



LIFE SKILLS

LOOKING AFTER YOU >

Session plan

AT A GLANCE >

Resilience is not just about us coping on our own with life. This session helps young people identify support networks and navigate their way to people or services that can help them when they need extra support.

Some great information and self-care suggestions can also be found here at: <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/youth-mental-health/#>

Support for a young person in crisis can be found here (access for young people, professionals and parents): <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/get-urgent-help/>



MATERIALS

- ✓ Guided meditation resource
- ✓ Get support handout
- ✓ Whiteboard/flipchart
- ✓ Pens
- ✓ Extra materials needed for the Helping hand activity (listed on page 6)

LEARNING OUTCOMES >

- ✓ Identify their own support network
- ✓ Name at least three sources of support
- ✓ Be aware of additional support networks that can be reached out to for support
- ✓ Understand personal qualities that help support others
- ✓ Recognise responsibilities and build empathy

ACTIVITIES >

ACTIVITY	TIME	PAGE
<u>Introduction</u>	5-10 minutes	<u>03</u>
<u>Mindfulness practice</u>	15 minutes	<u>05</u>
<u>Helping hand</u>	20 minutes	<u>06</u>
<u>Optional: Helping others hand</u>	15 minutes	<u>09</u>
<u>Wrap up</u>	5 minutes	<u>10</u>

INTRODUCTION >



TIME REQUIRED

5-10 minutes



MATERIALS

- ✓ Flipchart paper or whiteboard
- ✓ Pens

ACTIVITY STEPS >

1. Introduce the session to your group. Explain that you will be exploring who they can reach out to when they need some extra support.
2. Recognise that due to the personal nature of some of the topics you might discuss, it is important that everyone feels safe. Ask all young people for a joint agreement on ground rules for this session. This may just be an opportunity to recap on the contracting discussion from session 2 and to get the young people to agree again, or it could be to check if the rules worked and change anything or add what may have been missing.

Guidance on what to include and the importance of not skipping this step is outlined below, under the heading 'Group contracting'.

3. Record your agreed rules onto flipchart paper or a whiteboard and leave it displayed in the room for the duration of the sessions, for reference.

GROUP CONTRACTING

As with any group session, ground rules/contracting should be established in advance by the group. It is assumed that this would have already taken place prior to these sessions being delivered. However, that said, due to the nature of the content being discussed it is recommended that a reminder of established ground rules are re-examined in relation to the benefits of creating safe spaces for discussion in relation to this content.

As a guideline, emphasis and discussion should be placed on the following boundaries for establishing a 'safe space':

- *Confidentiality* – explore what this means to each participant and as a group. Recognise and explore differing individual interpretations and agree upon a shared group understanding.
- *Only volunteering yourself* – ensure participants are not volunteering others to share their personal experiences.
- *Speaking in the 'I'* – speak in the first-person ('I') vs pluralised pronouns of 'we' and 'you'. This ensures participants are supported to speak from their own perspectives and avoids the risk of experiences being assumed onto others. For example "if you meditate it really helps you reduce stress" vs "when I meditate I feel less stressed".

Note that some young people may find some of the topic areas difficult to explore based on their own experiences of mental health, including those with and without mental health diagnoses. Contracting is vital to support with this, however for some young people they may require additional support and signposting. The 'Get support' handout is provided to be used at any time during this unit with your young people, or it could be displayed permanently in your teaching space.



MINDFULNESS PRACTICE >



TIME REQUIRED

15 minutes



MATERIALS

- ✓ Guided meditation resource

ACTIVITY STEPS >

1. In preparation for this session, compile a list of self-care practices that you are comfortable to run. You may also ask young people to think back to the last session to see if any of them would like a chance to share their own self-care strategies as a 15 minute exercise with the group. Examples might include yoga, listening to classical music, reading, mindful drawing, meditation or a breathing exercise. If you are short on time or ideas, try the meditation practice below.
2. Ask everyone to find a space they find comfortable – this could be lying down on the floor, or in a chair if you have limited space. Explain that you are about to guide them through a visualisation and that they are invited to close their eyes but do not have to. If at any point they feel uncomfortable, they can open their eyes, sit up and if necessary, leave the room.
3. Read from the script in the guided meditation resource.
4. Once finished, get everyone to sit in a circle and feedback what this was like. Some young people may not find this useful and responses may vary, and that's OK. Mindfulness isn't for everyone, it's just one tool to try out.

KEY MESSAGE:

This session is about exploring and finding out what self-care tools might work best for you.

HELPING HAND

It is important to note before starting this activity that it may prompt memories and feelings in relation to bereavement, turbulence at home or estrangement. Consider in advance who these young people may be so that you can hold them in mind before, during and after the activity. Although it is important that young people attempt this activity to know that they are not alone (be it chosen families or support services), a secondary activity (Helping Others Hand) is listed next.



