

INSIDE THE MIND:

A GUIDE FOR YOUNG  
MENTAL HEALTH

The  
Children's  
Society

USE YOUR **smile** TO  
CHANGE THE WORLD,  
DON'T LET THE WORLD  
CHANGE YOUR SMILE

Hi, we are a group of young people between the ages of 14 and 19. We are all from different backgrounds and ethnicities. At some stage in our life we have all been affected by situations that have troubled us.

We are a group that have been on adventures together, and we're always there for each other. We have made this book as we want to raise awareness of a topic that we hold close to our hearts.

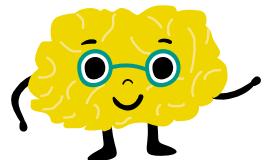
Bad mental health is an increasing problem worldwide and we want to help in any way we can by educating and supporting the young people and adults around us. This is why we have chosen the topic of mental health. Additionally, we know mental health is invisible, however our aim is to reach out to anyone and everyone to encourage them to be open about it and tell them that it's ok not to be ok.

Another aim is to also help adults (parents, teachers and professionals working with young people) to have a better understanding of young people's mental health from our experience and perspective, as well as from other young people's.

We hope that you find this booklet useful and will learn from it. We have included a wide range of activities, quotes and personal stories we hope you can relate to. Enjoy and engage with the subject. It is important!

**The Participation Team at The Children's Society East**

**Disclaimer:** We conducted a survey in which we ask other young people for their input about mental health. Fifty five young people responded and we used their answers to help inform this booklet.



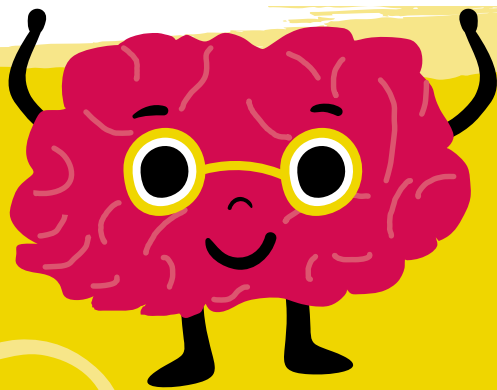
# MENTAL HEALTH

*noun*

a person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being.

**According to the WHO (World Health Organization), mental health is:**

A state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.



As part of our survey we asked young people to define mental health...

The way  
you think  
and feel

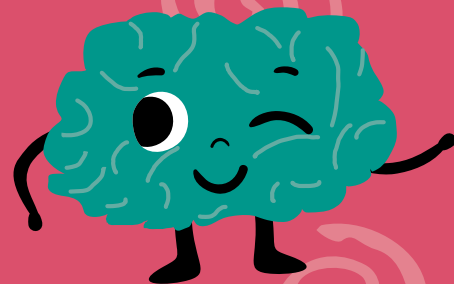
MENTAL AND  
EMOTIONAL  
WELL-BEING

How you  
feel on  
the inside

MINDSET

Whether you  
are happy  
or unhappy

Colouring can act as a great stress reliever, as well as enhancing creativity, strengthening memory and increasing concentration. Take five minutes out of your day to look after your own well-being.



**1 IN 4**

people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year

**10%**

of school children have a diagnosable mental illness

**75%**

of young people with a mental health problem are not receiving treatment

**676 MILLION**

people are affected by mental health issues worldwide

**75%**

of mental illnesses start before a child reaches their 18th birthday, while

**50%**

of mental health problems in adult life (excluding dementia) take root before the age of 15

More than

**50%**

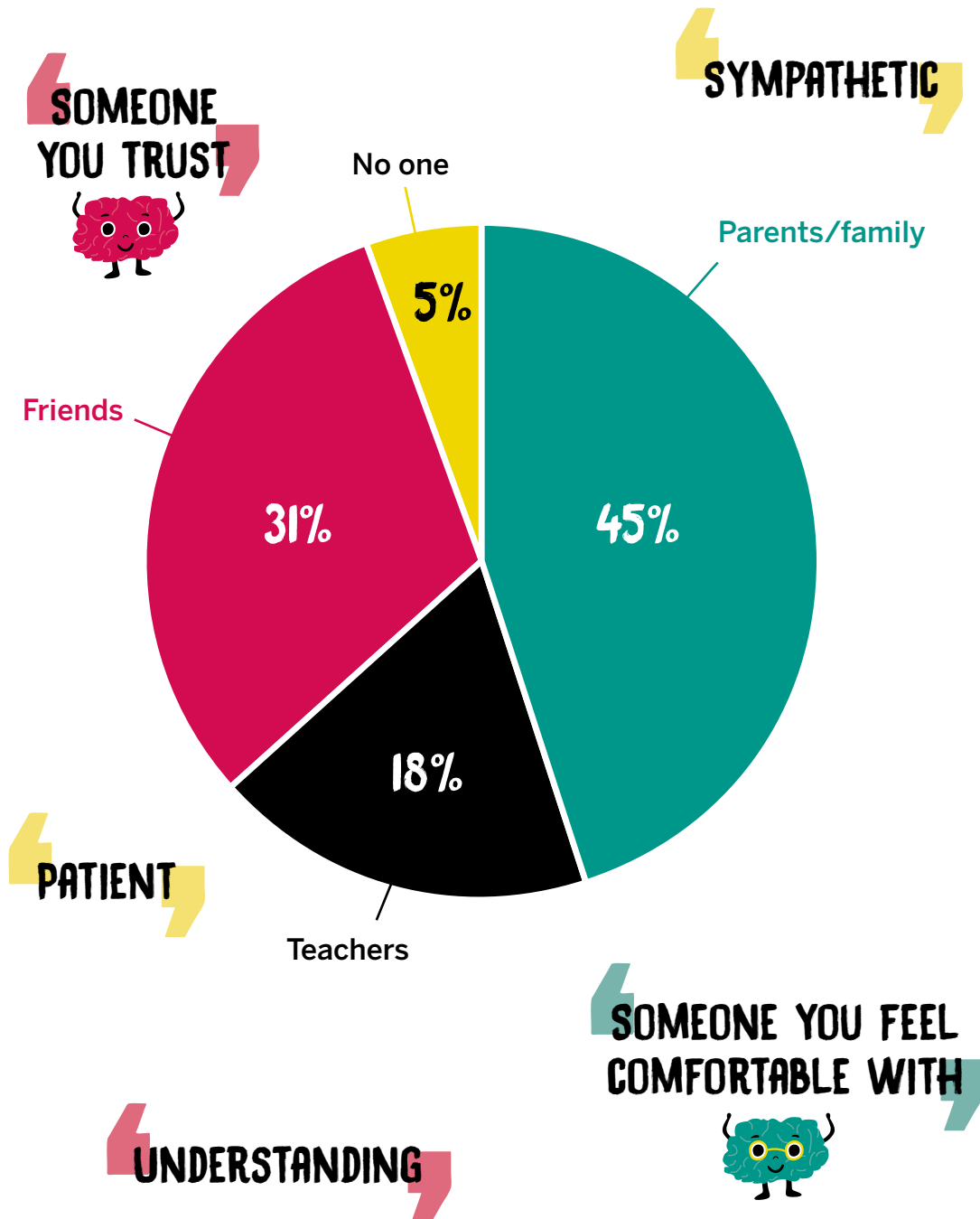
of young people feel embarrassed about mental illness

