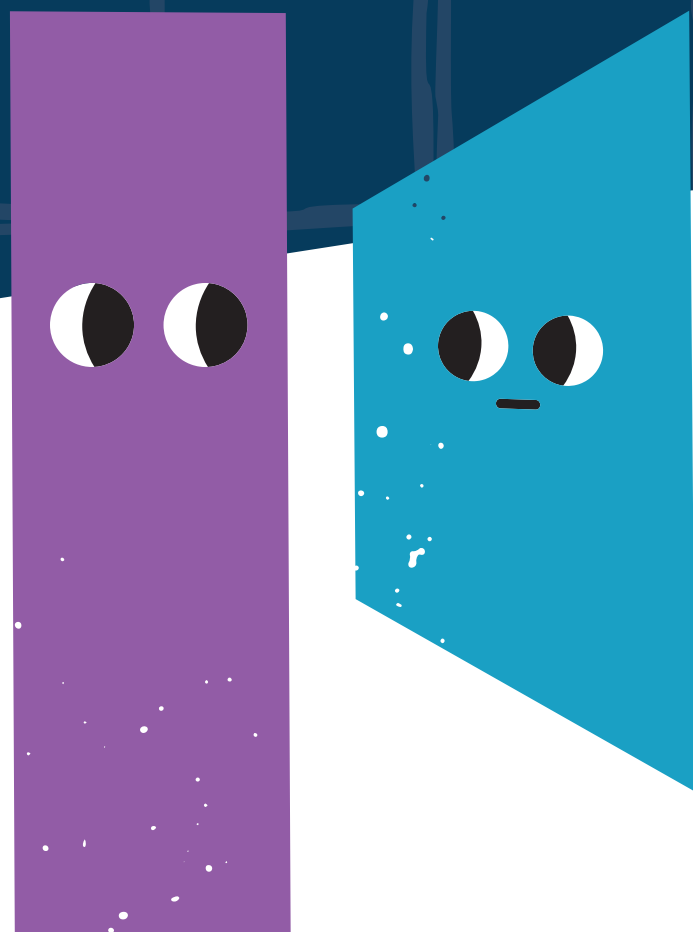


Sibling's Toolkit



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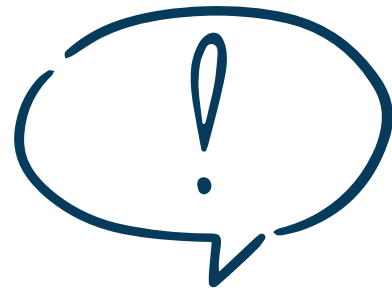
What is an eating disorder?

Having a sibling with an eating disorder can be really hard, and it's completely normal to feel confused or upset about what's going on. Some siblings have found that learning more about eating disorders has helped them understand their sibling a little better.

Eating disorders are an illness, and your sibling is unwell. They may not even realise they are unwell, which can be why they may sometimes resist getting help and taking the right steps to get better.

Because eating disorders affect the way people think about food, eating, their body and exercise, it can lead to them not eating as much as they need to, or sometimes eating and exercising too much. It can cause them to be scared of things that are a completely normal part of life, like eating, hanging out with friends or going to a birthday party at a restaurant. They may really want to get better, but the idea of recovery can be quite scary.

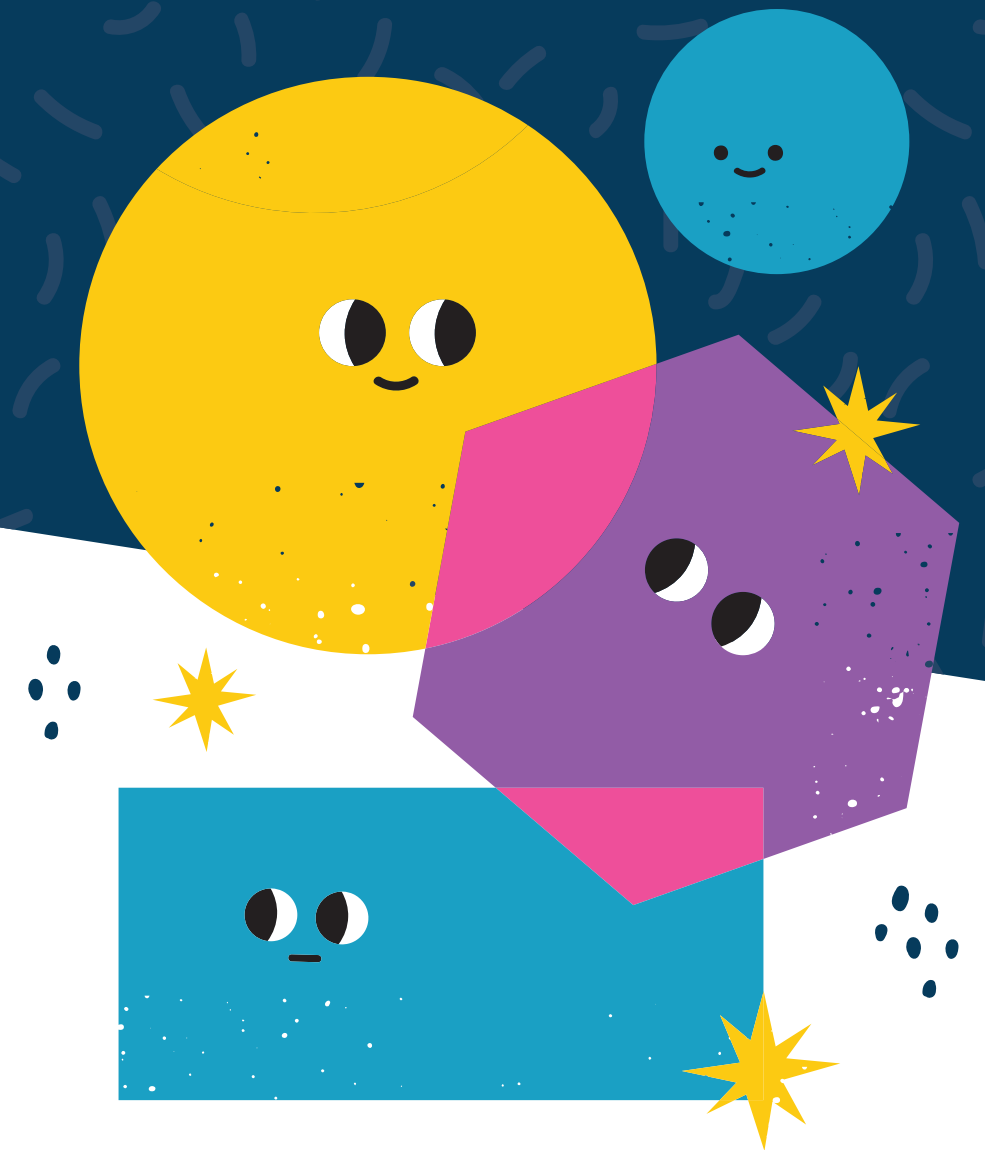
It's like how someone who is afraid of flying feels when they try to walk onto a plane. They might really want to go on a holiday, but getting there is just so scary. These struggles make it harder to live a normal, happy life, which is why getting help is so important.



Facts

If you've heard people talking about eating disorders before, you might think that everyone with an eating disorder is the same, but that's not true. Here are some important things to remember:

- People with an eating disorder do eat. It might not be in the way that their body needs, but they do still eat.
- We don't know the exact reason someone develops an eating disorder. But with treatment, many people recover!
- Most people with an eating disorder don't look different from you or your friends. It can be hard to tell.
- Eating disorders aren't a choice – your sibling is unwell and struggling.
- Both males and females can have an eating disorder - they affect all different people, and people of all ages.



Treatment

Treatment can be a tough time for both the person with an eating disorder, and their family. The most important thing to remember is that full recovery is possible, which means that your sibling can get better.

Over time, they can get back to doing the things they love, with the people they care about, without it being so difficult for them. It's good to remind yourself that things will most likely get better, especially when things are very difficult.

Your sibling will receive medical check-ups to see how their body is coping, support from dietitians to help their eating, and therapy to help work through their thoughts and feelings.

When young people have eating disorders, treatment will often include the whole family,

parents and siblings. It can be really helpful for the whole family to work together to help your sibling recover.

If you are involved in family treatment, it can be really helpful for the other members of the family to also receive support. It's common to experience a range of feelings, all of which are valid.

During these times, it's important to remember that your sibling is going through a lot inside, even if it's hard to see. Two things can be true at the same time: your sibling can be struggling with their eating disorder, and it can also be tough for the rest of the family.

Remember, there's always hope and help – for everyone in the family.

Mindfulness and grounding

Many young people who have a sibling with an eating disorder have said that it can be really stressful and upsetting at times. These feelings can happen for a lot of reasons. For example, it can be frustrating when the eating disorder makes mealtimes harder, or when it seems like the whole family dynamic is changing because of it. You might be angry that yet again, your brother got to choose the TV show to watch after dinner to help him calm down. You might also feel like your parents aren't able to focus on you as much as they did before or that everyone asks about your sibling first.

While these feelings are normal, it can still be tough to deal with. That's why it's helpful to have some strategies ready to help manage those tough moments. It's a good idea to practise these strategies when you're in a good head space so that you're familiar with them and can use them when you really need them.

Don't get discouraged if they don't help right away. Just like learning any new skill, it takes time and practice to get better at using these strategies.



3-3-3 rule

The 3-3-3 rule is a simple technique that helps us stay focused on the present moment. For example: If you're sitting on the couch, feeling frustrated, you might start to notice your chest feels tight, your body feels warmer, and your mind starts racing with thoughts like, "this isn't fair." In moments like this, the 3-3-3 method can be a really helpful way to stay calm and manage your feelings.

Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit and take notice of three things you can see, three things you can hear, and three things you can feel on your body. This technique works best when you say each of these 3 things out loud. We've selected a few examples:

3 things you can see.

- The television
- The grey sofa
- Your glasses on the table

3 things you can hear.

- The TV
- The water boiling on the stove.
- The rain outside

3 things you can feel on your body.

- The pillow against your back
- Your phone in your pocket
- The feeling of socks against your toes

Breathing techniques

Sometimes, we find ourselves feeling overwhelmed, with our thoughts racing or getting more frustrated with the people around us. In these moments, it's helpful to take a pause, take a deep breath, and think about how to respond calmly. One easy way to refocus is by paying attention to your breathing.

Breathing technique 1

- First, imagine that you're smelling a flower by breathing in through your nose.
- Then, blow out a candle by breathing out through your mouth.

By practising this breathing exercise, it can help you feel more in control and better able to handle tough situations.

Breathing technique 2

You can also follow the steps for a second breathing technique:

- Place one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
- As you slowly breathe in, focus on breathing into your stomach, making your hand on top of your stomach rise.
- As you slowly breathe out, watch the hand on your stomach go down.
- Continue breathing slowly, watching the hand on your stomach rise and fall, while the hand on your chest stays still.



