

# HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

## Looking after your emotional health and well-being

### Information for young people

**Lots of people drink alcohol and in some families this can make things difficult. These worksheets are for you to use if you are affected by the alcohol use of a person in your life (like a parent or carer).**

They look at different feelings you may have and how they might be affecting you. Each worksheet gives you tips to help you understand and cope with your emotions, there are lots of online links to other places to get help, and some stories from other young people in the same situation as you. We hope these worksheets will help you with some of the difficult feelings you might have.

### Information for practitioners

**Growing up with a parent who misuses alcohol can have a significant impact on a young person's emotional health and well-being. Our work with young people helped us develop a set of worksheets based around the type of emotions someone may experience and a number of ways to get support with these issues.**

Each worksheet gives a simple overview of the emotions the young person may be experiencing, and examples of how they may be affected physically or emotionally. They include a number of practical suggestions that can help a young person deal with these feelings, and online links to other useful resources and further information and reading.

The worksheets also include links to films, audio or interviews with other young people – helping children using these sheets to realise they are not alone in experiencing their emotions or dealing with a parent who drinks too much.

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## Things that may help...

### Ask me about me

**Our worksheets cover the emotions of anger, anxiety, confusion, fear, isolation and loneliness.**

These are the key emotions that young people we work with have identified when talking about what is happening in their homes and how it affects them.

Giving young people the chance to express and explore the ways they are thinking and feeling reminds them that they are important and their voices are being heard.

### Helpful links

**There are a number of online resources to support young people as they try to make sense of the situation they are in – click on the links below to visit them:**

- \* **Young Minds:** the website has a section for young people with downloadable publications and blogs.
- \* **Partnership for Children:** the website includes a resilience section with downloadable worksheets to help discuss feelings, communication, friendship, anger and change and loss.
- \* **Place2Be:** the website includes young people's stories and recommends resources.
- \* **Rethink:** the website has information, where to find support and a young people's mental health toolkit.
- \* **Mental Health Foundation:** the website has research and practice-based study, including information and resources for young people.

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# FEELING...ANGRY?

## Tips to help you look after your emotional health and well-being

**Anger is an emotion that everyone experiences – whether you feel absolutely furious or just a bit annoyed. It is a normal, healthy emotion and people can experience it in reaction to certain situations, behaviours or things said. However, although it is a normal emotion, it can be a problem if you find it difficult to keep anger under control. Anger can really get in the way of our thinking, feelings, behaviours and relationships.**

Anger can cause changes in your body and behaviour. These can include:

- \* Clenched fists
- \* Tightness or tenseness in your body
- \* Verbal outbursts
- \* A particular facial expression
- \* Hitting out

When anger takes over, it can come in different forms, from shouting to being physically aggressive and causing damage to things around you. Anger can sometimes make you act in a way that's harmful to yourself or others. It is important to get angry sometimes, but it is just as important to release the anger in the right way.

Learning how to deal with anger healthily can stop it causing more distress, it can also help you learn how to solve problems and cope with emotions.

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## Things that may help...

**Recognise your anger signs:** being aware of what causes our anger and what goes on inside us when we are getting angry can help us to understand it and manage it better.

- \* **Count to 10 and breathe slowly:** this can give you time to think and calm down.
- \* **Talk about how you feel:** this could be with anyone that you find comforting to talk to – don't bottle it up.
- \* **Do something creative:** this can help channel your energy and focus towards something else. Anger is a way of expressing ourselves, so expressing ourselves in other ways is helpful.
- \* **Listen to calming music:** this can help to change your mood and slow down your physical reaction.
- \* **Try to get some exercise:** physical activity can help reduce the stress that can cause you to become angry. If you feel anger escalating, see if you can go for a brisk walk or run – even just spending some time outside can help.

**Useful online resources** – click on the links below:

- \* **NHS choices:** anger management.
- \* **Controlling Emotions:** a lesson from Angry Birds.
- \* **A STORY:** staying calm when angry.
- \* **Dealing with anger:** worksheet activities.
- \* **Worksheets** to help you think about your feelings and people who can help.

**More online information**

- \* **Young Minds:** anger

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# FEELING...ANXIOUS?

## Tips to help you look after your emotional health and well-being

**Anxiety affects everyone at some point in their life and it can happen when you might be feeling afraid, nervous or worried about something. Sometimes the cause of the anxiety is obvious, but at other times it might be tricky to work out what is causing you to feel this way. Anxiety usually happens when we are experiencing something that we find difficult to control, or we are in a situation which is uncertain or dangerous.**

Symptoms of anxiety can be complicated and may be:

- \* **Physical:** sweating, chest pains, breathing difficulties, heart racing, shaking, blushing, headaches, feeling sick, panic attacks and vomiting.
- \* **Emotional:** anger, sadness, feeling worried, feeling nervous or afraid, aggression, helplessness, concentration difficulties, feeling numb, repetitive negative thinking or behaviours, and feeling continually watched or criticised.

