

Distraction Techniques

- Squeeze a stress ball
- Have a relaxing bath or shower
- Play with a pet
- Count and name things
- Listen to music
- Draw / Paint
- Tear up paper
- Have a drink
- Watch TV
- Splash your face with water

- Read a book
- Play with a toy or puzzle
- Watch a funny DVD or movie
- Play a computer game
- Talk to someone you trust
- Play a musical instrument
- Make or build something
- · Play with plasticine or play dough
- Do a physical activity

Promoting Positive Mental Health

"When 'I' becomes 'We' even illness becomes wellness" - Malcolm X

Welcome to the Rosses Community School Mindfulness Toolbox. This booklet is designed to support all our students, parents and staff. Although it was originally envisioned as a support for students, the tools and guidelines within are relevant to everyone regardless of age, gender or position in life.

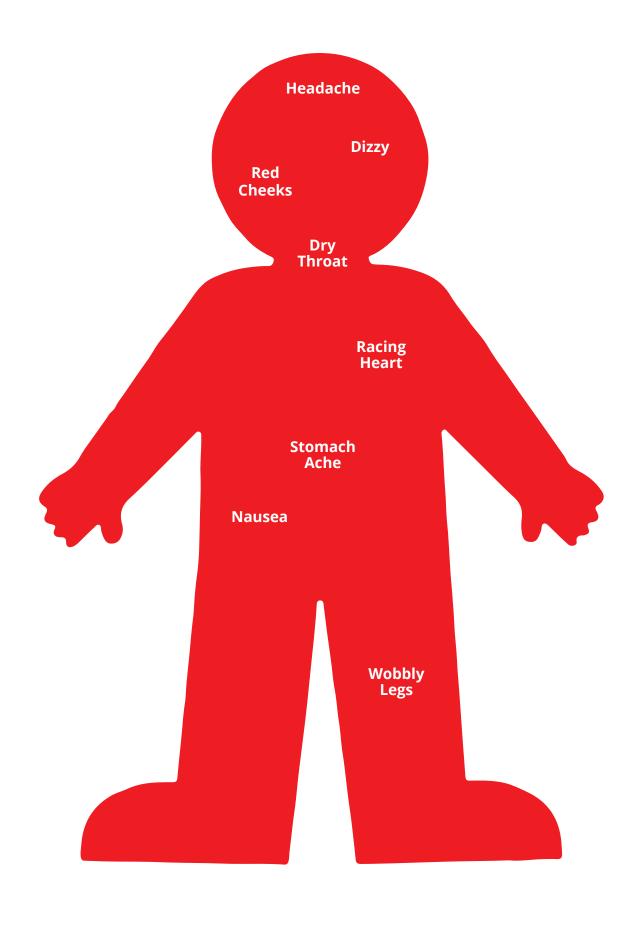
We all experience 'speed-bumps' in our life's journey. Sometimes a 'speed-bump' can knock us off course and we end up lost and confused not recognising ourselves or where we are going. Often our friends and family can see we're a little lost but don't know how to best help or support. The tools in the Mindfulness Toolbox will help get you back on track or will help you help a friend or loved one who needs help and support.

Greater self-awareness also helps us be more aware of others. We can often assume that everyone else's life is rosey. Walking a 'metaphorical mile' in the shoes of another can help us have greater understanding and tolerance. Developing empathy for others will also help us have greater empathy for ourselves - we can forgive ourselves for hitting the speed-bump and use our energy to get back on track rather than becoming 'swallowed up' by negative emotions and anxiety.

This booklet is a handy reference tool, it gives ideas and strategies; however it is not intended as a replacement for real engagement with GPs or Services. Some people can experience profound difficulties that require much greater supports. If you find yourself in a situation where you find you are really struggling, speak to someone you trust; talk to a parent, teacher, GP - Seek help and support.



Have you ever had any of these symptoms?



Have you ever had thoughts like these?





Anxiety



Anxiety triggers a chemical reaction in our brain. It causes us to react in one of 3 ways...



Fight

We lash out, say things we don't mean, act aggressively.

Flight

We run away, avoidance tactics, isolate ourselves.

Freeze

Our minds go blank, we can't think clearly, our reaction is no reaction.



Physical symptoms can be Alarm Signals to feelings of anxiety



Anxiety is caused by how we think about a situation rather than the situation itself

Just because you think something is true, doesn't mean it is true. Don't believe everything you think! Don't fall into a "Thinking Trap".



Thinking Traps

All or nothing thinking - Blowing things up!	Thinking only of possible outcomes at either extreme (really good or really bad) or not seeing all the possible outcomes in between (the 'grey') Most of life is somewhere in the middle.	 One friend gets angry at you - "Nobody likes me, I'm totally unlovable & selfish." Failing one test - "I'm obviously stupid." Reading in class - "I won't be able to pronounce words, my voice sounds funny."
Catastrophizing - Predicting Failure	Imagining the worst case scenario, no matter how unlikely it is.	Getting one bad mark - "I won't get into university and I'll end up homeles."
Overestimating - Magnifying the negative	Exaggerating the likelihood that something bad will happen.	"If i have another panic attack I'm going to have a heart attack and die."
Fortune Telling	Believing you can predict the future	 "I couldn't find a job last summer so I won't be able to find one this summer. "No one is going to talk to me at the party."
Over-generalizing	Making sweeping judgements about ourselves and others based in only one or two experiences. These thoughts typically contain the words 'always' and 'never'. The problem: You can never be summed up in one one word or base your value as a person on one single experience.	 One friend gets upset at you - "I always ruin friendships. I have no real friends. Missing one soccer goal - "I never get things right."
Mind Reading	Believing you know what others are thinking (and assuming it's negative), without any real evidence. The problem: you can't read minds so stop trying.	 "I know they are talking about me right now. They are thinking about how weird I look." "They're giving me dirty looks." "I know she thinks my gift is lame."

