

Little book of coping skills

shout
85258
here for you 24/7



Introduction

We have put together this pocket book of coping skills that you can use if you're feeling anxious or overwhelmed, lonely or low, worried or stressed. We hope you can use this booklet whenever you need.

Based on conversations our volunteers have taken with people who have contacted **Shout 85258** for support, this booklet provides our top coping methods people use when they have finished their conversations with us.

We hope that you can refer to it whenever you need, or share it with someone else who might need it.



“I ended up painting and going to the gym today with friends, thanks again for your support, keep doing what you're doing!”



If you need support, you can text **SHOUT** to **85258** any time, day or night to start a free, confidential conversation.

Wellbeing mood journal

We've created this mood journal for you to colour in and see how your mood changes over the next few days.

Once it's completed you can use it to compare to previous weeks or show it to a GP, therapist or someone you trust to start a conversation about mental health.



Download the [wellbeing mood journal](#).

Watching a film or TV

During our conversations, many of our texters tell us about their favourite film or TV show. Putting on your favourite film, reconnecting with your favourite characters and lines can be a helpful distraction from how you are feeling in the moment.

Here are some of the top things people tell us they do to help them relax once they've finished a conversation with our Shout Volunteers:

- Watching Netflix
- Taking your mind off things with your favourite TV show
- Distracting yourself with TV and a cup of tea
- Watching a film with family or friends

Use this space to write down your favourite film or TV show and why:

Listening to music

Music can have a powerful effect on wellbeing. It can boost your mood, remind you of a particular time in your life, make you want to dance around, or help you unwind and relax into sleep.

In our conversations, people told us they like to listen to calming, relaxing and loud music as a coping mechanism when they are feeling low. Others found listening to music with friends or while they go for a walk helpful.

Try writing down three of your favourite songs in the space below. Put them on. How does each one make you feel? Some words to get you started might be happy, warm, comforted, upbeat.

1. Song name:

2. Song name:

3. Song name:

Talking to your friends or family about how you feel

More than one in three people who have reached out to Shout tell us they have never spoken to anyone else before. Many are sharing how they've been feeling for the first time over text with one of our volunteers, but by the end of the conversation feel empowered to talk to someone else they can trust.

Here are the things that texters tell us help them feel calmer:

- Spending time with family
- Chatting to a friend
- Talking to a partner
- Talking to family member about how they feel
- Writing a letter

If you're not feeling ready to talk to family, you can text **SHOUT** to **85258** to speak to one of our volunteers. It's free, confidential and anonymous and you'll be sharing what's on your mind in a non-judgemental environment.

“Thank you so much for your support, it's given me the confidence to be open with my parents and move forward.”

Some people find it difficult to speak about how they feel, but showing someone you trust your text conversation can help explain. You can also try writing a letter. You can use this template to get you started.

Dear _____

I've been feeling _____

This has been on my mind for _____

I'd really like your help and support to _____

Getting enough sleep

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, around one in five of our conversations mentioned the words 'exhausted', 'tired' or 'fatigue'. But sleep also appears in our conversations as one of the most frequent coping mechanisms people use, particularly as it allows them to reset and start anew the next day.

Getting the right amount and quality of sleep is an important part of looking after your mental wellbeing, but it can be hard when you're feeling particularly stressed or anxious.

Some of our top tips for a good night's sleep include:

- **Regular sleep hours:** Getting to bed and getting up at the same time can help teach your body to sleep better.
- **Natural sunlight:** Exposure to natural light during the day, as well as darkness at night, helps to maintain good sleep.
- **Exercise:** As little as 10 minutes of aerobic exercise, such as walking or cycling, can drastically improve night-time sleep quality.
- **Remove distractions:** Try to limit how much you're scrolling on your phone or looking at social media just before bed, as this can wake you up and make you more alert.

Try these tips over the next few weeks and see how you feel.





Exercise

Exercise can be hugely beneficial to how you feel. If you're struggling with anxiety, depression, a low mood or stress, some physical activity can be a really good way to help boost your mental wellbeing.

Physical and mental wellbeing go hand in hand. Even 10 minutes of brisk walking increases our alertness, energy and positive mood. Exercise can help aid a good night's sleep, and regular physical activity has been suggested to reduce stress and enhance self-esteem.

