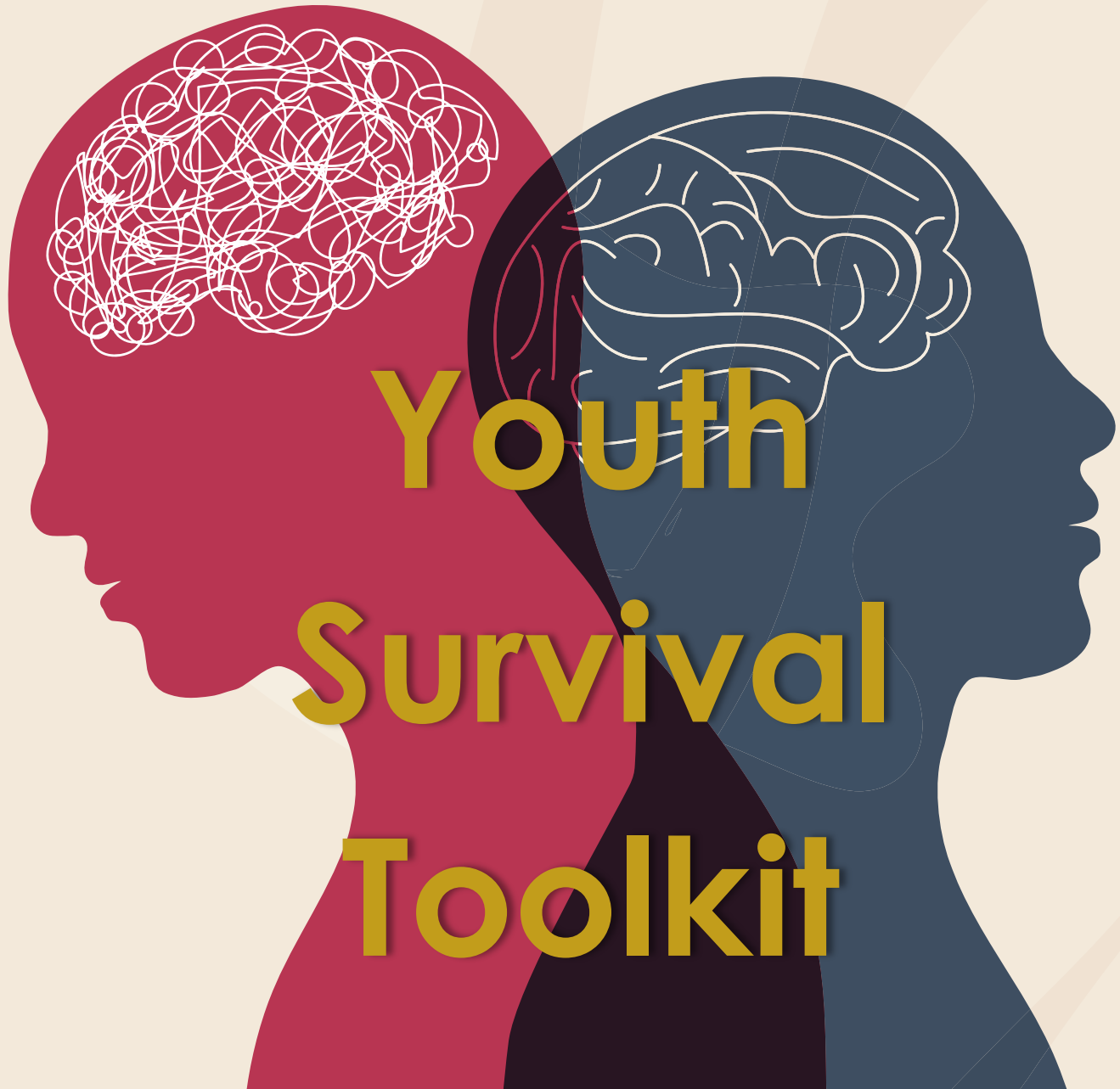




Resilience and Adaptability in Youth



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Every effort has been made to verify the accuracy of the information contained in this toolkit. All information was believed to be correct as of May 2023. Nevertheless, the Consortium Members Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation, Comune Di Cinisello Balsamo, and Helsinki Pioneers cannot accept responsibility for the consequences of its use for other purposes or in other contexts.