Thinking Errors

Practice more helpful thinking styles - get in control.

Automatic Thoughts



Choose to ${\hbox{\scriptsize STOP}}$ and change the direction of your unhelpful thoughts or continue in an unhealthy downward spiral...



The Mindful Toolbox - Even if... Then I can...

The Worry Diary:	For two weeks, write down your worries as they pop up. By writing them down, you don't need to "keep track" of your worries in your head anymore. You might find that a lot of worries don't seem so powerful a few hours later, and especially after a good night's sleep.	
Calm Breathing:	Is a technique that helps you slow down your breathing when feeling stressed or anxious. Calm breathing is a great portable tool that you can use whenever or wherever you are feeling anxious.	
	 Take a slow breath in through the nose, breathing into your lower belly (for about 4 seconds). Hold your breath for 1 or 2 seconds. Exhale slowly through the mouth (for about 4 seconds). Wait for a few seconds before taking another breath. About 6 - 8 breathing cycles is often helpful to decrease anxiety. 	
Tense & Release:	This exercise is about tensing and then relaxing all of the muscles in your body, one at a time. By first tensing your muscles and then relaxing them, you can feel more loose and relaxed.	
	Some teens are so tense throughout the day that they don't even remember what being relaxed feels like.	
	 Focus on one muscle group at a time (for example your left hand). Take a slow deep breath and squeeze those muscles until you feel warmth and some pressure for about 5-7 seconds. Let all the tightness flow out of the tensed muscles, exhale as you do this step. It is important to focus on and notice the difference between the tension and relaxation. This is the most important part of the whole exercise, as it will help you to remember how to feel relaxed! 	
Fact V's Belief Chart:	1. Write down what you are worrying/thinking about. 2. List what you believe to be true about that worry/thought. 3. List the facts that you know to be true about that worry/thought. 4. Generally the 'facts' are significantly less than the 'beliefs' - it will help you think clearly and take charge of your thinking.	
Distraction Techniques:	Squeeze a stress ball Listen to Music Count and name things Have a relaxing bath or shower Play with a pet Draw/Paint Tear up paper Watch TV Splash your face with water Read a book Have a glass of water Watch a funny movie Play a computer game Talk to someone you trust Play a musical instrument Make or build something Do a physical activity	
Learn to Relax:	Is something which can "dial down the volume" of stress and anxiety and take charge of worry. Learning to relax helps us to think more clearly, focus better, and feel stronger and steadier. Our brains are like a muscle, we can't constantly stress it and strain it and expect to work well. We have to let it relax to recharge. Relaxing releases endorphins, which are hormones which help us feel good. Relaxing also helps us focus more clearly when we need to.	

The Mindful Toolbox - Even if... Then I can...

Take a Helicopter View:	Sometimes it's useful to see the bigger picture. When something is distressing us, we're close to it, involved with it, part of it - it's really hard to stand back from what's happening. It's a bit like Google Earth - we see the close up view but everything is hidden from us.
Be Good to Yourself:	We can often be our own best critics and this only leads to misery. It is important to try and accept that everyone makes mistakes, has bad days and can feel bad about feeling bad. Take notice of how you talk to or treat yourself. Say to yourself:
	 I'm doing the best I can I'm a work in progress, I'm constantly learning and growing This is really painful. But, everyone feels this way sometimes. It's part of being human. Let me try to be as understanding to myself as I would be to someone else.
Get a Good Night's Sleep:	Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day. Keep the lights dim. Create a relaxing bedtime routine. Avoid TV or screens, caffeine, alcohol and smoking before bed.
Laughter is the best medicine:	Try to find the fun in life. Humour is an excellent antidote to worries and anxieties.
Talk to someone you trust:	'A problem shared is a problem halved.' Telling someone you trust will also help you get a 'helicopter view' of the issue, they will have distance from the issue and will be able to help you to view it from that perspective.

Mindful Engagement - Know your mood and know how to recognise the mood of others



In The Red! - the thinking brain goes out the window, the emotional brain kicks in! If two people are in the Red then chaos will ensue, shouting, arguments, sarcasm, unhealthy & unhelpful engagement. If you're in the Red it is not a good time to be making decisions or trying to talk something out.

Amber - the signs of going into red start to appear - heart starts to beat faster, sweaty, twitchy.. If you recognise the signs that you or the other person are heading into the Red then use your self awareness to extract you or the other person from the situation - press pause until you are both in the Green - don't be an 'Amber Gambler'!

Green for Go - the mood of both is open and receptive, there can be meaningful, non-judgmental engagement, there is a willingness to listen as well as speak.

Additional useful information...

In-School Supports:

Pastoral Care Team & Year Heads or a staff member with whom you feel comfortable.

External Supports:

Jigsaw: https://jigsaw.ie/location/donegal/

HSE

CAMHS: Donegal Child & Family Mental Health Service - referral by your local GP

Useful Websites:

www.youth.anxietybc.com

www.headstrong.ie

www.spunout.ie

www.youngminds.org.uk

Useful Apps:

smilingminds - meditation app





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