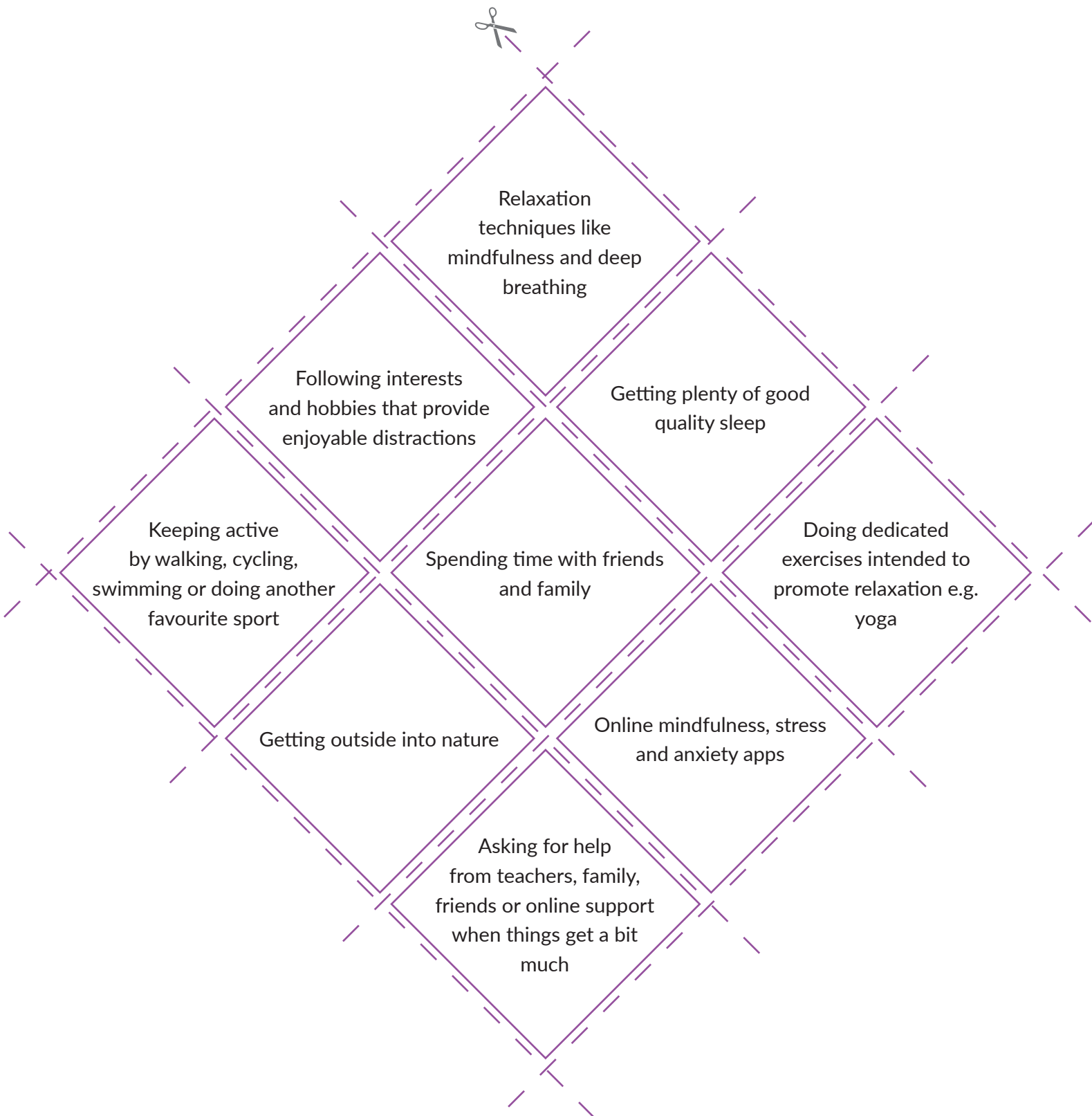