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Consortium

Cyprus Youth Clubs Organization (KOKEN) – Cyprus

KOKEN, Leading Partner, is a non-profit, nonpartisan, non-governmental organization (NGO) which forms the central coordinating body of 70 Youth Clubs in urban and rural areas of Cyprus. The organization successfully coordinates, supports, and provides expert guidance to volunteer groups who actively participate in youth clubs. Additionally, the organization develops and delivers inclusive activities, educational seminars, awareness campaigns, whilst aiming at enhancing the well-being of young individuals.



Comune Di Cinisello Balsamo – Italy

The Youth Policy and Social Innovation Department of Cinisello Balsamo Municipality organizes and manages actions with/for young people. The activities aim to develop the soft skills, referring to key competences for lifelong learning as well as the growth of the active citizenship and youth participation. As a Public Body, it works for a shared youth policy strategy for a sustainable local development.



SDPL: Helsingin ja Uudenmaan piirijärjestö ry/Helsinki pioneers - Finland

Helsinki Pioneers is a children and youth organization based in Helsinki, Finland. Established in the early 50's, it has valuable experience in organizing various activities in order to empower youth, promote self-expression, enhance diversity and inclusion of all children, youth and adults irrespective of cultural backgrounds and limited opportunities.

Each year, it organizes around 20 summer and winter camps for children and young individuals making it one of the biggest youth organizations in Helsinki.





RAY - Resilience and Adaptability in Youth

Raising awareness and developing skills amidst the Covid-19 crisis project focuses on the mental health enhancement of youth, in an effort to equip young individuals with the mental strength to overcome everyday challenges and to bolster the mental health of youth impacted by the Covid-19 crisis. More specifically the objectives of the project include:

Raising awareness of the impact of Covid-19 crisis on mental health in various contexts (e.g. workplace, education)

Helping youth workers and the youth identify and recognize mental health issues.

Improving adaptability and resilience skills of youth workers and youth

Enhancing the use of non-formal methods to cope with potential mental health issues associated with Covid-19 crisis.



Every day is mental health day

Take the first step and use this “Survival Manual” to learn more about your own mental health and things that you can do to look after yourself. When you feel ready, start having conversations with your loved ones about mental health. The more we all talk about it, the less stigma there will be about sharing our feelings and challenges.

Learn about Mental Health, Wellbeing and Selfcare

Covid-19 Pandemic and Mental Health

The aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic have already impacted the well-being of young people and have put them at an increased risk for mental health problems, as studies suggest. Young people themselves report their greatest concern is the toll that the pandemic took on their mental health. Even before the pandemic, mental health was an issue not easily discussed among young people, mainly because of the unjustified negative connotations mental problems carry.

How the Survival Manual will help you

Did you know that according to the World Health Organization mental health conditions account for a considerable proportion of the global disease burden during adolescence and are the leading cause of disability in young people?

And despite these high prevalence rates and the negative impacts of poor mental health on education, health, and employment outcomes, youth mental health seems to be neglected in the global public health space and development investments¹.

In this Survival Manual, you will find helpful tips to keep your mental well-being as fit as it can be. You'll also find resources for self-help, as well as for professional help.

¹ “MHPSS Worldwide: facts and figures,” <https://www.government.nl/topics/mhpss/funding-and-support-for-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-in-crisis-situations/mhpss-worldwide-facts-and-figures>

What is Mental Health?

Mental health refers to the emotional and psychological well-being. Having good mental health helps one lead a relatively happy and healthy life, demonstrate resilience, and have the ability to cope in the face of life's adversities. Mental health can be influenced by a variety of factors, including:

- genetics
- daily habits
- environment
- biology

Our mental health is always changing. We can feel strong one day and worried the next. It's normal to have ups and downs, especially when you're young. Good mental health helps us deal with ordinary life, school and work. It also helps us feel balanced and content.

Mental health challenges are not something to be ashamed of!

Self-care means looking after our own mental health.

Sometimes we feel okay. Sometimes we don't. This is normal for people of all ages.