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is great when things are very calm, but also when things feel very stressful. It helps us focus on what's happening right now, instead of worrying about the past or stressing about the future.

There are lots of different mindfulness activities you can try. Some are simple, while others might be slightly more complicated and take more effort.

A body scan

A body scan is an easy mindfulness activity you can do by yourself. To start, find a comfy spot, laying down if you can. Then, slowly focus on each part of your body, starting at your toes and working your way up to your head.

Notice how each part of your body feels. Can you wiggle your toes? Picture your ankles, then try tensing your calf muscles. Keep moving slowly, paying attention to each part of your body until you reach your head.

Apps

There are also several different apps that can help you to engage in mindfulness.

Smiling Mind: a program designed by psychologists and mental health experts to help improve well-being.

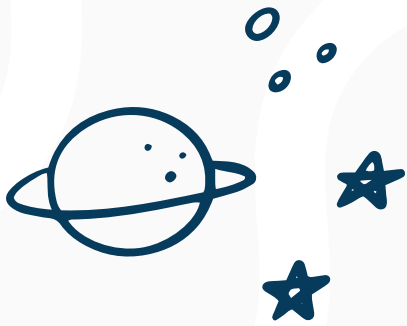
Calm: aims to help you calm your mind in moments of stress.

Insight Timer: meditation app for sleep, relaxation, and more.

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Self-care



What is self-care?

Self-care is all about making time to take care of yourself. It's a great way to feel better mentally and emotionally, so that you can feel stronger and capable of handling difficult situations. Even small things you do for yourself can make a big difference in reducing your stress or anxiety – it's like giving your brain a little break to recharge.

Everyone has different ways of feeling their best, so self-care might look different for each person. For some, it could mean applying a face mask. For others, it might be as simple as going to the beach in the summer, or going to the footy. The most important thing is to do what helps YOU feel relaxed.

Why do we need self-care?

We live in a busy world where there is always something going on. Between school, friends, family, and dealing with an eating disorder in the family, it's easy for life to feel overwhelming. If you don't take time to stop, recharge, and check in with yourself, it can quickly feel like you're running on empty.

Imagine that you are a jug of water. Each area of your life needs to be watered, with the more stressful areas needing more water. Over time, your jug becomes emptier, leaving you with very little water and little to use to care for yourself.

Many of the things that take water from our jug are beyond our control. We can't stop school assignments or music lessons, and we can't stop a family member from struggling with an eating disorder. But we can find ways to refill our jug.

That's where self-care can be valuable. It's a way to replenish your energy and help to put more water back in your jug, so that you're able to cope better with life's demands.

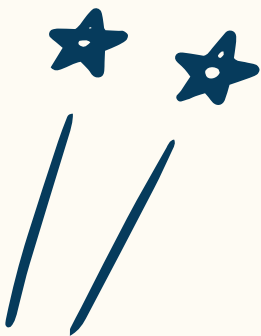
What are the things that you notice taking water from your jug?

What are the things that make you feel relaxed?



Self-care ideas

If you haven't ever practised self-care, it can be hard to think of new ideas. We have put together a list of self-care ideas that you can try. Remember that you may not like the first one, so you can always try something else. Self-care isn't meant to be complicated; it's about finding what helps you feel better.



- 01

Have an early night: Sleep is very important for staying healthy. Every so often, stay home and get some rest rather than going out late with friends.
- 02

Slow down your mornings or evenings: Wake up a little earlier or start your bedtime routine earlier to give yourself more time for relaxing activities.
- 03

Try yoga: Yoga can be a great way to unwind. There are free online classes (Yoga with Adriene is a great option), or you can use meditation apps like Calm or Headspace to help you recenter.
- 04

Spend time outside: Fresh air and daylight can be very relaxing. Find a shady spot and sit outside in the quiet or listening to music.
- 05

Exercise: Many people find physical activity helpful for self-care. Depending on what makes you feel good, perhaps try going for a walk, shooting some basketball hoops, or grabbing your skateboard for a ride.
- 06

Read a book: Set aside time each day (even just 30 minutes) to read. This is a great way to escape from your daily life.
- 07

Journal your thoughts: Writing down your feelings can help reduce stress and anxiety. Journaling also gives you a clearer understanding of your emotions. You might even try gratitude journaling.
- 08

Digital detox: Turn your phone on 'do not disturb' mode for a while. Disconnecting from screens can help improve your sleep and your mood.
- 09

Doing something creative: Using your hands and doing something creative can quiet your mind. Don't worry if you're not artistic, you don't need to be to use colouring books or a paint-by-numbers kit.

Three self-care ideas I am interested in:

1.

2.

3.

Remember, what works for one person might not work for you. The key is finding what helps refill your own ‘jug’ and gives you the energy to keep going. If you’re focusing on activities that improve your physical, mental, or emotional health, then you’re on the right track with self-care!

When trying something new, it can be helpful to make a plan. Have a think about how self-care might work best in your life.

Example:

What I am going to try for self-care: I find exercise helpful in making me feel a little better. Because of this, I am going to try 15 minutes of yoga. I am going to use the Yoga with Adriene YouTube videos to help guide me.

When I am going to try it: Because I find the mornings a little rushed, I’m going to try doing yoga when I get home from school, at about 4:30pm on a Monday and Thursday.

Why I need self-care: By the time I get home from school I am really tired, and I find myself snapping at my family more. I hope that taking a little time to reset in the afternoons will help me get less annoyed.

What I liked/didn’t like (after trying it): Thinking about what worked or didn’t work can help you find the right self-care activity. For example, if you liked yoga, you might want to choose something to add to it that uses light movement.

Build your own plan:

What I am going to try for self-care:

When I am going to try it:

Why I need self-care:

What I liked/didn’t like about it (after trying it):

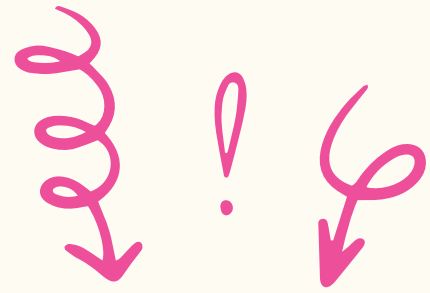


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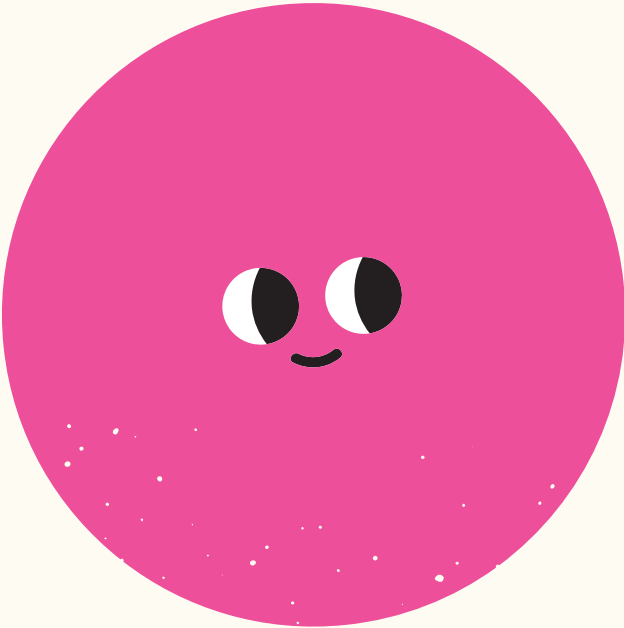
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Reminders to self

Many children and teenagers who have a sibling with an eating disorder can have similar thoughts, worries and fears. While it can feel as though you are the only one, we know that they are very common. So what helps?

We have put together messages from other siblings that have helped them when things are difficult. We hope that things they have learned through their experience helps you.



Not everything you think is true. It's ok to have negative thoughts - it doesn't mean you really believe them.

Having a sibling with an eating disorder can bring up some strong and dark thoughts. This is so common, and many others have felt this way too. Some even have memories of wishing that their sibling wasn't part of the family. While it's natural to feel guilty from having these thoughts, it's important to know that your thoughts don't make you a bad person.

You are not your thoughts. Just because you think something, doesn't mean that it's true or that you actually want it to happen. Everyone has difficult thoughts from time to time, especially during stressful moments. Try and remind yourself that your thoughts are just things that pop into your mind, and it doesn't mean you truly believe it.

It isn't your responsibility to fix other people, including your sibling.

It's understandable that you want to do everything you can to help your sibling get better. It is completely normal to feel that way because you care about them and don't want to see them struggling.

But it's also important to remember that, while you be there for your sibling in many ways, you can't "fix" them, and you aren't responsible for "fixing" them. They hopefully have a team of people supporting them, so leave it to the professionals, while you continue to just be their sibling.

You are allowed to live your own life and have fun, even when people you love are struggling.

When the people we care about are going through a tough time and struggle to do the things that used to make them happy, it can feel wrong to enjoy the things you like to do. But it's important to remember that you don't need to feel guilty. It's okay for you to smile, laugh, and have fun. You deserve to feel happy.

Your parents still love you, even if a lot of their attention is on helping your sibling recover.

Many children feel overlooked and as though they are not as important anymore, because so many people are focused on their sibling. But over time, they have come to realise that just because there's a lot of attention on one person, it doesn't mean that there's any less love for them.

Your sibling and their eating disorder are separate. Hate the eating disorder, love the sibling.

While it may seem as though the eating disorder and your sibling exist together, it's helpful to remember that they are separate. Your sibling has an illness, and their behaviour is coming from this illness.

You're still allowed to feel angry about the things caused by their eating disorder. Just remember that hating the eating disorder doesn't mean you hate your sibling.

It is not your fault that your sibling is struggling with an eating disorder.

You may be wondering if something that you did caused your sibling to develop an eating disorder or has made their eating disorder worse. This isn't the case. No one is to blame for an eating disorder developing, especially not you as their sibling. There's nothing that you have done to cause any of this.



What's happening to your sibling is likely having an impact on you too.

You are just as important as your sibling, and what you are going through matters too. Many siblings of people recovering from an eating disorder experience things that others their age might not, and it can have a big impact on how they feel.

It's really important to share how these things are affecting you with the people around you – let them know what you're feeling and what you need. You are allowed to be struggling, even if it looks different to your sibling.

You are uniquely perfect just the way you are.

Some siblings have noticed that they have started to judge their own bodies more since their sibling developed an eating disorder. You may start to think that judging your body or size is normal, and that there's something wrong with your body or size.

But there's nothing wrong with you. The things your sibling is saying and thinking are not true. They are just 'eating disorder thoughts'. You are perfect just the way you are.

While not everyone experiences this, it's important to know that it's a possibility. And if this happens, please share it with someone so they can support you through this.

Your brother or sister doesn't want to hurt you.

