A photograph of an outdoor basketball hoop. A basketball is suspended in the air, just above the hoop. The hoop is orange and the net is white. The background consists of dense green foliage and a clear sky. The overall tone is slightly desaturated with a greenish tint.

A Guide for Personal Success

About Us

Global Future is a think tank dedicated to using psychology to provide fearless and original insight into the challenges facing our times. We aim to guide leaders – from businesses to politics, arts and civil society – to ask bigger, deeper questions about how we can best serve our communities.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Global Future Partners for their insights and support with this report. We would also like to thank all the young people who enriched this research by sharing their views and time with us.

Notes From Authors and Partners



Akal Bains:

"Today, young people are growing up in a fast paced and highly pressurised system. With this report we seek to add to their psychological inventory by providing practical methods for navigating their transition into later life. A core part of our philosophy in writing this has been to ground the report in the realities of the modern world and what it takes to navigate it with a sense of self-motivation and confidence."



Sadie Levi:

"Over the past years, we've seen consistent reports that young people's mental health is in decline. It's clear that change is needed - not just to help young people cope, but to help them thrive. Combining psychological insight with personal stories - this guide offers practical actions to help young people build successful lives by finding a sense of purpose, by strengthening their intellectual, emotional and people energies."



Catherine Roche:

"We are delighted to partner with the Global Future Foundation on this practical and purposeful new resource. Children and young people are our future, and we want all children to thrive through having good mental health. At Place2Be, our Whole School Approach focuses on early intervention, helping children and young people to develop the skills and tools needed to navigate life's challenges with resilience and confidence. We hope this guide, informed by young people in Place2Be schools, is a helpful and practical resource that further aids young people to realise their potential as they prepare for life and the transition into the workplace."

Introduction

Growing up in today's world isn't easy. Life feels uncertain and the pace of change can be overwhelming. Indeed, the pressures and expectations placed upon young people are taking a toll with rising rates of anxiety, stress and burnout. One in five children and young people have a probable mental health condition and many continue to have these problems into adulthood¹. Further, in a survey² we conducted with 16–24-year-olds in Britain, we found that a majority (59%) of young people experience periods of bad emotional wellbeing, 'sometimes', 'often' or 'all of the time'.

It's clear something needs to change, and young people support this. 68% of the people we surveyed said they'd like more support with their mental health struggles. But this isn't just about coping or surviving – **it's about thriving**. To turn the tide on this mental health crisis – we need targeted mental health support, but we also need to equip young people with the tools to prosper in the modern world.

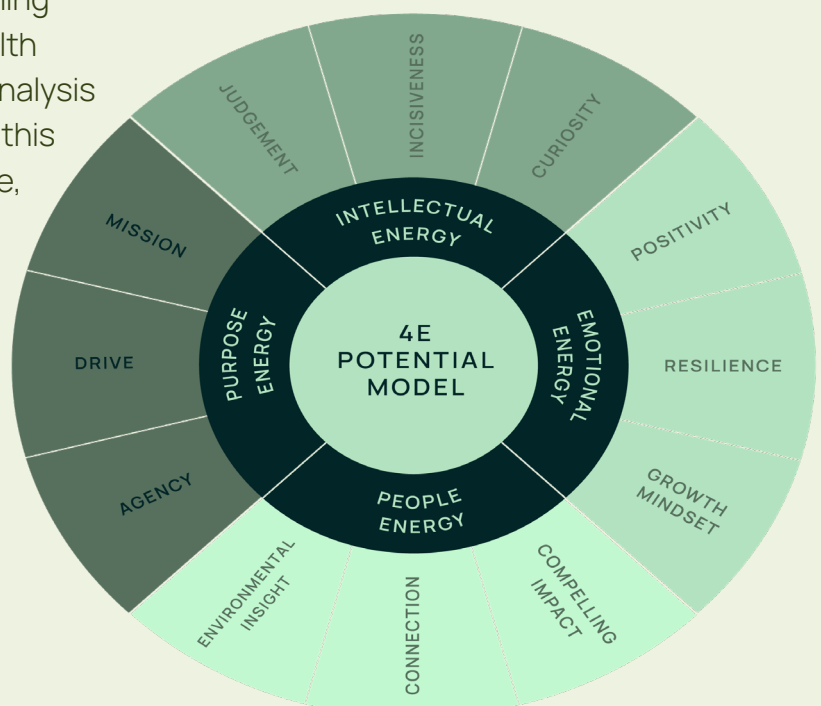
That's where this report comes in, combining the expertise of the children's mental health charity Place2Be with the psychological analysis of Global Future Foundation. Operating at this intersection, we offer best-practice advice, from those who intimately know the challenges young people are facing today, with the knowledge of those who, having worked with many of the leading FTSE 100 firms, understand the mindset

