

Parent/Carer ADHD Toolkit

A resource for parents & carers to help support their child or young person to understand and manage their ADHD

STEP (Swindon)

Email:

stepswindon1@outlook.com

Website: stepswindon.co.uk

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About this toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help parents and carers of young people who have (or are in the process of receiving) a diagnosis of ADHD. If any other emotions, feelings or challenges are raised while completing this toolkit with your child then please feel free to contact us and additional resources can be provided to you to support them further.

ADHD is a persistent pattern of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity that is more extreme than is typically observed in individuals at a similar stage of development. ADHD is evident at a young age and is present across different settings e.g. home, school and with friends.

Within the UK, ADHD is sometimes referred to as Hyperkinetic Disorder. ADHD affects about 3-5% of children and 2% of adults and is more common in males than females (4:1). Girls with ADHD may show less hyperactivity than boys and so may be less easily identified in primary care settings (NICE, 2008, 2013).

ADHD

What is ADHD?

ADHD is a condition where you have lots of energy and have difficulty concentrating. You might also find it hard to control what you say and do. For example, you might speak without thinking first, or find that you do things on impulse.

Symptoms usually start very early life, before the age of six. We don't know exactly what causes ADHD, but experts think it might run in families, or it could be to do with the way the chemicals in your brain work, but you might start to experience ADHD-like symptoms if you've had a difficult experience.

Another condition called ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) has similar symptoms to ADHD, but you don't feel as hyperactive. For people with ADD, the main problem they have is difficulty concentrating.

What causes ADHD?

It is believed that ADHD is a neurobiological disorder linked to an imbalance of brain chemicals (dopamine and noradrenaline) with some evidence that there are also some structural brain changes in children and adults with ADHD. ADHD is partly genetic and therefore immediate or extended family members may have similar symptoms, although not always diagnosed.

What are the symptoms of ADHD?

The symptoms of ADHD include:

- Feeling restless or fidgety
- Talking a lot and interrupting others
- Becoming easily distracted
- Finding it hard to concentrate
- Saying or doing things without thinking

If you experience any of these symptoms above, it doesn't mean you definitely have ADHD. But if any of them are affecting your everyday life, you should do something about it.

How does ADHD affect an individual's life?

The way that a person is affected by ADHD is different for each individual but there are some common areas of life that are affected, these include:

- Getting to sleep at night
- Getting ready for school on time
- Listening to and carrying out instructions
- Being organised
- Social occasions
- Shopping
- Time and time management
- Understanding the consequences of actions
- Impulse control
- Staying still and seated
- Maintaining focus on a specific task or activity

These challenges can cause difficulties for the young person both at school and within the home setting.

It is important that an individual with ADHD is supported correctly and given praise often when they behave well or do the right thing. This is because young people with ADHD often receive a lot of negative attention or consequences due to their diagnosis which may lead to low self-esteem.

Let's talk feelings

To begin to support your child it is important for you to understand how they are feeling and how their diagnosis affects their life. This will ensure that the support you give them is useful to their specific needs and will also help support their general mental wellbeing too. Firstly try to encourage your child to talk about how they are feeling. Talking about their ADHD will make it seem less overwhelming. If they find this difficult or do not wish to talk, then they may benefit from writing their feelings down in a diary and sharing them with you when they feel they are ready to. Don't give up talking about feelings if it doesn't go well the first time, keep trying and choose a time when you won't be distracted and can give your full attention. You could also try using the **"Cup 'o' feelings"** sheet in the resource section of this toolkit. Once you have been able to talk with your child about how they are feeling, you can then begin to explore the emotions they are experiencing. Reassure your child that their feelings are valid and nothing to be ashamed or embarrassed about. It may be useful to use the **"My ADHD"** worksheet in the resource section of this toolkit.

How to support a young person with ADHD

It is important to understand that an individual with ADHD can often not control their behaviours and we should support them with this. However, it is also important to recognise that while their diagnosis may explain their behaviours but does not excuse them. As young people grow up it is important to help them learn to self manage their behaviours to help them be successful in later life and to protect their mental wellbeing.

Support with time management, attention and organisation

In general, individuals with ADHD like routine and structure. It lets them know what is expected of them throughout the day and what task they will be doing next. Creating a timetable for both the day and week will provide a visual prompt to show this. Timetables also help with time management skills which individuals with ADHD often struggle with. They will make sure that all tasks that need to be completed (school work, meals and chores etc) are done while showing that “free time” is also protected and included in their day.

