



Name: Rebecca Wiggins

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The *Adolescent Coping Scale for Schools (ACS-S)* is a 60-item self-report questionnaire that is used to support young people identify their coping behaviours and develop coping strategies. Coping can be defined as a set of cognitive and affective actions that arise in response to a specific concern. This report provides a coping profile of an adolescent’s usage of 20 coping strategies and their perceived helpfulness. It categorises these strategies into two distinct coping styles, productive coping or non-productive coping. The ACS-S assesses how individual adolescents cope with either general concerns or a specific concern. There is no right or wrong coping, it depends on the situation and the extent to which you use a strategy.

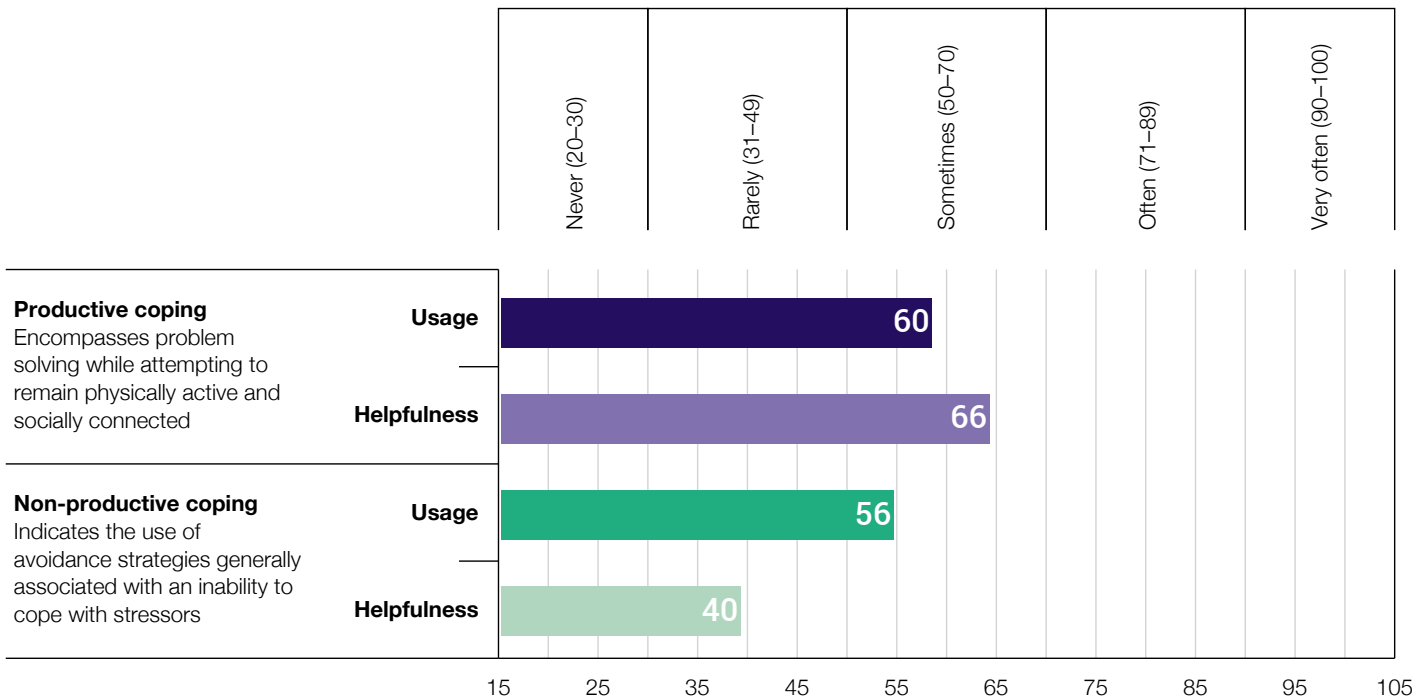
You responded according to how you cope with a specific concern or problem. Your specific concern was:

friendships

Throughout this report, the scores are less important than the relative usage and helpfulness of each strategy, which can help you identify areas for development.