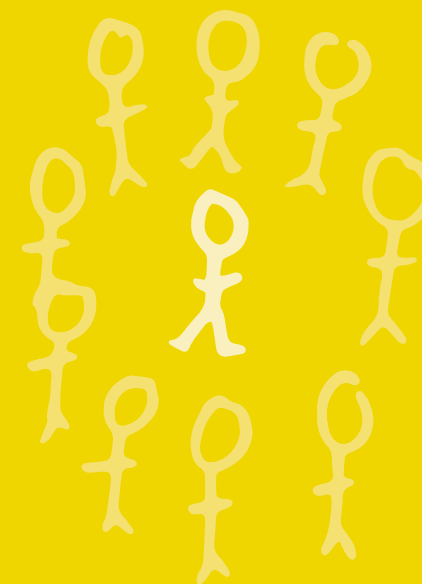
For every person affected by mental illness

**£5 IS SPENT**

on research – 22 times less than cancer and 14 times less than on dementia

Taken from the survey, these are who young people would go to for support when they are feeling down:





**Don't judge**  
**THE PATH I CHOOSE TO**  
**TAKE IF YOU HAVEN'T**  
**WALKED THE JOURNEY**  
**I HAD TO MAKE**



## Examples of mental health conditions

### Depression

- Depression is a long-lasting low mood disorder
- Affects your ability to do everyday things, feel pleasure or take interest in activities
- Different things can lead to depression such as your upbringing, stressful and traumatic events, your lifestyle
- If you feel low, getting enough sleep, eating healthy food and keeping active can help

#### Some signs:

- \* Feeling low
- \* Feeling bad about yourself
- \* Not wanting to do things

### Anxiety

- Everyone has feelings of anxiety, worry and fear sometimes
- These can be normal responses to certain situations
- If you have anxiety these feelings of fear and danger can be ongoing and interrupt your daily routine long after the threat has gone
- They can make you feel like things are worse than they actually are

#### Some signs:

- \* Racing thoughts
- \* Difficulty concentrating
- \* Uncontrollably overthinking
- \* Sweating, shaking, heavy breathing

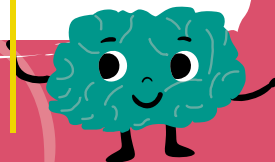
### PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder)

- Can develop after experiencing a traumatic event eg witnessing an assault being bullied, being involved in an accident, abuse
- Not everyone who experiences trauma will develop PTSD
- With help you can recover from PTSD

#### Some signs:

- \* Traumatic memories or dreams, flashbacks
- \* Avoiding things that remind you of the event
- \* Feeling isolated and withdrawn
- \* Feeling on constant alert

YOU ARE GOOD  
ENOUGH!



### Eating disorders

- People who have an eating disorder use food to try to control and manage their feelings and emotions
- They have an unhealthy relationship with food – may be eating too much or too little

#### Common eating disorders:

- \* **Anorexia:** trying to keep weight as low as possible, thinking of being overweight even if others say you are dangerously thin, fear of gaining weight
- \* **Bulimia:** unhealthy eating cycle, eating a lot of food and then do something to stop weight gain for example making yourself sick, taking laxatives or over exercise; average body weight which may mean other people do not notice the problem
- \* **Binge eating:** eating a lot of food in a short period of time on a regular basis, feeling out of control of eating, distressing, may feel disconnected and struggle to remember what was eaten

### Drugs, alcohol and mental health

- Some people use drugs and alcohol to try and deal with the symptoms of a mental health condition – it's called 'self-medication'
- Drugs and alcohol can make the symptoms worse
- Some drugs may make it more likely for you to develop a mental health condition and they may make it harder to treat, for example, research has shown that cannabis can increase your chances of developing schizophrenia
- Ask for professional help if your drug and alcohol use impacts on your physical and mental health
- Educate yourself about alcohol and different types of drugs and the risks to your health so you can make more informed decisions

**If you experience anything unusual in your mood or your physical reactions, always ask for support and seek medical advice.**

**Please don't self-diagnose – it is ok to ask for help!**

Young people want you to know that...