When completing a timetable for your young person it is important to remember that screen time (iPad, computer games etc) should be restricted to “free time”. Exercise and active time should be encouraged as this is a great way to manage the symptoms of ADHD. It is crucial to remember to include frequent breaks as these are required for individuals with ADHD to maintain concentration. Examples of and blank **“weekly timetables”** and **“daily timetables”** can be found in the resource section of this toolkit.

Support with time

Individuals with ADHD often struggle with time management. They may struggle to judge a length of time and won’t be able to “feel” how much time has passed. They may become so engrossed in an activity that they will continue with it for hours on end (even forgetting to eat and drink) or they may struggle to concentrate on a task for few minutes (levels of concentration and focus are often directly linked to their level of interest in the particular task).

Timers can be very useful for people with ADHD. They help prevent an individual becoming too engrossed in a specific activity for too long (at the expense of other tasks) or help keep attention as the individual can have a visual prompt as to how long they have left in completing it.

Help your young person set a timer (or encourage them to do this themselves) at the start of an activity so they have a set time for this. Some young people may also benefit from 15min, 10min and 5min warnings before the task is due to end as this will mean it will not be as much of a shock and the transition to the next activity will be smoother.

Actions and consequences

If you are finding that your young person is displaying negative behaviour it may be beneficial to display a list of rules within the house. This can act as a visual prompt reminding them of what is expected of them and how they should behave. It will also help to include a list of consequences or sanctions that will occur if they break a rule or behave in a way that is not appropriate. This will help with their understanding of actions and consequences as it will help them learn that their actions have direct consequences. This, in turn, will help with improved impulse control as they will be better able to consider what will happen if they do something before they do it and will also help make sure they know where they stand with regards to discipline.

Sanctions should be at an appropriate level (the punishment should fit the crime) and must never involve physical punishment (hitting or slapping), humiliation/ embarrassment or the removal of basic needs such as food, shelter etc. an example list of **“rules and consequences”** can be found in the resources section of this toolkit.

Rewards

People with ADHD tend to be motivated by personal gain, they will do something if they believe they will benefit from it. Because of this they often thrive on rewards and praise. However, ADHD also makes it difficult to look to the future so long term gains are often not enough of a motivator. An example of this would be “the advantage of completing school work is a better career in the future”. The reward needs to be immediate to have an effect. Frequent rewards are also effective and, as well as increasing motivation will help to boost self esteem through an experience of achievement.

Reward charts often work well with those with ADHD as they provide an instant positive reinforcement and also a visual representation of success. Stickers/ stars can be awarded for completing given task as well as for spontaneous positive behaviours. Once an agreed number of stars/ stickers have been gained in an agreed time these can be exchanged for a reward. E.g. 7 stickers in a day can be exchanged for a new game on the iPad, a movie night, extra screen time etc. An example of a **“reward chart”** can be found in the resources section of this toolkit.

Support with homework

You can help your young person complete their homework in a number of different ways including:

- Encouraging them to spend time completing homework when they are timetabled to do so
- Making sure they have a tidy, clutter free work space that is free from distractions
- Reducing background noise and keeping the environment in which they are working quiet and peaceful
- Breaking tasks down into smaller, more manageable chunks
- Encouraging regular and frequent breaks
- Allowing them to move, get up and walk around when they need to

- Offering fidget toys and stress balls as these can help maintain concentration
- Taking an interest in their work, ask them what they're doing and offer help
- Making sure they drink enough and are hydrated (water, squash and milk are best, avoid caffeine)

Ways to help manage general ADHD symptoms in daily life

Exercise

Exercising regularly is one of the easiest and most effective ways to reduce the symptoms of ADHD and improve concentration, motivation, memory, and mood. Physical activity immediately boosts the brain's dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin levels, all of which affect focus and attention and in this way, exercise works in much the same way as ADHD medications.

Types of exercise include:

- Running
- Walking
- Cycling
- Yoga
- Football
- Aerobics
- Tennis

Self care

Encourage your young person to take "me time" regularly, make sure they take breaks when studying and spend time doing things they enjoy. **Colouring sheets** and **yoga instructions** can be found in the resources section of this toolkit. Activities that do not involve the use of a screen and those that are calmer are particularly beneficial to help unwind and calm down.