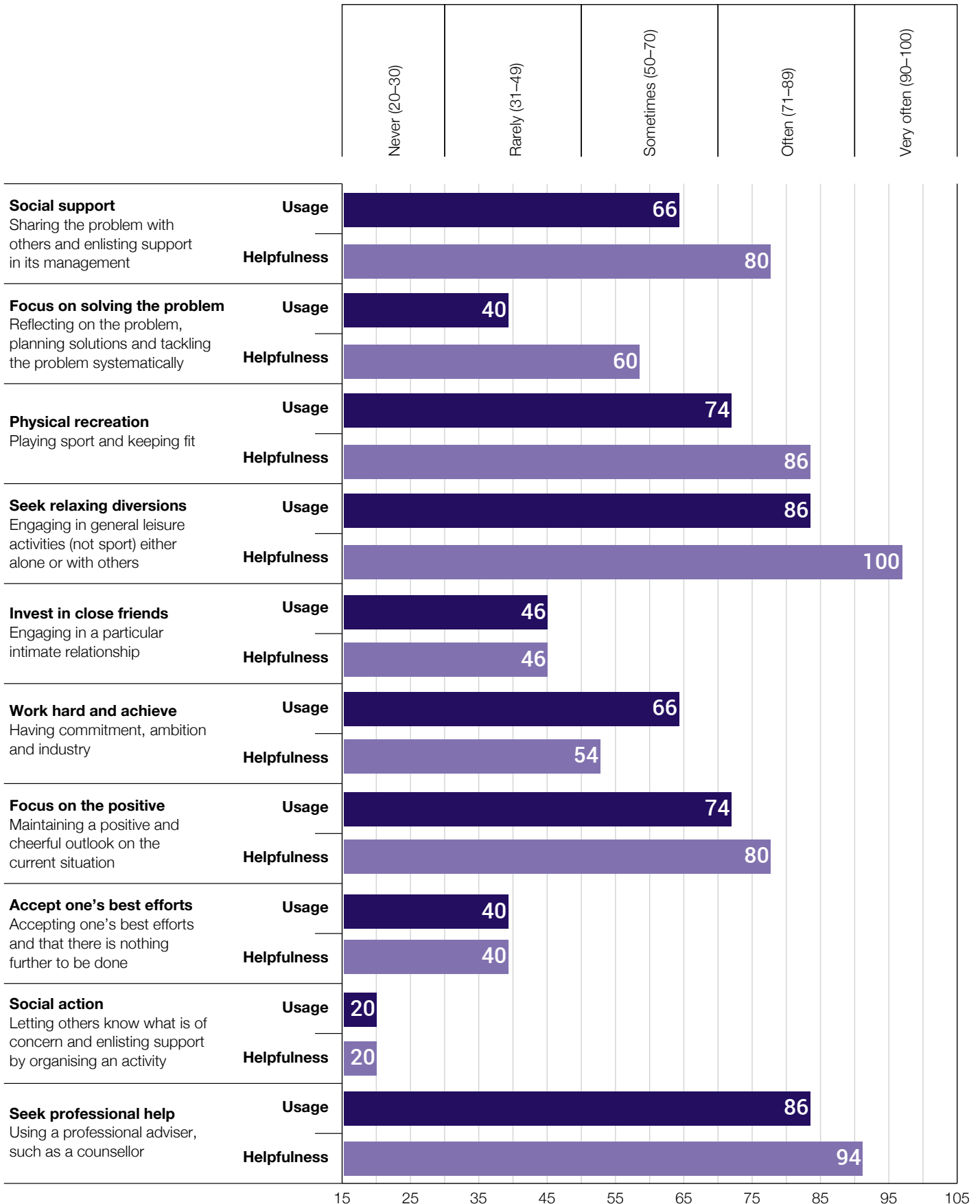
Profile of coping styles

The adjusted scores graphed below are based on mean ratings of the items in that coping style.



