

HERE
for youth

EXAM CONFIDENCE

ACTIVITY PACK





PAUSE & BREATHE: YOUR EXAM WELLBEING ACTIVITY SUPPORT PACK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE 15-18



STUDY + SELF BALANCE PLANNER

Mindful Activity

"TAME THE THOUGHT" COGNITIVE DISTORTION TOOL

Mindful & Discussion Activity

RESET IN 5: YOUR CALM TOOL PATHS

Mindful Moments

PLAYLIST FOR MY BRAIN

Creative Activity

"IF THIS HAPPENS, I CAN..." CALM-DOWN STRATEGY MAP

Mindful Activity

I AM NOT ALONE

Mindful Activity

HERE



PAUSE AND BREATHE: TOOLS FOR EXAM CONFIDENCE

INFORMATION + SUPPORT FOR THIS ACTIVITY PACK



The run-up to exams, the pressure during them, and the anxiety afterwards about results can all take a significant toll on young people's mental health. In recent news, many have questioned whether our current system is "making young people ill," with Childline reporting nearly 1,650 counselling sessions relating to exam stress between April 2024 and March 2025.

Young people are sharing that they're struggling, including sleep loss, family pressure, guilt for taking breaks, toxic comparison, and feelings of hopelessness.



As one former UK Education Secretary noted: "Pupils who are supported and feel a sense of belonging perform better academically."

This pack was created to respond to those concerns with accessible, creative, and trauma-sensitive mindfulness tools.

These printable worksheets and journaling pages can be used in school, at home, or in support settings. They are not intended to "fix" stress, but to offer young people a sense of agency, calm, and encouragement.

Support Pack Aims:

- Support students' mental wellbeing during exam periods
- Provide accessible and relatable stress-management tools
- Encourage positive self-talk, balanced study habits, and emotional awareness

Each Activity Includes:

- A teacher/provider explainer page (with objectives and guidance)
- A student-friendly worksheet or creative task page



STUDY + SELF BALANCE PLANNER

GUIDE SHEET FOR EDUCATORS + PROVIDERS



This tool is designed to help students plan their revision schedules in a way that supports both productivity and wellbeing. Many young people in the 15–18 age group tend to either overwork or procrastinate during exam season, often swinging between burnout and avoidance. This planner promotes a more sustainable approach by integrating rest, movement, sleep goals, and emotional check-ins directly into their daily planning. It also gently reinforces that self-care is not a reward for hard work, it's a non-negotiable part of it.

WHEN TO USE THIS TOOL:

- At the beginning of a revision period (term time or holiday)
- During tutor time or PSHE sessions on wellbeing or time management
- With individual students who are struggling with overwhelm, low energy, or burnout.
- To support conversations around exam stress and healthy habits
- For building routine and boundaries with students

HOW TO GUIDE THE ACTIVITY:

1. Introduce the purpose of the planner: Talk about how balancing work and rest isn't just good for wellbeing, it actually improves memory, focus, and motivation. Frame it as a performance and wellbeing tool.
2. Walk through each column together: Explain how students can plan their main study topics for the week ahead, and encourage them to actively schedule breaks, movement, sleep, and even downtime. You could even do a live example or share your own version to help encourage them.
3. Highlight the 'Evening Mood + Reflection' column: Encourage students to fill in their mood, energy level, and overall end of day feeling day by day. This helps them reflect on how their habits are connected to how they feel, and helps you spot patterns, too.
4. Normalise imperfection: Remind students this isn't about perfectly ticking every box. The goal is to build awareness, catch imbalance early, and respond with kindness and small changes.

TIPS:

- You can offer it weekly and suggest that the youth can use the following worksheet or create their own ~ personalising it as they wish.