Some examples of self care include:

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Reading | • Talking to friends |
| • Listening to music | • Playing games / jigsaws |
| • Watching a film / TV | • Colouring |
| • Having a bath | • Cooking / baking |
| • Yoga and meditation | |

Meditation and Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a technique you can learn which involves making a special effort to notice what's happening in the present moment (in your mind, body and surroundings) – without judging anything. It has roots in Buddhism and meditation, but you don't have to be spiritual, or have any particular beliefs, to try it.

Some useful videos to explain what mindfulness and meditation are and to help guide you through how to practice them can be found in the online support links section of this toolkit.

Grounding techniques and breathing exercises can also help an individual calm down and regain focus both on a day to day basis and during times of extreme agitation. The more frequently these are practiced the more effective they are, practicing them when feeling calm will make them easier to do when needed. Details of these can be found in the resources section of this toolkit.

Sleep

It is important for everyone to get enough, good quality sleep. However, individuals with ADHD are more likely to struggle to get to sleep and have a poorer quality of sleep. This leads to tiredness which can increase the symptoms of ADHD. You can help your young person sleep better by:

- Making sure they do not have any caffeine after 4pm (better still, avoid it all together)
- Not using a screen for the hour before they go to bed
- Establishing a bedtime routine that involves winding down and keeping calm
- Making sure they take any medication prescribed to them to help with sleep
- Helping and encouraging them to practice meditation, mindfulness and breathing exercises (such as “Tummy Chums” as explained on our Facebook page) before bed

Details of a the video **“sleep: a bedtime story”** can be found in the resources section of this toolkit, this video is a guided meditation designed to help young people get to sleep easier.

Medication

It is important that young people take any medication that has been prescribed to them in the way their doctor has told them to, this includes both day time and evening medication. Do not stop taking medication unless advised to by a medical professional.

If you or your young person have any questions or concerns regarding their prescribed medication then speak to your GP (this may be done via telephone), a pharmacist or CAMHS.

Diet

While there is no specific evidence that diet directly affects ADHD symptoms, eating a healthy and balanced diet will help maintain energy levels and lead to overall good health.

Foods to eat

- Complex carbohydrates – wholegrain bread, rice, pasta, potatoes
- Fruit and vegetables – fresh, frozen or tinned
- Protein – meat, fish, meat alternatives such as Quorn, pulses and beans
- Dairy – cheese, milk, yogurt (or soya alternatives)

Foods to avoid

- Sugar
- Sweets
- Chocolate
- Fried food
- Caffeine

Support for your young person within school

If you have concerns about how your child is managing in school then speak to their class teacher or personal tutor. Ask how they are progressing academically, socially and behaviourally from the school's perspective. Ask if the school have any concerns or have noticed any specific struggles they may have. Share with the school what your concerns are and discuss any suggestions you may have of how to improve these.

If you feel your child would benefit from more support within the school environment then arrange a meeting with the school SENCO (Special Educational needs Coordinator) to discuss this.

Regular communication with your child's school will ensure that everybody involved is aware of how your child is coping and progressing at school and any concerns can be addressed jointly.

There are a number of different agencies within Swindon who can provide parents and carers with advice and support in accessing support for their child, the details of these can be found in the resources section of this toolkit.

Personality strengths and ADHD

Not every person with ADHD has the same personality traits, but there are some personal strengths that can make having the condition an advantage, not a drawback. Examples of these traits include:

energetic: Some with ADHD often have seemingly endless amounts of energy, which they are able to channel toward success on the playing field, school, or work.

spontaneous: Some people with ADHD can turn impulsivity into spontaneity. They may be the life of the party or may be more open and willing to try new things and break free from the status quo.

creative and inventive: Living with ADHD may give the person a different perspective on life and encourage them to approach tasks and situations with a thoughtful eye. As a result, some with ADHD may be inventive thinkers. Others words to describe them may be original, artistic, and creative.

hyper focused: Some people with ADHD may become hyper focused on certain tasks. This makes them so intently focused on a task that they may not even notice the world around them. The benefit to this is when given an assignment, a person with ADHD may work at it until its completion without breaking concentration.