needed to flourish in the modern workplace.

Whether you're figuring out life after school or navigating the pressures of early adulthood, this guide offers practical, psychological tools to support your wellbeing and growth.

The structure of this guide follows the 'Four Energies Model' – a framework developed by our expert psychologists. In this model, we follow the principle that by nurturing your core purpose, intellectual, emotional and people energy- you can establish the foundation to thrive. Ultimately, we believe that by building these energies you will be able to better navigate the challenges life throws at you and make the most of the opportunities that come.

Keeping young people's voices at the centre, throughout the guide you'll find quotes from students at the schools Place2Be operates in, who had a direct role informing the actions that follow.



1. <https://www.place2be.org.uk/>

2. <https://globalfuturefoundation.com/reports/nothing-about-us-without-us/>

Purpose Energy

Purpose is something that grounds you - it is both a driver of success and a powerful safeguard against mental illness. Research shows³ that having a sense of purpose can reduce depression, stress, and anxiety⁴, significantly boosting well-being⁵ by giving you a hopeful sense of direction.

1. A healthy perspective on purpose

Purpose is important, it can give your life a sense of meaning and drive. But, when you place too many expectations on discovering your life's mission, you can experience purpose anxiety⁶. Follow what interests you, but let go of the idea that you need to discover your life's purpose right away. Trust the process and lose the assumption that everyone else has it all figured out- they don't!

2. What does success mean to you?

We know that good grades, job status and salary don't correlate perfectly with happiness or fulfilment. So, work on building up a more holistic understanding of what success means to you. When you have a clearer image of where you want to go, it is much easier to find a way to get there. Also, part of the goal should always be to enjoy the journey!¹⁰

Action

Focus on the things you are good at, that you find interesting and build from there. Your 'purpose' isn't necessarily some grand undertaking - but is something found in the things you're naturally drawn towards or enjoy. Also, finding purpose doesn't need to be a solitary task. Have conversations with your peers or with someone you look up to. (Useful resources: *Filling the Void*⁷ & *Meaning Inc.*⁸ & *Ikigai*⁹)

'There's a lot of pressure, from quite a young age to figure out what direction you want to take. Making those decisions can feel quite daunting. I've found it helpful to speak to my friends, parents and teachers. Figuring it out together can make everything feel a bit easier.' - Student at Place2Be School

Action

When you envision success- don't just think about grandiose goals and top-level job titles, think: What do I want my life to look like? How do I want to spend my time? What things are important to me? What motivates me on difficult days? Success includes making time for things that make you feel good.

3. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10566624/>

4. <https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/purpose-in-life-less-stress-better-mental-health>

5. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4779362/>

6. <https://www.kornferry.com/insights/this-week-in-leadership/the-rise-of-purpose-anxiety>

7. <https://globalfuturefoundation.com/reports/filling-the-void-purpose/>

8. <https://globalfuturefoundation.com/books/meaning-inc/>

9. <https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/434703/ikigai-by-miralles-hector-garcia-and-francesc/9781786330895>

10. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/a-global-lens/202310/how-do-you-want-to-feel-along-the-way>

3. *Developing Confidence*

Young people - who are doing new things, embarking on new journeys - often struggle with imposter syndrome. It is important for your wellbeing and performance that you find a way to not let this anxiety hold you back. Remember your strengths, make note of your successes, understand that there's a reason you've been chosen to be there - you have the skills, so don't be afraid to take agency and feel confident.

