important worries with someone you trust may help your mind feel lighter the next night when you settle down to sleep

Relaxation exercises

Another way to help quieten our minds and help fall asleep is by trying a relaxation exercise like the one below, this can take a bit of practice but stick at it, the more you do it the easier it is to relax...

1

Get comfortable and make sure there will be no distractions

2

Imagine your favourite place to be, somewhere you feel calm and safe, it might be the beach, your friends house, relaxing in your garden... anywhere at all

3

close your eyes and think about:
What might you hear?
What might you see?
Who would be there with you?

4

Become aware of your body ... does anywhere feel tense? try to relax by gently squeezing your body part that is tense and then letting go

5

When you start to feel relaxed, take a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth until you feel calm and ready to sleep

When we are feeling worried, stressed or angry our muscles can tense up. Relaxing our muscles can help us calm down. Work from the bottom of your body to the top

Go through each exercise in number order each time holding it for 5 seconds, then relaxing and repeating each 3 times

1

Tense up all the muscles in your FEET

2

Tense up all the muscles in your LEGS

3

Tense up all the muscles in your STOMACH

4

Tense up all the muscles in your CHEST

5

Tense up all the muscles in your ARMS

6

Tense up all the muscles in your HANDS

7

Tense up all the muscles in your FACE

Hold for 5 seconds

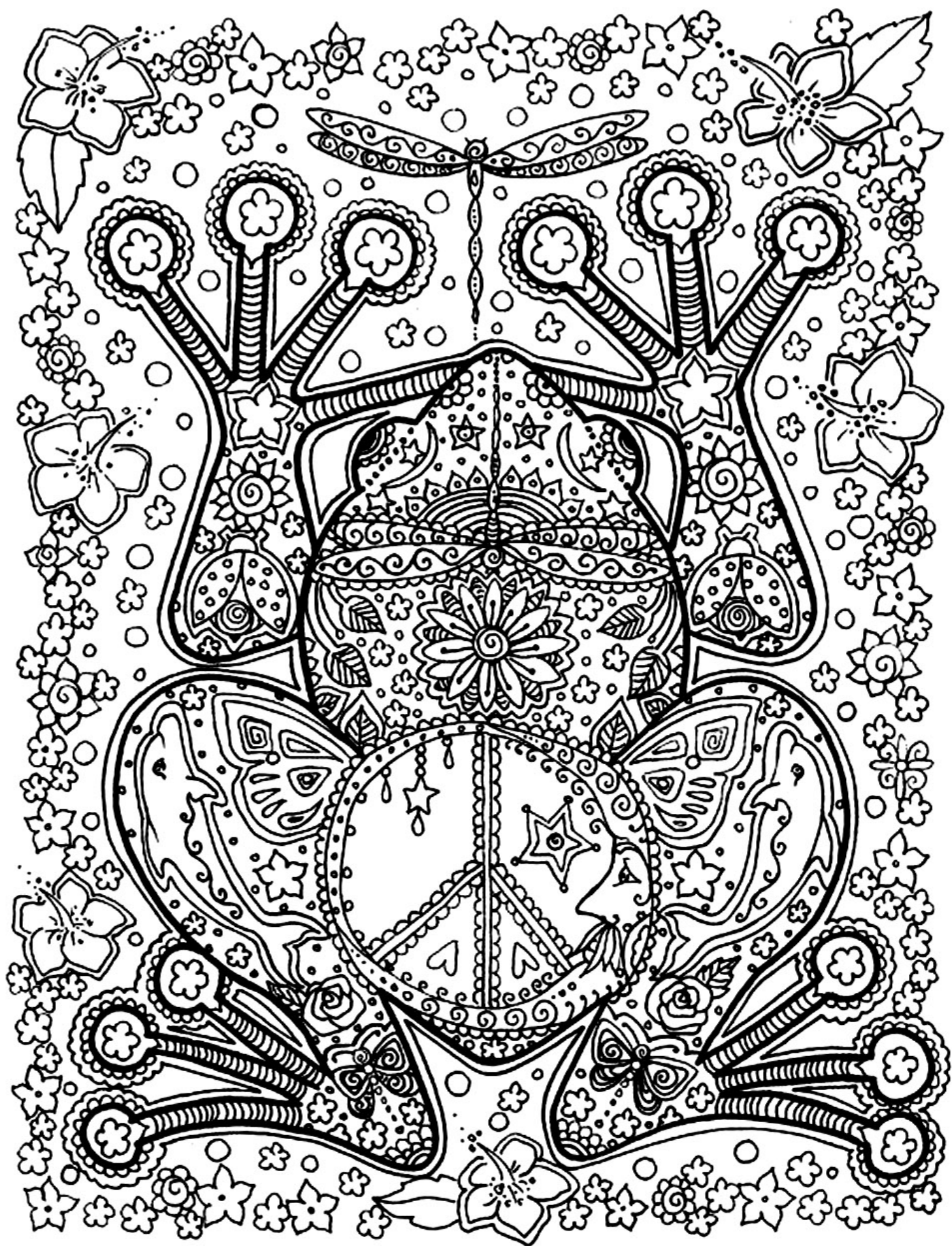
Then let them relax

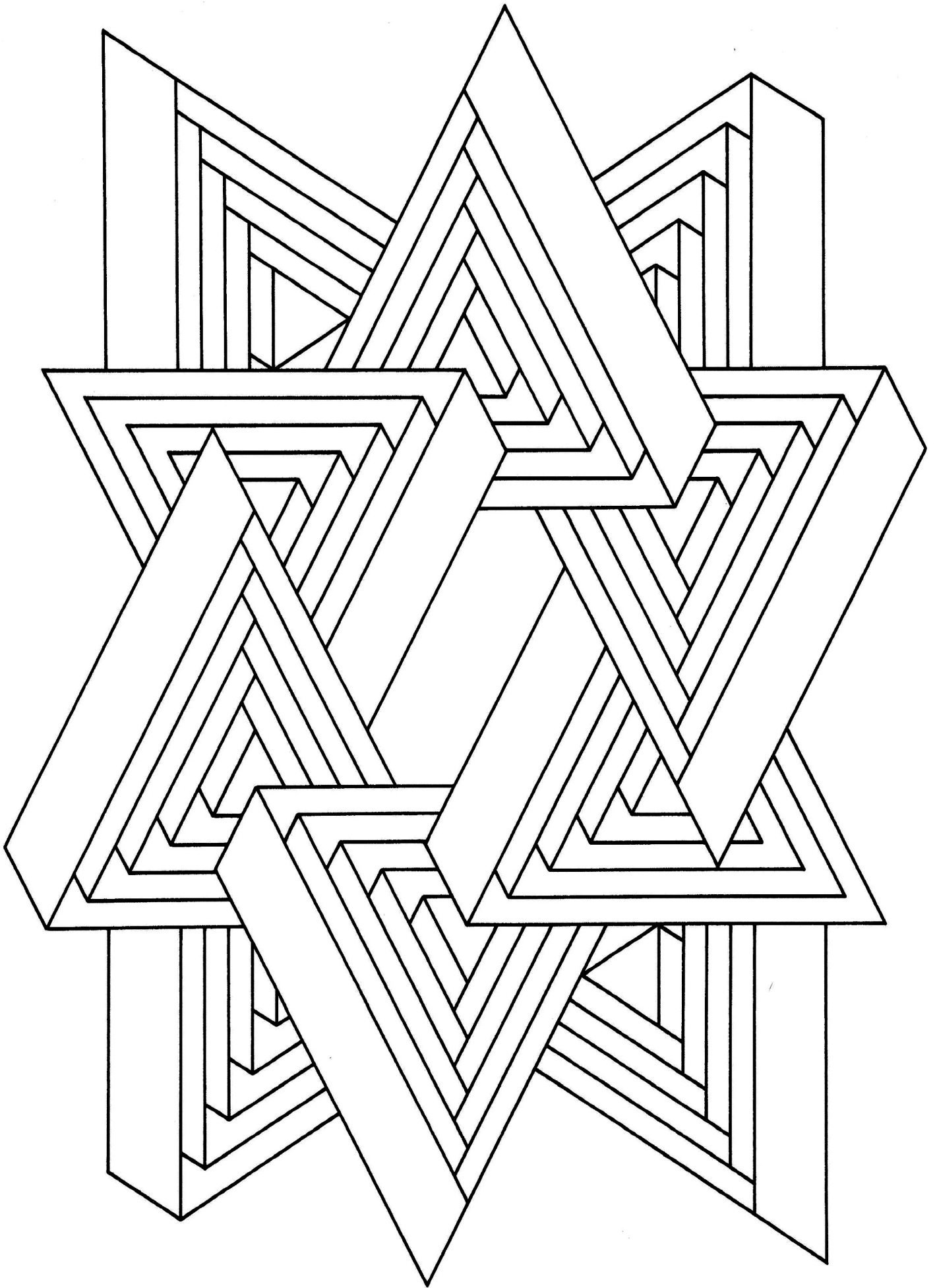
Do this 3 times

Colour me in to wind down before bed

Colouring is a great mindful activity can get you in the flow and enable you to not focus of an overactive mind. It will settle and calm you before bed, during stressful moments or just as a self-care exercise. Try our three examples here and or get yourself a colouring book from a book shop.







Virtual Activity Planner

If you're struggling to think of an activity to find your flow and calm your mind, use this planner calculation, and choose from the list below – or add some of your own.



