

Looking out for your students

Good Thinking's quick guide to help teachers and other education professionals support young people who are struggling with their mental health.



In these challenging times, it's important to be kind and look out for those around you. [Good Thinking](https://www.good-thinking.uk), London's digital mental wellbeing service, has created this practical guide to help you check in with your students on a regular basis – the more open everyone can be about their feelings, the better. If you have any concerns about any of your students, please refer to your school's mental health and wellbeing policy before taking any action.

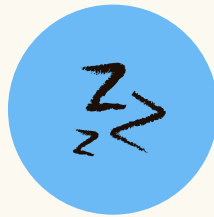
STEP 1

Spot the signs

It can be difficult to know if a child or teenager is struggling with their mental health but there are a few things you can look out for.



Do they seem particularly sad, worried or overwhelmed or have they talked about feeling unhappy, hopeless or trapped?



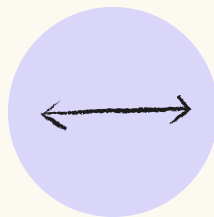
Are they often tired or lacking energy?



Do they find it hard to control their emotions (e.g. are they often irritable, restless, tearful or extremely happy or excited)?



Are they experiencing physical symptoms regularly (e.g. headaches and tummy aches)?



Are they more distant than usual (e.g. are they talking to their friends less or not wanting to be around other people)?



Have their academic achievements changed?



Are they behaving differently on social media (e.g. spending more or less time online or getting stressed or upset by posts and comments)?



Are they hurting themselves on purpose?



Have you, their parents or their friends noticed any changes in their behaviour (e.g. being secretive, often late for class, different eating habits)?

Check out Good Thinking's [lesson pack](#), which includes teaching resources about common mental health challenges and the risks and triggers.

STEP 2

Check in and let them know you can help



It may not always be possible to spot the signs so it's really important to check how your students are feeling and to create a safe and supportive space for them to open up.

There are lots of suggestions for classroom activities to promote positive mental health in Good Thinking's [lesson pack](#). For one-to-one conversations, you could use [Thrive LDN's conversation starter](#) to help you find out how a student is feeling – for example, you might want to do the following:

Starting the conversation

Find a quiet space

It's important to find a private, comfortable space away from any distractions and at a time where nothing is going to interrupt your conversation.

Initiate the discussion

It can be helpful to start by asking about their day and then asking how they are – but make sure you give them time to talk before you follow up with another question. Also be aware that they may not feel comfortable telling you or that this might not be the right time.

Shall we sit here? It's nice and quiet.

Let's find somewhere to have a chat.

It's good to have time for us to catch up. How are you doing?

How has your day been so far?

*Are you feeling ok?
I've noticed/heard that...*

Is there someone you would feel more comfortable talking to?

STEP 2

Check in and let them know you can help



During the conversation

● Be a good listener

Listening is a key part of any conversation so ensure that you aren't distracted by any other task or person. Try to make eye contact and try to reflect back what they have told you. Perhaps wait before responding in case they have more to say. Avoid asking too many questions, relying too much on your own experience or jumping to conclusions – let them lead the conversation.

● Bringing your chat to a close

Having this conversation might be an emotional and exhausting experience for your student. Before bringing the conversation to a close, it can be helpful to consider how to end the conversation – perhaps give them some time alone in the room.

You mentioned [example]. How did that make you feel?

Do you mean [example]?

I remembered you said that [example] was worrying you. Do you want to tell me about it?

How do you feel now, after having this conversation?

Would you like us to have a chat about this again?

It's been good to talk to you. I'm here when you need help.

STEP 2

Check in and let them know you can help



Closing the conversation

● Understand that you don't need to have all the answers

As adults, we often want to help fix things but your student might only want to air the problem and not expect you to offer a solution. Please remember, there are lots of organisations and resources to support young people (see Step 3). Your conversation can be an opportunity to talk through the next steps and possible options for support so that they feel in control of what happens next.

What would you like to do now?

I think we should look at getting you some support.

Would you like to talk about next steps or how to solve the problem?

If one of your students tells you they are struggling with their mental health, be patient, listen and give them space to respond. Your acceptance and compassion can make a big difference.

