



KS3 · YEARS 8–10

Looking After Yourself

Wellbeing & Balance · My Learning Toolkit · My Understanding Toolkit

All the tools in your toolkit work best when you're not tired, worried or running on empty. Feeling a bit nervous before a test is normal. But studying should never cost you your sleep, your food or your happiness. Here's how to look after your brain – and you.



We are a Take 5 school

Parkhall is a Take 5 school. Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing are five simple things everyone can do to feel good and look after their mental health. Try to do a little of each one every day – especially when you're revising.

1 Connect	Spend time with family and friends – talk, play, eat a meal together. Revise with a friend by quizzing each other.
2 Keep Learning	Try something new just for fun: a recipe, an instrument, a new skill. Learning new things builds confidence.
3 Be Active	Walk, dance, swim, play sport – anything that gets you moving and makes you feel good.
4 Take Notice	Stop and notice what's around you – sounds, colours, the sky. Try it in your revision breaks.
5 Give	Do something kind: help at home, thank a teacher, cheer on a friend before a test.

Find out more about Take 5: www.mindingyourhead.info/Take5



Sleep: your brain's save button

While you sleep, your brain moves the day's learning into long-term memory. So sleep isn't time off from revising – it's part of it!

How much? Most people your age need around 9 hours a night. Sleep experts recommend 9–12 hours up to age 12, and 8–10 hours for teenagers.



- ★ Go to bed and get up at about the same time every day – even at weekends.
- ★ Charge your phone outside your bedroom. Researchers found that teenagers who use their phone more before bed also use it more after midnight.
- ★ Swap screens for a book or music for the last 30 minutes before bed.
- ★ Skip energy drinks. They are packed with caffeine, which can stop you sleeping and make you feel jittery or anxious.
- ★ Don't revise late into the night. It usually means you remember less, not more.



Breaks matter

TAKE 5 • TAKE NOTICE

Short breaks aren't lazy. They give your brain time to sort out what you've just learned.

- ★ Revise for about 20–25 minutes, then take a 5-minute break.
- ★ In your break, stand up, stretch and get a drink of water.
- ★ Try not to scroll your phone in your break – 5 minutes can easily turn into 50!
- ★ Little and often: spacing out your revision (like the Leitner System) means less panic before tests.



Move your body

TAKE 5 • BE ACTIVE

Moving helps your mood, your sleep and your concentration.

The guideline The UK Chief Medical Officers say young people should aim for an average of at least 60 minutes of activity a day across the week. Anything that makes you breathe faster and feel warmer counts.

- ★ Walk, cycle, dance, swim, kick a ball, play – it all counts.
- ★ Spread it through the day. A quick walk between revision sessions is perfect.
- ★ Try things that build strength too, like climbing, skipping or a workout.



Fuel your brain

- ★ Eat breakfast. Your brain needs energy to concentrate in the morning.
- ★ Remember the Eatwell Guide from Home Economics: plenty of fruit, vegetables and starchy foods.
- ★ Keep a water bottle with you while you revise.



- ★ Choose snacks like fruit, yoghurt or toast instead of sweets and fizzy drinks.



Butterflies before a test

TAKE 5 • TAKE NOTICE

Feeling nervous before a test is completely normal. A racing heart and butterflies are your body getting ready to do its best – just like before a match or a performance.

- ★ Breathe slowly: in through your nose for 4, out through your mouth for 6. Repeat 5 times.
- ★ Write your worries down for a few minutes before the test. Then fold the paper up and put it away.
- ★ Remember that mistakes are how you learn. Getting something wrong in practice helps you get it right next time.
- ★ Think about what you have done. You've practised with your toolkit – trust it!



Talk about it

TAKE 5 • CONNECT

If revising is making you feel stressed, worried or upset, don't carry it on your own.

- ★ Talk to a parent or carer, your form tutor, your Head of Year or any adult you trust in school.
- ★ Talk to your friends. They're probably feeling the same.

♥ **If it ever feels like too much** It's okay to ask for help. Talk to your form tutor, Head of Year or a trusted adult – that's exactly what they're there for.

Childline	0800 1111	Free, any time of day or night. You can also chat online with a counsellor at childline.org.uk . For anyone under 19.
Lifeline	0808 808 8000	Northern Ireland's crisis helpline. Free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Emergency	999	If you or someone else is in danger right now.





My wellbeing week

Fill this in each day for a week. Look for patterns – how does your sleep affect your mood?

Day	Hours of sleep	60 mins active ✓	Breaks taken ✓	Phone out of bedroom ✓	How I feel
Mon					😊 😊 😊 😊
Tue					😊 😊 😊 😊
Wed					😊 😊 😊 😊
Thu					😊 😊 😊 😊
Fri					😊 😊 😊 😊
Sat					😊 😊 😊 😊
Sun					😊 😊 😊 😊

My Take 5 this week – what did I do for each step?

Step	What I did	✓
Connect		☐
Keep Learning		☐
Be Active		☐
Take Notice		☐
Give		☐

This week, I'm averaging _____ hours of sleep a night.

One person I could talk to if I feel stressed:

Where this advice comes from

1. Public Health Agency (2025) "Campaign urges people to 'Take 5' for better mental health" – Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing: Connect, Keep Learning, Be Active, Take Notice, Give. mindingyourhead.info/Take5 2. Parkhall Integrated College: My Learning Toolkit (Years 8–9), My Understanding Toolkit (Year 10), Wellbeing & Balance sections. 3. American Academy of Sleep Medicine (2016) Recommended amount of sleep for teenagers (consensus statement, Paruthi et al., Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine). 4. Education Authority NI, Healthwell: "How much sleep do kids need?" (healthwell.eani.org.uk). 5. UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines for children and young people (2026). 6. Mathew, G. M. et al. (2026) Bedtime smartphone use and overnight phone activity in adolescents. SLEEP 2026 abstract, Sleep 49 (Supplement 1). Early findings, not yet a full paper. 7. UK Government (2026) plans to end sales of high-caffeine energy drinks to under-16s in England; Northern Ireland considering similar rules. 8. Childline (childline.org.uk), Lifeline (lifelinehelpline.info), Shout (giveusashout.org), Samaritans (samaritans.org), Department of Health NI helpline list, Minding Your Head (mindingyourhead.info).
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