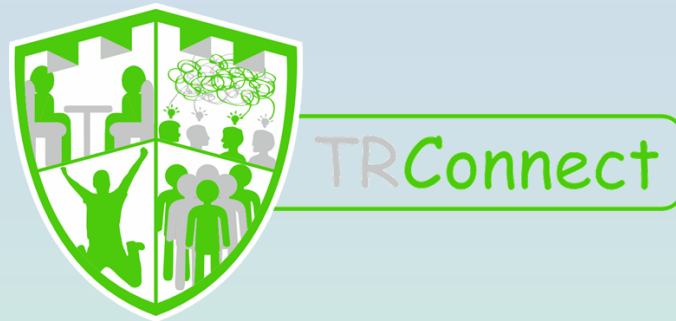




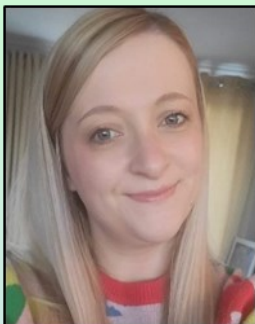
# Low Mood, negative thoughts & goal setting

Most of us experience ups and downs from time to time. But some of us may feel sad, lonely, down and anxious or stressed for longer periods of time to the extent that it can affect your every day life and prevent you from doing things you would normally do.

**Remember: It's OK not to be OK but it is NOT OK to feel this way all the time.**

In this issue of the **TRConnect** newsletter we offer support and guidance on how to manage low mood and negative thoughts. The **TRConnect** team are here to advise and support so please get in touch via the [trconnectreferral@trc.ac.uk](mailto:trconnectreferral@trc.ac.uk) email if you would like any further guidance.

## The TRConnect team



**Charlotte McGowan**

Mental Health  
Support Team  
Coordinator &  
Mental Health  
First Aider

W102C



**Michelle Rowbotham**

Health &  
Wellbeing  
Coach

W101



**Abby Dobson**

Trainee  
College  
Counsellor &  
HLTA

W101



**Jess Inglis**

College  
Counsellor

M102E

# What is low mood?

Everyone feels low or down from time to time. It does not always mean something is wrong. Feeling low is common after distressing events or major life changes, but sometimes periods of low mood happen for no obvious reason.

But a low mood will often pass after a couple of days or weeks – and there are some easy things you can try and small, everyday changes you can make that will usually help improve your mood.

## Signs of low mood

- sad
- worried, anxious or panicked
- feeling tired more often
- struggling to sleep
- less confident
- frustrated, irritated or angry
- no pleasure in the things that normally make you feel happy
- change in appetite



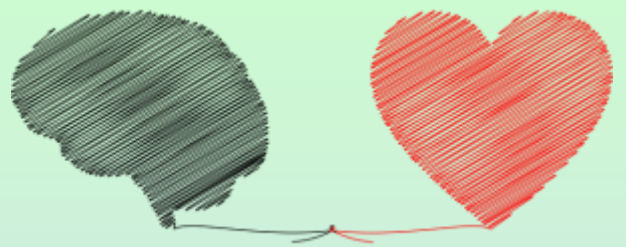
**Create your own free NHS Mind Plan**

Answer 5 quick questions to get your plan with practical tips to help you deal with stress and anxiety, improve your sleep and feel more in control.

If your signs/symptoms are too intense or last for too long, it could be a sign that you might need additional support. Talking about it can be really helpful and is often the first step to feeling better.

Alternatively you could try:

- **Doing something you enjoy:** Whether exercise, sports, art, music, reading, writing, film, TV, theatre, dance – anything! These things can help you to feel good again, even just doing a little bit
- **Keeping a journal:** Regularly write or record how you're feeling and what's been happening in your life. You could do it every day, or whenever you feel you want to. It can help you to:



- let your feelings out
- see what you've written and think about things differently
- learn more about what makes you feel low and what helps
- think about new ways to cope or different things you could try.



- **Being active:** Regular exercise is proven to help boost mood. Even a short walk or stretching can help build up your enthusiasm and stamina, particularly if you're feeling low, and lacking energy and enthusiasm.

