stem4
supporting teenage mental health

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DAY™

19th September

How to #BeBrave

School and College Edition

![stem4 - supporting teenage mental health]

Dear YMHD supporter,

stem4, the charity I founded eleven years ago, is once again running Youth Mental Health Day (YMHD) in 2023. This year, stem4's YMHD is centred around the theme #BeBrave. We are delighted to invite you to get involved this YMHD, and help us to promote positive mental health in young people.

It has not been an easy year for many children and young people. There is still so much to catch up on after the pandemic, and the huge number of global changes has had an undeniable effect on young people and families. Despite this, your bravery and resilience continues to motivate us to carry on providing effective resources and enhancing the wellbeing of young people.

This year, stem4 has put a brief guide together to help build aspects of bravery and confidence. Please join us by sharing your experiences, creative pieces, and even your own tips on how to #BeBrave this year on social media. Tag us at @stem4org, and use this year's hashtags (#BeBrave and #stem4YMHD), to connect with us and with other young people on 19 September.

As a charity supporting young people's mental health, I would like to thank you for your valued participation, and look forward to hearing from you.

Happy #stem4YMHD!

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Nihara Krause
Founder and CEO, stem4

#stem4YMHD   #BeBrave

![stem4 Youth Mental Health Day logo - 19th September]

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH DAY™
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'How to #BeBrave: School and College Edition' is here to help you to navigate the many challenges you might face whilst at school or college. This guide looks at ways to manage the anxieties that can arise when you're at school or college, how to put your best foot forward, and how to #BeBrave!

What's inside?

What is bravery?

Bravery has traditionally been defined as the way in which we defend ourselves from fear. Bravery can emerge from instinct, training, or empathy. Imagine a soldier charging into battle, willing to do what needs to be done to defend their King and country.

More recently, bravery has been defined as the quality or state of having or showing mental or moral strength to face danger, fear, or difficulty.

Bravery ⟶ Confidence
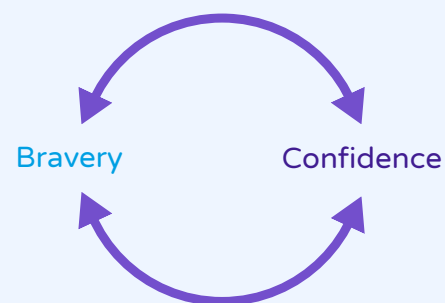
Bravery and confidence form a positive circle.

By being brave, you become confident. In turn, having confidence helps you to be brave.
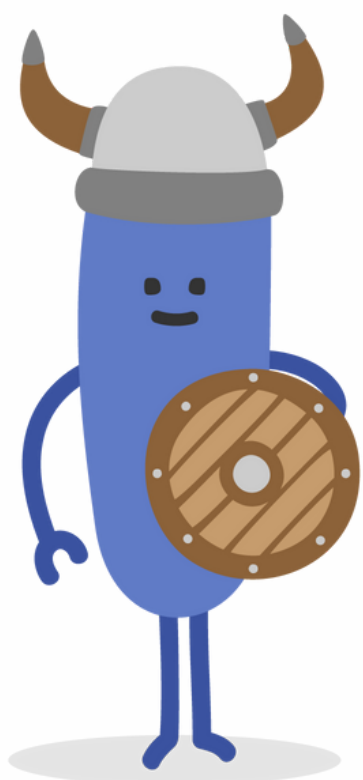
Courage is also about being brave and refers to the way in which we manage our fears. It is often defined as the willingness to face negative or difficult situations.

Courage comes from the heart and allows you to make a choice to act, despite fear. Emotions such as compassion, concern, or love, help people to be courageous.

'I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it.'
- Nelson Mandela

What can it mean to #BeBrave?

Bravery looks different to everyone. What one person may find very difficult, another person may not, but it's important to remember that everyone has fears and worries, and will practice bravery when they face them. How you challenge yourself to #BeBrave is up to you, and you may already have some ideas in mind. If you need extra inspiration, here are some ways in which you can challenge yourself to #BeBrave today.

How you can challenge yourself to #BeBrave today

Get back to sport after recovering from an injury, even though you're worried you may hurt yourself again.

Decide to tell someone how you feel and ask for some help.

Put your hand up to ask a question in class, even though you don't understand something.

Read something you've written in front of the class, even though you're worried it might be wrong.

