



## ‘Mind matters’

- Count to ten, with your muscles still tense.
- Suddenly and quickly release your foot muscles so that they’re completely relaxed.
- Count to twenty.

Now, repeat the process from the start and do it again, using the same foot. You should notice more sensations the second time. When you’ve tensed and relaxed the same muscle twice, it’s time to move on to another group of muscles.

Do exactly the same thing – tense muscles for ten seconds, relax for twenty, repeat. The idea is to relax and tense all the muscles in your body, starting with your feet and working your way up.

### Recommended order of muscle tensing

1. Right foot
2. Right lower leg and foot
3. Entire right leg
4. Left foot
5. Left lower leg and foot
6. Entire left leg
7. Right hand
8. Right forearm and hand
9. Entire right arm
10. Left hand
11. Left forearm and hand
12. Entire left arm
13. Abdomen (tummy)
14. Chest
15. Neck and shoulders
16. Face.

When you’ve completed this process, your muscles should be much more relaxed. The more you practice it, the more relaxed your muscles will be able to become over time.

### Finishing the exercise

When you’ve finished your last tensing pattern:

- Relax with your eyes closed.
- Count slowly backwards from five to one.
- Get up slowly. If you get up too quickly the drop in blood pressure could cause you to fall down again or feel dizzy.

## Building Self-confidence

**Confidence can be a tough thing to build up but we have some handy tips that just might help you out.**

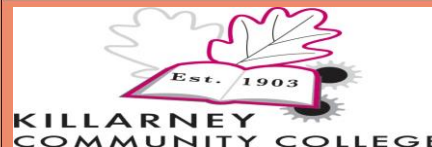


## Top 5 tips for building self-confidence

### 1. Look at what you’ve already achieved

Sometimes it can be easy to focus on what you haven’t done. It’s easy to lose confidence if you feel like you haven’t achieved anything. Focusing on stuff you have done, big or small, can help remind you of your talents and abilities.

Write down a list of all the things you’re proud of in your life. Think of things you have achieved, whether it’s getting a good mark on an exam or



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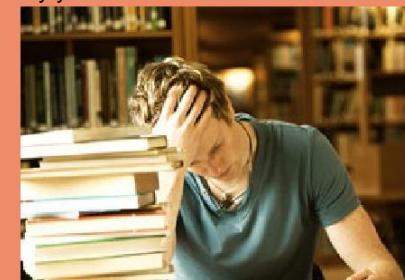
### If you’re not feeling better

Sometimes the quick fixes don’t help in the long term. If you’re feeling really bad and things just don’t seem to be getting better, it might be worth going to talk to someone who knows how to build you up like a counsellor.

## Facing Exams

There are a lot of things you can do to help you get through exams the best

way you can.



### Manage your stress.

You’ll be less stressed if you’ve got an idea of how the lead-up to your exams is going to look, so plan what you’re going to study and when, and stick it up on the wall, or on your desktop. Break it down into manageable chunks and start working through it at the rate you planned. It’s probably more boring at the start, but it’s far less stressful. Plan some break times and days off too!

### Take the pressure off.

Deal with pressure and expectations by realistically assessing how you think you’ll go, and working to do the best you can. If other people’s

even learning to ride a bike. Keep this list close and add to it when you do something you’re proud of. When you’re low in confidence, pull this list out and use it to remind you of all the great stuff you’ve done.

### 2. Think of things you’re good at

Everyone has strengths and talents, what are yours? Recognising what you’re good at and trying to build on those things can be a really valuable way of building confidence in your own abilities.

### 3. Set some goals

Set some goals and aim to achieve them. By proving to yourself that you can get stuff done, you’ll prove to yourself what you’re capable of achieving. They don’t have to be big goals; they can even be things like baking a cake. Just little things that can be ticked off a list and help you gain self-confidence in your ability to get things done.

### 4. Talk yourself up

You’re never going to feel confident if you have a negative commentary running through your mind telling you you’re no good. Think about your self-talk and how that might be affecting your self-confidence.

### 5. Get a hobby

Try to find something that you’re really passionate about. Do you like playing football? Like doing puzzles? Think of some of the things you’re really interested in and commit yourself to giving them a go. Finding things that you’re passionate about will help you find out what you’re good at. Chances are, if you’re interested or passionate about a certain activity you’re likely to be good at it as well.

Compiled by Killarney Schools Youth Mental Health Teams, Niamh Mulligan & resourced  
information through mental health sites: [www.'Reach Out'.ie](http://www.Reach Out.ie), [www.spun out.ie](http://www.spun out.ie), ABC of bullying.

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expectations are pressuring you, talk to them and try to get them to back off. If you fail an exam it's likely that the worst that can happen is that you take it again, with a massive head-start from the work you've already done.

### Do it together.

There are other people studying for the same exam, and they probably don't like having to lock themselves away to study any more than you do. Get together with them and take the books outside from time to time. If you're not as strong in certain areas, it could help to talk to other students as well. You will have your base groups in the school and homework classes for this.