STUDY + SELF BALANCE PLANNER

WEEK OF:

	STUDY FOCUS	BREAK IDEAS	MOVEMENT	SLEEP GOAL	EVENING MOOD + REFLECTION
MON					
TUE					
WED					
THU					
FRI					
SAT					
SUN					



“TAME THE THOUGHT” COGNITIVE DISTORTION TOOL GUIDE SHEET FOR EDUCATORS + PROVIDERS



This reflective tool helps students identify and challenge unhelpful thoughts, particularly those related to fear of failure, perfectionism, self-doubt, and comparison. During exam season, many teens experience thoughts like:

- “If I don’t get top grades, I’m a failure.”
- “Everyone else is more prepared than me.”
- “One bad exam means I’ve messed everything up.”

These thoughts can feel overwhelming and real, but they’re often distorted or exaggerated by stress. “Tame the Thought” gives students a way to slow down, examine those thoughts, and gently shift them into something more balanced and self-compassionate.

HOW TO GUIDE THE ACTIVITY:

1. Introduce the idea of ‘unhelpful thoughts’: Let the youth know it’s completely normal to experience anxious or negative thinking, but that our brains sometimes jump to worst-case scenarios when we’re under pressure. These are known as cognitive distortions.
2. Explain that this activity is a way of talking back to those thoughts: Just like we’d support a friend who’s being hard on themselves, this worksheet helps us speak more kindly and logically to ourselves.
3. Guide them through the prompts one at a time:
 - “The worry in my head is...” (write down the unhelpful thought exactly as it shows up)
 - “Is this 100% true? What evidence do I have?” (look for proof for and against the worry)
 - “What would I say to a friend who felt this?” (externalising can soften self-judgment)
 - “A more balanced version of the thought is...” (create a kind, reasonable reframe, e.g. “I didn’t do my best today, but I still have time to try again.”)
4. Reinforce that this isn’t about “thinking positive,” it’s about thinking clearly. We’re not ignoring the pressure, just helping the brain step back from spirals.

"TAME THE THOUGHT"

ACTIVITY SHEET

This worksheet is here to help you challenge unhelpful thoughts and calm your mind. When we're stressed, especially around exam time, our brains sometimes tell us things that aren't totally true or helpful. This activity helps you slow down and see your thoughts more clearly.



Write a thought that's bothering you, no matter how big or small it seems:

Is this 100% true? What's the evidence that this thought is true? What's the evidence that it might not be?

What would I say to a friend who had this thought? Try imagining someone you care about felt the same. What would you say to help them?

What would be a balanced version of the thought? Replace the worry with a thought that is still honest, but calmer, kinder, and more balanced.



RESET IN 5: YOUR CALM TOOL PATHS GUIDE SHEET FOR EDUCATORS + PROVIDERS

This activity gives young people quick access to calming strategies they can use during high-pressure moments like exam stress, overwhelm, or panic. Instead of following a long routine, they can choose from five simple calming paths: breath, affirmation, grounding, self-kindness, and mindset. This allows them to pick what path feels most helpful in the moment.

HOW TO GUIDE THIS ACTIVITY:

- Guide the youth by saying they can build their toolkit on the following worksheet by choosing one of the following tools from each path, or they can choose their own!
- They can also use this as a way to be creative ~ For example, they can invent their own title for their breath practice, affirmation, grounding technique, etc.

Breathe ~ Calm your body, slow your mind

- Box Breathing: In-2-3-4, Hold-2-3-4, Out-2-3-4, Hold-2-3-4
- Trace your fingers while you breathe in and out
- Imagine blowing up a balloon, then letting it slowly deflate

Affirm ~ Remind yourself you've got this

- "I've prepared the best I can."
- "I'm more than one exam."
- Write your own phrase that lifts you up

Ground ~ Come back to the present moment

- 5-4-3-2-1: 5 things you see, 4 hear, 3 touch, 2 smell, 1 taste
- Hold something small (like a keyring or stone) and focus on it
- Look around and quietly name what you see

Kindness ~ Talk to yourself like you would a friend

- "One thing I'm proud of today is..."
- "I showed up. That counts."
- Write yourself a kind note or list 3 tiny wins in your head

