

BSA Student Support Guide

Being a student can sometimes feel overwhelming. You might be dealing with stress, anxiety, low mood, problems at home, friendship issues, money worries, or pressure around exams and coursework. Whatever you are going through, **support is available** and asking for help is a strong and positive step.

This guide explains **what to do, step by step**, if you are struggling while studying at BSA, and where you can find **extra support in and around Bristol**.

Step-by-step: What to do if you are struggling

Step 1: Notice how you are feeling

If you are feeling stressed, anxious, low, tired, overwhelmed, or not yourself for more than a short period of time, it is important to listen to your body. We always recommend using regulation techniques first, such as:

1. Slow your breathing

When you feel anxious or stressed, your breathing often becomes fast and shallow.

Try this:

- Breathe in through your nose for **4 seconds**
- Hold for **4 seconds**
- Breathe out slowly through your mouth for **6 seconds**
- Repeat for 1–2 minutes

This can help your body calm down and send a signal that you are safe.

2. Ground yourself in the moment

If your thoughts feel loud or overwhelming, grounding techniques can help bring your focus back to the present.

Try the **5–4–3–2–1** technique:

- Name **5 things** you can see
- **4 things** you can feel
- **3 things** you can hear

- **2 things** you can smell
- **1 thing** you can taste

This can help slow racing thoughts.

3. Create a simple routine

When things feel out of control, a basic routine can help.

- Wake up and go to bed at roughly the same time
- Eat regular meals
- Set aside time for rest, college work, and something you enjoy

Even a small routine can help your day feel more manageable.

4. Break tasks into smaller steps

If work or life feels overwhelming:

- Break tasks into **small, achievable steps**
- Focus on **one thing at a time**
- Write a short to-do list (3 tasks is enough)
- Completing small tasks can help build motivation and reduce stress.

5. Move your body

Movement can help release stress and improve mood.

- Go for a short walk
- Stretch or do gentle exercise
- Put music on and move in a way that feels good

You don't need to do intense exercise for it to help.

6. Limit social media and screen time

Constant scrolling can increase anxiety and comparison.

- Try taking short breaks from your phone
- Avoid social media before bed

- Replace screen time with something calming, like music or reading

7. Get enough rest and sleep

Sleep plays a big role in emotional wellbeing.

- Try to go to bed at a similar time each night
- Avoid caffeine late in the evening
- Keep your room as calm and dark as possible

If sleep is difficult, speak to someone at BSA for support.

8. Express how you're feeling

Keeping feelings inside can make things feel heavier.

- Write in a journal
- Draw, paint, or make music
- Talk to someone you trust

There is no "right way" to express emotions.

9. Be kind to yourself

Struggling does not mean you are failing.

- Remind yourself that it's okay to have difficult days
- Try not to judge your feelings
- Celebrate small wins, even getting through the day

Step 2: Talk to someone you trust

If things feel unmanageable, or aren't improving, you do not have to deal with things on your own. This could be:

- A tutor or teacher
- A member of the office staff at BSA
- A friend or family member
- The mental health Lead at BSA - Lisa Wellsford
- If you are unsure who to speak to, any member of staff can help guide you to the

right support.

Step 3: Ask for support at BSA

BSA has support in place for students who are struggling. This may include:

- Emotional wellbeing support
- Safeguarding support
- Help with attendance, workload, or deadlines
- Signposting to external services

You can ask for support even if you are not sure what you need yet.

Step 4: Accept help and take small steps

Once support is in place, try to engage with it. This might feel difficult at first, but small steps can make a big difference. Support looks different for everyone, and it is okay to ask questions or say if something is not helping.

Step 5: Seek extra support if needed

Sometimes, support outside of college can also help. There are many organisations in Bristol that offer free, confidential support for young people.

Local support organisations in Bristol

Below are some trusted organisations that students may find helpful:

Off The Record (OTR) Bristol

Offers free mental health and wellbeing support for young people aged 11–25. This includes counselling, group support, and self-help resources.

Bristol Mind

Provides mental health support services, information, and advice. They offer groups, wellbeing courses, and one-to-one support.

CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)

Supports young people with more serious mental health difficulties. Referrals are usually made through a GP or professional.

Samaritans Bristol

Available 24/7 for anyone who needs to talk. You do not need to be in crisis to contact them. They offer confidential listening support.

Kooth

An online mental wellbeing service for young people. It includes chat support, forums, and self-help tools and is available outside of college hours.



If you are in immediate danger

If you feel unsafe or at risk of harming yourself or others:

- Call **999** in an emergency
- Go to A&E
- Contact **Samaritans** for immediate emotional support

Your safety is the most important thing.

Remember

- Asking for help is not a weakness
- You deserve support
- There are people who care and want to help
- You are not alone

If you are unsure where to start, **reach out to a member of staff at BSA** — they will help you take the next step.