

LIFEMATTERS

Students Version

TIPS & TOOLS FOR
HEALTH, WELLBEING & RESILIENCE

A Practical Guide
to Important Life Skills

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Published by
LIFEMATTERS ACADEMY

The printing of this book has been
sponsored by RAMAS & LifeMatters Academy in honour of World Mental Health Day October 10th 2015
and in support of Bressie's excellent A lust for Life website : www.alustforlife.com

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Special thanks to
Sean Hammond David O'Sullivan ,Doug and Sharon Stead

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This book is dedicated to
Sean, Sophie and Catherine

Wishing All Readers Health, Wellbeing and Resilience

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to LifeMatters, a work book to help you live your best, happiest and most productive life.

This self-help book enables you to develop life skills that will simplify your life and help you to enjoy yourself and your world with ease and confidence. Use this book to create yourself a healthy, happy and contented life, at School, University and beyond.

Before you start reading and using this book, please take a little time to read through and understand two very important ideas.

The first idea is all about what we humans need to be healthy, happy and productive.

The second idea is all about how to achieve that health, happiness and productivity using what we call the Five Steps.

The First Idea: Needs and Seeds

What we all need to be healthy and happy. Lots of people have tried to discover what ingredients go into making human beings healthy and happy. In writing this book we looked at all the good ideas and strategies from experts around the world and gathered them together.

To make it easy for you to understand and use these ideas, we approach them in a practical way: what are your own particular needs? What works best for you?

Let's start by looking at the needs that we humans all share, and the ways we go about getting these needs met. We call these human needs and seeds. Needs, because we all need them. Seeds, because they must be planted and rooted into our life for us to develop healthy and happy.

Human Needs & Seeds

All Humans Need:

1. To be safe and to feel secure
2. To connect, to belong and be close to others
3. To love and be loved
4. To give and receive praise, recognition and attention
5. To learn, be stretched and be challenged through work and play
6. To have plans and purpose in life so that we can make the world a better place and have a sense of meaningful contribution
7. To respect ourselves and take responsibility
8. To regulate ourselves, to train our mind so that we can achieve our full potential
9. To dream, rest and relax or just to Be
10. To take care of our bodies, to build and maintain good health
11. To realise that we are always living and learning and that it is natural to make mistakes. When we know better we can do better.
12. The need to live and let live. Do good deeds and remember that you have done them.

What do you need to be healthy, happy and to lead a productive life?

How can you meet your needs?

How can you plant positive seeds in your life?

How can you meet your needs?

How can you sow seeds for success for University and beyond?



- This book provides you with tips & tools to help you build and maintain lifeskills for a healthy and happy life. Treat these skills as if they are seeds that you are sowing in your life.
- In order for these skills to grow you will need to practice them until they become second nature to you. Repetition is the Mother of Skill.
- To enable these skills to grow you will need to become aware and replace negative, self defeating or any bad habits that you may have built up.
- You will need to give attention to building these skills as they grow. Observe yourself, take time to reflect and think. What works for you? What doesn't work? Let go of any habits of behaviours that do not work for you. Build on habits and skills that do work.
- All learning of new skills needs fluidity. Here we mean that it is helpful if you are flexible and open to your experience. Try to stay open minded and flexible in how you learn to apply life skills that work for you.

The Second Idea: Take Five!

The ideas in this book are based around the Five Systems Model shown below. The Model attempts to show that what we do in one area of our life affects the way we feel in another area.

For example, the way we feel in our body (that is, physically) affects the way we feel in our mind (that is, our thoughts and feelings) and in turn this affects our behaviour too, including the way we behave with others.

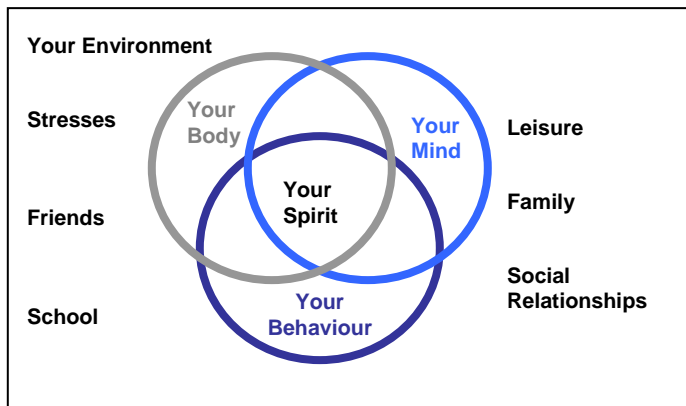
This is very useful because it means that if we can make a positive change in one aspect of ourselves or our lives, then that change will flow naturally and simply into the other areas too.

The Five Systems are:

- (1) Your Body
- (2) Your Mind
- (3) Your Behaviour
- (4) Your Environment and
- (5) Your Spirit, Essence, Identity.

Getting the most out of life means thinking, feeling and behaving in healthy, stress-free ways. The aim is to work at keeping health and balance in all five systems. The Take Five steps taken to work on any one system will effect all other systems also.

THE FIVE SYSTEMS MODEL:



Using the Five Systems model, we find a new way of looking at our well being that considers a human being as a whole, with connections between the mind, body, behaviour and environment. Looking after your Spirit helps promote balance, health and wellbeing in your life and in your world.

As humans we have this amazing drive towards health and happiness and an ability to restore balance when health is lost. This ability does not stay the same, it changes over time. Every day brings a new chance to start again.

The ability to restore balance is not the same for all of us. We each have our different strengths and weaknesses, and we can learn to get to know these and work with them in a creative and respectful way.

For all of us, whatever our own particular strengths and weaknesses may be, and whatever our starting point, we can use the Take Five or the Law of Five to make ourselves healthy and happy.

Our total wellbeing is the result of what we put into all Five Systems: body, mind, behaviour, environment and spirit.

In the Five Systems Model there are five parts to health and wellbeing and five parts to ill health. This is an idea that can be found throughout history and all over the world. It's an idea shared by the mystics of Tibet, by top sports people, and by successful people in all areas of life. This self-help book aims to set you up for success and good health in your own life. Using the Take Five approach we have divided the book into five key sections, covering steps and skills to build positive, balanced and successful people.

One – Your Body

A healthy body creates a healthy mind and so the book starts by giving you lots of ideas on how to keep your body fit and healthy. This first part of this book will help you become more aware of your body and its need for good nutrition, rest and exercise. The idea here is that when you listen to your body and take care of it, you feel fit and healthy. When your body is fit and well, you feel more comfortable and confident in your life as a whole. You find that you tackle difficult situations and problems much better.

If our body is not taken care of, on the other hand, or if it's put under too much pressure through a poor diet and/or taking in toxins such as alcohol, caffeine, drugs; through allergens, pollution, or stress, we may be asking it to do too much. We push the limit of our ability to cope too far and, as a result, we may become unwell. So, if you want to speed up your good health and happiness, it is much easier if you are developing the habits, skills and behaviours of being fit, healthy and feeling good in your body. Step One shows you how to do this in an ongoing and enjoyable way.

Two – Your Mind

Our mind tries to make sense of everything we hear, smell, touch, taste and feel. We don't see things as they actually are, we make our own sense of everything we see and hear, filtering it as if through a coloured veil, by way of our inner thoughts and feelings. Our thoughts and feelings are themselves coloured by our past and present experiences. For example, two people may see the same film but each of them react in a completely different way to what they see on the screen. One person might find the film very funny, while the other is just bored to tears! It is exactly the same with what happens in our everyday life: we are interpreting things in our own way all the time. 'Nothing is good or bad, but thinking makes it so', as William Shakespeare so wisely said. In other words, 'It's the thought that counts'.

The way you think affects the way you feel, both emotionally and physically. Just as a healthy body helps to create a healthy mind, so too a mind that is working well for you creates a healthy body. Step Two gives you lots of ideas for creating health through the power of your mind — that is, through developing supportive thoughts and feelings. Step 2 helps you look at your thoughts and your thinking patterns and shows you how to handle negative or scary thoughts. It also helps you to become a successful 'power thinker'. This part of the book is full handy hints, not only on how to make life less scary, beat the blues and stress less, but also on how to positively build up your confidence, self-esteem and thinking skills.

Developing positive thinking helps you to be healthy and feel good about yourself. We may not be able to change the world, but we can certainly change the way we think about it, and how we "see" or feel about it. This in turn helps us to make a positive contribution to the world around us. When you consider this deeply, you begin to realise that life can be just what you make it. It really is up to you!

Three – Your Behaviour

The more you do of what you are doing, the more you get of what you are getting. The way you act or behave plays an important role in shaping your friendships, work, social relationships and the quality of your life at University and beyond. Step 3 of this book looks at ways you can behave and actions you can take to help yourself. This section introduces you to effective tools that you can use to stay positive, calm and in control. It looks at communication skills and problem solving and is full of valuable ideas, tips and insights that you can call on to help you behave in ways that are supportive and helpful to you. Step 3 is all about discovering the habits, skills and behaviours that help you in your own best interests.

Four – Your Environment

Step 4 of this book looks at your environment and how you can make it work best for you. By environment we mean your family, friends, social life, leisure, pleasure and Academic progress. This Step is all about the importance of friends and family in growing and changing. It shows you how to develop habits, skills and behaviours that make your life happy, healthy, productive and safe. Even if you are going through tough times at the moment, Step 4 provides lots of ideas and shows you some very useful skills to help you. It shows you how to learn from your experiences, put the past behind you and move on to a safe, healthy and productive future.

There are times when we can all benefit from help and advice from others, whether at home, College or at play. Step 4 of this book gives valuable information on how to develop supportive friendships in your life and how to manage your time and resources in your best interests.

Five – Your Spirit

All four systems (body – mind – behaviour – environment) come together to make you who you are. The point where they all meet is called the Nexus, but you may prefer the simpler word, spirit. This is where you balance all the elements that make up YOU. Step 5 of this book is all about taking care of your spirit, your energy and your sense of being in the world. Life may be full of uncertainty, but if you take care of your spirit, your values and your unique identity, you will be able to stay centred and grounded and so you will be able to move through difficulties with a much greater sense of ease and confidence.

Looking after your spirit is about learning to view yourself through loving and supportive eyes. This means: getting a good balance in your body (through nutrition, exercise, rest and energy), a happy balance in your mind (developing nourishing thoughts, feelings, attitudes), a positive way of behaving (learning how to act so that confidence and ease flow inside you and around you), and last but not least: creating a supportive environment for yourself by learning skills, helpful habits and ways of relating to others that keep you safe, confident and at ease.

LifeMatters

This Take Five Personal Support Plan gives you life skills and ideas for taking good care of you. As you work through these pages you may notice that the way you think affects the way you feel and in turn affects the way you behave, so it is helpful to understand and try out ideas in Step One and Step Two before Step Three.

A healthy body, a healthy mind, positive personal behaviours and good relationships with other people are important life skills that will help you get the best out of your self, your life, and others. *LifeMatters* is full of ideas to help you think, feel and behave in ways that create ease and confidence.

Peace of mind, courage and real strength is within you. You can unlock this potential through the Steps and skills outlined in this workbook. You don't have to wait until your life is problem-free before you can be happy, peaceful or enjoy success. You can work at boosting your life *now!*

PERSONAL VALUES

Research has shown that positive personal values are like seeds: they send out the roots and shoots of our lives. They “ground” us when we are fearful and give us wings when we need to “fly”. Positive personal values provide the foundation and the strongest kind of motivation for achieving the goals we most want to achieve. What “seeds” are you sowing in your life? What are your personal values? What kind of life are you setting up for yourself?

Take a moment to think about what is most important to you in your life. What drives you? What gets you going? What interests or motivates you? What values do you want to demonstrate in your life? Some examples of values include things like: honesty, compassion for others, loyalty, giving your best, being good to family, being good to friends, being loving; peace of mind, contentment, respect, trust; taking care of yourself.

Take a moment now if you wish to write down your personal values (list all the values that are important to you):

Take a moment now to write down your personal values:

Try to get an image of your life in your mind. What do you want more of in your life? What do you want less of? If you can't be yourself, who do you think you can be? Try to be true to yourself. Imagine a picture of how you would like your life to be today, this week, three weeks, three months or three years from now.

The Take Five approach (body, mind, behaviour, environment & spirit) is a reminder that efforts made in one aspect of our lives are more than doubled as they will naturally create change in other aspects too.

You get to choose how your life will be.

Nobody can control the way you to think or feel, your life is your own and you can learn to shape it in positive and productive ways. The more responsibility you take, the greater the power you have to manage and make your life work for you.

When you appreciate other people and try to understand them and work with them, you make yourself powerful and take a giant step towards creating a better life for yourself. On the other hand, if you are blaming other people or other things for life's difficulties, you will never be free to create your best life. This is because you are handing over the responsibility to someone or something else. Remember, you can choose the way YOU think about things and your thoughts will affect every aspect of your life!

The LifeMatters Programme is not a "read once and put aside" kind of book. It is meant to be used as a resource — different ideas will work at different times. To get the best out of it, pick it up and work on the different sections as often as you can. Practice and use what works for you. Don't worry about the rest. You choose for you.

The book is designed so that you can make it your own. Please enjoy the book by adding your own ideas and thoughts when you can. Space is provided for you at the end of each part. At all times, MAKE IT PERSONAL TO YOU.

This book presents you with lots of ideas for developing important life skills and shows you how to build a life of ease and self-confidence. Work through the book at your own pace and try to put the suggestions into practice. Remember that change doesn't just happen to us, you can't change what you don't know, so try to observe and become more aware of yourself and your needs. You have the power to make your life work. You create it. You have already made a great step by choosing to read this book. Now go one step further and start creating the life you want!

Take Five and check out the steps and skills available to you *NOW!*

YOUR PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

Congratulations on taking this really positive step to a healthy and happy you! Your Personal Support Plan has been designed so that you can monitor your own progress and record your growing success.

This is your personal passport to better health and improved well being. It is packed with advice and tips proven by research to work effectively and confirmed by the ongoing experience of health and well-being experts.

ONE STEP AT A TIME



TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE, IT IS YOUR LIFE — YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, YOU ARE IN THE DRIVING SEAT

By taking things one step at a time you will gradually make positive changes in the areas of your life that you want. Each small change will form an important part of the bigger picture.

The Five Systems Model is a reminder that efforts made in one aspect of our lives are more than doubled as they will naturally create change in other aspects too. Use this to advantage by making as many positive changes as you can.

In order to improve your health and become happier you may need to make some changes in your life. This book guides you through the small, simple positive steps that will make this easier and more rewarding than you ever thought possible.

The Personal Support Plan is easy to use and safe to apply. It is packed with expert guidance on important life skills.

Don't forget to ask for extra help if you need it. Please take some time now to write down any numbers you could call for extra support. Please write them down on the next page.

LIFEMATTERS: PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

LEARNING THE HABITS, SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS OF HEALTH, WELL BEING & RESILIENCE

This self-help book aims to set you up for success! It uses the Take Five approach and is therefore divided into five sections. It looks at how to activate and promote health by helping you:

- Body** - for example, through nutrition, relaxation and exercise
- Mind** - by taking a fresh look at your thinking, attitudes and feelings
- Behaviour** - by helping you to create positive habits and skills
- Environment** - by guiding you in network of family, friends, social life, leisure and work
- Spirit** - by nurturing your inner spirit and sense of 'being you'.

The reason for dividing things up in this way is that, as you know now, stress can affect all these five aspects of our lives: body, mind, behaviour, environment and spirit (remember the approach).

So in order to overcome stress, we suggest that you take care and positive action in each of these essential areas.

We don't wish you luck.

Luck has nothing to do with it.

Instead, we invite you to use LifeMatters to the full.

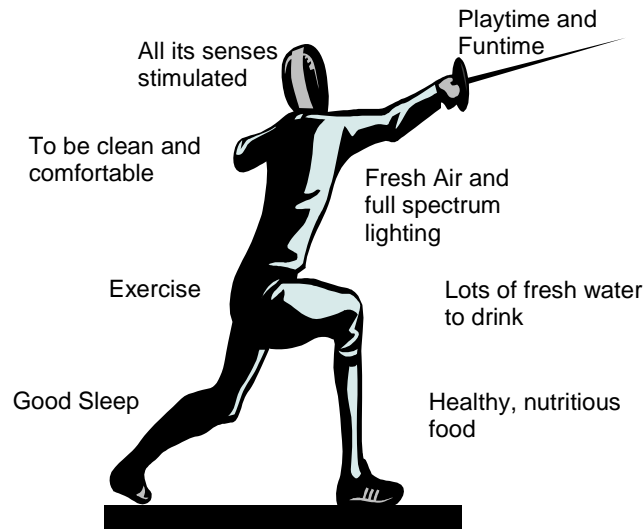
That way, you will discover what works best for you, and you are guaranteed results.

You will improve your health, your happiness and well being.

Step One: Take care of Your Wonderful Body

... you ask a lot of it each day!

In order to be healthy the Human body needs:



LOVE YOUR BODY



STEPS AND SKILLS INCLUDE:

- **Being active and exercise daily**
- **Make wise food choices**
- **Limit alcohol, caffeine and other toxins**
- **Rest, Relax and Restore**
- **Get good quality sleep.**

A healthy body really does create and support a healthy mind and spirit. This is because increased physical energy leads to increased emotional and mental energy too. When you feel physically healthy you are set up for success. Master the skill of taking good care of your body and you have more energy to cope with everything, especially if you are under pressure.

There are many ways in which you can take good care of your body and all of them are easy to put into action. Be kind to your body. Work on building up its health and wellbeing. Once you start treating your body with respect, very quickly you start noticing differences in other areas of your life too. For instance, when you feel physically fit you have better concentration and confidence, and this in turn leads you to be more alert and energised, even when under pressure.

