

Self-care for adult survivors of child sexual abuse

www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk

Look after your physical health

Taking care of your physical health can help boost and support your mental wellbeing:

- **Take regular moderate exercise** - 30 minutes every day can help you feel calmer and increase your energy. Find something you enjoy like walking, swimming, yoga, dancing or a team sport. www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/exercise
- **Eat well** - eat a balanced and nutritious diet with lots of fresh fruit and vegetables and cut down on sugar. www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/eat-healthy
- **Cut down on caffeine, smoking and drinking alcohol** - try not to use them to try to feel better. www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/i-m-looking-for-myself/what-can-i-do-to-feel-better/look-after-your-physical-health
- **Get a good night's sleep** - it can help you feel stronger and cope better. Create a nightly routine which helps you relax and avoid alcohol at night: www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/sleep



Find a safe space

It can help to find a safe space - somewhere you feel safe, calm and soothed - this may be alone or with someone else. It could be at home or in nature.

Talk about how you are feeling

- **Try talking to a friend you trust about how you are feeling** - this can relieve some of the pressure and help you feel more supported.
- **Try to develop relationships with family and friends and build up a good social network.** Be open with people you trust about how you are feeling.
- **Join a peer support group** - peer support can connect you with people with similar experiences so that you can share emotional support, encouragement and practical help. www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/peer-support



Learn to relax

Practise relaxation and breathing techniques every day - to help you feel calmer and improve your sleep. Try different ways to relax such as yoga, aromatherapy or meditation. www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/relax



Be mindful

Practise mindfulness when doing everyday tasks - ask yourself what you can hear, feel, smell, see and taste. This can help to refocus thoughts back to the present moment and can help to combat low moods and depression. You may find a course helpful. www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/be-mindful

Try to challenge your thoughts

Try to challenge any ANT (Automatic Negative Thoughts) that pop up now and then like 'I am rubbish', 'I am not good enough', 'I am to blame'. These are often long-held beliefs and may well have no truth in reality. Look at the evidence against these thoughts and then find a more helpful and balanced way of thinking - 'I am a valuable and important', 'I am a kind and caring person', 'I am a good friend', 'It was not my fault.' www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/i-m-looking-for-myself/what-can-i-do-to-feel-better/practise-self-help/child-sexual-abuse-self-help/challenge-your-thoughts

Get creative

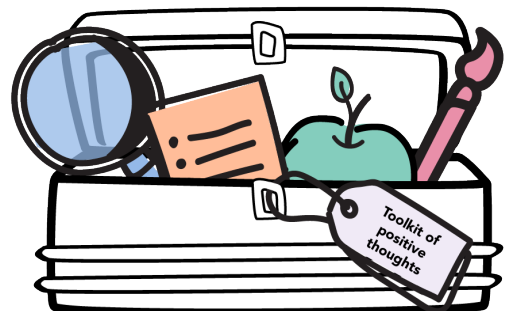
Enjoy some activities like painting, drawing, photography, craft and creative writing - they can be relaxing and calming and help distract thoughts away from everyday worries and concerns. Art can also be a valuable way of expressing your thoughts and feelings without the need for conversation.



Create a toolbox of positive thoughts

Create a toolbox which can help boost your mood whenever you find yourself feeling low:

- Make lists of things you like about yourself, successes, things you are grateful for, good experiences and compliments.
- Come up with a list of things that you can do for a quick mood boost - a walk in nature, playing with a pet, a craft activity.
- Include some upbeat music, a funny movie, a favourite book and photographs that make you feel happy - these could be of friends, holidays you have taken or places where you feel safe.
- Write a note to remind yourself that how you are feeling now will pass - 'It will pass'.



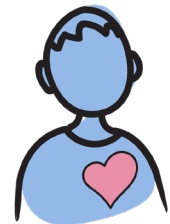
Find safe ways of expressing your anger or soothing your sadness

It's natural to feel anger about what happened to you as a child. It can be helpful to know ways you can calm yourself at times when you feel angry or upset. Find out what works for you:

- Go for a run.
- Dance around the room.
- Pound a pillow.
- Write something on a piece of paper and tear it up.
- Find different ways of calming or distracting yourself.
- Listen to relaxing music.
- Go to your 'safe place'.
- Take a warm bath.
- Cuddle up with a blanket or a hot drink.
- Stroke an animal.
- Watch a funny movie.
- Pamper yourself - do something that makes you feel happy.
- Talk to someone you trust.
- Do something creative.

Be kind to yourself

Don't be too hard on yourself - remember that what happened was not your fault and was beyond your control. Think how you would talk to a friend who was in the same situation and treat yourself with the same kindness. It is normal to have both good days and bad days - if you need time out sometimes to look after yourself that's OK.



Don't give up on yourself, and don't lose hope.

Healing can take time but it is always possible.