

Active and Healthy Aging

LifeMatters Silver Version



A Practical and Complete Guide To *Psychological Health and Well-being* in Retirement

Celebrating 50 years of Psychology at University College Cork



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DEDICATION

To the biggest little woman I know,
A real 110 percenter !

JOY



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **LifeMatters Healthy and Active Aging** a programme designed to help you recognise your self-care needs and ensure that your health and wellbeing is the best it can possibly be.

Use this book to create yourself a healthy, happy and contented life. From the outset let us state that this is not a “don’t worry be happy” book. It is about building awareness about the interconnectedness of mind and body, how we think, how we feel and the values and behavioural choices that we make.

This evidence based book provides you with the information, framework and tools that enable you to develop life skills that will simplify your life and help you to enjoy yourself and your world with ease and confidence.

Your Health is your Wealth

The World Health Organisation, WHO, has defined Health as **“a complete state of physical, social and emotional well-being and not just the absence of ill health”**

Well-being is a sense of serenity and fulfilment. Resilience is our ability to withstand and recover from adversity, set-backs, injury or ill health, in other words our “bounce back” factor.

Life is stressful; stress is in all our lives, sometimes it is positive and gives us a great boost to perform well while at other times it can feel like too much. Nobody’s life is stress-free.

There is abundant evidence to show that negative stress, at any age, can lead to ill health and reduced quality of life. Some of this negative is down to the stressful events we experience, but stress experts tell us that a lot of it is down to how we **perceive** and **experience** the stress on a personal level. If we can learn techniques to reduce our exposure to stress, and to deal effectively with the stress we can’t avoid, we are practicing good self-care and in doing so doing ourselves a great service.

This book is designed to provide a framework and guide for older people in improving their quality of life, particularly through learning to build well-being and resilience and cope with and respond effectively to stressful situations and challenges of their lives.

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 all humans (yes that includes YOU) need to be healthy, happy and content.

The second idea is all about how to use the **Active and Healthy Aging** framework or model to achieve health, well –being and resilience using what we call **The LifeMatters big five**, that is the **Five Systems Model**.

The word Resilience refers to your ability to cope with the inevitable stresses and strains of life, if you have good resilience, you are able to bounce back reasonably quickly when you have set backs or disappointments.

The emphasis in this book is on self-aware self-care. You can follow the programme by yourself using the book or you can follow it with a small group with a guide. It is entirely up to you. Use the steps and skills here to help you enhance your wellbeing and the quality of your life. The more you practice using the **Active and Healthy Aging** framework and tools the more you will learn the habits, skills and routines of healthy, wellbeing and resilience.

There are lots of ideas, tips and tools in this book, we suggest that you keep a note of any strategies or tips that you think are relevant and useful to you. Keep a “BANK” of the tips you might call on or use when you need a boost.



The First Idea: Needs and Seeds

Our nature as human beings : What we all need to be healthy and happy at every age and stage in life.

Lots of people have tried to discover what ingredients go into wellbeing and 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 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 to thrive and be healthy; "Seeds", because they must be planted and become rooted into our life for us to develop wellbeing and self-care, to regulate stress and stay healthy and happy.

Human Needs & Seeds

At **every age and stage of life** Humans Need:

1. Basic life requirements (oxygen/air, water, food, light, warmth etc.)
2. Nourishment and body care (to boost, build and maintain good health)
3. Safety (to feel comfortable and secure)
4. Human Contact (attention, recognition, and harmony with other human beings)
5. Belonging and Participation (to connect, engage with, and be close to others, to love and be loved, social connection)
6. Self-Awareness (to observe, understand & regulate oneself, discipline and kindness towards oneself and other. POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP with self & Others)
7. Self -Care (to promote wellbeing, set limits, soothe and calm oneself and have recovery and reward routines..... POSITIVE EMOTION)
8. Meaningful Purpose (to have plans, purpose and a sense of success and meaningful contribution..... ENGAGEMENT)
9. Learning through life (to be stretched, be challenged and stimulated intellectually in leisure, pleasure and play, in other words LIFE LONG LEARNING...ACCOMPLISHMENT).
10. Rest, Recovery and Renewal (to sleep, to refresh, dream, relax or just to BE)

How do these translate into your life?

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

How can you meet your needs?

How can you plant positive seeds in your life?

The Second Idea: The LifeMatters BIG FIVE Model

The ideas in this book are based around the bio-psychosocial model; we call it the Five Systems Model (shown below). The Model postulates that we are made up of body , mind, behaviour, context and spirit (the big five) and while each system is independent it is also inter-dependent with all other systems and that therefore, what we do in one area of our life effects the way we feel in another area.

For example, the way we feel physically affects the way our brain and mind functions (e.g. attention, perception, thoughts and feelings) and this in turn affects our behaviour, including the way we behave with others. There is an emerging and highly significant research evidence base on the importance of mind-body connections in health and wellbeing. And you will know this from your own everyday experiences – a sore back or headache makes everything seem more negative, while a bad mood affects our energy and our approach to tasks and to people.

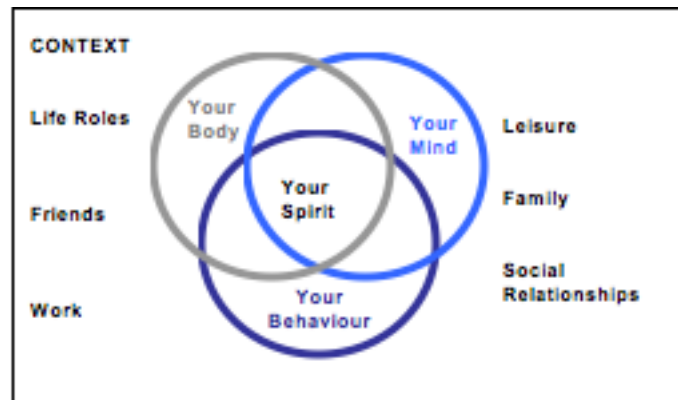
Positive input in one aspect of ourselves or our lives, ensures positive impact will flow naturally and simply into the other areas too. This creates balance or homeostasis in all five systems.

The Five Systems which feature in the LifeMatters model are:

(1) Body (2) Mind (3) Behaviour (4) Context and (5) Spirit

Getting the most out of life means, thinking, feeling and behaving in healthy, resilient and stress regulated ways. The aim is to work at keeping health and balance in all five systems. Steps taken to work on any one system will affect all other systems also.

THE LifeMatters 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 given time to rest and restore. This ability does not stay the same, it changes over time. Every day brings a new chance to build on experience or to start again.

The ability to restore balance is not the same for all of us. We each have our different strengths and vulnerabilities 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 **BIG Five** steps to make ourselves healthy and happy.

Our total health, wellbeing and resilience is the result of what we put into all Five Systems: body, mind, behaviour, context 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 is an idea shared by the mystics of Tibet, by top athletes, and by successful people in all areas of life. This self-care workbook aims to set you up for success and good health in your own life. Using the Five Systems Model approach we have divided the book into five key sections, covering steps and skills to build positive, balanced and resilient health and wellbeing.



Using this book:

- This book provides you with steps and skills for self-care health, wellbeing and stress regulation. Treat these skills as if they are seeds that you are sowing in your life.
- In order for these skills to grow and be of benefit to you, you will need to practice them until they become second nature to you. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE..... **REPETITION is the mother of skill.**
- To enable these skills to grow try to become aware of, and replace, negative, self-defeating or any self-limiting 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 or 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.
- Intrinsic to the goals of **Active and Healthy Aging** is the notion of self-care and the importance of a Personal Support Plan. Using the practical steps and skills in this book will help you get to grips with your needs better over time. Enjoy filling in the Quizzes. Build your **BANK** of tips and become smarter about which techniques, tips and skills work best for you.

Your Personal Support Plan

The **Active and Healthy Aging** 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. As you progress through the book you will find these links becoming clearer.

A healthy body, a healthy mind, positive personal behaviours and good relationships with other people are important skills that will help you get the best out of yourself your life, and others. This workbook 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 – the soil from which we can grow

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 is important to you? What are your personal values? What kind of life are you setting up for yourself?

Questions to explore.

Take a moment to think about what is most important to you in your life. What qualities best describe or define you?

What interests or motivates you?

What values do you want to demonstrate in your life? What do you stand for? What are your core values?

Some examples of values include things like: ***kindness, friendship, family, gratitude, positive mind set, compassion, serenity, honesty, loyalty, giving your best, being good to family, being good to friends, being loving; peace of mind, contentment, respect, trust; taking care of yourself.***

What do you care about?

What gives your life value, meaning, direction?

What aspects of your life are most satisfying and energizing ?

What do you want to be remembered for?

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:
What is really important to you?

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? 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, social context and 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!

This book 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.

The workbook 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 THIS BOOK PERSONAL TO YOU.

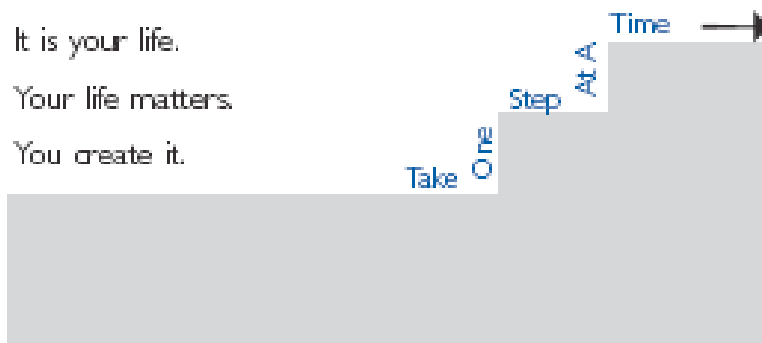
Try to meet your needs in all five systems.

This workbook 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, and that we can't change what we 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

This is your personal passport to stress regulation, better health and improved self care and 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 choose. 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 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.

If you are facing difficult times or just need a boost, why not pick up the telephone and dial a 'lifeline'.

Please list here the telephone numbers of friends, family or others you can contact for support when you need it:

THE BIG FIVE: PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

LEARNING THE HABITS, SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS OF SELF-CARE, STRESS REGULATION, HEALTH AND WELL BEING

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

Body - for example, through exercise, nutrition, relaxation, sleep and physical health and hygiene.

Mind - by taking a fresh look at your thinking, attitudes and feelings – mental health and hygiene

Behaviour - by helping you to understand links between thoughts and behaviour and create positive habits and skills

Context - by guiding you in your social contacts, family and friends; in social life, leisure, pleasure and tasks.

Spirit - by living your values, nurturing your inner spirit and sense of self, 'being you' with comfort and ease.

The reason for dividing things up in this way is that, as you now know, wellbeing is built by us attending to our needs and seeds. Stress can affect all these five aspects of our lives: body, mind, behaviour, social context and spirit.

So in order to develop self-care, build wellbeing and inoculate against stress, we suggest that you take care and positive action in each of these essential areas.

We don't wish you luck with this book.

Luck has nothing to do with it. Instead

YOU are invited to use *Active and Healthy Aging* book to the full.

That way, you will discover what works best for you and

how you can improve your health, well-being and resilience.

