

## Contact us

Leeds Children and Young People's  
Eating Disorders Service  
The Reginald Centre  
263 Chapeltown Road  
Leeds LS7 3EX  
Tel: 0113 843 4317

## Help us get it right

If you have a complaint, concern, comment or compliment please let us know by speaking to a member of our staff. We learn from your feedback and use the information to improve and develop our services.

If you would like to talk to someone outside the service contact the **Patient Experience Team** on 0113 220 8585, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm or email [Ich.pet@nhs.net](mailto:Ich.pet@nhs.net)

**We can provide this information in large print, Braille, audio or other languages on request.**

Partial references from: DBT® Skills Manual for Adolescents, by Jill H. Rathus and Alec L. Miller

[www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk](http://www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk)

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# Taking care of yourself during difficult times

A guide to supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of young people and their parents/carers



Leeds Children and Young People's  
Eating Disorders Service

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### It is important to ask for help if you feel you cannot keep yourself safe. You could:

- Speak to your parents
- Speak to a friend
- Call our service to speak to a duty clinician (available between 9am-5pm) on: 0113 843 4317
- Call or text a helpline (details below)
- Or call 999



### Useful websites and phone numbers:

- **MindMate:** <https://www.mindmate.org.uk/>

For when you need support with how you are feeling out of hours:

- **Teen connect:** text number 0771 566 1559
- **Kooth:** <https://www.kooth.com/> (online chat until 10pm)



### Coronavirus specific support:

- Coronavirus self-isolation information and support from **Young Minds:** <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>
- **BEAT:** Beat have set up a specific page which includes guidance and advice to support you through this time. <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/coronavirus>



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## Introduction

### Hello!

As a team, we understand that the difficulties young people and their families are experiencing impact on day to day life in many different ways.

In this booklet, you'll find many ideas and tips that we hope will go towards supporting you through challenging times.

Some of these things can be practiced alone, or as a family. Most importantly, they can be adapted for all ages. If there is anything you would like to discuss further, don't hesitate to speak with your care-coordinator/worker, or have a look at the resource list for more information.

Take care,

**The Leeds Children and Young People's Eating Disorder Service**



# Finding a balance

A balance within our daily lives is very important for our wellbeing; it provides structure and predictability to our days which can ease tensions and help us feel safe and supported.

It can be tricky to find a balance when living soo closely with other people of all ages. Take a few moments to think about the parts of the day you spend together (mealtimes, a certain TV programme you all enjoy, family traditions throughout the week) and then build your balance around this.

## Some important things to consider:

- Balance should include a good sleep routine. This is vital for our physical and mental health. Stick to your normal school/work sleep routine as much as possible, and you'll find it easier to regulate the rest of the day and to move back into 'normal' life when we begin to move freely again.
- It is often helpful to find a good range of activities across self-care, leisure and work. This will ensure that you are taking care of yourself whilst maintaining some normality and structure to your days.

## Here are some examples:

Self-care

- Shower/bath
- Painting nails
- Eating/drinking
- Facemask
- Medication
- Attending physical and mental health appointments
- Meditation/relaxation/mindfulness

Leisure

- Reading
- Playing in the garden
- Colouring
- Board games
- Puzzles
- Exercise
- Watching a film/TV

Work

- School work
- Revision
- Reading
- Working from home
- Housework

- Remember that everyone has their own balance of activities and that what is right for one person might not be for the other. Make a point of spending time together and time apart within the home to allow each other space and independence within the home.