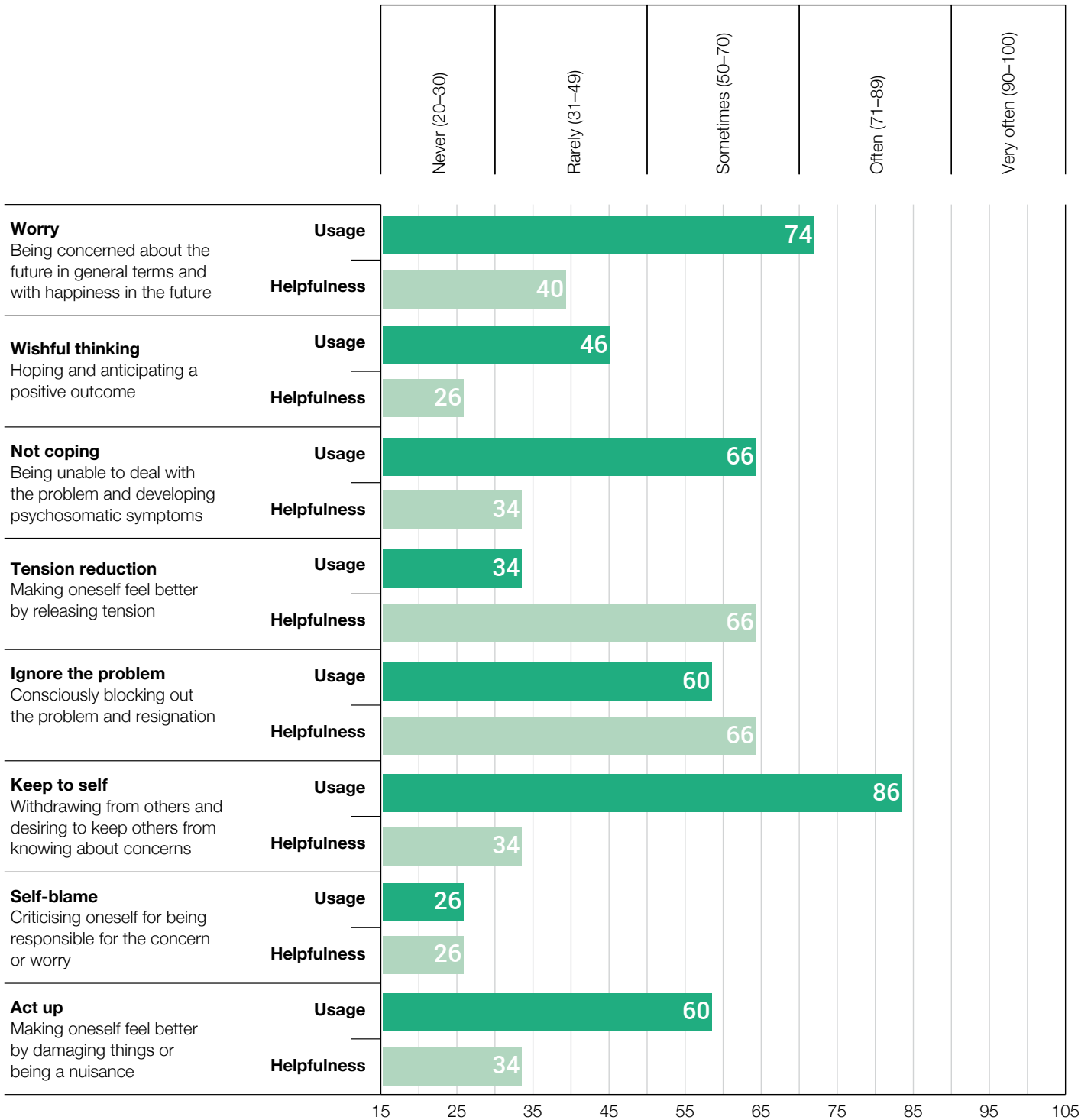
Productive coping

This coping style includes problem solving while attempting to remain physically active and socially connected. The adjusted scores graphed below are based on mean ratings of the items in that coping strategy.



