

# THE CHENDERIT LITTLE BOOK OF WELLBEING

(a work in progress)

Useful websites

[www.teenbreathe.co.uk](http://www.teenbreathe.co.uk)

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

[www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing)



**School and Life Can be Stressful – we are always trying to process lots of information - find out how you can deal with tasks more effectively.**

### **Eight Ways Why You Are Like A Computer**

Imagine your brain has having lots of folders open with information stored inside - sometimes we all have too many tabs open. Find out how you can declutter and work more efficiently.

- 1. You function better when you are less cluttered.** Research shows that people with uncluttered desks are more productive and that being surrounded by mess can set off threat detection systems in your brain that make it hard for you to concentrate. Once in a while you might clean down your computer and get rid of old files to free up some memory – do the same with your work space: straighten your desk and make sure everything you need is in reach.
- 2. You have internal systems that detect a malfunction.** When your computer battery is almost drained a warning sigh appears. Your body is constantly providing you with messages and asking you to take care of it: an empty stomach, heavy eyes that want to close, feeling thirsty, rapid heartbeat or shaking hands. Don't ignore these signs – action maybe required to avoid shut down.
- 3. You may have too many windows open.** You and your computer have limited working memory – don't overload it. Try to close some windows and focus on one task at a time efficiently.
- 4. You need a firewall.** A firewall keeps harmful material out of your computer. Create your own firewall to minimise negative events in your own life. Build relationships with friends and family who will support and not judge you. You do not need to engage in negative social media messages or read every post. You can choose the information you consume.
- 5. You need regularly scheduled updates.** Try sometimes to get an early night, go for a walk or a swim and eat healthily.
- 6. Avoid crisis moments.** Your computer normally crashes when you can least afford it – and you are the same. When big events such as exams are approaching get some “anti virus protection” – get to bed on time, eat well and take care of yourself.
- 7. Completely shut down occasionally.** Take some time once in a while to have a complete break from technology – no phone, no TV, no computer. You need a rest.
- 8. You can't trust everything on the internet.** Don't trust everything you hear - keep an open mind, do your research, think for yourself.

Extracts from Teen Breathe Magazine Issue 3



## **Your Best Really is Enough!**

*Most people are happy knowing they have done their best and learnt to deal with the feeling of never being the best. But what if you are an overachiever and constantly feel the pressure of having to be the absolute best?*

**So what is life like as an “overachiever”** – always producing amazing work, scoring well in exams and sports and fitting in lots of extracurricular activities? It can have its downsides. Some overachievers link their success to their self-worth and worry how people will see them when they make mistakes that they perceive as failure. Self-esteem then is easily dented and they can experience painful self-doubt. Many will hide these worries, fearful that if they show their vulnerabilities their peers will judge them to have failed.

The constant fear of not being the best or getting something wrong means overachievers can become stressed and anxious. They can sometimes do everything possible to avoid not being perfect which can have a negative impact on mental health. If this sounds like you or a friend or colleague what can you do to help?

### **1. Embrace Failure**

One important remedy to this anxiety is to learn how to fail and move on. It might not be that you are perfect all of the time but accept you worked hard and did your best. Failure sounds negative but it is a human learning experience – some of the worlds most accomplished people have failed many times before achieving their goals – JK Rowling, Walt Disney and Michael Jordan to name a few amongst many.

### **2. Deal with (constructive) criticism**

Criticism is an overachievers nightmare – no one likes to be told their work isn't perfect but to someone who consistently excels it can be brutal. Criticism can often help to improve so try to listen without it affecting self-esteem.

### **3. Be kind to yourself**

Being the best at something is not the only thing that makes you a good person. Good people are also kind, thoughtful and happy. You can't always change what others do, think or say, but you can decide how you react and deal with people and their expectations.

### **4. Accept that your best is enough**

It is important to realise that not everyone can be a winner all of the time – look at Andy Murray or Serena Williams – they don't win all of the time but they do learn from their disappointments. What sets high achievers apart from overachievers is that they are content knowing they do their best and are proud of any progress they make.