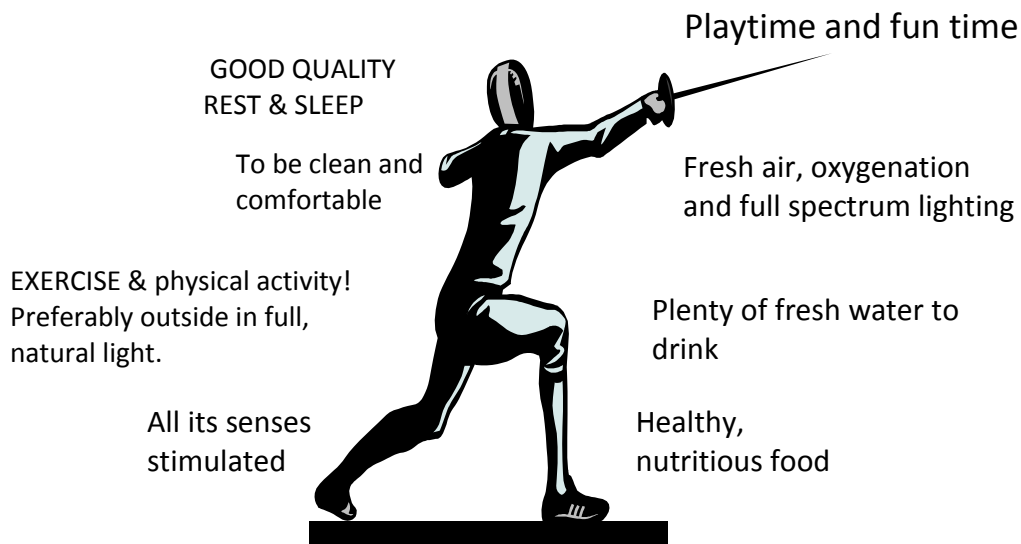
Step One: Healthy Body Healthy Mind

Take care of Your Wonderful Body

The first wealth is health : Take Care of your body: you ask a lot of it each day!

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 exercise, good nutrition and rest. 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 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 lack of exercise, a poor diet, over use of alcohol and/or through allergens, pollution, or stress, you may be asking it to do too much. You push the limit of your ability to cope too far and, as a result, you may become unwell. So, if you want to boost your health, wellbeing 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 on-going and enjoyable way.

In order to be healthy the Human body needs:



LOVE YOUR BODY



FIVE ESSENTIAL BODY CARE SKILLS INCLUDE:

1. **AWARENESS : Know Your Body**
2. **EXERCISE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**
3. **MAKE WISE FOOD AND DRINK CHOICES**
4. **MASTER STRESS**
5. **REST, RELAX, RESTORE**

There are both physical and psychological benefits to being active. 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.

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.

1. AWARENESS: KNOW YOUR BODY

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 aware of what your body needs, pay attention to your physical health and be kind to your body. It is the most important instrument you will ever own.

Know your body from the top of your head to the tips of your toes and all points in between. Work on building up its health and well-being. Pay attention to your body's needs, wellbeing and hygiene.

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 well and healthy 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 Model. Taking positive steps to support your body will help your mind, your behaviour, your environment and your spirit.

Being aware of your body's needs is the first step in creating a healthy body.

2. EXERCISE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Be active and exercise daily

Physical exercise combined with a balanced diet is the most natural way of creating and maintaining physical and mental energy. Exercise (preferably out in the fresh air) helps you feel more relaxed in your body and your mind. It boosts your energy and sense of well-being. Of course, not everyone can be an Olympian, and not everyone is used to exercise – but these are not good reasons not to start! Health Psychologists tell us that when it comes to exercise **we don't have to like it we just have to do it!**

A little each day, keeps ill health at bay.

Exercise 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 pressure, illness or stress.

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? And remember – exercise need not be a burden or a chore! You can simplify the process by walking or cycling alone or with friends, adding exercise to your fun times, rather than replacing them with exercise. Try to get outdoors into natural, full spectrum, lighting, regularly. Outdoor activities are a great choice. Fresh air and full spectrum lighting are wonderful for your health.

So make this part of your life a fun, easy 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. At first you may have to tell yourself *“You don’t have to like it, you just have to do it “*.
You will come to enjoy it.
- ✓ Set yourself up for success by picking an activity or exercise that is easy to do, that you will enjoy doing and will be happy to carry on with.
- ✓ Exercise/gym partners make walking/gym a social activity. Also a motivator!
- ✓ Always warm up and stretch properly before doing anything strenuous.
- ✓ Have a good stretch every day, stretching will help build flexibility and strength
- ✓ If you find a new exercise activity or sport hard to pick up, be patient and take your time. Sometimes it takes a while to get into new things. The main thing is to move more....it is really good for your health and wellbeing.

♥ **Top Tip** ♥

Exercise is relaxing, energizing and stress relieving.

Movement or exercise just 20 minutes a day gives you more energy and improves your sense of wellbeing.

A little exercise goes a long way!!

3. MAKE WISE FOOD & DRINK CHOICES:

Maintain Your ideal weight and limit toxins such as alcohol, caffeine and tobacco

You can create good health, a calm mind and positive energy through what you eat and drink. The evidence is irrefutable; maintaining your ideal weight is essential for energy and health.

Choose a balanced diet which nourishes your body and replaces lost energy. Water plays a vital role in balancing physiological and biochemical processes as well as nerve function. The human body loses about 1.5 litres of water each day. Make sure you replenish this and hydrate your body every day.

When we give our bodies the right foods at the right time it does its own repairs and produces the energy for everything we do. *Everything we put into our bodies, whether it is good or bad, has an effect.* Eat Calmly. Eat slowly and chew thoroughly.

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, and eggs); carbohydrates (e.g. bread, rice); fresh fruit and vegetables; oils and fats; and dairy products in your diet. Why not choose wholesome foods which look and taste good.

It is also important to look at how much you consume. 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, alcohol).

But being healthy does not mean being deprived! Some of the most delicious dishes are extremely healthy. If you consider the case of countries like Italy or Spain, we find fantastic cuisine and long lives. Let's eat like them!

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 eating?
- c) How are you eating?

What are you putting into your body?

Try to balance your diet with plenty of variety.

✓ Lots of fiber and whole foods

✓ Lots of fruit and vegetables and 1.5 to 2 litres of water

- ✓ 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. If unsure, check the labels before buying!

When do you eat?

You could 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 within 2-4 hours of when you want to sleep.

How do you eat?

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

- ✓ enjoy your food, eat consciously and mindfully: when you eat, pay close attention to the texture, smell and taste of your food
- ✓ eat slowly and allow yourself to taste and thoroughly enjoy your food.



LIMIT YOUR USE OF ALCOHOL, CAFFEINE AND OTHER TOXINS

Take good care of your body by keeping alcohol use in check. The safe limits of alcohol are: 21 units maximum per week for males, 14 units maximum per week for females.

Limit Alcohol Use:

Units per Week	Drinking Habit
14	SAFE maximum for females
21	SAFE maximum for males
21-40 units	Hazardous
41-60 units	High Risk
Above 60 units	Dangerous

Try to drink Alcohol responsibly and in moderation. Alcohol impacts mood, concentration and sleep quality negatively.

Think BEFORE you drink.

Three Tips regarding Alcohol:

- 1.) If you drink alcohol in the evening, don't start thirsty.
- 2.) Don't be hungry... a lot of people use alcohol instead of food. Have some protein/nuts (not peanuts) to stem hunger.
- 3.) Match each glass of alcoholic drink with a glass of water.

In our culture we focus a great deal on the consumption of alcohol, but it's not the only drink which can cause problems for us. Caffeine, a real favourite of busy people, is toxic in doses of over 300mg. This is equivalent to 3 mugs of instant coffee or two of bean coffee, 4 mugs of strong tea or 6 cups of ordinary tea, 8 small cans of cola or 4 high energy drinks a day.

When you drink too much caffeine for a sustained period of time it impairs the quality of your cognitive performance (concentration, memory, problem solving, decision making etc.) and it impairs the quality of your rest and sleep.

Alcohol and other drugs (which include cigarettes and caffeine as well as non-prescribed drugs) may feel beneficial at times, 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 of Smoking for:

Your Body

Cigarettes give you bad breath and make you smelly as well as damaging your heart and lungs. They also stain your teeth and fingers 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.

Your Brain

Nicotine is a stressor, it activates the sympathetic (“fight / flight”) nervous system, increases heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rates. If you become addicted to cigarettes, the cravings when you need a smoke lead to distraction and poor concentration... Brain Drain!!

Your Behaviour

Many people who smoke or 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 or even theft. Seeds are being sowed for deceitful habits and perhaps a deceitful life.

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.

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.

And all of this without even considering the financial cost!

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.*
-
-
-
-

*If you have got into some bad habits, why not master the skill of Breaking Bad Habits. SEE **Building Health Habits and Routines** later in this book*

4. MASTER STRESS

What is STRESS ?

Stress is a reaction of the body secondary to an aggressor or stressor. The stressor can be physical; like a virus, bacteria, lack of sleep, exposure to extreme temperatures or an attack.

When confronted by a stressor the body reacts by producing the stress hormone adrenaline. This increases the blood flow to the extremities and muscles, in order to allow the body to prepare for "fight or flight" against the "enemy" or stressor. A lot of energy becomes available to the individual. But this is not what we usually mean when we talk about stress.

In modern life we are confronted with new aggressors: the psychological and interpersonal stressors. Most people do not work hard **physically** in modern life but they are confronted by psychological, emotional and social pressures at home and in social situations.

The body reacts the same way to a psychological as to a physical or biological stressor. The body produces stress hormones and makes available a lot of extra energy to prepare for any necessary "fight or flight" in order to deal with the aggressor or stressor. But unlike an attack, these stressors do not come and go quickly, and the stress response of the body is maintained. This stress is linked to high blood pressure, stomach ulcers, stroke and heart disease.

High levels of stress hormones have an impact on sleep quality, appetite and even blood pressure, causing fatigue, over or under eating, headaches and irritability.

Exercise and physical activity is one of the best, most effective ways to keep stress regulated and under control.

Stress can be functional and positive; for example when it helps us increase energy and performance. Functional stress is usually short term and we are fully aware of and able to manage the stressor(s). Dysfunctional stress is usually more extreme, less conscious, longer term pressure or stressor that impedes performance and drains energy. Stress; be it functional or dysfunctional is always personally defined. What one person may find exhilarating and stimulating another person may find very challenging or overwhelming. We are all very different and perceive and define stressors and aggressors based on our personality, life experiences, thinking and emotions. Becoming aware of what stresses or stretches us is the very first step in managing stress.

It is worth pointing out that most of us are not aware when we are stressed. It is usually those around us (friends, family and others) who notice when we are stressed and pressured.

Stress impacts on the way we think, feel and behave. Steps 2 & 3 look in more detail at ways to master stress, especially psychological and interpersonal stress

5 .REST, RELAX, RESTORE

Take good care of yourself by choosing to create 'quiet time' for relaxing and letting go. 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 decompressing and '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 stillness, 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.



FOR FAST ACTING RELIEF – SLOW DOWN (Lily Tomlin)

RELAXATION

Here are some relaxation exercises you may wish to try.

Before you start, bring your focus and attention to the task by taking a gentle, deep, slow breath and say out loud “THIS IS TIME FOR ME”

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 breathe 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 easy exercise to help you relax and feel well.

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 me, warming my 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?

RESTORE

GOOD QUALITY SLEEP: SLEEP HYGIENE

Take good care of yourself by ensuring your body has enough time to rest and rejuvenate. Sleep is essential to health. 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?

Poor sleep quality your systems in the following ways:

Body: low energy, weariness, fatigue

Mind: everything can seem more negative and difficult; poor attention, concentration and information processing; learning is impaired

Behaviour: low activity; irritability and irrationality; low energy to tackle problems, socializing may be impaired and this can raise stress levels

Environment: effect on friends, family, work

Spirit: low energy, feeling low

SLEEP HYGIENE.....getting good quality sleep

Good sleep is of major benefit to your physical and mental health and wellbeing as well as to your alertness and clear thinking during the working day.

Your inner body clock (Circadian rhythm) works on a 24hour day/night cycle. It has a huge influence on the timing and quality of our sleep. Keeping your circadian rhythm regular will have a positive effect on your sleep.

