

MENTAL

HEALTH

FRIENDS



HANDBOOK



kent youth county council

kycc

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Introduction

Young people in Kent were asked where they would go for support for their mental health. They told us that family and friends were often the first place they asked for help. The Mental Health Campaign group of Kent Youth County Council (KYCC) decided to create this handbook. While there are some good training resources for young people, many of them are targeted at over 16's and we recognised that young people often needed information much earlier than that.

We have created this handbook for young people aged 13-16 to:

- **Give them the confidence to respond if someone they know is experiencing poor mental health.**
- **Help them understand the importance of their own wellbeing.**
- **Recognise the signs and symptoms of a young person who needs mental health support.**
- **Know where to go to get professional help and support.**

ONLINE SOURCES

Supporting a friend with their
Mental Health.

YoungMinds - www.youngminds.org.uk
Mind - www.mind.org.uk

A large, stylized white opening quotation mark with a black outline, positioned at the top left of the quote.

**Don't focus on
the future, focus
on the present.**

A large, stylized white closing quotation mark with a black outline, positioned at the bottom right of the quote.

Looking after you

Helping a friend or another young person who's going through a difficult time can be hard and you might not notice how much it affects your own mental health. It's okay to feel upset, shocked, or worried but make sure you look after yourself too. Here's some things to think about:

- **It's not all on you.** Supporting someone can be a big responsibility. Don't try and do it alone. Encourage them to speak to a trusted parent, teacher or other adult to take some of the pressure off you.
- **Set boundaries.** Try not to promise them things you feel you cannot do and make sure you make time for your needs. Be honest about your limits and look after your own wellbeing.
- **Think about how it affects you.** If it feels too much, ask a trusted adult to help straight away.
- **Look after your wellbeing.** Remember to take time for yourself and do things that help you relax and feel good.
- **Talk about your own feelings with someone you trust.**

For more information, visit www.moodspark.org.uk

A place where young people aged 10-16 can learn how to look after their emotional and mental health and find ways to help them bounce back when life gets tough.

The background is a vibrant yellow-orange with a halftone dot pattern and radiating lines, reminiscent of a comic book. Two white speech bubbles with thick black outlines are positioned in the center. The top bubble contains the text 'You don't have to go through it alone' and the bottom bubble contains 'It's OK not to be OK'.

**'You don't have
to go through
it alone'**

**'It's OK not
to be OK'**

How to tell if someone might be struggling

Not meeting up or responding to messages as much as normal

Smoking, drinking, or using drugs when they didn't before

Seeming distant or not like themselves

Spending more time on their own

Crying or shouting

Not chatting, smiling or laughing as much

Talking about feelings that worry you, or saying 'I can't do it any more'

Showing lower self-esteem

Not doing things they normally like



Sometimes it's hard to know if someone's struggling with their mental health, because everyone can act differently when they're going through a tough time.



CAN'T CONCENTRATE

**NOT WASHING
OR TAKING CARE
OF THEMSELVES**

**NOT DRESSING
LIKE THEY
USED TO**

**Some of
the physical
changes you
might notice in
someone**

**EATING TOO
MUCH OR
TOO LITTLE**

**LOOKING
TIRED**

**HURTING
THEMSELVES
ON PURPOSE**

**GAINING OR
LOSING WEIGHT**

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How to start the conversation