Extracts from Teen Breathe Magazine Issue 3

**So next time something does not go as you wanted it to, remember: your best really is good enough.**



be kind  
to yourself.



## Food and Mood

***We all have good days and bad days; we all have foods we like more, or like less. But is there a connection between feeling fine and the foods we have eaten? Do some foods make us feel grumpy? Is it possible to plan a diet for a good mood?***



Research has found that young adults (under 30) who ate fast food more than three times a week scored higher on levels of mental distress. Fast food is usually high in the saturated and trans fats that can provoke a low-grade inflammatory response in the body, which, in turn, is linked to anxiety and depression in both animal and human research.

A study in Norway found that people who consumed fish oil regularly were about 30 percent less likely to have depression. Fish oil is known to be rich in omega 3 fatty acids, which are important for brain function, and was also among the supplements given to the inmates in the prison study. If fish is not to your taste, then walnuts or flaxseeds are good too.

And let's not forget protein – it's essential for making serotonin and dopamine, two chemicals linked to emotional health. The components for synthesising these in the brain are present in lean proteins, such as chicken, fish or turkey. For the vegetarians amongst us, beans, lentils and quinoa will also provide these.



### What do I need?

The most important thing is to eat regularly and include the main food groups in your daily diet: starchy foods (such as rice, potatoes and bread); fruit and vegetables; meat, fish, eggs and beans; milks and dairy foods; and foods containing fat and sugar. [But be careful not to eat too much sugar or fat, and to eat more of the 'good' fats – unsaturated and Omega-3 rich foods.] Not eating regularly means your blood sugar will drop, and your mood will drop with it.

### What in my food affects my mood?

- **Tryptophan:** an amino-acid that the body uses to help make serotonin, which is known to modulate mood, emotion, sleep and appetite. Tryptophan is found in bananas, walnuts, turkey, sunflower seeds, milk, eggs, cheese, brown rice, chicken a fish.
- **B-vitamins:** these vitamins help the process your body uses to get or make energy from food, so not getting enough B-vitamins in your diet can make you lethargic and even depressed. A lack of B6 or B12 can also cause anaemia. Foods that are rich in B-vitamins include whole grains (such as wheat and oats), fish and seafood, poultry and meats, eggs, milk, leafy green vegetables, beans and peas.
- **Omega-3 fatty acids:** essential fatty acids which are important to your overall health and wellbeing, and notably for nerve and brain function. Good sources of omega-3 are oily fish (such as salmon, mackerel and sardines), omega-3 eggs (check the box), walnuts, flaxseeds and sunflower seeds.

## Some good mood-boosting foods

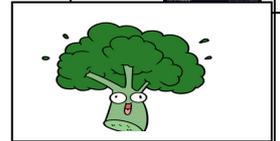
- **Sweet Potatoes** are full of B vitamins folate and B6 which can help to alleviate premenstrual symptoms and depression. They also help to keep blood sugar levels steady and therefore help to prevent mood swings and sugar cravings.



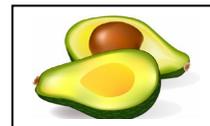
- **Bananas** give a sustained energy boost and are packed with vitamins and tryptophan. They are also packed with potassium, levels of which can be depleted by stress.



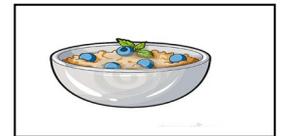
- **Leafy greens** such as broccoli are an excellent source of folic acid, a lack of which has been linked to a depressed mood.



- **Avocados** contain tryptophan, vitamin B6 and folic acid.



- **Oatmeal** is rich in soluble fibre which helps to smooth out blood sugar levels by slowing the absorption of sugar into the blood.



- **Lentils** are an excellent source of B vitamin folate, low levels of which have been linked to depression. Lentils are a great food for vegetarians as they also contain protein.



