

A WORKBOOK FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

A creative self help guide to staying healthy and happy.



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Mental health and wellbeing is about how we think and feel and how we cope with day-to-day life. Good mental health and wellbeing helps us enjoy life and cope well with life's challenges.

In the same way we all have physical health, we all have mental health and we need to look after it.

In order to maintain a healthy sense of wellbeing, we can benefit from achieving a healthy balance across all parts of our life. To create a healthy balance allow time for activities which give you a sense of achievement, connection with others, and enjoyment. These activities affect our brain chemistry and can improve our mental health and wellbeing.

This easy to use workbook contains lots of useful information and activities to support you to stay healthy and happy.



10 WAYS

TO HELP IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

There are small things we can all do that make a big difference to our mental health if we do them regularly. Try building the following 'ten top tips' into your regular routine. There is more information on each one throughout this workbook.

1. Eat well and drink sensibly
2. Keep physically active
3. Ensure you get enough sleep
4. Take time to do the things you enjoy
5. Keep in touch with others
6. Take a break
7. Talk about your feelings
8. Accept and value who you are
9. Care for others
10. Don't be afraid to ask for help

For more information on these please visit:
www.nhsaaa.net/better-health/

Eat well and drink sensibly

Eating a healthy diet can do a lot to improve your mood and sense of wellbeing. Use these tips to start making positive changes to the way you eat.

Getting your 5-a-day

We all know we're meant to get five portions of fruit and vegetables every day, but it can seem like a lot. Try making some small changes, like chopping a banana into your cereal, or adding some vegetables into your spaghetti bolognese. Even a glass of orange juice counts, so it can be easier than you think.

Learning to cook

Cooking from scratch is a really healthy way to eat, as there will be less salt and more vitamins than in most ready meals and processed food. And learning how to do it can be fun. Watch some cooking programmes, get a recipe book or find some inspiration online and give it a go.

Eating breakfast

Your granny was right, breakfast really is the most important meal of the day! Eating breakfast means you'll also be less likely to reach for unhealthy snacks before lunch. Choosing wholemeal toast, cereals or porridge helps to keep your energy levels up through the whole morning.






Sitting down with other people

Families who eat together are more likely to sort out problems and enjoy each other's company. Whether it's with the kids, your partner, or people from work, being sociable at mealtimes can be a good thing.

Cutting down on tea, coffee and 'energy' drinks

These all contain caffeine - try cutting down if you feel anxious, panicky, or sleepy.

Use this daily checklist to tick off when you are able to do each habit.

		M	T	W	T	F	S	S
	<u>Eat 5 fruit & veg</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>Drink 8 glasses of water</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>Be mindful of caffeine intake</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>Share a meal with someone</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<u>Cook a meal from scratch</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Keep physically active

We know that being active is good for us. But what activity, how often, and where?

Well the good news is that you don't have to join a gym. Walking briskly for a total of 30 minutes, 5 days a week, will not only reduce stress levels, but will also help reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

You don't have to do it all at once either. Three lots of 10 minutes works just as well, and makes it easy to fit into everyday life.

Friendly stroll

Going for a walk with a friend is a great way to catch up and be active.

Joining a walking group is fun, find one near you at www.pathsforall.org.uk

Get out at lunchtime

Why not go to the shops or park at lunchtime? The walk will also make you feel more awake in the afternoon.

Join in with the kids

Chasing your kids around the garden or having a kick-about in the park is good for you and fun for them.

Similarly, you might also enjoy playing with pets, especially in the outdoors.





Green spaces

Research shows getting out to a green space can boost your mood. It's great for your kids too. So whether it's a walk round your local park or a climb up a hill, go for green!

Make it part of your daily life

You can be more active by making small changes to your routine. Try taking the stairs instead of the lift, or park the car further away when you go to the shops.

Use the table below to track your mood before and after being active to see if you can notice any changes.