It may seem as though your brother or sister doesn't care about you or if you are hurt due to their eating disorder. However, they do care, they may just not have the words to express it. They love you and may even feel guilty that you are being hurt in the process. It doesn't mean that you have to forgive them for how they are acting towards you, but in time you will hopefully realise that they aren't intentionally hurting you.

A sibling story



My sister was diagnosed with Anorexia Nervosa about 15 years ago, when we were both teenagers – me a bit older than her. At the time, our family knew very little about eating disorders or treatment options available. Living in a regional area limited these treatment options and made it even harder for her to access the support and professionals that she needed.

Since then, my sister has seen numerous psychologists, dietitians, psychiatrists, and other professionals. She's bounced in and out of medical hospital wards and inpatient treatment centres, both public and private. Unfortunately, despite these efforts, she's still living with her eating disorder.

The impact

I still can't full grasp the extent of the impact the eating disorder has had on our family. It created a lot of conflict between us all, and there were times when I didn't want to be at home.

One attempt at treatment included Family-Based Therapy (FBT), and as a sibling, I found it really challenging. It felt like everything in our family had to revolve around my sister's recovery, yet I had no sense of agency. No one really asked me how I was feeling.

I remember people telling me to 'just be a sister', but I wasn't sure what that meant. Most of the resources were geared toward younger siblings of someone with an eating disorder, but that wasn't my experience.



My memories

Looking back, I probably took on too much of a 'carer' role, stepping in to help whenever my parents were overwhelmed or couldn't be around, like at snack times. Those teenage years were incredibly difficult.

I remember having to physically bring my sister to the table because her anxiety before meals was so high. I'd sit with her for hours while she slowly ate, trying to stop her from self-injuring – along with other things that no teenager should have to endure.

My memories of family holidays are mostly filled with stressful meals and fights at lunchtime. Even though I shouldn't have taken on that carer role, I think it gave me a sense of control in a situation that felt completely out of my hands. I believed – and sometimes still do – that if I said the right thing or was there at the right moment, I could make her better.

A few times, my parents asked if I wanted to talk to someone about what was going on. I was fiercely opposed, insisting that I wasn't the one who was sick. Growing up, mental health wasn't talked about openly, and I didn't realise how much it was affecting me. It also meant that I didn't talk to my friends about what we were going through. There was so much stigma around eating disorders, and I didn't want anyone to think my sister was just a "silly girl trying to be skinny".

My support

I finally saw a psychologist in my early 20s, and I really wish I had done it sooner. I'm much more open about my mental health now and am working on being more honest with my family about how the eating disorder has affected me as a sibling.

I attended the very first EDFA Sibling Support Group, and found it to be such a validating experience. Hearing other siblings express the same feelings I had was powerful. As one of the oldest in the group, it also made me sad to see younger siblings going through what I experienced at their age.

Like many siblings, I often put everyone else first and try to be the peacemaker in the family. Having a space where we can connect without judgement has been really special and comforting.

Advice for others

My advice to other siblings is to prioritise your own mental health and find activities that are completely separate from your sibling and eating disorders. I encourage siblings to get a Mental Health Care Plan through their GP and seek support from a counsellor or psychologist, no matter how young they are or how early the family is in their eating disorder journey.

I wish I had sought help earlier and hadn't felt such a heavy responsibility to be the one who was 'okay'. I also wish I had been more open about my own struggles. Your feelings as a sibling are important and valid, and you deserve love and support as well.

Asking for help



Asking for help can be tough for anyone, no matter how old you are. Lots of people feel like they should be able to handle things by themselves. When you have a family member dealing with something like an eating disorder, it can feel even harder to ask for support. You may think that they're suffering more than you, so how can you be the one needing help?

The truth is, asking for help is actually a really positive thing. It shows strength, not weakness. Here's why:

There's always room for you, too.

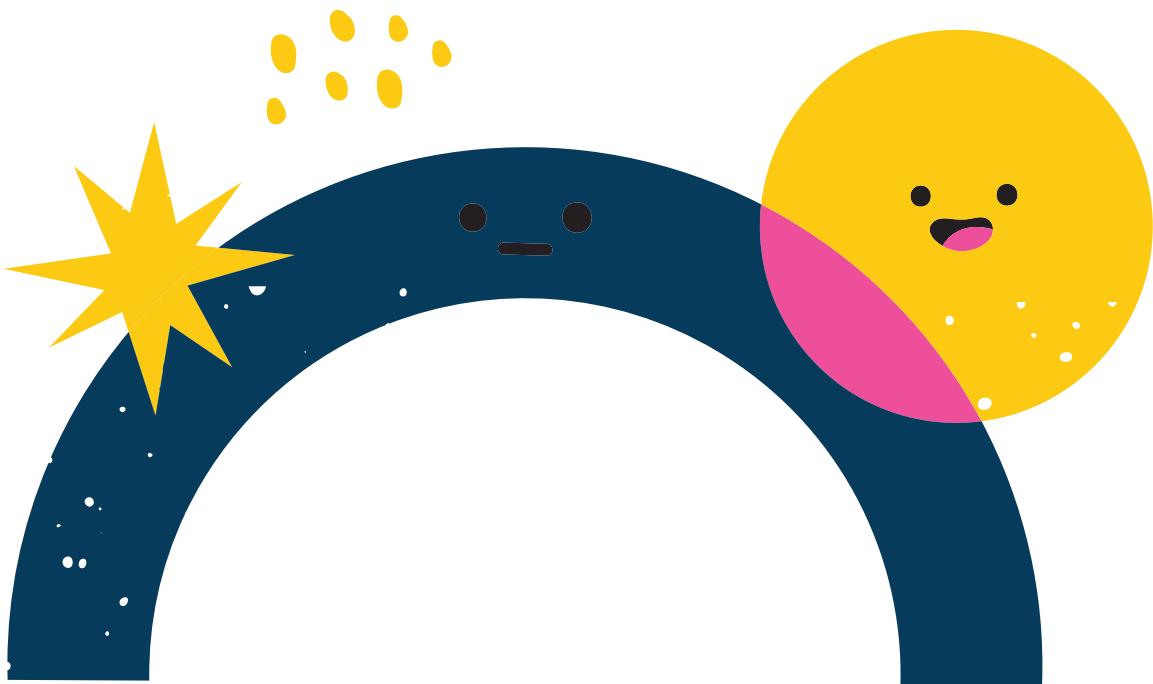
It can feel like there isn't enough space left for you when your sibling needs a lot of support. But parents and other adults are often able to handle more than you might think. They have an unimaginable amount of love for you and have room to support you too.

Help is all around.

There are many people all around that can help: teachers, coaches, aunts, uncles, or even friends' parents. If one person can't help in the way you need, try reaching out to someone else. Everyone has different ways of supporting you, so you may find it better to ask for support from more than one person.

Admitting you need help is brave.

It can be difficult to admit, or even notice, that you need help – especially if you've taken on a more independent role in the family. However, asking for help is a sign of maturity and strength. It takes courage to say, "I'm not okay", and to let others in. Even adults need help at different times in their life!



How do you ask for help?

Asking for help looks different for everyone, but here are some tips to get you started:

What do you need?

Before you reach out, think about what kind of help you want. Do you just need someone to listen? Or are you looking for advice or practical support? Knowing what you need can help you decide who to ask. Maybe a friend is the right person to just listen, but a teacher or family member might be better for advice or guidance.

What do you need help with right now?

Which way will you communicate?

We all have different ways of communicating. If speaking face-to-face feels awkward or intimidating, writing things out might be easier. You can text or email someone, or even use online services like Headspace or Kids Helpline if you'd rather talk to someone online or without them knowing who you are.

How do you prefer to communicate?

When should you ask for help?

If you're in a very difficult place, don't wait to ask. But if you can plan ahead, try to pick a time when both you and the person you're asking aren't rushed or distracted. It also helps to pick a private, safe place where you can have an honest conversation.

When will the best time for you to ask for this help be?

What if it doesn't go the way you planned?

Asking for help can take practice. You may not get the exact support you need the first time you reach out for help.

This is not a reflection on you. It doesn't mean that you weren't clear or didn't deserve help – it just means that the person might not have the right resources or be in the right place to help you. If that happens, ask them if they can think of someone else you should approach, or try someone else you know.

The more you practise asking for help, the easier it becomes – and the more confident you'll feel doing it. Remember, asking for help is a skill that will serve you for the rest of your life. You deserve to feel supported, just like anyone else.

Don't be afraid to ask for it when you need it – you are not in this alone.

The feelings wheel

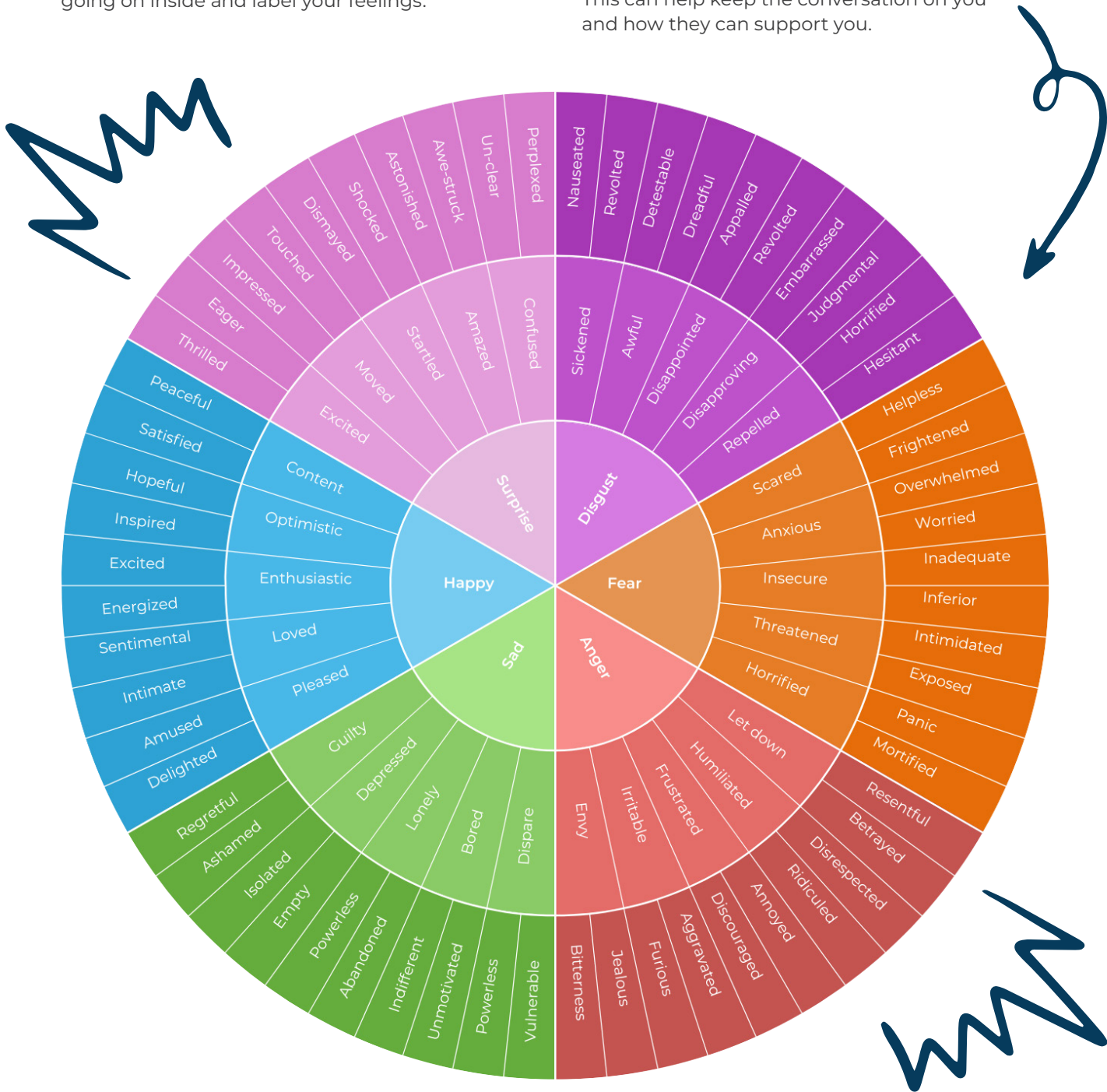
It can be tough to figure out exactly how you're feeling, especially when you have a lot of strong emotions all at once. That's where a feelings wheel can help!