Action

To begin, take stock. Remind yourself of what you bring to the table. Don't let your self-doubt hold you back - when you act with confidence you are more likely to internalise that feeling. Begin by trying to change the narratives you tell yourself - the mind is powerful in changing self-perception. Put yourself forward for new things, ask for help when you need it and internalise praise when it comes.



Intellectual Energy

In a world that is dynamic and ever-changing, intellectual energy is vital. By cultivating critical thinking¹¹ and curiosity¹², research shows you can enhance both mental clarity and emotional well-being, equipping yourself with the tools you need to thrive in the face of adversity.

1. *Lean into your interests*

Reflect on your strengths, identify the things you are drawn to and lean into the academic/ career paths that align with your interests. Pay attention to activities that put you in a 'flow state' where you feel so engaged and focused, you lose track of time. Knowing your skills and being able to play to your strengths will build your confidence and success - at work and in life more broadly.

2. *Build your curiosity*

Remain curious, keep an open mind and don't be afraid to take on challenges that put you outside your comfort zone- you may discover a new talent or passion. Where curiosity helps you feel energised it improves wellbeing; where it encourages an appetite for new challenges it builds success. By adopting a curious mindset, you will allow space for personal growth- improving your creative and problem-solving skills.

Action

Deciding which path to follow can feel daunting. Take time to research the reality of working in your chosen sector - what tasks do people do in their day-to-day? How does this align with your skills and interests. With this, think about who your role models are and try asking them for some mentoring or guidance. Once you have some more clarity, be brave and follow your curiosity.

Action

Seek-out and embrace new learning opportunities, whether that be enrolling in a new course or completing work experience or trying a new hobby. You might discover a skill or find inspiration in unexpected areas. Also, be selective with where you direct your energy - it's important not to overload yourself with a hundred new things - try one at a time, focus your attention and make decisions in a sustainable way.

'I had the opportunity to organise a fundraising campaign at school. Being able to lead a project, that really aligns with the things I care about and see it through from start to finish- was incredibly rewarding.' Student at Place2Be School

11. <https://www.thevirtualtrainingteam.com/articles/intellectual-curiosity-the-power-of-the-inquisitive-mind/>

12. <https://www.alexismaida.com/dimensions/intellectual-wellness-focused-curiosity>

3. Clear manageable task-setting

Task setting boosts your intellectual energy as it forces you to prioritise your time, strengthening your intellectual muscles by enhancing your decision making and judgement skills. This practice also boosts your wellbeing, improving your sense of achievement and helping you stay focused. We know that this small habit can have transformative effects- every time you tick something off your to-do list, you experience a boost of positive energy- build this into your everyday and grow your sense of fulfilment. (Read more on this in the book- Atomic Habits¹³)

Action

Each morning or each week, write yourself a realistic and achievable to-do list. Break down larger projects into smaller, actionable steps to avoid feeling overwhelmed and create a structured plan to manage your time. When you have a particular deadline - make yourself an action plan; when you decide on a goal - map out how you're going to get there. Think about how AI tools might help you create a schedule that effectively prioritises your time to meet your deadlines.



13. <https://jamesclear.com/atomic-habits>

Emotional Energy

Given the widespread impact of poor mental health, it is crucial that we actively invest in our emotional strength. Research shows¹⁴ that emotional resilience improves wellbeing, it helps us cope with stress and bounce back from difficult times.

1. Prioritise your physical health

Mental and physical health are deeply interconnected. When we neglect our physical wellbeing, our ability to manage stress and anxiety is significantly weakened. We know that when anxieties stack-up they become overwhelming. To build against this, we can stack the solutions – establishing a better baseline wellbeing. These techniques help us approach life with enthusiasm and better cope during stressful periods.

'For me, running is a form of mindfulness. It forces me to be present and allows me to clear my head' - Student at Place2Be School

2. Build your mental resilience

Challenges arise in a range of different forms, from everyday nuisances to more acute problems. Often these issues are amplified, and sometimes even entirely created by our mind's tendency to overthink. It is important to recognise that your mind has evolved for survival¹⁵, not to have a positive sense of wellbeing. By slowing down your thinking and coming into the present moment you can both improve your mental focus and reduce anxiety.