## Carbohydrate = Glucose = Brain Power

The ability to concentrate and focus comes from the adequate supply of energy – from blood glucose – to the brain. In fact, the brain uses 20% of all energy needed by the body. Glucose is also vital to fuel muscles and maintain body temperature. The glucose in our blood comes from all the carbohydrates we eat – foods including fruit, vegetables, cereals, bread, rice, potatoes, sugars and lactose in milk.

Drink plenty as dehydration can cause headaches, mood changes, lethargy, poor concentration and slower responses. Try to drink about 1.2 litres (6-8 glasses) a day, and more if you are very active or it is a hot day.

Eating breakfast and regular meals containing some carbohydrate ensures you will have enough glucose in your blood. Healthier sources of carbohydrates include wholegrains, vegetables, fruits, legumes and lower fat dairy. These are an important source of nutrients as well, such as calcium and B vitamins. Not having enough glucose in the blood (hypoglycaemia) makes us feel weak, tired and 'fuzzy minded'. It can also happen with people following very restrictive diets or with erratic eating patterns. However, although glucose ensures good concentration and focus, once your blood glucose is within the normal range, you cannot further boost your brain power or concentration by increasing your glucose levels! And if you consume some carbohydrate foods, additional sugary 'energy' drinks are not needed and not helpful.

## Caffeine and the 'drug-effect'

Caffeine, found in coffee, cola and energy drinks, is often called a 'drug': it acts as a stimulant and can improve the feelings of alertness, and counter the effects of fatigue. However there is also a suggestion that some of the effects of caffeine are more to 'normalise' the lower levels of alertness felt by regular users who have not consumed enough caffeine that day.

Too much caffeine, particularly in people who are not used to it, may cause the adverse effects of irritability and headache. Such symptoms also occur with caffeine withdrawal in people used to lots of caffeine.

## Good Mood Food

### Spiced Pepper Pilafs

#### Ingredients

2 peppers  
10ml vegetable oil  
1 small onion  
1 clove garlic  
1cm piece of ginger  
10ml spoon of tomato puree  
2.5ml cumin  
5g medium or mild curry powder  
75g basmati or long grain rice  
300ml vegetable stock  
100g spinach leaves  
Fresh mint (optional)

#### Method

1. Turn on oven to 200C.
2. Dice onion and garlic finely. Grate the ginger.
3. Use a sharp knife to slice the top off each pepper. Cut out the middle stalk and scoop out any seeds. Carefully trim the bottoms slightly so they stand upright, but the filling won't fall out.
4. Heat the oil in a saucepan. Add the onion, garlic and ginger, then gently cook for 5 mins until softened. Stir in the tomato purée and spices, and cook for 1 min more. Add the rice, stir to coat, then pour in the stock. Bring to the boil, cover with the lid and leave to cook over a low heat for 15 mins, until the rice is cooked. Stir through the spinach and mint.
5. Fill each pepper with the rice mix and place the lid on top.
6. Place the peppers on a lightly greased baking tray and cook for 25-30 mins or until the peppers have softened.

### Banana, chocolate and Walnut Bread

#### Ingredients

4 ripe bananas peeled  
250g caster sugar  
2 eggs  
140g softened butter  
250g plain flour  
2 tsp baking powder  
100g walnut piece  
100g chocolate chip

#### Ingredients

1. Heat oven to 190C/170C fan/gas 5. Line a 900g/2lb loaf tin with baking parchment. In a large bowl, mash together the bananas and the sugar with the back of a fork.
2. Add the eggs and mix well with an electric hand whisk until fully incorporated, then add the butter and mix for a couple mins more to blend everything together.
3. Sieve in the flour and baking powder and fold together with a spatula, then add the walnuts and chocolate chips.
4. Give everything one final mix before tipping into the lined loaf tin. Bake for 1 hr 5 mins or until a skewer inserted into the middle comes out clean. Leave to cool slightly in the tin, then turn out and serve cut into thick slices, either warm or at room temperature. *Any uneaten cake will keep in an airtight container for up to 3 days.*

# COPING WITH STRESS

Family upheaval, exams, broken friendships, new school, money worries. They are all different situations, but they have one thing in common – they bring mental or emotional strains or tension, otherwise known as stress. Most people will experience this at some point in their lives and a certain amount can be healthy, but there can be times when it seems like the weight of the world is on your shoulders. The important thing to remember is that you're not alone – according to a 2016 survey by YouGov, six in every 10 students say they experience levels of stress that interfere with everyday life – and there's no reason to be embarrassed. But how do you recognise stress, and what can you do if it feels like it's just too much?