The wheel shows different big emotions such as happy, sad, surprised, disgust, fear and anger. If you find yourself overwhelmed by your emotions, or unable to explain how you're feeling, the feelings wheel can help you understand what's going on inside and label your feelings.

Using the feelings wheel is also a great way to help others understand how you're feeling. When you can label your feelings and talk about your emotions clearly, it's easier for others understand and support you.

Tip: when using the feelings wheel, it can be helpful to communicate using 'I' statements. For example, 'I feel...' or 'I am...'

This can help keep the conversation on you and how they can support you.



Letter to a sibling

I first started struggling with Anorexia when I was 15, which means that my brother was only 12. Even though my battle with Anorexia is something I went through personally, as I've gotten older, I've realised that it's part of his story too. Back then, just like me, he was too young to fully understand what was happening. I've never really talked to him about those years, probably because it's too painful for both of us. However, that doesn't mean there isn't anything that I'd like to say to him.

If I were to talk to him now, after all these years, the first thing I would say is sorry. I'm sorry that Anorexia didn't just hurt me, but our whole family too. I'm sorry for the things I said and the way I acted, and how it made our parents sadder than we would ever want to see them. I'm sorry for how I made mealtimes feel like a battle zone, and for that one average family dinner where I threw a bowl of pasta at you – I don't even remember why I did it.

I'm sorry that I couldn't tell you all that I was hurting and scared. Instead, I just stopped eating and got lost in this fight with Anorexia. If I could talk to him now, I'd tell him that when I said those hurtful things, it wasn't really me – I promise it was Anorexia talking. Sometimes I knew that what I was saying wasn't fair or true, but the words would come out anyway, as if they had a mind of their own. When Anorexia took over, it felt like the world around me stopped making sense. It's like being trapped in a fog, where everything is upside down, and the only way to feel okay is to follow these crazy rules inside your mind.

I'm sorry I took up so much of Mum and Dad's time and energy. It hurt me to watch them struggle, like I know it did for you too. I still feel guilty for the time and money they have invested in my treatment – I hope you don't resent me for it. I know we all need different things at different times, but I'm sorry all the same.

I'd want him to know that I know it must have been tough to walk alongside me, not knowing how to help or what to say. I hope he knows that's okay, I didn't know how to help me either. But most of all I'd want him to know that if I could change anything, I'd take it all back in a second. I wish Anorexia had never been part of my life, but most of all, I wish it hadn't hurt the people I love most in the process. I hope he knows I'm truly sorry, and that I love him more than words.

Coping with worry

You may be surprised to learn that worry and anxiety can sometimes help us. However, at a certain point, worry can become unhelpful, especially when you find yourself unable to control it.

For example, worrying a little bit about how you will do on an upcoming maths test can help motivate you to do your homework and study. However, some people might find that they worry so much about how they will do that they find themselves unable to study at all. Now worrying has become unhelpful.

You might find yourself worried a lot of the time. Perhaps one of the hardest parts of having a sibling with an eating disorder is that often these worries sit outside of your control. If your sibling is in hospital, there's nothing you can do to bring them back home. This can sometimes leave you feeling a little lost and overwhelmed.

Sometimes, you might find yourself stuck in something we call a worry loop.

So, what is a worry loop?

A worry loop is a little bit like listening to a song that keeps skipping back to the same line time and time again - where negative thoughts keep playing over and over again in your head.

What we know is that worry can grow. Often, the more you think about something, the bigger the worry seems to be.

In times like these, you might find yourself anxious and worried, even if there isn't really a reason to be worried.

You may have started off slightly worried, but as your anxiety takes over, you become very worried. Or you are worried about many things now, when originally there was only one worry.

How do we stop worry loops?

Stopping these worry loops is important in helping you feel calmer. Breaking the worry loop helps your brain to get out of that place where your thoughts are stuck replaying over and over again, and instead allow you to think about something less worrying.

Challenge your thoughts

Take some time to ask yourself questions about your worries. This can help us see that our worries aren't always as scary as they seem.

Some questions you can ask yourself:

- "Do I know that this thought is true?"
- "Do I have any evidence for this thought?"
- "What is some evidence against this thought?"

Distraction techniques

Sometimes it's too hard to challenge our worries. You can try and distract yourself instead, as distractions can help you take your mind off your worries for a while.

- Play a game
- Talk to a friend or family
- Go for a walk
- Break out your sensory box
- Watch a movie
- Do a crossword or colouring sheet from this toolkit

Often, they won't come back when you stop the activity, but don't feel bad if the worries do come back – you haven't done anything wrong!

Identify the worry

It can be really distressing when you're not sure how you are feeling. Sometimes just being able to understand what you are feeling can help – whether you just acknowledge it to yourself in your mind, or even write it down.

Using a feelings wheel might be helpful here to help you understand not only what you are worried about, but how this worry is making you feel.

Ground yourself

Grounding techniques such as the 3-3-3 technique where you name three things you can see, three things you can hear, and three things you can feel are often helpful when stuck in a worry loop.

These help your brain focus on the present moment rather than the worry thoughts.

Journaling

Writing down all the thoughts you have in your mind can help you move on. Sometimes when you have a lot going on in your mind, it can feel as though you can't move past them. But if you can write about it, it can help you move forward.

Can you think of a time when your worries have been stuck on repeat?

Can you think of anything that helped you move past these worries?

What technique would you like to try next time you experience a worry loop?

Stopping the worry loop doesn't make the problem go away, but it gives you a chance to feel in control again. It's a little like hitting a 'reset' button for your brain and helps us tackle worries and concerns from a stronger, more logical place.



Building a sensory box

Some siblings of young people with eating disorders have found that creating a sensory box can be a helpful, calming way to manage feelings when they're upset, stressed, or worried.

So what is a sensory box?

A sensory box is a box or container filled with items that relate to each of your senses. Because our senses are connected to how we feel, they can have a big impact on our emotional state. If we engage our senses when we are upset, it can help us to shift our focus away from negative feelings so that we can feel better.

Here are some helpful tips for creating your sensory box:

Choose your box

First, you need something to put everything in. You can use a nice box, like a gift box or shoe box that you decorate. Or you can use a container or even a backpack and keep it in your bedroom. It doesn't have to be fancy – just away from others.

Personalised extras

An important part of any sensory box is that it makes you feel calm and happy. Think about the things that bring you comfort or help soothe you. For example:

- Affirmation cards to remind you of some important things
- A note or letter to yourself, or from a loved one, that reminds you of how much you are loved and encourages you when you're upset.
- A small toy or hobby that you enjoy doing like LEGO, crocheting, or paint by numbers. It helps if it's an activity that you enjoy!

Put it all together

Now that you have all your items, it's time to put them together in your box. You might want to toss everything in or separate each sense using dividers or Ziplock bags.

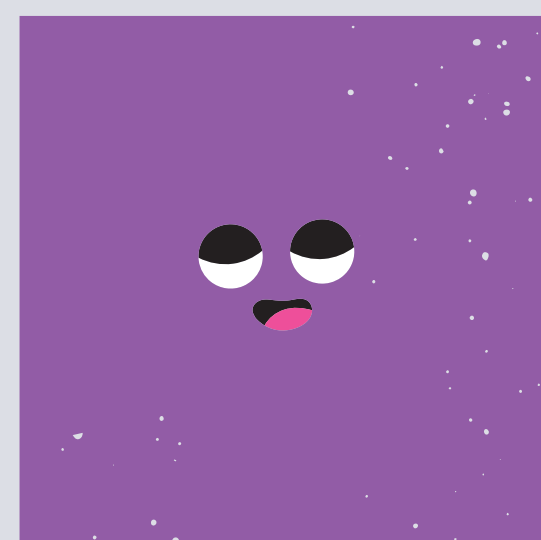
Use it when you need it

When you start feeling overwhelmed or upset, take a moment to sit quietly with your sensory box. The goal is to use the sensory items to help ground yourself, calm down, and refocus your mind.

Extra tips

- It's ok to use your box often, even when you're not upset. The more familiar you become with the items you've included, the clearer you'll become about what works best for you.
- Update the box as you grow and change – adding new sensory items every so often is a good way to keep the box as relevant as possible. You might like different items at 15 than you did at 10!
- Keep the box somewhere easy to access, like next to your bed or on your desk so that you can reach it at any time.

Remember, everyone's sensory box will look different! Make yours as unique to you as possible with items that bring you comfort and help you to feel better.



Journal prompts

Journaling can feel overwhelming, especially when you're going through tough moments or when someone close to you is struggling. Journaling can help you make sense of your thoughts, feelings, and experiences. You don't have to be a writer to start journaling – it's about expressing yourself in a way that feels good to you.

Here's how journaling can help:

1. Understand Your Feelings – it can be hard to figure out what you're feeling. Writing things down can help you get to the bottom of your emotions and understand them better.

2. Release Stress – journaling can be a way to let go of built-up emotions and calm your mind when things get overwhelming.

3. Discover New Perspectives – Writing can help you see things from a different point of view. It can open your mind and help you discover new ways to handle challenges.
4. Explore Your Creativity – Journaling isn't just for serious things – it can also be a fun way to let your imagination run wild. You might surprise yourself with the creative ideas you come up with.

5. Track Your Growth – Looking back at your journal entries can show you how far you've come. It's amazing to see how you've changed and what you've learned along the way.
- Whether you're feeling stressed, confused, or even happy, journaling is a way to express yourself and find clarity. Journal prompts are like little guides to help you begin, especially when you don't know where to start.

Here are 16 journal prompts to get you started

01

What's something you're feeling right now?