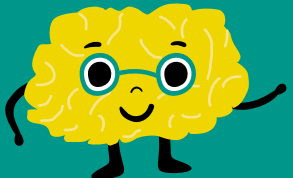
Social media  
isn't the  
only cause

MOST PEOPLE  
WILL SAY THEY  
ARE OKAY WHEN  
THEY ARE NOT

Not everyone's  
symptoms or  
triggers are  
the same

Prevention  
is better  
than cure

MENTAL HEALTH  
ISN'T JUST  
ABOUT ANXIETY  
AND DEPRESSION





## Examples of mental health symptoms

### Feeling sad

- Everyone will experience sadness from time to time in the ups and downs of everyday life. However, a long period of sadness could point to a mental health condition, including (but not limited to) depression and anxiety

### Difficulty sleeping

- Most people have difficulty getting to sleep at some point in their lives which can be caused by various factors including anxiety, stress and changes in life-style. In combination with other symptoms, long-lasting insomnia can be one of several symptoms pointing to a serious illness

### Low self-esteem

- A person with low self-esteem has a low regard for themselves, which can show itself in indecision, hypersensitivity to criticism, and guilt. It doesn't make up a mental health condition alone but in combination with other symptoms it can point to conditions including (but not limited to) anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder and personality disorders

### Self-harm

- Harming yourself on purpose such as by scratching, cutting, overdosing on medication, biting or burning. It isn't a mental health condition but it is often linked to mental distress. Drinking a lot of alcohol or taking drugs may increase your risk of self-harm. You are more at risk of death if you self-harm because of accidental suicide

### Mood swings

- Refer to changes in mood from high to low or low to high which everyone experiences to a certain degree Extreme mood swings can be characteristic of a mental health condition

### Weight loss

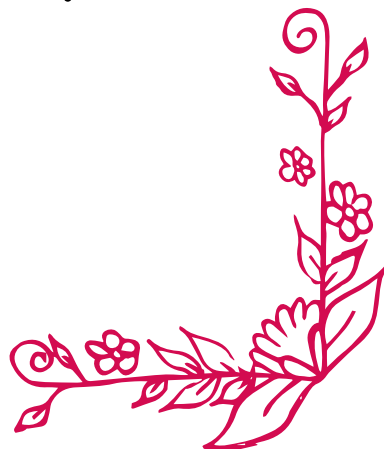
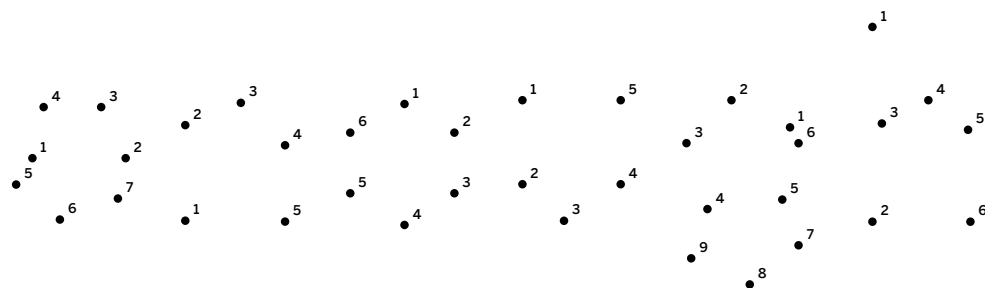
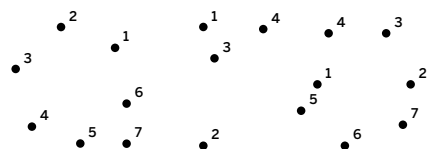
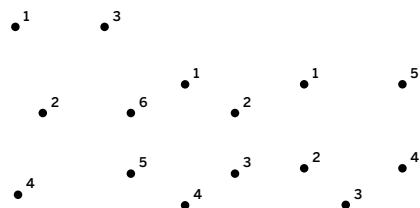
- Most people experience change in their weight throughout their lives. However, if you have had a serious weight loss or are unhappy with your weight this may be a symptom of an eating disorder

### Racing Thoughts

- Rapid thought patterns that frequently occur in manic, hypomanic or mixed episodes which commonly associated with the mania in bipolar disorder and schizoaffective disorder, but are also often found in anxiety disorders such as OCD

**If you experience anything unusual in your mood or your physical reactions, always ask for support and seek medical advice.**

