

# Student Wellbeing Toolkit

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## Need Urgent Help?

### Why is wellbeing important?

Paying attention to our mental health has never been more important. Many students have faced disruption to their education during the COVID-19 pandemic and, as university and college environments continue to change, paying attention to and protecting their mental health must be a priority.

A survey published by the National Union of Students in December 2020 found that over half of students' mental health is worse than before the pandemic. The survey also found that:

- Only 29% of those who said their mental health had been negatively affected had sought help.
- Only 20% of all students surveyed sought mental health support.

### Using this toolkit

This toolkit has been created by [The Reading Agency](#) to support student wellbeing through the power of reading.

The toolkit recommends the titles from the [Reading Well for mental health](#) collections that are available for you to borrow from the shelves of your public library and for free download via [public library e-lending services](#) to support your mental health while studying. The toolkit also contains signposting to relevant resources to help foster and support a culture of wellbeing amongst students.

***The Reading Agency** is a national charity that tackles life's big challenges through the proven power of reading. We work closely with partners to develop and deliver programmes for people of all ages and backgrounds; our vision is for a world where everyone is reading their way to a better life. We help 1.8 million people benefit from reading every year, through our programmes, our tireless campaigning, our excellent networks and our power to influence, challenge and make change happen. [www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk)*

# Reading for mental health

At The Reading Agency, we want to create a world where everyone is reading their way to a better life. Research shows that reading for pleasure can promote better health and wellbeing, aids in building social connections and relationships with others and is associated with a range of factors that help increase the chances of social mobility.

Read our reports into the [benefits of reading for pleasure and empowerment](#) and of [creating a society of readers](#), or explore more reading facts below:

- Readers for pleasure report fewer feelings of stress and depression than non-readers (28% more likely to report feelings of depression).
- Reading for just 30 minutes a week made people 18% more likely to report high self-esteem and greater life satisfaction.
- Children with reading difficulties are at greater risk of developing mental health conditions later in life.
- Reading regularly improves health literacy: an individual's ability to find, read and understand health information.

## Reading Well

[Reading Well](#) supports you to understand and manage your health and wellbeing using helpful reading.

The books are chosen and recommended by health experts as well as people with lived experience of the topics covered.

You can borrow books from the collections from your local library. Reading Well is a shared programme with [Libraries](#)

[Connected](#) and the Society of Chief Librarians Cymru as part of the [Universal Public Library Health Offer](#).

Welsh Government has funded the provision of collections in Welsh and English to every public library authority in Wales.

**2.6 million** Reading Well books have been borrowed from libraries and **91%** of people surveyed found their book helpful.

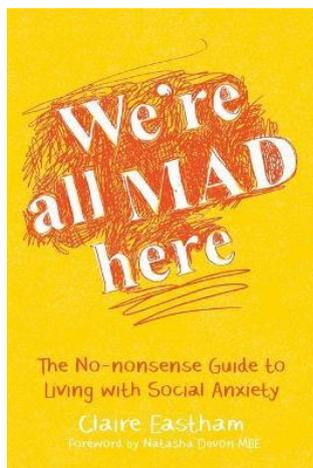
You can borrow an eBook or eAudiobook for free today, via [your library e-lending service](#) or visit your local library where the books are available for you to borrow directly from the shelves. Anyone can read or recommend books from the collection to support mental health.



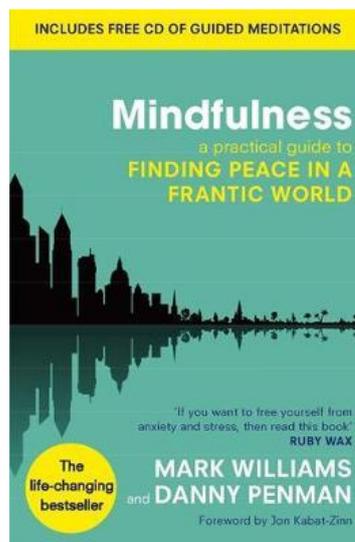
“I learnt so much from these books – how to raise and maintain my self-esteem, to problem-solve successfully, to manage stress and how to take care of myself. I took notes, so I could keep reminding myself of what to do”