Choose a number between 1 & 9



Multiply it by 3



Add 3



Multiply it by 3 again



Add the two digit number you get together



THE NUMBER YOU GET WILL BE THE ACTIVITY YOU WILL BE DOING!

- | | | | |
|---|---|----|---|
| 1 | Try an online class | 10 | Read the book you have been meaning to read |
| 2 | Write a letter to someone and post | 11 | Phone a friend for a chat |
| 3 | Bake something | 12 | Try meditation |
| 4 | Listen to some new music | 13 | Cook something new |
| 5 | Play a game with family/household | 14 | Try something artistic |
| 6 | Watch your favourite film | 15 | Learn to juggle |
| 7 | Start a diary/journal | 16 | Go and collect a bag of litter locally |
| 8 | Go for a long walk | 17 | Have a day without social media |
| 9 | Plant something/grow some herbs from seed | 18 | Make a new playlist |

Journalling



Creating a journal can be very beneficial to your emotional fitness.

- Develops self awareness
- Helps you pay attention to what is going on within me
- To Help focus
- To just be you
- To think things through
- To transform limiting beliefs
- To listen to myself
- To connect with my heart
- To put down the burden



If writing isn't for you then try an audio journal – there are several voice note apps online you can get on your phone. Or the more creative people may want to bullet journal – take a look on Pinterest at some amazing examples.

What's important to you

LIST THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS IN YOUR LIFE:

(Such as friends, family, pets, music, sports, education, hobbies etc.)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

NOW WRITE DOWN SOME ACTION POINTS ABOUT HOW YOU ARE GOING TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES AND MAKE TIME FOR THE THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU.

Try to make sure you do something each week for each of the things you have listed as being important to you (for example, if friends are important to you, you might try to ensure that you meet up with a friend on the weekend or after school).

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