**Please don't self-diagnose – it is ok to ask for help!**



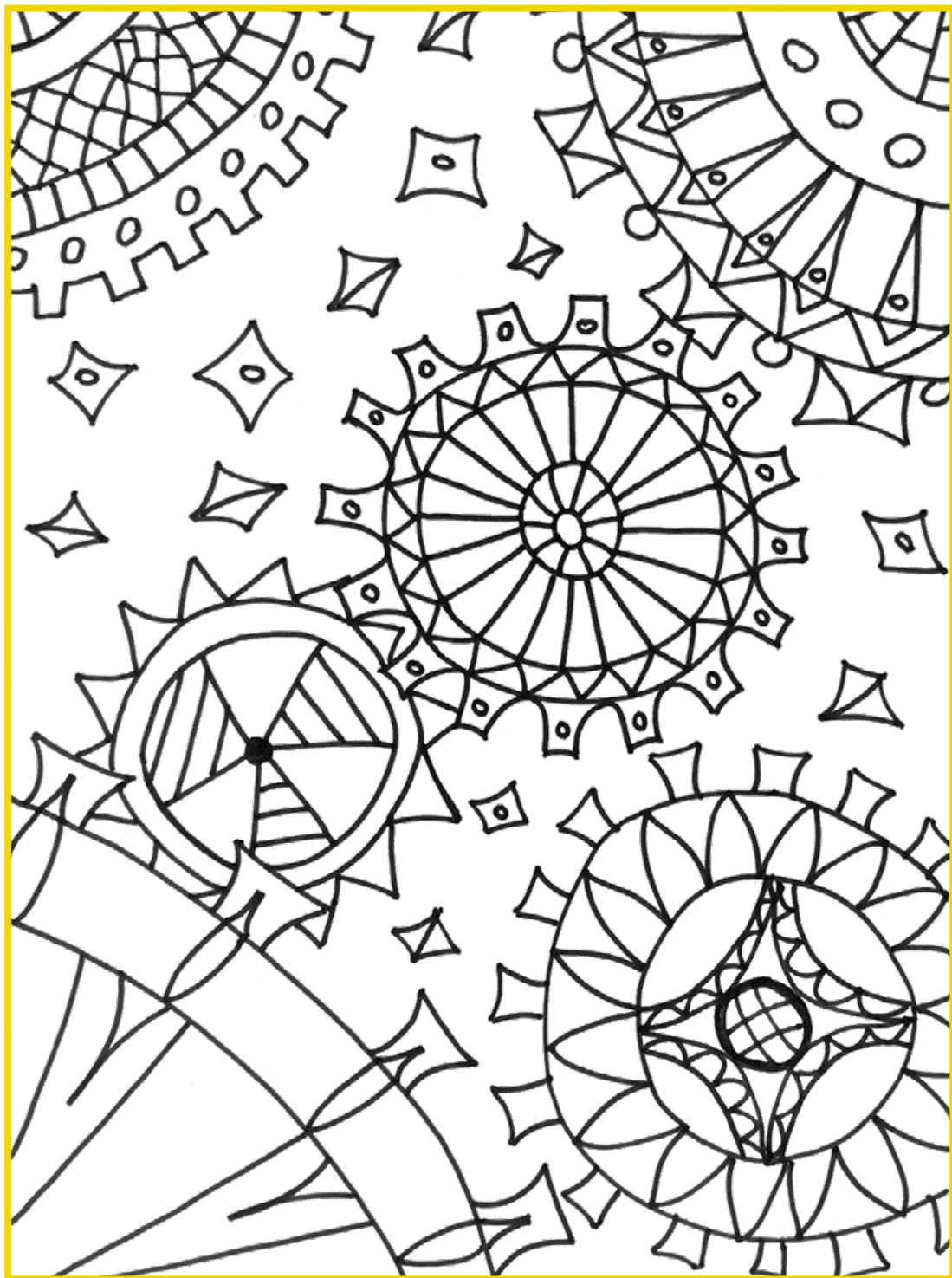
**I have suffered with mental health issues since I was around 12.** I felt very depressed and anxious and felt like a burden to those around me. I started to self harm as a way of having a release and control. As I got older my mental health got worse along with the self harm. I had a lot of counselling and therapy but didn't feel it was working. When I was 16 I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression. At 17 I was put on antidepressants to help me cope with day to day life.

Before my 18th birthday I attempted to take my own life. I was in a very dark place at the time and felt there was no other way out. I was sent to A&E and put on a drip. I had a psychological assessment and was sent home the next morning.

I am now nearly 20. I'm receiving support through a therapist and another mental health service. I still take medication to help me and I still have my bad days.  
**But I'm getting there, and so can you.**

**Written by a young person, age 19**





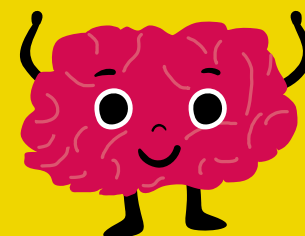
In the survey we asked: why do you think it is important to talk about mental health?

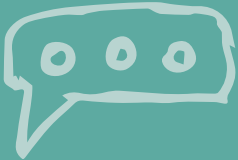

So people  
don't have  
to suffer  
in silence

TO GET RID OF  
THE STIGMA  
ATTACHED TO  
MENTAL HEALTH



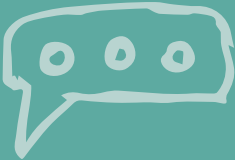

Give different  
perspectives

IF WE DON'T  
TALK ABOUT IT,  
IT WILL NEVER  
GET SOLVED





Social anxiety, to me, has always been an odd experience. One moment I could be as confident as ever. But other times I could be embarrassed at a sentence I said an hour ago that didn't really matter that much. It could be something as simple as **'Did I say hello in the right way to this person?'** or 'Is this person judging me because they looked at me?' This doesn't just happen in real life conversations either, even when I text someone on Instagram, WhatsApp or just a simple text message. That worry always looms over me of **'Have I said the right thing?'**



Usually, **I don't speak out about this stuff.** I just keep it all to myself, and sometimes it bottles up for a while. Sometimes I forget about it by the end of the day. I guess the only way I can really describe how my brain works is: Have you ever been thinking to yourself in the middle of the night and remembered that **embarrassing** thing you did three years ago? That's a snapshot of what I think about **daily.**