 Day/time	 Mood before	 Activity	 Mood after

Ensure you get enough sleep

Good sleep is essential but when we're feeling stressed, low or anxious our sleep can often be one of the first areas of our life where we notice a change.

Here are some top tips to get to sleep and sleep better.

Keep regular sleep hours

Making a habit of going to bed when you feel tired and getting up at roughly the same time helps teach your body to sleep better.

Create a restful environment

Dark, quiet and cool environments generally make it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep. Try turning off electronic devices and artificial blue light well before bedtime.

Move more, sleep better

Being active during the day can help you sleep better. Just remember to avoid vigorous activity before bedtime if it affects your sleep.

Confront sleeplessness

If you are lying awake unable to sleep, do not force it. Get up and do something relaxing for a bit, and return to bed when you feel sleepier.

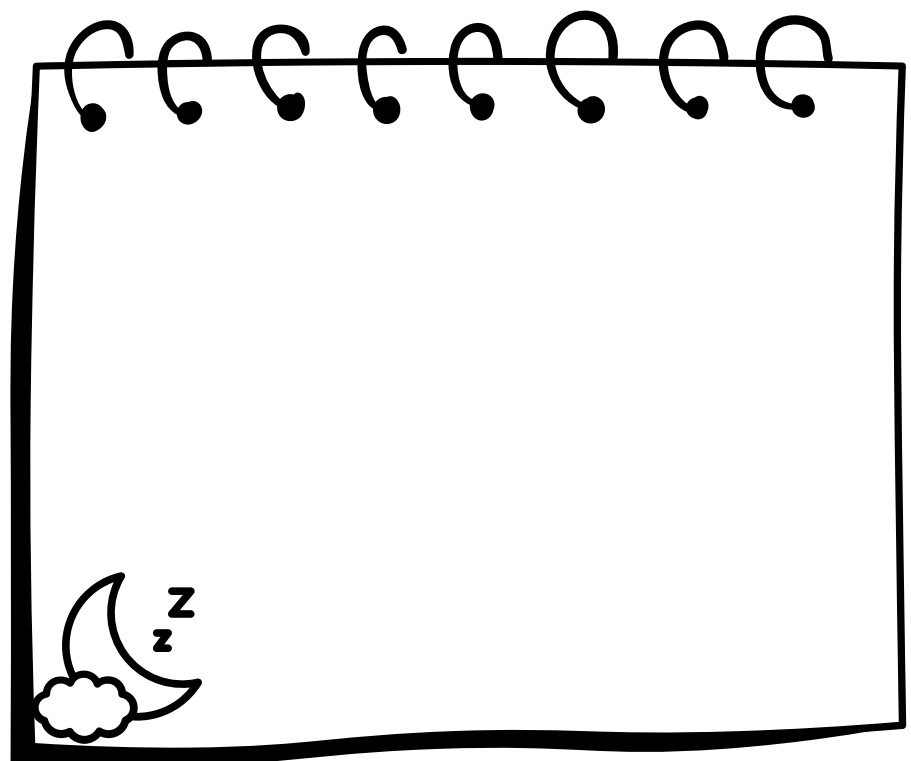
Write down your worries

If you often lie awake worrying about tomorrow, make it part of your daily routine before bed to write a list for the next day. This can help put your mind at rest.

Put down the pick-me-ups

Caffeine and alcohol can stop you falling asleep and prevent deep sleep. Try to cut down on alcohol and avoid caffeine close to bedtime.

You can use this space to write down any worries or thoughts that might keep you awake.



Take time to do the things you enjoy

In the same way we look after our physical health every day, we should look after our mental health and wellbeing by taking time to do the things we enjoy every day.

Think of some activities that you enjoy. This can be anything at all, whether it is a hobby, an activity or a task. Remember to review these regularly and take some time to try some new Daily Wellbeing Tools.

Use the template below to write down your personal Daily Wellbeing Tools and try to remember to do them every day.

My Daily Wellbeing Tools

1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

!

If you need some inspiration...

