



A guide to
help you
understand
and cope
with
anxiety

MY WELL-BEING PLAN TO SUPPORT ANXIETY

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal emotion which has evolved over time to keep us safe.

The part of our brain that deals with emotions was present in our very early beginnings, when we lived in caves and were in danger from physical threats it alerts us to danger. As our brains have developed over time, the thinking part of our brain has become much bigger and stronger. However, these two parts of the brain do not always balance comfortable together. Sometimes emotions 'take over' from thinking and cause anxiety.

Why do I have anxiety?

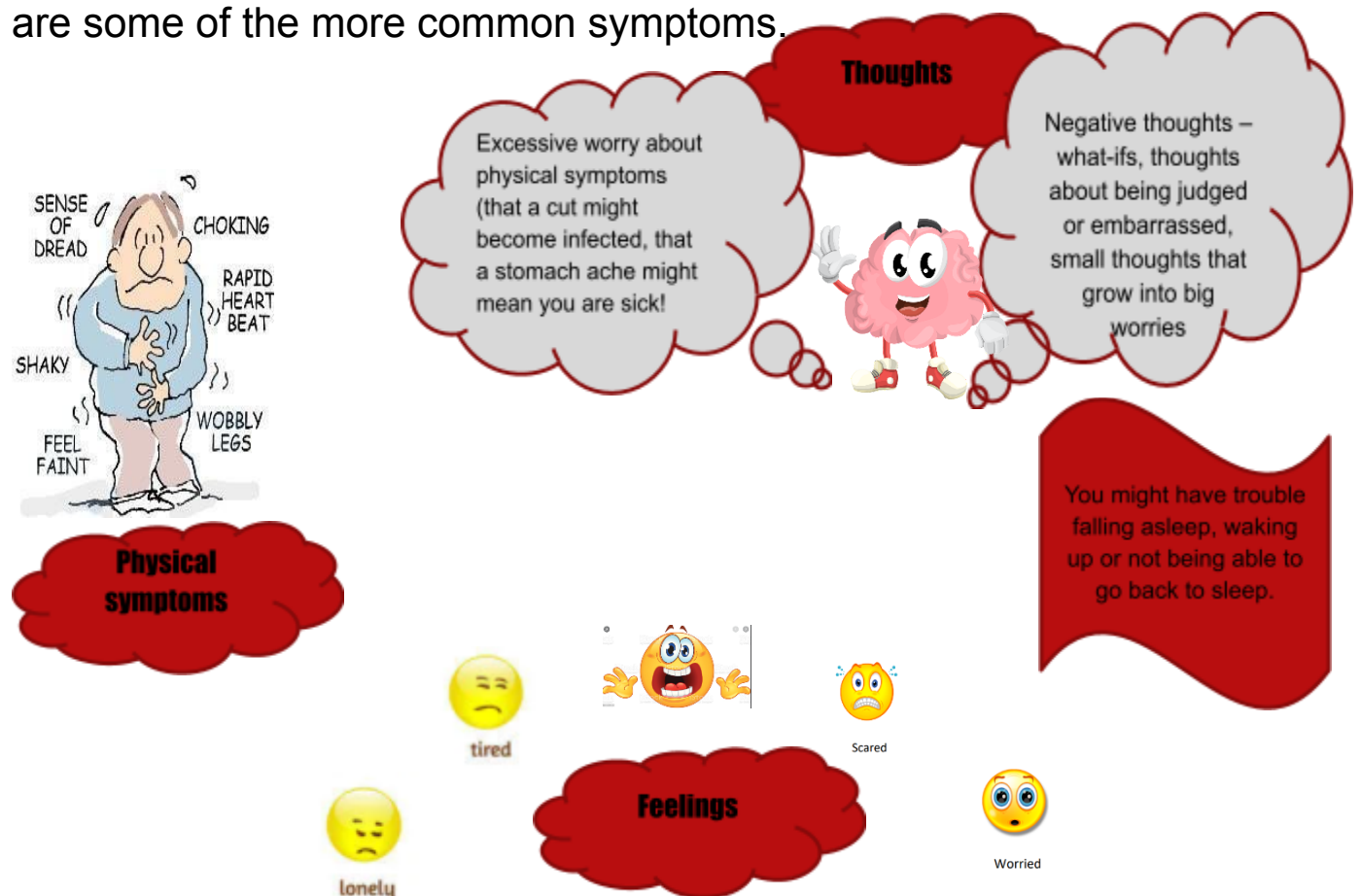
If anxiety is making a menace of itself, the good news is that there are ways to take it back to small enough. First though, it's important to understand the telltale signs of anxiety and where they come from. When you understand this, anxiety will start to lose the power that comes from its mystery and its unpredictability. People with anxiety will be some of the strongest, most likable, bravest people any of us will know. Anxiety and courage always exist together.