Resilience is our ability to overcome those challenges by remaining flexible in our thoughts, feelings and behavior. Being resilient does not mean that people don't experience stress, emotional turbulence and suffering. Contrary, resilient individuals work hard to overcome adversities and do not always recover effortlessly.

Being adaptable means that you are able to modify or adjust your behavior in meeting different circumstances or different people. Resilience and adaptability are of vital importance in everyday life and especially in extreme situations such as the recent pandemic era of Covid-19.

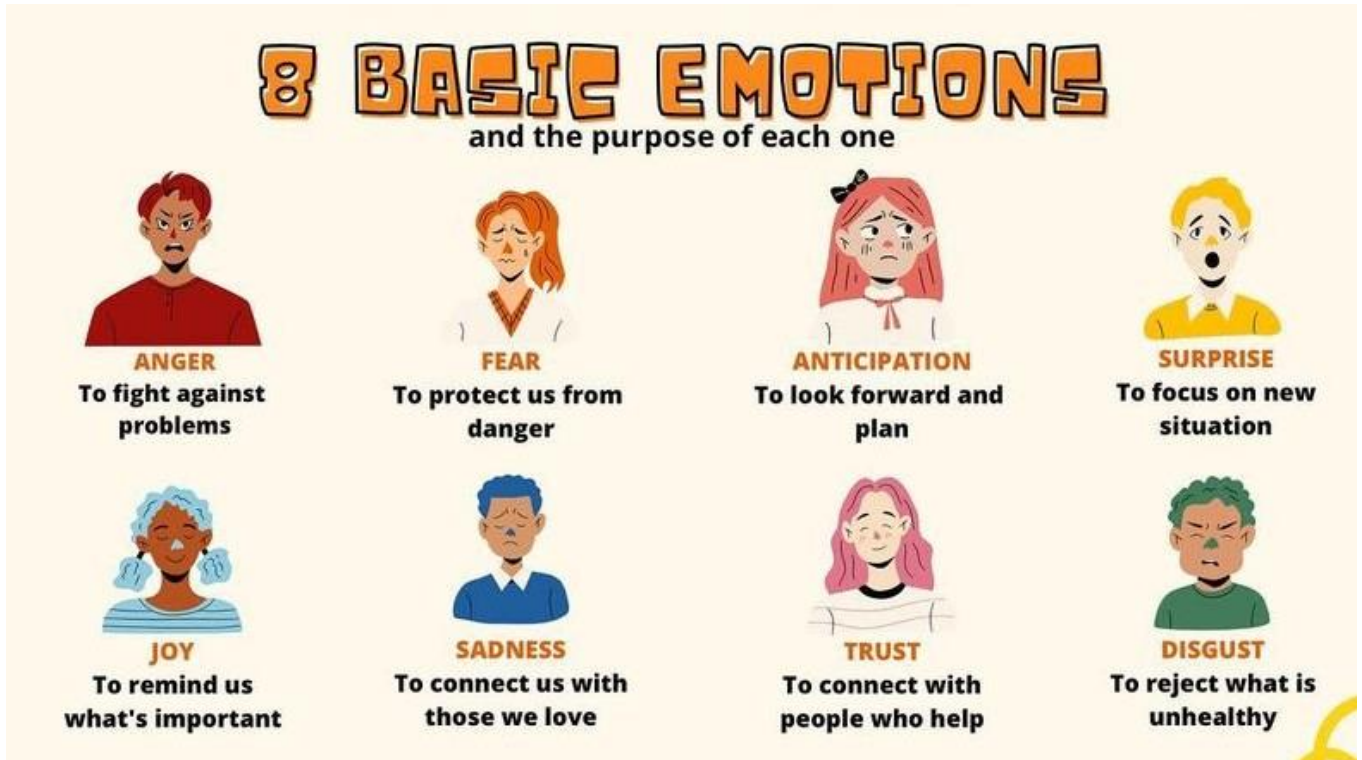
Emotional fitness

Just like we need daily fitness to keep our bodies strong against illnesses, we need to practice emotional fitness to help us manage our stress, anxiety, sadness, and many other unpleasant feelings.