Celebrities who have ADHD

Some celebrities who have ADHD include:

- Emma Watson (actor)
- Michael Phelps (swimmer)
- Jamie Oliver (celebrity chef)
- Will.i.am (singer)
- Channing Tatum (actor)
- Ryan Gosling (actor)
- Simone Biles (gymnast)

Resources Section

In this section, you will find:

Useful worksheets

Breathing techniques

Mindfulness activities

Yoga instructions

Online support links

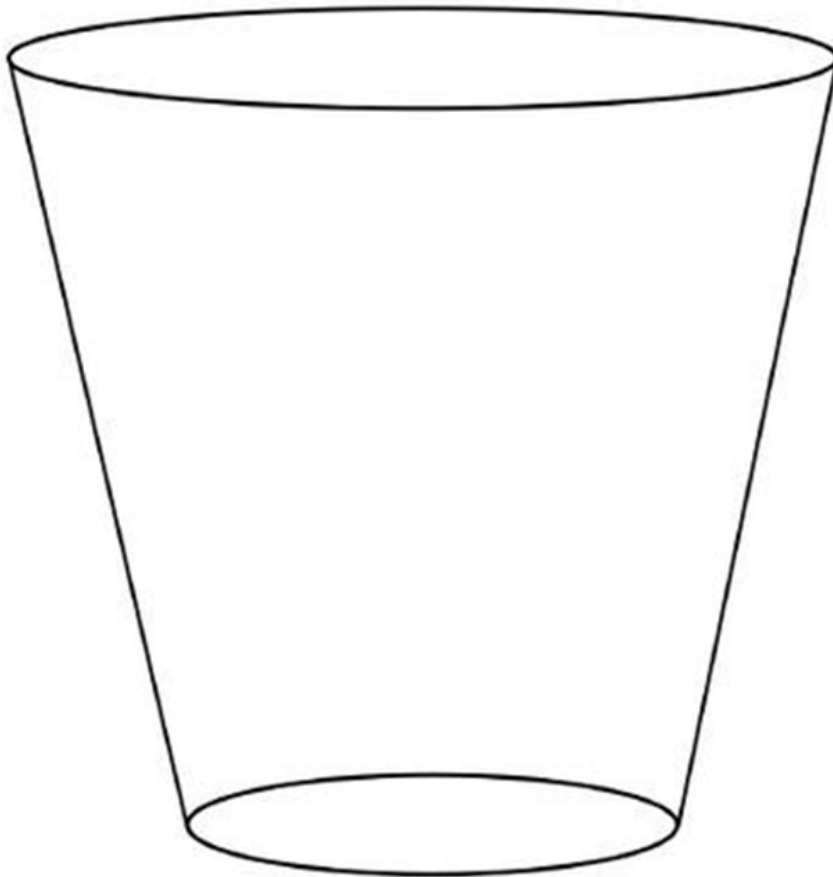
Support telephone numbers

Use this sheet to help your child identify their feelings and emotions

MY CUP-O-FEELINGS

Color inside this cup to show how much of each emotion you're feeling right now!
Use the blank spaces to pick other colors and feelings that you'd like.

YELLOW • Happy RED • Angry PINK • Hopeful PURPLE • Scared
ORANGE • Nervous GREEN • Excited BLUE • Sad BROWN • Surprised



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My ADHD

How my ADHD affects my life, things I am proud of and things I would like support to change.

	True	False	Sometimes true
I struggle to sit still			
I struggle to focus in class			
I shout out in class			
I interrupt others when they are speaking			
I am active and have a lot of energy			
I am funny			
I struggle with being organised			
I get angry a lot			
I feel my ADHD makes my life difficult			
I get the support I need at school			
I like to fidget to help me concentrate			
I need breaks when I am doing school work			
I sleep well			
I find it difficult to follow instructions			
I do things without thinking of the consequences first			
I am often late for school			
I argue a lot			
I like to have structure and follow a timetable			
I often forget things I need e.g. PE kit			
I am creative			
I enjoy playing sports			
I can focus on something for a long time if it interests me			

The three things I would like support to improve are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Example weekly timetable