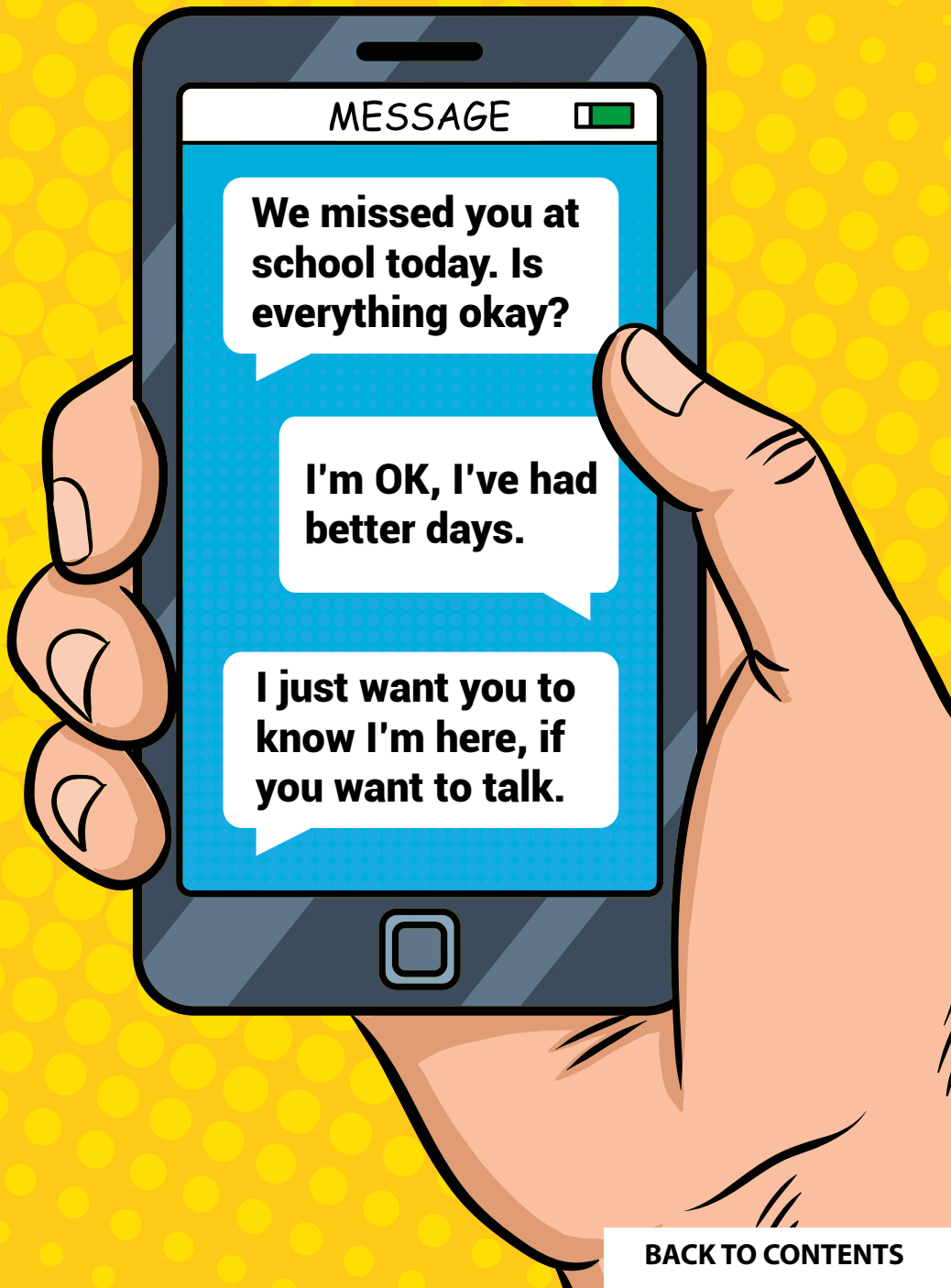
Finding the words to start talking to someone else about how they're feeling can be difficult. But really, there's no wrong way to begin and however you do it, they'll probably just appreciate you trying. Here are some examples of conversation starters to get an idea:

**We haven't talked in a while.
What's happening with you?**

**You've not seemed like
yourself lately. How are you?**

**You're my friend, I'm here for
you whenever.**

If they don't want to talk, try not to pressure them. They will open up to you, or someone else they trust, when they're ready.



MESSAGE 

We missed you at school today. Is everything okay?

I'm OK, I've had better days.

I just want you to know I'm here, if you want to talk.

What to do if someone tells you they are struggling

This might be the first time they have spoken about what is worrying them, and it may be difficult for them to find the right words. They may not know how to begin or feel scared or worried about how you will react. Here are some tips to help make it easier for them to open up to you.



Remember: if they tell you they have a mental health diagnosis, still give them the opportunity to try the CLARE tips and make sure any trusted adult involved is aware of their diagnosis too.

