

**QUICK ACCESS RESOURCES**  
**FOR**  
**PEOPLE WITH ADHD**



## **A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF HOW ADHD AFFECTS PEOPLE**

The main difficulties that people with ADHD have are varied from person to person. You may have also learned to hide or repress some of the difficulties so that they aren't noticeable, which can be exhausting and stressful. Having undiagnosed ADHD for many years can lead people to expect that they will struggle and fail at everything and that others don't want them around.

### **5 GENERAL PROBLEMS CAUSED BY ADHD**

- A short attention span for regular, routine, everyday tasks (homework, chores, work tasks etc.) and distractibility
- Organization problems (like having a disorganized room and/or always running late) and forgetting things
- Trouble starting (procrastination) and finishing things
- Problems with impulsivity (saying or doing something before thinking it through)
- A need for high activity and/or stimulation to feel satisfied by life

Having these difficulties can cause further problems such as:

- Trouble listening when people talk to you
- Problems with time management (e.g. losing track of time)
- Forgetfulness and a tendency to lose things
- Poor attention to detail and making careless mistakes
- Excessive daydreaming and being preoccupied by lots in your head
- Feeling bored easily and often
- Difficulties with self-awareness and getting on with people sometimes
- Appearing unmotivated or apathetic
- Being tired or sluggish or conversely always on the go
- Having big mood changes → Irritability, anger, anxiety, sadness
- Spending too much time on something stimulating or rewarding
- Doing risky things and sometimes getting into trouble for them
- Coping by self-medicating (e.g. lots of caffeine, alcohol, opioids, cannabis, cocaine etc.)

These things have a major impact on a person's relationships, education, work and home life. It can be stressful getting into trouble and forever feeling that we can't meet expectations even when we try. This stress can also contribute to people with ADHD becoming mentally unwell too.

*This booklet aims to give you some suggestions to help you get started in managing some of these problems. You will also develop your own strategies over time, now that you have an idea about your differences.*

*Try to make use of your strengths to manage your difficulties*

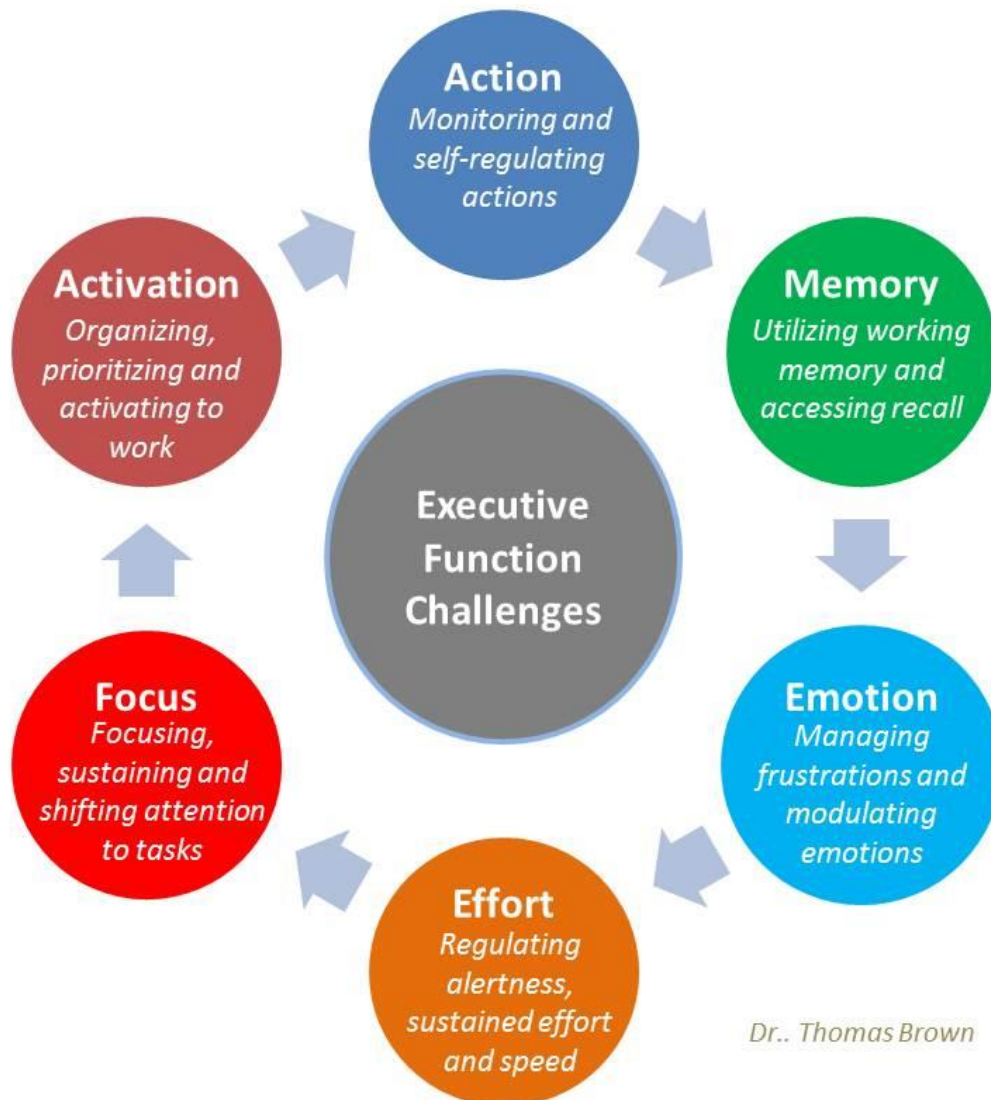
## What Causes ADHD and How to Manage it

ADHD is thought to be caused by genetic differences that result in alterations in the way certain parts of the brain work.

Those brain parts affect something called 'executive function'

Executive functions are a set of abilities that typically developing children acquire through childhood, but those with ADHD struggle to develop.

They are shown in the diagram below



These can be understood under 3 linked general abilities

- **Working memory** enables us to retain and manipulate pieces of information in our mind for short periods of time (e.g. when doing mental arithmetic or working out what to say).
- **Mental flexibility** helps us to focus or shift attention as the demands upon us change.
- **Self-control** allows us to manage our feelings, stay motivated, set priorities and resist impulsive actions or responses.