Write about whatever emotions are on your mind. It's okay if you're feeling a mix of emotions – it's all part of being human.

02

Describe your perfect day.

If you could do anything, anywhere, with anyone, what would it look like? Let your imagination run wild!

03

When was the last time you felt proud of yourself?

Think about a moment when you accomplished something or handled a situation well. Write about how it felt.

04

What do you wish you could change about today?

Write about something that didn't go as planned or something you wish was different. How would you change it if you could?

05

What is one thing you can't stop thinking about?

Sometimes just putting it down on paper can help get it out of your mind.

06

What's one thing that always makes you laugh?

Write about something that makes you giggle, whether it's a joke, a video, or a funny memory.

07

What's something you love to do just for yourself?

Think about something that makes you feel good – whether it's drawing, playing a sport, or reading. What do you enjoy about it?

08

What's something you're grateful for right now?

Take a moment to think about something in your life that makes you feel thankful, big or small. Thinking about what we are grateful for can help us see the positive throughout our day.

09

What do you do when things get tough?

Write about ways you cope with stress or difficult situations. Do you have any tips that help you feel better?

10

What's a goal you have for yourself this year?

Think about something you want to achieve, big or small. Write about why it's important and how you can get there.

11

How do you like to unwind after a long day?

After a busy day, what helps you relax? It could be anything from watching a movie to taking a walk.

12

What's something you've learned about yourself recently?

Write about a moment when you realised something new about who you are or how you handle situations.

13

What's a memory that always makes you feel good?

Think about a happy or peaceful memory that brings you comfort. What was it about that moment that made you feel good?

14

If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?

Imagine you had the power to change something in the world. What would you choose, and why?

15

How do you stay positive when things feel challenging?

Write about ways you keep a positive mindset, even when life is tough. What helps you stay hopeful?

16



What's one thing you want to learn or try this year?

Whether it's a new skill, hobby, or activity, write about something you're curious about and how you can get started.

Self-care journal

Self-care is all about making time to take care of yourself. It's a great way to feel better mentally and emotionally, so that you can feel stronger and capable of handling difficult situations. Writing down your feelings can help reduce stress and anxiety. Journaling also gives you a clearer understanding of your emotions.

TODAY MY MOOD IS



DATE / /

M T W T F S S

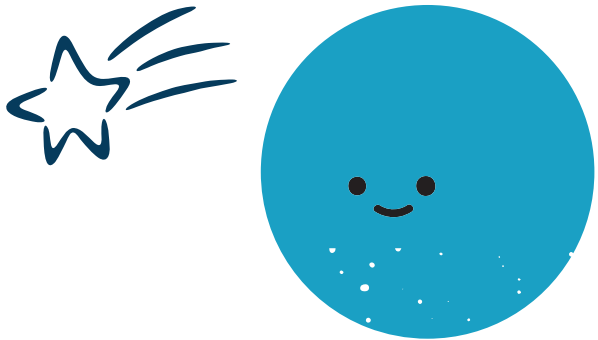
TODAY'S AFFIRMATION

TODAY'S SELF-CARE GOAL

HOW I FEEL TODAY

TODAY I'M GRATEFUL FOR

WHAT WAS THE BEST THING ABOUT TODAY?



Self-care journal: an example

TODAY MY MOOD IS



DATE 22 / 4 / 25

M T W T F S S

TODAY'S AFFIRMATION

TODAY'S SELF-CARE GOAL

HOW I FEEL TODAY

TODAY I'M GRATEFUL FOR

WHAT WAS THE BEST THING ABOUT TODAY?



My well-being plan

You can use this to keep well, connected, and safe when the eating disorder takes over your home.

Sometimes having a sibling with an eating disorder can mean that things can get heated, stressful, chaotic, and sometimes even a little scary. In these moments, it can be difficult to think as calmly as you might normally. A well-being plan is a simple guide to help you in

different situations where you might need some extra support. It helps you know what to do if you ever feel scared, confused, or in danger.

With a well-being plan, you might feel a little more confident and prepared, so you always know what to do in these challenging times. This is something you can talk about with your parents or other trusted adults, and it can change as you grow or face different situations.

Sometimes things become too much. During those times it's important to reach out for help and support.

Emergency Services
000

Lifeline
13 11 14

Kids Help Line
1800 55 1800

e-headspace
ehheadspace.org.au

In an emergency, I will call:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Warning Signs

Warning signs are situations, feelings, or thoughts that might mean I need help.

I will know I need help if I notice any of these signs:

People I can go to for help

These can be friends, aunts/uncles, my parents' friends, teachers, or anyone else that I'm comfortable talking to.

Friends or family I can go to:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Why I feel comfortable talking to them: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Why I feel comfortable talking to them: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Why I feel comfortable talking to them: _____

Teachers or school counsellors I can go to:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Why I feel comfortable talking to them: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Why I feel comfortable talking to them: _____

Places I can go

These are places that you can go when you need to leave home immediately. Think about places you can get to on your own.

Examples: parks, friends' houses, library, public pools, cafes, shopping centres.



Activities that help me

These are things that are relaxing and I can use to feel better.

Examples: your favourite TV shows and songs, books, going for a walk, computer games. You can find other ideas from the sensory box.

What have I learned about myself that I can use in stressful situations?

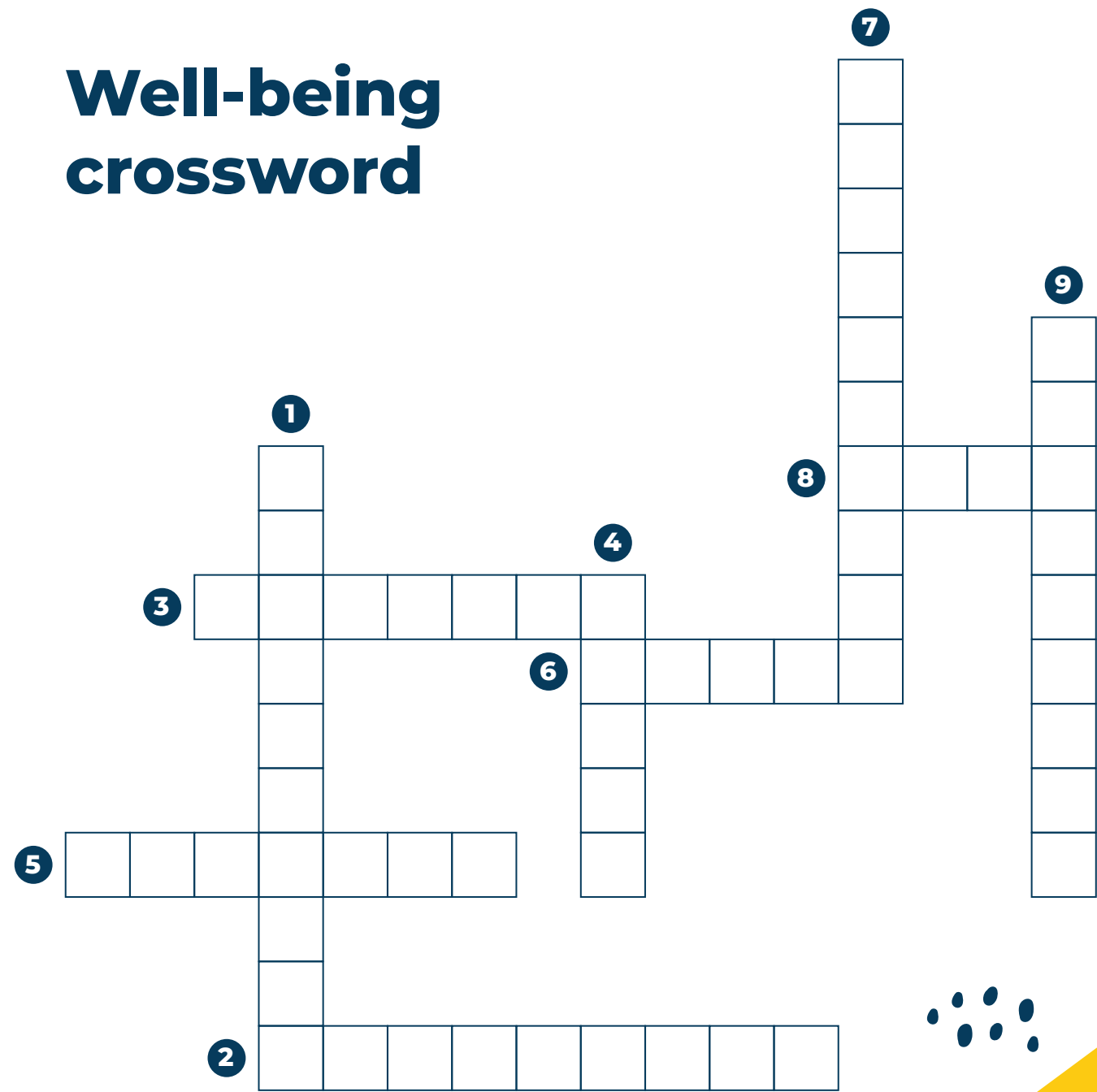
When things aren't going well, it's helpful to think about what has worked in the past to help us through difficult times. If it's worked in the past, there's a good chance it will work for us again! Below are examples. You can tick all that apply for you.

- ☐ I am strong and can get through this tough time
- ☐ I am not alone and I have loving people around me who care about me
- ☐ Reaching out to others has helped me in the past
- ☐ Doing small things for me can help my mood (such as having a good night's sleep)
- ☐ I deserve to talk kindly to myself
- ☐ Being active helps me get out of my head
- ☐ Nothing lasts forever
- ☐ Sometimes I need to spend time with others, and sometimes I need to be by myself
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

You can also write your own in the boxes here.