Comfort and calm. Let them know you are glad they felt able to share how they are feeling and reassure them that you want to help. You could say, 'I'm really glad you told me this'. Try not to panic if they share something upsetting.

Listen to them. Suggest somewhere quiet where you're not going to be interrupted or overheard by others. Let them know you're there when they're ready and give them time to share. Let them know that's OK if they want to write down what they are feeling instead. Try to listen carefully without interrupting or judging them. Show you are listening by nodding or repeating what they say to make sure you have understood.

Ask them what would help. They may already have things that help them like listening to music, quiet time or going for a walk. Ask if there is a trusted adult they feel able to talk to. Find out if this has happened before and if anything helped then.

Reassure them. You could say something like 'It's okay to feel like that' or, 'What you're going through sounds really tough'. Sometimes when you are struggling with your mental health, it can feel very lonely. By letting them know how they feel is important to you, you are letting them know that they are not alone.

Encourage them to find support. Find out what would make it easier for them to talk to a trusted adult like a parent, teacher, doctor or someone else they trust. Sometimes offering to come with them to find someone to talk to or being there with them can help them.

Safety information

Some important things to remember. What if they ask me to keep a secret?

If someone tells you something and asks you to keep it a secret, it's normal to not want to break their trust but if you think they, or someone else could be in danger, it's important to tell a trusted adult about what they have said, to make sure you're both safe.

Tell them that you need to tell someone because you are worried about them, but you can ask if there is someone specific they would prefer you to talk to.



GET HELP

STRAIGHT AWAY

- If they have hurt themselves in any way, it is important not to deal with it on your own.
- If you believe they might hurt themselves or someone else, it is important not to deal with it on your own.
- If you believe that they or someone else is in danger, it is important not to deal with it on your own.



**GET HELP
FROM A TRUSTED
ADULT NOW.**

Where to find support

Who else can offer mental health support in my school/college? (Record their contact details and any notes on the page below)

“

You can't help your friend if you're struggling yourself.

”

*trusted adults might be teachers, lunchtime staff, receptionists, youth workers or adult volunteers.

Safeguarding/ pastoral care

SENCO

Wellbeing staff

Other trusted adult

Someone else?



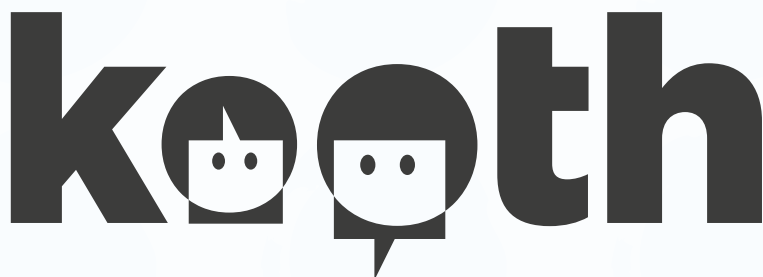
**There's a wide range of
support available for children
and young people on our
wellbeing hub**

Kent Children and Young People's Single Point of Access

Concerned about a young
person's mental health?
Not sure what help is
needed? Call the Single
Point of Access (SPA)

0800 011 3474





For children and young people aged 10-25 in need of mental health support, including online counselling.

www.kooth.com



Need support now?

Text 'Kent' or 'Medway' to 85258 for in-the-moment help. We are here for everyone, any age, 24/7.



www.releasepressure.uk



NHS Foundation Trust

Check out the
Children and Young
People's Mental
Health Service
Instagram account
for young people
aged 13 and above.



@kentandmedwaycamhs

**we are
withyou**

**in Kent
at Mind and Body**

01795 500882

Mind and Body

Call 9am-5pm,
Monday to Friday, to
find out how to join
small group sessions
for managing difficult
thoughts and feelings.

**[www.wearewithyou.org.uk/
services/mind-and-body-in-kent/](http://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/services/mind-and-body-in-kent/)**



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**The highest
climbs have the
greatest views.**



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Created by the
Mental Health Campaign Group 2022
Kent Youth County Council

To find out more about us,
please get in touch

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