This will be a less detailed timetable than a daily one. Times and activities can be changed when completing the blank timetable for your individual child.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7am – 8am	Morning routine	Morning routine	Morning routine	Morning routine	Morning routine
8am – 9am	Walk to school	Walk to school	Walk to school	Walk to school	Walk to school
9am – 10am	School	School	School	School	School
10am – 11am					
11am – 12pm					
12pm – 1pm					
1pm – 2pm					
2pm – 3pm					
3pm – 4pm	Walk home, snack	Walk home, snack	Walk home, snack	Walk home, snack	Walk home, snack
4pm – 5pm	Home-work	Home-work	Homework	Homework	Home-work
5pm – 6pm	Free time/ dinner	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time
6pm – 7pm	STEP	Dinner and chores	Dinner and chores	Dinner and chores	Dinner and chores
7pm – 8pm		Club	Free time	Free time	Club
8pm – 9pm	Quiet time	Quiet time	Quiet time	Quiet time	Quiet time

Blank timetable

Add in the activities that your child needs at the times they happen.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7am – 8am					
8am – 9am					
9am – 10am					
10am – 11am					
11am – 12pm					
12pm – 1pm					
1pm – 2pm					
2pm – 3pm					
3pm – 4pm					
4pm – 5pm					
5pm – 6pm					
6pm – 7pm					
7pm – 8pm					
8pm – 9pm					

Example daily timetable

This is an example daily timetable which is more specific than the weekly one. Use your child's individual school timetable to include the correct lessons at the correct times. Timings should be adjusted to suit your child's age and your own family routine.

Time	Task	Tick when complete
7.00 – 7.30am	Up, washed and dressed	
7.30am – 8am	Breakfast	
8am – 8.30am	Walk to school	
8.30am – 9am	Registration	
9am – 10.30am	Maths	
10.30am – 11am	Break	
11am – 12pm	Science	
12pm – 12.45pm	Lunch	
12.45pm – 1pm	Registration	
1pm – 2pm	French	
2pm – 3pm	History	
3pm – 3.20pm	Assembly	
3.20pm – 3.45pm	Walk home	
3.45pm – 4pm	Snack	
4pm – 5pm	Homework	
5pm – 6pm	Free time	
6pm – 7pm	Dinner and chores	
7pm – 8pm	Free time	
8pm – 8.30pm	Shower	
8.30pm – 9.30pm	Quiet activity / meditation (no screen time)	
9.30pm	Bed time	

Blank daily timetable

Add in the activities that your child needs at the times they happen.

[illegible]

An example of rules and consequences

Rules

- No physical violence or fighting
- No swearing
- You must complete all school work
- Follow your timetable
- Do not leave the house without permission
- No bullying of siblings / name calling
- Do not take things that are not yours
- Do not intentionally break things or damage the house / furniture
- No slamming doors
- Clean up after yourself and keep your room tidy
- No shouting

Consequences

- Reduced screen/ computer time
- Temporary loss of an electronic device
- Time out
- An apology
- Extra chores such as washing up
- No dessert after dinner
- Loss of pocket money / allowance to pay for repairs or replacements of anything broken intentionally
- Clean up any mess made. Fix anything that has been broken and can be repaired

An example reward chart

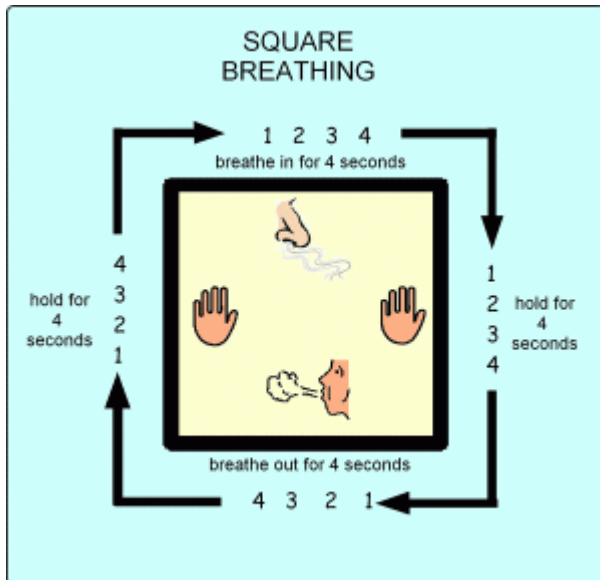
Week beginning:							
Task	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Get up and dressed on time							
Eat breakfast and clear up after							
Arrive at school on time							
Come straight home after school							
Complete all homework							
Tidy room							
Eat dinner and help tidy up							
Shower before bed							
Bonus stars (for good behaviour)							