Well-being crossword



- 1

Something we put in place to protect ourselves.
- 2

Taking the time to prioritise your own well-being and happiness.
- 3

Something that we all need and deserve, especially when things are tough. "love and ..."
- 4

One of our five senses.
- 5

Something you can use to get your feelings out.
- 6

One of the core feelings on the feelings wheel.
- 7

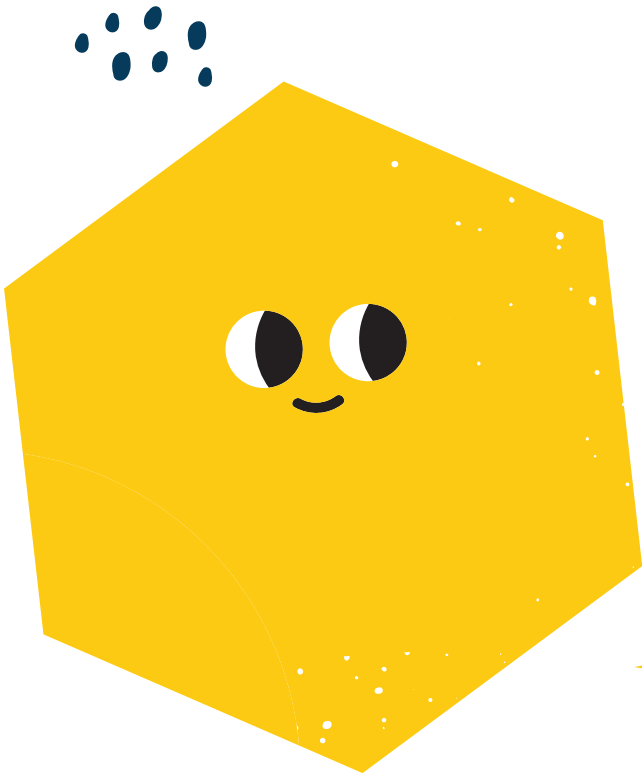
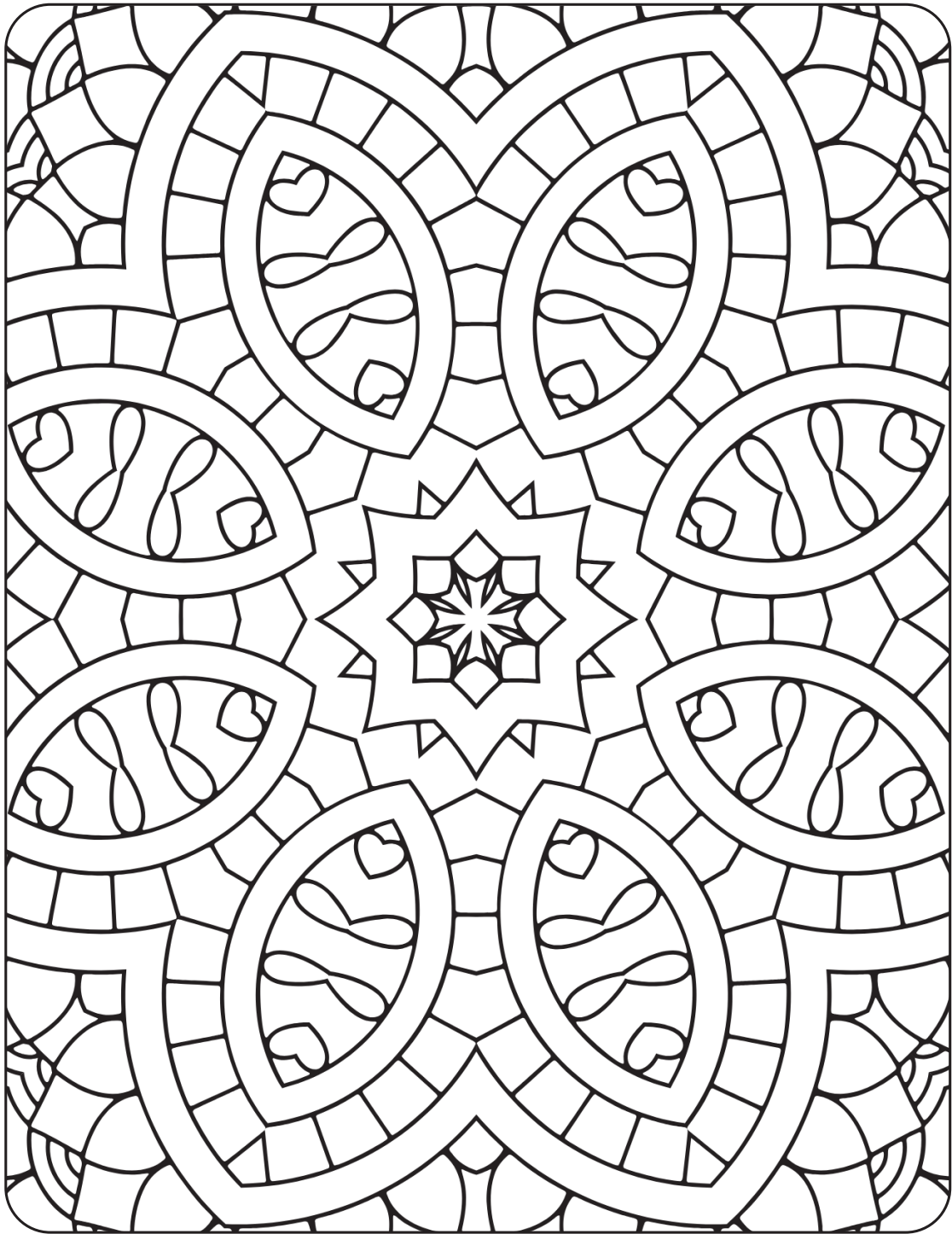
Someone at EDFA that you can book in with for support.
- 8

A strong, positive feeling that can help a family get through tough times.
- 9

Something we can focus on to calm down and reset.

Answers are on page 36.

Colouring page



Setting boundaries

What are boundaries?

Boundaries help keep your body and mind safe, and help you feel good about yourself. They are limits you set with other people to protect your feelings, your space, and your well-being. Setting boundaries helps you stay healthy and strong, and they teach others how to treat you in a way that makes you feel safe and respected.

Why do I need to set boundaries?

Setting boundaries helps you stay healthy and strong, and they teach others how to treat you in a way that makes you feel safe and respected.

What is an example of a boundary?

Boundaries can be physical (like needing personal space) or emotional (like needing respect for your feelings). For example, you might have a boundary when you don't want someone to borrow your things without asking or that no one disturbs you when you need some quiet time alone to relax.

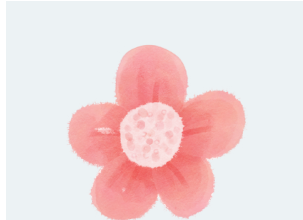
Below is a collection of important ways that you can set healthy boundaries. The cards are full of helpful phrases to boost your confidence in setting boundaries and encourage you to respect your own limits. It's a powerful tool to help you take care of yourself, no matter what's going on around you. Feel free to cut them out and keep them close by.

Remember

- You won't always get it perfect, and that's okay! The more you practise setting boundaries, the easier it becomes.
- Setting boundaries doesn't mean avoiding tough situations. It just means you're dealing with them in a way that works best for you.
- Sometimes, people might not respect your boundaries, and that can be really tough. It's okay to walk away and try again later.
- You might also notice other people setting their own boundaries. That doesn't mean they don't want to spend time with you! It just means they're taking care of themselves too.
- Everyone has different boundaries. An EDFA counsellor can help you figure out what boundaries are most important to you. You can book a session at: <https://edfa.org.au/counselling-service/>



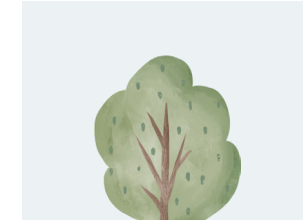
You have the right to say no to things that make you feel tired



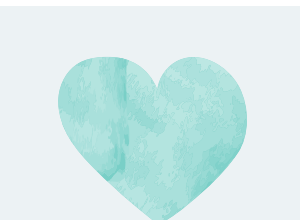
It's okay to set limits on how much you are able to support other people



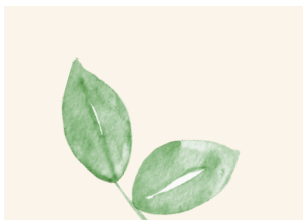
It's okay to let people know they have upset you



You can take a break from a conversation if it's upsetting or makes you feel uncomfortable



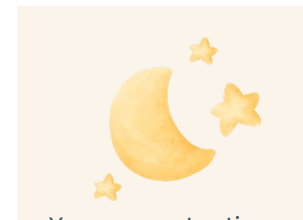
You have the right to be honest about your feelings, even if they may upset someone



You can say no without having to explain why



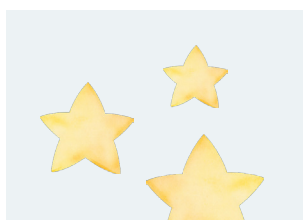
You don't need to feel bad if you need to ask for help



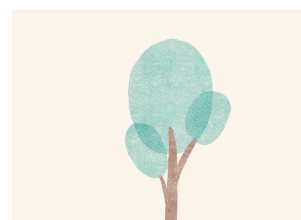
You can set a time limit for homework and other activities so that you don't get too tired or overwhelmed



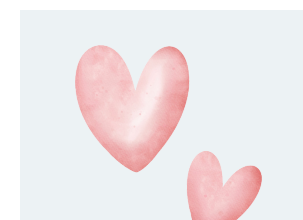
You are allowed to put yourself first when you need to



You don't have to respond to texts or calls immediately if you need space



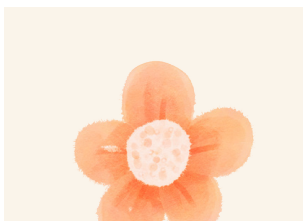
You can do something for self-care without feeling guilty



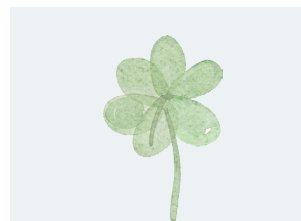
You can nicely protect your boundaries and well-being



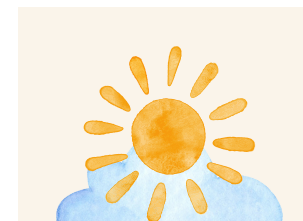
You are allowed to distance myself from people who don't respect your boundaries



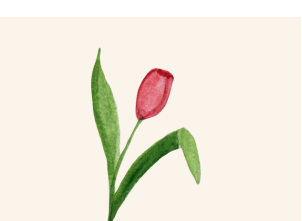
It's okay to turn off notifications on your phone to protect your mental space



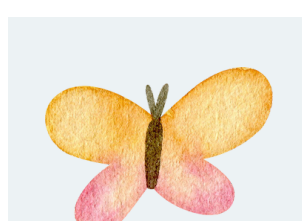
You can block or mute people online if they make you feel uncomfortable



You have the right to your own privacy



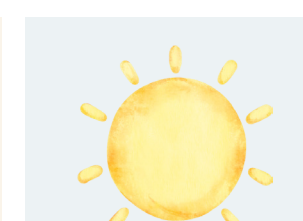
You are not responsible for managing how someone else feels