The TRSports centre offers Gym membership to new and existing students at £50 for an unlimited yearly membership or £20 term time only membership. Parent or Guardian must complete the relevant online membership agreements and give consent for any student to attend the gym. For further information call [01709 300700](tel:01709300700), email [inspiresports@trc.ac.uk](mailto:inspiresports@trc.ac.uk) or pop into talk to one of the team.

- **Mindfulness and meditation:** Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or be overwhelmed by what's going on around us.

#### Mindful eating.

This involves paying attention to the taste, sight and textures of what you eat. Try this when drinking a cup of tea or coffee for example. You could focus on the temperature, how the liquid feels on your tongue, how sweet it tastes or watch the steam that it gives off.

#### Mindful moving

While exercising, try focusing on the feeling of your body moving. If you go for a walk, you might notice the breeze against your skin, the feeling of your feet or hands against different textures on the ground or nearby surfaces, and the different smells around you.

#### Body scan

This is where you move your attention slowly through parts of your body. Start from the top of your head and move down to the end of your toes. You could focus on feelings of warmth, tension, tingling or relaxation of different parts of your body.

#### Mindful colouring and drawing

Rather than trying to draw something in particular, focus on the colours and the sensation of your pencil against the paper. You could use a mindfulness colouring book or

[download mindfulness colouring images.](#)

#### Mindful meditation.

This involves sitting quietly to focus on your breathing, thoughts, sensations in your body or things you can sense around you. Try to bring your attention back to the present if your mind starts to wander. Many people also find that yoga helps them to concentrate on their breathing and focus on the present moment.

- **Set yourself achievable goals:** Setting small, achievable goals each day, like taking a shower, going for a walk, or even getting dressed, can help boost your mood and self-esteem. It's okay if some days you don't achieve your goals; self-compassion is really important too.
- **Listening to music:** Create a playlist of your favourite songs to listen to. Start with the slower, more chilled songs, working up to the higher tempo and more energetic songs. This can help your mood and energy gradually increase too.
- **Challenge unhelpful thoughts:** Reframing the way we think can help to make us feel more positive (look at pages 5-7 for more support on this).
- **Improving your sleep:** It can be a vicious cycle when we feel low and then tired, and/or tired and then low. Getting better sleep can help to improve mood. Take a look at our previous Newsletter with tips on how to support your sleep. [Newsletter - Sleep January 2026](#)
- **Eating a more balanced diet:** Consuming lots of foods high in fat and sugar can make us feel sluggish and low. Eating healthier can make us feel more energised and improve our mood. Try starting with one extra piece of fruit or vegetable and then working more into your diet.





In partnership with



# Coping with your low mood



## 9 Common Causes of Low Mood

Bullying

Falling behind with  
school workFamily problems  
and arguments

Loneliness



Traumatic events

Physical health  
problemsFamily history of  
depressionMoving school or  
homeFriendship and  
relationship difficulties

## Symptoms - Mind and Body

### Psychological

Frightened, worried  
or anxious

Upsetting thoughts

Guilt

Lack of interest  
and motivation

Isolating yourself

Sad and tearful

### Physical

Aches and pains

Self-harm

Disturbed sleep



Changes in appetite

Tired

## 8 Ways To Help Yourself Feel Better



Spend time with a friend



Keep active



Sleep well every night



Eat healthily and regularly

Avoid drugs  
and alcoholListen to music, draw,  
read or write a diarySpeak to an adult (parent,  
teacher or health worker)Plan something  
to do each day

## Places where you can get more help



### Charities

Youngminds.org.uk  
Youthhealthtalk.org  
Childline.org.uk; 0800 1111  
Samaritans.org; 116123



### Books

For a list of helpful books:  
Reading-well.org.uk



### Contact a parent, teacher or:



Produced by the **Bank Workers Charity** in collaboration with Professor Mina Fazel, University of Oxford Department of Psychiatry and Professor Tamsin Ford, University of Exeter Medical School.