## According to Russel Barkley, having ADHD means...

- You struggle with your performance not knowledge or skill
- You know what to do, but can't do what you know
- The key to coping is to design scaffolding or external supports, to give yourself an artificial 'executive function'

I have summarized this in the acronym 'PEARLS'

### PEARLS of Wisdom

- **Plan** - This is essential to build self-awareness and understanding of where you need the help and to be realistic about what you can achieve and how so your plans don't set you up to fail
- **Externalise** - Externalise everything relating to executive function to give yourself the scaffolding you need
- **Abilities** - Use your skills and interests to your advantage in any way you can, whether it is relating to rewards or getting tasks done
- **Re-fuel** - To maintain your capacity to work - this involves regular brain rest, physical activity and a small amount of glucose
- **Learn** - from experience and reflect upon what worked, what didn't and why - keep using successful strategies (these become motivating through confidence) and remember you have a disability (neuro-genetic) and you're doing a great job!
- **Soothe** - Use self-soothing skills to manage your strong emotions and avoid doing things impulsively you will regret

*This booklet has information and suggestions to help you do all these things.*

*Start with small changes and build on things that work for YOU, personally.*



*You are learning how to be your own mentor.*

# MOTIVATION

## IMPROVING MOTIVATION

1. Break lengthy periods into short ones and big projects into small ones so the delay between the start and the end is removed
2. Give yourself an external reward after each step - don't rely on your internal reward system → **Use your individual interests, skills and values to make it REALLY rewarding**
3. Replenish your fuel tank by:
  - Use of greater rewards and things that bring positive emotions
  - Statements of self-efficacy and encouragement
  - Use the 10-3 rule → for every 10-minute task that requires a lot of focus and self-control have a 3+ minutes relaxation or meditation to rest
  - Visualise and talk about future rewards before and during demanding tasks
  - Get some routine **physical exercise** (house-work, walk the dog, gardening)
  - Have a sweet drinks - sipping sugary drinks fuels the brain quickly
4. Begin the task with no expectations and see what happens
5. Create some urgency for yourself - give yourself a deadline - this is very good for people with ADHD (don't make it too long, say 15-30 minutes at a time)
6. Reward, Reward, Reward! Schedule in something enjoyable before and after the task and plan rewards long term - e.g. a chocolate bar or cinema trip for every 3 things you finish.
7. Create a list of things you have to do and just spend 15 minutes on the top 2 or 3 to get started (this often helps).
8. Remember - "good enough is enough" often we avoid and feel unmotivated, because of a fear that the end result won't be good enough - but then we do nothing.
9. Do the hardest things when you are at your peak (the time of day you have the most energy and think the most positively) - this might be when your medication is at its most effective.
10. Picture the end result - remind yourself of why and what you are aiming for and the end reward → use pictures, written descriptions, objects or symbols as a reminder of the end result.

## MEMORY

Having ADHD involves being forgetful and this can be stressful and annoying to us and others, but don't despair! There are practical ways that can make up for the way things seem to 'fall out' of our memory store.

The following can be helpful to act as reminders (multiple might be needed!):

- Use visual cues such as lists, posters, post it notes **placed strategically** in areas where they can be seen by you and not ignored
- A paper diary to write important reminders in when they come up – don't wait to do this until later that day (you WILL forget!)
- A phone diary
- A desk calendar/planner
- Use phone alarms and reminders with a note about what it signifies, or you WILL forget!
- Ask others to remind you
- Objects placed strategically in areas where they can be seen and not ignored (e.g. parcel to post by the front door)
- Email yourself with reminders or to-do lists
- HAVE A ROUTINE – this avoids having to remember everything each time
- Externalise mental problem solving –
  - put on paper or a white board
  - make it manual (use objects) if it is too hard to hold multiple things in your mind

## IMPROVING TIME MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION

### 10 TIPS FOR BETTER TIME MANAGEMENT

1. Plan ahead and Prioritise (see below for more info)
2. **Use a** large clock so time is *noticeable*
3. Use an alarm to let you know when to move onto the next task
4. Aim to arrive 10-15 minutes early and set reminders to leave on time
5. Use a watch or other timer and set reminders and alarms - perhaps 30 minutes before planned departure, 10 minutes before planned departure, at time of planned departure
6. If you have a smartphone, you can make use of the calendar app
7. Say no to others or check your diary before committing yourself!
8. Allow more time than you think you'll need - add ten minutes to every 30 minutes
9. Do one thing at a time and finish before moving on if possible
10. Delegate (politely) when you can!

### 10 TIPS FOR BETTER ORGANISATION

- Create more space - identify which items are necessary and discard or store other items - try not to hoard!
- Create a *SIMPLE* filing system using boxes, folders, shelves, baskets etc to file and store things
- Have a place for important items for work or school by the front door or where you can see them before you leave home e.g. keys, bags, coats.
- Have a daily/weekly routine & tick off completed activities, e.g. pet care, household chores
- Check school/work bag/handbag and RECHECK before leaving home/office or school/college!
- Get things ready for work/school the night before
- Use a wall calendar (or smartphone/computer calendar) for weekly events e.g. evening class, special events, appointments, exams, assignments etc.
- Use a whiteboard or messages on the fridge for reminders / to do lists
- Deal with post, calls etc. as they come in rather than leaving for another time
- Use a social media group for family or friends to stay in touch and schedule your activities together.

## DECISION MAKING USING THE EISENHOWER MATRIX

The Eisenhower Matrix classifies most tasks under two headings: urgent or important. The following are the definitions of Important and Urgent, according to the Eisenhower Principle:

- Important activities have an outcome that leads to the achievement of your goals, whether these are professional or personal. (Unimportant Activities do not aid in goal completion.)
- Urgent activities demand immediate attention and are often associated with the achievement of someone else's goals. (Non-urgent activities do not demand immediate attention.)

Tasks can be labeled as one of the following:

**Box 1.** Urgent and Important – e.g. a house fire, a big presentation for work, a baby crying

**Box 2.** Not Urgent and Important – e.g. exercising, nurturing relationships, working on a project

**Box 3.** Urgent and Not Important – e.g. donuts in the staff room, a solicitor calling with a "once in a lifetime" opportunity

**Box 4.** Not Urgent and Not Important – e.g. surfing the Internet for no reason in particular, watching TV

Some people use the easy to remember rule of "1 = do; 2 = plan; 3 = delegate; 4 = eliminate."