## 1 What is stress?

Sometimes everything feels too much. Your parents want you to do things. Your school puts pressure on you. You want to keep up with friends. You're being pulled from different angles and the pressure mounts. Life feels out of control and situations are overwhelming. You feel... stressed.

## 2 Is feeling stressed quite common?

Feeling stressed often comes when things change – right now, it might seem that everything is changing as you drift between childhood and adulthood. Sometimes you wish you were small (and maybe safe) again, sometimes you feel strong and grown up. Your body is changing. People start asking more of you. Your feelings get more intense and can be difficult to express or control. You start discovering who you are – and who you'd like to become. None of this is easy. So, no wonder you're encountering new levels of stress in your life. You're not alone.

## 3 Does that mean that some stress is natural then?

It's very natural to experience some stress when you face new challenges – as you stretch yourself to take on more responsibility or try new things. Feeling stressed for a short period of time can even help by making you feel more alert and propelling you to take action. Remember, the brain actually likes solving problems. Everyone has different thresholds for stress. You may be able to cope with more than a friend, for example, but less than someone older than you. The good news is that no matter your current level, you can learn how to handle stress better. Learning to face stress and deal with it will make you more flexible and less frightened. You'll discover an innate strength and courage to be proud of.

## 4 How do I recognise if I am stressed?

Stress changes shape and it manifests in different ways – both emotionally and physically. Here are some signs that you might be feeling stressed:

- lack of focus
- disturbed sleep, constantly tired
- lots of worrying
- snappier or more tearful than usual
- more withdrawn
- feeling lonely and alone (with no one to talk to)
- feeling down on yourself
- eating more or less than usual
- not able to disconnect from social media
- panicky or having panic attacks

- more controlling or obsessive
- disconnecting from feelings, numbness

Now, some of these things can also be a natural part of being a teenager so, check it out – use your gut instinct. It's also worth noting that more serious symptoms of stress include dangerous risk-taking and some people might even hurt themselves.

### 5 What do I do if I feel stressed?

The first thing to do is to tune into, and then voice, how you feel. Take a moment now if you're feeling stressed. Do you feel a physical sensation – or are you snappy with those around you? Are you feeling lonely and withdrawn, or are you acting out? When people come for help, it is important to explore what is troubling them and to focus on aspects of health such as getting good-quality sleep, regular exercise and cutting down on sugar. Simple breathing exercises like counting in for three seconds, and out for five seconds, can really help to calm you down if you are feeling stressed.

### 6 What if my stress doesn't ease?

If you feel your stress is long-lasting or serious, speak to a responsible adult, whether that be a relative or teacher. Listen carefully to the advice they give, even if you don't like what they have to say at first. Test their ideas out as an experiment – and come up with your own ideas. They may encourage you to see a GP who may in turn suggest seeking professional advice to help you reduce your symptoms and get to the root cause of your stress. Try to make sure you're involved with any decision-making and are comfortable with the options offered.

### 7 And what about the future?

Your teenage years are a period of amazing growth and change. It's likely to be stressful at times, but with help this can be managed and it will pass. Above all, remember that this is all part of becoming you.

Taken from Teenbreathe Issue 2

- *Words: Renée van der Vloodt*



**I choose.....**

**To live by choice, not be chance  
To be motivated, not manipulated  
To be useful, not used  
To make changes, not excuses  
To excel, not compete  
I choose self-esteem, not self pity  
I choose to listen to my inner voice, not to the  
random opinion of others.**