Sleep is nature's repair and refreshment activity.

Here are some tips for a restful and healthy sleep –

- ✓ Go to bed at a regular time; avoid daytime naps, especially after 3pm
 - ✓ Establish regular/routine times for activities such as meal times and exercise
 - ✓ Keep stress in check, daily exercise routines will help enormously
 - ✓ 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.
 - ✓ 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 within 4-5 hours of bedtime as these may keep you awake.
 - X Do not watch TV, listen to the radio, smoke, eat or drink in bed.
 - X Avoid work or studying in bed, especially 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 Try not to 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.

Why not keep a Body Learning Log?

Write down all the things that work for you ... go ahead, you create it!

♥ Top Tip ♥

It is a good idea to WRITE things down because when you write things down,

- You can observe it
- Things become simpler, clearer
- You get some distance from it
- You can see the bigger picture
- It gives you time to pause before you act
- You remember it
- You act on it
- You have a record of your progress

My Body Learning Log: What relaxes me?

Make your own list below:

YOUR PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

In order to help you regulate stress, to build and maintain wellbeing and a healthy life , it is important 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 **SMART**:

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”.

M - 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.

A - 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 is 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!

R - 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.

T - 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
PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT TARGETS (PAT's) below:***

- Take a short 10-15 minutes walk every day
- Eat at least three pieces of fruit every day
- Pace myself, be less hurried and rushed savour the moments..
- Drink water regularly during the day
-
-
-

Why Not 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 20 minutes every day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I am always careful to eat mainly 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 most nights	<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"/>	<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:

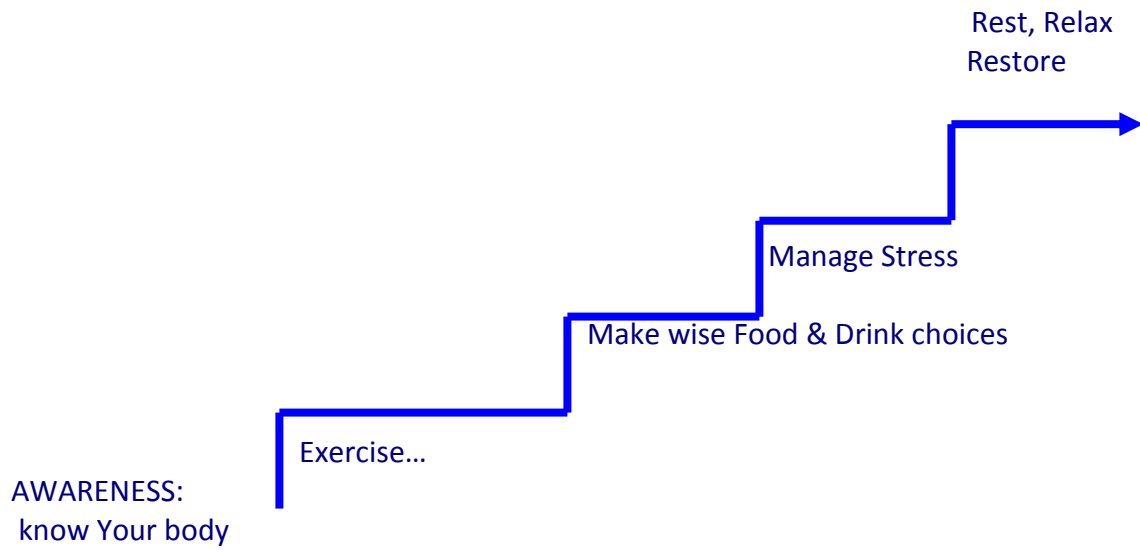
It takes us humans 21 days to build a habit. Why not take the next 21 days to build Positive Skills Habits that will help you take good care of your wonderful body!

Take Five to think about:

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

My BANK of GOOD IDEAS for Body HEALTH
What tips would you like to use?
Make your own list below :

FIVE STEPS AND SKILLS FOR PHYSICAL HEALTH, ENERGY AND WELLBEING



Step Two – Take care of your beautiful mind

Humans are multi-sensory beings. Our mind tries to make sense of everything we hear, smell, touch, taste and see.

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 reacts in a completely different way to what they see on the screen. One person might find the film very funny, while the other may not have enjoyed it at all. It is exactly the same with what happens in our everyday life: we are interpreting things in our own way all the time.

'There is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so', as Shakespeare so wisely said.

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 healthy 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 of 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 wellbeing, self-esteem and healthy 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!

You possess the ultimate super-computer and it is in your head!

It runs on Hardware - BRAIN (anatomy, physiology, biochemistry) and Software –MIND (programmes, internal dialogue, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts). Below are five essential steps and skills that unlock your mind 's potential and can calm, relax and boost your thinking power.

Health and wellbeing is not only the product of our physical behaviours, but our mental and emotional behaviours and attitudes as well.

The way we think has a major impact on how we feel about ourselves, our lives and the people around us. The way we think, whether positive or negative, impacts on our sense of peace, calm and happiness. It impacts on our physical health and wellbeing also.

Remember the model : Everything effects everything !

FIVE Essential Skills for the Mind are:

- 1. Self-Awareness: Observe oneself; reflection and awareness of our needs**
- 2. Mental Fitness: Train your brain; keep it fit, stimulated, stretched and healthy**
- 3. Develop Positive Mental Attitude (PMA) and Clear Thinking**
- 4. Emotional Health: Building emotional intelligence and self-esteem**
- 5. Wellbeing and Self Care: Building resilience and self- belief**

1. SELF AWARENESS

What does the Human Brain need to be healthy?

- ✓ Good nutrition, water, clean air, natural, full spectrum lighting
- ✓ Lots of sensory experience to stimulate, excite and stretch it
- ✓ Calm, rest and time to restore and renew
- ✓ Positive self-talk and healthy thinking
- ✓ Freedom from toxins, accident and injury
- ✓ WISE choices, healthy behaviours

Your brain loves to be stimulated, stretched and challenged by lots of different things, and in different ways. It loves variety and it loves structure.

Your brain is divided into two hemispheres. The left side is stimulated by lists, numbers, and order while the right side is stimulated by creative things including music and sounds. To maximize your brain potential, it is best to keep both sides of your brain simulated and stretched.

Your brain thrives on different kinds of sensory experience and 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 information processors; we use all five senses in learning and communicating.

We use all five senses in building our awareness and attention.

We can use each of the senses to improve our awareness and attention.



Eyes: Look at lots of different images, books, art, TV, fields, woods, sea.
See what you see. Really look....SEE



Ears: Listen to different types of music and sounds.
Hear what you hear. Really listen.....HEAR



Touch: Enjoy touching and feeling different materials and textures.
Feel what you feel. Really touch.....FEEL



Smell: Enjoy different smells, scents.
Smell what you smell. Really inhale.....SMELL

Taste : Enjoy different textures and flavours
Taste what you taste. Really tune in to your taste buds.....TASTE

Try to observe yourself and get wise as to your own unique needs in all five senses and all five systems (body, mind, behaviour, context and spirit.) Build awareness and get to know YOU as well as you can.



Imagination:

Stimulate your brain through work, play and day dreaming using all five senses.
Put some nice images in your mind, use your imagination.... IMAGE –IN IMAGINE
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) ... a really useful life skill.

Intuition : If you take the word apart it is IN TUITIONteaching or learning from within.

Become aware of and tune in to your needs, desires and instincts. This will serve your mental and emotional needs well.

As often as you can, take yourself to somewhere beautiful and still and take in the full sensual experience. Be aware of what you see, hear, smell, touch and taste, the full multisensory experience. Admire the view, savour the moments. The so-called “golden hour” (around dawn and dusk) is a great time to get out, clear your mind and enjoy the outdoors.

You cannot run good software if your hardware is not working properly!

3. Mental Fitness: TRAIN YOUR BRAIN

Some of us spend hours in the gym each week training our bodies to do healthy things; why don't we spend time training our minds to be healthy also?

Try these brain boosting exercises. (See Dennison & Dennison's Brain Gym for full details.)



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 a picture of the letter 'X' or the number '8' 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.. 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.

Energizer: 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.

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.

Plus: Eat food with lots of water, e.g., fruit and vegetables. Drink plenty of water.



ENERGY MASSAGE

To cut down distractions, build focus and clear thinking.

Using Your 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.



3. Develop a Positive Mental Attitude and Healthy Thinking

Positive Mental Attitude (PMA) is a really important life skill that is managed through discipline and positive self-talk.

Developing the discipline of PMA is a habit that is positively helpful to you. Deciding to have a PMA is an effective a way of setting yourself up for success each day. It is a good way of preparing yourself for difficult situations. Positive self-talk helps you control your thoughts in a positive direction. When you face difficult situations, prepare yourself in advance by using PMA, positive self-talk and clear, healthy thinking.

Control your thoughts and you can control the outcome. Think positive thoughts and you will get positive outcomes. This will give you both the confidence and the ability to respond positively to stress or challenges.

Attitude is a habit, a learned pattern of beliefs and behaviours. A positive mental attitude (PMA) is a life skill worth building.

We develop our attitudes from our earliest years. Thoughts can be positive or negative, functional or dysfunctional. Negative or dysfunctional attitudes can lead to self-limiting beliefs and self- defeating behaviours. They make us feel negative about our ability to manage our lives and cope with pressure. Do you have self- limiting attitudes or beliefs? Think about it.

If you have learned negative thinking habits, it can be energy draining, mood lowering and very wearying.

It is really worth trying to break negative attitudes because they are so stress-inducing and self-defeating.

A large, light blue speech bubble with a black outline and a drop shadow, containing a quote.

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

The way you think affects the way you feel. Your mental attitude (positive or negative) has an impact on how you feel and behave towards yourself and others. 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 attitude 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', stressed or 'worry thinking'.

Psychologists tell us that the average person has between 30,000 and 50,000 thoughts a day. Many of these thoughts will be positive and helpful. However, some may be negative, unproductive or self-limiting or even self-defeating.

Following difficult, unhappy or traumatic events in our lives we can feel discouraged 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, this is an attitude of mind that could have negative effects on all aspects of your life. It is exactly the same process with positive thoughts: build up the habit of PMA: 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 an important life skill. You give yourself the skill to reach your full potential.

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. Look around you....the seat you are sitting on , the building you are in now, the workbook you are reading....all started with a thought.

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?

Over the course of our lives we all develop patterns or habits in our thinking that become our mental attitude and 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 a positive mental attitude, you can

change unhelpful habits of thinking. You can get to choose how you think and how you see the world. You can discipline yourself to develop PMA. Behave with PMA and the feelings will follow. ACT AS IF you have PMA and bit by bit the pattern will emerge. With practice, you can 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 clear and healthy thinking.

You can learn the skill of clear and healthy thinking. Here are some 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 attitude will help your body, your behaviour, your environment and the nexus, or spirit.

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.**

Your thoughts create your feelings and emotions... control your thoughts and you control your life.

Focus on the positive side of things, be Happy, Healthy and Resilient in your approach and guess what you will be

Yes, Happy, Healthy and Resilient.....a great person to be around !

HEALTHY THINKING: A really useful skill

Thinking is a habit, a learned behaviour. Like attitude, our thinking style develops from our earliest years.

We develop patterns of thinking as a habit. But our thinking pattern or style is not fixed in stone.....we can change how we think if we chose to learn healthy thinking skills. Healthy 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 healthy 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 positive mental attitude (PMA) and 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 healthy thinking. Positive self-talk replaces the old, habitual ways we may have built up of being very critical of ourselves or others. In fact, like Healthy 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 a simple example, you may have a small 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 very helpful.