Understanding your emotions

Emotional awareness simply means recognizing, respecting, and accepting your feelings as they happen

Basic 8 Emotions and the purpose of each one



Anger – to fight against problems

Anticipation – to look forward and plan

Joy – to remind us what's important

Trust – to connect with people

Fear – to protect us from danger

Surprise – to focus on a new situation

Sadness – to connect us with those we love

Disgust – to reject what is unhealthy

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is understanding yourself. It means being able *to notice your feelings, your physical sensations, your reactions, your habits, your behaviors, and your thoughts.* It's also understanding that other people may see you differently from how you see yourself. Understanding your own feelings helps you know your own strengths and weaknesses. Self-aware individuals know how they are received in the world and are aware of what aspects of their character still need to be developed.

Self-awareness is important because it's a part of getting you know yourself and the better you know yourself the stronger you will feel. You will be able to understand the triggers and roots of your thinking and feeling patterns. Self-awareness could help you improve your self-acceptance, increase self-confidence, become more proactive and reduce stress in social interactions.

Objectively observe your thoughts and emotions. Which situations make you feel happy? Anxious? Overwhelmed? A journal is a good way to get started.

Be a detached witness of yourself in social situations. Being objective and remaining detached means refraining from judging, resisting or criticizing yourself for what you see.

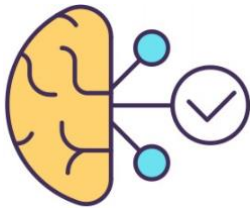
Make reflection a part of your daily life. Revisit your day and ask yourself what you are proud of and what you want to improve.

Five ways to cultivate self-awareness



GAIN A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

- Ask for feedback



PRACTISE MINDFULNESS

- Pay attention to your inner state as it arises
- Try mindful walking, eating listening



PRACTISE LISTENING

- Pay attention to speaker
- Observe emotions and body language
- Don't judge or evaluate



CREATE SPACE AND TIME

- Connect with yourself daily
- Avoid digital distractions
- Carve out solitude

1.



JOURNAL YOUR AWARENESS

- Process your thoughts through writing
- Record your inner state

Boosting your wellbeing

Doing small things every day can have a positive impact on mental well-being.

There are many strategies that can help people establish and keep good mental health.

These can include:

- keeping a positive attitude
- staying physically active
- helping other people
- getting enough sleep
- eating a healthy diet
- seeking professional help for your mental health, if you need it
- socializing with people, with whom you enjoy spending time
- forming and using effective coping skills to deal with your problems

Healthy Coping Skills and Strategies

Healthy approaches in dealing with mental health stressors could be:

- Self-help strategies
- Support from people who are understanding, such as friends or family members
- Exploring counselling, therapy, or self-help groups
- Exploring alternative therapies

and always depending on the needs of each person, since there is no one-size-fits-all problem-solving solution.

Problem-focused coping strategies include:

1. Finding out as much information as possible about the situation, including the people who can help you in finding a solution
2. Dismantling the problem into manageable pieces, and addressing them one step at a time.

Emotional and psychological difficulties are not just the results of what's happening to us or around us. It is also the outcome of the perception we have pertaining the event and the thoughts that is triggering. Emotion-focused coping strategies include:

1. Breathing and relaxation practices, which automatically regulate the nervous system and create a sense of calm.
2. Creative expression, such as art, music, or dance, which helps people process emotions in positive and productive ways.

Meaning-making strategies can help change one's negative perspective and assist to see the positive or meaningful aspect.

2. **Reframing** helps shift one's mindset and point of view, allowing one to see a situation, person, or relationship from a healthier point of view.
3. **Journaling** can also help put one's feelings in perspective and make sense of what one is going through, as part of the person's larger story.

Turning to others who can help solve a problem is one of the most helpful coping skills for young people. It's a boost for the emotions and can also help alleviate a specific stressor. Social support strategies include:

1. Connecting with a close friend who makes you feel loved for who you really are
2. Reaching out to a trusted friend, trusted family member or any other trusted individual, for support and guidance

For many people, faith traditions can support healthy coping by providing social and emotional support and a sense of meaning. This form of coping does not have to involve an organized religion.