[www.bwcharity.org.uk](http://www.bwcharity.org.uk)

# Automatic negative thoughts

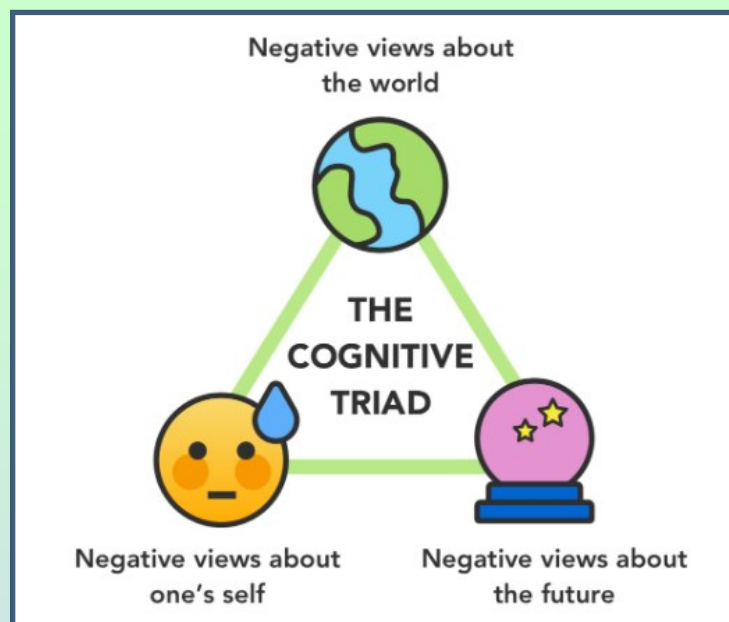
Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTS) are negative beliefs that occur habitually. They are involuntary responses to certain situations that are based on core beliefs you hold about yourself, others, or the world.

You cannot directly control these automatic thoughts BUT you can indirectly alter your beliefs in a positive way.

It is important to recognise that all automatic thoughts are:

- Always negative.
- Makes you feel bad about yourself.
- Self sabotaging and tends to stop you from helping yourself.
- Uninvited and judging you when you least expect it.
- Believable because you are stuck in negative thinking trap.
- Biased because you are experiencing a distorted perception of reality.

## The Cognitive Triad



The triad involved automatic, uncontrollable thoughts about

- One's **Self**— "I'm worthless and hate myself".
- The **World** or **Environment**— "Why does no one care about me?".
- The **Future** — "Things will never get better".

You may have heard of CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy), wondered how it works, what it's good for and whether it could help you.

If you click on the images below it will take you to the Every Mind Matters NHS website where you can watch short video guides and try online self-help techniques. These can help you deal with worries and unhelpful thoughts, work through problems in new ways, build resilience and boost your mental wellbeing.

This is not a full CBT course but rather some practical self-help tips and strategies based on CBT techniques.

## reframing unhelpful thoughts

One CBT technique that I use a lot is called reframing unhelpful thoughts.



### Reframing unhelpful thoughts

It's natural to feel worried every now and again, but our anxious thoughts can sometimes be unhelpful. Learn how to step back, examine the evidence for your thoughts and explore other ways of looking at the situation.



### Tackling your worries

Worrying is part of life, but if your worries feel overwhelming there are lots of things you can try to manage or overcome them. Find out about the "worry time" technique, as well as plenty more practical tips and strategies.



### Problem solving

Finding new ways to work through your problems can make them feel more manageable. Learn how to tell the difference between hypothetical worries beyond your control and real problems you can tackle with practical solutions.



### Bouncing back from life's challenges

Taking steps to look after your mental health every day can give you the skills you need to build resilience, cope with life's challenges and bounce back in tougher times.



### Facing your fears

Avoiding situations we are afraid of can mean our fears grow. Our step-by-step strategy of how to confront and start to overcome your fears can ease anxiety and help you feel more in control.



### Tackling your to-do list

Avoiding tasks and activities might feel like a relief in the short term but can make a low mood harder to shift. These strategies can help you take on your to-do list, build more structure into your life and find a better balance.

**Better Health** every mind matters



### Staying on top of things

Bring together everything you have learnt and see how to make caring for your mental health a habit. This can help you protect your mental wellbeing and manage difficult situations or setbacks more easily.

**NHS**



## AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS



## WAYS TO CHALLENGE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

What is a more helpful thought?

What is another possibility?

What would the people who care about me say?

What is the worst that could really happen?