Mindset Move ~ Shift your thoughts, not your worth

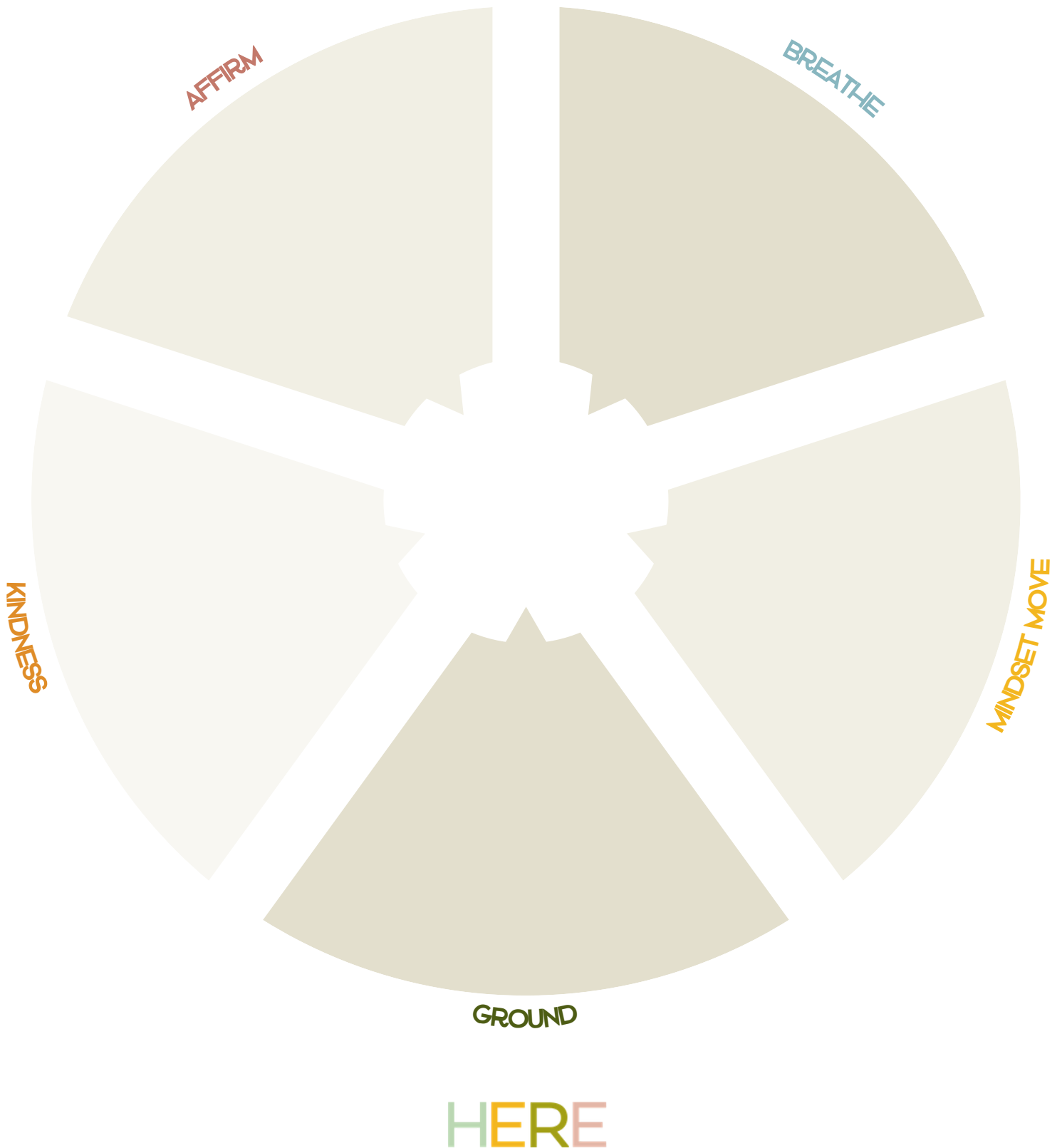
- "This is just one moment."
- "I can try again tomorrow."
- "What's one small next step I can take?"