### Get enough sleep, eat good food, and keep moving.

It's really important you look after your physical health when studying for exams. Make sure you're stopping to eat regular meals and try to set aside 30 minutes a day to do some exercise, even if it's just going for a walk. Having enough sleep is also really important.

### Have options.

Make sure you don't pin all your hopes on one outcome. Have a few options, and realise that if your heart's set on one thing there are always going to be other paths to it.

## If you're really stressed

If you're finding things tough, ask for help. It's your teacher's job to help you understand the subject, so if you're not understanding it, tell them and they should be able to help. If your study load or exams are getting too much,

there is a guidance counsellor in the school who can help with that as well.



## Other supports to your mental health include;

### • Exercise

Exercise makes you feel good. It gives you energy. It's an out for stress, gives you endorphins and makes you feel motivated. It's brilliant and easy to do.



### • Sleeping well

Sleeping well is probably one of the most important things we can do to help our mental health. This is because sleeping time is when our body grows and repairs any damage done in the day. Lack of sleep can have an effect on our body and brain but learning a good sleep routine can be done. Leave the social media and gaming for during the day.

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## Some relaxation activities include:

- Going for a walk.
- Taking some time out and really focussing on what's happening around you. Go to a park/outside place and enjoy the fresh air.
- Listening to some music you really like. Music has an impact on our heart rate, so quieter, less intense music is more likely to help you chill out.
- Going fishing.
- Playing your favourite sport.
- Taking a bath.
- Going to a movie or watching a DVD.
- Focussing your attention on a puzzle.
- Reading a book.
- Learning yoga or tai chi.
- Practicing meditation

## Practicing breathing techniques

- **Become aware of your breathing.** Place one hand on your upper chest and one on your stomach. Breathe in so that your stomach rises, and then falls back as you breathe out. The hand on your chest shouldn't move too much.
- **Get a steady rhythm of breathing.** Try and take in the same amount of air each time you breathe in.
- If you've managed the two steps above, **try and slow your breathing rate down.** Add a short pause between when you finish breathing out, and when you take another breath.

It might not feel totally comfortable at first, as it can sometimes feel like you're not getting quite enough air. But

if you practice regularly it should begin to feel comfortable and easy.



## Muscle relaxation is useful

You can actually reduce the stress and anxiety you feel, if you learn to relax your muscles properly. It involves tensing and relaxing different groups of muscles through your body.

### Preparation

Make sure before trying out this muscle relaxation training, that you do these things:

- Find a comfortable quiet space.
- Make sure you're comfortable.
- Sit on a chair in a comfortable position. You can also lie down if you prefer, but you're more likely to fall asleep.

### The relaxation

- When you're prepared and ready, focus your mind on your right foot (you can start with your left side if you're a leftie and it feels more normal).
- Breathe in, and tense your foot muscles as hard as you can.

information through mental health sites: [www.'Reach Out'.ie](http://www.'Reach Out'.ie), [www.spun out.ie](http://www.spun out.ie), [ABC of bullying](http://ABC of bullying).

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someone else, it doesn't help you to hold on to negative feelings.

- **Good Communication skills.** If you know how to communicate a problem well, it will help prevent conflict from getting worse.
- **Think Positively.** Optimism involves learning to think positively about the future - even when things go wrong. That's not to say you pretend that everything is fine when it isn't. Instead, it's about making a decision to focus on the good. It can be hard to do, but if you practice, you're likely to get better.
- **Learn how to set goals.** Small ones to start to achieve what you want.
- **Relax.** Relaxation is a great way to refocus your thoughts, particularly when things are becoming a bit too much.
- **Build your gratitude.** Take some of your focus away from the negative things, and take 5 minutes each day to identify 3 things which you are thankful about.

**Note:** You don't have to work this stuff out on your own. Counsellors are great at helping to build and develop coping skills. They also can be good to talk to if you prefer not to talk to friends or family, or if your problems are making it hard to carry on with day to day stuff. (The school provides this support for you and names and supports are in the last page).

### Ways to relax

Knowing how to chill out and relax is really important for your mental and physical health, particularly if you're finding something a bit stressful. Find out information on different ways

people relax, learn about breathing techniques, and what to do if you're finding it hard to chill out.

### This can help if...

- you're a bit stressed
- you're a bit anxious
- your life is really busy



### Why it's important to chill out

Relaxation is really important for your mental health and wellbeing. Everyone needs time in their everyday lives to chill out and enjoy themselves, but it's easy to forget this when things get busy. If you know how to relax, and make an effort to actually relax when you need to, it can be a great coping strategy to help you when you're stressed out. People who are able to relax are more likely to bounce back from tough times, tend to be happier.

### How to chill out

There are a lot of different things you can do to relax and chill out. A lot of forms of relaxation, like walking and sitting quietly, are really simple, easy to do, and don't take much time.