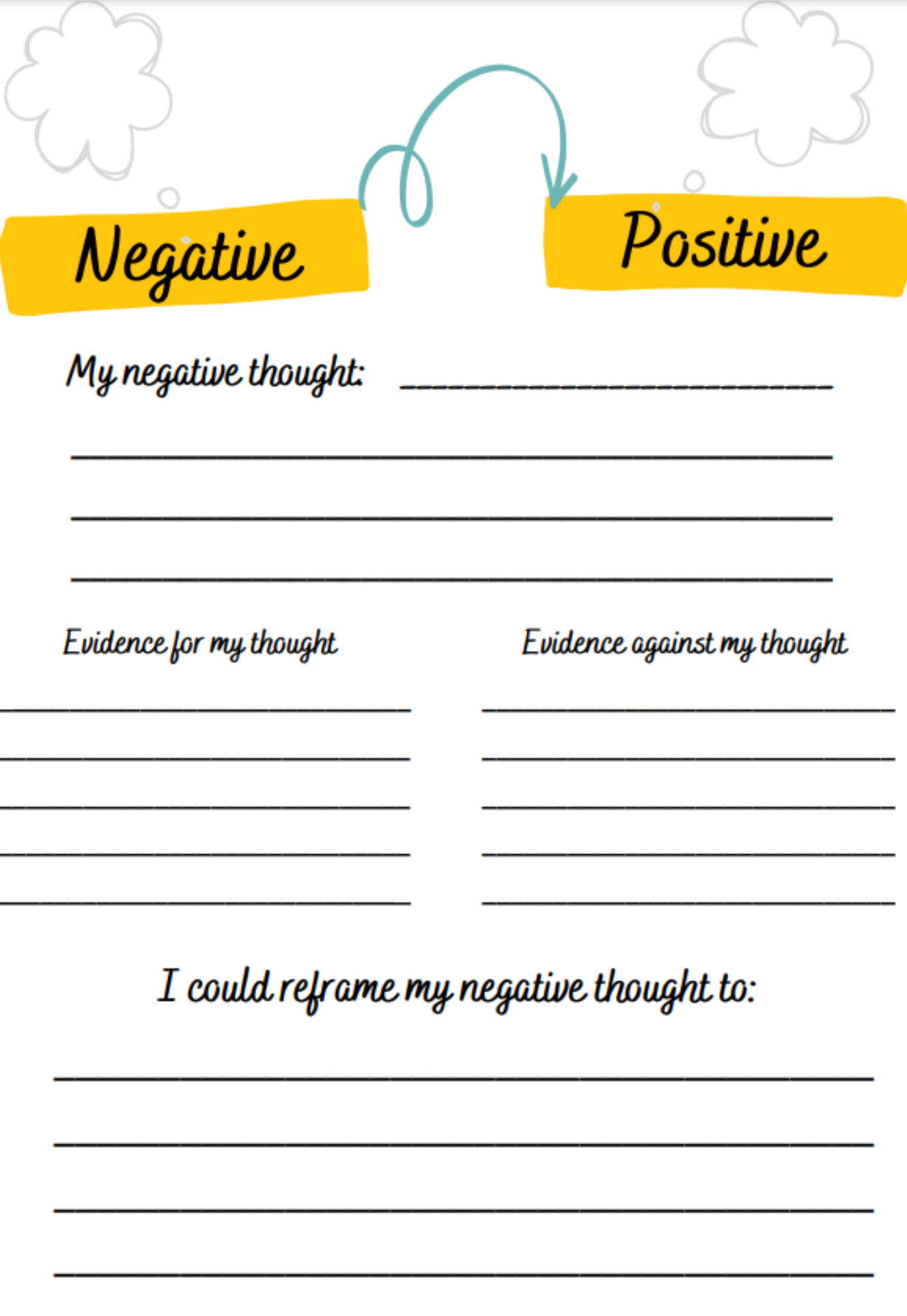
If my friend had this thought, what would I tell them?

Can I be 100% sure this is true?

If the worst really did happen, what could I do to deal with it and who could help me?

What is the best possible outcome?

Have a go using the questions below to reframe negative thoughts you may be experiencing



*Negative*

*Positive*

*My negative thought:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Evidence for my thought*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Evidence against my thought*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*I could reframe my negative thought to:*

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# GOAL SETTING

## A PRACTICAL WAY TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

### SMART goal strategy

The London  
Psychiatry Centre



Goal setting may seem like an intimidating concept at first, but it can make a huge difference in the way we perceive our mental health journeys, and the steps that we need to make in order to improve our wellbeing.