- Exercise
- Baking or cooking
- Walking
- Create a daily 'to do' list
- Learn a new skill
- Gardening
- Colouring or craft
- Yoga
- Have a 'clear out'
- Look through old photos
- Start a journal
- Spend time outdoors
- Read a book or magazine
- Mindfulness
- Phone or visit friends or family
- Make a 'feel good' playlist

Keep in touch with others

Good relationships are important for our mental health and wellbeing.

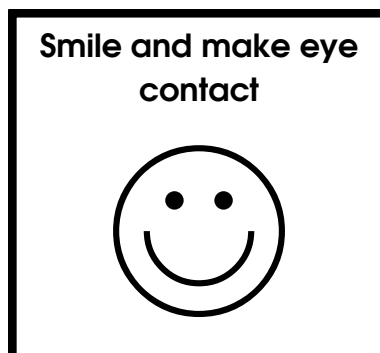
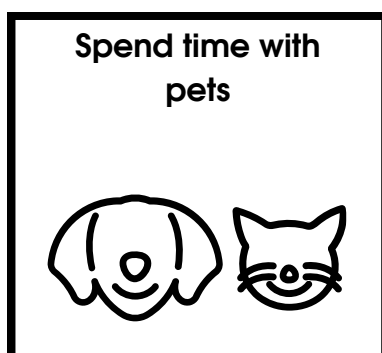
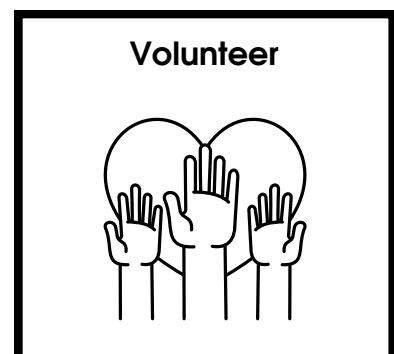
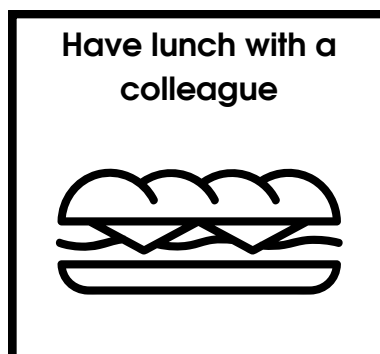
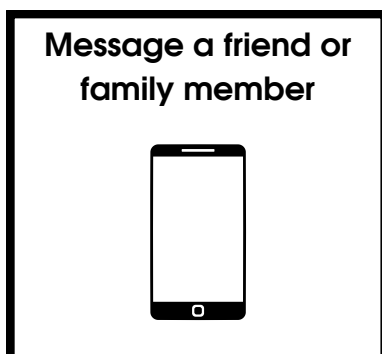
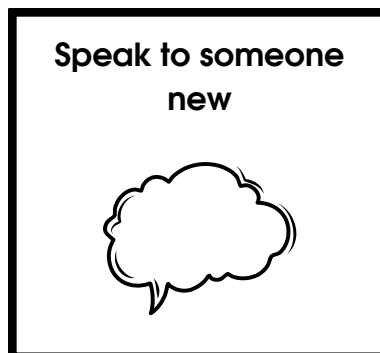
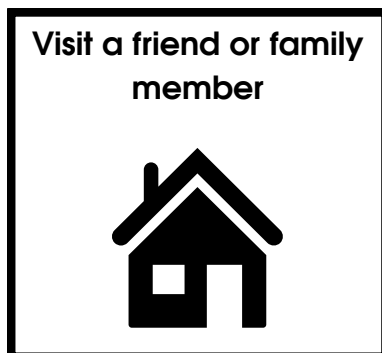
Having a strong support network can help you through difficult times in life and can combat feelings of loneliness and isolation.

They can:

- help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth
- give you an opportunity to share positive experiences
- provide emotional support and allow you to support others

Social Connection Bingo

Use the icons below to keep track of the ways you connect with others each week. It's a great way to reflect on how you keep in touch with others and think about how you could build your social connections in new ways.



Take a break

Relaxation doesn't have to take up lots of time. Simply taking a few minutes for yourself to do something you enjoy can give you enough space to feel calmer. Try to make a plan for your day or your week...and remember to build in some form of relaxation!

Simply breathing...

and paying attention to the moment for a few minutes every day can help build healthy coping skills and calm anxiety. Try to take a little time to breathe, focus on the present moment and be thoughtful about the small details of where you are and how you are feeling.

Box breathing...

involves exhaling to a count of four, holding your lungs empty for a count of four, inhaling for four, holding for four, exhaling and beginning the pattern again. Look at any square shape to make this easier.

Mindful colouring...

Colouring is a great activity to reduce stress as it helps your mind to relax and switch off from unhelpful thoughts.

You can use the template below to try some mindful colouring.

Belly breathing...

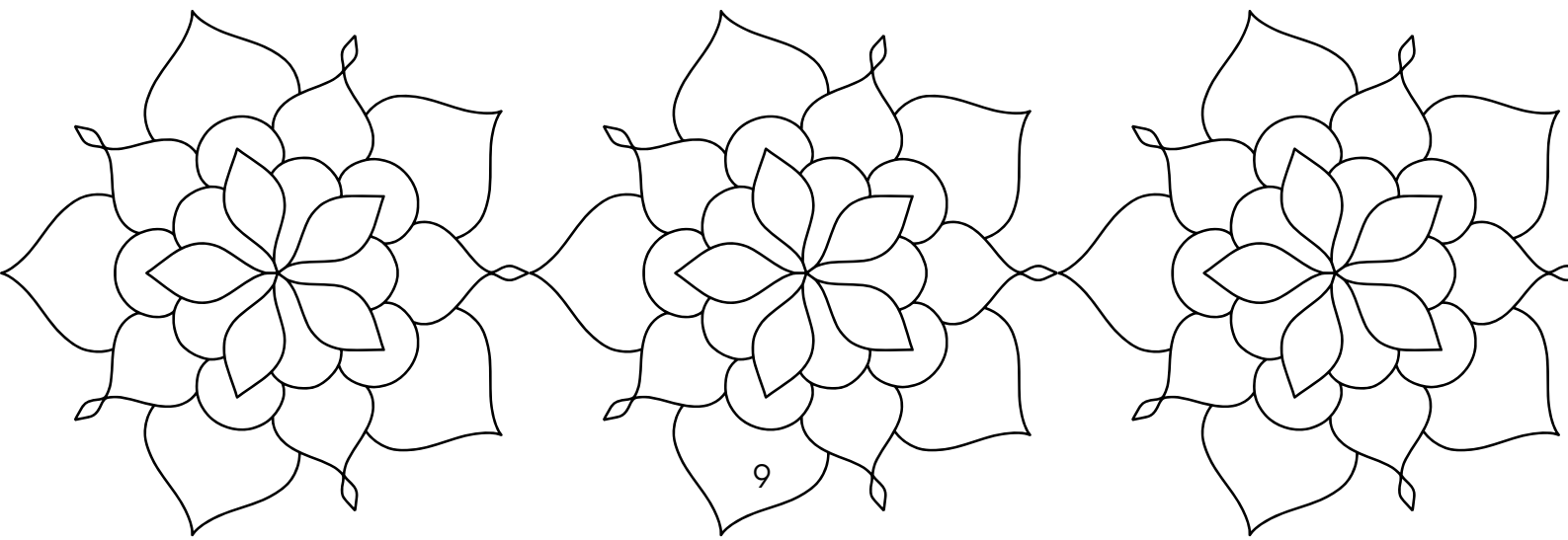
is when we put one hand on our stomach and one on our chest. Slowly breathe in and feel your stomach expand like a balloon. Slowly breathe out and deflate the balloon.

Body scan meditation...

involves paying attention to your body. It is a good way of releasing tension you might not even realise you are experiencing.

Mindful cup of tea or coffee (decaf of course!)...

simply sit and just be in the moment. Take five minutes before the day begins... this is even more important when we are going through a busy or more challenging time.



Talk about your feelings

You don't have to solve every problem on your own.

Lots of us find it hard to start talking about difficult problems. Sometimes it's embarrassing to talk about feelings and sometimes we don't know exactly what's wrong. But sharing a problem can ease stress, even if you can't find an answer straight away.

Communicate in a way you are comfortable with - face to face, video or phone call, writing a letter, online chat.

Find the right time and place - find somewhere comfortable, relatively quiet, and where you're unlikely to be disturbed or interrupted.

Practice what you want to say - try not to overthink it, but have a rough idea of what you want to say before you start.

Writing down your feelings can also help to ease stress.

Research has shown that writing down three things that have gone well or made us smile can improve our mood, help us feel more positive and able to cope.

This is particularly useful when things are tough. Small things are best. It can be anything from a smell, sound or touch. It can be something you have done or something someone has done for you.

Use the template to write down three good things every day...

Three Good things

1.	
2.	
3.	

How did this make you feel? // !

Accept and value who you are

Our self-esteem can affect how we value and perceive ourselves. It's based on our opinions and beliefs about ourselves, which can feel difficult to change.

Positive self talk

Positive self talk is one way to boost your self-esteem and increase your confidence.

Saying things to yourself in your head is very powerful. Your body believes this 'self talk'. Saying positive statement over and over can help you develop a new attitude to yourself and to situations. This can help cope with challenges or when you feel worried or nervous.

Think of some positive phrases that you could say to yourself...

You could write your positive self talk phrases down in the speech bubble below, or type them into your phone and look at them if you feel worried or nervous.



Care for others

Helping others isn't just good for the people you're helping; it is good for you too. Research tells us that being kind can boost our mood, help us feel more capable, strengthen our connections with others and even help us cope better with stress.

Helping friends and family members in need

Doing things for other people can raise your self-esteem and make you feel good about yourself. If you don't know where to start you could try small but meaningful acts of kindness, or spend time with someone you know has been having a difficult time. Even the small act of exchanging a smile or friendly words can be comforting to someone and also lift our own mood.

Caring for animals

Looking after a pet can improve your wellbeing by bringing structure to your day and acting as a link to other people. You could offer to walk a friend or neighbour's dog to help out occasionally.

Volunteering

Getting together with others to support good causes can help us feel more connected and give us the sense that we can make a difference. All of this is good for our mental health.

There are lots of things you can do, such as:

- helping out at playgroups
- visiting elderly people or hospital patients
- working in hospital radio
- clearing canals or planting trees
- helping at animal sanctuaries
- working in a charity shop

Volunteers often go on to find paid work in the same kind of role.

Use this space to note down some ways you might like to help out in the future?



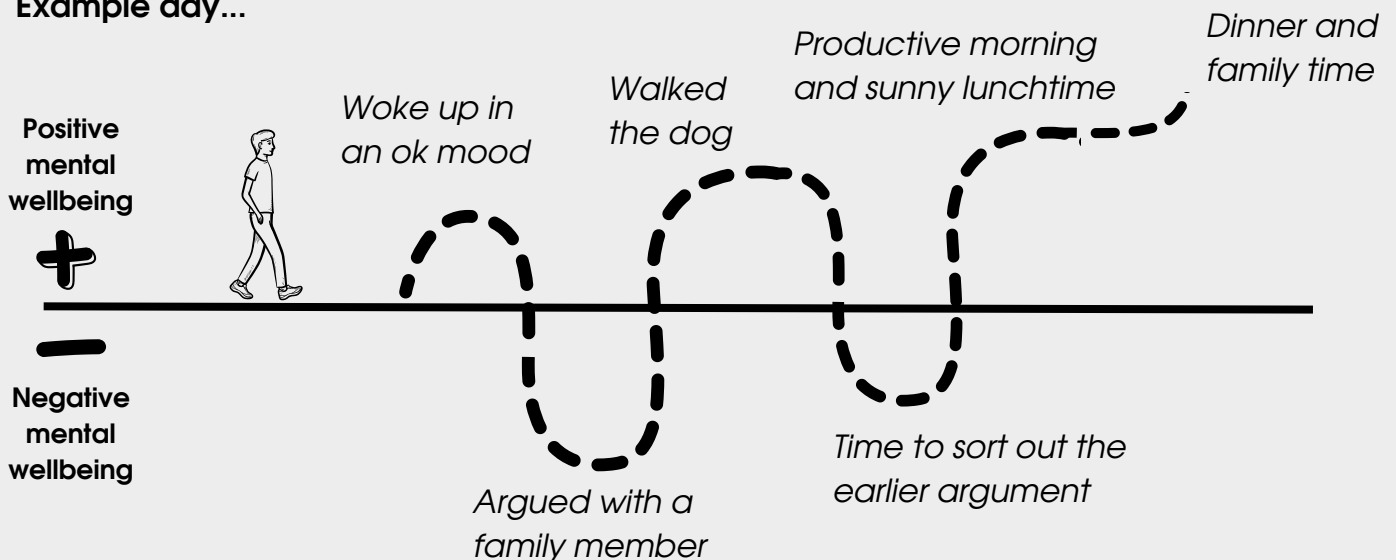
A day in your life

Mental health is not static. It is normal for our mood to fluctuate over a day, a month or a year. Mental health and wellbeing also fluctuates across the life course.

Our mental health and wellbeing is always changing. Day to day events can cause us stress and impact how we feel. Some of these are out of our control and people can be impacted differently by the same event.

Use the template below to track 'a day in your life', thinking about what happened and how it impacted your mood. Is there anything you could have done differently to lift your mood?

Example day...



My day...



Signs of Stress

Our bodies usually cope well with short-term pressures, but too much stress for too long can make us unwell. The first step towards managing stress is to be aware of when things are getting on top of us.

Stress can affect everyone in different ways. Use the four lists below to tick off the signs of stress you recognise in yourself. You can use these to look for these changes in yourself and others to help detect stress early and prevent symptoms from getting worse.



Physical signs

- Aches and pains
- Diarrhoea
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Chest pain/tight chest
- Rapid heart rate
- Breathing issues



Emotional signs

- Low mood
- Feeling unhappy
- Easily irritated
- Feeling agitated
- Moody
- Overwhelmed
- Anger



Cognitive signs

- Memory problems
- Unable to concentrate
- Poor judgement
- Focusing on the negative
- Racing thoughts
- Constant worrying



Behavioural signs

- Eating more or less
- Sleeping problems
- Withdrawing
- Putting things off
- Using substances, eg. alcohol
- Nervous habits, eg. nail biting

Other signs

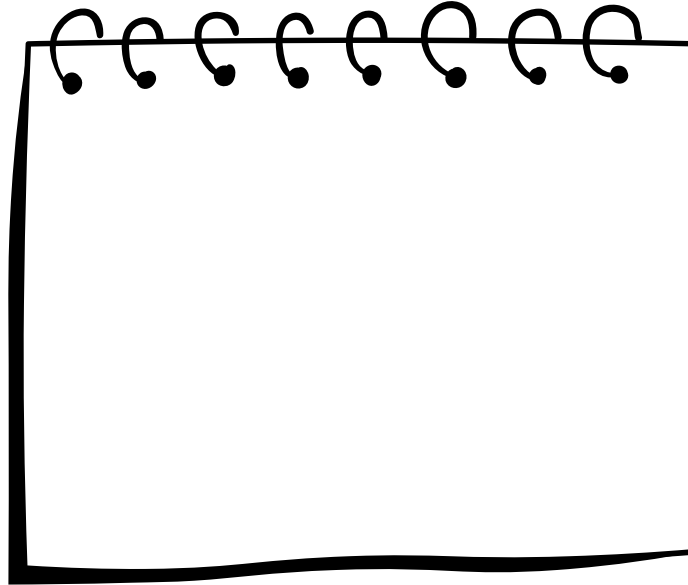
Use this space to write down any other signs of stress that you notice.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Managing Stress

To be able to deal with stress we need to look after ourselves. Revisit the '10 ways' from earlier in the workbook. Build these practical self care tips in to your daily routine to build resilience and help cope better with stress.

Taking steps to deal with your problems and the things that are causing you stress is another useful tool. Writing down your problems is a good place to start. Find 10 minutes - and a pen - and let's have a go...



Now choose one problem to work on and break it down into specific steps to start sorting the problem.

Problem	Steps I can take	When?

Fixed that first problem? Well done! Give yourself a reward and tick it off of your list. Take a breath and when you're ready, move onto the next problem...

If your steps haven't worked...

Work on another problem- you can come back to this one later.

Sleeping on it or talking to someone about it may help.

Don't be too hard on yourself and keep at it.

Some solutions are more complicated, take one step at a time and be patient.

Looking for more?

There are a range of websites with more detailed information on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing. Please visit the sites below for further information:

NHS Inform

Scotland's national health information service helping the people in Scotland to make informed decisions about their health. There is information on a range of mental health and wellbeing topics.
www.nhsinform.scot

The Mental Health Foundation

UK charity promoting good mental health for all. This website has a range of information, resources and self help tools.
www.mentalhealth.org.uk/Scotland

NHS Ayrshire & Arran: Better Health-Mental Health and Wellbeing

A range of information on how to look after our mental health and wellbeing. There are also links to tools, resources, and apps to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing.
www.nhsaaa.net/better-health/
click 'mental health and wellbeing' icon on web page

Young Minds

Advice and information on how young people can look after their mental health & wellbeing. There are dedicated sections for young people, parents and for individuals who work with young people.
www.youngminds.org.uk



Don't be afraid to ask for help

It is normal to feel worried, stressed, anxious or low at times.

Let people around you know there are simple things they can do to help you cope...

- Acknowledge that it is ok to be concerned.
- Don't dismiss my questions or concerns; listen and try to reassure me.
- Taking part in another activity while talking can make it easier.
- Try to stay positive and offer me safety.
- Check in with me regularly.

Are you worried or need someone to talk to?

NHS 24

Free call - 111

<https://www.nhs24.scot>

Samaritans

Free call - 116 123

www.samaritans.org

Breathing Space

Free call - 0800 83 85 87

<https://breathingspace.scot>

Beat - Eating Disorders

Free call - 0808 801 0711

<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk>

Living Life (NHS)

Free call - 0800 328 9655

<https://nhs24.scot>

Cruse Bereavement Scot

Free call - 0845 600 2227

<https://crusescotland.org.uk>

Anxiety UK

Free call - 0344 775 774

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk>

For parents and carers...

Parentline Scotland

Free call - 08000 28 22 33

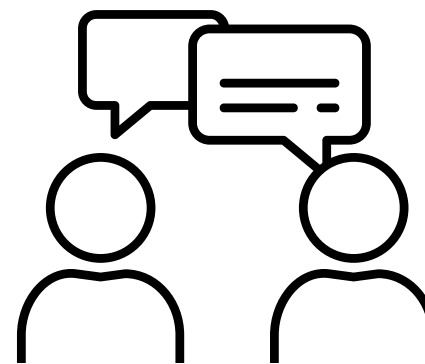
<https://www.children1st.org.uk/help-for-families/parentline-scotland/>

Young Minds Crisis Line

Text YP to 85258

<https://youngminds.org.uk>

Or you can contact your local GP Practice to arrange a mental health consultation within your surgery with a Mental Health Practitioner; the consultation offers mental health screening, signposting, resources and referral.



My notes...

You can use this space to write down some notes, thoughts, or anything that comes to mind while working through the content in this workbook.