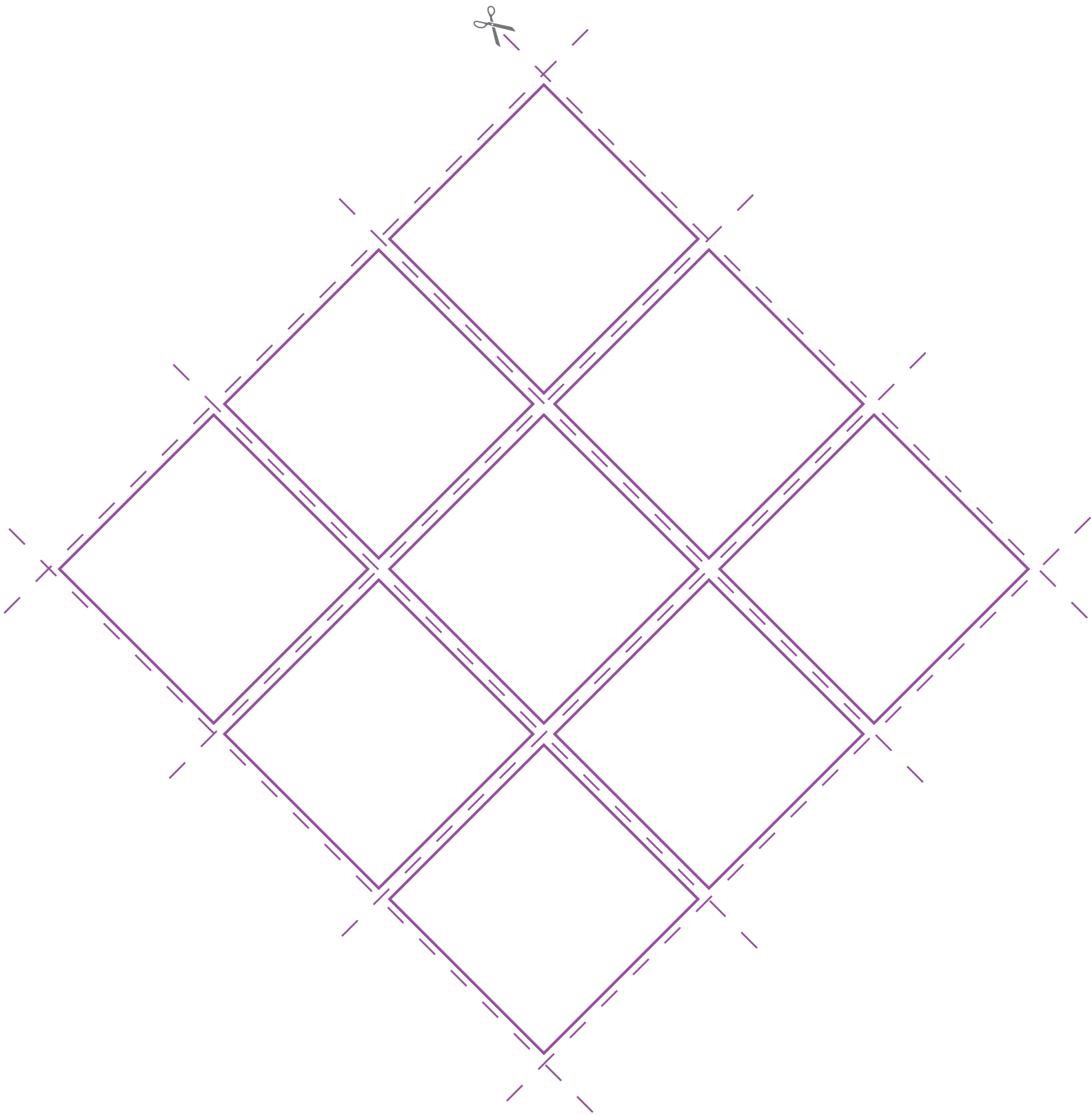