	URGENT →	→ NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<b>1</b>  <b>DO</b>	<b>2</b>  <b>PLAN</b>
↓  NOT IMPORTANT	<b>3</b>  <b>DELEGATE</b>	<b>4</b>  <b>ELIMINATE</b>

## **PROCRASTINATION**

Many people with and without ADHD suffer with procrastination. Often this is not because you aren't able to do the task effectively, but because you think it will be too difficult, not good enough and draining due to your condition.

After getting your diagnosis and starting medication you will be in a better position to manage and challenge these beliefs effectively.

### **10 TIPS TO REDUCE PROCRASTINATION**

1. Clarify what is expected of you first, as confusion and uncertainty can lead to stress and stress to avoidance
2. Be aware of perfectionism and deciding upon a GOOD ENOUGH end point
3. Break the task down into its sub-tasks or component parts and work out how long each will take
4. Give yourself plenty time to do each sub-task
5. Make sure you schedule in breaks and rewards e.g. sitting in the garden and having a cigarette or cup of tea and cake
6. Make sure you have all the materials you need
7. Take your medication before you start and allow enough time for it to be of benefit to you
8. Do not overload on caffeine, as you could feel restless or jittery and unable to get on. If you feel restless, go for a walk first or do other exercise you enjoy
9. You might want to try the Worst/Best -First principle: knock out the worst task first, so all other tasks after that are easy by comparison OR start doing a task that you like and that might energise you, and then without a break quickly switch to a task that you have been putting off.
10. If a task is dreaded use the 5-Minute rule: plan to spend just 5 minutes on the task. This is such a small amount of time that you can tolerate just 5 minutes. At the end of the 5 minutes, reassess and see if you can spend just another 5 minutes on the task, and so on.

*Keep trying different techniques, as different tasks might be better approached in different ways*

### **TIMERS**

*Time Timer* (<http://www.timetimer.com>) is the creator of a variety of products that create a graphic image of the passage of time. As time elapses, a red disk gradually disappears under a clear lens, so you gain a real understanding of how much time is left for a particular task. The desktop version has been around for more than 20 years, but more recently the company launched a watch version as well as an App for iPhones and Android phones.

*Datexx Smart Cube Timer*, available at Amazon.com and various other retailers, works by simply resting the cube with the desired time facing up—5, 15, 30, or 60 minutes. When your time is up, a loud alarm will ring; simply set it back to zero at the top to silence it. This saves the user the time and effort it takes to program the amount of time needed, making it far more likely people with ADHD will use it.

## PLANNERS

Planners specifically designed and created to help individuals with ADHD effectively manage their time and reach their goals can be helpful. A good planner combines the best aspects of a quarter-hour planner, monthly planner, and Long-Term Goals and Weekly Objectives worksheets. Try to include incentives and consequences to tasks, and even rate their performance on a weekly basis right in the planner itself. The *Bulletproof Planner: Executive Function and ADHD Academic Planner* Paperback has good reviews and can be found on Amazon.

## APPS

The following is a list of apps that can help people stay organized, manage their time and follow through with goals. Some but not all are available currently for iPhone/iPad or Android products.

App	Description
Planner Plus	Like a paper planner in digital form. It has monthly and weekly views, as well as task lists and notes section.
Wunderlist	A list-making app that allows the user to easily share to-dos or ideas with others.
Cozi	A calendar app and website designed to incorporate schedules for the entire family, integrating shopping lists, sports activities, chores, meal plans and more.
Task Current	An iPhone and iPad app that turns a to-do list into a list of skills to learn motivational tricks and productivity tips to work into one's day-to-day life, and more.
Task Timer	Allows the user to create a list of tasks, set time goals for a task, and keep track of the amount of time spent in each task. It has several options available for customization.
Evernote	The Evernote app helps users remember everything across all of the devices he or she may use. It helps the individual to stay organized, save ideas, and improve productivity by managing notes, photos, to-do lists, and recorded voice reminders all in one place. In addition, Evernote makes these notes completely searchable at any time. More recently, the

	<p>Evernote brand has launched some new products that are equally helpful:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Skitch allows the user to use annotations, sketches, and shapes to develop ideas;</li> <li>b. Web Clipper allows the user to save ideas from the Internet with one click; and</li> <li>c. Evernote Peek turns notes into study materials.</li> </ol>
Total Recall	A mind-mapping app. In other words, users create graphic organizers on their mobile device and can easily share their creations with others.
Unstuck	Combines personalized digital tools with tips and know-how from a community of other people facing “stuck moments,” offering on-demand coaching for the user. Through a series of questions and answers, the Unstuck app pinpoints the type of stuck moment you’re in then provides suggestions on how to become “unstuck.”
Due	Aims to set you back on track with reminders to do the important things. Increase your productivity by taking the variability out of the must-dos, like taking medication. Adding a reminder is easy, the app design is super clean and sleek, and the reminders are persistent. When a reminder goes off, it continues to ping you in set intervals (say, every 10 minutes) until you mark the task as done.
Remember the Milk	Helps create task lists with their own subtasks. Assign due dates to each and add notes that lend helpful information, like locations, passwords, details, messages, or addresses that you need handy to complete the tasks.
Asana	A free organization and collaboration tool. Use it to create to-do lists and add due dates and details. Asana is great for adding structure to your professional life, too, as it allows for team collaboration: assign tasks to others, view tasks in project boards, and keep tabs on what’s been assigned to you and others.
RescueTime	A productivity app that encourages positive changes based on insights into your behavior. Time spent on your phone is one of the ultimate productivity sinks. The app automatically logs and categorizes the time you spend using your devices, including your phone and laptop or desktop computer. Mobile notifications alert you when you’re approaching or have exceeded your designated limits.
Todoist	Allows you to get things out of your head and onto a list that stays with you, pings you, and motivates you to be productive. With the quick-add feature, you just type in a task, reminder time, and hash-tagged list

	category, and the app takes care of all the organization.
Brain Focus	Keeps you from using your phone as a distraction and blocks other apps and quiets your notifications so phone distractions are not an option when you need to focus. The app uses the <a href="#">Pomodoro method</a> of setting time on-task and time off-task, otherwise known as a break, meditation... whatever suits your needs best.
MotiveAider	Allows you to devise a brief personal message that serves as a trigger or cue to remind and urge you to engage in the desired behaviour. Then you choose a prompt type - either vibration alone or vibration plus an audible tone - and decide how often to receive prompts. Next you simply "associate" your personal message with the prompt so that whenever you feel (and if you choose, also hear) the prompt, you'll automatically think your personal message.
The Tile App	When you attach Tile to an item (such as your keys), you're tethering them to your phone. So when something gets lost, you have a buddy that knows what to do. The app automatically records the last place your phone (or any other phone with the app open) saw your Tile. If you have to retrace your steps, it's good to know where to start walking. When you begin searching for a lost item, your phone tracks the signal strength of your Tile. As you get closer, the app's tracking circle fills in, giving you a clear indication of your progress. Available at <a href="http://www.thetileapp.com">http://www.thetileapp.com</a>