Reading Well participant

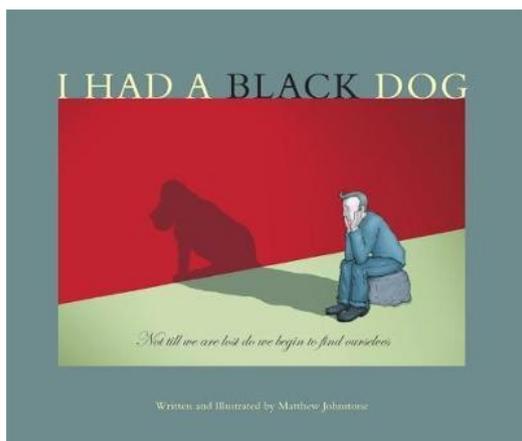
Here are a few of the books from the Reading Well collections that may be useful to support your wellbeing:



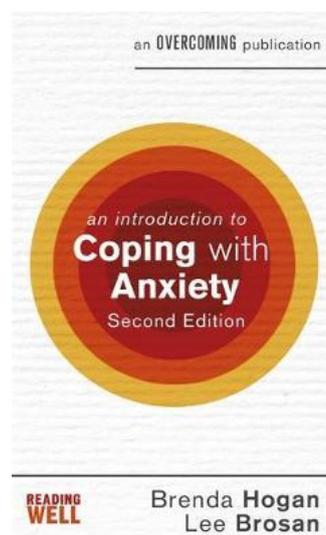
This no-nonsense guide to beating social anxiety covers everything from surviving university and the workplace, through to social media and making it through parties and dates (whilst actually enjoying them!).



A set of simple yet powerful practices that you can incorporate into daily life to break the cycle of anxiety, stress, unhappiness and exhaustion.



A moving and uplifting illustrated account of living with the 'black dog' of depression.



Learn strategies to reduce feelings of anxiety, while finding out how anxiety develops and the physical symptoms to look out for.

These titles are free to borrow now as e-books and audiobooks. [Visit your local library website](#) to find out how to join the library and access books electronically.

Find more books from the [Reading Well book collections](#).

[Reading-well.org.uk/wales](http://Reading-well.org.uk/wales)

## Mood-boosting books

Reading Well [Mood-boosting Books](#) is a national promotion of uplifting titles, including novels, poetry and non-fiction. The books are all recommended by readers and reading groups.

You can [browse our Mood-boosting booklists](#) to find an uplifting book and [read this blog](#) from students at the University of Exeter who created their own Mood-boosting booklist for new students.

If you would like to create a Mood-boosting booklist for your university, email [readingwell@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:readingwell@readingagency.org.uk).



## Useful signposting to support mental health

### Seeking mental health support

If you need help to access mental health treatment, contact your [local GP service](#). NHS mental health services are free, and therapies can be delivered effectively remotely online and on the telephone. The [NHS 111 Wales](#) website provides an overview of mental health services available in Wales. The [C.A.L.L. \(Community Advice and Listening Line\)](#) helpline offers a confidential listening and support service by freephone 0800 132 737 or text 'help' to 81066 and has many useful links on the website, including a [self-assessment tool](#).

### Mental Health Foundation [Behind the Books](#) campaign

The Mental Health Foundation's campaign, co-produced with students at the University of Sussex in September 2020, aims to help university students talk about their mental health, to recognise when they're struggling, to provide tips on ways to cope, and to normalise the ups and downs of university life.

### Mind's [Student mental health hub](#)

The site offers advice for new and returning university students, including:

- How coronavirus is affecting student mental health
- Tips for coping with [mental health during coronavirus](#)
- Bilingual services offered by [Student Space](#)
- Support at university and from other organisations
- What to do if you [become unwell](#)
- Urgent support for student mental health

### Become's [advice for young care leavers attending university](#)

The government has asked universities and colleges to make sure that certain groups, including care leavers and students without family support, get the help they need during the coronavirus outbreak. This should include guaranteed access to appropriate accommodation, continued access to financial support, access for a named contact and access to student support services. They also offer tips to calm anxiety and stay connected.