1. Spending time in nature inspires a sense of awe and gratitude, and reminds young people that they're part of something bigger than themselves.
2. Volunteering connects adolescences and young people to their larger community. It's also showed to lower stress and promote overall health and well-being.

Practicing mindfulness

Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens.

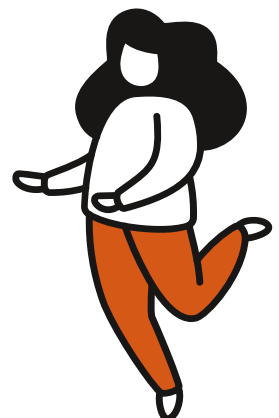
Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them. That is, accepting that there is no “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we are sensing in the present moment, rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.

Many studies have been conducted, which have shown that practicing mindfulness, even for just a few weeks, can bring a variety of physical, psychological, and social benefits.

Mental Health Exercises

Mental or thought exercises focus on alternate ways to think about a given circumstance or experience that can help you get out of a stuck or unhelpful way of thinking. While some thought exercises have been studied extensively by psychological researchers (mainly CBT focused¹), others are offered by psychologists and clinical mental health counselors (e.g. mindfulness exercises) because they've been helpful anecdotally for some types of patients.

It's important to keep in mind that there isn't a one-size-fits-all thought exercise. You can try one of them for a few weeks and see if you like the way they impact your mental health and feelings of well-being. If not, you can try a different one. Thought exercises are meant to be a method of seeing the world differently, and do not replace mental health professionals.



Unhelpful ways of thinking - Cognitive distortions



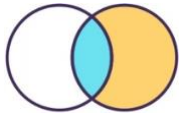
FILTERING

Focusing on the negative
Ignoring the positive



FALLACY OF CHANGE

Expects others to change



POLARIZED THINKING

All-or-nothing thinking
Ignoring Complexity



GLOBAL LABELING

Extreme generalization



PERSONALIZATION

Always assuming self-responsible



ALWAYS BEING RIGHT

Being wrong is unacceptable
Being right supersedes everything



EMOTIONAL REASONING

"If I feel it, it must be true"



JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

Makes assumptions based on little evidence



BLAMING

Assumes everyone else at fault



"SHOULD"

Holds tight to personal rules of behaviour
Judges self and others if rules broke



OVERGENERALIZATION

Assumes a rule from one experience



CATASTROPHIZING

Expecting the worst-case scenario
Minimizing the positive



CONTROL FALLACIES

Assumes only others to blame
Assumes only self to blame

The self-observation exercise²

This mindfulness approach is a practice of observing our inner compounds and experimenting with them. It's an exercise of self-discovery and self-observation, which are both elements for self-healing and sustainable living. When you begin to experience the symptoms you associate with anxiety, you can use this exercise to get curious and learn more about what you're going through.