**Think small:** For example, today's goal could be to go for a walk in the fresh air, meditate for 10 minutes, or detox from technology for an hour. These small goals are easier to perceive and achieve, and the benefits should be simpler to visualise.

**Write down your goals:** By writing your goals down, you create a visual aid that will help you achieve them. Put your written objectives in a place where you can see them regularly; this will remind you of what you intend to accomplish, promoting motivation and consistency. If you struggle to motivate yourself, try sharing your goals and your progress with a trusted friend or family member. They may be key in helping you progress in your journey.

**Don't be hard on yourself if you fail:** Every day is different, and on some days you may be unable to progress in the way that you intended. However, it is important to take your journey one day at a time. If you do happen to miss out on achieving a particular goal, or you are unable to complete it within a certain timeframe, try to reflect on why this happened, and perhaps make adjustments to make your goal more attainable the next time you are ready to try again.

# Calm.com— 10 mental health goals will help you improve your wellbeing

## To Do List

**To Do List**

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**Notes**

**Focus**

**Remember**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## SMART GOALS PLANNER FOR STUDENTS

**Instructions:** Define a specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound goal, break it down into actionable steps with assigned deadlines, anticipate obstacles and develop strategies to overcome them, track progress, seek accountability, and regularly review and adjust your goals.

**S** **Specific** What exactly do you want to achieve?

**M** **Measurable** How will you track your advancement?

**A** **Attainable** Evaluate the feasibility of your goal.

**R** **Relevant** How does it fit into your broader objectives?

**T** **Time-bound** What is the deadline?

## W.O.O.P YOUR GOAL!

W - Describe something you wish to accomplish.

O - How will you feel/what will happen if you achieve this?

O - What are possible obstacles to achieving this?

P - What steps could you take to overcome these?

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| <b>WISH</b>     | <b>OUTCOME</b> |
| <b>OBSTACLE</b> | <b>PLAN</b>    |

## Long-Term Goal Action Plan

MY LONG TERM GOAL

↓

GOAL ONE      GOAL TWO      GOAL THREE

↓

MY ACTION PLAN      MY ACTION PLAN      MY ACTION PLAN

Take a look at what you can do in March to make it **Mindful** with help from the Action for Happiness Calendar.

**Mindful March 2026**

| SUNDAY                                                                | MONDAY                                                               | TUESDAY                                                           | WEDNESDAY                                                       | THURSDAY                                                         | FRIDAY                                                      | SATURDAY                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Set an intention to live with awareness and kindness                | 2 Notice three things you find beautiful in the outside world        | 3 Start today by appreciating your body and that you're alive     | 4 Notice how you speak to yourself and choose to use kind words | 5 Bring to mind people you care about and send love to them      | 6 If you find yourself rushing, make an effort to slow down | 7 Take three calm breaths at regular intervals during your day   |
| 8 Eat mindfully. Appreciate the taste, texture and smell of your food | 9 Take a full breath in and out before you reply to others           | 10 Get outside and notice how the weather feels on your face      | 11 Stay fully present while drinking your cup of tea or coffee  | 12 Listen deeply to someone and really hear what they are saying | 13 Pause to watch the sky or clouds for a few minutes today | 14 Find ways to enjoy any chores or tasks that you do            |
| 15 Stop. Breathe. Notice. Repeat regularly                            | 16 Get really absorbed with an interesting or creative activity      | 17 Look around and spot three things you find unusual or pleasant | 18 Have a 'no plans' day and notice how that feels              | 19 Cultivate a feeling of loving-kindness towards others today   | 20 Focus on what makes you and others happy today           | 21 Listen to a piece of music without doing anything else        |
| 22 Notice something that is going well, even if today feels difficult | 23 Tune into your feelings, without judging or trying to change them | 24 Appreciate your hands and all the things they enable you to do | 25 Focus your attention on the good things you take for granted | 26 Choose to spend less time looking at screens today            | 27 Appreciate nature around you, wherever you are           | 28 Notice when you're tired and take a break as soon as possible |
| 29 Choose a different route today and see what you notice             | 30 Mentally scan your body and notice what it is feeling             | 31 Discover the joy in the simple things of life                  |                                                                 |                                                                  |                                                             |                                                                  |

**ACTION FOR HAPPINESS** **Happier · Kinder · Together**

Everyone's path to happiness is different. Based on the latest research, **Action For Happiness** have identified 10 Keys that tend to make life happier and more fulfilling.

You can explore them below by clicking on the image below.

|                                                           |                                                       |                                                     |                                                              |                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Giving</b><br/>Do kind things for others</p>        | <p><b>Relating</b><br/>Connect with people</p>        | <p><b>Exercising</b><br/>Take care of your body</p> | <p><b>Awareness</b><br/>Live life mindfully</p>              | <p><b>Trying Out</b><br/>Keep learning new things</p> |
| <p><b>Direction</b><br/>Have goals to look forward to</p> | <p><b>Resilience</b><br/>Find ways to bounce back</p> | <p><b>Emotions</b><br/>Look for what's good</p>     | <p><b>Acceptance</b><br/>Be comfortable with who you are</p> | <p><b>Meaning</b><br/>Be part of something bigger</p> |





**Connect** is a safe, welcoming group and space designed to help students make friends, meet new people, and reduce feelings of loneliness. It is currently running **fortnightly** in the Foundation Room (next group is on 9th of March) and is **peer mentor led** (not staff led).

**Activities on offer include:**

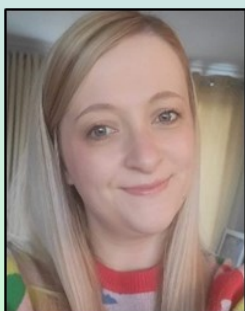
- Board games
- Lego building
- Crafts
- Mindfulness colouring
- Eating lunch together
- Chatting and meeting someone new

Please do pop along to meet the college peer mentors and meet new people!



# Mental Health & Wellbeing Support at TRC

Please find further information about the TRConnect service below. We do advise students to attend the drop in sessions in the first instance, so we can offer advice, signposting and self-help resources. If we feel it is appropriate, we will discuss more about the self-referral to look at the additional enhanced support available.



**Charlotte  
McGowan**

Mental Health  
Support Team  
Coordinator &  
Mental Health  
First Aider



**Michelle  
Rowbotham**

Health &  
Wellbeing  
Coach



**Abby  
Dobson**

Trainee  
College  
Counsellor &  
HLTA



**Jess  
Inglis**

College  
Counsellor

## Drop in sessions

Please find the information about the days and times below. Within the drop-in sessions, you will be able to access signposting from a member of the TRConnect team and access practical self-help resources to gain more strategies to support your wellbeing. These are located in **M102F**, the narrow corridor near the careers team and Student Services.

| Day                  | Time               |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Monday & Tuesday     | 8-9<br>11.40-12.20 |
| Wednesday & Thursday | 8-9                |
| Friday               | 8-8.30             |

## With Me in Mind & Talking Therapies

We can offer and support referrals to With Me in Mind (under 18s) and can signpost and offer advice regarding self-referrals to Talking Therapies (over 16 1/2). Please see the below links for further information about both of the services.

[With Me in Mind](#)

[Talking Therapies](#)

## Peer Mentors

We have a group of Peer Mentors (trained by With Me in Mind) who can offer support sessions with our students with low level support needs. We make sure that we allocate peer mentors by aligning interests, hobbies and future aspirations and goals.

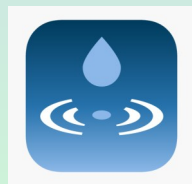
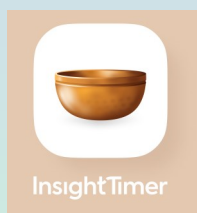
## Counselling

The TRConnect team support students who may be struggling with anxiety/low mood, particularly if these are barriers to your learning, however if these issues are impacting on all areas of your life, counselling might be a more appropriate source of support. Counsellors are more likely to work with a student who has been diagnosed with a mental health disorder, but not exclusively.

Please take a look at [A-Z of local Support Services](#) for links to services in the local area.