KS4: Lesson 4 Resource 1: Emotional Wellbeing Strategies Diamond 9



KS4: Lesson 4 Blank Diamond 9 (for original ideas)



KS4: Lesson 4 Resource 2: Assess the risk

1. Sharing emotions and personal details on social media

2. Working excessively on school work to cope with anxiety about studies

3. Regularly over-exercising to the point of collapsing

4. Following a restrictive eating plan that involves eating less food than the body normally needs

5. Using energy drinks to boost energy and mood when feeling the need for a 'pick-me-up'

6. Smoking to 'calm the nerves'

7. Punching the wall (or hurting themselves in other ways) to manage difficult feelings like anger



1. Sharing emotions and personal details on social media

Sharing feelings is a positive strategy.

Oversharing on social media can lead to later regrets and embarrassment, there are also people who accuse others of attention-seeking which can be upsetting, so there are better ways to seek help, such as discussing their feelings with a close friend or trusted person.

2. Working excessively on school work to cope with anxiety about studies

Without sufficient sleep, rest, and enjoyment of daily life, anxiety is likely to get worse.

If a person has been working steadily, they are unlikely to need to put this level of time into their studies – planning in advance really helps.

Talking to an adult about how to manage time and emotions is important in this situation.

3. Regularly over-exercising to the point of collapsing

A person can become addicted to the endorphin release from exercise as a way to manage their mood.

When a person's exercise behaviour reaches this level, it can be viewed as a form of self-harm. Exercise professionals can help people assess what a healthy regime looks like for an individual. This person is likely to need emotional support too to manage the difficult emotions which led to this behaviour.

4. Following a restrictive eating plan that involves eating less food than the body normally needs

Sensible exercise and dietary changes can be a way to reduce weight for health reasons but is best done under a dietician or doctor's supervision.

If eating habits have become disordered, it is actually linked to unhealthy ways of controlling difficult emotions so it is important to reflect on the thinking behind food restrictions and get support.

5. Using energy drinks to boost energy and mood when feeling the need for a 'pick-me-up'

Whilst not a high-risk activity, there are better ways to boost energy and mood.

Energy drinks contain high levels of caffeine and sugar. Artificial stimulants like caffeine and sugar, when consumed in limited quantities, can be part of a balanced diet. However, the high levels in such drinks can lead to mood changes, as the perceived improvements in energy and concentration are usually followed by energy and mood dips later on.

6. Smoking to calm the nerves

It is a common myth that smoking calms the nerves.

Whilst smokers often report this effect when they smoke, smoking cigarettes has been found to create anxiety as the body craves regular ingestion of nicotine.

The chemicals in cigarettes have an impact on other body functions and hormones so is likely to have a long-term impact on wellbeing which can only be addressed by giving up smoking.

7. Punching the wall (or hurting themselves in other ways) to manage difficult feelings like anger

This is an unhealthy coping strategy which is likely to lead to physical harm.

This level of anger suggests an underlying cause which needs to be addressed.

Punching pillows or a gym punch-bag (with gloves on) are healthier alternatives.



SPENDING TIME IN NATURE



Historically we lived and worked in ways which were much more closely connected with nature and many people believe this has impacted on our health.

There is some promising evidence that being in nature can reduce feelings of anger, fear and stress while improving mood and psychological wellbeing. Being outdoors is thought to reduce stress by lowering the stress hormone cortisol. More studies are needed, but this could mean

the rate of recovery from stress is quicker when in the natural environment than the same stressor indoors.

Research has shown that even connecting to nature in small ways like having a plant in a room may decrease levels of stress and anxiety.

Aside from the benefits of actually spending time in nature or viewing scenes of nature on our wellbeing, taking time out of our days to go for a walk or activity may give overactive minds an opportunity to 'switch off'. This could be a factor explaining why nature walks may be beneficial for people with depression.

Some studies have found that not only do people with mood disorders benefit from raised mood at the time but regular practice can help them see longer-term improvements.

“Being in nature can help us live in the present moment - a key component of wellbeing or happiness.”