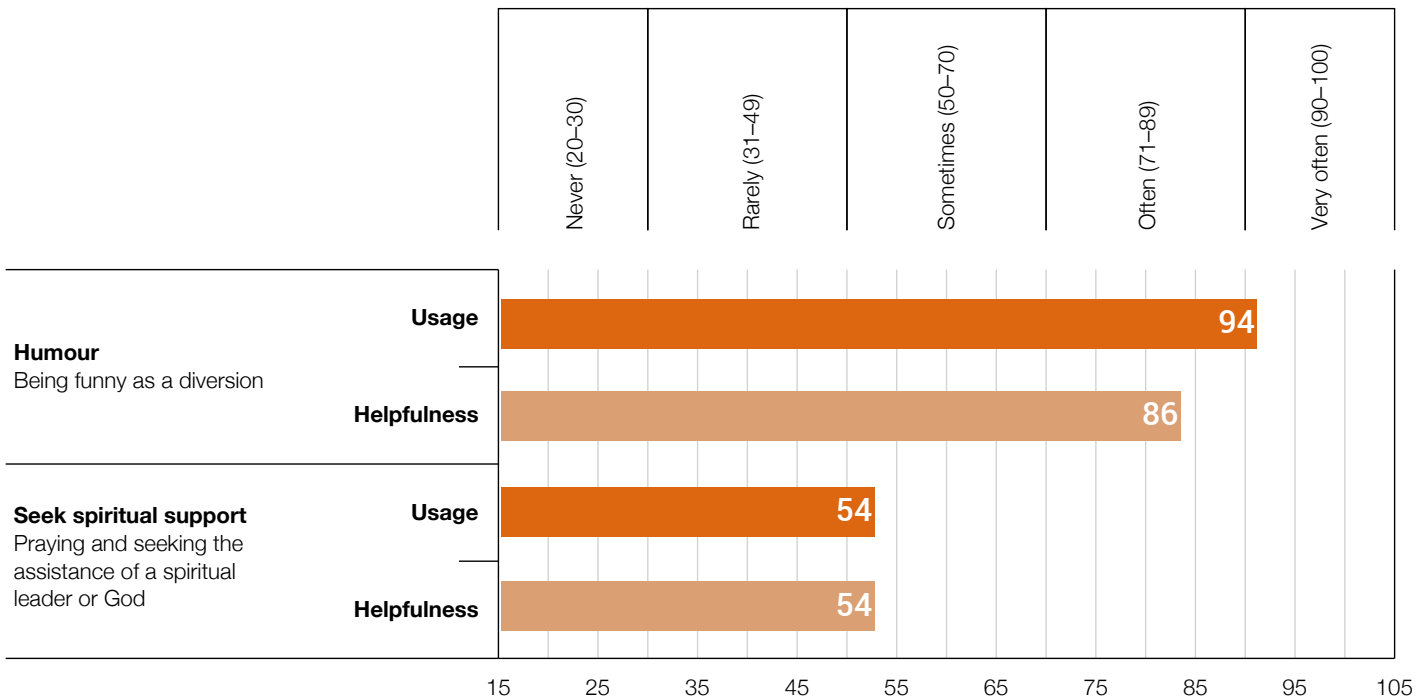
Non-productive coping

This coping style includes the use of avoidance strategies generally associated with an inability to cope with stressors. The adjusted scores graphed below are based on mean ratings of the items in that coping strategy.



Other coping styles

These coping strategies don't relate significantly to either the productive coping or non-productive coping styles. The adjusted scores graphed below are based on mean ratings of the items in that coping strategy.



Interpreting the results

By reflecting on your coping profile, you can identify the coping strategies you use, how frequently they are used and how helpful you find the coping strategies. You can understand your own coping behaviours and identify small changes you can make and achieve.

Follow-up

The following questions can be used to stimulate discussion and reflection on your coping behaviours. This can be done on your own, with your teacher or a friend, in a small group, or as a class.

- 1 What have you discovered about the way in which you cope with your concerns?
- 2 What strategies do you use very often?
- 3 What strategies do you use infrequently?
- 4 What changes would you make to the way you cope?
- 5 What would you like to do more of?
- 6 What would you like to do less of?
- 7 What would you like to do differently?
- 8 Do you use some strategies very often even if they are not helpful? How would you like to change that?
- 9 Do you use some strategies only sometimes even if they are helpful? How would you like to change?