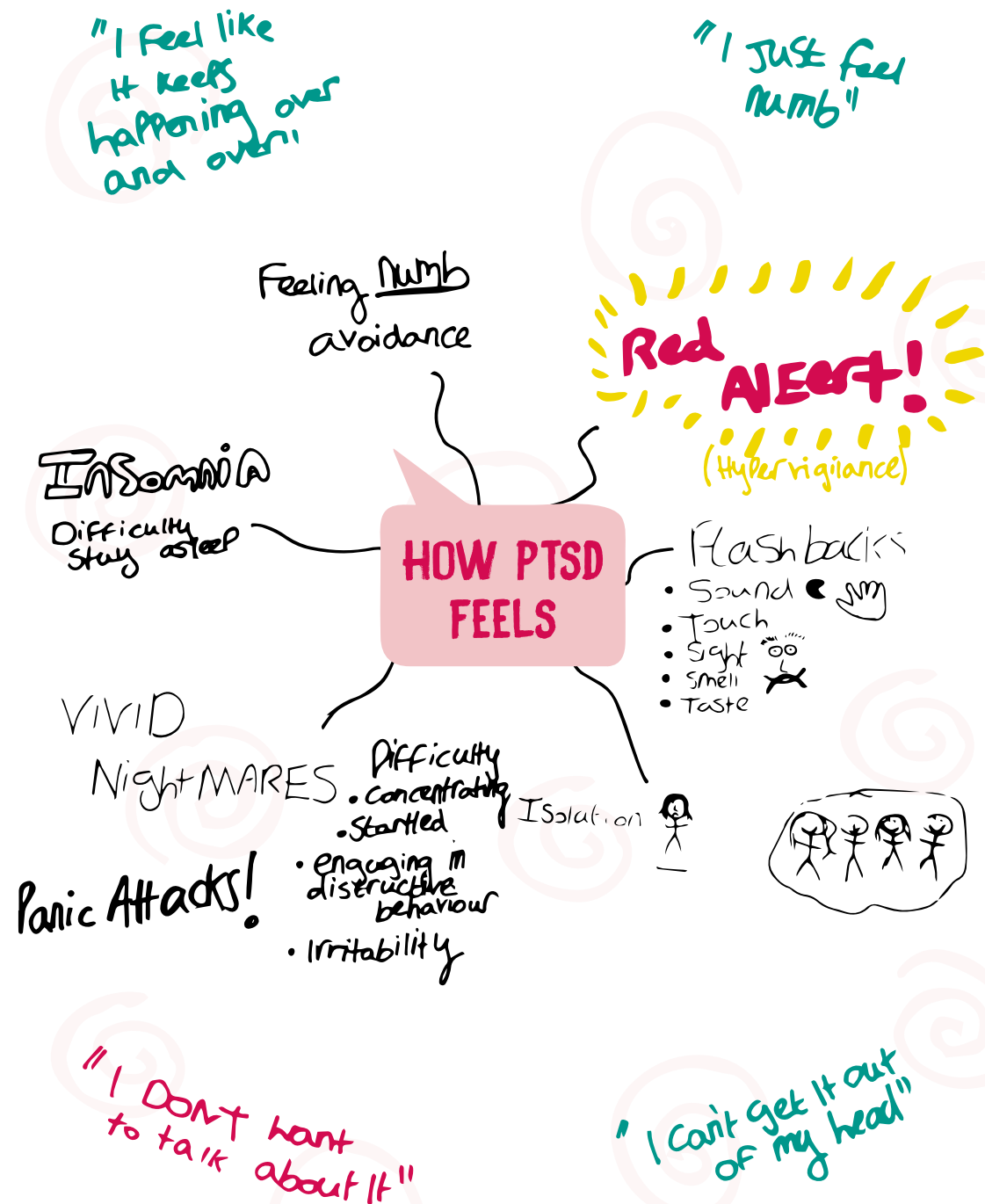
**I know it's never going away.** I've fully understood that, but I've learnt that I need to stop caring about that spelling mistake or that missing comma. **I need to move on,** and if you are in the same situation as me; no one really takes notice of what colour socks you wear, how you word your sentences or that bit of hair that sticks up once in a while. Forget about the past, that's already happened. **Look at the now, and where you're headed.**