#### Other Helpful apps:

Lumosity	A website and app scientifically designed and researched to train memory and attention, cognitively challenge the user in new ways, and track progress.
ADHD Guardian and ADHD Angel	<p>Offer practical support for people with ADHD, The app also features 'ADHD Tipping Points' that contain advice on how to manage particularly difficult situations, such as moving up to secondary school, learning to drive or entering the workplace.</p> <p>The Guardian has the ability to send medication reminders. The apps also provide practical information for managing ADHD, including a guide to the disorder for police and court officials, and a simple explanation of ADHD for patients and their families to use in daily life when explaining it to others.</p>

## TIPS AND TRICKS FOR IMPROVING ATTENTION AND FOCUS

First and foremost be realistic about your strengths and most problematic areas e.g. is daydreaming or distraction your main problem or is it hyper-focus or a mixture?

Use techniques that are suitable for a specific problem and make the best use of your strengths to help with this.

1. Think about the environment where you intend to work
  - i. Is it busy/noisy where others will disturb you?
  - ii. Does your workspace face a window looking out onto a busy area?
  - iii. Do you have a comfortable seat? Etc.
2. Use headphones/earplugs and tell the people around you that you cannot be disturbed for a given time (and you aren't being rude by not joining in).
3. Create a plan/list of what you need to turn your attention to throughout the day, so you do not forget - use highlighters or the Eisenhower Matrix to prioritise.
4. Timetable a rewarding activity between essential and less interesting tasks (e.g. TV, gaming).
5. Some people find it easier to focus with familiar background music playing to filter out other noises and provide a sense of calm.
6. Remove things that cause you to become distracted or capture your attention easily e.g. your phone.
7. Use an alarm with a sound or piece of music that you like.
8. Add 10 minutes extra time on to every 30 minutes you estimate a task will take to be on the safe side (people with ADHD can have difficulty estimating how long a task will take).
9. Turn off notifications on your phone and computer while you need to focus.
10. Make a note of times or activities that are particularly problematic and result in hyper-focus or 'daydreaming' (engrossed lengthy thinking) and use time management strategies, such as rewarding yourself, for sticking to an allotted time.

*Don't expect to change overnight; developing new habits takes time.*

## MANAGING IMPULSIVITY

### IMPULSIVE SPENDING:

- Give yourself a limit on spending each week
- Only use the cash you carry with you
- Leave your cards at home when you go shopping, or only take 1
- Take a friend or relative who can remind you about your tendencies in a nice way!
- Unsubscribe from emails from shops
- Take shopping apps off your phone
- Block websites that are too tempting
- Remove '1-click' payment options
- Use a shopping list and keep a note of what you spend
- Have a rule to never do shopping at night or when you a feeling low or have been drinking or taking drugs

### IMPULSIVE DRINKING/DRUG TAKING

- Set yourself a limit beforehand
- Only take money out that will cover the amount you are going to drink
- Ask people not to offer to buy you drinks
- Save your money towards something else if people buy you drinks
- Be the designated driver (or take your care or bike) so that you have a reason not to drink
- Remind yourself that you are putting yourself at risk if you drink/take drugs impulsively and have difficulty stopping or protecting yourself (e.g. are you risking your driving license?)

### IMPULSIVE SPEAKING

- Know your strengths and limitations so you can prepare for a difficult situation
- Give yourself time to think before reacting to something irritating/offensive - e.g. take a few breaths, count to 5, take a sip of a drink, then be assertiveness!
- Get to know a bit about the people you will be talking to first, to avoid blunders if you do speak on impulse
- Ask yourself, "is this important/relevant/respectful" before speaking
- Remind yourself of the problems caused by speaking impulsively so you have reasons to manage it (e.g. people get the wrong impression of you).
- Learn to make a joke of slip-ups you make
- Apologise if you think you might have offended someone - but try not to criticise yourself.
- Practice calming and self-soothing techniques if you react impulsively to feelings of disappointment, sadness, frustration or anger etc.
- Use the strategies above if you react impulsively to happier feelings of excitement and pleasure.

# DEVELOPING BETTER COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

## ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION

### Basic Human Rights

Assertiveness means all people have basic human rights including:

- I have the right to say "No" without feeling guilty.
- I have the right to make mistakes.
- I have a right to express my own opinions and feelings including anger.
- I have the right to be listened to and taken seriously
- I have the right to dignity.
- I have the right to make my own decisions.
- I have the right to consideration from others.

### *But with rights come Basic Human Responsibilities:*

- I am responsible for treating others fairly, honestly and with respect for their dignity.
- I am responsible for my own actions and their consequences.
- I am responsible for upholding the rights of others whenever I can.
- I am responsible for my own decisions.
- I accept responsibility for my own life. What happens to

### 5 steps to assertiveness:

1. State the situation you want to change
2. Say how it affects you
3. Say what you would like to change
4. Be willing to negotiate but not back down
5. Thank the person for their cooperation

E.g. "Peter, when you have the radio on so loud I struggle to concentrate and become very stressed. Please keep the volume low while we're working, I don't mind if you turn it up at lunch time, thanks."

The idea of being assertive can be daunting and leave us feeling very anxious and stressed. It can be helpful to use some slow soothing breathing and self-compassion imagery when you feel this way (see managing emotions).