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### • Eating Healthily

Ok, so we know fast food is bad for us. But when they're banging on about evil fries, it's not always clear why eating well is so important. The right nutrition helps our bodies and brain work to their max. When you feel bloated or tired, you can pretty much guarantee that's the work of food that isn't healthy. Good eating habits don't mean you have to take a vow of vegetables.

### • Good Friends

Good friends help you get through the tough times, the good times and are often useful when you're bored on a Sunday. It's a good thing to remember though, that not every friend is the right friend for you. Picking good friends is something you learn with time and the beauty of a good friend choice is that they'll often be your friend for life.



### Bullying

**You can do something to stop bullying. You have power to do something about bullying. If you're really worried or not sure what to do you can get help. Everyone has the**

**right to live free and safe from any form of bullying.**

**We** can act in different ways when they see or know about bullying:

- Some bystanders take the side of the bully by laughing at the victim, encouraging the bully or forwarding on text messages or messages on social media like Face book and YouTube.
- Some bystanders will give silent approval or encourage the bully by looking on.
- Some bystanders may watch or know about the bullying but don't do anything. They may not know what to do or are scared. This group of bystanders knows that bullying is not ok.
- Some bystanders will be supportive and take safe action to stop the bully, find help or support the victim

Just as we have human rights we also have responsibilities to respect and protect the rights of others.

A supportive bystander will take action to protect the rights of others and use words and/or actions to help someone who is being bullied. If bystanders are confident to take safe and effective action to support victims then there is a greater possibility that they can stop bullying and the person who is bullied can recover. People respect those that stand up for others who are bullied

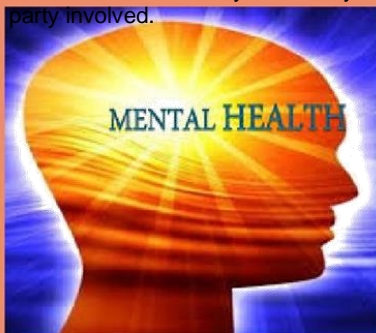
- Make it clear to your friends that you won't be involved in bullying behaviour.
- Never stand by and watch or encourage bullying.
- Do not harass, tease or spread gossip about others, this includes on social networks like Face book.

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- Never forward on or respond to messages or photos that may be offensive or upsetting.
- Support the person who is being bullied to ask for help e.g. go with them to a place they can get help or provide them with information about where to go for help.
- Report it to someone in authority or someone you trust e.g. at school to a teacher, or a school counsellor, your parent.
- This school has a responsibility to report and deal with any bullying behaviour in a way that stops people getting hurt and informing parents of the same to reduce any risk to any party involved.



### Teachers who can help you in

All teachers and staff can help you if you find you are struggling in school with any of the issues discussed. Contact any member of the pastoral care team who are there to support students deal with any issue of difficulty or find you support that you may need. Your Pastoral Care team include the following;

**Write in the following so you have them;**

**Your Principal:**

**Your Year Head:**

**Your Guidance Counsellor:**

**Your School Counsellor:**



**Other positive resources for your support within your community include the following;**

- Your Local G. P. (Your Doctor)
- SouthWestCounselling Service – 066 9481000
- KDYS - 0667121674
- Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services - 0667144081
- Jigsaw – 0667186785
- IACP Counsellors @ [www.IACP.ie](http://www.IACP.ie)

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### Dealing with tough times

Working out how to handle different situations can be tough, but it's worth it to feel more confident and free of stress. It can be difficult and stressful starting a new school – we can help. Positive actions can help you to manage and reduce stress in your life. People who use positive strategies are not only better able to tackle challenges and bounce back from tough times, but they are also much happier.



Some strategies work better for you than others in terms of how well they reduce stress and help you manage. It's also worth noting that some strategies will work better or worse depending on the particular event.

### What can help?

- **Turn to someone you trust.** It can be a relief to share your thoughts with someone else, and it can be good to work through problems with the help of another person.
- **Write it all down.** Keeping a notebook handy for you to scribble your thoughts in whenever you feel like it can be a

great way of expressing yourself. You may find it helpful to write about what is worrying you, or express yourself in a more creative way.

- **Set aside regular time for yourself.** Even if it's just ten minutes of 'you' time, taking some space for yourself where you turn off your phone, spend time alone, exercise, meditate, or listen to music can really prepare you for tackling stress or challenges.
- **Walk away.** Work out which situations you are likely to get most stressed out by. If you feel like you're getting too angry, end the conversation, take some space, and don't resume talking until you are calm and ready.
- **Positive Self-talk** can help you give a huge boost to your confidence.



- **Reduce your load.** Sometimes you just have to accept that you can't do everything. Keep track of your schedule. You should be busy, entertained, and challenged, without feeling overwhelmed.
- **Consider the big picture.** When you're going through a stressful situation, ask yourself these two questions. 'How important is this?' and 'will it matter in the long run?' If you realise it doesn't, it's probably not worth getting too stressed out by.
- **Learn to forgive.** Move on from hurt. Whether you are angry at yourself or

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