Written by a young person, age 15



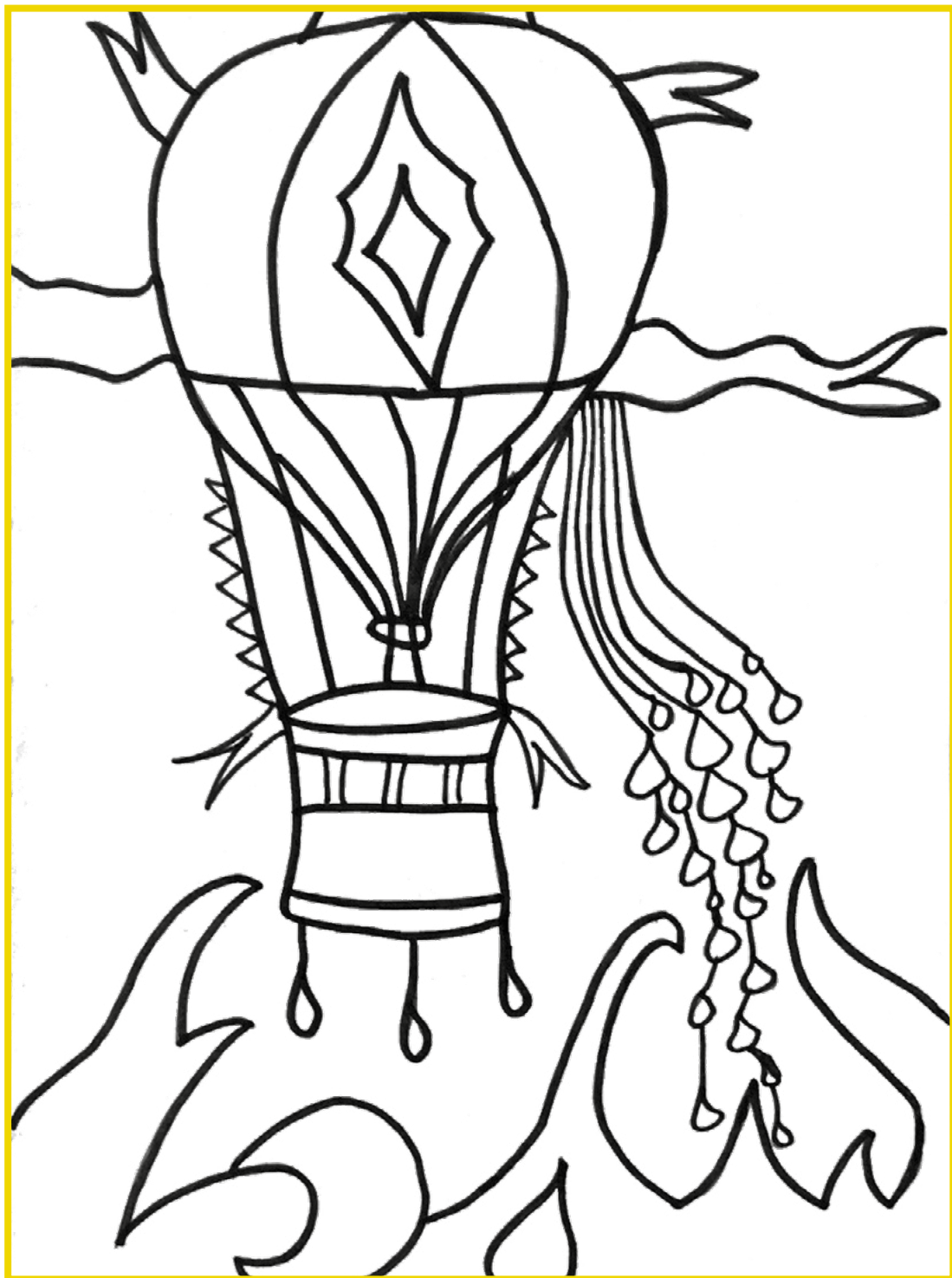


Illustrated by a young person, age 17









The advice young people would give to an adult (ie parents, teachers) on how to support young people's mental health...

**Don't be judgemental**

**DON'T PUT TOO MUCH PRESSURE ON YOUNG PEOPLE**

**Don't assume they are seeking attention or being dramatic**

**Stop comparing age generations**

**YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T SHOW MENTAL ILLNESS AT ALL TIMES. IT CAN HAPPEN IN EPISODES**

**WE WILL OPEN UP EVENTUALLY**

**Talk to them as if they were an adult, not a child**



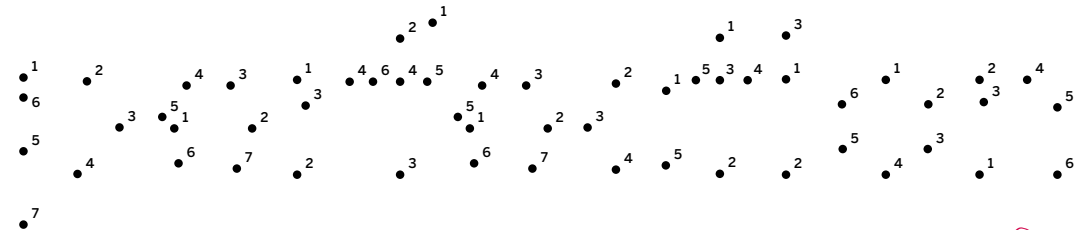
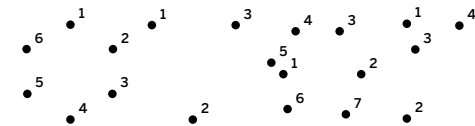
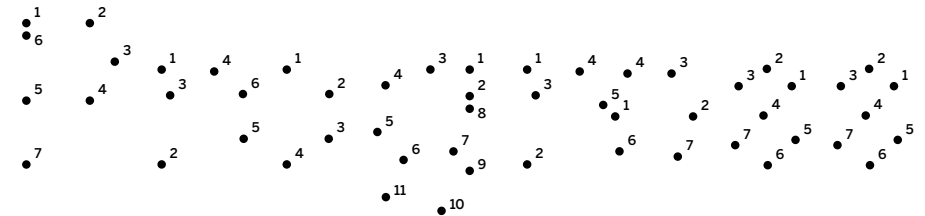
It's okay not to be okay.

I tell myself these words every day and yet I still struggle to come to terms with this phrase and its meaning... is it okay not to be okay?

Everyone is allowed to be happy and smile and laugh, but why can't we be sad or angry or emotional. We are humans after all, we are all entitled to have and express our emotions. There's no need to explain yourself to someone if you woke up feeling groggy and moody just as you don't have to explain yourself to someone when you're feeling good and happy. The same way that we embrace our happiness we should also embrace our sadness and hurt because all of these feeling and emotions make us who we are as individuals and builds us up stronger.