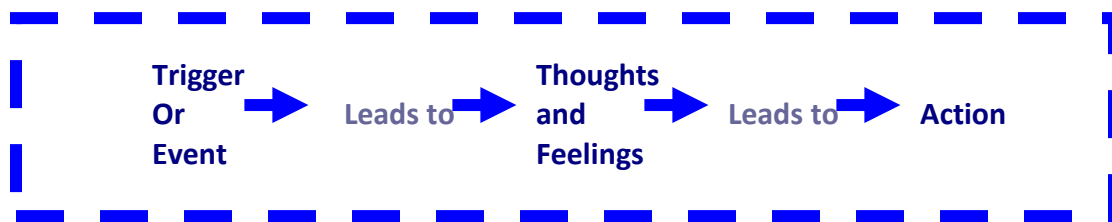
Gradually you'll learn to recognise more clearly all the various habitual thoughts that run through your mind, and you will begin to notice how they affect you. With practice you can become aware of this flow of thoughts even before you have finished thinking them.

On the next few pages we will be looking at the way you think (your thinking skills) and thought patterns.

We will examine 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.

Let's take a closer look at how thoughts and thinking habits work:

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.



Our thoughts are very powerful because:

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

They are often distorted and exaggerated — i.e. they do not fit the facts

They are believable — it does not occur to us to question our thoughts, we accept them readily

They are involuntary — they can be difficult to switch off

They can be unhelpful – they can make you feel negative and have the potential to reduce your confidence and self-esteem

Aaron Beck, the father of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) identified the “toxic ten” thinking styles that are unhelpful/ dysfunctional for all of us....

These are...

- **‘All or none’ thinking**, the habit of thinking in absolute terms – seeing yourself as totally successful or alternatively a total failure....JUDGING
- **Jumping to conclusions** – making conclusions/predictions in the absence of hard facts.
- **Catastrophizing** – imagining the worst possible outcomes when something has gone wrong; ‘Its all my fault, I will lose my job over this’.
- **‘Should’, ‘must’ and ‘ought to’** statements or rules – laying down the law to yourself or others. This has the effect of pressurising or oppressing you or others. Try not to have hard and fast rules. Be flexible and adaptive as needed.
- **Negative mental filter** – Having a filter which seems to capture only the negative, self-defeating or self-limiting beliefs. A focus on the negative rather than the positive or neutral.....Amplifying mistakes
- **Downgrading Positive Things** – this is a version of negative mental filter where you minimise positive aspects of yourself in favour of negative or destructive thoughts or beliefs. It may result in perfectionism, where nothing less than perfect is in any way acceptable to you.
- **Emotional Reasoning** – you interpret feelings as facts, assuming that if you feel something (worried, useless, unloved) that it is a fact and it means you cannot do something.
- **Overgeneralization** – when things go wrongs – assuming that they will always go wrong, that that is the way things will always be for you. Watch out for absolutes like ‘Always’ or ‘Never’ - Try to substitute words like “I would prefer if...”
- **Personalisation** – Taking things personally when they may have little or nothing to do with you. It may also involve trying to control people or events.
- **Mislabelling/Criticising** – You label behaviour as being a negative personality attribute; “I am a horrible person” or “only a fool would do that”.

Toxic thinking can make you feel worried, sad, depressed, powerless, frustrated and even angry. Try to be aware of and get clever about any toxic 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. Awareness is 90% of the solution!

IDENTIFYING YOUR THINKING PATTERNS

Once you have developed awareness, you can begin to identify any specific “toxic”, stressed, self-limiting or negative thinking habits you may have; then you can begin to question and challenge them.

There are very often several different ways to interpret life events and situations. Starting below are six examples to help you question the way you are thinking. Under each one is an example of a negative thought, 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.

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QUESTION 1 — am I thinking in all or nothing terms?

Is your thinking 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.

Toxic/Negative/Stress-inducing thought: I didn't do well in that task. I've messed up. I'm useless.

Antidote/New stress-reducing ways to think: The job 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.

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QUESTION 2 —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.

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

Antidote/New stress-reducing 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 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?

Toxic/Negative/Stress-inducing thought: I can't manage now that Jane is gone. I can't cope with being alone.

Antidote/New stress-reducing 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 or new hobbies, catch up with old friends. Try to make some new friends. I will start with attending an event that interests me.

.....

QUESTION 4 — am I taking something personally, which has little/nothing to do with me? Labeling and Mislabeling?

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.

Toxic/Negative/Stress-inducing thought: That person is giving me filthy looks and/or is shouting and getting at me. What have I done wrong?

Antidote/New stress-reducing ways to think: I'm not the only person here. Perhaps he/she is on edge and shouts at whoever is around. It is his/her issue/problem and I do not have to involve myself in this. I chose to protect myself and move on.

.....

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**)

Toxic/Negative/Stress-inducing thought: It's no good, I'll never sort this out

Antidote/New stress-reducing 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.

.....

QUESTION 6 — am I applying double standards?

One tough, rule for me, one more flexible and realistic rule for others?

Thinking is a habit; our thinking style is 'inherited' from our families and people close around us. We learn to think and to solve problems in a particular patterned way. Each of us has our own unique thinking style. Think about your style ... do you have an inner critic that offers you negative comment? Do you suffer from perfectionism? Learn to challenge this thinking. Perfectionism and self-criticism will increase the stress you put on yourself. Challenge double standard thinking, use healthy thinking instead.

Ask yourself: Would I be this harsh with someone I love or admire? Next time you are offering yourself criticism, stop, re-think, and try to show yourself some kindness and balance. Ask yourself "Is there anyone I know who has the same limitations but has succeeded despite this?"



Today's reminder:

The way you think affects the way you feel and ultimately your mental attitude and the way you approach life. Neutralize and control negative thinking, self-doubt, blame-games, fear and learn clear, balanced and **healthy thinking** instead.

THE POWER OF THINKING POSITIVELY

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.

Thinking is a habit, NOT FIXED IN STONE, FLEXIBLE and CHANGEABLE. Use healthy thinking to maintain a Positive mental attitude and to build balanced, realistic and positive thinking skills and habits.

*When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you
African Proverb*

♥ top tip ♥

If you don't like the way you are feeling -Challenge the way you are thinking by asking: 'It may be feeling . . . but is it a fact?

It is your life - power it with PMA, healthy thinking and positive self-talk.

4. EMOTIONAL HEALTH and FITNESS

Happiness is an inside job. The way you think really does affect the way you feel. Emotional health begins with awareness. How well do you know and understand yourself emotionally? Do you know **how** you feel at any given moment? Can you describe it? Can you get in touch with your emotions? Can you soothe or calm your emotions when you are upset, worried or depressed? How emotional are you? What emotions are most dominant in your life? Strong emotions are signals we must pay attention to.

DEAL WITH WORRY

FEAR: False Evidence Appearing Real. 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. Calm yourself, get active: Exercise/movement is good for the body and mind. It really will help alleviate worry and stress. Fear is not *harmful*, only *unpleasant*. (when you face it, fear will pass)
4. Watch how you are thinking. Challenge negative thinking, use healthy power thinking instead.
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

Think calm to feel calm. Stop adding to worry or panic with negative thoughts. Use healthy thinking skills. Consider 'what evidence do I have for thinking like this?'

Practice being flexible in your thinking.



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 more productive life.

Try to think of alternative thoughts and possibilities. Ask yourself :

- Am I predicting the future? Am I focusing on my weaknesses and forgetting my strengths?
- Am I expecting myself to be perfect? Go easy on yourself.
- Are my thoughts helpful to me? What would it be like if I was my own No.1 supporter?
- Am I exaggerating the importance of events? Learn to let go
- Am I predicting the future instead of taking control in the present?
- Am I giving attention to the things I can positively do to help me here?

Well-being is built by tuning into the present moment, the power of NOW. 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.

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 and they will pass.

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! The aim is to get the carbon dioxide / oxygen balance restored to calm the mind-body system down.

CHANGE YOUR BREATHING : Try the 7-4-11 technique

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. Use slow, deep calm breaths.

To help yourself slow your breathing you could use the 7-4-11 technique to count to yourself whilst breathing. This involves inhaling slowly, counting from 1 to 7 as you breathe in, then holding breath for the count 1 to 4, then following this with a slow strong exhalation counting 1 to 11 as you breathe 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.



Use the **STOP** technique to control frightening thoughts

When you are in panic you can start thinking frightening or unpleasant thoughts, this only adds to body tension and fear and a vicious cycle can start where tension creates fearful thinking and the fear adds to tension and panic. When you feel yourself being overwhelmed with panic and negative thinking, just say **STOP**, out loud if possible. This will take your attention to coping mode; use power thinking to return your thoughts to pleasant, helpful self-supportive statements. Prepare some positive, stress reducing self-statements in advance of panic times. For example statements like “I can cope and I will cope “or “this will pass, just try to breathe calmly, all will be well “

Prevention is better than cure; be stress aware, know yourself and what pressurizes you. Be proactive, have a coping with panic plan in place for yourself. Practice it, know what works for you.

What is stressing you? Try to pinpoint what you are really worrying about. If you need help do ask. A WORRY SHARED IS A WORRY HALVED. 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 or your doctor.

MANAGING DEPRESSION AND LOW MOOD

Depression is a common problem in modern living, at all ages and stages of life. 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, difficult or changing 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 your five systems?

- 1 Your Body: (e.g. feel drained, loss of appetite, low energy, tired)
- 2 Your Mind: (e.g. feel worthless, lack of self-confidence, difficulty concentrating, learning)
- 3 Your Behaviour: (e.g. sleep problems, tearfulness, loss of interest in usual activities, passive, avoidant)
- 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? Absolutely YES!

MANAGING DEPRESSION AND LOW MOOD

If you are going or have gone through hell, keep going, work through it. Don't let yesterday use up too much of today. If you find that depression/low mood persistently interferes with your day then **do speak to your doctor** — s/he can talk you through specific options as there are some very good treatments available for depression. ***There is hope, there is help.***

You can help yourself in the meantime; here are some suggestions that have shown success.

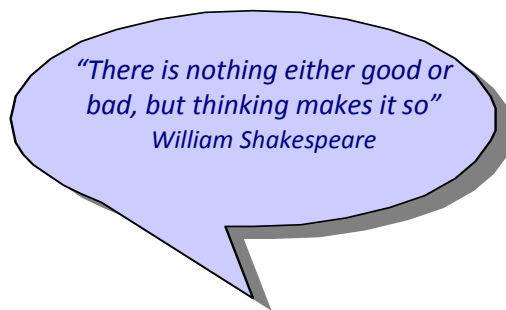
When your emotions are unsettled or difficult**CHALLENGE YOUR THINKING**

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

- Am I being hard on myself or 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.



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 manage stress and lift low mood. It will give you a well-needed break and actually produces a natural 'high' in your body. Take an exercise class or a brisk walk can lift your mood. Get active, plan activities with friends. Put a structure on your day. Do something active **every** day. Try to act, get moving physically. The evidence is irrefutable: people who exercise regularly, at least 20 minutes, every day are calmer, less emotional, more creative and generally healthier and more productive. Research has established the link between exercise and psychological wellbeing and it is now understood why - physical activity triggers the secretion of endorphins in the brain. Both stimulating and relaxing, endorphins promote a feeling of wellbeing and reduce (psychological and physical) pain. **Physical exercise is the best medicine for low mood or frazzled nerves.** Can you really afford not to do some exercise every day?



LET OTHERS HELP or SUPPORT YOU

Do not carry all your troubles by yourself. Family or friends who seem over-concerned want *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.** Social contact is protective against depression. Try to get/stay involved with others. Stay connected.



BUILD UP CONFIDENCE

People who feel depressed are often quite self-critical and harsh with themselves. Berating yourself will only make your spirit sink.

We are all only human, we all have '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. Self-esteem and confidence comes from a positive mindset, use positive self-talk and healthy thinking to build up your mood and confidence.



LOOK AFTER YOUR BODY

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



LIMIT ALCOHOL

Whilst alcohol may appear to give a short-term "relaxer" or '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 SELF-MEDICATE OR USE DRUGS**, unless your doctor has prescribed them for you.



HAVE A RECOVERY ROUTINE

Let others help: Social support is very important. Take a break from your situation. Try to 'get out of yourself,' at least for a while. Try new things like yoga, or join a quiz team, gym or walking club. Look up clubs and societies you can join. Be flexible about what might work to lift your mood. Try out new ways of coping. Develop a good recovery routine for yourself. Some people like to chat, others like to listen to uplifting music, pray, meditate, or watch fun movies. Others prefer to walk in the fresh air. What kind of coping do you use? **Emotion focused** - Where you focus on feelings and upsets or **Solution focused** - Where you focus on actions to deal with what is upsetting you? Try new and different ways to cope from time to time. Develop a Recovery Plan that will work for YOU

♥ top tip ♥

Plan your day in advance, try to ensure you have some exercise and that you have some social contact with other people, try to ensure that you are busy or distracted at times when you may feel low.



ASK FOR HELP OR CONTACT PROFESSIONALS

Avoid 'going it alone'... use informal and formal supports. 'Don't suffer alone. There are many people specifically trained in helping people manage depression. It is a good idea to talk things through with your Doctor.

SET YOURSELF UP FOR EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING BY GETTING CLEVER / WISE ABOUT WHAT HELPS BUILD YOUR WELL-BEING.

When you find things which 'lift' you or 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 Steps Model. Do something positive for your body, your mind, your behaviour, your context and your spirit (Nexus).

I can lift my mood by:

- Starting the day with some exercise.
- Developing positive and power thinking.
- Planning my day in advance
- Watching my favourite comedy video
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MANAGING ANGER AND STRONG FEELINGS

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, unclear thinking – high emotion = low logic)
- **Your Behaviour:** (e.g. increased suspicion, creates strain in relationships)
- **Your Context:** (e.g. effect on friends, family, work)
- **Nexus:** (e.g. effect on how you feel about you , your self-esteem)

There are two common responses to anger; either we “bottle up” or we “let rip”.

When we “**bottle up**” emotions they tend build, grow and change inside us, and risk making us irritable, bitter, resentful or hostile. We simmer with anger and the slightest things offend or upset us.

When we “**let rip**” too easily, anger or other emotions may get out of control. We risk saying or doing things that are ‘over the top’ - things we do not mean or that we may regret later. We become known as ‘hot heads’.

If you can recognize either one of these in yourself then it’s time to think about understanding your emotions 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 emotions/anger work **for** you not **against** you.



High emotions = low logic



FOUR STEPS TO GETTING ANGER AND STRONG EMOTIONS UNDER CONTROL

1. **Think about your reasons for managing your emotions.** 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 behavior. 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; I am coming across as measured and calm.
2. **Become self-aware.** Recognize both external and internal things that make you stressed or emotional. Try to understand your anger or strong emotions so you can break bad habits: list what makes you angry; do you ‘bottle up’ or do you ‘let rip’? How does the way you think affect the way you feel? Are you thinking negatively? Remember power thinking; get clever about knowing when you are going to ‘lose your cool’.
3. **Take action to self-regulate.** Regulating emotions in ourselves is a process. It takes time. Begin to approach any challenges or problems in a new way: follow STAY CALM (see below); 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. **Self-regulation is a really useful life skill.**

The two essential elements in learning to manage anger and strong emotions are:
1) the ability to **recognize** 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 strong feelings or anger so that it does not become destructive and upsetting for you or others. We have looked at ways of recognizing our anger (e.g. do we “bottle it” or “let rip”) and now will look at an alternative way of handling difficult situations. STAYS 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 focused on the present, 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** **Think** about what you need. Try to recognize anger as it is happening. Emotions are signals we need to pay attention to. 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 if possible positive. Use Power Thinking.
- 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 are faced with.
- Y** **“You can do it”**. “You are in charge”. Say this to yourself and talk yourself out of the high emotion or 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. Seek first to understand and then to be understood. 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. Emotions are signals we need to pay attention to. Listen to you. 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 and of unreasonable behaviour. Do not add to the problem by using cruel or clever words to humiliate a fellow human being; in doing so, you would be shaming yourself.

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 may need help, and this is when you could consider the support network you listed earlier in this workbook.

It takes discipline and practice and understanding one's emotions is a huge part of that.

Time cools, Time clarifies, take time



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

♥ top tip ♥

Think win-win. If you cannot get things on a better footing, do not bend yourself out of shape to make things right. You usually have the option to leave a situation. If not, seek help

5. WELL-BEING & SELF CARE

"Be wise. Treat yourself, your mind, sympathetically, with loving kindness. If you are gentle with yourself, you will become gentle with others" – **Lama Thubten Yeshe**

If we start using healthy thinking and build, through regular use, PMA and healthy thinking patterns then unhealthy and/or unhelpful thoughts may unwire and fade away. Our Hardware (Brain) can be rewired through Software such as PMA, healthy thinking, emotional management .This is called neuroplasticity – like exercise strengthening muscles through use, we can strengthen thought patterns.

Well-being and happiness is an inside job. Well-being is enhanced by attention to self-care. Developing ways to build and maintain positive thinking and attitudes- even when

under pressure is a crucial way to generate well-being and resilience.

Resilience refers to our capacity to focus or switch to a positive, even when feeling negative or under pressure. It is our ability to “bounce back” or “keep calm and carry on” after or even during adversity.

Psychologists have found that resilient people actively work on decreasing the duration of any negative feelings and that they develop the habit of “attention switching “ to positive feelings. Resilient people pay attention to the everyday pleasures of ordinary activities and routines. They get inspired by how others cope, they relish and value the comfort of friends and family and they remind themselves to “count their blessings” Resilience helps us to keep on keeping on. We keep going. Life keeps happening, new opportunities appear. Building our resilience helps us have a very effective **REFRESH** button for our lives.

Look for something soothing and beautiful in each day. Do something lovely for yourself each day....

What is your favorite -

Family Photograph ?

Friends Photograph ?

Holiday photo?

Song?, Music?, Film?

Joke?

Use your favorite images, sounds, smells, items to act as a powerful **refresh button** when you are tired, weary or stressed.

DEALING WITH STRESS

STRESS can be positive when it helps us stretch or even strain but negative when we perceive demands outweigh our resources or ability to cope. Stress (often seen as worry, fear or panic) **is a normal part of life...** stress is the body’s healthy, instinctive, response to pressured situations. However some people experience stress or 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 stress state becomes negative or dysfunctional. Lots of people worry/suffer from serious stress or worry at some point during their lifetime ... and hence if you do you are not alone.

Anxiety or stress can begin in our mind but is often expressed through, and made worse by behaviour and by the body’s reaction to stress/physical symptoms (see STEP 1) . It can form a spiral which results in ‘panic’.

But... if we recognize our own symptoms (how it affects us), we can take steps to manage it and prevent it from escalating out of control. Think about stress or anxiety for you, with these **Two Questions: what makes you stressed and how does it affect you?**

Think of the five systems

1. **Your Body:**
 1. What makes you stressed? Tiredness, poor diet, lack of exercise?
How does it affect you? (e.g. fatigue, jumpiness increased heart rate, sweating, 'butterflies' in stomach)
 2. What is your body's recovery routine? Exercise, relaxation, fresh air?
2. **Your Mind:**
 1. What makes you stressed? Being self-critical, too concerned about appearance, worrying over the minor things , guilt or perfectionism, negative thinking?
How does stress affect you? (e.g. worry about losing control, poor concentration, mood sours)
 2. What is your mental recovery routine? Write a journal? Listen to music?
3. **Your Behaviour:**
 1. What stresses you? Putting excessive pressure or demands on yourself, people pleasing, trying to compare or compete with others?
How does stress affect your behaviour(s)?(e.g. become fidgety and irritable anger, avoid people/places)
 2. What is your recovery routine? Good time management, Prioritizing, decompression, time?
4. **Your Context:**
 1. What stresses you? Family members, certain friends, colleagues, finance, living arrangements, habits?
How does stress affect your context ? (e.g. disorganized, unsettled, pressured, negative impact/ effect on friends, family, work)
 2. What is your recovery routine? Take action, deal with hassles/demands?
5. **Nexus:**
 1. What stresses you? No down time, being too busy to think, reflect or attend to real needs?
How does stress affect your spirit ? (e.g. spirit sinks, feel disconnected, pressured, isolated, energy depletes)
 2. What is your recovery routine? Mindfulness, meditation, journal keeping, gratitude, counting blessings, quiet time?



Prevent, Reduce and Regulate STRESS through Self Care

"Sometimes we are not even aware of the detrimental impact stress has on our lives. We become so accustomed to living in an uproar that we don't notice when our body is telling us that it's on overload. We can experience symptoms like illness, unusual fatigue, depression or anxiety, appetite and weight issues, addictions, sleep disorders, irritability or a desire to withdraw from life. This is when we need time alone, away from other people so that we can rejuvenate".

Doreen Virtue

Please take good care of yourself. Be your own best friend. Keep your body fit and healthy; a healthy body triggers a calm mind. The body provides energy for the brain, when the body is unable to provide sufficient energy; the nervous system does not work as efficiently. Adequate rest is essential for a healthy body. Without rest it is very difficult to control emotions and mood. Think of yourself when you are very tired, everything seems so much more difficult and little irritations often turn into big arguments. Notice how things can look so much better after a good night's sleep.

Physical activity is essential to a calm mind and a healthy body. Stress can cause a buildup of cortisol and surplus energy in your body, which can be exhausting; it is important to dissipate this through physical activity. The link between physical activity and psychological wellbeing is well established. The best medicine for stress is daily exercise.

Relaxation is another important stress reducer; like exercise, relaxation helps you decompress, let off steam and let go. Try some of the relaxation exercises (mental or physical) in this workbook.

Letting off steam through writing or journaling can also relieve and reduce stress. Write about how you really feel. Know that it is human to feel aggressive or irritable with others sometimes, write it all down. Writing cannot harm anyone, you don't have to store what you write, in fact it is often quite helpful to destroy your written notes afterwards.

Power thinking is another strategy or tool for reducing stress. Control stress by using healthy thinking skills. See the POWER THINKING section in this book.

Prevention is of course better than cure -use the five systems model to improve and maintain healthy, stress-reduced living.

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



BALANCE: Find the balance in things. Balance energy in and out.

Balance work and play.

Being physically tired, run down, or having many challenges and changes to your life makes you more vulnerable to stress or anxiety. Keep your stress levels down by staying active, managing your energy and keeping your body healthy (Step One in this book).

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

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, whether physical (e.g. go for a walk, change the music, wash up after a meal) or mental (e.g. count backwards from 100 in 3s, or do a crossword or Sudoku puzzle).



Build WELL-BEING by using RELAXATION EXERCISES

Remember *Step One: Body Skills?* Use mental or physical relaxation in two ways:

- 1 To daily prepare your body/mind for the day's challenges and 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

Practicing 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.



INSIDE OUT: Stress Regulation

Stress regulation and wellbeing is an inside job.

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

Remember to **focus on what you want** NOT what you don't want.