Anxiety happens because your brain thinks there might be danger, even when there is no danger at all. Brains are smart, but they can all read things a little bit wrong sometimes.

On average, about 1 in 5 young people have anxiety. Without a doubt, someone you know or care about will also struggle with anxiety from time to time.

Anxiety exists on a spectrum - some people get it a lot and some people get it a lot less, but we all experience anxiety on some level at some time in our lives - exams, job interviews, performances. Sometimes it can happen for no reason at all.

Recognising anxiety – Anxiety can show itself in many ways. Here are some of the more common symptoms.



How to help yourself when you're feeling anxious

There are lots of different techniques and strategies to help you. What is important is finding the one that works for you. Take a look at the list below. Try to incorporate some or all of these into your daily life.

1. Mindfulness.



Studies have shown that mindfulness can be a little bit magic in strengthening the brain against anxiety. Mindfulness changes the brain the way exercise changes our body - but without the sweating and panting.

Two of the ways mindfulness changes the brain are:

- by strengthening the connections within the brain. The stronger the connections, the easier it is to calm things down.
- by teaching the brain to stay in the present. Mindfulness helps to keep control over your brain so you can stop it from worrying about things it doesn't need to.

2. Exercise.



The effects of exercise on mental health are proven and powerful. Any activity that gets your heart going counts as exercise. This will be different for everyone. It doesn't have to mean pounding the pavement with your running feet on to the point that you're gasping for sweet life and demanding an oxygen tank. A brisk 20-minute walk or 8-10 minutes of going up and down the stairs a couple of times a day will also do it. Whatever works for you. Try for something you can do at least five times a week.

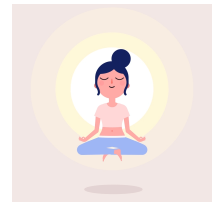
3. Breathe.

But practice, practice, practice. Breathing is the switch that will activate the relaxation response and calm the brain. Once you start slow deep breathing, your body will take over and do the rest.

The key to this working well, is to keep your shoulders still: Breathe in for 3, hold for 1 and then breathe out for 5.

Try the following that we have practiced in Resilience Group:

- >Japanese hand holding technique Breathe in and Breathe out
- >Square breathing - In for 4 - Out for 4
- >Spaghetti breathing
- >Squeeze
- >Shake to relax



4. Food.



An unhappy belly can make an unhappy brain. If you eat too much processed food or too much sugar (or not enough good food) it can knock out the balance of good bacteria in your gut. This can upset the balance of everything and heavily influence your mood by sending funky messages back to your brain. Eating unprocessed, healthy food, and food that

contains good bacteria (such as miso or yoghurt) can help to balance things out inside your gut and put things back on track. Try being more mindful whilst eating your food-chewing slowly and appreciating every mouthful.

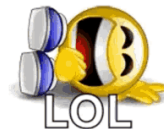
5. Give yourself some love



Make sure you love yourself a little louder. At adolescence, you're at a point in your life where the world is opening up to you. It's a world that needs your wisdom, your courage and your interesting and very wonderful take on things. Anxiety can have a way of shifting the focus too often to the negative, but the things about ourselves that we would like to change often have very wonderful strengths built into them. Focus on your positives rather than negatives and if you need help with this ask your family what they see as your strengths. Give yourself time to relax, pamper yourself with a bubble bath or good book.... whatever brings you comfort.