[Adapted from a blogpost on trekking holidays]



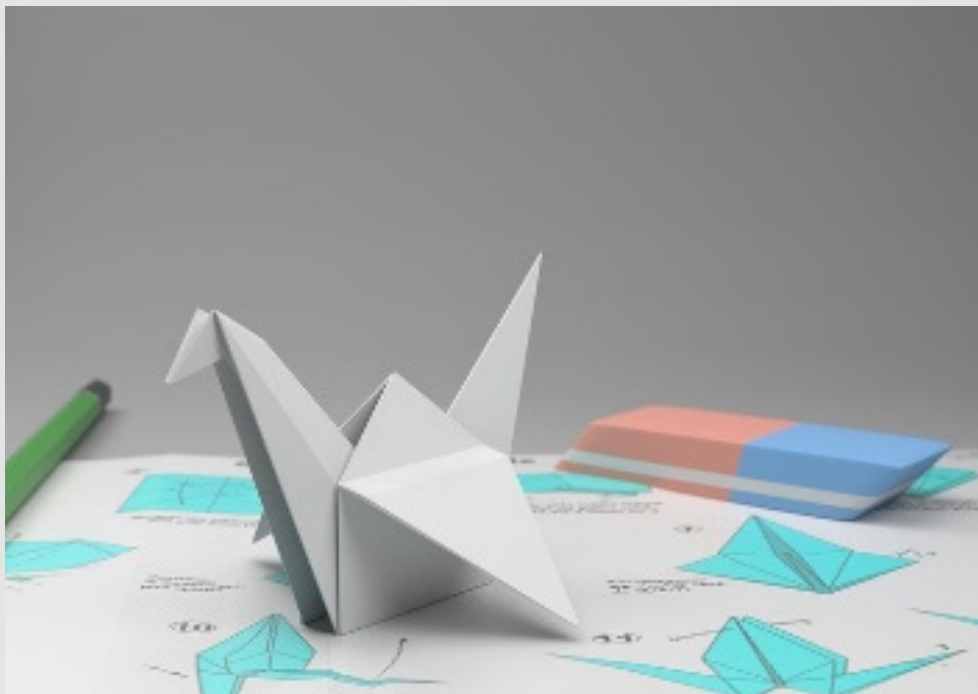
Further investigation questions:



- How long do people need to spend in nature for it to make a difference?
- Is there evidence that nature causes the improvement, not just exercise?
- What alternatives are there to going for a walk in nature that might still provide similar benefits?



ARTS AND CRAFTS



A 2009 collection of interviews provided examples of how the arts can have an impact on recovery from mental illness. Interviewees noted benefits from many art-forms including music, painting, drawing caricatures and poetry. Many reported both enjoyment from practising the art-form itself and from the opportunities for social connection that attending a choir or art class provided.

During times of stress and mental ill-health, people sometimes find they have repeated, often negative, thoughts. Many may be struggling to decide what to do about a difficult situation. Yet even when a person identifies this repeated thinking as unhelpful, it can be difficult to simply stop such thoughts. Diverting full attention to another activity (e.g. arts or crafts) can provide relief.

More good quality studies are needed on the links between involvement in arts and crafts and mental health and wellbeing. However, a recent report on visual art and mental health found that: “...engagement in the visual arts for adults with mental health conditions can reduce reported levels of depression and anxiety; increase self-respect, self-worth and self-esteem; encourage and stimulate re-engagement with the wider, everyday social world....”

“Self-expression commits the whole of your being, your personality and your faculties to an activity and that I think is an inherently healthy and good thing.”

“Art allows you to rise above, to be able to dream, to play and have some fun”

[Comments from the Arts for Health Report: Restoring the Balance]



Further investigation questions:



- How long do people need to spend on arts or crafts for it to make a difference?
- Is there evidence that art causes the improvement, not just meeting people?
- What are some unusual arts and crafts which people might not know about or might not think about practising?



SPORTS AND DANCE



Participation in regular exercise has been shown to improve mood and self-esteem whilst reducing stress and anxiety. This is due to many reasons including the immediate impact of the endorphins (hormones) released during exercise, and the improvement in sleep quality following such activity. Studies have repeatedly shown that good quality sleep has been linked with improved mood.

The NHS provides exercise 'on prescription' as it has been found to be as effective as medication for those with mild to moderate depression (and in some studies, in those with severe depression).

Research suggests that team sports and dance can both offer additional benefits for mental

health. Researchers found women who did group sports had better mental health than those who went to the gym or walked alone and suggested this may be due to the social aspect of team sports. A recent American study found that, although all types of exercise had an impact on mental health (12-22% reduction in self-reported mental ill-health), team sports had the biggest impact (22.3% lower), with cycling showing a 21.6% reduction and aerobic/gym activities a 20.1% reduction. They also found those who exercised had 43% fewer days of poor mental health the previous month than those who did not.