Tell a friend that they have hurt you by leaving you out.

Introduce yourself and have a conversation with someone you haven't spoken to in class.

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How to #BeBrave when you're starting at school or college

September can be an unsettling month as it marks the beginning of a new academic year. Starting a new year, particularly at a new school or college, can be worrying and challenging. So at this time of year, it's especially important to #BeBrave and put your best foot forward!

Some tips to help when you're starting at a new school or college

Tip 1: Remember that you're not alone in how you feel.
Even the coolest looking person will have some degree of worry about settling in. That's because new situations take adjusting to and some people are better at adjustment than others. But everyone will need time to get used to something new.

Tip 2: Make an effort to try something new.
That might be saying hello to someone that you haven't spoken to before, or trying a new task.

Tip 3: #BeBrave in sharing your ideas.
Try and ask a question or contribute to a discussion in class. The earlier you try, the easier it will get.

Tip 4: Don't worry about doing everything straight away.
If you don't get chosen into activities such as sports or music, don't write yourself or the school/college off. Just like you need time to get to know them, they need time to get to know you and what you can do.

Tip 5: Allow yourself to feel your emotions.
It's ok to be sad about what you left behind. It might help to put together some photographs or collect some of the messages your friends have given you as a way to make you smile.

Tip 6: Challenge negative thinking.
Change negative thoughts about things never being right where you are. Be optimistic and see the school or college, new friends, and new ways of learning, as opportunities to be hopeful.

Tip 7: Do some fun activities.
Plan something to look forward to. Fun activities can help boost your mood!
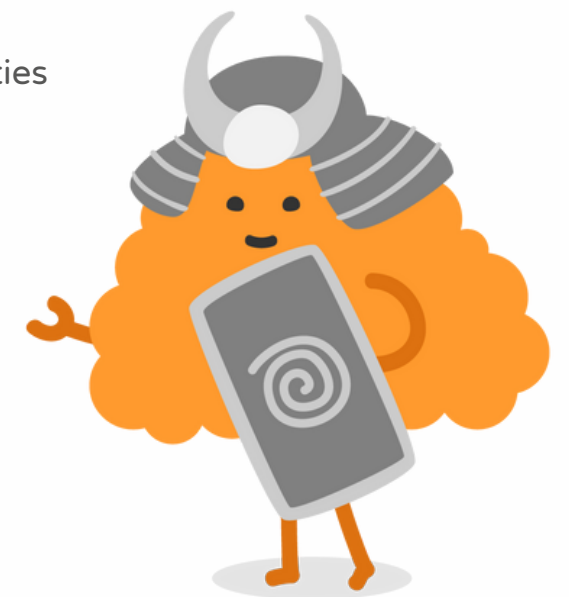
How to #BeBrave if you're struggling with your work

It can be challenging to stay on top of your workload, and it can be particularly stressful if work begins to pile up. But there are some things you can do to regain control of your workload and ease the pressure. If you're struggling to get work done on time, it's brave to admit this and reach out to your teachers, parents, or carers for support.

Some tips to help you manage your workload

Learn to manage your time efficiently. Make a list of your tasks and note any special dates ahead, such as holidays or exams.

Aim to complete tasks by an earlier deadline than the due date. This will help prevent procrastination and ensure things aren't left to the last minute.

Create a realistic timetable. Try not to be over-ambitious. Really think about what you will be able to achieve each day.

Ask yourself: Is what you're doing now giving you the best version of yourself? If yes, keep doing the same. If not, try and make some changes.

Learn to manage distractions. This might mean working somewhere that's not your bedroom, or putting your phone away until you've finished your work.

When exam results are out, acknowledge what you did well and what could have been better. Be proud of what you've achieved!

Try to manage perfectionism. Practise giving in something incomplete and face the fear of handing in something that's good, but not perfect.

If you're struggling with work, reach out to a teacher or parent/carer. It's brave to admit you're finding something challenging and ask for help.