***Also, make one change at a time rather than trying to change lots of things all at once.***

### How to be assertive when feeling angry:

- Do not stand too close
- Keep your body relaxed but upright (no clenched fists or waving arms!)
- Maintain eye contact (but don't stare)
- Use a firm facial expression
- Maintain your voice volume at a steady level - no shouting or whispering
- Keep your timing consistent - try not to hesitate

### Listening Skills

- **Show You Are Paying Attention** - i.e. being focused on what the other person is saying using your ears, eye contact and posture
- **Acknowledge What the Other Person/People Say** - i.e. indicate you've heard what they have said, by saying "Mmm", "yes" or nodding/shaking head
- **Respond** - i.e. answer questions that have been asked, share your opinion or give question-type feedback (i.e. "Did you really?")
- **Avoid visibly checking your watch (even if you are bored)!**
- If you start to zone out and miss something - apologise, explain and ask what was said

### Conversational Skills

- **Take Turns to Talk** - i.e. allowing the other person the opportunity to talk
- **Interrupt Carefully** - too many or inappropriate interruptions may be seen as disrespect or disinterest in the other person
- **Use Questions** - ask and answer questions to stimulate conversation (but don't interrogate!)
- **Be relevant** - don't suddenly go off topic unless it seems to naturally happen
- **Politely Correct**- e.g. if someone calls you by the wrong name

***Think before speaking - is it Relevant, Respectful, at the Right time?***

*(But don't expect perfection, we all make mistakes at times)*

### Other Tips for Successful Social Situations

- Set a limit for the amount of alcohol you want to drink or how much (and what) you want to smoke beforehand.
- Notice any negative self-talk in your mind beforehand and remind yourself that this is just your nerves talking
- Plan beforehand how you will get there and back and make a note of it to take.
- Make sure you know where you are going and at what time, before you go.

### General Advice for Meetings and Discussions

Suggestion	Reason why	Overcoming Barriers
1. Consider the person/people you will be speaking and what you are comfortable disclosing and what you are not.	This will lessen the likelihood of impulsively disclosing information or saying things that you will later regret.	Think and plan well <b>BEFORE</b> the meeting; you might want to write out your thoughts on this to help you remember.
2. Have <b>ONE</b> topic/goal to discuss in a meeting or discussion or deal with multiple topics in order of priority.	This will lessen the likelihood of being distracted and losing sight of your intended goal for the discussion.	Write down the topic and what you would like the outcome/goal of the discussion to be. <i>Take this note with you to the meeting.</i>
3. Agree on an agenda and timings to cover each part in more formal meetings.	This will keep the discussion on track. It can also help to elect a person to be a timekeeper.	Keep a written summary of the agenda that has been agreed up front (possibly by email).
4. Write down what you intend to say in the discussion or meeting	This will prevent the likelihood of blurting everything out impulsively and becoming frustrated	Keep referring back to this in the meeting if you can and cross things off as you discuss them.
5. Make a summarised account of the meeting - use bullet points.	This will remind you of what the outcome was and what you need to do/not do afterwards.	Write down bullet points as you go. Use a computer or iPad if you tend to lose paper and notebooks. You might ask permission to record the meeting to refer back to
6. Break long meetings into smaller ones and have breaks.	This will reduce the likelihood of you losing focus and missing your goal.	Be realistic about what your limits are regarding how long you can concentrate and stick to this as a rule.

## MANAGING EMOTIONS AND IMPROVING SELF-CARE

### General tips for good self-care

- Develop a routine to get enough sleep by having a quiet bedtime; go to bed (and get up) at the same time most nights (avoid caffeine late in the day).
- Exercise as often as you can and spend time outdoors - even a walk to the shop or with a dog (but ask the owner first!)
- Schedule in fun, enjoyment and relaxation as often as you can
- Eat healthily regularly, including:
  - Small meals and often
  - Avoid too much sugar or caffeine (which can increase symptoms)
- Try to have 2 alcohol free days each week (and aim to cut out illegal drug use)
- Learn to say no! Don't take on too much.
- Use some of the strategies in this booklet to help you - everybody needs them in some way or another.
- *Don't pressure yourself to be perfect!*

### LEARNING TO SELF-SOOTHE

When you feel emotionally overwhelmed, the emotional part of your brain (called the limbic system) takes over and the rational or thinking part of your brain takes a back seat. Calming your emotions—also called self-soothing—is an important life-long skill everyone can learn to manage these times effectively and think more clearly.

#### The Details....

When you perform any of the activities on this list your brain will be producing bio-chemicals, such as natural opioids and serotonin that gives you a sense of calm. There are three different factors that can make a particular activity more soothing:

- *Familiarity*: Activities that are associated with pleasant memories from the past will be particularly helpful in soothing your feelings. For example one woman said that sipping hot chocolate with a marshmallow on top from a large blue mug made her think of happy afternoons from her childhood.
- *Multi-Sensory*: Our emotional brain responds best when activities are multi-sensory and involve sound, sight, taste, touch, and smell. Typically pleasant activities that involve two or more senses are most soothing. An example of a multi-sensory activity might include walking in the woods, smelling the flowers, feeling the breeze, and hearing the wind rustling the trees.
- *Repetitive Motion*: Studies suggest that repetitive motion, such as chewing gum, knitting, or rocking in a chair, can produce soothing chemicals, like serotonin, in the brain. Our bodies are naturally inclined towards repetitive motion, like pacing, when we are agitated.

## MAKING A SELF SOOTHING BOX/BAG

The idea behind this box/bag is that it is filled with things that can help you to feel better. When you're feeling upset, anxious, or experiencing thoughts of suicide then you can use the box as a way to feel better and take your mind and mood to something more pleasant or simply calming.

One key thing to remember about this box/bag is that it is **personal to you**. This is really important, as everyone responds differently to different things. You can make your own box or decorate any sort of container or bag to use, and some people even make small pocket-sized versions to take out with them in case they need it. The more personalised the better and creating the self-soothing box in itself can be a really good self-care activity.

Photographs - loved ones, pets, places you have felt calm in	A USB filled with relaxing noises - whale song, nature sounds, the weather	A musical instrument - one you play or a drum, bell, or chimes
A favourite CD	An audiobook	A stress ball
Piece of material (silk, fluff, wool)	Hand cream with tactile beads to massage hands	Rubber bands to snap on your wrist
Clay or dough to massage	PVA glue to dry and peel off	Boiled sweets, chocolate, chewing gum, mints
Popping candy	A scented candle	A word search book
A mood lamp	A jar of spices to smell	Magnets to play with
Objects from nature e.g. pinecones, conkers, fossils, shells	A list of pleasant things to do (like baking or clay work)	Favourite toiletries for a soothing bath or shower
A sudoku book	Bubbles to blow	Soft socks to put on
Gemstones	Pebbles to hold	A soft cushion to hold
Adult colouring book and pens	Notebook and pen to write how you feel	A compassionate or funny letter to yourself to read
Coping statements	Hot water bottle	A Rosary or crucifix
A fluffy blanket or a weighted blanket	A hairbrush or scalp massager	Help line numbers
Bubble wrap to pop	Fidget toys	A rubix cube
Flavoured teabags or hot chocolate	Aromatherapy oil e.g. lavender	Your favourite movie on DVD or USB
Comforting perfume/aftershave	Sensory toys e.g. squishies, light up balls	Motion toys e.g. lava/oil/bubble toys

## SOOTHING ACTIVITIES

Check off the activities that you think would work best at different times.  
Add additional ideas of your own.