TIPS:

- Remind the youth that there's no one-size-fits-all for calm...they can find their way with what works best for them
- Self-kindness and emotional reset tools are skills, not signs of weakness
- These are real tools, to handle real pressure, at any moment they need



RESET IN 5: YOUR CALM TOOL PATHS ACTIVITY SHEET





PLAYLIST FOR MY BRAIN

GUIDE SHEET FOR EDUCATORS + PROVIDERS

This tool invites students to think intentionally about how they use music to support their mood, focus, and energy during revision and downtime. Music can be a powerful emotional anchor.... This activity helps students reflect on what works for them, and build a personalised resource they can turn to when stress runs high.

By separating music into “Focus Zone” and “Switch Off” playlists, the activity encourages healthier break-time boundaries, supports self-regulation, and reminds students they already have tools to manage their stress.

HOW TO GUIDE THIS ACTIVITY:

1. Open a discussion about music and mood. Ask students if they have thought about using music before as a tool to help with focus and stress.
2. Ask students: What kind of music helps you focus? What do you listen to when you want to calm down or feel better? Let them share artists, genres, or moods, it helps youth feel seen and can break the ice.
3. Explain the two playlist types:
 - **“Focus Zone”** is music that helps them concentrate (this might be lyric-free, chill beats, film scores, lo-fi, classical, ambient, etc.)
 - **“Switch Off”** is music for relaxing, shifting their mood, or processing feelings (this could include calming music, nostalgic songs, or uplifting tracks)
4. Give students time to build both playlists on paper or digitally
5. They can fill out a printable version or use their own streaming platform to actually make the lists. Encourage 5–10 tracks per playlist to start.
6. Discuss when to use each one.
7. Talk about how music can signal a transition between work and rest, or help bring focus in a noisy or anxious moment.



**FUN
FACT**

You can teach the youth that certain sound frequencies, called Hertz (Hz), can affect how we feel. For example, 432 Hz is known as the “calming frequency” and 40 Hz is used in brain research to support focus + memory!

TIPS:

- Invite students to give their playlists creative names and themed covers (e.g. “Lo-Fi Lock In” and “Brain Reset Mode”)
- Offer space for doodling album art or drawing soundwaves for a more expressive version
- Suggest they keep their playlist links saved on their phone or printed in a revision folder
- Normalise the idea that different things work for different people and this is about what feels right for them

HERE

PLAYLIST FOR MY BRAIN ACTIVITY SHEET

Music can change how we feel. It can help us concentrate, wind down, or reset when stress builds up. To support you while studying and for whenever you need, create two playlists you can use during revision and exam season: one to help you focus, and one to help you switch off and relax.

Playlist 1: FOCUS ZONE (Music that helps you concentrate and block out distractions.)

Think of, or research, lyric-free tracks, calm beats, lo-fi, classical, instrumental film scores, or anything that helps you zone in.

MY FOCUS ZONE TRACKS:



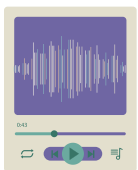
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Give your playlist a name and draw a cover:

Playlist 2: SWITCH OFF (Music that helps me relax, feel better, or release stress.)

Think of, or research, songs that comfort, uplift, calm, or give you a break from overthinking. It could be nostalgic, funny, or peaceful.

MY SWITCH OFF TRACKS:



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Give your playlist a name and draw a cover:

“IF THIS HAPPENS, I CAN” CALM-DOWN STRATEGY MAP GUIDE SHEET FOR EDUCATORS + PROVIDERS



This activity helps young people prepare for emotional overwhelm by creating personalised strategies they can rely on in stressful moments. It offers a simple, visual approach to support self-regulation and ease panic before, during, and after exams.

Instead of waiting until they're already overwhelmed to figure out what helps, this activity guides them to plan ahead by mapping out “if-then” calming actions they can take when specific challenges arise.