# Creating a routine

Most of us have a routine we follow throughout the day and when this is disturbed we can often be left feeling uncertain and without focus. Having an aim for each day can increase our sense of wellbeing and achievement. Below is an example of a routine planner that could be used to set small goals for each day.

| Approx meal timings | Mon | Tues | Weds | Thurs | Frid | Sat | Sun |
|---------------------|-----|------|------|-------|------|-----|-----|
| Morning             |     |      |      |       |      |     |     |
| Breakfast:          |     |      |      |       |      |     |     |
| Snack:              |     |      |      |       |      |     |     |
| Afternoon           |     |      |      |       |      |     |     |
| Lunch:              |     |      |      |       |      |     |     |
| Snack:              |     |      |      |       |      |     |     |
| Evening             |     |      |      |       |      |     |     |
| Evening:            |     |      |      |       |      |     |     |
| Snack:              |     |      |      |       |      |     |     |



## Things to remember:

As adults, we don't often have set meal/snack times throughout the day, but young people do when in school. Sticking to these times at home can often lessen anxiety for young people with eating difficulties as this is what they're used to.

Meal times will also ensure that meals don't get missed or skipped, and that they do not run into each other throughout the day. This will support you all in continuing restoring physical health.

The activities you set yourself should be a good balanced range. Try and split activities throughout the week so that you have a little of everything throughout each day.

A routine isn't a rule; don't worry if you change your mind and want to do something else.

Support each other with routines within your homes; you might want to come together for part of them or respectfully spend time apart within the home.

Make it fun! Where possible add in things you really enjoy, or that are new to you. This can be an opportunity to do something different!



## Planning and organisation of meals

All families are different in the way they plan organise meals and although there is no right or wrong way, evidence suggests that when someone in the family develops an eating difficulty recovery is promoted by parents/carers taking control of the organisation and preparation of meals. Here are some suggested ways to support this:

- **Set a regular time to plan meals for the week** - this will allow for consistency and predictability which can decrease a young person's anxiety/worry about mealtimes.
- **It can be helpful for the adults in the family to agree and set consistent rules around eating** e.g. eating at the table, eating together at a set time, eating the portion that is given to you.
- **Do not weigh or measure quantities of food** - this can help break some of the rigid rules that can be set by someone with an eating difficulty.
- **Give the young person a '5 minute warning' of when a meal/snack is to be served** - this allows them to prepare and to be ready to sit down at the table.



## Dietary guidance

As young people move towards adolescence and then adulthood, they should continue to gain weight steadily as part of their growth. An important part of this is a consistent and steady intake of food and water that allows the body to grow, repair and restore.

This consists of 3 meals a day and a couple of snacks between to ensure that the body has enough energy throughout the day to meet the demands a young person puts on it!

Each meal should consist of a good balance of carbohydrate, vegetable and protein. Throughout the day fats and dairy should also be included to ensure that you are getting all the vitamins and minerals needed.

## Remember – variety is key!

### Fluids

- Approx. 2 litres per day required = 7-8 mugs / medium tumblers
- Any fluid is fine i.e. orange juice, milk, water, tea, coffee
- If drinking caffeinated drinks, limit to 3 per day as caffeine is a stimulant and therefore can disturb sleep and increase anxiety

### Snacks

Try and listen to your body's hunger cues and if you are peckish between a meal you should respond by having a snack. You should aim for a range of snacks ranging from fruit to nuts to a chocolate bar to make sure you are getting plenty of variety in your diet.

### Budgeting and cooking

We understand that providing a range of foods can be difficult at times and for financial or practical reasons not always possible. We have a few tips for how to get the most out of your food, time and budget:

- **Try to use any fresh ingredients you have first** so that they don't go to waste. If they are starting to turn, use vegetables to make a soup or sauce that can be frozen for later. Chop your fruit and freeze to use as a yoghurt or breakfast topper.
- **Store your fresh ingredients correctly** – generally salads and fruits keep best in the fridge, whilst root vegetables and potatoes/onions are best kept somewhere cool and dark.
- **Freeze leftovers for another meal** – or better yet search for ways to use them online e.g. leftover meat from a roast dinner can be used to make a pie or similar the next day.
- **Cook in bulk** – where possible batch cook and freeze your meals (allow to cool fully before freezing). Ingredients tend to be cheaper if bought in larger quantities e.g. spaghetti bolognese sauce and chilli are the same basic ingredients with different herbs/spices; cook a large pan and separate to add flavour then freeze so they are to hand later in the week or month.
- **If possible, keep a simple store of ingredients** (tinned tomatoes, beans/pulses, pasta and rice) as there are many different meals that can be made from these few. If you're unsure, search online for quick and easy recipes to follow.