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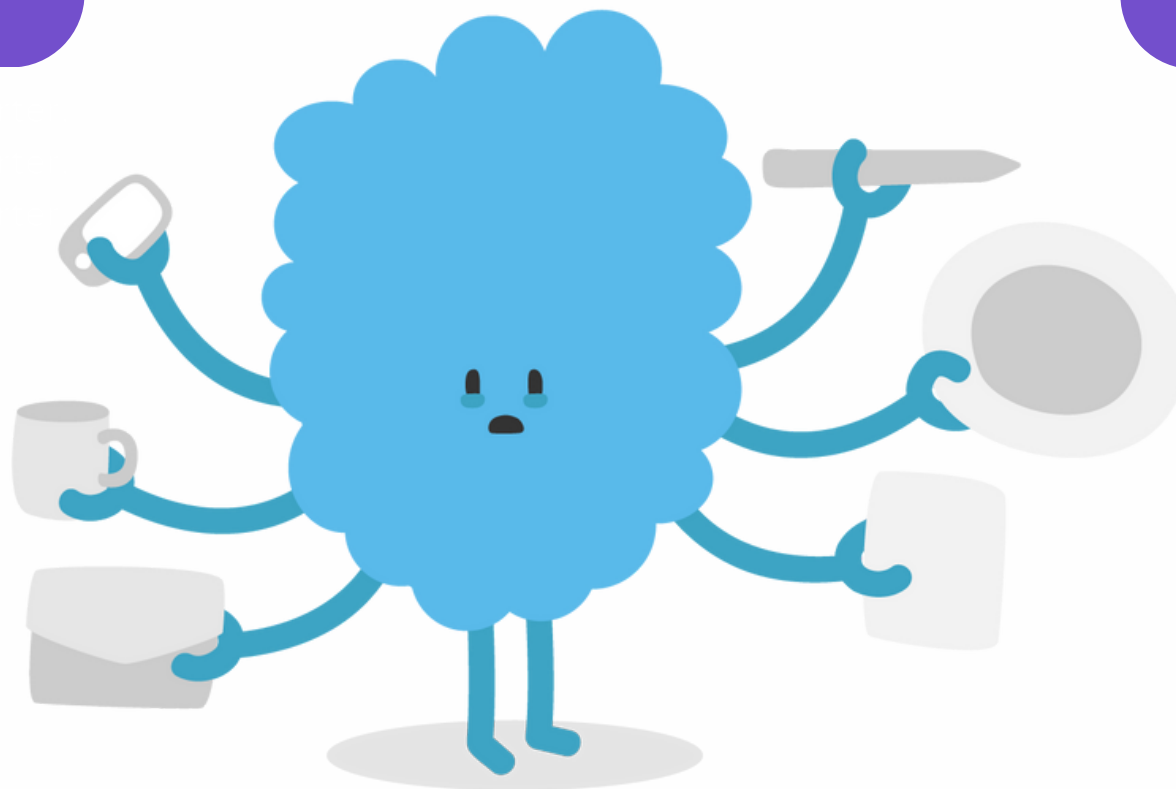
How to #BeBrave and make new friends

Meeting people and making new friends can be scary, and it can require lots of courage and bravery to put yourself out there. This is especially true if you're new at school or college and don't know anybody yet, or if you're looking to branch out and meet new people at the school or college you already attend. Having said this, making new friends is an exciting and fun part of life, so try to push yourself out of your comfort zone and #BeBrave!

Some tips to help you make new friends

Tip 1: Try to find some similarities.
When we're nervous, we tend to focus on the differences between us and others. Instead, try to look for similarities and ways to connect with new people.

Tip 2: Look for common interests.
Shared interests are a great way to connect with others. It's easy to talk about what you know and love!

Tip 3: Practise some conversation starters.
Prepare some ways to start a conversation. For example, you could ask someone about their school experiences, a subject that they're interested in, or something topical (like a football match).

Tip 4: Ask open questions.
Try to avoid questions that give yes or no answers. For example, instead of 'Do you like football?' ask, 'What sort of sport do you like?'

Tip 5: Try to be open-minded.
Don't try and find a best friend straight away. Start with finding some people to hang out with. You can be more selective later, once you've had a chance to make lots of friends.

Tip 6: Spend time with mutual friends.
If you can, hang out with friends of friends. It's an easier way to meet new people and may feel more comfortable to begin with.