LIST THE VALUES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU:

Values; these are the traits, characteristics, morals and ethics that we feel personally connected to and that are important to us (such as honesty, kindness, trying hard, persevering etc.).

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

NOW WRITE DOWN SOME ACTION POINTS ABOUT HOW YOU ARE GOING TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES AND BEHAVE IN WAYS THAT ARE IN LINE WITH YOUR VALUES.

Try to think of an action point for each of the values you identify. For example if kindness is important to you, perhaps you might invite someone who is on their own to sit with you at lunch).

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

Revision support

We all learn and remember things in different ways. Learning and revision techniques are different for everyone. Some people struggle with things like flashcards whereas some people find this helpful! If you are using the wrong revision technique for your learning style this can make you feel more stressed out and make your revision less productive!

Take a look at some ideas here that can help you feel confident with your learning.

Get someone to test you by asking questions about the work



Search online for relevant podcasts or YouTube videos that talk about the topic



Make up rhymes or raps about the work to help you remember

Record yourself reading revision notes and play them back on repeat

Creating posters and putting them up in a place where you will regularly see them!



Highlighting key points in the text or colour coding your notes

Use the computer to make a powerpoint with pictures and colour

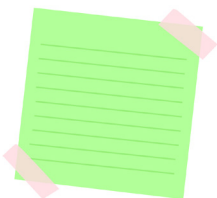
Creating mindmaps & flashcards



Write your revision as if it was a story and illustrate it



Put post it notes around your house, walk around while reading



Revise in a group if you can or have discussions with your family about the topic

If you get fidgety use a stress ball & take lots of breaks, revise in short blocks



To learn facts, write them out several times over and over on scrap paper





Stowmarket
High School

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