Blank reward chart

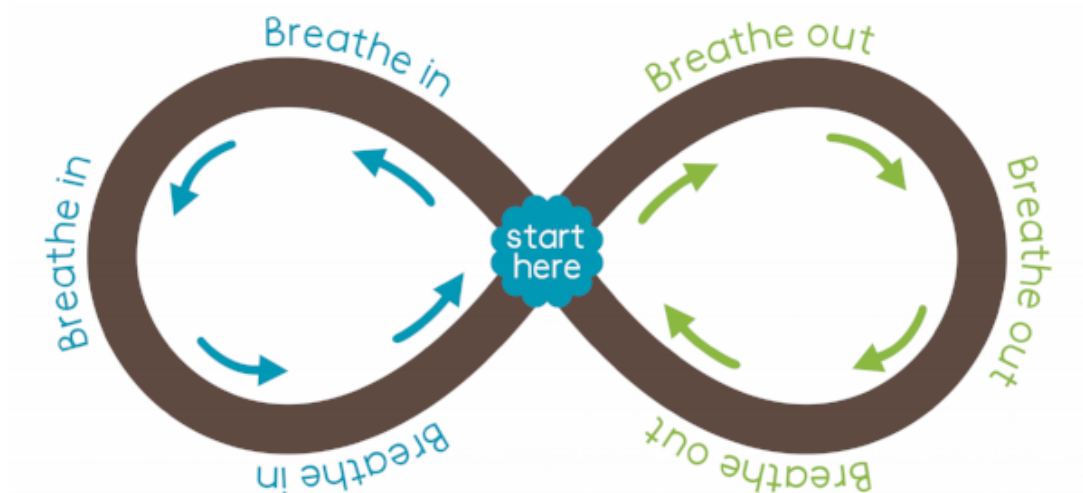
Include tasks that are relevant to your child, make sure the tasks and target number of stars are achievable for them. Include tasks that they are reluctant to complete, the reward chart may motivate them to do so.

[illegible]

Deep breathing techniques can be used to manage stress, anxiety and panic and can help calm an individual who is feeling hyperactive. They take just a few minutes and can be done anywhere. Below you will find a few different techniques you can teach your child to use. Why not try and learn them together so you can practice them regularly .



1. Begin by exhaling all of your air out.
2. Then, **gently inhale** through your nose to a slow count of 4, imagining going along one side of the square.
3. **Hold the breath** for a count of 4, imagining the second side of the square.
4. **Gently exhale** through your mouth for a count of 4 for the third side of the square.
5. **Pause and hold** for the count of 4 to complete the square.



Mindfulness activity suggestions



Mindfulness colouring can help improve mood, reduce feelings of stress and anxiety. It can help focus the mind and allow an individual to practice concentrating on a task. Free, printable colouring sheets can be found online. We have included two colouring sheets in this toolkit but many others are available online.

Mindfulness jars (or bottles) are a great way to distract the mind from feelings of stress. They help an individual to learn to focus their mind as well. Making them is a fun activity too.



Practicing a body scan meditation can help reduce stress and calm the mind.

GOOD FOR YOU, MEDITATION IS.

Set a timer for 10 min.

Sit comfortably.