If you are badly affected by anxiety, it can make a difference to every aspect of your everyday life and make it a struggle for you to control your feelings. Symptoms of anxiety can continue after the stressful situation has ended – for example if you have grown up in a home where there is alcohol misuse, you might remain on edge, vigilant and unconsciously hoping to avoid stressful situations long after your parent or carer may have gone into recovery.

**Other young people's experiences** – click on the links below:

- \* **My anxiety story:** things I wish people knew.
- \* **Anxiety disorders:** blogs and stories.

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## Things that may help...

**Trying mindfulness:** put simply, mindfulness is about being aware: noticing our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and anything that is around us and happening right now. By being aware of the feelings of anxiety and trying to stay with them, you can remind yourself that they will pass. To start with this will be hard to do, but the more you try to stay with the anxious feelings and observe them and not avoid them, the easier it will become to manage them.

**Be kind to yourself:** do something you enjoy – it could be meeting friends, reading, writing, drawing, painting or taking part in sport. It can be helpful to go outdoors and spend some time in the fresh air.

**Be aware of your personal limits:** be realistic about what you can cope with; if you are feeling overwhelmed then try to work out how others can help.

**Share your experiences:** a number of organisations have online discussion boards where you can talk and learn about your anxiety and share experiences or tips with others in similar situations.

**Relaxation/meditation:** some people find that activities such as meditation, visualisation or breathing exercises are helpful.

**Talking therapy:** if you are finding it difficult to cope, try and talk to someone who is trained to help – this could be your support worker, school nurse or a trusted friend or relative. If you need more help, your doctor may be able to help you get further support.

**Useful online resources** – click on the links below:

- \* **Calm:** meditation and simple guides for mindfulness to sleep, relax and breath for **IOS** and **Android**.
- \* **Hot air balloon ride:** guided meditation and visualisation.
- \* **Breath meditation.**
- \* **Worksheets** to help you think about your feelings and people who can help.
- \* **Message boards** for children affected by a parent's drinking.

### More online information

- \* **Anxiety UK**
- \* **Young Minds:** what is anxiety?
- \* **The Mix:** anxiety
- \* **The Children's Society:** anxiety

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# FEELING...CONFUSED?

## Tips to help you look after your emotional health and well-being

**Young people can often experience confusion about things happening in their lives, which can be made worse if parents misuse alcohol.**

Confusion may be caused by a lack of routine in your life – for example, some days there may be regular meals and a set bedtime, but on others there may not be enough food or anyone to tell you when to go to sleep.

Your parents may have mood swings – being loving and kind one minute and loud, angry or mean the next. Adults who drink may also be able to live their life like other people: going to work, making sure the bills are paid and running the house. This can be confusing when trying to understand that they have a problem.

**Living with confusion can cause a number of issues for you including:**

- \* **Trying to appear normal to people outside the family home:** this puts a lot of pressure on you and can be the cause of stress and anxiety.
- \* **Trying to behave like a young person at school and with friends but having to behave like an adult at home** when looking after a parent or siblings.
- \* **Knowing what to believe:** your parent may make promises while drinking that they then forget or do not carry out.
- \* **Not knowing who to trust:** your parent may hide their drinking from other members of the family and professionals, or ask you to lie for them.
- \* Feeling their drinking is **somehow your fault.**

Feeling confused about what you should think or feel towards your parent or your home life can cause stress and anxiety which can affect your day-to-day life.

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## Things that may help...

**Share your experiences:** a number of organisations have online discussion boards where you can talk and learn about your confusion, and share experiences or tips with others in similar situations.

**Talking therapy:** if you are finding it difficult understand what is happening at home, try to talk to someone who is trained to help – this could be your support worker, school nurse or a trusted friend or relative.

**Mindfulness:** if the confusion is causing great stress and anxiety, it might be worth trying mindfulness. Mindfulness is about being aware: noticing our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and anything that is around us and happening right now. By being aware of the feelings of anxiety and trying to stay with them, you can remind yourself that they will pass. To start with, this will be hard to do, but the more you try to stay with the anxious feelings and observe them and not avoid them, the easier it will become to manage them.

**Be kind to yourself:** do something you enjoy, whether meeting friends, reading, writing, drawing, painting or playing sport.

**Useful online resources** – click on the links below:

- \* **Message boards** for young people affected by a parent's drinking.
- \* **Worksheets** to help you think about your feelings and people who can help.

### More online information

- \* **Childline:** parents and alcohol
- \* **Barnardo's:** Confused about feelings: Parental drug and alcohol problems

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# FEELING...FRIGHTENED?