## Managing mealtimes

### What can work well:

- **Staying calm** - it is very difficult not to blame yourself or the young person, but eating difficulties are no one's fault.
- **Sticking with** - it mealtimes can often become exhausting and non-stop, ending in conflict. You may all feel like shouting or walking off. Try to stay seated and take some deep breaths before continuing.
- **Be a role model where possible** - eat the same foods and with your young person.
- **Chat about everyday things** - this can help to decrease anxiety and distract everyone from the meal. Encourage all of the family to join in!
- **Offer encouragement and praise** - some young people find it difficult to hear praise, but others do not. It is best to ask if you aren't sure. Some examples of what you can say are 'I believe in you, I know you can do this'.
- **Keep the eating environment consistent** - you might want to discuss as a family what suits you all. Perhaps it is that you sit at the table for all meals during the week and then have teas on knees in front of the TV at the weekend – do what feels best in supporting your family to eat together.

### Things to avoid:

Discussing food and/or emotions during the mealtime this can quickly become overwhelming and make it difficult for the young person to eat.

### Common situations during meals:

The young person says  
"I'm not eating that."

I know  
this is hard  
for you, but  
we are here to  
support you

We agreed  
when we made  
the weekly plan  
that this is what  
you would  
eat

Your body  
needs this to  
fuel itself

You can  
do this, you  
have managed  
difficult things  
before

The young person is playing with food on the plate

I can see that you are finding this difficult, but you need to keep putting food on your fork, we are here for you

This will make the meal last longer, keep going and we will be able to do our activity

There is a small amount of food left on the plate

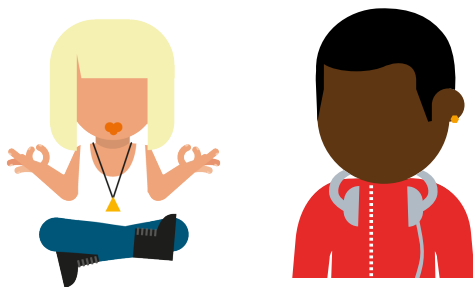
You have managed so well, it is just this last bit

I can see you have left some, you need to finish what is there please

## Planning and organisation of meals

Often, post meal times are the most distressing for a young person with eating difficulties and they may manage this through unhelpful behaviours including jigging, moving around a lot, going to the toilet or exercising. Other ways of managing these overwhelming thoughts and feelings could include:

- Watching TV together
- Listening to music
- Playing a game
- Relaxation
- Washing up together



If difficulties continue to arise after mealtimes, it might be helpful to set aside some time to talk about this together. You might choose to do this daily, or weekly, to get an understanding of what is going on for the young person at the mealtime.

## Managing difficult emotions, thoughts and/or sensations

### The bucket

Imagine a bucket sat outside. When it rains the bucket begins to fill up, but with no other escape for the water, the bucket quickly fills up and spills over the sides. If we put some holes within the bucket, the water can flow freely out in a more controlled and predictable way.



This is similar to what happens when we become overwhelmed with lots of feelings. Our minds can start to fill with unhelpful thoughts or worries with no helpful way for them to escape. Hopefully, throughout this booklet, you will be able to find some strategies and ways of coping with daily stressors.

### Tips for managing difficult emotions, thoughts and/or sensations

#### Engaging your senses:

For when you are in a crisis or feel overwhelmed

- Helps by changing your body chemistry to reduce arousal.
- For emotions such as anger, anxiety, or fear, we usually want to reduce our physical arousal level.





## Come back into your body by self-soothing using your 6 senses:

Skills for tolerating painful events and emotions when you can't make things better right away and you don't want to make things worse!