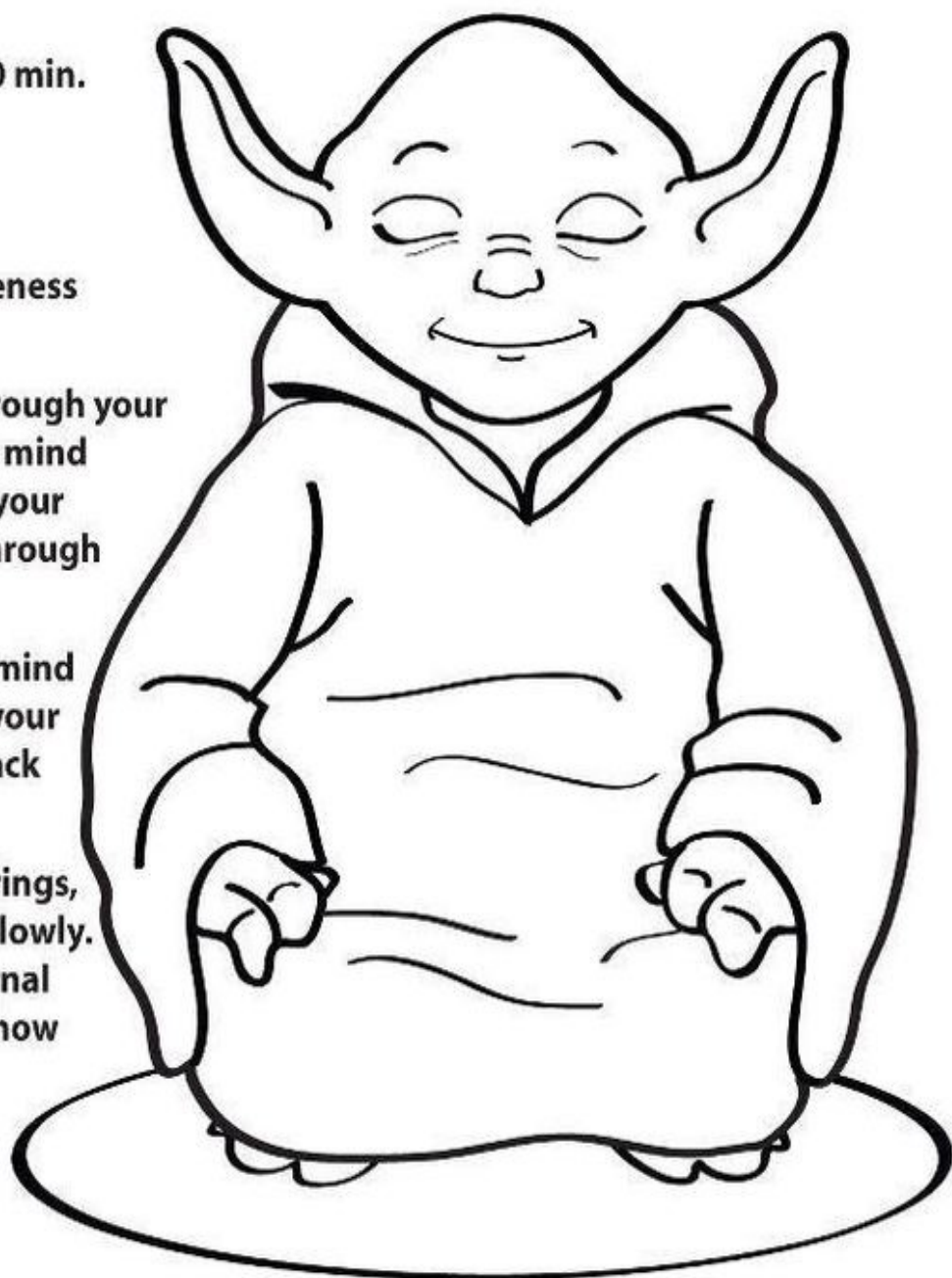
Close your eyes.

Bring your awareness
to your breath.

Slowly inhale through your
nose. Focus your mind
on the sound of your
breath. Exhale through
your nose.

Every time your mind
wanders, bring your
concentration back
to your breath.

When the timer rings,
open your eyes slowly.
Keep a daily journal
and write down how
meditation
makes you feel.

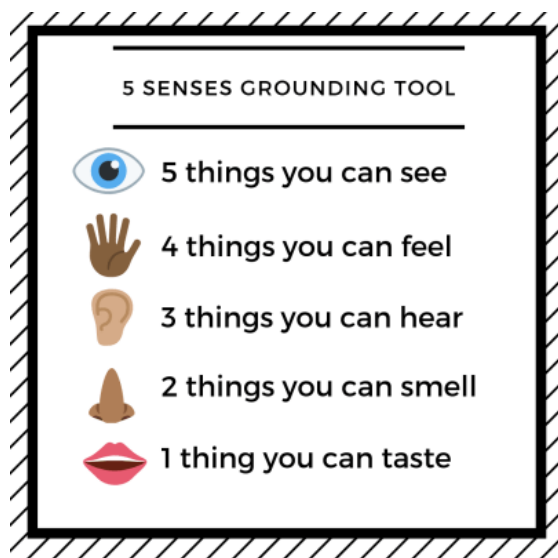


It might be challenging at first. But
don't give up! With steady practice,
you'll soon be able to meditate just
like Yoda!