Tip 7: Show that you're open to making friends.
Show that you're open to making new friends by joining in with a group activity or discussion rather than standing at a distance. Try to make eye contact, smile back, and say hello!
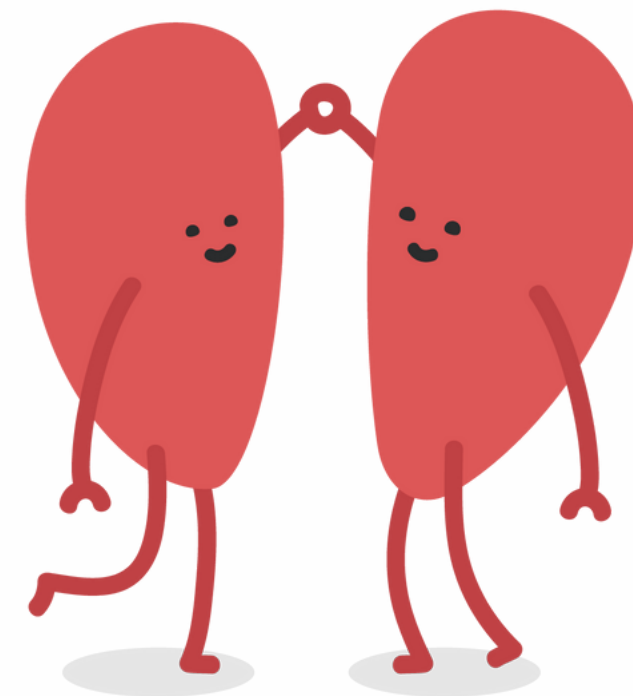
How to #BeBrave if you're avoiding something

What is avoidance?

If a person is worried or fearful of something, they are likely to want to avoid the thing they are fearful of. For example, if you're worried about speaking to a teacher about a piece of homework you haven't completed, you might put it off. Or, if you're worried about something that may happen at school or college, you might avoid going in that day.

Avoidance behaviours increase as the intensity of fear or anxiety gets greater. This means that the more you're worried about something, the more drastic the steps you take to avoid it may be.

The anxiety and avoidance cycle

Whilst avoidance may bring relief in the short term, it makes things worse in the long term. This is because it reinforces that what you're avoiding is dangerous. You might start to think that what you are avoiding now should always be avoided. Therefore, your anxiety levels are maintained or even increase. This creates an 'anxiety cycle'.

anxiety

avoidance

short-term relief of anxiety

long-term anxiety growth
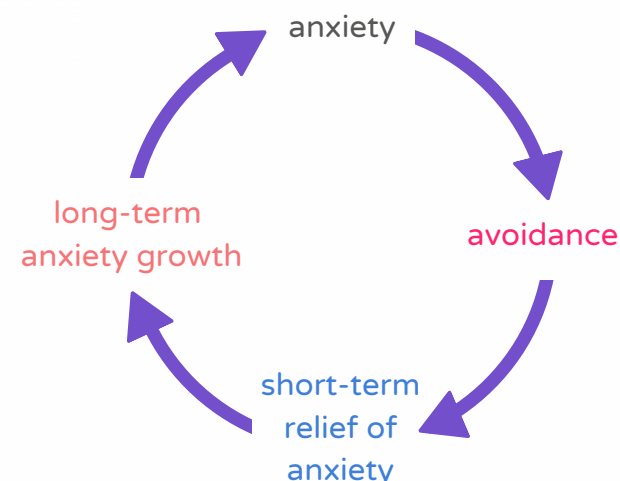
Tips to help you change avoidance behaviours

Tip 1: Try to spot patterns in your behaviour.
When you try to avoid something, recognise when and where this happens. For example, you may notice that avoidance behaviours always happen in the mornings when you're about to leave the house for school or college.

Tip 2: Make a note of this.
Make a note when you're avoiding something. This will help you to find out how often avoidance behaviours happen, and what may cause them.

Tip 3: Gradually try and face what you're avoiding.
The challenge in recovering from avoidance behaviours is to gradually face what is being avoided. Try and face it, one small step at a time, until it no longer has a hold over you. Practice makes perfect!

Tip 4: It's OK to ask for support.
Facing something that you've been used to avoiding is difficult. Try to start facing it with the help of somebody else. Gradually, start doing it on your own. It is brave to ask for help and support.

stem4's resources

For more information on anxiety and avoidance behaviours, take a look at stem4's further resources.
stem4.org.uk/resources

Clear Fear

About Clear Fear

The fear of threat, or anxiety, is like a strong gust of wind. It drags you in and makes you want to fight it or run away.