HOW TO GUIDE THIS ACTIVITY:

1. Introduce the idea of planning ahead for tricky moments.
2. Ask: What moments during exam season make you feel stressed, panicky, or like giving up? What helps bring you back to calm or focus?
3. Give each student the worksheet and let them fill in strategies for common stress points:
4. Example prompts:
 - If I feel panicky before an exam → I will try box breathing or grounding
 - If I feel like giving up → I will text someone I trust or step outside for a break
 - If I fail an exam → I will remind myself of what I'm proud of, and make a reset plan
5. Encourage them to personalise it
6. Let students decorate it, add doodles or emojis, and fold or keep it in their bag, revision folder, or phone photo gallery.

TIPS FOR DELIVERY:

- Model a few examples using your own or shared class ideas.
- Emphasise there's no shame in struggling.... That this is a tool for strength, not weakness.
- Remind students that they don't need to follow the map perfectly. Their map is there to support, not pressure them.





"IF THIS HAPPENS, I CAN.." CALM-DOWN STRATEGY MAP



When stress hits, like panicking before an exam or feeling disappointed after, it's easy to freeze or spiral. This activity helps you plan ahead with calm, helpful actions. Write a stressful scenario in the top box (e.g. "If I panic before an exam..."), then add two things you can do to support yourself underneath.

IF THIS HAPPENS... I CAN... I CAN...		IF THIS HAPPENS... I CAN... I CAN...	
IF THIS HAPPENS... I CAN... I CAN...		IF THIS HAPPENS... I CAN... I CAN...	



I AM NOT ALONE

GUIDE SHEET FOR EDUCATORS + PROVIDERS



This activity helps youth recognise that they are not alone in how they're feeling during exam season. Many young people report feeling isolated, "behind," or like they're the only ones struggling, when in reality, these emotions are nearly universal. This tool brings connection, perspective, and emotional safety back into their exam and preparation experience.

It's designed to support students aged 15–18 who may not openly ask for help but benefit from knowing they're part of something bigger such as a class, a cohort, a wider network of young people all navigating similar stress.

HOW TO GUIDE THE ACTIVITY:

Students complete small, but meaningful tasks from a set of four connection-based activities:

1. **Connection Reminder:** Think of someone who believes in them and write what that person might say.
2. **Reach Out:** Send a supportive message or voice note to a friend.
3. **The Bigger Picture:** Imagine a network of students all facing exams and say to themselves: "We're all in this. I'm not alone."
4. **Kindness Loop:** Create or share a kind message with another student.

HOW IT HELPS:

- Validates emotions and reduces comparison
- Builds empathy and peer connection
- Supports emotional regulation through co-regulation
- Boosts a sense of belonging, which is shown to improve academic outcomes and mental wellbeing

TIPS FOR DELIVERY:



Start with a quick group discussion or anonymous warm-up prompt: "One word for how exams make me feel..."



Encourage Creativity: Students can write, draw, text or record



Offer Privacy + Emotional Safety: Not every student will want to share, but can participate by listening



Invite students to keep a note or phrase from the activity in their planner or pencil case



Pair with calming music or quiet time for reflection



I AM NOT ALONE

During exams, it's easy to feel like you're the only one struggling, stressing, or falling behind. But you're not. This activity helps you feel more connected, even if you're studying on your own.



CONNECTION REMINDER

Someone who believes in me is:

If they could speak to me right now,
they'd say:

REACH OUT

Send a quick message to a friend or
classmate saying something like
"You're not alone, we've got this!" or
"You've got this"

Message I could send:

IMAGINE THE BIGGER PICTURE

Close your eyes for a moment and
picture your whole year group
studying, and thousands more
across the world. Imagine a thread
connecting you all. Now finish this
sentence ~ Right now, I am part of:

Say it to yourself: "I'm not alone in
this. We're all doing our best."

KINDNESS LOOP

Write or draw something kind
you'd want another student to hear.
Put it in your classroom, send it to a
friend, or keep it with you.

My message of kindness: