



Pocket Guide to Wellbeing



Recognising stress

This manual is for anyone who is exhausted, tense or tired as a result of their mood. The skills in this manual are based on a tried and tested type of therapy which focuses on the role of unhelpful thoughts and behaviours. To ensure you get the most out of this manual it is best to learn and practice the skills in your own time.

Although you may be able to use this manual without any support, in the same way as having your own personal trainer you might find it useful to be coached by a trained professional. A specialist therapist can support you in various ways, e.g. via a course, email/online support, or by telephone/face to face sessions. They can also advise you on how to overcome common obstacles in applying the skills in this manual. The usual way to access our service is via a referral from your GP or a self referral through giving us a call or going on our website.

Anxiety

Being on edge

Trouble relaxing

Getting annoyed

Worrying

Low mood

Problems sleeping and eating

Moving or speaking more slowly

Not enjoying things

Difficulty concentrating

Thinking you've failed

Website: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/>

Video modules: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/talkplus-video-modules/>

Guided self-help booklets: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/guidedselfhelp/>

**NOT FIRING
ON ALL
CYLINDERS?**



Problem solving



Many people struggle with being preoccupied about problems that on the face of it appear to be quite small. Although it's very common to try to deal with everyday concerns by keeping busy or thinking about other things, you may have found being even more anxious or depressed about having lots of unresolved problems. The most useful method is to resolve one problem at a time by applying the following steps:

1. **Write down one problem**
2. **Write down various solutions**
3. **Note the pros and cons of each solution**
4. **Choose the best solution**
5. **Make an action plan**
6. **Carry out the plan**
7. **Review the results**

See our 'problem solving' video at: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/talkplus-video-modules/> - this video is located within both the 'depression' and 'worry' sections

See our 'problem solving' booklet at: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/guidedselfhelp/>

Five Ways to Wellbeing: Give

...and live longer. Offering support to others is associated with reduced mortality rates. Do something nice for a friend, or even a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. It can be incredibly rewarding and will create connections with the people around you.

Challenging thoughts



Some people find that how they feel, feeling down for example, can cause a negative outlook. In turn negative thoughts can makes us feel even worse. Feeling depressed can lead to thinking how we have failed in the past. Feeling anxious can lead to having more concerns about the future. Cognitive restructuring is an effective evidence-based treatment because it helps you to develop the skill of thinking about things in a more balanced and realistic way. We can do this by keeping a thought diary and writing down:

1. **Our level of stress, 0-100%**
2. **The negative thoughts when we are stressed**
3. **What facts support negative thoughts? What facts support the opposite?**
4. **A thought that takes all of the facts into account**
5. **Re-rate our stress levels, 0-100%**

It can also be helpful to consider the act of 'thinking' as a behaviour, i.e. we can choose to think or not think, how long we think about something for and what we think about (or focus on) - when we are stuck in our head, do we need to switch off for a bit or change our focus?

See our 'STOP technique', 'unhelpful thinking habits' and 'challenging unhelpful thinking' videos at: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/talkplus-video-modules/> - these videos are under 'depression'

See our 'cognitive restructuring' booklet at: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/guidedselfhelp/>

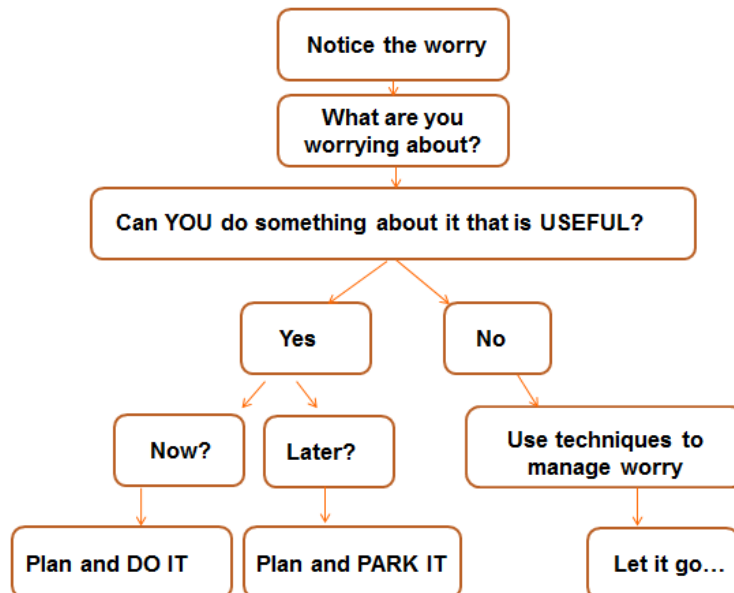
Five Ways to Wellbeing: Take Notice

...and savour the moment. Be aware of your feelings and the world around you. 8 to 12 weeks of practicing this curiosity has been shown to enhance well-being for several years. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

Reducing over-thinking



The act of 'thinking' can also be considered a behaviour, i.e. we can choose to think or not think, how long we think about something for and what we think about (or focus on). When we are stuck in our head, do we need to switch off for a bit or change our focus?



See our 'worry tree' and 'worry time' videos at: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/talkplus-video-modules/> - these videos are under the 'worry' section

See our 'worry management' booklet at: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/guidedselfhelp/>

Five Ways to Wellbeing: Connect

Connect with people around you: your family, friends and colleagues from work, school, sport team or army. Regardless of your age, building and maintaining these associations will improve your well-being.

Confronting fears



Avoiding specific situations that you are afraid of can mean that you continue to feel anxious; escaping from a situation can relieve your anxiety temporarily but avoiding those situations over and over again can make it even more frightening for you to experience that situation in the future.

Exposure therapy is a treatment that reduces anxiety through habituation; habituation is where your anxiety reduces naturally even when you remain in a feared situation. For this to work effectively you need to...

1. **Face situations that make you feel anxious step-by-step.**
2. **Allow yourself to feel the fear without any distractions.**
3. **Stay in the situation until your anxiety has reduced by half.**
4. **Experience the same situation repeatedly to reinforce your progress**

When we are ready we can then move on to the next most feared situation.

See our 'avoidance and safety behaviours' and 'graded exposure' videos at: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/talkplus-video-modules/> - these videos are located under 'anxiety'

See our 'graded exposure' booklet at: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/guidedselfhelp/>

Five Ways to Wellbeing: Keep learning

Set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things is not only good fun but will also make you more confident. Your wellbeing is strengthened by meeting self-generated goals that are in tune with your values.

Getting going



A lot of people find that feeling low is kept going by being less active. Although it's easier to do less when you don't have as much energy the downside of putting things off is that problems can become harder to deal with, and you might be missing out on leisure activities that could lift your mood. We can essentially end up losing momentum...

Research shows that people can improve their wellbeing by meeting up with friends and 'doing stuff' (playing games or sports, sharing a joke). As doing less tends to happen over a period of time most people find it helpful to start doing things again gradually using the following steps:

1. List any leisure activities or everyday tasks you are finding difficult to do
2. Rewrite this list in order of difficulty
3. On a weekly diary add a small number of the easiest activities, including the first step of anything that is urgent
4. Complete each task on your diary, and gradually add more activities from your list each week

See our 'behavioural activation' and 'activities' videos at: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/talkplus-video-modules/> which are located within the 'depression' section

See our 'behavioural activation' booklet at: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/guidedselphelp/>

Five Ways to Wellbeing: Be Active

Whether hiking or fishing, riding a bike, playing a game or dancing, discover a physical activity that suits your mobility and fitness. Even a short amount of exercise can improve your mood.

Recharging



Good quality sleep is essential for keeping the body operating at optimum efficiency, and if your body is well looked after then you are more likely to achieve all the things you need to do each day (including some of the previous suggestions in here).

When we have been struggling with a sleep problem for a long time we have often searched online or asked for tips to help us sleep. Therefore it may be that you have tried one or more of the rules below, however it is important to try them all simultaneously, and for a lengthy period of time, to realise potential benefits.

1. **Avoid these things before going to sleep:** Caffeine 4 hrs before; nicotine 1 hr before; and alcohol around bedtime, it may help you fall asleep but sleep will be poorer quality
2. **Do not go to bed too hungry or too full**
3. **Engage in regular exercise, however not for 2 hours before going to sleep**
4. **The bedroom needs to be:** Calm and tidy; a comfortable temperature; and quiet and dark during the night
5. **Keep the bedroom for sex and sleep, avoid the following activities in bed:** Reading, eating, using electronic devices or watching TV
6. **Set regular times to go to bed and to get up each day.**

See our 'getting better sleep' video at: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/talkplus-video-modules/> which is located within the 'people with long-term conditions' section (although relevant for everyone)

See our 'CBT for insomnia' booklet at: <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/guidedselfhelp/>

Five Ways to Wellbeing: Summary

Give to others, take notice of the world around you, connect with people, keep learning new things and be active. These ways of leading your life will lead to a greater sense of wellbeing.

Employment issues



Difficulties with employment can create a huge amount of stress for us, whether that be problems with finding work or problems within your current job. Richmond Fellowship work alongside us at TalkPlus and they have a long and highly successful track record in employment services. Their employment advisors focus on an individual's strengths and opportunities and reflect on what someone can do rather than on what they can't.

They offer the following support:

1. **Individualised action planning with advisors who have specific training in order to recognise and work with mental health problems**
2. **A person-centred approach which identifies individuals' skills, values and interests**
3. **Employment preparation courses, assertiveness training and help to develop IT skills**
4. **Support in job searching, CV preparation, completing applications, preparing for interviews**
5. **Advice on disclosure of mental health issues to employers and, where appropriate, we work with an individual and their employer to provide ongoing support in their work place**

If you feel that this could be relevant to you please ask us for more information. We can discuss your concerns with you and consider whether or not a referral to this service might be suitable.

Accessed via TalkPlus - please discuss with your therapist

General lifestyle

Physical exercise is consistently associated with positive mood; individuals who exercise fall asleep faster, sleep longer and more deeply than those who don't. Exercise can help us to feel happier and less anxious, think more clearly, have more energy, better concentration and better sleep, reduce the chance of physical illness, lose weight and live longer. You could consider taking part in your local park run event <https://www.parkrun.org.uk/>



It is also important to consider the effect of what we eat and drink on our wellbeing

Looking after your gut

Sometimes your gut can reflect how you feel emotionally; if you are stressed or anxious this can make your gut slow down or speed up. For healthy digestion include fibre, fluid and regular exercise.

Caffeine

Caffeine is a stimulant, it will give you a quick burst of energy but then may make you feel anxious or depressed, disturb your sleep or give you withdrawal symptoms if you stop suddenly. Quick tips – switch to decaf tea/coffee and zero sugar drinks.

See the following website for more advice on food and mood:

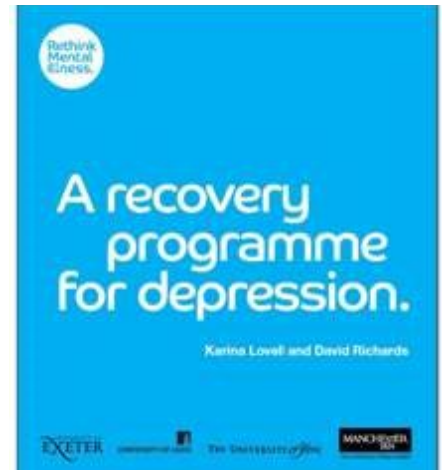
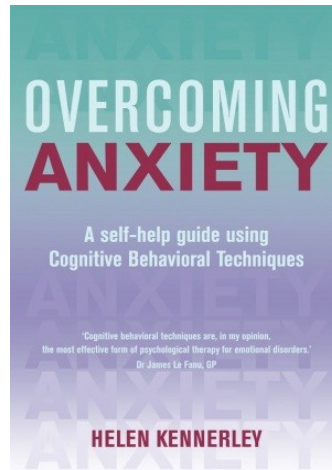
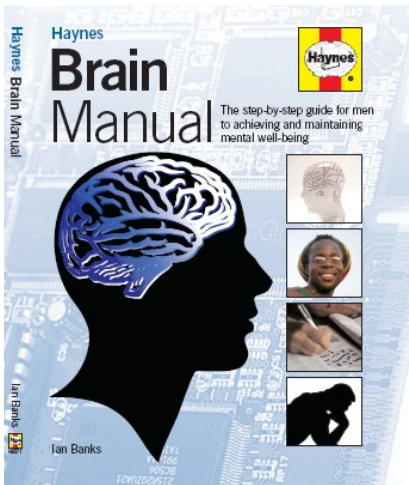
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/food-and-mood/#.WkuZ4lVI-Uk>

Alcohol

Our brains rely on a delicate balance of chemicals and processes. Alcohol is a depressant – meaning it disrupts our thoughts, feelings and actions. For more info visit: <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/>

If you have a long term condition please see <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/long-term-condition-video-modules>. Information is available about coping/resilience, pacing, getting better sleep, worry and problem solving for people with a long term condition

Further Information



Health Advice, Royal College of Psychiatrists, www.rcpsych.ac.uk

Centre of Clinical Interventions, www.cci.health.wa.gov.au

Five Ways of Wellbeing, New Economics Foundation,
www.neweconomics.org/projects/entry/five-ways-to-well-being

Anxiety BC, www.anxietybc.com

Moodzone, NHS Choices www.nhs.uk

Self-Help Guides, NHS www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic

Choice and Medication www.choiceandmedication.org/sabp

General lifestyle www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/



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