TIME REQUIRED

20 minutes



MATERIALS

- ✓ Pens and colour pens
- ✓ Decorating/craft things
- ✓ Colour A4 card
- ✓ Glue sticks
- ✓ Get support handout

ACTIVITY STEPS

1. Explain that as a part of self-care, we need to remember that resilience isn't just about coping, sometimes we all need help and knowing who we can reach out to in those moments is crucial. This might be a chosen family, i.e. one which is not biological but that supports you like a family – friends, trusted adults or support services.
2. Tell the young people that this activity will be creative and provide an opportunity to relax whilst thinking about these people and services available to them. It may be useful to have pre-selected some relaxing music to play during this session. Neo-classical is often a good option!
3. Present a pre-drawn example of your own 'helping hand' (see instructions in step 4) which names individuals (first names/ surnames, not 'friend' or 'teacher') from your life as you remember it when you were the groups' age!

This activity may be funny for the group but will also enable you to connect with how difficult some individuals might find this activity, and help you to tap into what might be going on for them as they complete it.

Talk the group through your 'helping hand' (young people will likely be interested in your experiences as a child!), and make sure you have decorated it. Decorating is a key part of the session; young people should experience different relaxing activities (mindfulness, drawing, crafts and music).

ADVISER'S TIP

You might choose to only list four names, giving room for a mental health support service, such as YoungMinds Crisis Helpline or Childline, to be added to the thumb. This helps ensure everyone has at least someone they can go to in a crisis. A handout with mental health support services is provided which may support some people directly with this activity. It is also recommended, for those young people in your group who are estranged from family, that you consider choosing and naming some individuals as 'chosen family', if this is true for you. This will give the young people permission to do the same.

You should also complete the back of the card with your other hand as per the 'Helping others hand' later in this session (again completing it as a younger you!). Seeing this may reduce anxiety for some young people who may be worried they have no one to write down or will feel triggered by this activity. However, ensure all young people first have a go (with staff support) at this activity before you hint/explain the optional 'Helping others hand' activity in this session.

4. Place the pens around the room and various coloured card/paper at the centre of the table. Ask each young person to choose a coloured card and draw around their hand on the card.
5. Encourage the young people to repeat the activity you have just gone through, getting them to write the specific name(s) of someone they can go to for support when things are tough on each finger. Provide them with enough time to decorate their hand with the pens or craft materials.
6. As the young people complete the activity, you (and any other staff members, if available) should move around the room, checking they are following the task and helping them to think of their sources of support. Examples you can use to support them include:
 - Other young people on your programme
 - Mum/Dad
 - Family member
 - Teacher
 - Family friend
 - ChildLine/The Mix/Samaritans
 - Friends

Remember to encourage them to write the names of the people. You and other staff may want to suggest yourselves for young people to write on a finger. For some, this will be very welcomed and others may be reluctant, where trust is difficult. Remember to allow everyone's helping hand to be their own, as this can be a sensitive topic for some and follow-on support after the session may need to be provided, as appropriate.

7. Once everyone has finished, explain that the 'helping hand' should act as a reminder about who they can turn to when difficult or testing situations arise.

8. Have a reflective discussion. Ask the young people:

- How was it?
- What did you notice when completing your helping hand?
- Why might it be important to have more than one person to speak to?
- What helps you to start difficult conversations?

It can often feel hard to start a conversation and ask people for help. So encourage the young people to think about what might make that a bit easier, e.g. talking to someone they really trust and knowing they won't be judged by that person.

9. Invite young people to take their helping hands home (or take a photo on their phone), so they have a clear idea of exactly who and where they can go to for help.

KEY MESSAGE:

No matter who we are, there is always someone that can help; you are not alone.



OPTIONAL: HELPING OTHERS HAND

This activity is useful if you have extra time, or if you have young people who might have completed their helping hands early or struggled to complete the activity.



TIME REQUIRED

15 minutes



MATERIALS

- ✓ Pens and colour pens
- ✓ Decorating/craft things
- ✓ Colour A4 card
- ✓ Glue sticks

ACTIVITY STEPS

1. Hand out the pens and paper. Ask each young person to turn over their piece of paper and draw around their other hand on the paper (this will be a challenge writing with their less dominant hand, but it should be fun!).
2. Tell them to write the name of someone they support when things are tough for that person on each finger and decorate their hand, as before, with the pens or craft materials. (If they do not want to write the name of that person they can use initials).

Encourage young people to also consider their peers in the Achieve programme. You, as staff, might give examples of how you have noticed them help others, where the help has been received positively.

3. If you have time and enough people have completed this section of the activity, ask the group the following:
 - What qualities are needed to support someone else?
 - What qualities do others have to support us?

ADVISER'S TIP

This activity helps young people to think about their strengths. Get them to think about whether or not they model all the qualities they would appreciate when people come to them for help. Helping others and empathising with others is great for building our own resilience, so young people understanding the role they play in being there for other people can be really powerful.

WRAP UP >



TIME REQUIRED

5 minutes

ACTIVITY STEPS >

1. Ask the group in a go-round format to each answer the following question: What quality would you like a young child to see in you?

ADVISER'S TIP

You might want to give the example of a younger sibling or niece/nephew, i.e. age 6 or thereabouts. This is a useful question as it often gives permission for young people, in speaking through a child, to name a quality about themselves that they otherwise may not. It also provides a positive ending, particularly in recognition for those with caring responsibilities for children.

FEEDBACK

If you would like to share your feedback on this session plan or the entire unit, please complete our survey [here](#).