6. Laugh

Laughter strengthens your immune system, boosts mood, diminishes pain, and protects you from the damaging effects of stress. Nothing works faster or more dependably to bring your mind and body back into balance than a good laugh. Laughter makes you feel good. And this positive feeling remains with you even after the laughter subsides. Humor helps you keep a positive, optimistic outlook through difficult situations, disappointments, and loss. Laughter shifts perspective, allowing you to see situations in a more realistic, less threatening light. A humorous perspective creates psychological distance, which can help you avoid feeling overwhelmed and diffuse conflict. Try watching a funny video on YouTube, spending time with friends or sharing a joke or 10 minutes of laughter yoga.



Help! I feel anxious right now – What can I do?

Hopefully you will incorporate the advice on the previous pages into your lifestyle.

Below are some immediate things you can try to help you when you are struggling with anxiety. These are called grounding techniques. Grounding techniques help by turning your mind away from worries, thoughts, memories and refocusing on the present moment. Most of these activities can be done anywhere.

5-4-3-2-1 Technique

Using the 5-4-3-2-1 technique, you will purposefully take in the details of your surroundings using each of your senses. Strive to notice small details that your mind would usually tune out, such as distant sounds, or the texture of an ordinary object.



What are 5 things you can see? Look for small details such as a pattern on the ceiling, the way light reflects off a surface, or an object you never noticed.



What are 4 things you can feel? Notice the sensation of clothing on your body, the sun on your skin, or the feeling of the chair you are sitting in. Pick up an object and examine its weight, texture, and other physical qualities.



What are 3 things you can hear? Pay special attention to the sounds your mind has tuned out, such as a ticking clock, distant traffic, or trees blowing in the wind.



What are 2 things you can smell? Try to notice smells in the air around you, like an air freshener or freshly mowed grass. You may also look around for something that has a scent, such as a flower or an unlit candle.



What is 1 thing you can taste? Carry gum, candy, or small snacks for this step. Pop one in your mouth and focus your attention closely on the flavors.

Categories

Choose at least three of the categories below and name as many items as you can in each one. Spend a few minutes on each category to come up with as many items as possible.

Movies	Countries	Books	Cereals
Sports Teams	Colors	Cars	Fruits & Vegetables
Animals	Cities	TV Shows	Famous People

For a variation on this activity, try naming items in a category alphabetically. For example, for the fruits & vegetables category, say "apple, banana, carrot," and so on.

Body Awareness

The body awareness technique will bring you into the here-and-now by directing your focus to sensations in the body. Pay special attention to the physical sensations created by each step.

1. Take 5 long, deep breaths through your nose, and exhale through puckered lips.
2. Place both feet flat on the floor. Wiggle your toes. Curl and uncurl your toes several times. Spend a moment noticing the sensations in your feet.
3. Stomp your feet on the ground several times. Pay attention to the sensations in your feet and legs as you make contact with the ground.
4. Clench your hands into fists, then release the tension. Repeat this 10 times.
5. Press your palms together. Press them harder and hold this pose for 15 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of tension in your hands and arms.
6. Rub your palms together briskly. Notice and sound and the feeling of warmth.
7. Reach your hands over your head like you're trying to reach the sky. Stretch like this for 5 seconds. Bring your arms down and let them relax at your sides.
8. Take 5 more deep breaths and notice the feeling of calm in your body.

Mental Exercises

Use mental exercises to take your mind off uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. They are discreet and easy to use at nearly any time or place. Experiment to see which work best for you.

- Name all the objects you see.
- Describe the steps in performing an activity you know how to do well. For example, how to shoot a basketball, prepare your favorite meal, or tie a knot.
- Count backwards from 100 by 7.
- Pick up an object and describe it in detail. Describe its color, texture, size, weight, scent, and any other qualities you notice.
- Spell your full name, and the names of three other people, backwards.
- Name all your family members, their ages, and one of their favorite activities.
- Read something backwards, letter-by-letter. Practice for at least a few minutes.
- Think of an object and "draw" it in your mind, or in the air with your finger. Try drawing your home, a vehicle, or an animal.

Useful Apps and websites – There's lots here. I wouldn't expect you to use them all, hopefully a browse through them will help you find the one that works for you.