Swedish research compared young women who danced with those who did not and found a significant improvement in mood which lasted up to 8 months after the dance classes ended. Another study found that just one lively dance session can have a greater effect on beating depression than vigorous exercise or listening to upbeat music.

"Do more of what makes you happy!"

[Twitter comment from a team karting company]



Further investigation questions:



- What activities could a person do if they are less interested in more popular team sports?
- What interesting opportunities for sport or dance are available locally outside of school?

MINDFULNESS (INCLUDING MINDFULNESS MEDITATION)



Mindfulness practices encourage focus on the present by paying attention to our thoughts, feelings and body in a particular way. Mindfulness-based clinical interventions are shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety, stress and depression for some people.

Benefits are also seen even in those without a mental health concern. A recent study found that 8 weekly sessions of between 75-90 minutes' mindfulness training led to an average drop of 20% in stress levels during exams.

There has been a recent trend to use colouring books to provide a way to calm the mind. Some very preliminary research has confirmed links between this activity and stress

reduction, particularly when used in combination with other techniques such as deep breathing. However, more studies are needed.

In mindfulness meditation, people focus on experiences in the present, such as the flow of breath, in order to be mindful of the moment. This trains them to acknowledge thoughts and emotions without judgement which can be particularly helpful if a person experiences negative thinking loops. This can therefore lead to improvements in self-esteem and, by extension, resilience during times of difficulty.

This technique has been shown to help some people with anxiety learn to handle distressing thoughts and emotions without being overpowered by them.

"You can't stop the waves but you can learn to surf."

[Jon Kabat-Zinn, Creator of the Stress Reduction Clinic and the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care and Society (USA)]



Further investigation questions:

- What apps are available to support meditation?
- How long is it recommended that a person meditate for?





YOGA, TAI CHI & QIGONG



Qigong, tai chi and yoga use postures or movements in combination with breathing exercises to clear the mind, as the exercises require balance and concentration.

Those who practise yoga often describe that it helps reduce stress and improve the symptoms of anxiety and depression. It is thought to do this through increasing the level of gamma-aminobutyric acid, or GABA, a brain chemical; this is important as those with anxiety tend to have low levels of GABA. There is early stage evidence of links between yoga and mental health and wellbeing.

Researchers have also begun to see benefits in those with other disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder. However, we need more good quality studies before we can be sure that this is the case.

Tai Chi and Qigong are traditional Chinese martial arts which use slow meditative movements to support relaxation, balance and health. Different studies have shown reduced stress and mood disturbance with repeated practice. As with other techniques, this may be due to the opportunity provided to 'switch off' but also the longer term ability to discipline the mind.

"Tai Chi has helped me maintain and strengthen myself - body, mind & spirit."

[Comment adapted from social networking site]



Further investigation questions:

- What are the different types of yoga available?
- What are all the ways exercises like these are thought to help mental health?





VOLUNTEERING AND RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS



Helping others can provide a sense of purpose and build self-worth.

Preliminary evidence suggests that helping others reduces stress and improves mood. One way it might do this is the knock-on benefits of the positive relationships we can form through things like volunteering. However, more research is needed to fully clarify how this happens, who it benefits, and in what circumstances.

Even aside from this, random acts of kindness are believed to have a strong impact on levels of happiness. When we are kind to others, the reward pathways of the brain respond, producing a 'warm glow' feeling. It is thought that our brains release hormones which are linked with positive mental health e.g. serotonin and dopamine. There is promising evidence that being supportive of others can reduce stress, anxiety and depression plus emotions such as anger.

A Japanese study found those who counted their acts of kindness increased their happiness, and they were more likely to both be kind to others and be grateful for others' kindness, further promoting their wellbeing.

"Carry out a random act of kindness, with no expectation of reward, safe in the knowledge that one day someone might do the same for you."

[Princess Diana]



Further investigation questions:



- What local opportunities for volunteering, mentoring and helping others can you find?
- What day-to-day activities could a person include in their 'random acts of kindness'?

New challenges

Reframing negative thinking

Recognising mental ill-health and when to get help

Promoting emotional wellbeing