Instead, face your fear with the free Clear Fear app and learn to reduce the physical responses to threat, as well as changing thoughts and behaviours and releasing emotions.

Anxiety is a natural response to fear, threat, and apprehension. However, when anxiety is extreme or goes on for a long time, or the response to a threat is disproportionately large and affects a person negatively, it may become an anxiety disorder.

Anxiety disorders are the most common form of emotional disorder and respond very well to a form of treatment called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or CBT.
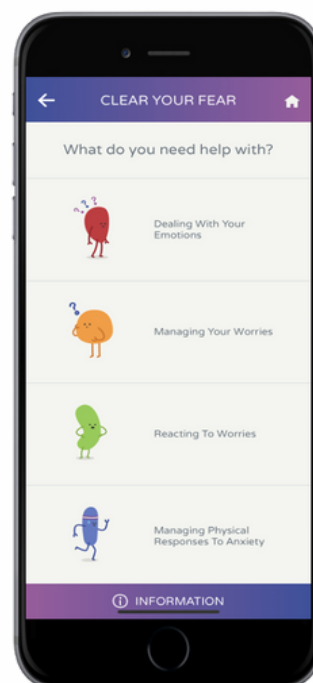
When you face your fear, you will reduce the threat and glide.

Clear Fear is an app developed for teenage mental health charity stem4 by Dr Nihara Krause, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, and uses the evidence-based treatment CBT to focus on learning to reduce the physical responses to threat by learning to breathe, relax and be mindful as well as changing thoughts and behaviours and releasing emotions.

Please note the app is an aid in treatment but does not replace it.

Find out more at clearfear.co.uk

stem4 — supporting teenage mental health

Who are we?

stem4 is a charity that promotes positive mental health in teenagers and those who support them including their families and carers, education professionals, as well as school nurses and GPs, through the provision of mental health education, resilience strategies, and early intervention.

This is primarily provided digitally through our innovative education programme, pioneering mental health apps, clinically-informed website, and mental health conferences that contribute to helping young people and those around them flourish.

Our Mission

To foster the development of good mental health in teenagers through enhancing early understanding and awareness in individuals, their families, schools and the community, promoting shared early detection and signposting towards prompt action and intervention.

Our Aims

- Raise early awareness and highlight the importance of early intervention in teenage mental health issues—taking steps to help stem problems at an early stage.

- Educate through interactive conferences for schools, digital tools such as the Head Ed programme, and through our comprehensive website.

- Encourage debate and shared information through a programme of conferences targeting students, parents/carers, education professionals, school nurses, and GPs.

- Provide self-help through our mental health app library, website, and booklets.
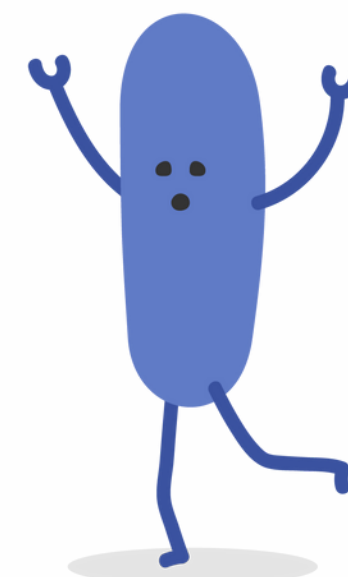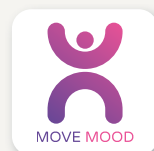
stem4's mental health apps
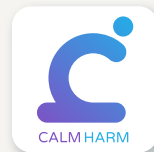
A free app to help teenagers resist or manage the urge to self-harm
www.calmharm.co.uk • @calmharmapp
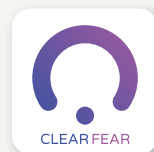
A free app to help children and young people manage the symptoms of anxiety
www.clearfear.co.uk • @clearfearapp

A free app to help teenagers manage low mood and depression
www.movemood.co.uk • @appmovemood

A free app to help families and friends provide mental health support
www.combinedminds.co.uk • @combmindsapp

A free app to help young people manage negative body image, poor self-worth,
and related early-stage eating difficulties or disorders
www.worthwarrior.co.uk • @worthwarriorapp

stem4's award-winning apps are available to
download from the App Store and Google Play.

Download on the App Store
GET IT ON Google Play

Please note that these apps are an aid in treatment but do not replace it.

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