[PE with Joe Wicks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSi2ix1i180) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSi2ix1i180>

<https://Smilingmind.co.au> - a free app has tailored programs for different ages.

www.stopbreaththink.org - start by choosing words to describe how you're feeling right now, and the app will suggest the best meditations based on where you're at.

<https://Insighttimer.com> - another free app with guided meditations from over 700 teachers. It also has a very excellent feature that shows a map of how many other people are meditating in the world (using the app) at the same time as you.

www.kooth.com - online mental wellbeing community for teenagers

www.headspace.com - A really good app to help with sleep

teensleeehub.org.uk - Another website/app full of useful advice if you are having trouble sleeping.

Calm.com - Guides you through meditation to help with your mental health

Youngminds.org.uk - Great online resource for young people's mental health

[Chill Panda](#) - An app that helps you learn to relax and manage your worries through breathing techniques and simple exercises.

My life - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmFUDkj1Aq0> - Good for mindfulness

www.actionforhappiness.org - Website/app that has lots of good ideas to focus on the positive things in life.

[Gratitude | A tool to help you improve your long-term well-being \(gratefulness.me\)](#) A free gratitude app that helps you focus on the positive things in your life

Talking is always helpful, it's really important to share how you are feeling with staff in school and you family and friends. If you wish to speak to someone who's not part of your daily life take a look at the websites below.

[MIND](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/) - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/>

[Childline](https://www.childline.org.uk/)- <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

[The Mix](https://www.themix.org.uk/) - <https://www.themix.org.uk/>

[Turn to me](https://turn2me.org/) - [https:// turn2me.org/](https://turn2me.org/)

My Wellbeing Journal

Complete the journal every day for week.

You can do this any time of day, find a time that works best for you.

Spend about 10/15 minutes on the task.

Try each task with an open mind.

After the two weeks are up work out which ones worked best for you.

Make your own personalised journal of the tasks you felt benefitted you the most.

Day 1 - Answer the following questions

1 good thing that happened to me yesterday

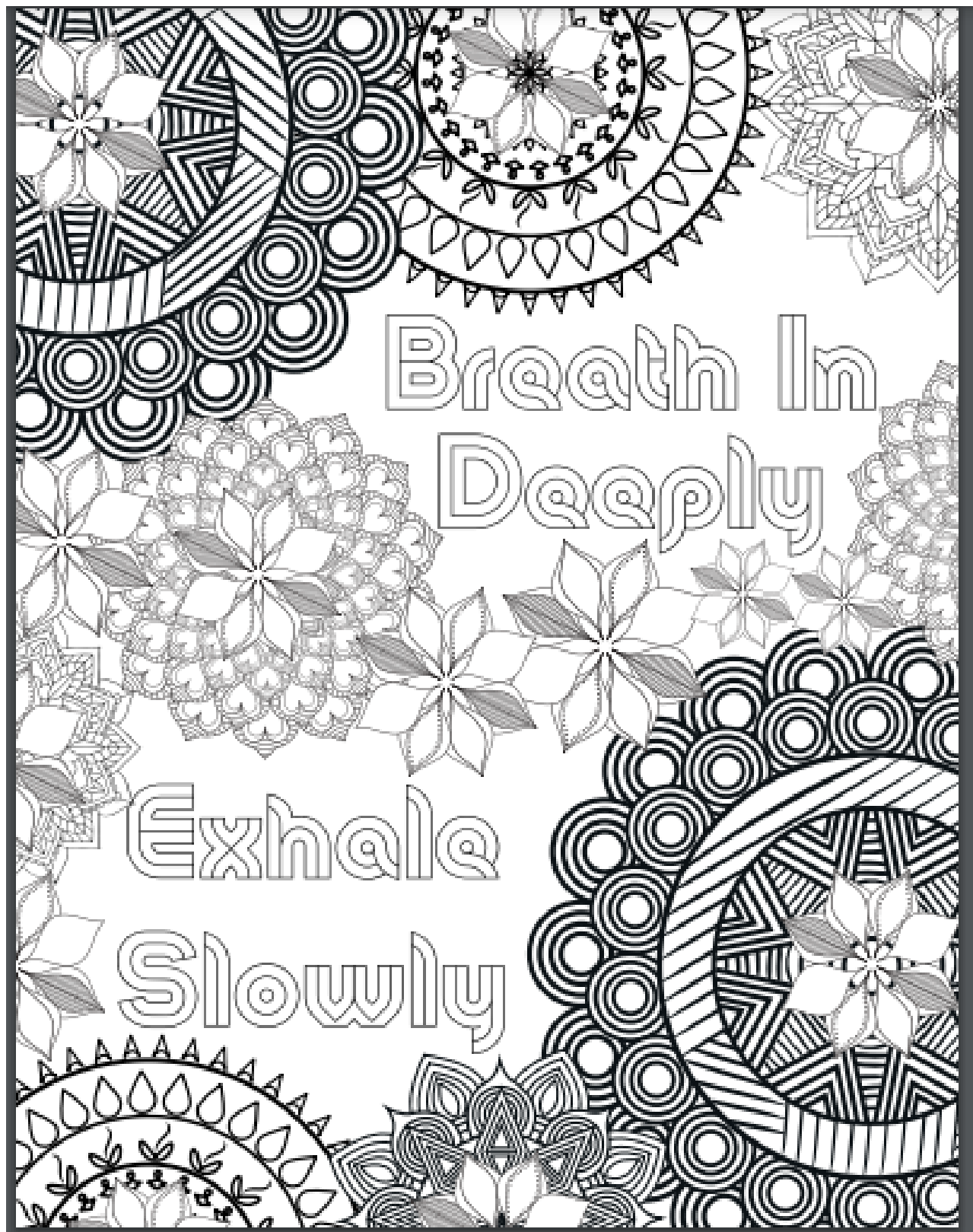
1 good thing that happened to me last week