Texters tell us that their favourite ways of exercising include:

- Getting outside for some fresh air
- Working out to music
- Going to the gym
- Working out with a friend
- Running and jogging

Think about what exercise you could do. Write down three things you'd like to try:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Making time for self-care

Setting aside time for yourself to do small things regularly can have a positive impact on your mental wellbeing, as long as you're doing things you want to do and that make you feel good.

Here are some of the things our texters have told us help them. Why not give some a try yourself:

- Take a hot shower or a bubble bath
- Have an early night
- Have a hot drink/cup of tea
- Listen to music
- Read a book
- Walk with friends or family
- Watch TV



The power of pets

Our furry friends can be powerful forms of stress relief, lowering not only blood pressure but also harmful stress hormones such as Cortisol, which is linked to depression and anxiety. Instead, animals help to increase beneficial hormones such as Oxytocin, which is linked to happiness and relaxation.

Texters tell us when they're feeling low that playing with their pets, having a cuddle with their cat or taking their dog for a walk is a good coping mechanism.



“Hi, thank you so much for listening to me last night. I really needed it. This morning I heard my dog walking around the house and she came into my room for cuddles and I made sure to give her some strokes from you. Thank you so much.”



Reading

Letting your mind get lost in a good book is a great way of distracting yourself and taking your thoughts away from how you're feeling.

Whether it's a motivational self-help guide or a fictional story that takes you to another realm, try picking up a book and seeing where it leads.

Need some inspiration? Some members of Team Shout have shared their favourite books below:

“My go-to comfort books are E.F. Benson's Mapp and Lucia series. Such wonderful characters, brilliant observations and gentle comedy. They're such escapism - funny and reassuring, I've read them time and time again.”

“Queenie by Candace Cary-Williams, which I could really relate to in a funny way - it felt to me like a reminder that everyone makes mistakes, and what is 'normal'.”

“I read Untamed: Stop Pleasing, Start Living by Glennon Doyle earlier this year which is a very thought provoking take on feminism and being true to yourself.”



Mindful eating

When we're feeling low, it can be easy not to think about food very much. Either you lose your appetite, or you can find yourself eating food that isn't always nourishing.

Texters tell us that cooking a nice meal or baking can help them feel calmer, because it acts as a mindful activity. The act of choosing, preparing, cooking and eating a meal can help keep you present in the moment.

Having a hot drink such as a cup of tea or hot chocolate were also things that helped people feel

calmer, as well as making sure they were drinking enough water to stay hydrated.

Did you know: Fruit and vegetables (and a bonus is dark chocolate) can help boost your serotonin levels, a hormone that helps balance our mood, feelings of well-being and happiness.

Writing/journaling/being creative

Sometimes writing down how you feel can help you to take control of your feelings when you can't find the words to speak out loud.

It's a reason many people text Shout 85258, because they find it easier to have a text conversation than say how they're feeling for the first time.

Here are some ideas that our texters have tried that might help you too:

- Write down your thoughts and feelings in a journal
- Explain what you're going through by writing a letter to others
- Share what you want to say by writing it down first
- Write something creative - a poem or a short story
- Write down three things you are grateful for each day

Playing

For everyone, play is a great healer. It can make us laugh, help us to feel present and encourage creativity.

For many of our texters, playing with family and/or friends, video games, musical instruments, with pets, on their phone can help relax and de-stress.



Resources and support

When people text Shout, our volunteers will often signpost them to further resources and support for how they're feeling.

This might include trying techniques such as a grounding exercise, downloading an app that can provide further information or taking the next step to speak to your GP.

The top apps people download after a conversation with Shout are:

- **Calm Harm** - for support with self-harm
- **MeTwo** - a safe and supportive forum for teenagers wishing to discuss issues in their lives
- **Doc Ready** - helping people prepare for talking to their GP about their mental health.

The 4-7-8 breathing technique

If anxiety sets in, take a moment to breathe.

A favourite technique we use at Shout is the four - seven - eight.



Take a deep breath
through your nose
and count to four



Hold your breath in
for seven seconds



Breathe out
through your nose
to a count of eight



Repeat this a
few times until
you feel calmer.