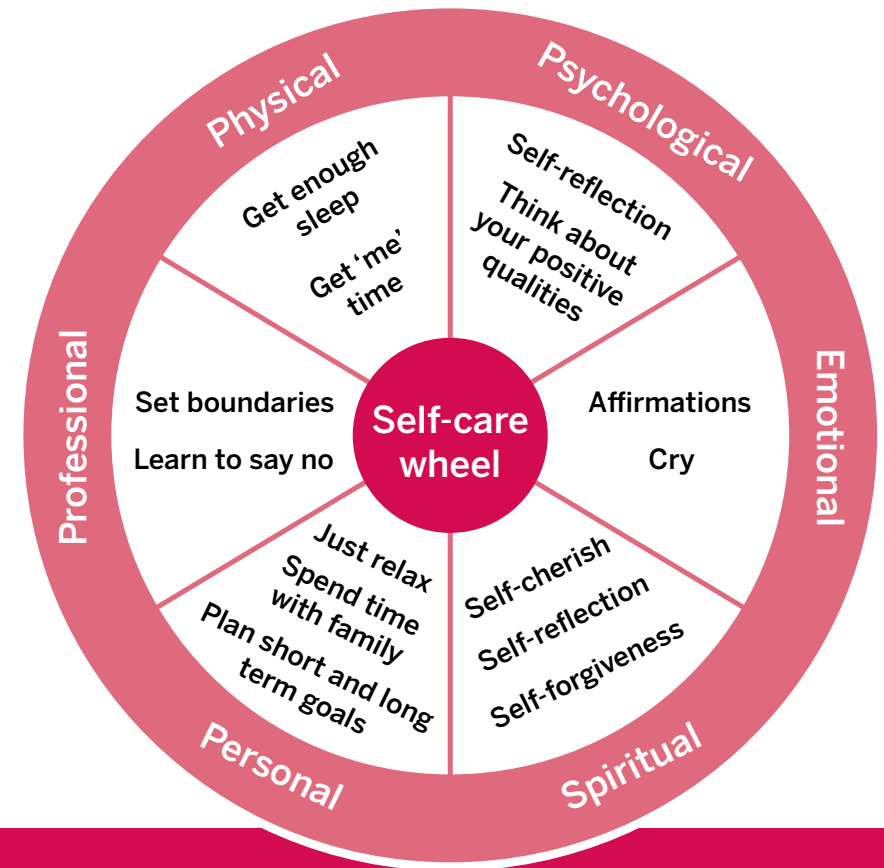
So yes, it is okay not to be okay. It may be something that you may not want to show or may not be proud of but you should because it is what made you who you are today.

**Written by a young person, age 17**



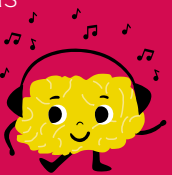
REMEMBER THE TIME  
YOU THOUGHT YOU  
COULD NEVER SURVIVE?  
YOU DID AND YOU CAN  
DO IT **again**

## SELF-CARE ISN'T JUST ABOUT A BATH AND A FACE MASK



Young people who completed the survey found these resources helpful:

- Sport
- Music
- Dance
- YouTube
- Comfort food
- Films
- TV shows
- Hobbies
- Art
- Sleep
- Stress toys
- Playing Instruments
- Reading
- Meditation
- Video games
- Hanging out with friends
- Crying



Our example of an A-Z of self care...

The only way to have a friend is to be one



**A**FFIRMATIONS

**B**UBBLE BATH

**C**ALMING DOWN

**D**RINK WATER

**E**XERCISE

**F**EELINGS

**G**OING OUTSIDE

**H**APPINESS

**I**MAGINATION

**J**OY

**K**INDNESS

**L**OVE YOURSELF

**M**USIC

**N**ATURE

**O**PEN UP

**P**ACE YOURSELF

**Q**UIET TIME

**R**ELAX

**S**Ocialise

**T**REAT YOURSELF

**U**SE YOUR SENSES

**V**ENTURE

**W**ELL-BEING

**X**HALE

**Y**OGA

**Z**EN



HAPPY



Make your own A-Z of self care...

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| A | B | C |
| D | E | F |
| G | H | I |
| J | K | L |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| M | N | O |
| P | Q | R |
| S | T | U |
| V | W | X |
| Y | Z |   |

Mental health begins with me



HAPPY



My mind is so blank,  
as dark as the sky,  
I feel so depressed,  
yet never know why

I wake up each morning,  
see the light in the day,  
but all I ever see,  
is sadness and grey

The anxiety rolls in,  
I feel it won't leave,  
the stronger it gets,  
I feel I can't breathe

My past it upsets me,  
my future isn't clear,  
the memories won't leave,  
I feel nothing but fear

I wanna be normal,  
despite what's wrong  
I'm scared to let go,  
I just wanna be strong