COLOR YODA!

Grounding techniques

A grounding technique is anything that helps us re focus in the present moment. Using the senses is a great way to do this and helps reduce stress and anxiety. It is also a good way to calm and focus the mind when someone is feeling hyperactive and distracted.



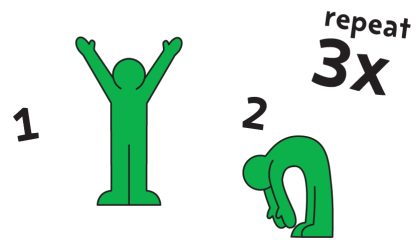
One useful technique that can help when you're feeling highly stressed or anxious is to focus on your senses and list in your mind:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

The more often this technique is practiced the easier it will be to do. Try practicing it when calm to make it easier to do when you need to.

Yoga

1. Get warmed up by raising your arms and stretching up to the sky for a count of 10, then touch your toes for a count of 10. Repeat 3 times.



2. Now make the Butterfly pose by sitting and placing the soles of your feet against one another. Hold your feet for a count of 10. Repeat 3 times.



3. Next is the Camel pose! Kneel down, stretch your arms up over your head and reach back to your toes. Hold it for 10. Repeat 3 times.



4. Dolphin pose is next – from standing, bend over and rest your elbows on the ground, keeping your legs straight. Tuck your head in and hold for 10. Repeat 3 times.



5. Finally, it's the Tortoise pose. Sit in a kneeling position, fold your body over and on to the floor, arms stretched out over your head. Hold for 30 seconds. Now repeat the circuit for 10 minutes.







Sources of support

Online support—the following organisations can provide advice and guidance for children and young people, many offer advice to parents/ carers as well.

ADHD specific support

- **Young Minds (ADHD support for young people)** - <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/adhd-and-mental-health/>
- **Young Minds (ADHD advice for parents)** - <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/parents-guide-to-support-a-z/parents-guide-to-support-adhd/>
- **ADHD foundation - (Support for individuals with ADHD and their parents / carers—**
<https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/>
- **Mind** - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/adhd-and-mental-health/>
- **Living with ADHD** - <https://www.livingwithadhd.co.uk/>
- **NHS** - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/>
- **The Children's society** - <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/mental-health-advice-for-children-and-young-people/adhd>

General support

- **Young minds** - The UK's leading charity fighting for children and young people's mental health
<https://youngminds.org.uk/>
- **Kooth** - Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people
<https://www.kooth.com/>
- **Samaritans** - <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- **The dock** - The dock is a new and different way for young people to find out about services that are here to help them in Swindon.
<https://thedockswindon.co.uk/>
- **NHS every mind matters** - <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>
- **The Mix** - Essential support for people under 25
<https://www.themix.org.uk/>
- **The Children's society** - Support for young people and their mental health
<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/young-peoples-mental-health>
- **Friends of STEP Facebook page**—Here you can find useful resources covering a variety of topics (including ADHD)
<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfStep>

Useful telephone numbers

Be U Swindon - At BeU Swindon, we believe in the power of togetherness. Our Collaborative Care model brings together experts from different fields, ensuring that every child and young person receives a holistic approach to their well-being.

Tel - 01793781484, Website - <https://beuswindon.co.uk>

CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) - Help children, young people and their families across Swindon, Wiltshire, Bath and North East Somerset who are experiencing more severe, complex and persistent mental health difficulties. Tel—01865 903422

Useful online videos

A beginner's guide to meditation - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-kMJBWk9E0>

The Five Ways to Wellbeing — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yF7Ou43Vj6c>

The social and emotional benefits of physical activity and exercise —

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNIOsNI-o60>

Sleep: A bedtime story — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fbaoqkY0Qk>

Support with special educational needs in Swindon

SIAS (Swindon SEND information, advice and support service) - https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20050/educational_support/766/sias_-_swindon_send_information_advice_and_support_service

Swindon SEND local offer - The “go to” website for services and support available to children and young people from birth to 25 years with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

<https://localoffer.swindon.gov.uk/content/send-local-offer/landing-pages/swindon-send-local-offer/>

Swindon SEND family voice - Support for Parents, Carers and families of children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Swindon

<https://swindonsendfamiliesvoice.org.uk/>