### Things You Can Do Immediately When You Are Feeling Emotionally Overwhelmed

- Take five cleansing breaths
- Self-massage
- Chewing gum
- Sip a soothing warm drink (preferably not one with caffeine)
- Wear familiar perfume or cologne
- Suck on hard candy
- Stretch
- Sit in the sun
- Other things I can do:

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### Things You Can Do When You Are Anticipating Situations That Will Make You Upset

- Take a warm shower or bath
- Get a massage
- Wear most comfortable clothes
- Enjoy a favorite meal
- Burn scented candles
- Take a walk outdoors
- Arrange and smell flowers
- Listen to quiet music
- Other things I can do:

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### Things You Can Do Every Day to Develop the Habit of Self-Soothing

- Take care of a pet
- Cook or bake (cakes, biscuits, bread)
- Meditate or relax in a quiet place
- Read a book
- Listen to "quiet" music
- Watch a funny movie or show
- Work on a hobby \_\_\_\_\_ (write in your hobby)
- Rock in a chair for 10 minutes
- Garden
- Other things I can do:

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A good audio recording of this text can be found at:

<https://soundcloud.com/compassionatemind/sootheingrhythmbreathingpractices/sJA0g8?in=compassionatemind/sets/compassionate-minds>

## SOOTHING BREATHING

Sit comfortably, place both feet flat on the floor about shoulder's width apart and rest your hands on your legs. Close your eyes, or look down at the floor if you prefer. Allow yourself to have a gentle facial expression may be a slight smile.

Gently focus on your breathing. As you breathe try to allow the air to come down into your diaphragm (that's just at the bottom of your ribcage in the upside down 'V'). Feel your diaphragm, the area underneath your ribs, move as you breathe in and out. Just notice your breathing and play an experiment with your breathing. Breathe a little faster or a little slower until you find a breathing pattern that, for you, seems to be your own soothing, comforting rhythm. Link up, with the rhythm within your body that is soothing and calming to you.

What you will usually find is that your breathing is slightly slower and deeper than normal. The in-breath is about 4 seconds ... hold ... and then take 4 seconds for the out-breath. Ensure that the breaths in and out are smooth and even. So, for example, notice if you're breathing in a bit too quickly or collapsing the out breath.

Spend as long as we wish - just focusing on your breathing, just noticing the breath coming down into the diaphragm, your diaphragm lifting and then the air moving out, through your nose. Sometimes it's useful to focus on the point just inside the nose where the air enters. So, in through your mouth and out from your nose, in through your mouth and out through your nose..... Just focus on that for a while.

Turn your attention to your body. Sense the weight of your body resting on the chair and the floor underneath you. Allow yourself to feel held and supported, coming to rest, in the present moment....

Remember that it is fine for your mind to wander. Simply notice it happening with curiosity about where your mind has gone and then gently guide your attention back to an awareness of your body as best as you can. Sense the flow of air coming in and out of your nostrils...just gently observing....no need to change anything....just allowing things to be as they are.

If you find focusing on your breathing a bit difficult then allow your attention to rest on an object. Find something you might like to hold such as a smooth stone or a soft ball - something that gives you the feeling of gentleness and calmness. Now as you just focus on your breathing also focus on your object that you're holding noticing how it feels in your hand resting your gaze on your object as best as you can.... staying with the sensations of holding it in your hand.

When you feel ready, slowly open your eyes and bring yourself back to the present moment. Sometimes it helps if you just have a gentle stretch and a deep breath to prepare you to carry on with your day.

## SAFE PLACE IMAGERY

Begin by taking some deep, soothing breaths just to begin to slow yourself down. When you are ready, try to create a place in your mind - a place that could give you a feeling of safety and calmness.

Imagine looking around you; what can you see? It might be a peaceful wood where the leaves of the trees dance gently in the breeze. You might imagine shafts of light falling through the canopy above to caress the ground with brightness. Or it might be a beautiful beach with a crystal blue sea stretching out to the horizon where it meets the sky, or relaxing next to an open fire.

Now focus on what you can feel, like the sensation of the sun on your face or a breeze stirring your hair. Or can you feel soft, white sand underfoot? Next, think about what you can hear. Can you hear the rustle of the leaves on the trees, or birds singing, or the fire crackling or the gentle breaking of the waves on the sand? Now think about whether you can smell anything, such as the salty smell of the sea or the smell of wood smoke, or a sweetness of the air.

When you bring your safe place to mind, allow your body to relax. Think about your facial expression; allow it to have a soft smile of pleasure at being there. Imagine that, *the place itself takes joy in you being there*. Allow yourself to feel how your safe place has pleasure in you being here. Explore your feelings when you imagine that this place is happy with you being there. Use your senses to enjoy being there - what do you see, feel, smell and hear...?

When you feel ready open your eyes and enjoy the feelings of warmth and calm that your safe place has left you with.

## APPS TO HELP WITH MOOD MANAGEMENT

Meditation Oasis	A variety of apps with guided meditations for sleep, relaxation, stress relief, energizing, and mindfulness.
Moodtracker.com	Allow people to track changes in mood and behavior online and share with their coach.
Breathing Zone	A guided breathing app that helps users to slow down their breathing and create a feeling of calm. This uses recorded sounds, voices and visual cues.
Calm	<b>Assists people</b> with sleep and meditation using guided audio instructions to follow. There are recordings for general use, work, exercise and sleep. Many people find it helpful in getting better sleep, lowering stress, and reducing anxiety.