1 good thing that happened to me last month.

1 good thing that will happen/has happened today

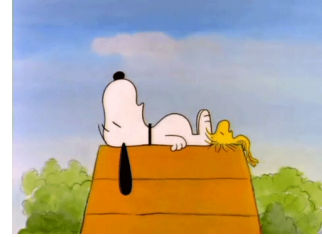


Day 2 - Spend some time colouring



Day 3 - Relaxation

Find somewhere quiet and comfortable to lie down.



First concentrate on your breathing.

- breath slowly in through your nose, imagine your whole body filling up with air
- Then exhales slowly through your mouth, imagine your body deflating as you breath out.

Once you've done this a few times, you should be in a rhythm.

Now continue the breathing exercise but concentrate on how your body is feeling at the same time.

- Start with your toes, as you breath in imagine the air reaching your toes, as you breath out feel your toes relaxing.
- Next move to your feet, breathing in feel the air spreading through your feet, breathing out feel your feet relax.
- Continue this up your body for your legs, hips, stomach, chest, fingers, hands, arms, shoulders, neck and head.

One your have relaxed your whole body, lie still for a few minutes just focusing on breathing in and out.

When you are ready to finish, slowly shake out your limbs and remember to sit up slowly.

Day 4 - Listening to music

Spend 15 minutes listening to your favorite songs. Ideally to help you relax you should listen to music that is fairly slow, have a simple melody and beat.

Or alternatively try some of the music links below for something a bit different.

Whilst listening to music, make sure you are sitting/lying somewhere comfortable, try not to let yourself get distracted by anything else. Just listen to the music.