It's okay to tell your family when you need quiet time to yourself

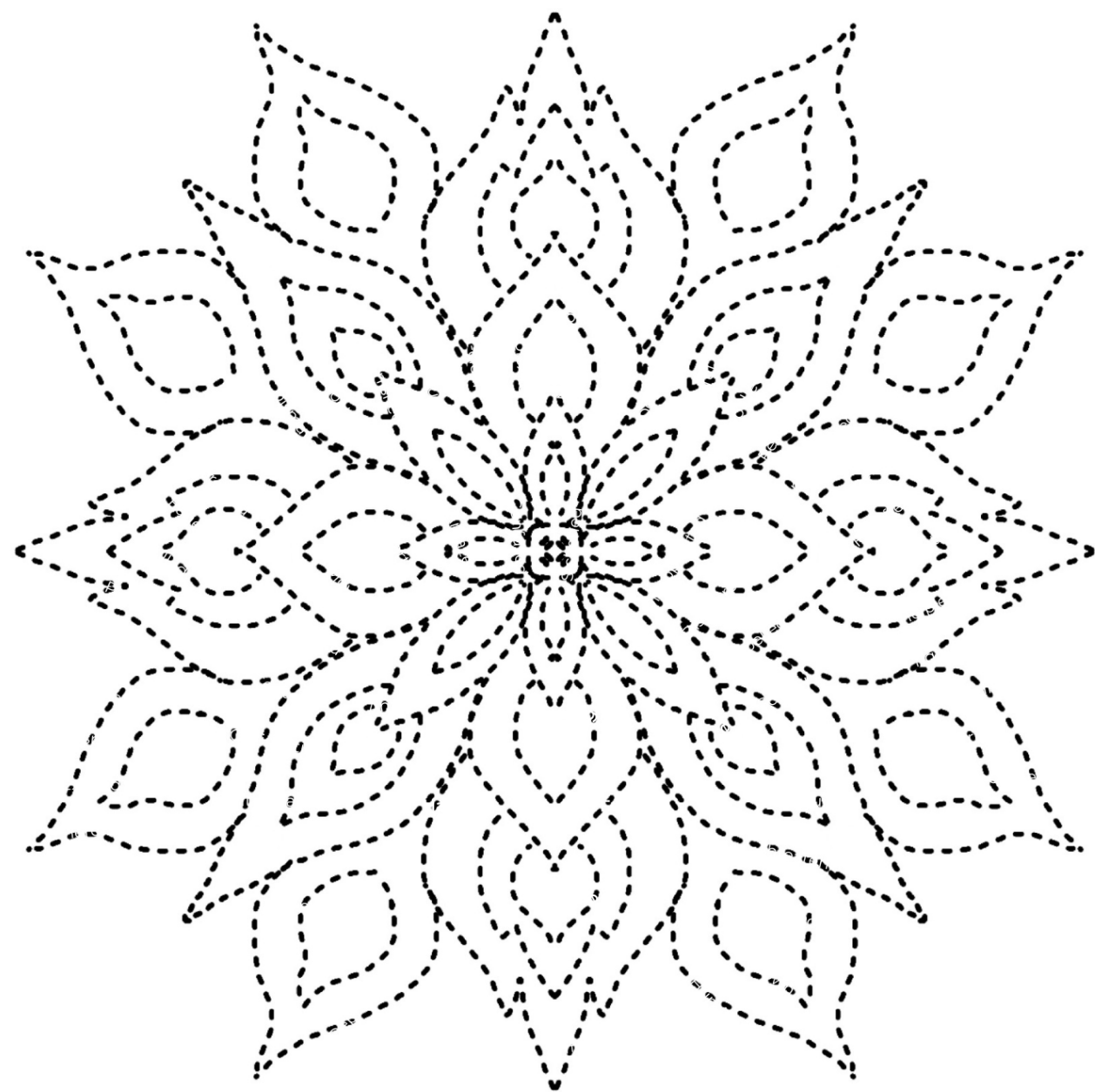


You don't have to pretend to be happy if you're not



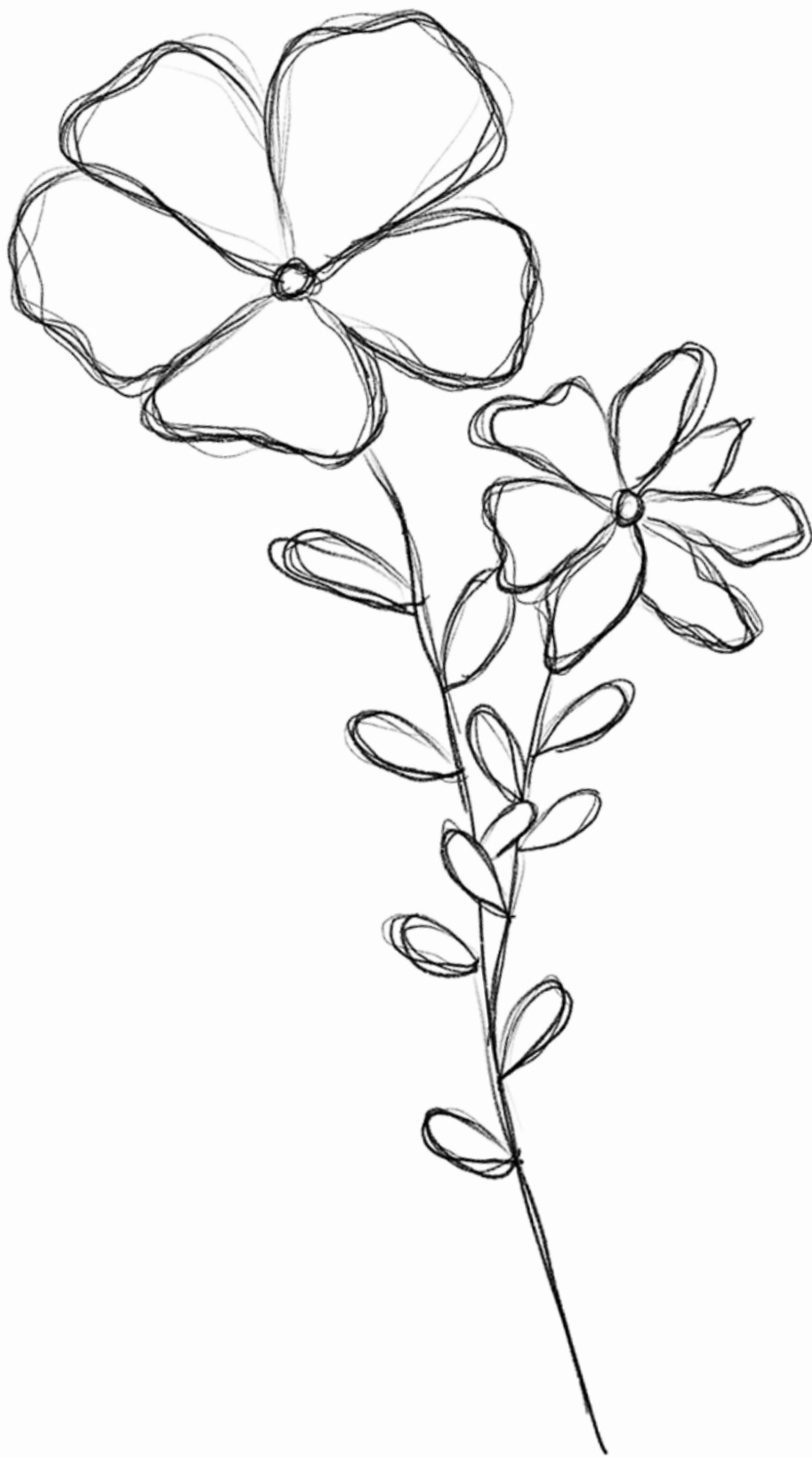
It's okay to tell someone if you don't feel up to talking right now

Colouring pages

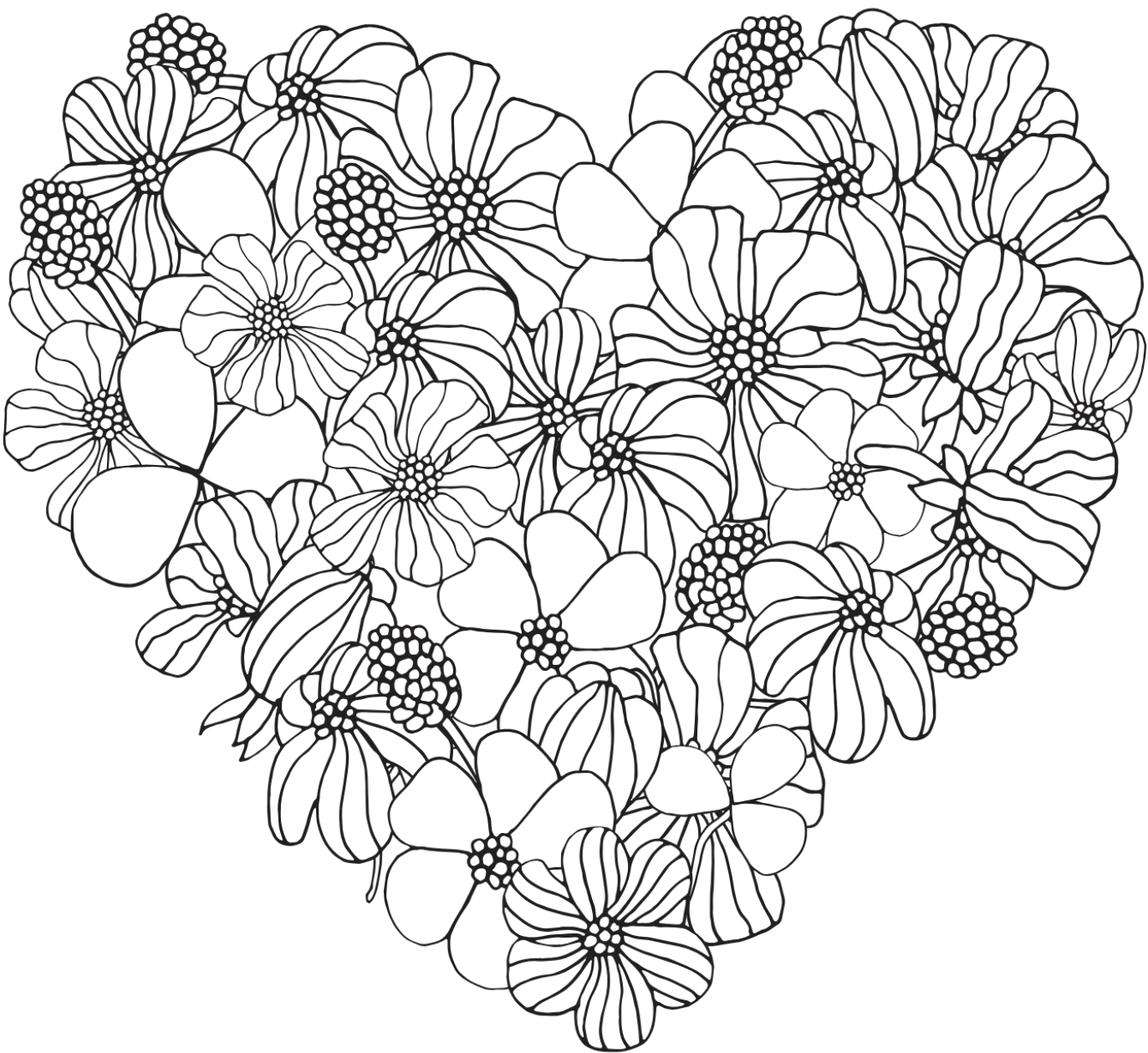
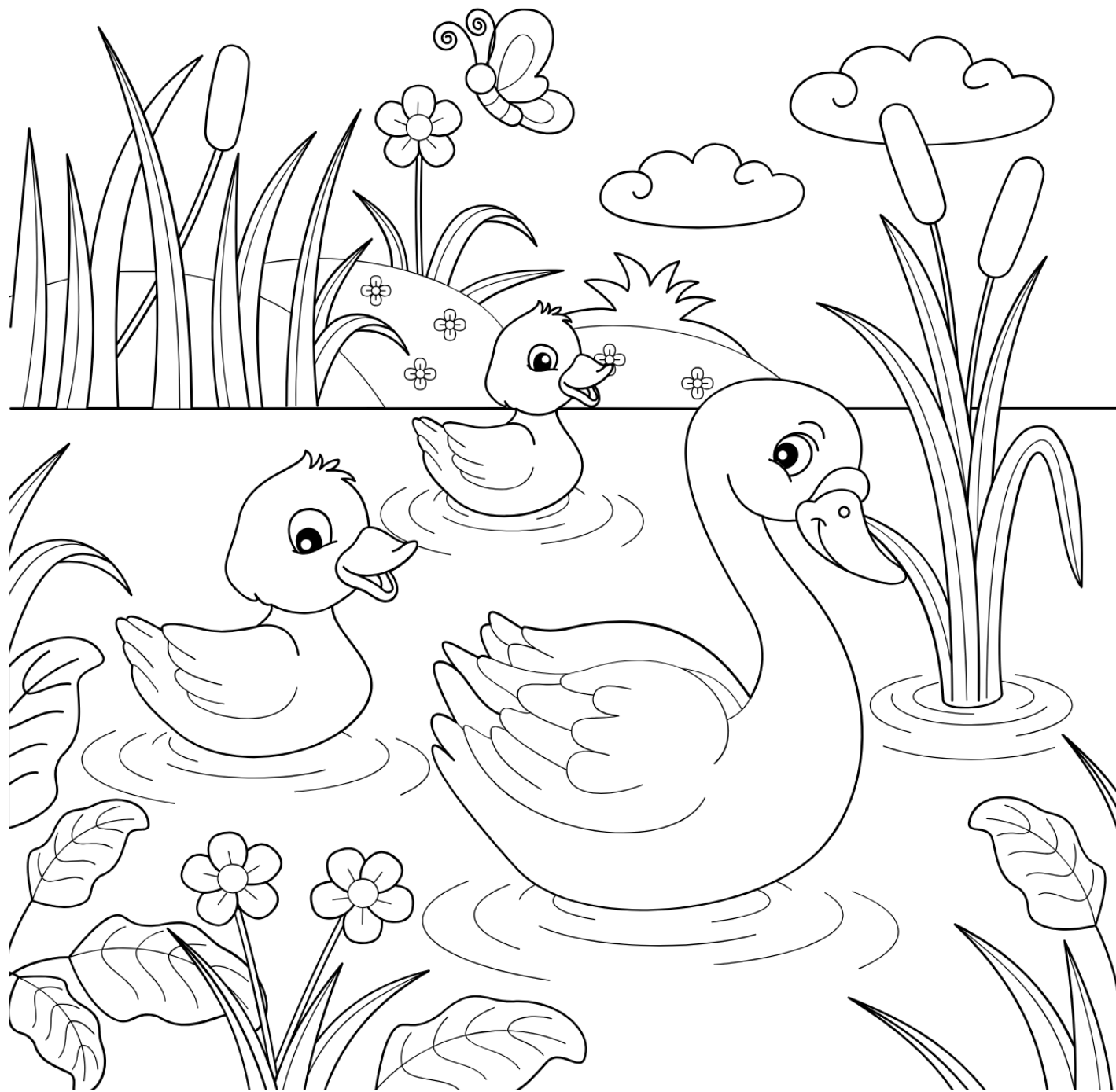