## SOME ORGANISATIONS, BOOKS AND WEBSITES THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL

### BOOKS

- Maté, G. (2011). *Scattered minds: The origins and healing of attention deficit disorder*. Vintage Canada.
- Hallowell, E. M. M., & Ratey, J. J. (2011). *Driven to distraction: Recognizing and coping with attention deficit disorder from childhood through adulthood*. Anchor.
- Hallowell, E. M., & Ratey, J. J. (2006). *Delivered from distraction: Getting the most out of life with attention deficit disorder*. Random House Digital, Inc..
- Kelly, K., & Ramundo, P. (2006). *You mean I'm not lazy, stupid or crazy?!: the classic self-help book for adults with attention deficit disorder*. Simon and Schuster.
- Barkley, R. A. (2010). *Taking Charge of Adult ADHD*

### YOUTUBE VIDEOS

- 30 Essential Ideas you should know about ADHD:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCAGc-rkIfo>
- The Neuroanatomy of ADHD and thus how to treat ADHD - CADDAC - Dr Russel Barkley part 3ALL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sPFmKu2S5XY>
- The Importance of Emotion in ADHD - Dr Russell Barkley:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hzhL-FA2v10>

### WEBSITES AND ORGANISATIONS

- The ADHD Foundation offers a broad spectrum of information and resources for adults and children with ADHD: [www.adhdfoundation.org.uk](http://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk)
- Royal College of Psychiatrists has information about adult ADHD: [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/problems-disorders/adhd-in-adults](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/problems-disorders/adhd-in-adults)
- Adult ADD UK is a site for adults with ADHD in the UK offering information and up to date news: [www.aadduk.org](http://www.aadduk.org)
- The UK ADHD Partnership offers a wealth of information and advice for children and adults with ADHD: [ukadhd.com](http://ukadhd.com)
- The UK Adult ADHD Network provides information and resources for clinical professionals, researchers and adults with ADHD: [www.ukaan.org](http://www.ukaan.org)

On these websites there are many support groups listed and other resources.

Some ADHD support groups for adults in the south of England:

- Bristol: No website but details are on the [aadduk.org](http://aadduk.org) website
- Brighton: [adhdbrighton.org.uk/contact/](http://adhdbrighton.org.uk/contact/)
- Buckinghamshire: [www.spacepage.co.uk/](http://www.spacepage.co.uk/)
- Cambridgeshire: [www.addaptability.org](http://www.addaptability.org)
- London: [www.adhdkingston.org.uk/index.html](http://www.adhdkingston.org.uk/index.html)
- Oxfordshire: [www.adhdoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.adhdoxfordshire.co.uk)

## **ADHD - RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE LAW**

The 1995 Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and Equality Act (2010) protects you at work and in education. The terms of the Acts say you have a disability if:

- You have a mental or physical impairment
- The impairment has an adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal everyday tasks
- The effect is substantial and long term (this means it lasts for at least 12 months).

At least one aspect of day-to-day life needs to be affected. For [ADHD](#), the key areas are memory and the ability to concentrate, learn and understand.

All organisations must comply with these acts, including the NHS, Criminal Justice System (police, prisons and courts), companies and educational institutions whether you are a service user or employer.

### ***It is always lawful to treat a disabled person more favourably than and nondisabled person***

In the UK the following actions by an employer are unlawful under the Equality Act (2010):

#### **Direct discrimination**

Helen directly discriminates against Dan if, because of a protected characteristic, (a disability by reason of ADHD), she treats Dan less favourably than she would treat others.

E.g. if an employer were to dismiss you because you have ADHD or refuse a bonus unlike the rest of the staff because you have ADHD, that would constitute direct discrimination. In addition, direct discrimination includes less favourable treatment towards someone because of:

- Association with someone who is disabled - for example dismissing an employee because he has a child with ADHD
- perception of disability - for example an employer dismissing an employee because he thinks the employee is autistic/has ADHD

#### **Indirect discrimination**

This occurs when Saffy applies a provision, criterion or practice to everyone but it disadvantages a particular group of people who share a particular protected characteristic, and he cannot justify it.

E.g. an employer requires staff to attend a yearly teambuilding weekend stating that their performance during the weekend will inform their pay rise. Jill performs badly in the teambuilding exercises because of her ADHD. She is therefore disadvantaged by the policy, as would be other people with ADHD. Given that there are many ways that would better inform a pay rise the employer is unlikely to be able to justify its policy.

#### **Discrimination arising from disability**

In a typical scenario, Peter would be discriminating against Dave if he treated Dave unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of his disability and Peter could not show that the treatment was a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

E.g. if an employer dismisses a person with ADHD because he works more slowly in an open plan office, even though he performs adequately in his job. However, there is no protection for the disabled worker here if the employer or boss shows that he did not know and could not reasonably have been expected to know that the employee had a disability.

## ADHD - RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE LAW CONTINUED...

### **Victimisation**

This is when you are treated badly because you have made a complaint about discrimination under the equality act. It can also occur if you are supporting someone who has made a complaint of discrimination and you are treated badly as a result.

### **Harassment**

Harassment occurs when someone treats you in a way that makes you feel humiliated, offended or degraded. For example, Dana is regularly sworn at and called names by colleagues at work because of her disability.

Harassment can never be justified, though if an organisation or employer can show it did everything it could to prevent people who work for it from behaving like that, you will not be able to make a claim for harassment against it, though you may be able to claim against the harasser.

### **Education rights**

Education providers:

- colleges
- universities
- providers of adult education
- local education authorities.

Education providers cannot discriminate against adult learners with disabilities. They must make reasonable adjustments to make sure you are not disadvantaged.

This could be by:

- changing policies that make it difficult for you to use a particular service
- providing extra classroom aids
- providing the service in a different way.

Policies that help a student with ADHD include:

- having breaks or relaxation exercises during classes
- allowing you to tape-record lectures and tutorials for later reference
- offering you paper copies of slides used in presentations
- repeating instructions
- giving written as well as verbal instructions
- one-to-one monitoring by email or phone calls.

### **Employment rights**

Under the DDA, employers must not discriminate for reasons related to disability unless it can be justified. This applies to:

- application forms (employers cannot ask job applicants about their health or disability until they have been offered a job, except in specific circumstances where the information is necessary for the application process or requirement of the job.
- interviews
- proficiency tests
- job offers
- terms of employment
- promotion opportunities
- training opportunities
- work-related benefits such as refreshment and recreational facilities.

Since October 2004, the law also applies to employers with fewer than 15 staff.