### Further signposting:

- The Office for Students (OfS) [Students guide to Coronavirus](#) features [FAQs](#) and advice for [students on returning to university](#) for the Spring term 2021.
- Welsh Government have also issued [guidance for students](#) studying in Wales and information on the [start and end of term](#).
- Public Health Wales have created a [young person's mental health toolkit](#) for young people up to the age of 25. Here you will find six playlists to direct you to a wide range of online resources to help you through the lockdown and beyond. In each of the playlists you'll find self-help websites, apps, helplines, and more that are here to support your mental health and well-being.
- The [Students Space](#) website offers bilingual support, advice and information specifically for students.
- The Anna Freud Centre's [OnMyMind website](#) provides a directory of 90 self-care strategies.
- Public Health England has issued [Guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).
- [themix.org.uk](#) provides support and advice for under 25s, including a helpline, crisis messenger service and webchat, including [information on how to deal with coronavirus-anxiety](#)
- [YoungMinds](#) provides information and support around mental health, and a crisis text messenger service for urgent help. This includes [information on looking after your mental health during coronavirus](#).
- [Young Stonewall](#) has information and support for all young lesbian, gay, bi and trans people and [Stonewall Cymru](#) provides information specifically for Wales.
- [Download Mind's top tips for coping during coronavirus](#) as an Easy Read PDF.
- [Kooth](#) is a website and app providing information on mental health and wellbeing, community message boards and confidential live chat.
- [NHS One You](#) offers a quick 5 question quiz to get your personalised plan of simple ideas to help improve your mental health and wellbeing.
- [Time to Change Wales](#) works to end mental health discrimination and have a page dedicated to [young people](#).
- [NHS 111 Wales's](#) website has resources and signposts to other supporting organisations to support mental health.
- [SilverCloud](#) provides online CBT programmes for anyone in Wales aged 16 or over dealing with mild to moderate depression, anxiety or stress.
- Mind have created a [list](#) detailing helpful organisations, public services, government guidance and other types of support available during the coronavirus pandemic.
- Mental Health at Work have created a [Lockdown: Looking out for ourselves and each other](#) toolkit.

## Help Lines

- [Community Advice & Listening Line \(CALL\) Wales](#) offers emotional support and information on mental health and related matters to the people of Wales. Anyone concerned about their own mental health or that of a relative or friend can access the service. C.A.L.L. Helpline offers a confidential listening and support service. Helpline: 0800 132 737 or Text 'help' to 81066.
- [Meic Cymru](#) is a confidential, free helpline service for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales. You can call, text or instant message them in Welsh or English for support, advice and information. 0808 80 23456 (8am to midnight) or text 84001.
- [Umbrella Cymru](#) are gender and diversity specialists in working across Wales to provide support and advice for anyone identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, + call 0300 302 3670 (if no one answers leave a message and they will return your call) or text 07520645700.
- [Campaign Against Living Miserably](#) (CALM) supports men experiencing distressing thoughts and feelings: 0800 58 58 58 5pm–midnight, 365 days a year.
- [Switchboard](#) supports anyone identifying as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender: 0300 330 0630 Open 10:00-22:00 every day.
- The [Helplines Partnership](#) provides a directory of all the helplines available in the UK, which you can search to find the best telephone support service for you.
- [Mind Infoline](#) provides information on local mental health support services that can support you: [0300 123 3393](tel:03001233393).
- [The British Red Cross](#) coronavirus support line offers help if you feel lonely, worried or need access to food and medication: 0808 196 3651 10am to 6pm daily.

## Need urgent support?

If you are having thoughts of suicide, are harming yourself or have thought about self-harm, it's important to tell someone.

These thoughts and feelings can be complex, frightening and confusing, but you do not have to struggle alone.

If you cannot wait to see a doctor and feel unable to cope or keep yourself safe, the [Time to Change Wales](#) website shows you how to get [urgent support](#) right away.