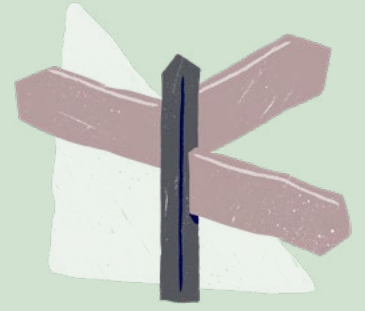
If they are reluctant to talk, reassure them that you are there for them if they ever want a chat.

If you're worried about a student's safety, speak to your designated safeguarding lead. It might also be helpful to speak to your mental health first aider, pastoral lead and/or SENDCO.

You can find lots of useful mental health resources in the [Good Thinking lesson pack](#).

STEP 3

Help them get the support they need



If one of your students chooses to confide in you, the most important thing you can do is show them that you care and want to help them.

Good Thinking has a great range of advice, tools and support which are free and available 24/7 – for example, you could:

- Tell them about Good Thinking's free NHS-approved apps that help with lowering stress, reducing anxiety, improving sleep and boosting mood. These include:
- Download the free Combined Minds app to help you understand common mental health conditions and learn how you can support your students.

Clear Fear – an app that helps 11 to 19-year-olds manage symptoms of anxiety.

Sorted Teens – a programme of audio tracks for 10 to 15-year-olds to help develop self-esteem, mental resilience and motivation.

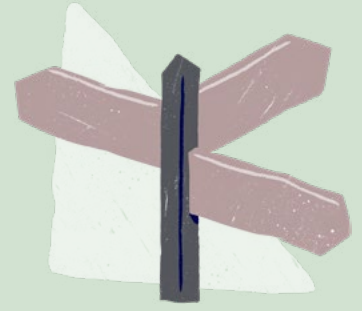


Designed by a teenage mental health charity, Combined Minds helps families and friends support young people with their mental wellbeing.

- Explore Good Thinking's library of expert advice for young people where you'll find short guides with tips and resource recommendations about a range of mental health concerns, including dealing with bullying, eating disorders and anger.
- Encourage your students to incorporate something from the Five ways to good mental wellbeing in their daily life.
- If one of your students has lost a loved one, you could share Good Thinking's bereavement advice and the free Apart of Me app, which has been developed by grief experts to help young people deal with loss.

STEP 3

Help them get the support they need



As well as encouraging your students to talk to their friends and family, you could recommend they use online support services, such as:

Apps and information to support positive mental health in young people.

www.stem4.org.uk



Free tools and support to help young people look after their mental health.

Text YM to 85258

www.youngminds.org.uk

Free, confidential, 24/7 crisis text support.

Text SHOUT to 85258

www.giveusashout.org

Free advice and support for under 25s.

Text THEMIX to 85258

www.themix.org.uk

Confidential support for young people struggling with thoughts of suicide.

Call 0800 068 4141

Text 88247

www.papyrus-uk.org

Remember that it's important to look after yourself too. If you're struggling with your own mental health, talk to friends, family and colleagues, and ask for help from your GP.

You might also find the [Education Support](#) website and helpline (08000 562 561) and our Good Thinking resources for [anxiety](#), [stress](#), [low mood](#) and [sleep](#) helpful.

Urgent support and professional help



If you're worried that one of your students could be at risk of harm to themselves or others, speak to your designated safeguarding lead and mental health first aider so they can contact the student's parents or carers and involve other services as necessary.

These support services might include:

- The student's GP
- CAMHS
- The multi-agency safeguarding hub
- The local 24/7 NHS mental health helpline or NHS 111
- In emergency situations, 999 or A&E

Visit [Good Thinking's Urgent Support page](#) and find additional information about seeking support in our [lesson pack](#).

If you have any concerns about any of your students, please refer to your school's mental health and wellbeing policy before taking any action.

What's in the Good Thinking lesson pack?



Our flexible lesson pack has been developed to encourage open discussion about mental health and wellbeing among young people aged 11 to 18. Utilising high-quality resources created by mental health professionals, you can tailor the lesson plans to the needs of your students.

The pack contains 10 lesson plans on the following topics and includes activity sheets, presentation slides and questionnaires that you can use with your students.

1. What is mental wellbeing?
2. Attitudes towards mental health
3. Mental health challenges
4. Mental wellbeing risks and triggers
5. Five ways to wellbeing
6. The way we think
7. Coping strategies
8. Recharging our batteries
9. Recognising when our mental wellbeing is suffering
10. Seeking support

Take a look at the Good Thinking [lesson pack](#) and start a positive conversation about mental health and wellbeing with your students.

This guide has been developed by Good Thinking in partnership with:



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