## **Written and collated by Poppy Ellis Logan when working as the Welfare & Rights Officer University of Cambridge**

### **Employment-related resources:**

- 1) templates for professional correspondence are available here: <http://www.vertex42.com/WordTemplates/resignation-letter.html>
- 2) [Good Copy • Email copy from great companies template emails](#) written in business-like way. Very useful for ensuring your emails are professional!

### **Emails, letters and administration:**

- 1) [The Bureau of Communication - Fill-in-the-blank Correspondence](#) Templates for writing letters (e.g. thank you letter, apology letter, etc.)
- 2) [Email Template Generator](#) Very useful email generator - allows you to generate email templates depending on audience and occasion.
- 3) [Doodle](#) - Doodle can help you take the headache out of coordinating a time to meet with friends or colleagues.
- 4) [This Free App Is The Best Thing To Happen To Email Since Gmail](#) (The app is called 'unroll me' and is a really useful way of keeping your subscriptions but putting each subscription email into one long email each day - you can go from 40 junk emails per day to only 1 really long one).

### **Packing planning [aids to prevent shop trolley/suitcase overfilling]:**

- 1) [Interactive Packing List | IndependentTraveler.com](#)
- 2) [FREE: The Ultimatest Grocery Lists at grocerylists.org](#) [The Grocery List Collection \(weird lists, funny books, downloadable PDFs & more\)](#). The best pre-formatted grocery lists ever created - and they're free. Print 'em out, hang 'em on the refrigerator door and mark 'em up before you go to the grocery store. There are comprehensive versions for both meat-eaters and vegetarians

### **Tips for telling others how ADHD feels:**

- 1) Really useful explanation of ADHD for anyone who doesn't understand how it affects you: <http://neurodiversitysci.tumblr.com/post/139769513631/adhd-community-philosophium-do-i-have-any> (honestly, take a look, it understand you better than YOU understand you)
- 2) [21 Things People With ADHD Want You To Know](#) -This buzzfeed understands it all. Seriously useful for explaining why something might be difficult because of ADHD to someone.
- 3) [Finish It Friday! : ADHD](#) (reddit forum made up of ADHDers for transatlantic support and solidarity at all times)

## **More from Poppy Ellis Logan ...!**

### **Tips for general organisation:**

- 1) [Free Planners & Productivity Worksheets • Productive Flourishing](#) (all sorts of different planner type so you can find one that is exactly what you need)
- 2) [Organization and Time Management | CHADD](#) (ADHD-friendly guide to getting organised!)
- 3) [Tab](#) (free, iOS and Android) makes complicated bill splitting \*super\* easy.
- 4) [Google Photos](#) (free, iOS, Android, web) is the ultimate photo search tool; unlimited storage, frees up your iPhone, turns bursts of photos into gifs, can be searched in cool ways e.g. 'food', etc.
- 5) [Google Drive](#) - Google Drive is the ultimate cloud-based platform for storing, managing, sharing, and collaborating on files. Everything saves automatically and two people can edit a document at once. Its magical.
- 6) [Habitica | Your Life the Role Playing Game](#) (boring things become much easier to get yourself to do when you earn GOLD for doing them)

### **Tips for adult-specific organisation:**

- 1) NASMA - Welcome to the National Association of Student Money Advisers (has a very useful 'money and mental health' leaflet which can help make thinking about your finances or accepting them as something you might have to take responsibility for a lot less scary)
- 2) Cleaning Basics | Unfuck Your Habitat (this website will give you any information you might need for pretending to be a functioning and sanitary adult)

### **Self care:**

- 1) You feel like shit. (a step-by-step self-care walk through for when you feel like shit)
- 2) 15 Easy Things You Can Do That Will Help When You Feel Like Shit (buzzfeed version of self-care walkthrough)
- 3) Mental Health Resources: 81 Awesome Resources When You Can't Afford a Therapist | Greatist (this list is very long, if you need support now, try one of the links above this).

### **Further suggestions about useful apps/technology/resources:**

- 1) <http://www.buzzfeed.com/nicolenguyen/life-changing-apps-we-downloaded-in-2015#.xayNI9DBG> Includes: Neko Atsume which is a game where you take care of cartoon cats and it's really cute. Doesn't actually help you organise your life but cats are super therapeutic so.
- 2) <http://www.lifehack.org/372021/15-free-resources-get-you-more-organized-2016>
- 3) ATTENTION APP-USING ADHDers: I am going to create a mega list of apps that y'all have found useful for coping with ADHD and need your help! : ADHD (even more apps, as used by ADHDers around the world)

## **HELP LINES FOR TIMES OF NEED OR CRISIS**

### **Samaritans**

Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)

Website: [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

### **PAPYRUS**

Young suicide prevention society.

Phone: HOPElineUK 0800 068 4141 (Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm and 7pm to 10pm, and 2pm to 5pm on weekends)

Website: [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

### **SANE**

Emotional support, information and guidance for people affected by mental illness, their families and carers. SANEline: 0300 304 7000 (daily, 4.30pm to 10.30pm)

Textcare: comfort and care via text message, sent when the person needs it

most: [www.sane.org.uk/textcare](http://www.sane.org.uk/textcare)

Peer support forum: [www.sane.org.uk/supportforum](http://www.sane.org.uk/supportforum)

Website: [www.sane.org.uk/support](http://www.sane.org.uk/support)

### **No Panic**

Voluntary charity offering support for sufferers of panic attacks and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Offers a course to help overcome your phobia or OCD.

Phone: 0844 967 4848 (daily, 10am to 10pm)

Website: [www.nopanic.org.uk](http://www.nopanic.org.uk)

### **Victim Support**

Phone: 0808 168 9111 (24-hour helpline)

Website: [www.victimsupport.org](http://www.victimsupport.org)

### **CALM**

CALM is the Campaign Against Living Miserably, for men aged 15 to 35.

Phone: 0800 58 58 58 (daily, 5pm to midnight)

Website: [www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

### **Men's Health Forum**

24/7 stress support for men by text, chat and email.

Website: [www.menshealthforum.org.uk](http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk)

### **Rethink Mental Illness**

Support and advice for people living with mental illness.

Phone: 0300 5000 927 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm)

Website: [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

### **Alcoholics Anonymous**

Phone: 0845 769 7555 (24-hour helpline)

Website: [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk)

***REMEMBER IF YOU NEED HELP URGENTLY AND A RELATIVE OR FRIEND IS NOT AROUND THEN PHONE YOUR GP OR DIAL 111 OR 999 AND ASK FOR HELP***