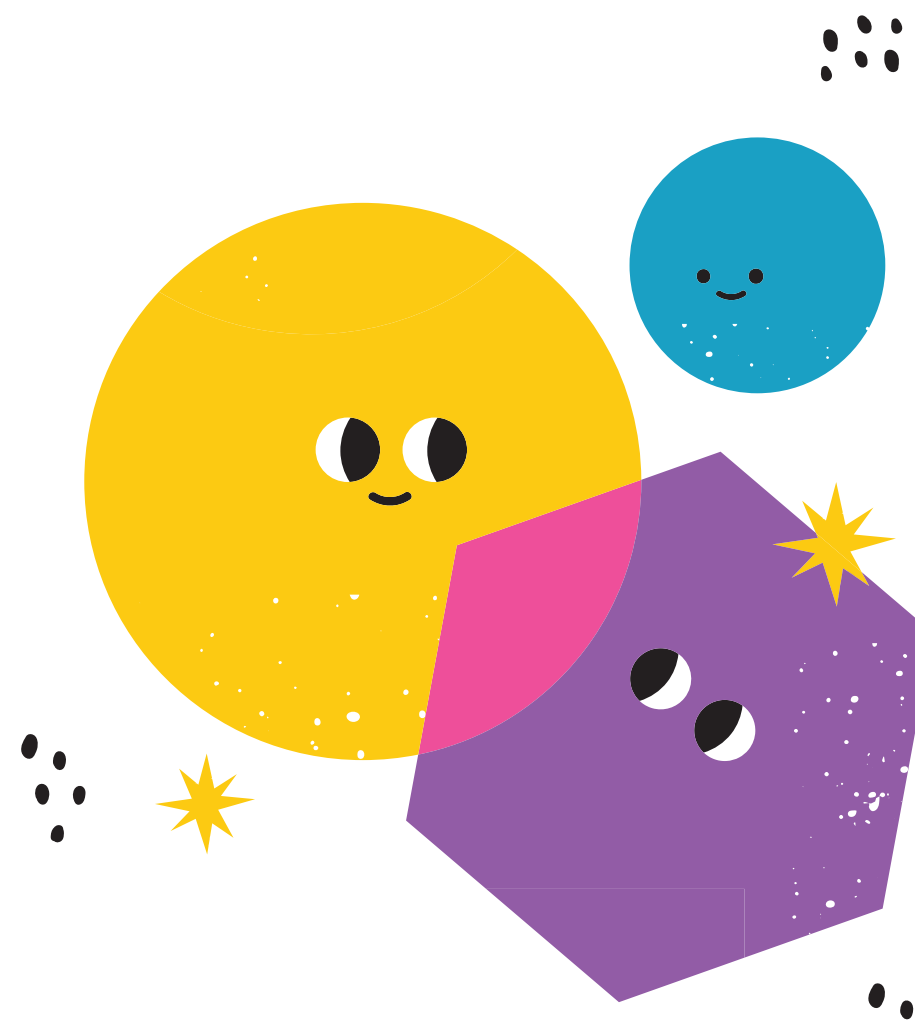
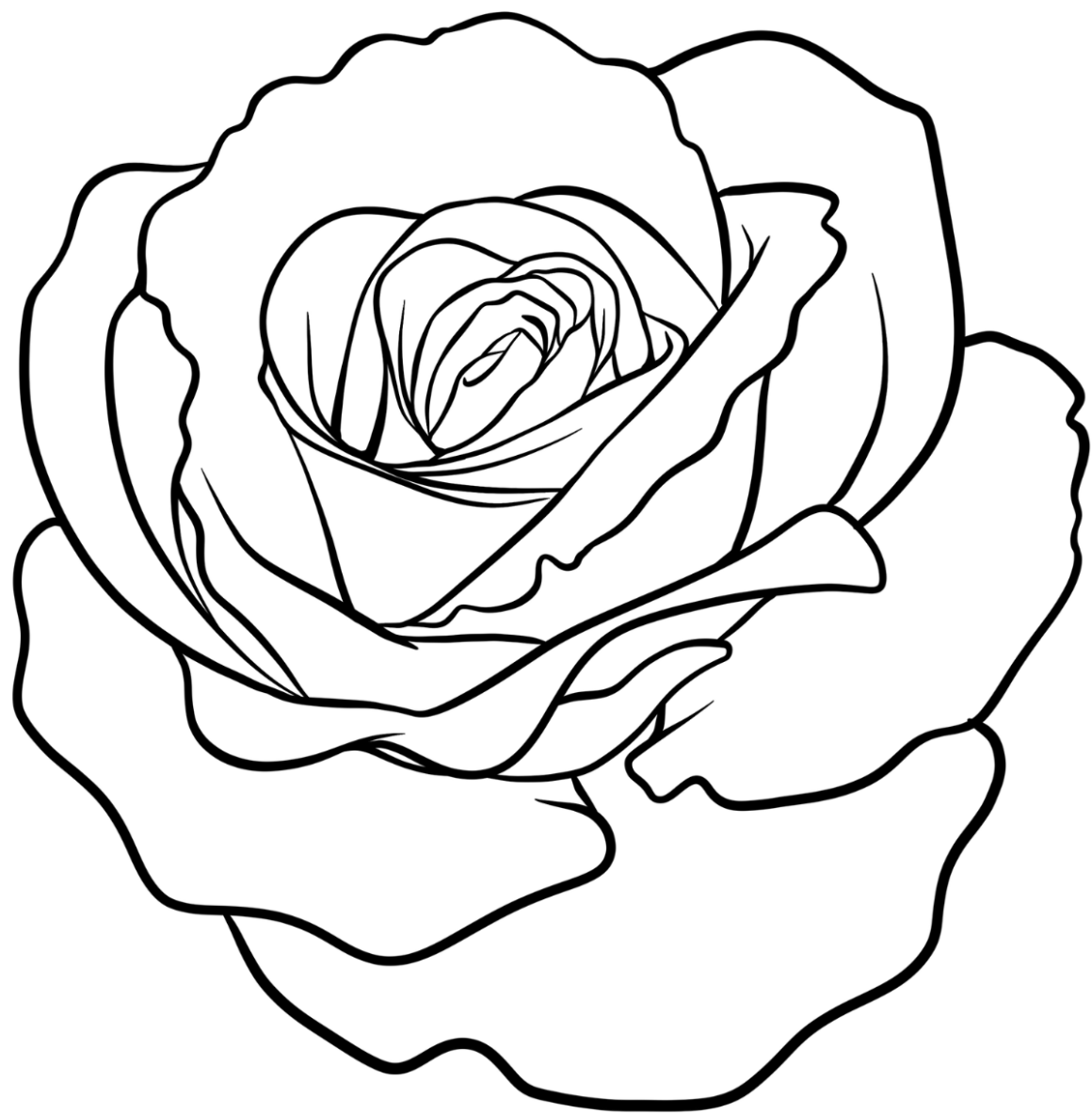
Well-being Crossword Answers

- | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 BOUNDARIES | 2 SELF CARE | 3 SUPPORT |
| 4 TASTE | 5 JOURNAL | 6 ANGER |
| 7 COUNSELLOR | 8 LOVE | 9 BREATHING |











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