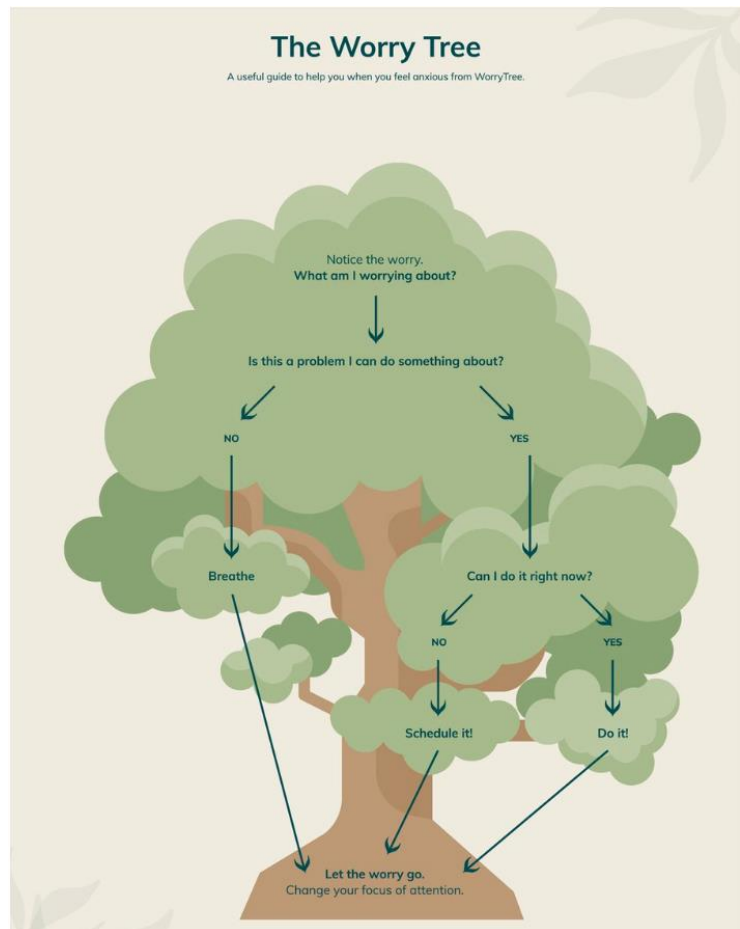
When you have the opportunity, take a couple minutes to yourself, away from other people so you won't be interrupted. Start noting the way that every element of your body feels, such as your shoulders, neck, stomach or head. Are you experiencing other symptoms, like fatigue or a headache? Don't judge the feelings, just observe them, as if you were observing a scientific experiment and needed to catch everything. Then turn your self-observation to your thoughts. What are the specific stressors cycling through your mind? Try to catalog them, rather than letting them overwhelm you. When you've noticed one, let it go, recognizing that you've "heard" it. If you can get to a place of fully focusing on bodily and mental sensations, you may find yourself able to calm down, doing things like releasing the muscles you've discovered are tense or letting thoughts go, instead of holding onto them intensely. This may take a few tries.

The act of self-observation can be a way to take your mind off the anxiety and come back to your body. When we are in a fight-or-flight mode, the anxiety gets us to safety, but if we are physically safe, this can be a way to evaluate our body and find our baseline again.

² <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mindful-recovery/202109/5-mindful-steps-self-observation>

The Worry Tree

The worry tree³ is a clinically recognized Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) technique, that takes you through a series of decision steps once you've noticed that you're worrying about something. It is an exercise which can help make a conscious decision between worrying or doing something else. It is a graphic flowchart which is customizable to the person, but essentially starts by questioning, "what exactly am I worried about?" then "Can I do something about it?" and "Can I do something about it right now?" The tree guides you to let worries go when nothing can be done, to make a clear plan if



nothing can be done right now, and to go do something if there is something useful to be done about the worry right now. It can help avoid rumination, where we think the same anxiety-inducing thoughts over and over without relief. For more examples of thought exercises follow the link: <https://cnet.co/3mLzzTf>

³ <https://www.worry-tree.com>

Breathing Exercises

1. Breathing exercises are a great way to center yourself and focus on the present moment. When you're feeling anxious about an upcoming event, take a few minutes to do some deep breathing exercises and see how much better you feel.
2. While there are several techniques you can try⁴, one of the simplest is diaphragmatic breathing. This type of breathing engages your diaphragm, a muscle located at the base of your lungs.
3. Sit up straight or lie down on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the ground pushing air out of your lungs.
4. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach, just below your belly button.
5. Breathe in through your nose, letting your stomach expand, as you fill your lungs with air. You should feel your stomach rising as you inhale.
6. Exhale slowly through your mouth, letting your stomach fall back down as the air leaves your lungs.
7. Repeat the process several times, until you feel calmer.

Mindful Walking

Mindful walking is a great way to get some exercise and focus on the present moment. All you need is a place to walk and comfortable shoes. You can try walking a nature trail⁵, a walk by the beach or river, or simply at a place where you feel at ease and peaceful. It is best to find a place where you won't be interrupted and to pick a route that you're familiar with, so you can focus on your surroundings and not on where you're going.

While walking, pay attention to your body. Notice how your feet feel as they hit the ground, how your legs are moving, and the sensation of your breath moving in and out of your lungs. As you walk, pay attention to your surroundings. Notice the sights, sounds, and smells around you. If your mind starts to wander, gently bring it back to the present moment.

