



Your social life and relationships with others can have a positive impact on your mental health, but they can also be a source of stress or anxiety.

Two of the biggest challenges young people say they're facing are the fear of being judged, and loneliness. It can be difficult to make friends, but also difficult to navigate those relationships when you do have them.

Positive relationships can improve your confidence and wellbeing. Learning how to cultivate positive relationships and to deal with social pressures can help you to look after your mental health, as well as to create the social life you want.

## EXTRA SUPPORT

### The Mix

**Support for under 25s**

Text 'THEMIX' to 85258

### Samaritans

For urgent support

116 123

### Papyrus

Support for under 35s experiencing thoughts of suicide

0800 068 4141

### Shout

Text 'SHOUT' to 85258

### Beat Eating Disorders

Student specific helpline 0808 801 0811

### Voice Collective

Support children and young people who hear voices, see visions and other sensory experiences

### Switchboard LGBTQIA+

0300 330 0630 - helpline

### Muslim Youth Helpline

Faith and culturally sensitive mental health support

### Mermaids

Support for transgender young people under 20

### OCD Action

Support and advice for anyone affected by OCD



### FURTHER READING, ADVICE AND SUPPORT

#### Racism & mental health

From Mind

#### LGBTQ+ mental health support and advice

From Mind

#### BAATN Network

The home of the largest community of Counsellors and Psychotherapists of Black, African, Asian and Caribbean Heritage in the UK

#### What's up with everyone?

Information and advice on key areas that impact young person and student mental health.

#### Friendships and mental health

Listen to this podcast on the importance of friendships on our mental health

#### Tell me App

A digital peer support App

#### **Behind the Books**

Mental health tips for university students created by a group of Sussex University students

#### Mental health A-Z

Learn about signs, symptoms and how to access support if needed

#### **Mind: Student advice**

Tips and guidance for students to look after mental health

#### Zero Suicide Alliance

Free online training for students about having conversations with peers about suicide

#### Meaningful Connections

Q&A between a student and counsellor



### TOP TIPS

#### TALK TO SOMEONE

Talking things through with someone can help you to get perspective, to take some time away from the things that are worrying you, and to get ideas for new things you can try to manage what's worrying you. Sometimes just saying it out loud can help you to process what you're feeling. Thinking about your relationships and how you behave in social situations can help you to make more informed, positive choices. If you don't feel you can talk to friends or family, you could talk to your GP, a counsellor, a staff member from college or university, or one of the helplines below.

#### DON'T COMPARE YOURSELF TO OTHERS

Your life is completely unique to you alone. Comparing yourself to others can cause feelings of low self-esteem, anxiety and stress. It can also cause you to make choices that are motivated by what's right for someone else, not for you. We often don't know the full picture of what's going on in someone else's life, so any comparison that you're making isn't based on what reality is like for that person.

#### TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF

Having time alone where you're not working or studying gives you a break from pressures and allows you to switch off. If you're someone who struggles to be on your own, practice being on your own for short periods of time, and fill that time with positive and relaxing activities, rather than checking off your to-do list. Try going for walks, or listening to a whole album without doing anything else. Practicing being on your own can build your resilience.



## TOP TIPS

### DO THINGS BECAUSE YOU WANT TO DO THEM

Think about the things you're invited to do and events you're invited to go to. You should only go to them if you want to, not because you feel like you have to. But pushing yourself out of your bubble is important too, so think about who is making you feel like you have to do something – are their motivations good? Do you feel safe? If the answers are yes, then it might be something worth trying. Trying new things and meeting new people can broaden our opportunities and introduce us to new hobbies and friends that we might otherwise have never met. If you fill your time with activities you enjoy, you're bound to meet like-minded people who also enjoy those activities. Find local hobby-based groups, societies or clubs and try them out to see if you like them.

### BALANCE

It's easy to prioritise your social life either because it's important to you, or because you feel pressure to do so, but it will benefit you and your wellbeing to balance your social activities with other equally important aspects of your life. Make sure you give yourself enough time to sleep well, eat well, be productive, and relax.

### LET GO OF UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

It's important to be able to recognise when a relationship is unhealthy. You don't have to hold onto relationships that aren't serving you. If someone is making you feel more negative emotions than positive ones, and you don't feel safe talking to them about it, it could be time to walk away. [Brook](#) offer advice and support for all kinds of circumstances. [Nedra Tawwab](#) shares helpful insights and advice.



## TOP TIPS

### FIND CREATIVE WAYS TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH PEOPLE YOU MISS

We're all getting better at doing things remotely, use those skills to find creative ways of connecting with people you don't get to see that often in person.

### DOING GOOD DOES YOU GOOD

Kindness can help reduce stress and improve our emotional wellbeing. We all have so much going on in our lives, not just on an individual level, but at a national and global level too. This can mean that we push kindness to one side in favour of what's urgent or trending right now. But if we take the time to be kind to other people, this can have a hugely positive impact on our wellbeing. Start with a commitment to showing kindness in your words and your actions, and thinking about random acts of kindness you can do for those around you.

### CELEBRATE YOURSELF

You might feel like there's a lack of people around who you want to be friends with – this won't always be the case, but if it is right now, take some time to celebrate yourself. Knowing what you want in a friendship or relationship is a good thing. Celebrate your little, everyday successes and what you feel able to do. Celebrate who you are and what makes you different to those around you. If you're experiencing loneliness, use it to spark some helpful thoughts – ask yourself, what do I have compared to what I would value having? This can help you to work towards the quality of friendship and relationship that you really want.



### TOP TIPS

#### PRACTICE EMPATHY

Not everyone likes to socialise in the same way. If you think outside of yourself and your own preferences it can help you to give people space and be supportive of their needs, which are probably different to yours. If you have a friend that doesn't always text you back or is reluctant to come along to social events, it could be because they don't enjoy socialising in the same ways that you do, and that's ok.

#### PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Practicing gratitude can lower stress levels, increase feelings of happiness, and help you sleep better. Each day, write down one or two things that you're grateful for from that day, like your health, family, or friends, or something you've done that you're proud of. This can help you to recognise and appreciate the people and things you have, and after a few days it can start to reshape how you feel about things. Celebrate your own achievements, even the ones you might think are the smallest ones – sometimes they feel like the hardest.

### SOCIAL PRESSURE EXTRAS

#### Safe drug taking

Do not forget that drugs are illegal and use is not recommended. You can reduce the risk of recreational drug taking with The [Loop's](#) harm reduction guide or check out [Drugs and Me](#) or [Talk to Frank](#)

#### [Drink Aware](#)

Get educated about alcohol and find tips on managing your relationship with it

#### [Brook](#)

For free and impartial sex and relationship advice

#### [Relate](#)

Information about healthy relationships

#### [NHS](#)

Information on social anxiety