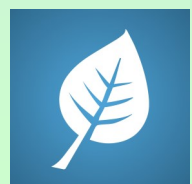
# Useful Apps

Insight Timer



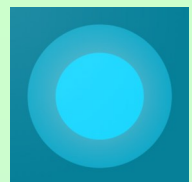
UCLA Mindful

Healthy Minds



Mindfulness Coach

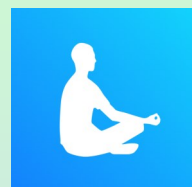
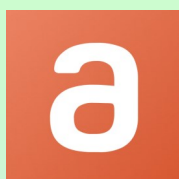
Happy Color



Breathe: Relax & focus (Android)

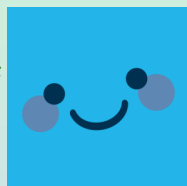
Breathe: Relax & focus (Apple)

Amaha



The Mindfulness App

My Possible Self



Focustodo - using the pomodoro technique to help you perform efficiently

# Awareness Days

|                                             |                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Eating Disorder Awareness Week              | 23rd February - Sunday 1st March 2025.                                                |
| Start of Ramadan                            | February 17th                                                                         |
| World Book Day                              | 5th of March                                                                          |
| International Women's Day                   | 8th of March                                                                          |
| World Sleep Day                             | 13th of March                                                                         |
| Comic Relief/Red Nose Day                   | 20th of March                                                                         |
| International Day of Happiness              | 20th of March                                                                         |
| Eid                                         | Thursday 19th March or Friday 20th March 2026, depending on the sighting of the moon. |
| International Transgender Day of Visibility | 31st of March                                                                         |
| Stress Awareness Month                      | April                                                                                 |
| Easter Sunday                               | 5th of April                                                                          |



## Take a look at what's coming up in our future TRConnect newsletters

| Newsletter issue | Topic                   | Date     |
|------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| Issue 5          | Exam Stress             | 16.04.26 |
| Issue 6          | Mindfulness / Grounding | 04.06.26 |
| Issue 7          | Self-care over summer   | 06.07.26 |

### The Learning Support team (Thrive)

At TRC, our **Thrive** team is here to help students with additional needs access learning, feel supported and succeed during their time at college.

You can access Thrive SEND support if you

- Have a declared SEND need
- Have an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP)
- Have been supported by your teacher and they believe that additional support is required.

If you are struggling in lessons, feeling anxious or overwhelmed with learning tasks or think you might need some extra support please speak to your teacher/s. You're **not alone** - lots of students feel this way sometimes, and it's okay to ask for help. Your teacher will listen to your concerns and work with you on appropriate interventions. If your teacher feels there may be a special education need (SEND) they will begin something called a graduated response, which will help develop a clear understanding of your needs and barriers to learning. The graduated response will support your teacher in being able to refer to the Thrive team for additional SEND support.

You don't have to manage things alone. If something is affecting your learning or wellbeing, **talk to someone**— your teachers and the Thrive team are here to help you figure things out, even if you're unsure what support you need.

### Careers & Work Placement Team

The Careers and Work Placement Team are fully qualified and offer expert informed careers education, impartial advice, and guidance to all students. The team can help you with your current skills and support you to develop new ones, tailored to your future career options. If you have any questions/queries regarding your future career options and work placement opportunities, don't hesitate to get in touch with the team on [careers@trc.ac.uk](mailto:careers@trc.ac.uk).

Please click [here](#) to see an image which shows how mapping out your thoughts and ideas on your future goals and career can help with your wellbeing.

### Safeguarding

The college safeguarding team cover multiple issues to ensure all students are kept safe and free from harm. Understandably, we cannot be with our students full time, so we hope to empower them with knowledge and information to build resilience, as well as opening doors to access services outside of college to prepare them for independence. For further information regarding our safeguarding team, [click here](#).

If there is something urgent and you feel there is an immediate risk / danger to you or someone you know contact the police on 999.

If you are under 18 you can contact **Rotherham** MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) on 01709 336080.

If you would like to report a concern about a child or young person via Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, click [here](#).

#### Safeguarding numbers for the surrounding areas:

**Sheffield** – 01142 734855

**Barnsley** – 01226 772423 Out of hours – 01226 78778



**TRC**  
THOMAS ROTHERHAM COLLEGE