Remember the Five Systems Mode. Taking positive steps to support your body will help your mind, your behaviour, your environment and your spirit.

Below are some Steps and Skills for creating a healthy body. There is space at the end for you to add your own ideas. Make the book work for your own life by using personal ideas that will work for you.

▪ BEING ACTIVE AND EXERCISE DAILY

Physical exercise combined with a balanced diet is the most natural way of creating and keeping physical and mental energy. It is also a good way of relaxing and 'letting off steam'. The greater the pressure you are under, the more useful you will find physical exercise. It gives you a fast release from tension by giving your muscles a good work out and relieving tightness. In the long-term, regular exercise means your body is better able to support you through times of stress.

Exercise helps you feel more relaxed about your body and your health. It boosts your energy and sense of well being.

There are lots of different types of exercise — many of which do not require equipment or specialist skills. Which one will you choose? Why not try a variety of activities until you find the ones that you especially enjoy doing.

Simplify your life by choosing activities which you look forward to and which fit in with your life. There are so many to choose from — whether they involve other people (for example yoga, tai-chi, football) or just you (walking, cycling, swimming etc.) – they are all good.

Make this part of your life a fun thing. Take the pressure off and lighten up - let exercise gradually become a welcome part of your lifestyle rather than a chore. Life rewards action. Why not take action/exercise *NOW!*

To get the best out of exercise, try to remember the following points:

- √ Ease yourself into new forms of exercise and let your body get used to the new activity. Do not push it, just do a little each day. Enjoy it.
- √ Always warm up properly before doing anything strenuous.
- √ Set yourself up for success by picking an activity or exercise you'll enjoy doing and will be happy to carry on with.
- √ If you find a new sport hard to pick up, be patient and take your time. Sometimes it takes a while to get into new things.

♥ Top Tip ♥

Exercising just 15 minutes a day gives you more energy and improves your sense of wellbeing.

▪ MAKE WISE FOOD CHOICES

You can create good health and positive energy through what you eat and drink. Choose a balanced diet which nourishes your body and replaces lost energy. The human body loses about 2 litres of water each day. Make sure you give it plenty of water.

When we give our bodies the right foods at the right time it does its own repairs and produces the energy for everything we want it to. *Everything we put into our bodies, whether it is good or bad, has an effect.* Why not choose to keep check of what you are eating and opt for healthy choices. Eating healthily means getting wise about what foods will replenish, nourish and make you feel good. It means giving your body a healthy variety of foods which provide it with essential vitamins and minerals. Go for a balanced approach to proteins (e.g. meat, fish, eggs); carbohydrates (e.g. bread, rice); fresh fruit and vegetables; oils and fats; and dairy products in your diet.

It is also important to look at how much of something you are eating/drinking. Whilst many things may not harm the body when taken in small amounts, they will have a very negative effect on the body if taken in larger amounts or over long periods of time (e.g. junk food, caffeine).

Be healthy and choose carefully.

Some people get very anxious about food, eating and dieting. Sadly, there are a lot of books that make all sorts of claims about what you should and shouldn't eat, what the latest celebrity is or isn't eating. Many of these books make huge profits by exploiting the worry and anxiety that we can all feel about our body and appearance. In fact, it is very simple to eat in a healthy way just by asking yourself the following questions:

- a) What you are putting into your body?
- b) When you are doing it?
- c) How are you doing it?

What are you putting into your body?

Try to balance your diet with plenty of variety.

- √ Lots of fibre and wholefoods
- √ Lots of fruit and vegetables
- √ Some but not too much carbohydrates
- √ Enough, but not too much, protein
- √ Eat good fats, e.g. omega-3 and omega-6 rich foods, like fish
- X Cut down on junk food and brain drainers
- X Limit your use of alcohol, caffeine and other toxins, they are brain drainers
- X Cut down on sugar... food affects mood!
- X Eat very little saturated fat, avoid 'trans' fats.

When are you doing it?

You should try to eat at regular intervals.

- √ Have 'energy' foods (e.g. containing carbohydrates or fresh fruit) if you are doing exercise later
- X Do not eat just before exercise
- X Do not eat rich foods or drink caffeinated drinks after 10 pm.

How are you doing it?

Try to resist the temptation of eating even when you are no longer hungry.

- √ enjoy your food
- √ eat slowly and allow yourself to taste your food.

♥ top tip ♥
'Take Five':
Eat 5 portions of fruit or
vegetables every day. Check out
Clinical Nutritionist Patrick
Holford's book "Optimum Nutrition
for the brain"

- **LIMIT YOUR USE OF ALCOHOL, CAFFEINE AND OTHER TOXINS**

Take good care of yourself by keeping alcohol and substance use in check.

Alcohol and other drugs (which include cigarettes and caffeine as well as other illegal drugs) can be enjoyable, but they all have a cost. They affect not only our bodies but also our minds, behaviours, and social relationships. Sometimes it is hard to see what certain substances are doing to us, and to the people around us, unless we stop and really take a look. Think about cigarettes for example, how do they affect each key area? What is the cost?

The cost for Your Body

Cigarettes give you bad breath and make you smelly as well as damaging your heart and lungs. They also make your teeth and fingers turn yellow. Smokers need to put a lot more work into their appearance and their health in order to keep up with their non-smoking friends.

The cost for Your Brain

Once you are addicted to cigarettes, the cravings when you need a smoke lead to distraction and poor concentration. This may effect your study and Academic progress.

The cost for Your Behaviour

Many people who drink too much try to hide the behaviour from others. Hiding the habit may lead to you becoming untruthful and secretive. Also, alcohol or substance abuse can be expensive, getting them may involve deception of even theft. Seeds are being sowed for deceitful habits and perhaps a deceitful life.

The cost for Your Environment

Cigarettes create a smoky and unhealthy environment for you and others around you. Consideration for others means that you should not smoke near them. This may in turn limit your circle of friends.

The cost for Your Spirit

For many smokers, alcohol and/or substance users, life revolves around the next "fix" rather than real life needs. Most adult smokers wish that they could stop, but they cannot without a huge effort. In other words, they have a lifestyle that they do not want. This diminishes their spirit.

Why not stop and think about how cigarettes, alcohol or drugs affect you personally. Think about the pros and cons of regular, long-term use. It may be worth writing out all the advantages of using the substances, and the disadvantages. Think about what you gain short-term and long-term by not using drugs or alcohol. Continue the list below.

Advantages of creating a healthy balance:

- **Save money**
- **A healthier body, mind and behaviours**
- **Greater confidence in my own ability to tackle difficult circumstances without relying on the false feeling that alcohol or drugs will make things better**
- **Developing a lifestyle in which I am in control and am not controlled by substances.**
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If you have got into some bad habits, why not master the skill of Breaking Bad Habits. The next step shows you how:

▪ **REST, RELAX, RESTORE**

Take good care of yourself by letting your body have enough time to rest and rejuvenate. Good quality sleep is a basic human need, it helps your body repair and refresh itself so that you can function well during the day.

Your body really needs its rest and sleep. When your body is tired and not fully rested, every area of your life is affected. Think back to the Five Systems Model — how does not sleeping well affect each area?

Not sleeping affects your systems in the following ways:

Your Body: low energy, weariness, fatigue

Your Mind: everything can seem more negative and difficult; poor concentration and information processing; learning

Your Behaviour: low activity; irritability and irrationality; low energy to tackle problems, socializing more stressful

Your Environment: effect on friends, family, work

Your Spirit: low energy, feeling low)

■ GET GOOD QUALITY SLEEP

Here are some tips for a good night's sleep – nature's repair and refreshment

- ✓ Keep stress in check.
- ✓ Get fresh air and full spectrum natural light during the day.
- ✓ Practice the habit of an unhurried and quiet 'getting ready for bed' routine as this gradually slows your metabolism and prepares your system for rest.
- ✓ Go to bed at a regular time.
- ✓ Drink hot milky drinks (with or without honey) or warm water as these have a calming effect on the body.
- X Do not drink sugary drinks, tea, coffee or fizzy drinks as these may keep you awake.
- X Do not watch TV, listen to the radio, smoke, eat or drink in bed. Try not to work or study in bed at times when you need to sleep.
- X Do not spend hours tossing and turning in bed. If you cannot sleep, try relaxation and letting go until you feel sleepy again. If this does not work, it is best to get up and distract yourself for a while, and then return to bed.
- X Do not use medication to help you sleep. In the long run it will only throw your body rhythm off its natural timing and sleep medication can be very addictive.
- X Do not drink alcohol. It does not help sleeplessness, as it will only make you feel 'unslept' the next morning.

Relaxation

Take good care of yourself by choosing to create 'quiet time' for thinking and relaxation. All of us need quiet or "downtime", a time to be still, a space in the day to Take Five and "drop in" on ourselves.

We all need a way of 'letting go'. No-one can keep going without breaks and without giving themselves time to reflect and re-charge their batteries. It's natural to need to 'switch off' regularly. When we are relaxed it becomes easier to look at our thinking and behaviour in an objective way. More options and choices start to become clear. Have you ever poured yourself a glass of fresh apple juice? When you have just poured it the juice is completely cloudy, with all the tiny bits of apple swirling about in the glass. But after a little while of silliness, the bits all begin to drift to the bottom of the glass and the juice becomes clear, pure - and delicious!

In the same way, we can take time to stop and be still for a few moments throughout the day. This will allow all our 'cloudy bits' to settle down and then we'll be able to see, think, and feel more clearly. Life suddenly feels calm and enjoyable again! Relaxation is a skill, similar to learning to walk or run - or pour apple juice just like an expert! The more you practice, the better you become.

Here are some relaxation exercises for you to consider:

Physical Relaxation

1. Choose a comfortable place to sit or, even better, lie down.
2. Make sure that you won't be disturbed by friends or family or the telephone.
3. Have your arms relaxed at your sides or with your hands gently resting on your tummy. You may like to cover yourself with a warm blanket and, if lying down, place a cushion or pillow under your head.
4. Allow yourself some time to focus in on your body and then gradually on your breath. You don't need to do anything or change anything in connection with your breathing - just watch and listen and allow yourself to feel all the sensations of your physical being as you breath in and out.
5. Your breath will naturally begin to slow down and deepen — you may wish to close your eyes after a while.
6. Slowly, in your own time, start to focus in on the different parts of your body. Start with your feet, just becoming aware of them - the skin on the soles of your feet. Then focus on your toes, your ankles, your heels.
7. Remember that it's perfectly natural for your mind to wander off to other things during this exercise. Just keep bringing your attention gently back to the sensations in your body, and to your breathing. You may sometimes find it helpful to work up each muscle in your body by first tensing or tightening it for a few seconds and then letting it relax again. For example, curling up your toes and then releasing them again.
8. Let your focus gradually move up your body from your feet: step by step, focus on your calf muscles, your knees, your thighs, your hips, your buttocks. If you find tension in any area, just relax it gently with your awareness. You can use the breath to help you: breathe in a sense of kindness and care; breathe out all your tension and worry.
9. Continue moving your focus up your body; up your spine, into your shoulders - relaxing and softening your muscles all the time - back of the neck, down your arms, elbows, into your hands. Relax your hands, allowing the fingers to curl naturally and easily.
10. Then bring your attention gently to your face. Are you frowning? Allow the skin of your forehead to relax and gently expand width ways towards your temples. Soften all the little muscles around your eyes; then likewise with your nose, your lips and mouth. Let your jaw relax and open a little bit. Relax your tongue and your throat. Being silent now, just enjoy the ease of letting your voice, tongue and throat totally relax into this peaceful quietness. Allow your kind awareness to flow into each area. Just let go!
11. Gradually bring your attention down to your abdomen area. You may like to gently place your hands here, just on the 'solar plexus' at the centre of your tummy. Allow yourself to feel any sensations and emotions deep in there. Remember your breath - breathe in kindness, breathe out tension.
12. In your own time, move your awareness gently up to your chest. Still staying with the breath, noticing how your chest expands as you breathe in, and then relaxes down again with the out-breath. Softly begin to focus in on the area around your heart. Breathe in kindness, breathe out all the old tension, pain, hurt. Allow yourself to feel deeply. Accept your feelings - whatever they are. You may feel a whole lot of different feelings - pleasure, pain, worry, even a sense of laughter. Go with the flow! Allow yourself to cry, laugh, groan or whatever! Your feelings are always natural and helpful. They are an important part of you, like the blood flowing in and out of your heart.
13. As you focus on the heart area, you might like to imagine the warm rays of the sun shining into your heart, nourishing and warming you. Allow yourself to bask in this sense of warmth and nourishment. Stay with it for as long as you like.

In your own time, you can complete this exercise by gently opening your eyes, and becoming aware again of where you are. Notice the sounds, the smells, the lights and shadows. Give yourself time to 'come back' into your surroundings. Be gentle and unhurried, keep your movements nice and easeful. Allow the sense of calm that you are enjoying to flow into the rest of your day.

Visualising or Mental Relaxation

At any time of the day or night, you can use this little exercise to help you relax and feel well.

You begin by closing your eyes and gently becoming aware of your body and your breathing. Take a few moments to do this.

Then, in your own time, begin to imagine walking slowly towards your favourite place — a beach, a field, anywhere safe and happy. Allow your mind and your heart to become more focused on this pleasant, relaxing place.

Use all your senses to make this favourite place as real as possible. Ask 'What do I see?'; 'What do I hear?'; 'What do I feel?'; 'What do I taste?' Is there a gentle breeze blowing? Is the sun shining down on you, warming your heart and body? Create the scene exactly as you wish. Enjoy this safe and happy place for as long as you wish. Allow yourself to let go completely and fill your mind with all the sensations that being in this relaxed place brings. When you are ready, gently bring yourself back to your current surroundings again.

You can do this visualisation to support you at any time - sitting on the bus, waiting for a friend, or lying in bed at night when you find it difficult to sleep.

Everybody is different when it comes to relaxation. Some of us like to chill out with some good music, others like to read or watch TV and some just like to sit and think.
What are the ways that work for you?
Why not keep a Body Learning Log? Write down all the things that work for you ... go ahead, you create it!

My Body Learning Log: What relaxes me

Remember

If you write things down,

- You can observe it
- Things become simpler, clearer
- You get some distance from it
- You remember it
- You act on it
- You have a record of your progress

YOUR PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

In order to start you on the way to a healthy life it can help to have goals or targets that you can work towards. We call these Personal Achievement Targets (or PAT's). These can change as you make progress, but it is good to start with a few simple PAT's.

These targets are the basis of your own personal action goals; action goals are the working out of your PAT's in terms of action that you can start to do now.

It is important that you yourself decide on the targets in your plan - after all, it is your own personal support plan. In this section we are interested in things you might try to do to support and take good care of your body.

Before you make a list of targets for a healthy body you should consider that you will be most successful if you ensure that every target is:

- **S – SOLUTION ORIENTED and SPECIFIC**
That is, firstly, that you focus on the solution, not on the problem. So you express your target and goals in positive rather than negative terms. Focus on what you want, not what you do not want. For example, your PAT is expressed as “I want to eat a healthy diet” rather than “Not to eat junk food”. You also make sure that your action goal is SPECIFIC, not vague. For example: “I want to cut my smoking down to one a day by next month” rather than “I want to quit smoking”.
- **MEASURABLE:**
The action goals should be such that you can measure progress easily. For example, if you have decided to go for a short walk every day, how many times did you do it this week? This way you can adapt your target if it isn't working for you.
- **APPROPRIATE and ATTRACTIVE**
The targets and action goals should fit with your life, your situation. We all have different lifestyles and different body needs, and it's important that our targets should be consistent with this. They should also be what you want for yourself, rather than what someone else wants for you. It is YOUR life!
- **REALISTIC**
Both the target and action goals need to work for you in your life. Small steps work best. Choose goals that are realistic for you to achieve now, rather than ones that are not yet possible for you.
- **TIME SCALED**
This means that your targets and your action goals should have a time (day/date) by which you will achieve them.

Why not start by listing some PAT's right here:

- Take a short walk every day
- Eat fruit every day
- Late nights only at weekends
-
-
-
-
-

Now Take the Quiz

How good are you at taking care of your body? Please tick true or false after each sentence:

	True	False
1. I take good care of my body all the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I do not use alcohol or other drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I am an active person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I exercise at least 15 minutes every day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I am always careful to eat only healthy foods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I limit the amount of sugary or processed foods I eat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I eat regular meals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I wake up fresh and rested each morning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I sleep well every night	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I find it easy to let go and relax	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I take quiet time to myself most days		<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I can do relaxation exercises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I make sure I get plenty of fresh air	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I drink at least 8 glasses of water each day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Count the number of times you have ticked True.

Write your score here _____

If your score is 10 or higher: Good for you, please keep your good habits going!

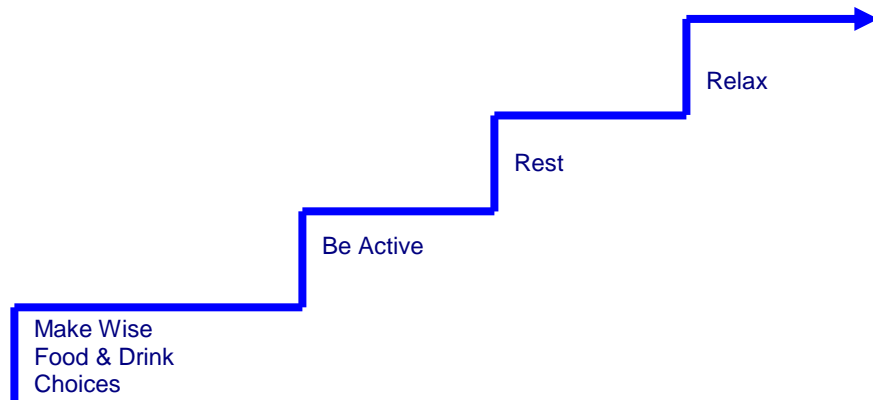
If your score is 9 or lower: Why not take the challenge . . .

Take the Challenge:

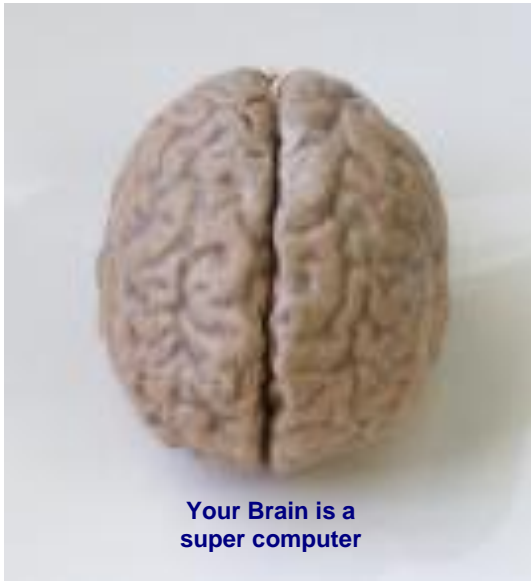
It takes us Humans 21 days to build a habit. Why not take the next 21 days to build Positive Skills Habits that will help you take good care of your wonderful body!

Take Five to think about:

- What are your body's needs?
- How can you build these body skills and habits in your life?



Step Two – Take care of your beautiful mind



The Life Skills for Step 2 are:

1. Train your brain: keep it fit, **stretched** and healthy
2. Develop a positive mental attitude
3. Power thinking
4. The power of thinking positively
5. Building self confidence and self esteem
6. Overcoming anxiety
7. Dealing with panic attacks
8. Overcoming depression



TRAIN YOUR BRAIN

Your brain loves to be entertained and challenged by lots of different things, and in different ways. It loves variety and it loves structure. Your brain is divided into two halves called hemispheres. The left side loves lists and numbers, music and order while the right side loves creative things including music.

Your brain thrives on different kinds of sensory experience, that means the brain loves it when you use all your senses. Research has shown that when the brain is deprived of sensory input it creates its own through hallucination. Humans are multi-sensory beings, we use our:



Eyes: Look at lots of different images, books, art, TV, fields, woods, sea.



Ears: Listen to different types of music and sounds.



Touch: Enjoy touching and feeling different materials.



Smell: Enjoy different smells, scents.



Imagination: Put some nice images in your mind, use your imagination.

Imagine lots of different things. Try to image something positive, something that you love or would like to happen. These imaginings are very helpful to you because they help you to develop a positive mental attitude (PMA).

What does the Human Brain need to be healthy?

- √ Good nutrition, water, clean air, natural light
- √ Lots of sensory experience to excite and stretch it
- √ Calm, rest and time to restore
- √ Positive self-talk, and power thinking
- √ To be free of toxins, accident and injury
- √ WISE choices

You possess the ultimate super-computer and it is in your head! Below are five simple activities that can calm, relax and boost your thinking power. Try these brain boosting exercises.



GET BOTH HEMISPHERES WORKING

To open the brain and maximise function.

Brain gym activities to help you practice using both sides (left and right) of the brain together. With both sides working together, you find that it is easy to be open to new learning. Thinking of the letter 'X' tells your brain you want to use both sides. Make physical movements with your body to create the image of the letter 'X'. Use upbeat music to do lots of exercises that involve crossing your left with right side.

Co-ordinate movement so that when one arm moves, the leg on the opposite side of your body moves at the same time. Try this for one minute each day. If you have got tests coming up at school, try it for three to five minutes each day. It really helps your brain to function at its best!



BRAIN STRETCH

To open up and stretch the brain.

This exercise helps handwriting, spelling and creative writing. Hold one arm next to your ear. Exhale gently through pursed lips while activating the muscles by pushing the arm against the other hand in 4 directions (front, back, in and away) or try a Calf-pump.

This helps you to be more motivated and ready to move. Do it whenever you feel "stuck". Lean forward on a wall or a chair, exhale, press the back heel gently to the ground. As you release, lift your heel up and take a deep breath. Repeat 3 times on each side. The more you bend the forward knee, the more lengthening you feel in the back of the calf.



BRAIN ENERGY EXERCISES:

To keep energy levels high.

Energiser: Rest your forehead between your hands. Breathe out all your tension. Then quietly breathe in as the air fills up your midline. Your head lifts up forehead first, followed by your neck and upper body. Your lower body and shoulders stay relaxed. Exhale as you tuck your chin down into your chest. Pull your head forward, lengthening the back of your neck. Relax and breathe deeply. Eat food with lots of water. Drink lots of water.

Energy Yawn: Pretend to yawn. Put your fingertips against any tight spots you feel on your jaw or forehead. Make a deep relaxed, yawning sound, gently stroking away tension.



ENERGY MASSAGE

To cut down distractions, build focus and clear thinking.

Using You thumb and index finger gently unroll your ears, three times from top to bottom. Give lots of massage to both ears and ear lobes. Feel the energy boost from this lovely massage.



MIND MAPPING

To help you organize your ideas or class notes, help you be more creative and improve memory.

Mind maps are the reflection of your brain's natural image filled thinking skills. Mind mapping is a very useful thinking tool and if you want to know more you should look at Tony Buzan's book called How to Mind Map.

We cannot give you a full course on mind mapping here but the basic principle is that you use pictures to draw a map where all the bits of a problem are connected together like a road-map. This enables you to see links between things as it is an excellent way of studying difficult school subjects.

♥ top tip ♥

tip Read Tony Buzan's Book on
Mind Mapping for teens.



DEVELOPING A POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE

'The mind grows by what it feeds on' — JG Holland

Experts tell us that the average person has approximately 50,000 thoughts a day. Many of these thoughts will be positive and helpful. However, some may be negative, unproductive and self-defeating; for example, thoughts/habits/things we say to ourselves which are put-downs that can limit us.

The way you think affects the way you feel. Your thoughts create the reality of your world. Just as the colour of flowers look brighter and more beautiful when the sun is shining, so it is with your feelings when your thinking is bright and positive. With stress many people's thoughts become negative or even scary for a while, a bit like when the sky becomes cloudy and grey, the sun is covered up, and maybe we can even sense a storm brewing. Some people find they get into a bit of a habit of 'cloudy day thinking' or "worry thinking".

Healthy, sunny thoughts create mind power, and our feelings and emotions become brighter and more enjoyable. Thoughts and feelings together help to create our everyday reality — everything starts with a thought or feeling.

Whether we realise it or not, we are constantly feeling, thinking about and interpreting the world around us. When something happens to us, it is the way we think about it that really does decide how we feel about it. And this in turn affects the way we deal with it. Can you think of an example of this in your own life?

By understanding the way we think and interpret things, we can have an influence on how we feel, and what we do in response to all the things that are happening in our lives.



Over the course of our lives we all develop patterns or habits in our thinking that affect how we feel and act. Some of these habits are helpful and energising, but others can be stressful and unhelpful to us. These unhelpful habits are ones we are better off without. Unhelpful habits include things like worrying; getting stressed or frustrated; feeling negative about ourselves and/or others. The good news is that by developing the skill of positive thinking, you can change unhelpful habits of thinking. You can get to choose how you think and how you see the world. With practice, you begin to control the direction your thoughts will take. Even when a certain pattern of thinking has become automatic, it can still be changed when you actively choose to use positive thinking.

The aim of Key Two is to help you learn the skill of positive thinking and Power thinking. Key Two will also give you ideas for new ways of approaching things which will give every area of your life a boost. Remember the model... making positive changes to your thinking - that is, your mind - will help your body, your behaviour, your environment and the nexus, or spirit at the very core of your being.

Once you've read through this section and understand the skills described, think about trying some or all of these skills in your life. Notice how the way you think really does affect the way you feel. Life is managed, not cured... your thoughts create your feelings and emotions... control your thoughts and you control your life.

Think Happy, Healthy Thoughts and guess what you will be

Yes, Happy and Healthy



POWER THINKING

Power thinking and positive self talk together make up a very valuable life skill that will help you to stay calm and in control of your thoughts, feelings and behaviour(s), even in difficult situations.

The idea with Power thinking is that the pictures and sounds that we run in our heads really do have effects on our mind and in our everyday lives. We can introduce into our minds some very positive and powerful pictures and sounds that not only counteract the negative ones, but also build up a great deal of new strength and confidence as well. Our thoughts, our feelings and our behaviours begin to help us and heal us. This is also true of positive self-talk, which is an aspect of Power thinking. Positive self-talk replaces the old, habitual ways we may have built up of being very critical of ourselves and others. In fact, like Power thinking, positive self-talk not only replaces negative thoughts, but introduces a whole new way of approaching things at the same time.

To begin with, it will help you if you can recognise your habitual self-talk as soon as possible. Often we say things to ourselves so quickly and automatically that we don't even realise that we have done it. For Example, you may have a little habit that you don't like in yourself - like burning the toast, for instance (we all do it!) But rather than simply recognising what has happened and reminding yourself to be more careful next time, your negative self-talk kicks in and gives you a really hard time. "I'm so stupid!" or "I'm always messing up" - these are two very common negative thoughts that can literally poison your mind. Try to become aware of this kind of self-talk. At first developing this kind of awareness may be a bit difficult because thoughts are often so automatic we barely notice them. But the effort you can make to recognise your self-talk is extremely helpful in itself. Gradually you'll learn to recognise more clearly all the various habitual thoughts that run through your mind. And you will begin to notice how they affect you. With practice you can become aware of this flow of thoughts even before you have finished thinking them.

On the next few pages we will be looking at your thoughts and thought patterns and how you can help Yourself to really see and understand through your own experience the link between the way you think and the way you act. You'll see for yourself how thoughts really do affect your actions.

Following stress, bad or traumatic events in our lives we often feel distressed or negative about ourselves, the world and the future. Ask yourself, 'Do I think in negative or unhelpful ways?' or 'Do I look on the pessimistic side of things?' Be aware that when negative thoughts built up into a habit, they will have Negative effects on all aspects of your life. It is exactly the same process with positive thoughts: build up the habit of kindness towards yourself and a sense of forgiveness and peace and your whole being will lighten up, filling you with energy, confidence and calm. With practice you can gradually change negative, pessimistic thoughts into helpful, nourishing ones. When you do that, you will have mastered the art of living your best life.

It is really worth trying to break negative thoughts because they are so self-defeating. Let's take a closer look at how they work on our minds:

They are automatic

— they just pop into our heads, they happen so fast, we do not even notice sometimes

They are often distorted

— i.e. they do not fit the facts

They are believable

— it does not occur to us to question them, we accept them readily

They are involuntary

— they can be difficult to switch off

They are unhelpful

— they make you feel negative and break down your confidence and self-esteem

—

Negative ways of thinking can make you feel worried, sad, depressed, powerless, and angry. Try to be aware of and get clever about any negative thoughts that could be ruling your life. Become aware of what your current thought patterns/ways of thinking are. Once identified these patterns can be tackled. Remember awareness is 90% of the solution!



THINKING PATTERNS

Once you have started identifying any bad/negative thinking habits you may have, then you can begin to question and challenge them. See if there are alternative ways of interpreting the situation. Starting below are five examples to help you question the way you are thinking. Under each one is an example of a negative thought to question, and an alternative way of thinking.

Please read through the examples given below and mark any ones you have ever had to deal with. Jot down other examples of ways of thinking which you feel are negative... always remember to question why you are thinking in that way. Is it the voice of somebody in your life, either now or when you were younger, who didn't really understand you? Have you somehow allowed their negativity to settle into your own mind? Well, here is your chance to have a really good mental spring clean! Consider and write down as many alternative ways of thinking as possible.



Today's reminder:

If you want to become skillful at applying power (healthy) thinking make a commitment and practice, practice, practice. Repetition is the mother of skill. Every positive thought you think is contributing its share to a happier life.

.....

QUESTION 1 —Do I have a habit of jumping to conclusions?

This can happen when you base what you think on poor evidence. A common example is believing people are thinking critically about you... how do you know what someone else is thinking? None of us are mind readers! You may think you know what someone else is thinking and you may be right, but do not jump to conclusions. Always check things out.

Negative thought: My friend didn't turn up as arranged. He couldn't give a damn about me.

New ways to think: All I know for sure is that he didn't turn up. I do not actually know whether he thinks little of me. Perhaps some emergency happened... I'll ask him next time I see him, or perhaps I'll contact him now.

.....

QUESTION 2 — Am I thinking in all or nothing terms?

Is your thinking too black and white? Nearly everything is relative, for example people are never all good or all bad — they are a mixture of both. Are you applying 'all or none' rules to yourself? Take the time to clear your mind and focus on being more flexible. Release negativity, just let it go.

Negative thought: I didn't do well in that test. I'll never do well. I'm useless.

New ways to think: The test did not go as well as I hoped and that is disappointing... I did not do as well as I wanted to. That doesn't mean it was no good at all. It doesn't mean I am useless. I will not condemn myself on the basis of one event but learn from the experience instead.

.....

QUESTION 3 — Am I concentrating on my weaknesses and forgetting my strengths?

When people get stressed they often overlook problems they handled well in the past — they overlook personal strengths which would help them to overcome present difficulties. Once they examine or question their thinking they are often surprised how they are able to deal with problems. How have you coped with similar things in the past?

Negative thought: I can't manage now that Jane is gone. I can't cope with being alone.

New ways to think: I was alone before I met her. Even when she was here there were times that I was alone... I coped. It may have been difficult but I managed. I can manage now.... I'll make an effort to get out and meet people... take up old hobbies, catch up with old friends. I'll phone a friend for a start.

.....

QUESTION 4 — Am I taking something personally which has little/nothing to do with me?

We all tend to be sensitive or even super-sensitive from time to time — especially when we are under pressure or when things go wrong. When we are sensitive or vulnerable we take things more personally, more to heart. We blame ourselves unnecessarily for things which very often may have nothing to do with us.

Negative thought: That man is giving me filthy looks and/or is shouting and getting at me. What have I done wrong?

New ways to think: I'm not the only person here. Perhaps he is on edge and shouts at whoever is around. It is his problem and I do not have to involve myself in this.

.....

QUESTION 5 — Am I assuming I can do nothing to change my situation?

Negative thinking and pessimism is common when we are stressed. Negative thinking can make you give up before you even start. You cannot know that there is no solution to your problems until you try. So go on, give it a go. (**see problem-solving for ideas**)

Negative thought: It's no good, I'll never sort this out

New ways to think: Never is a long time! I'll think about this another way... I'll take a break and come back to it. I'll try a problem-solving approach. I'll try to think of positive solutions.

♥ top tip ♥

Challenge your thinking by asking: 'It may be feeling . . . but is it a fact?'

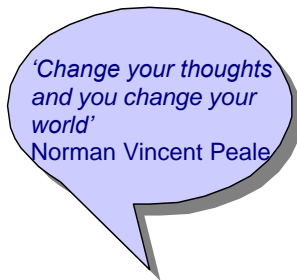


THE POWER OF THINKING POSITIVELY

Thinking is a habit. If you have learned bad thinking habits, life can get very stressful for you. Thinking can be ruled by self-limiting beliefs — these are thoughts/habits/things we say to ourselves which limit us and act as put downs. They make us feel negative about our ability to manage our lives and cope with pressure. Do you have any self limiting beliefs? Think about it.

Power thinking is about positive self-talk. Power thinking is a habit that is positively helpful to you. It uses positive self-talk as a way of setting yourself up for success each day. It is a good way of preparing yourself for difficult situations. Power-thinking is a way of talking yourself into staying calm if things get heated or stressful. Positive self-talk helps you control your thoughts in a positive direction. When you face difficult situations, prepare yourself in advance by using positive self-talk or Power thinking. Control your thoughts and you can control the outcome. This will give you both the confidence and the ability to respond positively to stress or difficulties.

At first you may not be able to stop thoughts from coming into your head, but you always have a choice about whether or not to give attention and energy to them.



INSIDE OUT

Happiness is an inside job. The way you think affects the way you feel. It is unrealistic to expect to be happy all the time but you might be happy and healthy much more often if you make a firm decision to use power thinking.

Listed below are some examples of power thinking. Why not give power thinking a try? Add any others which come to mind.

1. 'There are so many ways in which I can improve the quality of my life. I'll take time to create something positive in my life to-day.'
2. 'I am good at being positive these days. As long as I keep my cool, I am in control.'
3. 'I'll keep an open mind,' I will stay flexible, I will think about all the angles'
4. Do not get so bogged down in dealing with old wounds that you forget the power you have to manage the present day.
5. 'I've managed before so I can manage again' I have a choice about my attitudes and behaviours
6. 'I will not act on impulse, I will stay calm and keep control' Things take time
7. 'If I find myself getting uptight or upset I will focus on facts not feelings'
8. 'I do not have to get involved, I can 'let go', I can build a bridge and get over it!'
9. 'When I make a decision then I stick to it, I can teach myself that my choices have meaning and I deserve to be strong'
10. 'I will stay calm, and in power-thinking and that way I can then work out a plan to handle this'
11. *'To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance'* — Oscar Wilde
12. *'You grow up the day you have the first real laugh, at yourself'* — Ethel Barrymore
13. Say to yourself each day, 'I am loveable just the way I am'

♥ top tip ♥

It is your life . . . power it with positive self-talk. Happiness is an inside job. The way you think really does affect the way you feel.



Today's reminder:

Turn away from negative, self-doubt and fear and celebrate life instead. What joy can you acknowledge today?



BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

Self-confidence is a habit. It happens when we *unlimit* our thinking and use positive self-talk. The way you think affects the way you feel, about yourself and others. Avoid chaining yourself to the past with self-defeating guild or putting yourself down. Your life deserves, your attention, make this attention positive and supportive. Life holds so much for you.



YOU CAN CONTROL THE KIND OF PERSON YOU ARE NOW AND THE PERSON YOU BECOME

Self-confidence builds from within. Positive self-talk leads to positive thinking, inner strength, and positive feelings. We all have qualities that can benefit ourselves and others, but sometimes we do not see them unless we stop to look. Why not start recognizing and building on your skills and strengths now? Label your successes, be positive about your good points.

Things I like about myself

[A large rectangular area enclosed by a dashed blue border, intended for writing a list of positive points.]

Make a list of your positive points. Think about how a good friend would describe you. Carry the list with you and add to it.

♥ top tip ♥

Self-confidence is a habit . . . Do good things and remember that you did them



BUILDING UP SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM MEANS:

Being positive as much as you can

if you tell yourself you can cope then you probably will

Allowing yourself to make mistakes

Do not read too much into difficult situations – you are only human! Be kind to yourself . . . learn what you can and **Move On**.

Accepting compliments graciously

Too much energy is spent refusing compliments. Let others praise you when they feel you deserve it – and enjoy it . . . because you probably **do** deserve it. Even when you don't feel deserving, you can be grateful for another person's kindness.

Recognising your achievements – and praising yourself for them

Look at your achievements, not just the big ones, but all the little ones too (staying calm in a stressful situation).

See life's "glass as half full, not half empty"

Nothing succeeds like success. Build on your successes. Do not waste energy on being pessimistic. Turning around negative attitudes will boost inner energy, this in turn will boost outer confidence.

*This above all: to thine own self be true
William Shakespeare*



TIPS ON BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE

There are a number of ways in which you can help to build your confidence, here are just a few, feel free to add your own ideas:

1. Set your mind on a task . . . then get to it. Focus on the task. Complete it.
2. Take small steps . . . one step at a time
3. Acknowledge each achievement 'I did it'
4. Acknowledge your strengths

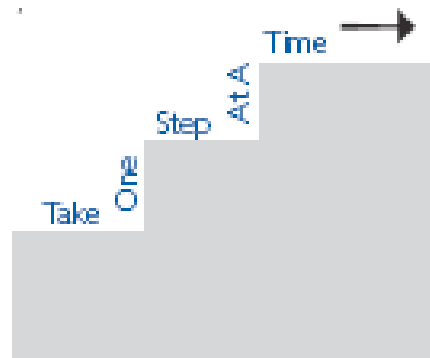
5. Talk positively to yourself – focus on the positives
6. Ask yourself what makes you feel more optimistic . . . do more of this!
7. Change thoughts you are not happy with
8. Identify and challenge any negative thoughts
9. Ask for help and support when you need it
10. Take care of your physical health by good nutrition, exercise and relaxation
11. Treat yourself – take time and space for yourself
12. Gradually start going places, learn new things, gain new experiences
13. Listen to other people's praise, accept it and *believe* it

Taking a risk and proving to yourself that you are able to do small things first will increase your confidence. Small successes then give you the boost and motivation to try bigger things.

Each small change is one area of your life which will affect the others i.e. improvements in your self-esteem will help you feel more confident, more relaxed and better able to manage.

Remember efforts made in one aspect of our lives are more than doubled, as they will naturally create change in other aspects too.

Contribute to your own wellbeing by trying to check in with yourself on a regular basis. Pay attention to your needs. Be aware of your inner 'voice'. Learn to value your own experience. Develop a non-judgmental awareness of yourself and your needs. Ask for help when you need to. Take one step at a time.



OVERCOMING ANXIETY

Anxiety (often seen as worry, fear panic or stress) is a normal human emotion... it is the body's healthy, instinctive, response to stressful situations. However some people experience anxiety so intensely that it stops them from coping well with day to day activities, causes them to avoid certain situations, and makes them feel they are no longer in control of their life. It is at this point that the anxiety state becomes abnormal. Lots of people worry /suffer from serious worry at some point during their lifetime ... and hence if you do you are not alone.

Anxiety can begin in our mind but is often expressed through, and made worse by behaviour and physical symptoms. It can form a spiral which results in 'panic'. But... if we recognise our own symptoms (how it affects us), we can take steps to manage it and prevent it from escalating out of control. Think about anxiety for you, how does it affect each area?

1. Your Body: (e.g. increased heart rate, sweating, 'butterflies' in stomach)
2. Your Mind: (e.g. worry about losing control, poor concentration)
3. Your Behaviour: (e.g. become fidgety and irritable, avoid people/places)

4. Your Context: (e.g. effect on friends, family, work)
5. Nexus: (e.g. effect on your spirit, your energy)



DEAL WITH WORRY

Take one step at a time. Do not avoid worry, try to manage your anxiety as quickly as possible. To help yourself try some of the following suggestions.

1. Remind yourself: *fear is normal*. Fears about tomorrow do not have to affect today
2. Be specific: What exactly is worrying you? (Name it) Break down and deal with each worry step by step.
3. Remind yourself: fear is not *harmful*, only *unpleasant*. (when you face it, fear will pass)
4. Watch how you are thinking. Get tough on negative thinking.
5. Remind yourself: the feelings *will pass* If you try to avoid things . . . fear will only build so feel the fear and face things . . . it will pass. Ask for help if you need it . Do not keep it a secret.
6. It is far better to face fear.. running away or avoiding it will only make it harder to deal with next time.
7. Stay in the NOW, deal with this moment, NOW not 'what ifs'



EXAMINE YOUR THOUGHTS

Stop adding to the panic with negative thoughts. Use power thinking skills. Consider 'what evidence do I have for thinking negatively?' Try to think of alternative thoughts and possibilities. Ask yourself.

1. Am I focusing on my weaknesses and forgetting my strengths?
2. Am I expecting myself to be perfect? Go easy on yourself.
3. Are my thoughts helpful to me?
4. Am I exaggerating the importance of events?
5. Am I predicting the future instead of taking control in the present?
6. Am I giving attention to the things I can positively do to help me here?

Because most worry focuses on the future, if you can learn to stay in the present, living one day or one moment at a time, you can break the cycle of worry and fear. Take positive steps and learn to focus all your attention on the **now**. The very moment you are living in.



USE POSITIVE SELF-TALK/POWER THINKING

Remember to tell yourself you can do it, remind yourself of times you have coped. Look at the situation as a time to practice what you have learnt. Think about how pleased you will be if you succeed at this. Ask for help if you need it.



LOWER STRESS

Being physically tired, run down, or having many changes to your life makes you more vulnerable to anxiety. Keep your stress levels down by working through the 'body,' Key One skills in this book.



USE DISTRACTION TECHNIQUES

Give the unpleasant symptoms of anxiety time to pass by distracting yourself and becoming interested in what is going on around you, not inside you.

Distract yourself by giving attention to things around you (e.g. focus on something in the environment, try to guess what people do for their holidays).

Use all your senses to enjoy some quiet time (e.g. what do you see, feel, hear) or look at a picture or painting and decide what you like and do not like about it

Distract yourself by giving yourself a task or activity to do like a physical task (eg. go for a walk, change the music, wash up after a meal) or a mental task (eg. count backwards from 100 in 3s, or do a crossword or sudoku puzzle).



USE RELAXATION EXERCISES

Remember Key One: Body Skills?

Use mental or physical relaxation in two ways:

- 1 To daily prepare your body/mind for future stressful situations
- 2 To reduce the unpleasant symptoms whilst you are experiencing anxiety

The more you can prepare yourself in advance the better you will be able to cope during a crisis. Develop a 'quick relaxation routine' which you can use during a period of panic: e.g. 1) point feet away from you and then let them relax, 2) pull back wrists, stretch fingers out, then let them relax, 3) pull shoulders down towards feet and then let them relax, 4) pull jaw down to chest and then let it relax.



USE DEEP BREATHING

Practising calm, slow breathing will help slow your racing body and mind. It will comfort you. Use it when you are preparing to face a difficult situation or to cool/calm down after an argument or a period of stress. Follow these steps:

- Take a slow, deep and gentle breath in. Breathe from your abdomen/stomach rather than from your upper chest
- Give a gentle but slightly longer breath out, let out a slight sigh, imagine with each out breath that you are pushing and blowing your troubles out. Concentrate on the air leaving your body as you breathe out
- Leave a small pause before the next breath in. Take it easy and slowly. Do not take fast or huge breaths, this will make you feel worse. Just take things slowly and calmly. Talk kindly and positively to yourself. Tell yourself that you can cope. All will be well.



BUILD UP CONFIDENCE

Confidence comes from enjoying and labelling successes and skills, trying new things and proving you yourself that you are able to cope. This means sometimes accepting the short-term discomfort of anxiety symptoms for the long-term gains of control over your life. It can mean *staying* in the anxiety-provoking

situation until the symptoms of fear and panic subside... because they will eventually. One thing that is certain in life is change. So, if things are difficult now... remember... THIS TOO WILL PASS.

Start with small goals and gradually build them up (e.g. put yourself in a situation which makes you feel mildly anxious and watch how the panic symptoms go away and you **cope**... this will give you the confidence to try a situation which is *more* anxiety-provoking). The more you practise the easier it will become. Always praise yourself when you have successfully coped with a feared situation.



CONTACT PROFESSIONALS

Don't be hard on yourself, be kind — if you need help do ask. Everyone needs a little help from time to time, you are only human. Ask for help if you need it.

♥ top tip ♥

Take a Five Keys approach to managing panic or anxiety



SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS BY GETTING CLEVER ABOUT WHAT HELPS YOU FEEL CALM AND LESS WORRIED

When you find things which make you feel better keep a note of them. Bring out the list when you feel worried or stressed/tense. Add to it regularly and make it your personal guide to managing worry.

I can help myself when I am anxious by:

- Using calm, deep breathing
- Concentrating on something completely unrelated (eg. A crossword puzzle).
- Talking over a situation with a trusted friend or parent
-
-
-
-
-

♥ top tip ♥

Feel the fear and do it anyway' . . .
always face things, even if it is just
in small steps!! – avoidance will
make you more anxious



DEALING WITH PANIC ATTACKS

One person in three experiences panic attacks. During a panic attack you are likely to breathe very fast. The fear of panic attacks can sometimes be enough to trigger one off. If you experience panic attacks it is important to remember that the feelings are nothing more than an exaggeration of normal bodily reactions to stress. The feelings are not harmful, just unpleasant.

To stop this awful process you have to raise the amount of carbon dioxide in your lungs. You can do this in two ways (1) the paper bag trick (2) change your breathing. We will look at each of these in turn.



THE PAPER BAG TRICK

If you have a **paper** bag handy hold it tightly over your mouth and nose so no air can get into your lungs from the outside. Breathe in the bag for several minutes until you calm down. Note: it is important that you use a paper bag, not a plastic one!



CHANGE YOUR BREATHING

If a paper bag is not handy then it helps to slow your breathing so you breathe in less air in a given period of time. To help yourself slow your breathing you could count to yourself whilst breathing. For example it might help to say “one elephant” to yourself while breathing in and “two elephants” whilst breathing out.

Breathing is something we do all the time, so check that you have got it right. Even when you are just talking, try to talk slowly, do not say too much in one breath, and try to take a gentle breath in from your tummy, before carrying on. Breathe slowly and deeply. Take your time. Get your body and your mind as relaxed as possible.



A WORRY SHARED IS A WORRY HALVED

If you need help do ask. Everyone needs a little help, from time to time, you are only human.

There is no need to be embarrassed, worried or ashamed. It is normal and healthy to worry sometimes. Ask for help if you need to. Talk to family, friends, teacher or your doctor.



OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

Depression is a common problem in modern living. Given the stresses and strains of modern society it is a natural for our moods to fluctuate, especially in response to stress or to upsetting or difficult circumstances. However, some

people feel they are 'down' much more than they are 'up' and cannot necessarily relate it to a specific event. Their low mood may interfere with many aspects of their lives, they may feel sad and tired, and may see their life as too difficult or worthless. This persistent low mood is called depression.

Depression can vary from mild to severe depending on a number of things. Thinking about times when you feel sad or low, how does it affect you?

- 1 Your Body: (e.g. feel drained, loss of appetite)
- 2 Your Mind: (e.g. feel worthless, lack of self-confidence)
- 3 Your Behaviour: (e.g. sleep problems, tearfulness, loss of interest in usual activities)
- 4 Your Context: (e.g. loss of interest in being with friends or people your own age)
- 5 Nexus: (e.g. feeling low in spirit or life energy)

So now we have identified how depression may affect us, is there anything we can do about it?... YES!



COPING WITH DEPRESSION

If you find that depression/low mood persistently interferes with your day then **do speak to your parents, carers or family doctors** — she/he can talk you through specific options as there are some very good treatments available for depression. *There is hope, there is help.*

In the meantime here are some suggestions that have shown success.

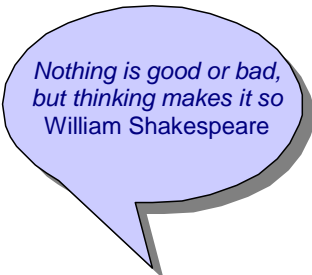


CHALLENGE YOUR THINKING

Although it may feel that you are thinking in a negative way because of the depression, it is most likely that it is one of the causes of it too. Ask yourself:

- Am I expecting myself to be perfect?
- Am I thinking in 'all or nothing' terms?
- Am I only paying attention to the pessimistic side of things?
- Do I give enough attention to my successes and victories?
- Am I blaming myself for something which is not my fault?
- Am I exaggerating the importance of events?
- Am I assuming that nothing can change?
- Do I pay enough attention to facts?

Try to challenge negative thoughts with facts not feelings. Ask yourself, what is the evidence for my thoughts/beliefs? Try to limit and control any self-limiting thoughts or beliefs.



*Nothing is good or bad,
but thinking makes it so*
William Shakespeare

Feelings may not be comfortable, but that doesn't make them bad. With a change of thinking you have choices about what to do with your feelings. Anything can be used to good if you allow it.



BE ACTIVE GET MOVING!

Physical activity (however limited) is a very good way to lift depression. It will give you a well-needed break and actually produces a natural 'high' in your body. Take an exercise class or a walk in the country. Do things by yourself or with friends. Get active. Put a structure on your day. Do something active every day.



LET OTHERS HELP YOU

Do not carry all your troubles by yourself. Family or friends who seem over-concerned are *wanting to help*. There will be many times that you are the shoulder for people to cry on... let others share your burden for a change. There is nothing to be gained by suffering in silence. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, it is a sign of strength to recognise that some things just cannot be done alone.



BUILD UP CONFIDENCE

It is likely that you spend an amount of time putting yourself down... but aren't we *all human* with 'rough edges'? Use your energy for self-help and support, not for 'beating yourself down'. Remind yourself what you can do... and then do more of that thing.



LOOK AFTER YOUR BODY

Your body works very hard at times of stress so, A) establish a good resting and sleeping routine if you need to. B) practice relaxation to give both body and mind a break. C) feed your body with high quality good (even if you have a low appetite)... it will give you energy and strength.



LIMIT ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

Whilst alcohol may appear to give a short-term 'block out' from problems, it has the potential to do more harm than good in the long run. Chemically, alcohol is a depressant and lowers your body's tolerance to stress. It can cause you to think in negative ways. **DO NOT USE DRUGS**, unless your doctor has prescribed them for you.



TAKE ACTION... DON'T STAY PASSIVE

Try to act, get moving physically, distract yourself. Think about what you can do to make things better for you. Do not let your low mood or worry stop you from taking the steps you need to manage your depression. Research has shown that action/exercise can lift your mood.



TRY NEW THINGS

Take a break from your usual routine. Try to 'get out of yourself,' at least for awhile. Try new things, yoga, join a quiz team, gym or walking club.



ASK FOR HELP OR CONTACT PROFESSIONALS

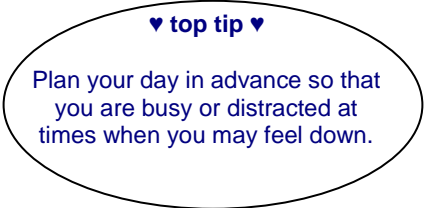
Don't suffer alone. There are many people specifically trained in helping people manage depression. Look through the Resources section or ask your Counselor.

SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS BY GETTING CLEVER/WISE ABOUT WHAT HELPS YOUR DEPRESSION

When you find things which make you feel better keep a note of them. Bring out the list when you next feel low.

Add to it regularly — make it your personal guide to improving your mood.

Remember the Five Keys Model. Do something positive for your body, your mind, your behaviour, your context and nexus.



I can lift my mood by:

- Starting the day with some exercise.
- Watching my favourite comedy video.
- Planning my day in advance
-
-
-
-
-



YOUR PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

Now lets identify your **Personal Achievement Targets (or P.A.T.s)** relating to your mind. Remember these can change as you make progress but it is good to start with a few simple P.A.T.s. These targets are the basis of your own personal plan. It is important that you decide on the targets in your plan as it is to be your own personal support plan. In this section we are interested in things you might try to do for your mind.

Remember to ensure that every target is:

- REALISTIC:
-
- ACHIEVABLE:
- MEASURABLE:
- APPROPRIATE:
- SOLUTION-FOCUSED:

Why not start by listing some P.A.T.s right here

I will challenge negative thinking
I will try a few brain exercises each day
I will work on building my self-confidence

**P.A.T.
For your
mind**



**Your
own**

Take the Quiz

How well do you look after your beautiful mind?

Please tick true or false after each sentence.

	True	False
1. I have a positive mental attitude.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I always know the difference between fact and feeling.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I use power thinking every day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I eat foods that are healthy for my body and brain.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I know how to manage my feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I drink lots of water each day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I take plenty of exercise to keep my brain happy & healthy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I am always kind to myself and work at building myself up.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I take good care of my brain by using all my senses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I imagine happy, healthy things for my life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I have learned study skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I train my brain regularly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Count the number of times you have ticked True. Write your score here _____

If your score is 10 or higher, Good for you, please keep your good habits going.

If your score is 9 or lower why not take the challenge

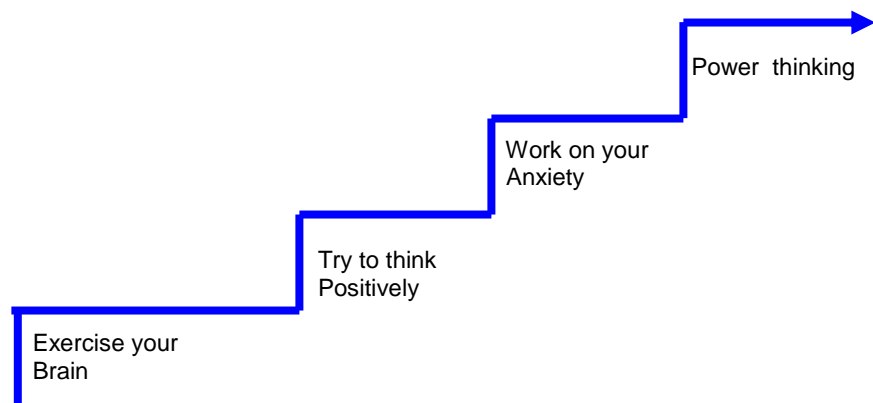
Take the Challenge:

It takes us Humans 21 days to build a habit. Why not take the next 21 days to build Good Habits that will help you take good care of your brain!

WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR YOUR MIND TO FLOURISH?

WHAT ARE YOUR BRAIN'S NEEDS AND SEEDS?

HOW CAN YOU PLANT MIND AND BRAIN SKILLS IN YOUR LIFE?



Key 3

Take care of Your Best Behaviours

The life skills for Key 3 are:

1. Making all your behaviours, your best
2. Making wise choices
3. Being an Assertive Person
4. Always act safely
5. Managing Anger and strong feelings

Look, LISTEN, Learn

Master these skills and you will help make your life happy, healthy, and full of fun and joy.



MAKING ALL YOUR BEHAVIOURS, YOUR BEST

"We are what we repeatedly do"
Aristotle

Our behaviours are often the first thing that people notice about us. Our behaviours show whether we wish to be friendly and whether we seem tense or relaxed. Not only do other people interpret our behaviours, but our behaviours also have an effect on the rest of our life. If we have positive personal behaviours we make friends easily and we also receive other positive reactions from people in our lives.

Our behaviours are largely influenced by what we are thinking at the time... and how our body is physically able to deal with the situation. When thinking positively and calmly we behave in a different way to when we are feeling low.

Thoughts really do count. Positive self-talk really helps. Think positive and you will act/behaviour positively. Act positively and people will enjoy your company and be drawn to you. Make changes to your behaviour (e.g. learn to break down problems to successfully solve them) and this will affect the health of both your body (e.g. you become less stressed and tired by problems) and your mind (e.g. you feel more confident about tackling things in the future so your self-confidence rises). Remember the model... making positive changes to your behaviour will help both your body and your mind.

In this section we will look at important ways you can stay positive, calm and in control of your behaviours... for remember that they are your behaviours. Think about the old saying:

The more you do of what you're doing... The more you get of what you're getting

Are there any adjustments/change you need to make to your behaviour(s)? The more positive behaviours you engage in, the more positive results you will gain. What can you do more of?



ACTION WHEN ACTION IS NEEDED

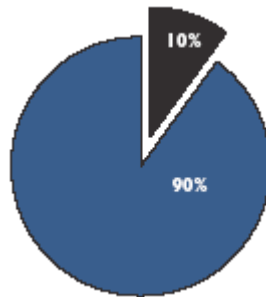
Let's now look at ways you can behave and action you can take to help yourself. Again we are trying to build habits, skills and behaviours for healing, health and well being.

Key 3 will look at how to build good habits and how to break bad habits and behaviours. It also provides information on positive action you can take.

Key 3 provides information on ways to manage your emotions, for example how to stay positive, calm and in control. It looks at problems solving and is full of useful ideas on how to behave in ways that are more supportive and helpful to you.

As you work through Key 3 lifeskills section you may notice that the way you feel affects the way you think and in turn affects the way you behave, so it is helpful to understand and try out Key 1 and Key 2 the lifeskills as you go along.

Awareness is 90% of the solution! Habits, skills and behaviours are the next 10%



MAKE WISE CHOICES: PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING

Are your priorities in order? Are you so busy with smaller, less important concerns that you run out of time for the really important things? Today make room to think about what really matters.



PROBLEM-SOLVING

Problem-solving is a technique which helps you learn to deal with problems as they arise rather than let them build up inside you. Once you begin to recognise the steps in problem-solving you will become less daunted by any difficulties which might come up. Because you will have the skills to break down problems you will learn not to brush them under the carpet.



PROBLEM-SOLVING MADE EASY:

There is usually more than one way to deal with an issue. Try different or new ideas... do not give up just because the first way you tried did not work

Most problems can be broken down into manageable stages. Do not feel you have to tackle all of them at once, take one thing at a time

Try to distance yourself from problems so you can see them in a more detached way. Perhaps pretend the problems are someone else's and you've been asked for advice



CHANGING PROBLEMS INTO SOLUTIONS:

Work through the steps with your own example, writing down your ideas as you go so that you can refer back to them.

1. Briefly jot down your problem(s) on a piece of paper
2. Cross out any that you can do nothing about
3. Identify the problems you can start to tackle
4. Put the problems into order of importance
5. Decide which one you will deal with first (start with the easiest)
6. List as many different solutions or options as possible — it doesn't matter if they seem far fetched or silly (this is called brainstorming)
7. Decide which options are realistic and unrealistic, cross out the unrealistic ones
8. Choose an option and break it down into small steps — plan how and when you will complete each
9. Start **TAKING ACTION**, step by step (your confidence should build with each step). Do not brood over things... just do it. Do something that makes a difference today, whatever the problem.
10. Take it easy though, take your time 'Patience is the key to paradise' — Turkish proverb



LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE

Look, listen, learn, instead of beating yourself up over mistakes. Try to get clever about what works, when and how. Try to be curious about the best way you can behave in different situations. Set yourself realistic goals. Be fair to yourself, as well as others. Master this habit and you will learn new skills that will help you all through your life.



DECISION MAKING

Every day we make thousands of decisions. Minor ones (such as which TV channel to watch) may be dealt with quickly, whilst major ones (such as whether to change jobs or move house) may take several hours/days. The steps in decision making always follows the same pattern though.

- 1 Think about your choices**
- 2 Weigh up the consequences of each (e.g. the pros and cons)**
- 3 Decide which to opt for**

Sometimes however we become so overwhelmed with steps 1 and 2 we never reach step 3! Often the options and choices open to us seem endless, and we worry that we'll decide wrongly and live to regret it.

Being a good decision maker is not about making snap decisions which always turn out perfectly. It usually means being: open-minded to consider all options; flexible to other people's opinions; willing to take a risk (e.g. of being wrong); and prepared to accept that, in life, sometimes we do get it wrong. The best decisions are made by being flexible: *If it works — go for it, if not — try another approach.* **Be Flexible.**

**Make things easy for yourself:
Here's how**

With SIMPLE DECISIONS (e.g. what to do this evening): DO NOT STRESS, it really doesn't matter in the long run

With MORE IMPORTANT DECISIONS (e.g. choosing to do a training course): Think about what you really want from your course... make a list then try to match it with your choice

With COMPLEX DECISIONS (e.g. how to handle upsets with schoolmates): Consult other sources (family, friends, experts in the field); learn from experience; do not make hasty choices



FIVE TIPS FOR GOOD DECISION MAKING

1. Look at making decisions as opportunities for new experiences

Don't be daunted by thinking that one path is success and the other failure... life is not black or white, it is rarely that simple. Stay flexible and open to new opportunities

2. Be willing to be wrong — to be human is to make some mistakes

We are all human and likely to make mistakes sometimes, so if at first you don't succeed... do try again

3. Act when action is needed

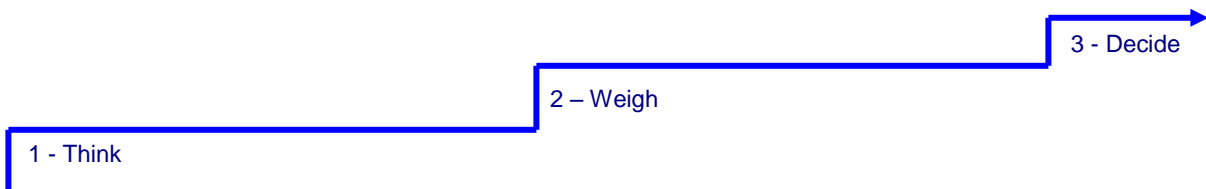
Whilst you may not make a wrong decision by ignoring or avoiding things, you haven't given yourself the chance to make a right one either

4. Remember to ask yourself: What do I want?

Whilst it can be very helpful/necessary to consider other people's opinions, do not be pushed into a decision which you are not happy with. Go with things that suit you and meet your needs.

5. Good decision-making requires positive thinking

Stay positive, calm and flexible in your self-talk. Use power thinking – it will work for you!



BEING AN ASSERTIVE PERSON

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. Have you ever felt pushed into doing something just because you couldn't say no? Are there times when lack of confidence stops you taking care of yourself? If so then this section is for you. Whilst being assertive is not the same as being pushy...it does mean having the confidence to express your view and your needs in a clear, calm and direct manner. It can improve communication in all areas of your life, and can save you time and energy. Assertiveness is all about you looking after you...you are your most important asset. Take care of you.

Here are some interesting things to consider:



You are in charge of you

What do you want? Sometimes we have to give ourselves what we wish someone else would give us. Try not to depend on others.



You have control over your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours

Things do not just happen to you. When facing difficulties think “what positive things can I do?” Remember you get to choose how you think, act or feel.



Assertiveness is not aggression

It does not mean pushing someone else into a corner, or taking away someone else’s rights, in order to have your own needs met. Be clear but not forceful.



All points of view are valid

Including your own. Whilst sometimes you may ‘agree to disagree’, usually a compromise is possible. A fair compromise means no-one feels bullied.



You do not have to YES — and neither does anyone else!

No-one is required to accept all requests. Be pleasant if someone turns you down and in return practice feeling comfortable about saying “no” yourself. There is no need to “people please”.



There is no need to justify yourself...teach people how to treat you

You have a right to be who you are and do things that affect you, your way. Whether turning down a request, reacting to criticism etc., you do not need to give complex excuses...state your point clearly and don’t make it too personal. If you are clear others will be clear also. You teach people how to treat you.



Think about your body language

Keeping eye contact is very important, as is using a clear and confident voice. Try not to fidget or mumble. Stand tall. Practice in front of a mirror.



Use visualisation

Visualise (ie. get a picture in your mind) how you want things to be. Imagine yourself dealing confidently with difficult situations. Creating a sense of control/achievement in your mind will naturally transfer to your behaviour.



Do not brood...TAKE ACTION

Hindsight can easily create regret, self-pity or resentment. Either learn from situations by trying to examine and learn from mistakes, or LET THEM GO.

Think of small ways you can start to assert yourself more. Keep track of your progress by writing a list. Soon you will have built up enough confidence to tackle more difficult situations. Keep praising yourself - you deserve it.

♥ top tip ♥

Everyone makes mistakes.
Winners are those who learn from
the past.



ALWAYS ACT SAFELY

We sometimes find ourselves in situations in which we feel uneasy and unsafe. This might be a situation where we feel we are in danger of physical injury or it might be something less easy to describe. For example you might be with someone who is acting strangely or expecting you to do something you don't want to do. You should always act for your highest good and safety and try to avoid taking part in activities that put you in danger of being hurt, injured or abused by other people. However, we sometimes find ourselves in unsafe situations despite our best intentions. Here are a few tips on how to manage these situations.

If you are in a very difficult or distressing situation, ask for help. If you do not get help at first keep asking until you get it. You should always be ready to explain what you need. There is an international 'Help Me' hand signal that you can learn. It is also useful to learn the TAKE FIVE safer steps below:-



"HELP ME" SIGN

The "Help me" sign is a hand gesture that symbolizes a child is in a crisis situation and needs immediate help. It can be used when someone is not able to call out or ask for help in an obvious way.

The sign for "Help" is made by closing your right hand into a fist.

Place your right hand on the outstretched palm of your left hand.

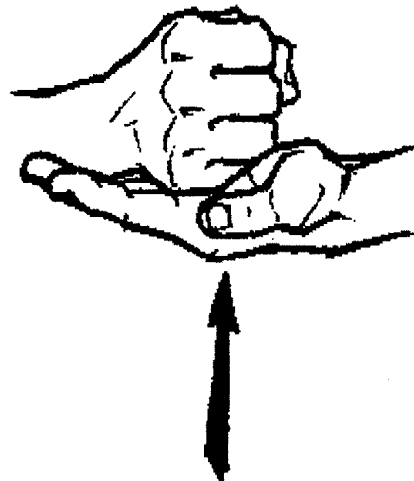
Raise both hands.

It does not matter if you get the right and left hands mixed up, the sign is the same.

If you see someone making the sign it means that they are in danger and need your help. You can reply by making the sign near yourself and then move it towards them. This says, 'I will help you.'

If you see someone who looks like they are in a dangerous situation you can ask them if they need help by doing 'I will help you' sign with your eyebrows raised in a question. This says, "do you want me to help you?"

If you see someone making the sign you should not put yourself at risk but should seek help immediately.





TAKE FIVE SAFER STEPS TO BE SAFE NOW

S Stop and Think

Stop and think about your safety. Be your own person and do not let people rush you or push you into things if you have doubts. Stay in thinking mode and trust your instincts. If someone is trying to make you do something that does not feel right, say no, get away from them immediately and seek help.

A Act to protect yourself

Be aware of which actions might lead you into danger and which actions will protect you. Always let others know where you are going and avoid having risky secrets. Remember, alcohol and other drugs will stop you thinking clearly and might lead you into dangerous situations.

F Fight for your right to safety

If you find yourself in a dangerous situation, fight, yell and scream in order to attract attention. Let others know immediately in the loudest and most visible ways that you are in danger. Learn simple ways to defend yourself but remember that avoiding situations that put you at risk is always better than having to fight your way out.

E Encourage others to stay safe

If your friends act safely they will create a safe environment for you all. Protect each other by looking out for your friends and have them look out for you. If you are going alone into a new situation, tell someone where you will be. Do not keep dangerous secrets, form a pact with someone you trust to look out for each other.

R Remember...

Remember the 'Help Me' sign.
Remember there is always someone to help if you need it.



THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNET SAFETY

The Internet can be a wonderful source of information and entertainment for teens and pre-teens but it's services (websites, e-mail, newsgroups, chatrooms etc.) can also be hazardous or risky to you. We would like to advise parents and kids alike of some safety tips set up by the Internet Advisory Board.

TLC's for children

- Tell** your parents if you come across anything on the Internet which makes you feel uncomfortable. Always tell your parents if someone wants to meet you outside your home.
- Leave** a chat room if you feel uncomfortable about what's being said and talk to your parents about it. It's easy for people on the Internet to lie about who they really are and it's hard sometimes to be sure about who you're really talking to.
- Check** with your parents about any rules they might have about when you can use the Internet, opening e-mails, using chat rooms etc.
- Stop** if you are asked to give any kin of personal details over the Internet (e-mail address, photos of yourself, etc.) – get permission first.

TLC's for parents

- Talk** about potential dangers and your concerns.
Get them to talk to you about what they do on the Internet.
Encourage them to talk about anything 'uncomfortable' they find.

- Look** Keep the computer where you can see it in a busy part of the house.
Spend time on line and see what they are doing.
Look and take note if too much time is being spent on-line.
- Check** Check history files for suitability of sites and chat rooms.
Check e-mails (especially for younger children).
Check phone bills.
- Set Rules** When the Internet can be accessed and for how long.
Never give personal information without permission.
Never agree to meet and on-line friend without permission.

THE SAFE NOW PLEDGE

I promise to do my best to be aware of my safety and that of others by knowing and practicing the TAKE FIVE Safer steps to be safe now.



MANAGING ANGER AND STRONG FEELINGS: 'KEEP YOUR COOL'

Anger is an emotion that we all experience. It is OK to be angry and to express it, but it must be to the right person, at the right time and to the right extent. When we are not in full control of our anger it can be very uncomfortable and very destructive. Think about what happens to you when you become angry, how does it affect each area of your life?

- **Your Body:** (e.g. neck/shoulder tension, increased heart rate, headaches)
- **Your Mind:** (e.g. increased stress & irritability, decreased concentration)
- **Your Behaviour:** (e.g. increased suspicion, creates strain in relationships)
- **Your Context:** (e.g. effect on friends, family, work)
- **Your Nexus:** (e.g. effect on how you feel about you)

There are two common problems with anger, either we: "bottle it" or we "let rip".

When we "bottle it": and let it build up it grows and changes inside us, making us bitter, resentful and hostile. We simmer with anger and the slightest things offend or upset us.

When we "let rip": too easily anger may get out of control. We say/do things that are 'over the top' - things we do not mean or that we regret later. We become known as 'hot heads'.

If you can recognise either one of these in yourself then it's time to think about understanding your anger better and discovering new ways of coping. This does not mean never getting frustrated, annoyed or angry from time to time, it means managing those feelings...making anger work *for* you not *against* you.



FOUR STEPS TO GETTING ANGER UNDER CONTROL

1. **Think about your reasons for managing your anger.** Think about how anger affects your life - balance the pros and the cons. Anger can give you the illusion of power. for a little while you may feel that you have control over your situation and over other people but that kind of false security will always let you down. It can be easy to justify our own unacceptable behaviour. Sometimes we excuse ourselves, saying "everyone does it", or we claim that we had no choice, or that we were provoked. We pretend that our wrongs don't count. But they do. Ask yourself: is anger working for or against me? List

the benefits of managing anger - e.g. I will get on better with others, I will feel in control of myself. I can hold my head up high. I'm giving my best.

2. **Prepare to change.** Try to understand your anger so you can break bad habits: list what makes you angry; do you 'bottle up' or do you 'let rip'?; are you thinking negatively. Remember power thinking; get clever about knowing when you are going to 'lose your cool'.
3. **Take action to change.** Change is a process. It takes time. Begin to approach your problems in a new way: follow STAY CALM; think ahead - practice dealing with anger provoking situations, watch out for triggers and learn to manage them; keep physically healthy and relaxed; learn to problem solve - use power thinking.
4. **Work at maintaining the changes.** Stay focused: try not to take things too personally or get into arguments that you know will wind you up. Think first, act later. Deal with problems as they arise. Act as if you are calm and in control. Use relaxation techniques regularly. Praise yourself when you have done well.



Today's Reminder: 'Forgiving is not forgetting, it's letting go of the hurt' – Mary McKeod Bethune

The two essential elements in learning to manage your anger are: 1) the ability to recognise when you are becoming angry (the earlier you can notice it beginning, the better able you will be at stepping in and taking control of yourself) and 2) knowing ways of dealing with the feelings of anger so that it does not become destructive and upsetting for you or others. We have looked at ways of recognising our anger (eg. do we "bottle it" or "let rip") and now will look at an alternative way of handling difficult situations. STAY CALM helps you control how worked up you get. Learning how to balance feelings with appropriate action is essential.



STAY CALM

The phrase STAY CALM has a powerful meaning. Each letter indicates an action. Have a look at it and try to get to know the meaning well so you can use it in difficult situations.

- S Stop the tension. Stop, look, listen. Stay in the now. Notice your reactions as soon as possible. Try to become clever at noticing discomfort *before* you're hitting the roof. This will come with practice.
- T Talk yourself through. Try to recognize anger as it is happening. Why get into a spiral that doesn't suit you? You can take control if you want. Do not let it get to you. Use positive self talk. Transform something negative into something manageable and positive.
- A Act in a more at ease and relaxed way even though you're feeling angry. Tell yourself "as long as I keep my cool I'm in control". Make adjustments, be flexible in order to deal with the stress you're faced with.
- Y "You can do it". "You are in charge". Say this to yourself and talk yourself out of the anger spiral. You can make choices that will help you. You have every reason to be hopeful. Easy does it.
- C Consider all sides of the situation. Let the other person know you are angry. You can begin with a simple statement like "I'm angry". Express what is annoying you and ask the other person what is annoying them. Stick to the facts. Do not let feelings get in the way of facts. Feelings are not the bottom line, feelings are only feelings.
- A Ask questions to break the tension. Acknowledge that your needs are your responsibility. Acknowledge that the other person may be annoyed also. Do not get into blaming or shaming but simply protect yourself. Admit it when you are wrong and make amends.
- L Look at what is going on and your role in it. Listen to the other person's point of view. Look after yourself and allow others to look after themselves.

M Mentally sum up the situation. Is it really bad or is it only in your mind? Do you really have to get worked up by fear about what might happen or can your thinking help you to do the reverse? Inwardly sum it up and move on to 'neutral' topics of conversation or move on to other things, e.g. "I'm angry, you're angry, let's talk about this when we both have had a chance to calm down". Admit when you are wrong and make amends, mind your own business. Mind yourself.

Keep practicing to stay calm. You can do it. You will succeed – `

Remember most of us carry more than our share of shame or unreasonable behaviour. Do not add to the problem by using cruel, clever words to humiliate a fellow human being, because in doing so, you would be shaming yourself.

♥ top tip ♥

You usually have the option to leave a situation. If not, seek help

If you try to stay calm and the other person keeps going on regardless you usually have the option to leave the situation. You do not have to hear the person out or to suffer abuse to the bitter end, sometimes it is better to simply leave. If that is not possible you will need help and you should consider the support network discussed in chapter one of this book.

Why not keep a learning log? Write down or 'log' all the things that work for you . . . go ahead, you create it

My Behaviours Learning Log

Remember, if you write things down:

- it becomes simpler
- you get some distance from it
- you remember it
- you act on it
- you have a record of your progress




YOUR PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

Now lets identify your **Personal Achievement Targets (or P.A.T.s)** relating to your behaviour. Remember these can change as you make progress but it is good to start with a few simple P.A.T.s. These targets are the basis of your own personal plan. It is important that you decide on the targets in your plan as it is to be your own personal support plan. In this section we are interested in things you might try to do for your behaviour.

Remember to ensure that every target is:

- REALISTIC:
-
- ACHIEVABLE:
- MEASURABLE:
- APPROPRIATE:
- SOLUTION-FOCUSED:

Why not start by listing some P.A.T.s right here

I will treat everyone I meet with kindness	P.A.T. For your behaviour
I will be flexible and positive	
I will stop and think before acting	Your own

Take the Quiz

How well do you look after your Behaviours?

Please tick true or false after each sentence.

	TRUE	FALSE
1. I always act in a polite way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I am always kind to others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I can say “sorry” when I do things wrong.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I like to learn from past mistakes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I try to improve my behaviours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I manage my emotions well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I have good discipline.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I set goals for me and my life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I am good at preparing in advance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I can forgive people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I know what is right and good behaviours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I always try my best.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Count the number of times you have ticked True. Write your score here _____

If your score is 10 or higher, Good for you, please keep your good habits going.

If your score is 9 or lower why not take the challenge

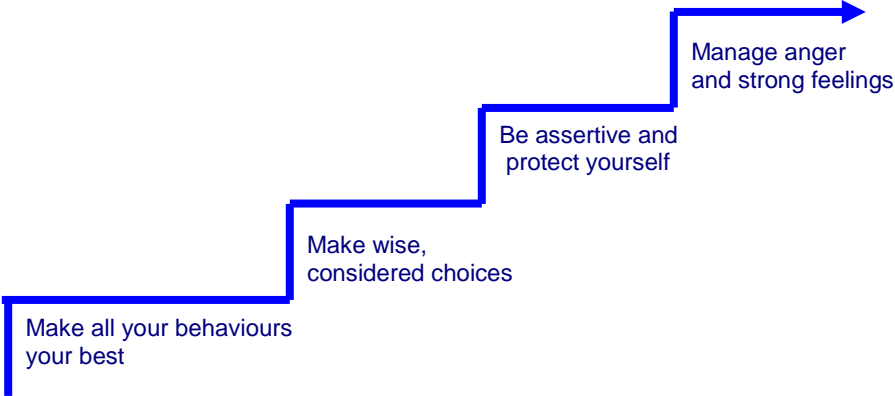
Take the Challenge:

It takes us Humans 21 days to build a habit. Why not take the next 21 days to build Good Habits that will help you take good care of your behaviours!

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO OPTIMISE YOUR BEHAVIOUR?

WHAT ARE YOUR BEHAVIOURAL NEEDS AND SEEDS?

HOW CAN YOU PLANT BEHAVIOR SKILLS IN YOUR LIFE?



Key 4

Take care of your nurturing surroundings

The key life skills here are:

1. **Sorting out your surroundings**
2. **Being responsible for your safety**
3. **Caring for others**
4. **Coping at School, College & University**
5. **Getting on with other people**
6. **Getting on with Difficult people**
7. **Seeking help**

When we think of our surroundings or environment we usually just think of physical things like the room we are in or our neighborhood. But in reality our environment is taken up by people and activities just as much. Therefore, your family, your friends, your schoolwork, your leisure and your play are all aspects of your environment.

Balance is the key to Happy Healthy Living. Sort out our surroundings and remember your Needs and Seeds



SORTING OUT YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Life can be confusing sometimes, with lots of different things going on, and all of them competing for our attention. In order to live a successful life we need clarity. This means we need to be clear about what is going on around us. It is an important life skill to be able to sort out our surroundings in a way that works well for us. This mostly comes down to paying attention and balancing things in our environment.

Sorting our your surroundings means:

- Understanding how important your environment is to your comfort and safety.
- Examining your home, your bedroom, your schoolbag, - take a mental tour of where you live, work and play. What are the positives? What are the negatives? And what are the "must make changes to" things?
- Dwell on positives, rather than negatives. Sort out the things that you know will make life easier and more comfortable for you. For example, perhaps your bedroom could be tidier or more restful/relaxing?
- Practice Positive Mental Attitude. It is contagious! Other people will become more positive along with you, and everybody benefits from that - including you! Each day, name three good things about your context, your surroundings or the environment you live in.
- Actively promote a positive attitude at work, school or play.
- Communicate with those around you, either by talking with them or by doing things together. Build a network of friends and a range of fun things to do. Master this habit and you'll make everything and everyone around you feel comfortable and easy to live with. Whether at home, at school or

work, or at play, you will know how to organise your surroundings to make the best choices for yourself.



GETTING THE BIGGER PICTURE

Life is a package deal. The good, the bad and the ugly. It is important to look at the whole picture, take the good with the bad, the rough with the smooth, so that you can make realistic choices for yourself. See life as a jigsaw and you are learning to put the pieces together.

We sometimes become fixed on one thing in our environment, it may be a problem that we are having at school or a disagreement we are having with our parents. Whatever it is, it may dominate our thinking. One of the risks here is that we focus in too sharply and we lose our peripheral vision. This means that we cannot see the full context in which the thing is happening.

For example, there is a song that says, 'Parents are people . . . people with children...'. When you have a quarrel with your parents did you consider that they may not have had any training in Lifeskills and parenting and that they are doing the best they can? They may not always get it right, that is for sure, but they are **your** parents. The point being made here is that when we perceive people as being mean to us we tend to focus in on our own hurt and anger when, in fact, there is usually a broader context. Perhaps our parents just received a huge telephone bill that made them anxious and so they snapped at us. We may be able to turn the bad around by seeing the full picture.

When bad things happen, try looking for a positive angle, there usually is one. And if all else fails look for support.



SORT OUT YOUR SUPPORTS

As we have seen, it pays to be considerate of others. When people hurt us it is usually due to their inability to cope with their own problems, and we can help ease things by behaving carefully and sensitively. It is rare to have a real enemy, somebody who really wishes to hurt you. However, sometimes people enter our lives who mean us no good. At times like this it is important that we know who we can count on in a crisis. Our supportive friends, family and others give us help and comfort when life seems bleak. They can also be a safety net if things begin to look dangerous. An important life skill is to be able to identify the people who can support you. These people are known as your support network.

Sorting out your supports means:

- Understanding that people need people, we all need to connect, belong and be close to others. We need to love and be loved. We need to give and receive attention, with friends, family and others.
- Understanding that you need to work on and nurture your friendships.
- Understanding that Parents are People, People with children. If your parents are unhappy together it is not your fault. This will be understood by your support network.
- Understanding that Bullies are people. If bullies are nasty, aggressive or unkind, it is not your fault. You should never take the blame on yourself, people in your support network certainly won't.
- Building your support network means thinking about who among your family, friends, teachers or other people is there to help you.



Today's Reminder: When grown ups or parents are grumpy it is not your fault. Adults get tired and unhappy too! Things can sometimes be a struggle but this too will pass.



BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY

Most people, but not all of us, are lucky enough to have happy lives where we can relax, feel contented and have our needs met. Sometimes things go wrong and the world does not seem such a safe place. Ask for help if you need it. Don't be put off if the first person you ask gives no help at all. Ask someone else. PLEASE DO NOT SUFFER IN SILENCE. You deserve to be helped.

Strive to be careful coming and going from home, school and play. Be aware of your surroundings. Be mindful of what is happening around you as you move around.

Show respect for your own needs and your property. Do not take part in activities or behaviours in which you may injure yourself or others.

Accept your right to care for yourself and try to develop a sense of responsibility for how you behave towards yourself and others.

Taking care of yourself means:

Find time to "do right" by yourself,

- to do the things you enjoy
- to do things that are safe and comfortable for you
- to seek help if you need to
- to simply relax, have quiet time

Put efforts in to your goals and dreams.

- stretch your reality to fit your dreams.
- take things step by step, keep going, learn what works, and what does not work.
- be flexible and prepared to change your behaviours if you need to.

Look after yourself

- take healthy options for your body
- look after your hygiene
- look after your mind

Keep it real

- balance your needs with those around you.
- be fair to yourself as well as others.
- deal with 'here and now' not the what if's? Stay focused on what you can do now.

Remember life is not always easy, ask for help when you need it from someone you trust. This might be a friend, a family member, a teacher or a counselor.



CARING FOR OTHERS

Life involves living with other people. Usually, this is great because others give us support and feed our brains with interesting conversation and play. Sometimes it can be frustrating when a person irritates us or crosses us in some way. However, we should be aware that most people are trying to 'do right' and it is in our best interests to help them, as long as their actions are not harming us in a serious way.

Caring for others means:

- Remembering they are them and you are you. Keep the line between you clear. Respect their right to

take care of themselves.

- Respect other people's property.
- Be kind and show positive behaviours whenever possible.
- Be truthful and honest always.
- Show you are pleased when others are kind.
- Treat others in ways that you like to be treated yourself.
- Think before you ACT.

Being mean, nasty or unkind to others is not for free . . . *everyone* pays for what they do . . . eventually. What you put into life you will get out of life.



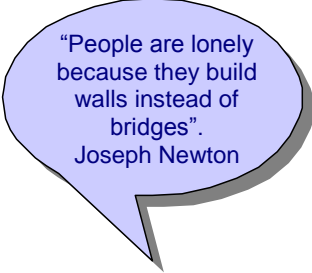
COPING AT SCHOOL

Doing well at school means different things for different people. When you listed your values at the beginning of the programme did you mention academic success? Some of you may wish to be successful in ways that require good school grades, others may wish to be successful in other ways such as having close friendships or being good at sports.

The fact is that school is a major part of your environment where you meet your friends and learn about life as well as school subjects. So doing well at school really means doing well at life. Your grades may not be the best but as long as you are trying and are happy that is the most important thing.

Doing well at school means:

- Caring about the school, the place, the property, the people! Try to be respectful and take good care of all. Remember, its *your* environment.
- Show you care about making it a safe and happy place for all.
- Show you care about school's purpose to grow and learn for life.
- Never berate, be unkind or bully others.
- Walk away from Bullies. Tell someone in authority if you or others are being bullied.
- Be positive, never encourage or make it easy for others to do bad, bullying or unkind things.
- Dare to be different, don't always go with the crowd.
- Do right by yourself and others.
- Do your best.
- Develop good study skills. Use brain gym and mind mapping to help you.



“People are lonely because they build walls instead of bridges”.
Joseph Newton



GETTING ON WITH OTHER PEOPLE

Every snowflake is different. Every thumbprint is different. Every person is different, uniquely themselves. Most situations in life involve us meeting or socialising with other people. Whilst we do not need to make close friends with everyone we meet, our life is easier if we can learn to get on with, or at least relax with, other people.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself. The more you do this the more others will do this too, then everyone benefits. After all, why talk to someone in a way which would offend/upset you?

You have a right to choose your own standards of behaviour but you do not have the power or the right to impose those standards on others. Avoid having rules for others. Get on with your own life.

“Live and let live”. You cannot change other people. It is unrealistic to expect everyone to like you. Just as we are not obliged to change to please others, we can not expect others to change simply to please us. You can let go of Rules about how others should be with you.

You can change your reactions to other people. You are in control of your actions and reactions. You do not have to be frustrated/annoyed/upset by what others do or say - you set yourself up to fail if you have this expectation. You cannot control others but you can control how they affect you...you choose.

Try not to compare yourself to others. If you compare you lose. We all have different strengths and weaknesses and we all have things that we can learn from, and share with, others. The less time we spend judging the surface of people, the more time we have to get to know the real person.

Quality matters more than quantity - work on building your friendships. Having one close and confiding friendship is usually far more satisfying than having 10 casual acquaintances.

Let people feel listened to - show you are interested by

not interrupting them (it can break their train of thought or pressurise them)

not finishing their sentences (you do not always know their thoughts)

pausing before you respond (it shows you are interested in, and thinking about, their point)

Someone can disagree with you, without either of you being wrong. When no one has to be wrong we can all fit in.

Be relaxed about advice/criticism/comment, you can learn so much from it. Whether people mean to be critical or not (and more often than not they don't) getting defensive will not help...it will feel uncomfortable for both of you and means you are not able to learn/gain from the situation.

All situations are open to misinterpretation. Jumping to wrong conclusions and overreacting causes many people to lose friends. Act on *facts* not *feelings* - say nothing until you hear more.

Learn the difference between helping someone and interfering. Watch how you go about helping others.



COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Getting on with other people nearly always comes down to communication. Successful relationships involve give and take, talking and listening. Here are three tips to think about:

1. Communicate your feelings, it may **not** be obvious that you are shy!
2. Ask others to communicate theirs, they may seem offhand but could be upset
3. Ask yourself what do my words communicate? Do I express what I am trying to say?

Remember, while you can not have everyone's friendship you can offer and receive respect, support and understanding.



Today's Reminder: You can be more tolerant of other views as you learn to take what you like and leave the rest.



DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

The world is full of wonderful people but every so often we come up against someone who is not so nice. If someone acts towards us in an unpleasant way we usually respond by feeling anger, sadness or self pity. Anger can lead us to respond in an equally unpleasant way and this can set of a circle of unpleasantness. These, negative reactions are not your only options.



USE YOUR BRAIN AND ANALYSE THE SITUATION.

Is the nastiness towards you personal? Often a person's bad mood is not aimed at you it only feels that way. Their unpleasantness is their problem, try not to make it yours. If you can get out of the situation by walking away that is exactly what you should do. Go and find someone or something more positive to occupy your time with. If you cannot walk away – seek help, consider your support network.



WATCH YOUR BEHAVIOURS.

Retaliation is often our first thought when dealing with difficult people, but is it the wisest course of action. We should take responsibility for our own behaviour not someone else's. Usually, retaliation only leads to things getting worse and it can become a game with no winners. Think of the behaviours that you want for yourself, respect them do not get thrown off course by someone else.



LEARN FROM YOUR BODY.

When we are confronted with difficult people we may become afraid or angry. Our body signals this to us by making us tense and sweaty as well as speeding up our heart rate. Be aware of these bodily changes and use them to take control of your feelings. Calm yourself down by taking control of your breathing. Remember, the calmer you stay the quicker an angry person will calm down.



FOUR TIPS TO HELP YOU HANDLE DIFFICULT PEOPLE

- 1 **Think about the situation/person carefully.**
Think before you speak. — Ask yourself “what is *really* going on here?”
- 2 **Stop trying to change other people —**
It is wasted effort, do positive things with positive people, stay away from negativity. Stop depending on what others do, say or feel to determine your own well-being or to decide on how you believe. Give angry or aggressive people a wide berth! Stay away from them!
- 3 **Learn to back off and let go —**
Pause for a moment before focusing on someone else’s mood, you may find that you have feelings of your own that deserve attention.
— Distancing yourself will make it clearer, it gives you the freedom to stay positive and calm.
- 4 **Decide on an Action Plan and stick to it —**
Remember it is *your* life, you always have choices, you take care of you. Check-in with yourself. Focus on your behaviour. Focus on your needs. **Ask for help when you need it.**



MANAGE YOUR RESENTMENT

When people have been unpleasant or cruel to us in the past it is easy to let it prey on our minds and we can easily fall into the habit of resentment. One of the hardest things for us to do in these circumstances is to try to focus on positive things. Nevertheless, this is exactly what we should do if we want to keep a clear and healthy mind.

Try not to let frustration build up, let go. You do not have to *like* whatever situation frustrated you, but you can learn to *live with it*. Besides, when you are positive you’ve got more exciting/positive things to focus on.

The past is past, let it go. We all make mistakes and most are forgiveable! You/they can do better when you/they know better.

Ask yourself who is being affected/hurt by resentment? - often we find we are only punishing ourselves. **BE GOOD TO YOURSELF.**



SEEKING HELP

In some cases a situation may arise in which you cannot avoid conflict. Clearly, you cannot allow another person to abuse and belittle you. Most of the time you can rise above such behaviour by practicing restraint, avoidance or assertiveness. However, sometimes a person is not easily dissuaded or dealt with and their behaviour may be intolerable to you. In this case it is important that you seek out help. These situations should not be dealt with on your own. Consider your support networks, this will usually involve family members such as parents. It might involve professional people beyond our friends and family such as teachers, counselors or even the police. If you are being threatened or abused do not hesitate to seek help.

It may be that the person abusing you is not to blame, maybe they have big problems of their own, but these are their problems don’t let them make them yours. The best way to help a person in this situation is to get help from outside. Whatever you do:

NEVER BLAME YOURSELF FOR ANOTHERS BEHAVIOUR

Why not keep a learning log? Write down or 'log' all the things that work for you . . . go ahead, you create it

My Learning Log for my Environment

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Remember to ensure that every target is:

- REALISTIC:
-
- ACHIEVABLE:
- MEASURABLE:
- APPROPRIATE:
- SOLUTION-FOCUSED:

Why not start by listing some P.A.T.s right here

I will not suffer abuse from others	P.A.T. For your Environment
I will look beyond the obvious	
I will try to see the perspective of others	
_____	← Your own

Take the Quiz

How well do you look after your Surroundings?

Please tick true or false after each sentence.

	TRUE	FALSE
1. I always put effort into my school work.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I act to keep my life safe and comfortable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I practice a positive mental attitude with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I always ask for help if I need to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I am sure of my support network.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I take good care to act safely each day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I put effort into my goals and dreams.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I keep myself aware of my surroundings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I always try to do the best for me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I show respect for others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I always respect other people's property.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I do not put up with bullying or abuse from others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Count the number of times you have ticked True. Write your score here ____

If your score is 10 or higher, Good for you, please keep your good habits going.

If your score is 9 or lower why not take the challenge

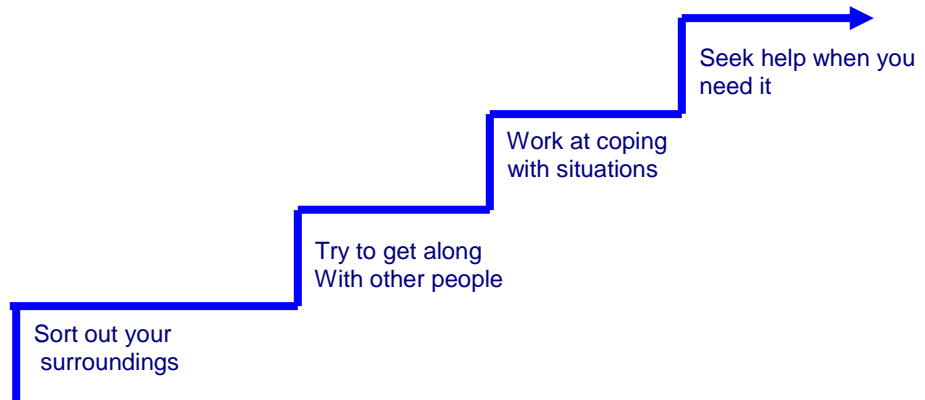
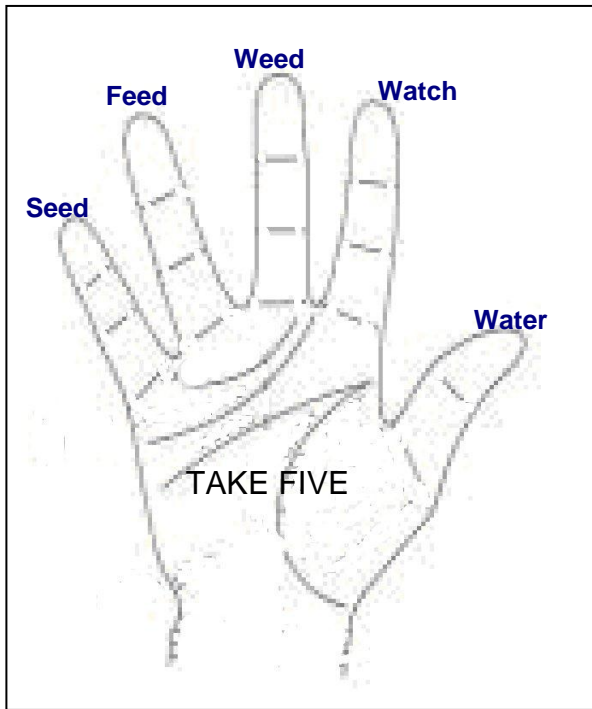
Take the Challenge:

It takes us Humans 21 days to build a habit. Why not take the next 21 days to build Good Habits that will help you take good care of your surroundings!

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO OPTIMISE YOUR SURROUNDINGS?

WHAT ARE YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS AND SEEDS?

HOW CAN YOU PLANT CONTEXT SKILLS IN YOUR LIFE?



Key 5

Take care of your exceptional spirit

The key life skills here are:

1. **Needs and Seeds**
2. **Identifying your spirit**
3. **Goal Setting and Life Planning**

This is the shortest part of the programme but in some ways the most difficult. This is where we ask you to integrate all that has gone before. The word Nexus means the point at which things connect and when we were looking for a simpler word that conveys the part of a person where the body, mind, behaviour and environment all come together, we realized that we were talking about a person's self or spirit. Your Spirit is the very private part of yourself where everything about your existence is experienced.



NEEDS AND SEEDS

Balance is the key to happy healthy living. Remember your Needs and Seeds.

The life skills you pick up from this book and from other places are seeds for a happy and successful life. They must be nurtured in order to grow. In completing the tasks in this book you have planted the seeds now you need to feed them by giving them attention and practice. In addition, you will need to weed out negative and self-defeating habits and feelings in your life so that healthy and positive ones can thrive. Then you should watch and observe the effect of these skills. Are they working for you? If not weed them out if they are then nurture and develop them. Finally, water your seeds, keep things fluid, be flexible let good things in and try new ideas and opportunities.



Today's Reminder: Progress can be hard to recognise, especially if our expectations are unrealistically high. Write down all your successes, however small.

When your body, mind, behaviours and context are healthy, your spirit will thrive and be healthy. This sets you up for happiness and success. In this book we have emphasized that you should act for your greater good. Look far ahead, what kind of person do you want to be?

Would you like to feel proud and pleased with yourself?

Would you like to feel comfortable and confident with yourself and others?

Would you like your dreams to come true?

The best way to make your Spirit healthy and happy is to use the life skills you have learned in this book. Take good care of your wonderful Body, your beautiful brain, your best Behaviours and your surroundings family, your friends, school work and your Spirit will soar.



TEN TIPS TO HELP YOU DEVELOP A LUST FOR LIFE.

1. Remember you are a child of the Universe, no less than the trees or the stars, you have a right to be here.
2. As far as possible without surrender (this means without giving up what you know is right), be on good terms with all persons.
3. Listen to others, they too have their story.
4. Don't rate yourself against others we are all different with different qualities, there is no *greater* or *lesser* in terms of being a human.
5. Be yourself, you are wonderful just as you are.
6. Be gentle with yourself. When you feel different from others remind yourself that you are special.
7. Remember that silence and quiet reflection is often as invigorating as noise and bustle.
8. Try to be cheerful and seek out the positive even if things look bleak. Your chance for happiness **will** come.
9. Always do your very best and even if you don't get the accolades, enjoy your achievements.
10. Try to always be grateful for the good things in your life. . . say thank you for all the good things that happen as this aids positive thinking.

'Keep adding little by little and you will soon have a big hoard'.
Latin Proverb



IDENTIFY YOUR SPIRIT

Who are you? This is a simple question but a very difficult one to answer. You might start by giving some information based on your body (e.g. 'I am a female, and I have brown eyes and black hair'). Then you

might mention the kind of mind or brain you have (e.g. 'I am quite mathematical and I sometimes get a bit anxious'). Then you might describe your behaviours (e.g. 'I am a bit irritable first thing in the morning but I mellow out by 11.o'clock'). Finally, you might mention your environment or context (e.g. 'I am the second child in a family of four children and I live in a big city').

Whoever you are, there are lots of ways that you can answer that simple question. In fact, the girl in our example above is all of those things and many more besides. This is what we mean by your spirit. It is the real you, the total you, and of course the simple question 'who are you?' is almost impossible to answer. All the same, why not give it a try? Making a list of the all things that make up who you are can be very revealing. It can help you to understand yourself more deeply.

Knowing who you are, the bits you are proud of and the bits you want to work on, is very important. It helps you to plan your life effectively. Of course, you will change: some of the things that seem important to you now will become less important later. And your spirit will change as your thoughts, feelings, behaviours and surroundings change. For many people there may still be a core that seems to remain the same all their life, or at least the experience of certain patterns of being that seem to stay the same. We are born with certain givens, like our eye colour and our height. However, as you will know now, it is possible to reduce what you don't like, and develop more of what you do like about yourself. The life skills that you develop help you to do this very effectively.

Who am I?

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GOAL SETTING AND LIFE PLANNING

Now think of the wider picture . . . Where do you want to be in 3, 5, 10, 15 years from now? How can you best achieve these goals and make your life something you can daily look forward to?

The first step is to think about what you want (identify your goals), be clear about *exactly* what it is you wish to achieve, then work towards ways of achieving them. Goals can be short-term (such as building positive thinking) or long-term (such as getting good grades in important tests). Goal setting and life-planning can help you live life in a more structured, positive way, and can give you the confidence to deal with day-to-day now and your life in years to come.

Thinking about the 5 Keys model, what goals can you set yourself to improve your:

- Body** for example, you may decide that you want to become fitter and healthier, eat less sugars?
- Mind** maybe to improve self-esteem, learn to cope with worry or fears? What goals are important to you here?
- Behaviour** do you want to be more relaxed, stay calm, improve relationship with sister,boss,parents, or others?
- Environment** would you like to set goals for a better balance of work, rest and play? Or sort out your bedroom?
- Spirit** You could decide to have regular, quiet time, time to think or just to be still

Once you have decided what you want, what kind of life you would like, then sow seeds by thinking about how you can achieve what you want. Set yourself up for success by choosing targets that are *attainable*.

Break down major goals (e.g. improving physical fitness) with smaller more specific goals (e.g. start walking more often). As you achieve smaller goals you will be getting nearer and nearer the major goal.

Notice how well you do when you (1) are clear about what you want, and (2) start to act and move towards it step by step. Remember that each small thing is better than *no*-thing. Most importantly . . . PRAISE YOURSELF for your efforts. **Remember: The journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step.**



PRIORITISING (WHEN YOU HAVE A LOT TO DO!)

Do you often feel you are juggling too much at once? Do you feel pulled in many directions . . . with responsibilities at home, at school with friends and with family?

You can't do everything at once. Whilst many things we have to do are *important* (either to ourselves or others), not everything is an emergency. It doesn't necessarily have to be done NOW.

Spending a short amount of time deciding what your **priorities** are can save you a lot of time and energy in the long run. If you follow the steps below you will find it possible to put some issues to the back of your mind for a while (this will ease your stress levels and help clear your head), whilst not forgetting about them in the long run. Add your own ideas too.

Prioritising Made Easy: HERE'S HOW

- 1 Make a list of all you would like to do**
keep separate lists for school tasks and home/family/friends tasks. Keep the school list with school stuff so that it doesn't create extra stress when you are at home, or with friends/family.
- 2 Divide the list into short-term and long-term tasks**
put the ones which can be completed today for instance down one side, and future/long-term tasks down the other (NB. Perhaps some of the long-term tasks have some short-term aspects which need completing).
- 3 Think carefully about what needs to be done now, and what can wait**
consider issues such as who will be affected if you do/do not do this today; will it get worse if left till tomorrow/next week.
- 4 Re-order the list so that the most important tasks are at the top**
put next to each task a time and date in other words a time limit for completing it
- 5 Break down the task if you need to**
use problem-solving/goal setting skills.
- 6 TAKE ACTION**
writing the list is an important part but it will not do the work for you. Now is the time to start getting on with the tasks
- 7 Tick each task off your list as you complete them**
this gives a good sense of satisfaction and achievement
- 8 Do not forget about the list**
tasks which were not a priority on one day/occasion will eventually become a priority on another

Important: *Prioritising is not about putting-off doing something because you do not want to, it is about making sure the most important things are dealt with first so that there is less stress/hassle for you, and others, in the long run.*

Organisation is the key to happy living. Learning to manage our time, our day, is an important way of making life easy and stress-free. The person who rushes about at speed does not necessarily arrive earlier or complete tasks more quickly than others! More haste can mean less speed. Continually rushing has a very draining effect on all parts of us. It affects our body by making us feel worn-out/exhausted, it affects our mind by creating stress, tension and worry, and affects our behaviour by making us less careful and accurate, and can make us more irritable and snappy with other people.



SOME EASY-TO-DO TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS

Plan your day in advance: make sure you plan for the time it takes to get from place to place

Give yourself plenty of extra time for things especially journeys: if it ends up taking less time than you thought then you have time to relax and prepare yourself for the event

Pace yourself: remind yourself that the busier you are the less you'll get done, so *pace yourself*...don't book in too much

Have in your mind that time is precious: don't waste time on "stuff" you really don't want to do; don't rush around being late for things

Use problem-solving and decision making skills: being decisive gives you more time for getting things finished, and less time for "dithering" or worrying about them

Use time-limits to focus you, see them as a 'light at the end of the tunnel': instead of feeling pressured and overwhelmed by lots of jobs or chores try to feel encouraged that by (e.g. this evening) you will have completed it....think how good you will feel then. Make time-scales work *for* you, not *against* you.

Be clear about what you want, not what you don't want: What do you intend to happen? An intention means that you have set a goal and you intend to achieve it. Your intentions drive your experiences.




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- SOLUTION-FOCUSED:

Why not start by listing some P.A.T.s right here

<i>I will identify my special needs</i>	P.A.T. For your body
<i>I will draw up a plan to meet my needs</i>	
<i>I will make a list of my priorities in lif</i>	
<i>I will take good care of me</i>	
	 Your own

Take the Quiz

How well do you look after your Spirit?

Please tick true or false after each sentence.

- | | TRUE | FALSE |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I know and take good care of my "needs and seeds". | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. All humans have the same needs and seeds. | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I am playful each day. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I can always see the good in myself. | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I can always see the good in others. | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. If anyone hurts me, I tell a grownup if I need to. | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I reach out and ask for help and advice if I need to when times are tough. | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I take good care of my beautiful brain. | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. I take good care of my wonderful body. | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. I take care to show healthy, kind behaviours even when others are mean. | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. I use Power thinking and Positive Mental Attitude. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. I acknowledge all the good things in my life. | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Count the number of times you have ticked True. Write your score here _____

If your score is 10 or higher, Good for you, please keep your good habits going.

If your score is 9 or lower why not take the challenge

Take the Challenge:

It takes us Humans 21 days to build a habit. Why not take the next 21 days to build Good Habits that will help you take good care of your spirit!

WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR YOUR SPIRIT?

WHAT ARE YOUR SPIRIT'S NEEDS AND SEEDS?

HOW CAN YOU PLANT SPIRIT SKILLS IN YOUR LIFE?



Use the Worksheets at the back of this book to help you plan ways to take care of your spirit.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

Congratulations!!!

Thank you for taking the time to read this book. Try to use some of the suggestions for simplifying your life and helping you to be more positive. Do not put pressure on yourself by expecting to remember everything you have read...instead keep the book handy so that you can “dip in” to it as often as you wish.

Continue to work at making your life simpler, more positive and stress free. Do not think that things will change just because you have read this book. You have got to **MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN**. Concentrate on making small changes to begin with and gradually build them up.

From Little Acorns, Big Oaks Grow
— each small step is part of something bigger—

Repeat things that work for you. Repetition is the mother of skill. Build good habits that positively help you. Just as you were able to learn one (negative) way of coping or acting, you will be able to learn another (positive) way in its place. The more you practice this NEW WAY, the quicker it will become an automatic reaction. Psychologists suggest that doing something at least 21 times (21 repetitions) helps build a habit.

Repeat your new skills at least 21 times
— **Repetition is the Mother of Skill**—

When you have made a positive change to one aspect of your life, for instance your thoughts, remember to notice what positive things have changed in your body and your behaviour too. Keep thinking back to the Model and remind yourself that every effort will be doubly rewarded.

Label and enjoy your successes, learn from your setbacks. Praise yourself when you attain each new goal. Set your sights gradually further and believe in your own ability. Make the commitment to give yourself a happy, calm and content life.

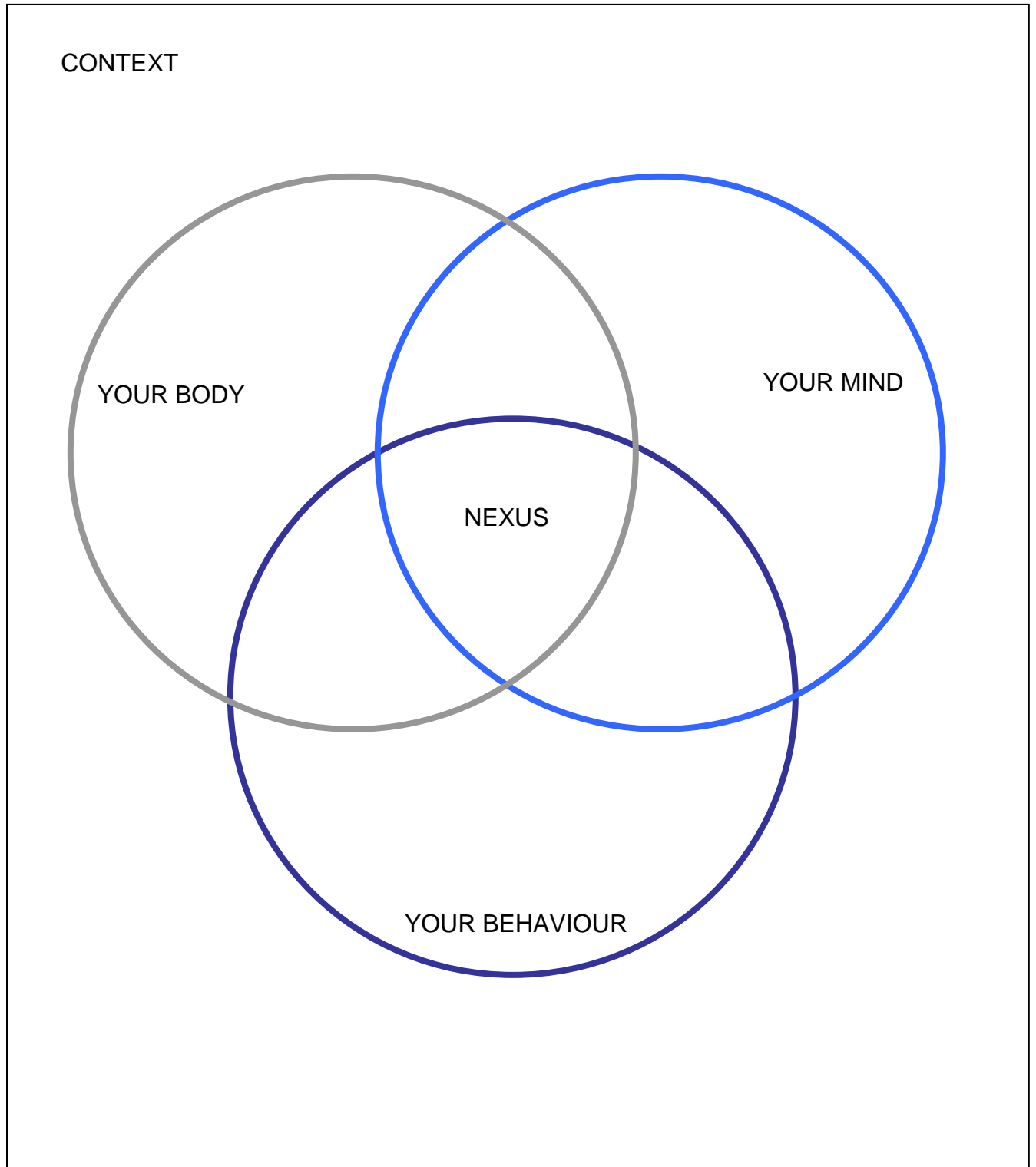
YOU CAN DO IT, YOU WILL SUCCEED, YOUR LIFE MATTERS



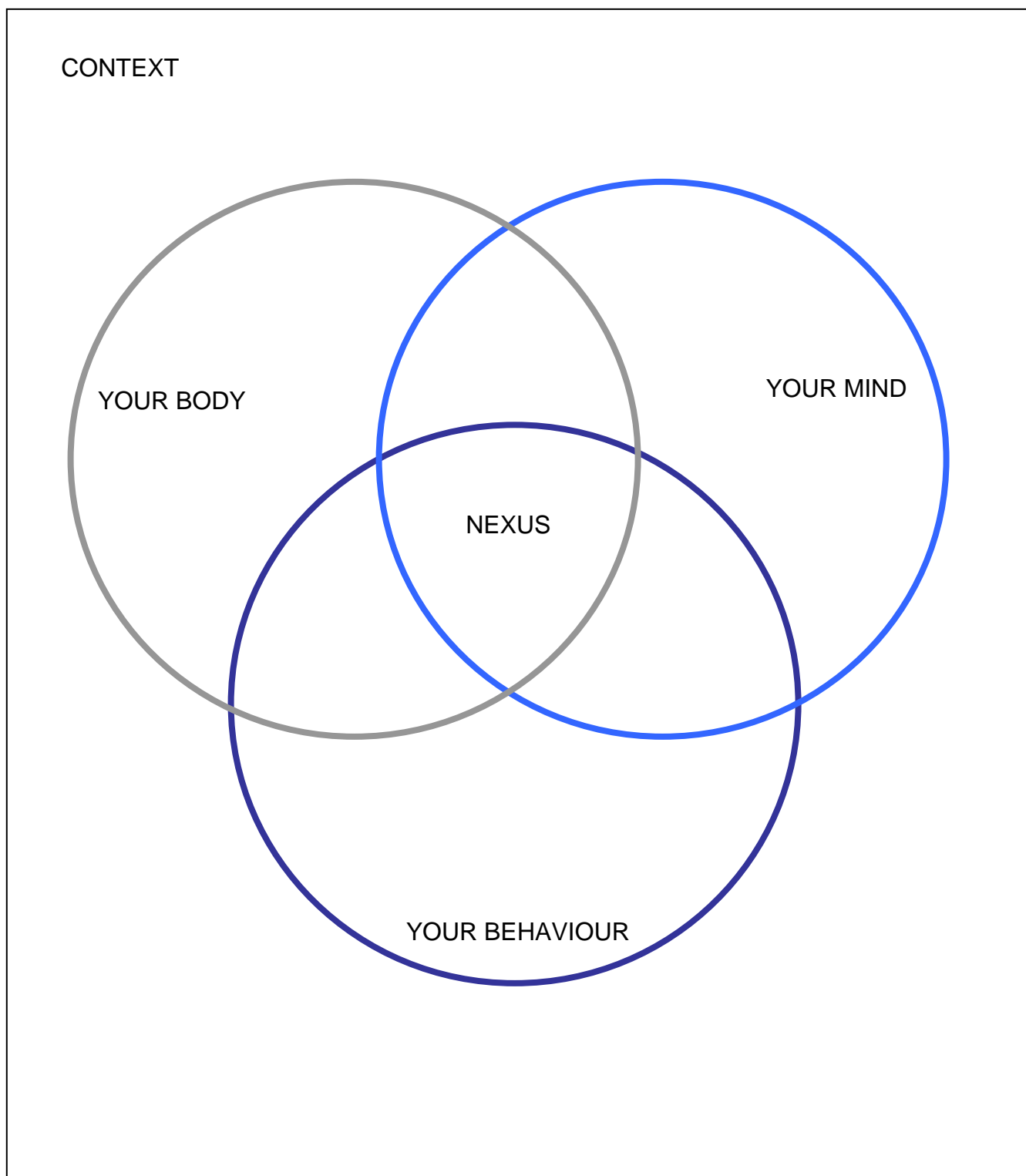
YOUR NOTES

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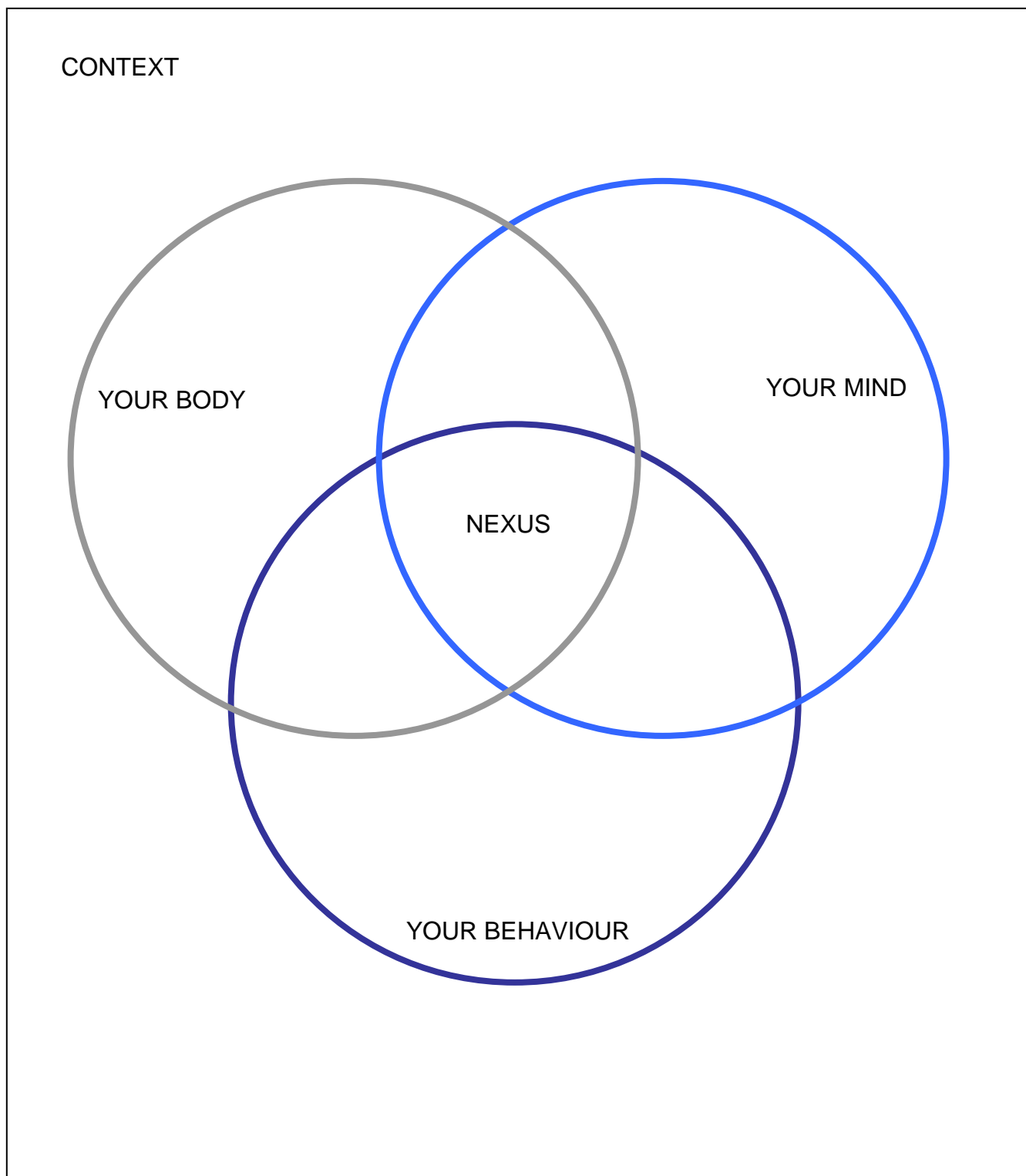
YOUR WORKSHEETS



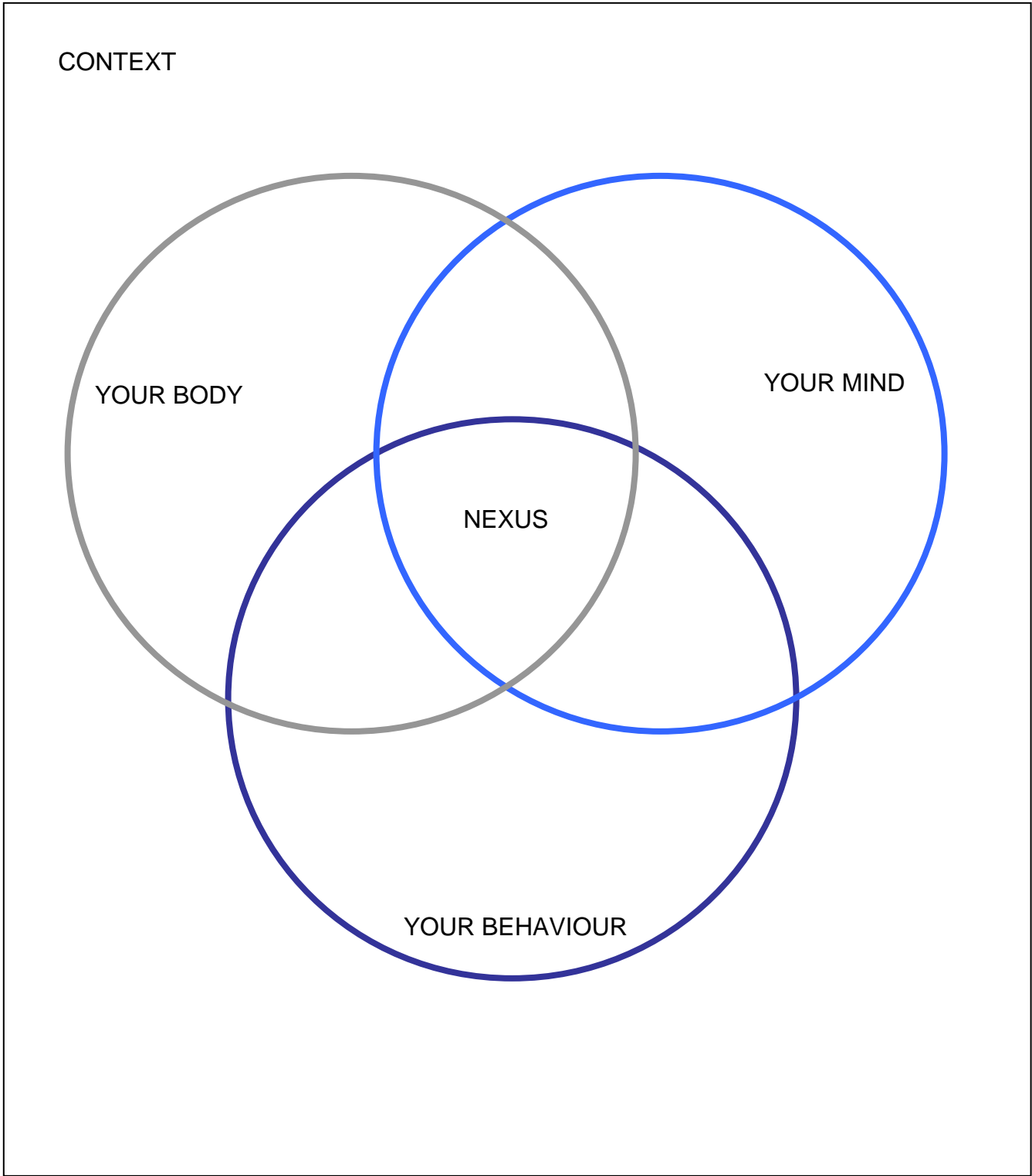
YOUR WORKSHEETS



YOUR WORKSHEETS



YOUR WORKSHEETS



Tell us what you think of this book.
Your ideas and suggestions are very important to us.
Please take a few minutes to tell us:

1. What you really think of this book.
I think this book is . . .

2. What kinds of ideas did you like best?
Answer:

3. Did you use any of the ideas? Yes No
If yes, which ones?

4. How useful is this book?
Please tell us what you really think.
I think this book is (please tick X)

Very useful
A little bit useful
Not very useful

Any comments? (For example, please tell us what you used the book for)

5. Would you recommend this book to your friends?
Yes No

Thank you for taking the time to tell us what you think.

Please send to Dr Margaret O'Rourke, School of Medicine, Brookfield Health Sciences complex, University College Cork, Ireland.

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