Marconi Union – Weightless

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfcAVeJsIrU&t=21s>

Peter Warlock Capriol Suite

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMyS1G8NWnY&t=34s>

Adele – Someone like you

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLQl3WQQoQ0&t=1s>

Bach Double Violin concerto

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJh6i-t_l1Q

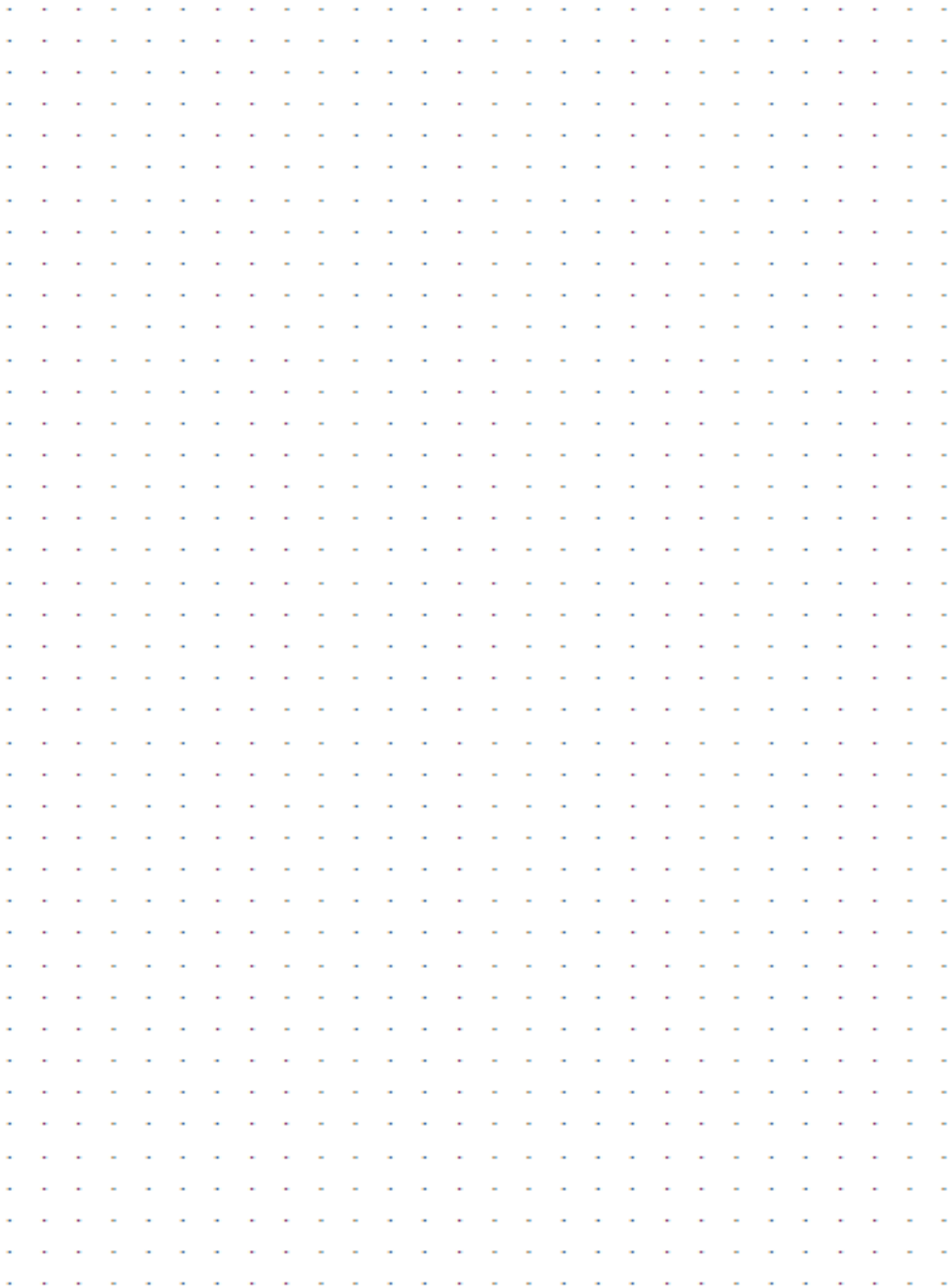


Day 5 - Journal

Write a journal about the last 24 hours. Don't think too much about what your are saying, don't worry about spelling and grammar just write about whatever comes into your mind.

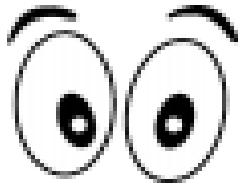


Day 6 - Doodle Draw a picture, write a word or just join the dots. Don't think too much about what you are doing.



Day 7 - Use your senses to calm your mind.

Identify



What can you see?



What can you feel?



What can you hear?



What can you hear?



What can you taste?