Vision

Hearing

Smell

Taste

Touch

Movement

### Vision

Look at a photo album; zone out to a poster/picture; notice colours in a sunset; look at pictures of your favourite places or places you would like to go: pay attention to all the different things you can see and explore them in detail one by one.

### Hearing

Listen to your favourite music and play it over and over again; pay attention to sounds in nature (birds, rain, thunder, and traffic); play an instrument or sing: play audio of some of your favourite sounds.

### Smell

Put on your favourite lotion; use a scented body wash; make cookies or popcorn; smell freshly brewed coffee; smell perfume or imagine your favourite smell.

### Taste

Eat some of your favourite foods; drink your favourite beverage; have your favourite flavour of ice cream; really notice the food you eat; eat one thing mindfully, crunch on a piece of ice.

### Touch

Take a long bath or shower; brush your hair; hug or be hugged; put a cold cloth on your head; change into your most comfortable clothes; touch your favourite fabric or get wrapped up in your favourite blanket, squeeze something, hold ice against your face, push your feet into the ground.

### Movement

Rock yourself gently; do yoga; dance! Jump up and down.

## Fully engage in the here and now

Say to yourself '**STOP**'



### Breathe

Take a slow, deep breath  
Notice your breath as you breathe in and out



### And notice:

5 things you can see

4 things you can touch



3 things you can hear

2 things you can smell  
(or if you can't smell anything,  
2 things you like the smell of)



1 thing you can taste (or like the taste of)



### And breathe

Take another slow, deep breath and notice  
your breath as you breathe in and out

## Paced breathing

Paced breathing entails slowing our breathing and making our exhale longer than our inhale. Pacing our breathing by slowing it down has been found by researchers to quickly bring down emotional arousal by activating the certain parts of our central nervous system. In turn, we can think more clearly about what to do next. This strategy can be used anywhere, any time because we always have access to our breath. Slowing breathing to approximately five or six breath cycles per minute (one complete breath cycle of inhale and exhale lasting 10–12 seconds) is effective at reducing emotional arousal by activating the certain parts of the nervous system.

Apps

Calm Harm is a useful app to help you manage if you feel like self-harming - <https://calmharm.co.uk/>



# Mindfulness

## What is it?

**FULL AWARENESS (opened mind):** Being aware of the present moment (e.g. thoughts, emotions and physical sensations) without judgment and without trying to change it.

## Why bother?

### Being mindful can...

1. Give you more choices and more control over your behaviour. It helps you slow down and notice emotions, thoughts and urges (i.e. increases self-awareness), and helps you choose a behaviour more thoughtfully, rather than act impulsively and make situations worse.
2. Reduce your emotional suffering and increase your pleasure and sense of wellbeing.
3. Help you make important decisions (and balance overly emotional or overly logical decisions).
4. Help focus your attention (i.e. be in control of your mind rather than letting your mind be in control of you) and therefore make you more effective and productive.
5. Increase compassion for self and others.
6. Lessen your pain, tension, and stress, and in turn can even improve your health.

## Mindfulness resources to explore

**Headspace:** Search Headspace on Youtube to find lots of guided meditation videos

### An introduction to meditation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUcC71-W9Os>

**Mini-meditation:** [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLW8o3\\_GFoCBOexWd8WK-hAjReSYifh1nx](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLW8o3_GFoCBOexWd8WK-hAjReSYifh1nx)

### Apps

Calm – [www.calm.com](http://www.calm.com)

Mindful Gnat app or website - <http://www.mindfulgnats.com/>

Stop, Breathe and Think app - <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/>

# My **STOP** help sheet

**STOP** Tell yourself to STOP what you are doing



## BREATHE

Take a slow, deep breath  
Notice your breath as you breathe in and out



## OBSERVE

Notice your thoughts  
What am I focussing on?



## STEP BACK

Take a step back from the situation  
Allow yourself some space from what is happening



## CHALLENGE

My thoughts are not fact  
This does not mean symptoms will get worse



**PRACTICE WHAT WORKS**  
Remind yourself that this will pass