Action

Tackle anxiety on multiple fronts: Make sure you are getting enough sleep (make time before bed to unwind), eating nutritious meals (try a weekly meal-plan) and staying physically active (even if this is just walking more). Think about where you could do more and create a realistic plan to build these things into your day. It takes just 40 days to build a new habit- and while it might be a challenge at first, setting a healthy routine can be incredibly rewarding!

Action

Make time to practice mindfulness – whether this be breathing exercises, yoga, meditation – or simply making time to walk and be alone with your thoughts. Make a deliberate effort to positively reframe challenges and try to be more present in everyday life. Take some time – away from screens – to be outside in nature¹⁶; all these things can help you decompress and feel more grounded.

14. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10911335/>

15. <https://www.sciencestrength.com/food-happiness/2022/1/4/we-didnt-evolve-to-be-happy-we-evolved-to-survive>

16. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/nature-how-connecting-nature-benefits-our-mental-health>

3. Cultivate a growth mindset

Psychology shows that those who adopt a positive growth-oriented mindset are more likely to overcome setbacks and achieve positive outcomes. Here, a growth mindset – that focuses on progress over perfectionism – allows you to build your resilience and optimism, helping you view challenges as opportunities to learn.

Action

Practice reframing challenges as learning opportunities- Change your mindset from 'I can't do this' to 'I don't know how to do this yet'. When you face a set-back, remind yourself that all the most successful people have experienced (and overcome) failures. Listen to the podcast: How to fail, and remind yourself- that 'failure' is all part of the process. Lastly, keeping a journal can help you practice self-reflection and remind you of all the obstacles you've already overcome!



People Energy

People energy – which includes social connections, empathy, and support – is a cornerstone of well-being. Research¹⁷ consistently shows that strong social relationships are linked to better mental and physical health. Ultimately, where feelings of loneliness are widespread, there is a clear need to invest in your people energy.

1. Nurture your social health

Humans are sociable beings, and we know that social relationships (or a lack of) have significant impacts on our health and wellbeing. We know that young people are struggling – almost a third of those surveyed said they feel lonely often or all the time. It is vital that we spend time nurturing our social health.

2. Check in and reach out

Talking about your feelings can also be incredibly liberating; it can have a positive impact on your wellbeing and the wellbeing of others. By having emotionally sensitive conversations you not only receive support, but you also help to break down stigma and establish a culture of open understanding.

Action

Relationships require time and energy- they require investment. Map out your social network - it can be helpful to physically draw out the circles of people around you. Think about who energises you and direct your efforts there. If you feel like you want to expand your network, actively seek out ways to meet new people- whether this be saying hello to your neighbour or making time for an old friend, joining a run club, a book club, or trying a new hobby- this can help you establish a sense of community.

Action

Take the time to check-in with yourself and with others. Take stock - notice how you're feeling. Friendships are all about supporting each other. Make an effort to reach out to someone you know is having a difficult time and don't be afraid to lean on your support system.

'It's important to have people you feel safe opening up to. Friends can be really good people to talk to, they may be going through a similar thing and that makes you feel like they really get it. But also, it's important to set some boundaries, and know when it's time to go and see a counsellor' - Student at Place2Be school

17. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3150158/>

3. *Managing social media*

Social media brings us closer to people far away, but it can make us more distant from the people who are closest to us. While social media can be a fun way to stay in touch with friends, it can also drive comparison, dissatisfaction and isolation. One in three young people in Britain believe the costs of social media outweigh the benefits, and 64% say they would like to use it less – So, how can we better-manage the costs and benefits?

Action

Use social media to connect with people, to make plans, to learn and to laugh. Try not to compare yourself to others – be it on Instagram or LinkedIn – remind yourself that social media is never the full picture. Finally, try to limit your use – this might mean taking time offline, setting time-limits on apps or reducing your brightness to make your phone less addictive.