⁴ <https://www.healthline.com/health/breathing-exercises-for-anxiety>

⁵ <https://www.visitcyprus.com/index.php/en/discovercyprus/rural/rural-nature-trails>

When you're finished walking, take a few minutes to reflect on your experience. How did it feel to be so present? What did you notice that you wouldn't have if you hadn't been paying attention?

Other mindful related activities for teens and young people can be found in the following link: <https://bit.ly/41uQrwM>

Additionally, you can go to the site www.visitcyprus.com for suggestions on outdoor activities (and locations) such cycling, climbing, nature trails, birdwatching, etc.

Ask for Help

CYPRUS

Discuss what is troubling you with your GP in order to get a referral for a mental health professional. You can visit the site of State Health Services Organization <https://bit.ly/3oUgFdH> to find a psychologist or visit the site of the General Healthcare System (GESY) www.gesy.org.cy to find a mental health professional.

There are also many psychologists or psychotherapists in the private sector, with whom you can book an appointment directly.

You can also call the Mental Health Hotline 1410 of the Youth Board of Cyprus for confidential and anonymous counselling

- Monday – Friday 10:00-23:00
- Saturday – Sunday 15:00-23:00

ITALY

Croce Rossa Italiana – 1520 : Free-phone number for psychological support accessible to all citizens over 18, from Monday to Saturday, from 8:00 to 20:00.

- The Italian Mental Health Department (DSM) includes all facilities and services related to mental health care in the Italian area connected to the Azienda sanitaria locale (ASL). The care offer is complemented by private clinics and private nursing homes.
- There are also psychologists or psychotherapists who work privately, with whom it is possible to have a direct appointment.
- For more information you can check this part of the official government website related to Mental Health: <https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/saluteMentale/homeSaluteMentale.jsp>
- The website of the Ministry of Health, where all the health facilities are divided for every Italian region: https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/documentazione/p6_2_8_1_1.jsp?lingua=italiano&id=29

FINLAND

Your school doctor, GP or private doctor can write a referral to the adolescent psychiatric clinic. In some municipalities, the young person and his or her family may receive counselling primarily from a family counselling centre.

Self-care programmes

The Youth Mental Health Online Service provides expert, factual and reliable information on typical mental health disorders and problems in adolescence, how to recognise them, how to treat them and how to refer to appropriate services. <https://www.mielenterveystalo.fi/fi/nuoret>

Local Services

Some bigger municipalities offer also specialized advice for mental health services. Look in the local municipality site or youth work. Below you find an example of help and advice that is provided by Helsinki municipality:

Youth centre, substance abuse services. The Youth Centre helps young people aged 13-23 who are struggling with a moderate mental health problem or a severe substance abuse problem.

The Youth Centre is staffed by nurses, social workers, social counsellors, social workers, social therapists, family therapists, psychologists, occupational therapists and a doctor. You can become a client with a referral from your school or college health centre, health centre or Mieppi.

<https://www.hel.fi/fi/sosiaali-ja-terveyspalvelut/terveydenhoito/mielenterveyspalvelut/nuorisoasema-paihdehuolto>

Mental health service point Mieppi. Mieppi is a low-threshold mental health service point where you can get counselling for mental wellbeing. Mieppi serves all young people and adults over the age of 13 in Helsinki. You can go to any Mieppi branch, no matter where you live in Helsinki. We have mental health professionals working at Mieppi, with whom you can talk face-to-face or remotely, as you wish. Please contact Mieppi if you have concerns about your life situation or mental health and would like to talk about them. In addition to discussion times, Mieppi also offers counselling and service guidance. You can also contact us if you are worried about a loved one. If your mother tongue is not Finnish or Swedish, we can use an interpreter. Mieppi's service is free of charge.

<https://www.hel.fi/fi/sosiaali-ja-terveyspalvelut/terveydenhoito/mielenterveyspalvelut/mielenterveyspalvelupiste-mieppi>

You can also find advice and help through **YOUNG PEOPLE'S OWN NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE** (Low-threshold mental health service)

<https://www.yeesi.fi/>

Private sector offers also various mental health related services for young people as:

<https://www.mielenkoutsu.fi/>

<https://www.plusterveys.fi/mielenterveys/ajankohtaista/mielenterveyspalvelut-nuorille>

General Online forums and Mobile Applications

Nowadays, and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic era, there was a rise of the available online mental health related resources including mobile applications, forums and online psychotherapy services. All the above made access to mental health services and self-help aid possible for people who faced difficulties in accessing them.