## Tips to help you look after your emotional health and well-being

**Most people experience periods of fear in their lives. These may be common fears like being frightened of the dark, animals or doing new things. Other fears may include losing a parent, being hurt, shouted at, or people finding out what is happening at home. Sometimes our worries and fears make us want to keep control of a situation and if this isn't possible it can lead to anxiety.**

Burying emotions such as anger or sadness may lead to you becoming frightened of your own emotions. Eventually you might start to fear all your powerful emotions and may even start fearing positive feelings like fun and joy.

When we feel frightened a number of things happen to our bodies, including sweating, a pounding heart, shortness of breath and a dry throat.

Some people who have experienced long term and/or repeated exposure to distressing events can have a reaction called **trauma**. This affects people in different ways but can include feelings such as denial, guilt, shame, low mood, depression, hopelessness, helplessness or numbness. It may also cause sleep problems, flashbacks, racing heart, low energy, being on edge and easily startled, tension, aches, pains and loss of appetite.

For some, these symptoms can get worse over time and develop into post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which is severe distress and anxiety caused by very frightening or life threatening events.

**Other young people's experiences** – click on the links below:

- \* **Dear diary...**the effects on a young person of a parent who drinks.
- \* **One day I will...**living with a parent who misuses alcohol.

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## Things that may help...

**Take time out:** it's impossible to think clearly when you're flooded with fear or anxiety. The first thing to do is take time out so you can physically calm down.

**Breathe through panic:** if you start to get a faster heartbeat or sweating palms, the best thing is not to fight it. Stay where you are, place the palm of your hand on your stomach and breathe slowly and deeply. This helps the mind get used to coping with panic, which takes some of the fear away.

**Talk to someone:** this could be anyone that you trust and find helpful to talk to. If you are afraid you are going to be hurt you must call the police or tell someone you trust.

**Try and think of a happy time or place:** when we're frightened, it can be helpful to think of a happy memory – this might be of people, animals, things or places you've been or would like to go.

**Learn how you relax best:** to help cope with the fears. It might be by playing sport, seeing friends or by reading, writing or drawing.

**Thinking of the future:** we all have hopes and dreams for the future, and thinking about them can help control your fears in the present.

**Professional help:** if fear and trauma have become impossible for you to cope with, you may need extra support from someone trained to help. Begin by talking to your support worker, teacher or doctor as they may refer you to specialist services.

**Useful online resources** – click on the links below:

- \* **A breathing exercise** for stress.
- \* **Overcoming fear and anxiety.**
- \* **Worksheets** to help you think about your feelings and people who can help.

### More online information

- \* Coping with **stress, anxiety and panic.**
- \* Ten ways to **fight your fears.**

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# FEELING...ISOLATED/LONELY?

## Tips to help you look after your emotional health and well-being

**Although both of these emotions can cause sadness, anxiety and stress, feeling isolated is a slightly different emotion to feeling lonely.**

There are different ways you can feel isolated:

- \* You have been left alone without any help.
- \* You may have withdrawn into yourself as a way of coping with feeling vulnerable or as a reaction to traumatic things happening in your life.

**If your parents drink you may be left alone for periods of time while they are out spending time with other people who also use alcohol. You may also feel different to or isolated from other young people – your worries will be different to theirs and you may not be able to have friends round or take part in activities outside of school because you have to rush home.**

Some young people will withdraw into themselves as a way of avoiding contact or connection with others. The more we isolate ourselves, the harder it becomes to make connections with people – this can then further isolate us.

Loneliness can be caused by not having enough contact with others to enable us to feel safe, loved and cared for. When we don't have this, we can feel lonely. Choosing to be by yourself is different to loneliness, it is your choice to be in your own company. However, loneliness is being alone when you don't want to be or feeling alone when you are with a group of people – be it family or friends. It may be difficult for you to make friends – so you may withdraw from social activities, leading you to feel sad and lonely.

Feeling lonely and isolated can have a negative impact on your mental health and can lead to difficulties such as anxiety or depression.

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## Things that may help...

**Tell someone about your situation:** if you are being left alone this isn't safe for you. Let a trusted family member, support worker or teacher know.

**Try and make contact:** smile, say hello – start off with what feels comfortable.

**Talk to people in the same situation:** a number of places across the country have young carers groups where you can meet others who have difficulties at home. If you would rather not talk face-to-face, then online message boards may be useful.

**Do something you enjoy:** your hobby may lead to meeting new people too.

**Relaxation/meditation:** if your feelings are causing you to become anxious, you may find it helpful to try activities such as meditation, visualisation or breathing exercises.

**Professional help:** if loneliness and isolation has become impossible for you to cope with, you may need extra support from someone trained to help. Begin by talking to your support worker, teacher or doctor as they may refer you to specialist services.

**Useful online resources** – click on the links below:

- \* **Message boards** for young people affected by a parent's drinking.
- \* **Calm:** Meditation and simple guided mindfulness for **IOS** and **Android**.
- \* **Hot air balloon ride:** Guided meditation and visualisation.
- \* **Breath meditation.**

### More online information

- \* Information from **Mind UK**
- \* Information from **Kids Health**

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