Coping tips

- 1** Aim to increase your use of productive coping strategies. Productive coping strategies include: physical recreation, working hard and achieving, solving the problem, seeking professional help, seeking social support, social action, investing in close friends, focusing on the positive, accepting your best efforts and seeking relaxing diversions.
- 2** Decrease your use of non-productive coping strategies such as: keeping to yourself, wishful thinking, self-blame, not coping, worrying, tension reduction, acting up and ignoring problems.
- 3** Use positive thinking: positive thoughts lead to positive feelings and hope.
- 4** Believe in your capacity to cope.
- 5** Avoid negative thinking by stopping, evaluating and reframing your thoughts.
- 6** Use assertive communication and problem-solving skills where appropriate.
- 7** Learn to manage conflict. Ask others for help when you do not have the strategies to cope.

How to think more positively

Hundreds of thoughts run through our minds every day, explaining and judging events and situations. If your thoughts are mostly negative, then you will experience mostly negative feelings. Negative thinking can cause low self-esteem, frustration, anger, unhappiness, depression, poor health, poor performance and low motivation.

When something happens that you have negative feelings about:

- 1** Stop and listen to your self-talk – have awareness of your self-talk
A good way to do this is to write down what happened, what your thoughts were and how you felt.
- 2** Evaluate your self-talk
Make a list of why your self-talk might be true and why it might be false. Thinking of reasons why your thoughts might be false is hard at first. If it is too difficult, ask someone else who can give an objective perspective.
- 3** Reframe your self-talk so it is more truthful and less negative
You don't have to pretend not to be disappointed or hurt – that would be unnatural. The aim is to try to look at the most positive perspective and keep some hope in your thoughts. One negative event doesn't make your whole future negative.

Avoiding non-productive coping

Some coping strategies are generally not helpful in dealing with problems, as they are largely negative and avoid the problem. A person may rely on these strategies because of habit, they might not be aware the strategy is useless or harmful and they may not be aware of other strategies they could use. To avoid non-productive coping strategies:

- 1 Learn from your mistakes and work out how to do things differently next time
- 2 Engage in peaceful activities: walking, reading, listen to music, engage in mindful relaxation, etc.
- 3 Do more activities you enjoy: drawing, playing computer games or music, watching a movie, etc.
- 4 Make time for physical exercise: go for a run, go to the gym, hit a punching bag, dance to your favourite music, etc.

Getting along with others

Communication is a part of everyday life. Sometimes it can be difficult to communicate with someone, particularly about something important. If you feel you can't speak with someone about a problem, try talking about a less concerning issue and see how it goes. In time you may feel comfortable enough to discuss your problem, or you may decide to talk with someone else about it.

When you want to discuss something important, how you approach the conversation will impact how well it goes. You need to consider what you want to express (feelings and words) and you need to say it without denigrating others. Use assertive communication to communicate successfully.

Assertive communication is expressing yourself and your wants in an honest, respectful and direct way that does not put others down. To communicate assertively, use I messages, state a tangible situation, explain the effect and suggest a preferred outcome. For example, 'When I'm shouted at, I feel embarrassed and bombarded. Could you please tell me in an ordinary voice what you're upset about?'

Avoid aggressive and passive communication. Aggressive communicators stand up for their rights at the expense of others in a rude and overly powerful manner. They attack another person, rather than objecting to others' behaviour or the situation. Passive communicators put others' rights before their own, feel sorry for themselves and remain silent so that others do not know how they feel.



Coping with conflict

Conflict arises from differences between people and a certain amount of conflict is normal. Each of us is an individual with our own needs and desires, which may clash with others'. Conflict in small amounts can be an opportunity for growth if it leads to positive change. When conflict is ongoing or severe, our relationships suffer and it can lead to negative outcomes, such as aggression or depression. To cope with conflict:

- 1 Understand the needs and concerns of the other
- 2 Communicate your needs and concerns
- 3 Handle your emotions
- 4 Brainstorm creative options
- 5 Consider your alternatives
- 6 Build win-win solutions.

Asking for help

Sometimes problems can seem too awful to talk about. They might seem too minor or trivial to discuss with others, or you might not be comfortable approaching someone else with a problem. There are various people to turn to when problems arise. Friends, parents and family members can be a great support. If the problem is something you feel embarrassed or guilty about – or if you don't want to discuss it with family or friends – there is another option: professional help. Doctors, counsellors and psychologists are trained to assess situations and to help people better understand and manage their responses by developing effective coping strategies – no matter how big or small the issue.