Some applications available related to mental health are:

Headspace

With Headspace you can build quick mindfulness activities into your day-to-day life. Choose from hundreds of guided meditations on everything from managing stress and everyday anxiety to facing challenging times such as anger, loss, or unemployment.

MyPossibleSelf

MyPossibleSelf has interactive tools, helpful tips, and engaging activities to help you take care of your mental health. There are lots of meditation activities to help boost your mood and clear your busy mind, and interactive content to help you explore things that can influence your mental health.

Moodnotes

Do you ever have a bad day and not know why you felt that way? Moodnotes can help you track your feelings throughout the day and identify the hidden emotions, such as jealousy or excitement that you may not have noticed. You can also track how intense these feelings are and explore what made your mood change.

Daylio

Daylio lets you have a private journal on your phone without having to write anything. It is a more minimalistic mood tracking app where you can explore what influences your mood by selecting how you feel and the activities you did that day.

You could also visit www.mentalhealthforum.net to join anonymous discussion forums related to mental health issues. By joining one of those forums you can anonymously discuss any mental health challenges you may be facing with people who share similar difficulties. The particular forums are moderated by trained volunteers to ensure that it's a safe space for all and that everyone is welcome.

MINDSPA

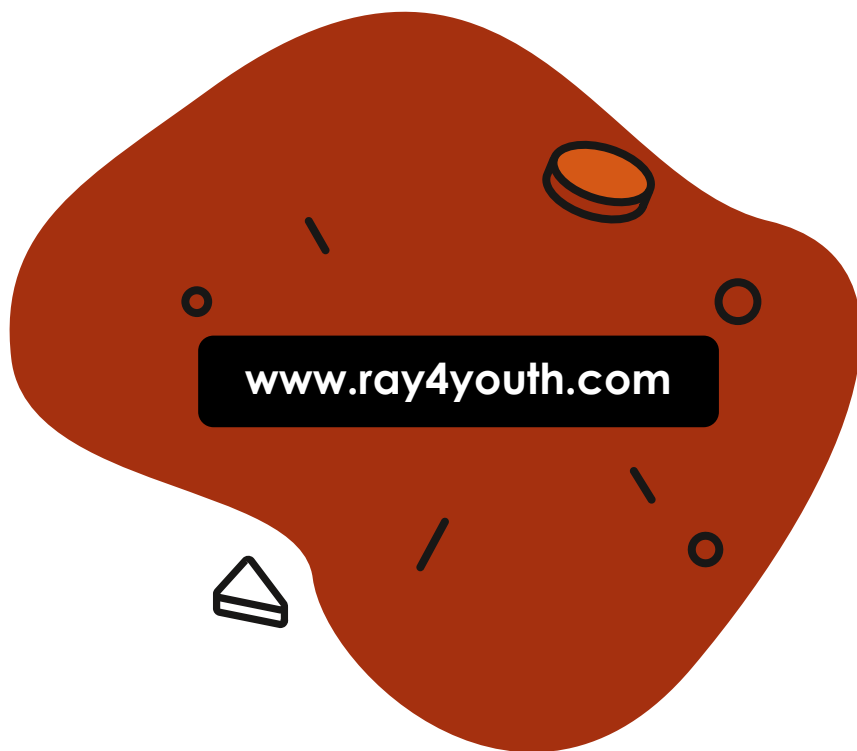
You can download also MindSpa, an app for your mobile phone or other device in order to have online therapy (with an online chat always available) or to follow a course to achieve mental health well-being. <https://mindspa.it/>

SERENITY: MEDITATION

There is also the possibility to follow free exercises for meditation, relax and mindfulness. The aim is to bring a sense of calm, peace and happiness in your life to fight against all kind of stressful health

problems. <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.co.serenity.guided.meditation&hl=it&gl=US>

For more information about illnesses related to mental-health you can use the following website to read articles or useful tips to improve yourself. <https://lamenteemeravigliosa.it/>



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