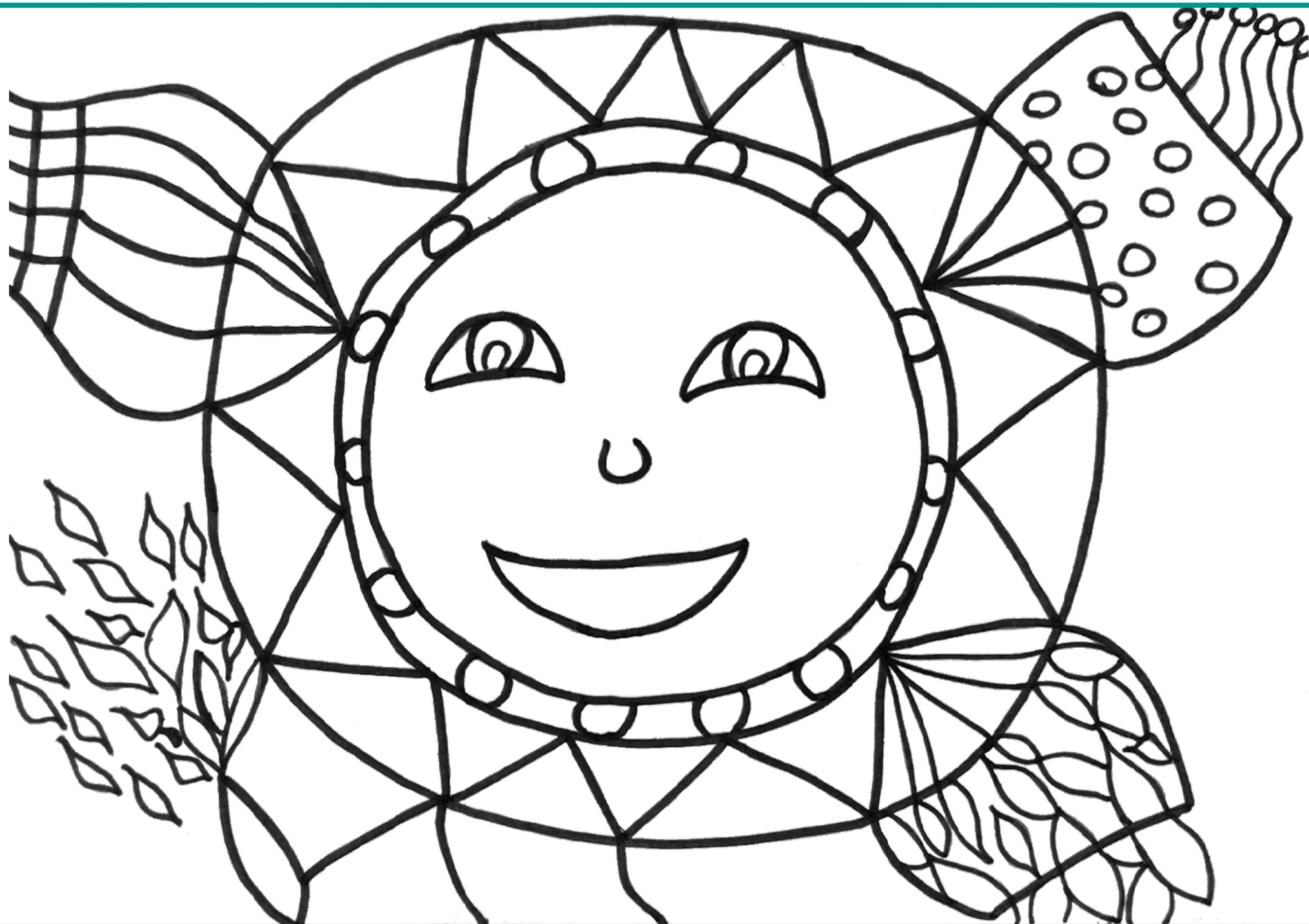


Written by a young person, age 19

YOU WERE GIVEN  
THIS LIFE BECAUSE  
YOU ARE **strong**  
ENOUGH TO LIVE IT

EVERY DAY MAY NOT  
BE GOOD BUT THERE IS  
**good** IN EVERY DAY





### Apps:

- Calm
- Headspace
- Sanvello
- White Wall
- For Me – the Childline app
- WYSA
- Calm Harm
- Mindshift
- WellMind
- Elefriends
- Meditation app
- Daylio Journal
- 3 Minute Mindfulness
- ClearFear



### Websites:

- Samaritans – [samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org)
- Young Minds – [youngminds.org.uk](https://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- Mind – [mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk)
- Anna Freud Centre – [annafreud.org/on-my-mind/resources](https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/resources)
- Childline – [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk)
- Rise Above – [riseabove.org.uk](https://www.riseabove.org.uk)
- The Children's Society – [childrenssociety.org.uk](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)
- Rethink – [rethink.org](https://www.rethink.org)
- Kooth – [kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com)





I know that life is hard right now,  
for you, for me, for everyone.

We know the pain can weigh a ton,  
the pain is shared we grow as one.

Day by day we'll find our way,  
in hope to reach a better place.

**Written by a young person, age 15**

**THERE IS hope EVEN WHEN YOUR  
BRAIN TELLS YOU THERE ISN'T**

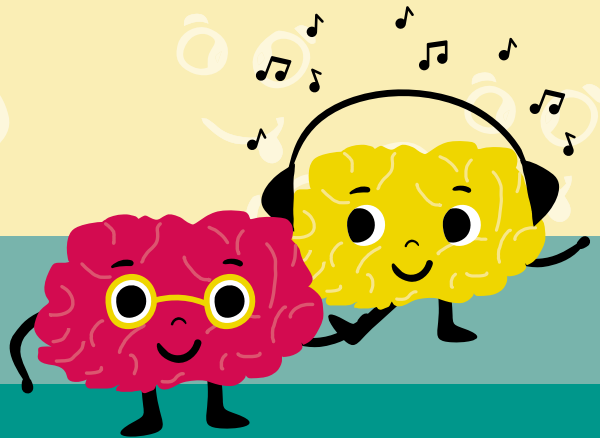


**The Children's Society and our supporters have been there for vulnerable children and young people for more than 130 years.**

We believe that every young person should have the support they need in order to enjoy a safe, happy childhood.

That's why we run services and campaigns that make children's lives better and change the systems that are placing them in danger.

**Together with our supporters, we're improving the lives of children today and long into the future.**



**The  
Children's  
Society**