Listed below are some examples of power thinking. Why not give healthy thinking a try? Say to yourself each day:

- '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.'
- 'I am good at being positive these days. As long as I keep my cool and stay in thinking mode I will cope.'
- 'I'll keep an open mind,' 'I will stay flexible, I will think about all the angles, the bigger picture, I will think win-win'
- 'I've managed before so I can manage again', 'I have a choice about my attitudes and behaviours'
- 'I will not act on impulse, I will stay calm and keep control, I will stay flexible', 'Some things take time'
- 'If I find myself getting uptight or upset I will focus on facts not feelings'
- 'I do not have to get involved, I can 'let go', 'I can build a bridge and get over it!'
- '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'
- 'I will stay calm, and in power-thinking, and that way I can then work out a plan to handle this'

Add any others which come to mind!

- *'To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance'* — Oscar Wilde
- *'You grow up the day you have the first real laugh, at yourself'* — Ethel Barrymore



Laughter is one of the most effective ways to boost energy and increase your sense of well-being. Seeing the lighter or funny side of things is one of the most powerful paths to well-being and healing.

BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM IS GREAT SELF-CARE

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 guilt 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. It has a major impact on wellbeing and resilience. Positive self-talk leads to positive thinking, inner strength, and positive feelings and positive behaviour. 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.

I am lovable just the way I am....

I will make a list of all the things I like and appreciate about myself....



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

Develop an attitude of gratitude for your unique skills



BUILDING UP SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM MEANS:

Being positive as much as you can, have an attitude of gratitude

If you tell yourself you can cope then you probably will. Be grateful for **all** life's gifts, no matter how small

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

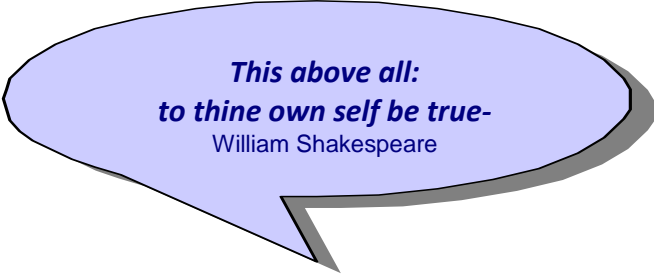
Too much energy is spent refusing compliments. Let others praise you when they feel you deserve it – and enjoy it . . . because you probably **do** deserve it. Even when you don't feel deserving, you can be grateful for another person's kindness.

Recognising your achievements – and praising yourself for them

Look at your achievements; not just the big ones, but all the little ones too (for example, staying calm in a stressful situation or doing a good job of household chores). Accept your limitations and ask yourself: "Is there anyone with similar limitations that has succeeded in spite of them ? " Tell yourself "I can succeed also".

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

Nothing succeeds like success. Build on your successes. Develop a Positive Mental Attitude - PMA. Do not waste energy on being pessimistic. Turning around negative attitudes will boost inner energy, this in turn will boost outer confidence & wellbeing.



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



7 STEPS TO GREAT SELF-CONFIDENCE AND SELF ESTEEM

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. Take care of your physical health and well- being. Look after your basic needs first. Give yourself the energy to be upbeat by good nutrition, exercise and relaxation
2. Set realistic goals and tasks, and then get to it. Focus on the task. Complete it. Stretch yourself, learn new things, gain new experiences, and give things a go!
3. Be proactive. Take charge of your life. Deal with things early. Label your successes. Acknowledge your strengths and acknowledge each achievement: 'I did it'
4. Use healthy thinking and positive self- talk – focus on your strengths and on the positives. Ask yourself what makes you feel good, more optimistic . . . do more of this!
5. Learn from others, from what works for them. Ask for help and support when you need it. Allow yourself to be human; we all need help from time to time.
6. Make space in your life for quiet time -Treat yourself – take time and space for **YOU**. Rest, Relax, Restore.
7. Listen to other people's praise, accept it and **believe it!** Remember 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.

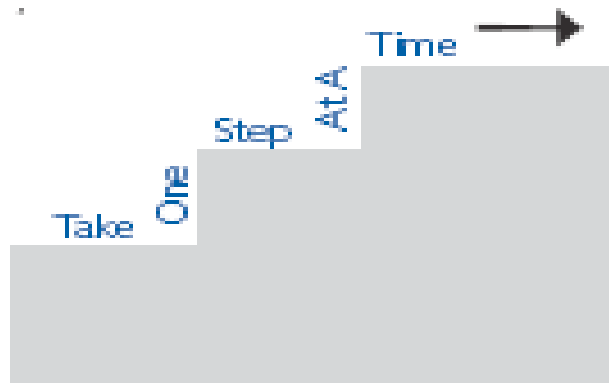
Each small change is one area of your life which will affect the others i.e. improvements in your self-esteem will help you feel more confident, more relaxed and better able to manage.

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. Work on healthy thinking habits. Eliminate the "toxic ten" use healthy thinking instead.

Ask for help when you need to. Take one step at a time.



BUILD UP CONFIDENCE

Confidence comes from enjoying and labeling successes and skills, trying new things and proving to 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. 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 practice 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.



SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS BY GETTING CLEVER ABOUT WHAT BUILDS YOUR HAPPINESS AND WELL-BEING

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 building wellbeing and resilience.

I can help myself when I am under pressure by:

- Using calm, deep breathing
- Concentrating on something completely unrelated, use another part of your brain (e.g. do a crossword puzzle, listen to music).
- Talking over a situation with a trusted friend or family
- I can talk with my doctor
-
-
-

YOUR PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

Now let's 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: **SMART**

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 think positively” rather than “Not to think self defeating thoughts”. You also make sure that your action goal is SPECIFIC, not vague. For example: “I want to try power thinking every day this week” rather than “I want to quit negative thinking”.

M - MEASURABLE:

The action goals should be such that you can measure progress easily. For example, if you have decided to try power thinking 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.

A - APPROPRIATE, ATTRACTIVE & ACHIEVABLE

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!


R - 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.

T - TIME SCALED

This means that your targets and your action goals should have a time (day/date) by which you will review or achieve them.

**Why not start by listing some
PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT TARGETS (P.A.T.s) right here**

I will watch my thoughts and challenge negative thinking	P.A.T. s For your mind
I will try a few brain exercises each day	
I will work on building my self-confidence	
_____	 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 discipline myself to 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 plenty (2 litres) 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 mind mapping and other brain exercises.	<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 healthy habits that will help you take good care of your mind!

WHAT DO YOU NEED for you mind to become healthy and strong and FLOURISH?

WHAT ARE YOUR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING NEEDS AND HOW CAN YOU MEET THEM?

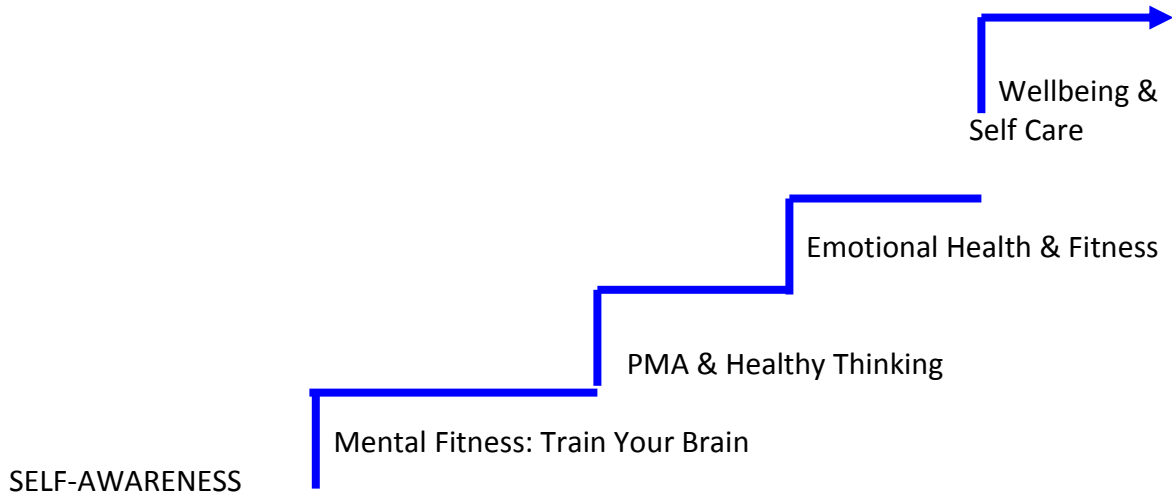
HOW CAN YOU PROMOTE MIND AND BRAIN SKILLS IN YOUR LIFE?



Do five simple things to stay healthy and well mentally and emotionally ...

- Look after your body
- Look after your thoughts
- Stay active
- Connect with others
- Communicate

STEPS AND SKILLS FOR YOUR MIND



**My BANK of GOOD IDEAS for PMA,
Emotional HEALTH & Clear thinking**
*What tips would you like to use?
Make your own list below :*

Step 3 Best Behaviours

“We are what we repeatedly do” Aristotle

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 home, at work and at play.

Everything about you says something about you.

Step 3 of this book looks at communication skills and behaviour and examines ways you can behave and actions you can take to help yourself. This section introduces you to effective ways 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 act and achieve your own best interests.

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”

The life skills for Step 3 are:

1. DEVELOP AWARENESS
2. BE PROACTIVE
3. BUILD PEOPLE SKILLS
4. MANAGING RETIREMENT
5. BUILD HEALTHY HABITS AND ROUTINES

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



DEVELOP AWARENESS

The way we behave has a major impact on how we feel and how other people think about and respond to us.

Our behaviours are often the first thing that people notice about us.

People may doubt what you say but they believe what you do. Our behaviour shows whether we wish to be friendly and whether we seem tense or relaxed. Not only do other people interpret our behaviours, but our actions also have an effect on the rest of our life. If we have positive personal behaviours we make connection and engage with colleagues, family and friends easily. We also receive other positive reactions from people in our lives.

Our behaviours are largely influenced by our life experience, habits, thinking, feeling (physical & emotional) and by the context we are in. When thinking positively and calmly we behave in a different way to when we are feeling stressed, hassled or low.

What behaviours define you ?

Friendliness / Unfriendliness

Warm / Distant

Chatty / Shy

Open / Closed

Get clever at what defines you. What do you think of your behaviour in general ?

Observe yourself. Reflect on your behaviours towards yourself and towards others.

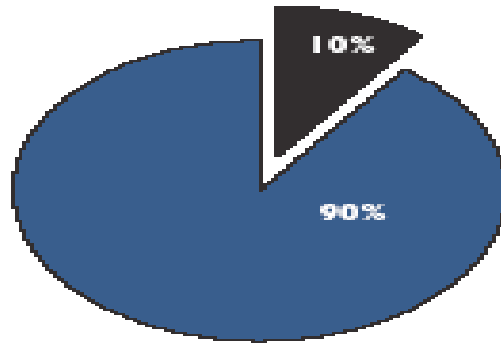
Think positively and you will act/ behave in a positive way. Thoughts really do count.

Positive self-talk really helps. Act positively and people will enjoy your company and be drawn to you.

If your behaviour is at times unthinking, thoughtless or negative in any way consider making changes. If you need to adjust or make changes to your behaviour then do. No big deal. As we live we learn. If some our behaviours (habits, skills, routines) need adjusting, just do it. Observe what works best then keep adjusting until you are happy. Learn to break down problem behaviour and bit by bit successfully adjust until it is more pro-social and positive. Your behaviour impacts on your health and wellbeing.

Remember the model... making positive changes to your **behaviour** will help both your **body** and your **mind**.

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



Invest time and energy in becoming aware of your behaviours, it will be time well spent. What do you want? What are your goals? What outcomes do you want? 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? What can you do less of ?



Remember :

“The more you do of what you’re doing... The more you get of what you’re getting”

So the question becomes--What do you want? Are you aware of what you want in life?

BE PROACTIVE

Once you have developed awareness of your needs and desires in life then it is important that you become proactive if you want success. Marshall your skills. Focus your energy on your desired outcomes. Create opportunities. Design your own future.

Plan your moves, then move your plans.

Let’s now look at ways you can behave and actions you can take to help yourself achieve personal and professional success.

GOAL SETTING AND LIFE PLANNING

Now think of the wider picture. In the last month, or the last year what did you have in your life? What did you learn about you? How well do you connect with your spirit, your needs or your goals? Where do you want to be in 3, 5, 10 years from now? How can you best achieve these goals and make your life something you can daily look forward to? Would you like to create a great year ahead?

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 define the goal, be specific; then carry out your plan, work towards ways of achieving your goal. Remember to review success, evaluate what you have achieved and what actions work best. Goals can be short-term or long-term. 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 Systems model, what goals can you set yourself to improve your:

Body for example, you may decide that you want to become fitter and healthier, improve sleep and rest or eat less sugars?

Mind maybe to improve self-esteem, develop power thinking, problem solving? What goals are important to you here? What are you focusing on? What gets your interest and attention?

Behaviour do you want to be more relaxed, stay calm, improve relationship with spouse/partner, boss, children, or others? What are the most important values or principles to you?

Environment would you like to set goals for a better balance of work, rest and play? Make plans for your best job yet.

Spirit You could decide to have regular, 'quiet or step back' time, time to think or just to be still. Remember 'Balanced Self Renewal'

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 S.M.A.R.T and *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, 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.

Prioritizing Made Easy: HERE'S HOW

1 Make a list of all you would like to do

keep separate lists for work tasks and home/family/friends tasks. Keep the work list with work 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 OFF EACH TASK AS YOU COMPLETE IT

This gives a good sense of satisfaction and achievement

8 REMEMBER THE LIST

tasks which were not a priority on one day/occasion will eventually become a priority on another



Important: *Prioritizing is not about putting-off doing something because you do not want to do it, it is about making sure that you get done what you want and that the most important things get done 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, distraction and worry, and affects our behaviour by making us less careful and accurate, and can make us more irritable and snappy with other people.

Begin with the end in mind When you look back in the future, what do you want to say about achievements for this day, this month, this year?



Time is not something you get, it is something you take.

Time is one of our most precious assets and we do not know how much of it we will get! Value it highly. Spend it wisely.



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. Do your most important work at the time of the day when you function best. Balance your day. Remember leisure and pleasure.

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

Prioritise, follow **the OHIO Rule** (Only handle it once), when you have paperwork, (letters, bills etc.), decide to act on it, file it or throw it away. Complete the job. Do not re-visit it. Only handle it once!

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 a maximum of five priorities or key things you have to complete each day.

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. Develop mindfulness

and awareness, work through activities in a balanced way. Devote time to the most important aspects in your life : family, friends, loved ones. Prioritize what is truly important to you. Keep other things in proportion. Balance necessary tasks and play.

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.



***“Pearls do not lie on the sea shore.
If you desire one you must dive for it”***

Eastern saying

Over the next few weeks, you can add to your health and wellbeing by taking care of your Body, Mind, Behaviours and Environment (Context). Here are some suggestions:

<p><u>Body</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise daily to reduce stress and increase energy • Optimal nutrition for the mind, e.g., eat fantastic fats in tuna, mackerel, herring, salmon, Omega 3 & 6. Take 5. • Rest: Cut down / out late nights • Relax • Reflect • Cut down / out 'brain drainers': junk food, caffeine, alcohol, sugars 	<p><u>Mind</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase wellbeing by trying mental relaxation to calm the mind • Try puzzles & crossword to focus the mind • Brain Gym to get clear thinking and confident decision making • Develop mindfulness • Develop power thinking • Visualize Health & wellbeing
<p><u>Behaviours</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut down on toxins of all kinds • Communicate and connect with others • Act to protect yourself and your goals • 'Drop-in' on yourself every day • Review and refine where you are up to in relation to your life goals and desires • Plan for pleasant enjoyable days : Be proactive 	<p><u>Context</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make environment comfortable • Get plenty of rest periods and pleasure with friends and family • Work in 'chunks' • Cut down / out hectic days or late nights • Cut down 'jobs' and being busy with stuff, focus on outcome

BUILD PEOPLE SKILLS

GETTING ON WITH OTHER PEOPLE

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 cannot 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. Sometimes we are ahead and sometimes we are behind, such is life - accept it. 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 pressurize 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). Avoid snap judgments.

Someone can disagree with you, without either of you being wrong.

When no one has to be wrong we can all fit in.

“We don’t see things as they are; we see things as we are”

Anais Nin

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.



Today’s Reminder:

Good to forgive, best to forget *Robert Browning*



COMMUNICATION IS KEY

*“A person knowing the power of the word becomes very careful of his/her conversation. One has only to watch the reaction of ones words to know that they **do not return void**”*
Scovel –Shinn, The Game of Life

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, for example.
2. Ask others to communicate theirs, they may seem offhand but could be upset or stressed
3. Ask yourself what do my words communicate? Do I express what I am trying to say?

BEING AN ASSERTIVE PERSON

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. Have you ever felt pushed into doing something just because you couldn't say no? Are you a people pleaser? 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, you get to choose what is best in your life

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 ask yourself "what positive things can I do?" Remember you get to choose how you think, act or feel. Be proactive. Act in a timely way do not wait for things to happen. Create opportunities.

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. Think win-win. What is a win for you, what is a win for the other person? 'Seek first to understand then to be understood.'

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 pushed around. Think win-win.

You do not have to say 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. "No" sounds so simple, yet many of us lack the confidence or are fearful of saying it. Have courage. Practice. Say "No" and other options will emerge. Others will respect you. 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. Communicate clearly about your needs and wishes,

Think about your body language

Positive eye contact (PEC) 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 Visualization

Visualize (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 you mind will naturally transfer to you behaviour. Remember mind-body-behaviour connections



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.

♥ top tip ♥

Everyone makes mistakes. Winners are those who learn from the past. When you lose, don't lose the lesson



***"Everything that happens to you is your teacher,
the secret is to sit at the feet of your own life and be taught by it"***

Mahatma Gandhi

MANAGE RETIREMENT: make sure you set up for Success

Managing retirement really is as easy as ABC

A: Advanced Planning

B: Behaviours

C: Context

ADVANCED PLANNING

Advanced planning and preparation are essential elements of managing retirement. If you want to enjoy your retirement then it is best that you become proactive and actively plan for what you want in your life.

Some people put more energy and resources in to planning a party than they do into planning their retirement !

There is an old saying *“Fail to plan, then plan to fail”*

Be clear about what outcomes you desire :

What you want? What you need?

Why you want it?

When you want it

How are you going to go about your lifestyle redesign?

How long will it take?

Where do you need help / extra input?

Talk of preparing for retirement usually brings to mind financial issues. While you may have put a lot of thought and effort into preparing your financial portfolio, how much thought have you given to preparing your psychological portfolio? Many people neglect this critical aspect of planning for their future.

Based on her study with retirees, Psychologist Dr. Nancy Schlossberg identified the following ways in which people approach the challenges of retirement :

- **Continuers** who continued using existing skills and interests;
- **Adventurers** who start entirely new endeavors;
- **Searchers** who explore new options through trial and error;
- **Easy Gliders** who enjoy unscheduled time letting each day unfold;
- **Involved Spectators** who care deeply about the world, but engage in less active ways;
- **Retreaters** who take time out or disengage from life.

Michigan State University psychology professor Norman Abeles, has found that those people most happy in retirement enjoy a variety of activities, ranging from volunteer work, exercise, continuing education and so on. Many on the road to retirement plan to spend a lot of time traveling, but increasing or unexpected physical ailments may make extensive traveling difficult, so be try to remain **flexible** in planning for retirement activities.

Use the five steps model to boost energy, options and clear thinking regarding a happy active and healthy retirement.

BEHAVIOURS

Be aware of your behaviour

Good preparation, be clear about your goals and the needs of other people involved

Planning may include being clear about the dates, deadlines, time plans

Be absolutely focused on your goals. What do you want in your life at the moment ?

What is the life plan for your life span ?

Be responsive to the other person(s) perspective (What do they require?)

Seek to understand and be understood. Pace yourself

Act as if you are calm and collected and this will happen.

CONTEXT

Set up for success early! Begin with the end in mind. Familiarize yourself with the context and environment you will be living in. What is going to be enjoyable and pleasurable ? How would you like your life to be? Plan your moves then move your plans.

Visualize what your lifestyle and daily routines and pleasures will be and imagine yourself being calm, relaxed and enjoyable working towards your desired life.

Use multi-sensory images to create calm, relaxed and enjoyable living.

Retirement preparation can be greatly assisted by working on all five systems to produce calm relaxed and effective planning.

What outcomes do you want?

What positive action can you take, to achieve your goals and dreams?



BE PROACTIVE: BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND.

PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING

What do you want? What are your goals (big and small)? 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 challenges as they arise rather than let them build up inside you. Once you begin to recognize 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 that 'brushing them under the carpet' is self-limiting and not in your best interests. Being proactive works better.



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 challenges or problem(s) on a piece of paper
2. Cross out any that you can do nothing about
3. Put the problems into order of importance, Identify the issues you can start to tackle
4. Decide which one you will deal with first (start with the easiest), this will help you to get off to a good start
5. List as many different solutions or options as possible — it doesn't matter if they seem far fetched or silly (this is called brainstorming)
6. Choose an option and break it down into small steps — plan how and when you will complete each
7. Start **TAKING ACTION**, step by step (your confidence should build with each step). Do not brood over things... just do it.
8. Do something that makes a difference today, whatever the problem.



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 (i.e. the pros and cons)**
- 3 Decide which to opt for**
- 4 Have a Plan B. If things don't work the way you desire they may work another way.**
- 5 Your success depends on your ability to adapt**

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 an evening course): Think about what you really want from your course... make a list then try to match it with your choice . Use a balance score card

Example: choosing a course:

BALANCE SCORE CARD			
SHORT TERM		LONG TERM	
Benefits	Drawbacks	Benefits	Drawbacks
Really interests me	A lot of extra work	Useful for work	None really

This is just a simple example. Try it for more complex decisions when you can list several benefits and drawbacks and look at where the balance lies.

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



SIX 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.....Pause when pause is required

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. Build a mental "pause" switch. Hit the switch if you feel overwhelmed....a short pause allows you time to make a smarter decision. That is the power of pause.

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!

6. Remember your success depends on your ability to be flexible

Stay flexible and adapt to changes in information or circumstances



MAINTAIN HEALTHY HABITS & ROUTINES

Make all your behaviours your best, because everything about you says something about you and you only get one chance to make a first impression. Develop healthy coping styles for life's inevitable challenges.

When it comes to coping, males generally tend to use "fight or flight" strategies while females generally tend to use "tend and befriend". Why not learn from each other, try new strategies from time to time. All strategies are effective if applied in the right context, at the right time and in the right way. Be flexible and tailor your behaviour to the needs of the situation at hand.

Flexibility is an important and healthy habit to build.

"Whatever is flexible and loving will tend to grow, whatever is rigid and blocked will wither and die" Lao-Tsu

Allow yourself to constantly learn and evolve, to grow, to nurture your talents and skills. Be open to developing new skills, new challenges. Take the plunge, enjoy new things.

"Too often we make our own cages : of the mind or heart. We have the keys to unlock them, we only need the will to use them"- Patrick Lindsay



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. Be ready to explain what you need.



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

F Focus on your safety needs

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

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.

R Remember...

Remain in "thinking mode" keep emotions in check. High emotion leads to low logic, stay in thinking mode. Focus on your safety needs and on behaving safely. Ask for help if you need it.

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

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

My Behaviours Learning Log :

- **If I plan the day in advance I feel better**
- **Rest is important to me**
- **Exercise, however gentle helps me cope**
-

YOUR PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

Now let's 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: **SMART**

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 behave like a professional” rather than “Not to behave badly “. You also make sure that your action goal is SPECIFIC, not vague. For example: “I want to think before I act once a day by next month” rather than “I want to quit acting first and thinking later”.

M - MEASURABLE:

The action goals should be such that you can measure progress easily. For example, if you have decided to monitor your behaviour 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.

A - 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!

R - 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.

T - 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 P.A.T.s right here

I will think win-win
I will treat everyone I meet with kindness
I will be proactive, leaving things to chance is not good enough for me
I will be flexible and positive
I will stop and think before acting



P.A.T.
For your
behaviour

**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 and respectful way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I am always considerate towards 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 admit mistakes and adjust my behaviour when needed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I try to act in a calm and considerate way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I manage my emotions well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I have good discipline and set limits for myself.	<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 how to be assertive.	<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:

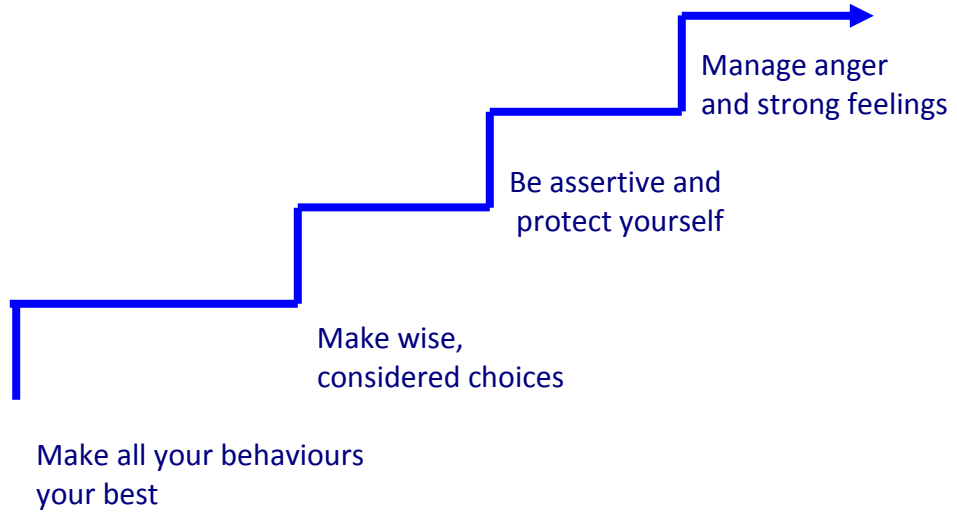
It takes us humans 21 days to build a habit. Why not take the next 21 days to build Good Habits that will help you take good care of your behaviours!
WHAT DO YOU NEED TO OPTIMISE YOUR BEHAVIOUR?

WHAT ARE YOUR BEHAVIOURAL NEEDS?

HOW CAN YOU PLANT BEHAVIOUR SKILLS IN YOUR LIFE?



STEPS AND SKILLS FOR POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS AND POSITIVE PEOPLE SKILLS



**My BANK of GOOD IDEAS for
BEST BEHAVIOURS**
*What tips would you like to use
Make your own list below :*

Step 4 – Your Environment / Context – Your Surroundings

Step 4 looks at your environment / context and how you can make it work best for you. By environment or context we mean your family, friends, social life, leisure, pleasure and resources. This step is all about the importance of friends and family in dealing with life's inevitable ups and downs.

Step 4 shows you how to develop habits, skills and behaviours that make your life happy, healthy, content and safe. Even if you are going through tough times, 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 more content future.

There are times when we can all benefit from help and advice from others, whether at home or in our social life. 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.

Context: CREATE A CALM AND COMFORTABLE LIFE

The key life skills here are:

1. **AWARENESS**
2. **CREATE CALM AROUND YOU**
3. **FAMILY & FRIENDS**
4. **DEALING WITH BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS**
5. **LEISURE & PLEASURE**

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 work, your leisure and your play are all aspects of your context.

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

AWARENESS

GETTING THE BIGGER PICTURE

Life is a package deal, comprising of 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, where 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 home or a disagreement we are having with someone. 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.

CREATE CALM AROUND YOU

Create calm in the world in which you live and play.

Life can be very busy and confusing sometimes, with lots of different things going on, and all of them competing for our time and attention. In order to live a successful life we need clarity and calm. 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 out your surroundings means:

- Understanding how important your environment is to your comfort and safety.
- Clearing out clutter.
- Examining your living space, your bedroom, your resources - take a mental tour of where you live or spent most of your time. What are the positives? What are the negatives? Where is the clutter? And what are the "must make changes to" things?
- Focus on what works and work on reducing any stresses and strains. 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? Declutter!
- 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, this really helps you thrive and survive the natural challenges of life.
- Make time for fun, humour and light hearted play...see funny films, look at funny books, cartoons or comedy strips on the internet or try a comedy club near you.
- 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.

FAMILY & FRIENDS

Master the habits of creating calm around you and you'll make everything and everyone around you feel comfortable and easy to live with.

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. Be aware of your surroundings. Be mindful of what is happening around you as you move around.

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, develop 'balanced self renewal' (see *The 7 habits of highly effective people* by Stephen Covey)
- to simply relax, have quiet time and calm

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 ifs?' 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, your doctor or indeed anyone you trust.

PEOPLE NEED PEOPLE: 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.

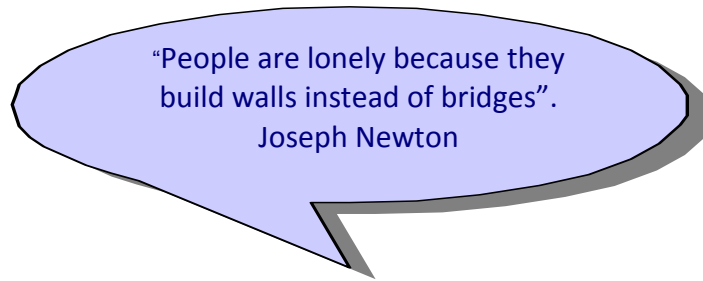
LIFE'S RICH PATTERN

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 upsets 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 be generous towards them, as long as their actions are not harming us in any way.

Communicating and connecting with 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 personal space and privacy (emotionally and physically).
- 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 necessary even if they have been unkind to us first. Step back from unpleasant behaviours. Do not engage. What you put into life you will get out of life.



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 POWER THINKING 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. 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 behavior, not someone else's. Usually, retaliation only leads to things getting worse and it can become a game with no winners. Think of the behaviors 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 help you increase awareness and to help you build skills 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 what 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. Be proactive. Act to protect yourself. **Ask for help when you need it.**
-



MANAGE 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 need to 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 forgivable! 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 GENTLE WITH YOURSELF.

SEEKING HELP

In some cases a situation may arise in which you cannot avoid conflict. Clearly, you cannot allow another person to abuse or 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 or friends or involve family members. It might involve professional people beyond our friends and family such as our doctor or even the police.

If you are being threatened or abused

Please 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 ANOTHER PERSON'S BEHAVIOUR

DEALING WITH BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS

"Loss is life's non-negotiable side, It is the time when we learn, unconditionally that we are powerless over things we thought we had a grip on"- Stephanie Ericsson

As we get older it is inevitable that we will lose family, friends and others in our life, this is a normal but painful part of life. Very painful emotions can arise after trauma or loss. The main thing is to give ourselves the time and space to discover how to deal with loss in the best way for us. Everybody is different and we all need to deal with things in a way that meets our needs. Death and loss may bring difficult emotions and it may feel like the sadness and grief will never pass. This is healthy and normal and while there is no right or wrong way to deal with loss, there are things you can do to ease the pain and cope well with the challenge of bereavement.

Psychologists remind us that it is normal to take 12-18 months (even two years) to work through bereavement and to grieve. Give yourself time. Go gently with yourself. Be patient and remember.....



Life has to end. Love doesn't – Mitch Albom

Many people find it helpful to read poetry or short stories about death to help them through the difficult time, others like to listen to soothing or classical music or just to sit and look at photographs or reminisce about happier times. Whatever way you find helps you best just do it – there is no right or wrong way to deal with bereavement and loss. Whatever you do try to remember the five systems model and the ways you can help yourself by attending to all five systems.

Here are some suggestions that have been shown to be helpful: -

BODY - One of the most helpful things you can do is to MOVE...yes move, go for a gentle walk or do whatever form of exercise you can manage. This will help reduce tension in the body, soothe your mind and lift your spirit.

MIND – Watch your thoughts, go gently and calmly. Keep negative or depressing thoughts in check. You may find it helpful to read inspiring or comforting poems to calm the mind - something like David Harkins words **HE IS GONE** (see below) may help you.

BEHAVIOUR – Have gentle routines, rest relax and restore. Do something that makes you feel calm, settled, better or even distracted for a while. It is normal and healthy to cry and be emotionally distressed, don't push the tears away be gentle, kind and accepting of yourself. We all deal with loss differently.

CONTEXT – Make contact with those who you know are a good support to you, visit the grave, follow customs and rituals of your culture, spend time with loved ones. Having the support of others is really helpful.

SPIRIT- Follow rituals / routines in honor of the person you lost. Meditate, reflect or Light a candle, spend some time thinking about the person and how grateful you are to have known and loved them...do whatever is meaningful to you.

He is Gone - David Harkins 1981,

You can shed tears that s/he is gone
Or you can smile because s/he has lived
You can close your eyes and pray that s/he will come back
Or you can open your eyes and see all that s/he has left
Your heart can be empty because you can't see him (her)
Or you can be full of the love that you shared
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday
You can remember him (her) and only that s/he is gone
Or you can cherish his memory and let it live on
You can cry and close your eyes, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what s/he would want: smile, open your eyes, love and go on.

LEISURE & PLEASURE

The world can be a big old lonely place! When you are feeling “down” or under pressure it’s all too easy to think you are “the only person in the world this has ever happened to,” or that, “things are so bad that no one would ever want to talk to me about them.” That is just not the case.

More often than not there are any number of people and organisations both nationally - and in your own community - who may be able to help. There is a lot of truth in the old saying, “A problem shared is a problem halved.”

You will frequently find that these people, if you get in touch, have faced the same problems themselves or at least have a really good understanding of the problems you face. They will know what you are talking about and should be able to give you advice, point you in the right direction - or quite simply listen to what you have to say. You don’t need to feel isolated and by building your own “support team”, you will have taken a major step forward in getting on with your life and widening your circle of friends.

So - who would be part of your team?

That really depends on you - and the things you want to include in your life. It could be as simple as a list of your family and friends, or your GP. It may be a number of people or groups who share your interests, hobbies or experiences. Or, you may be trying to overcome some serious problems in your life and you may need more specific help. In these circumstances there are often both local and national groups of people or organisations you can approach in addition to your doctor.

A little bit of research can go a long way. Your local telephone directory will list all sorts of voluntary organisations - as well as facilities run by the Health, Social Care or local authorities. Directories also list national “helplines” for all sorts of things. Your local directory will also have lists of places you might want to visit or things you might want to do - and who to get in touch with to arrange these. They are usually listed at the front of your directory in the Information section. It is worth having a look.

We also suggest that you begin to build up your own “address book” of people and numbers who have been helpful to you in the past, or who may be helpful in the future. Look in your local telephone directory to find services and organisations close to your home. Include details of activities that interest you - for instance your local sports center, gym, theatre, cinema, swimming pool and so on.

Make it a resource for your life.

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

Remember, if you write things down:

- it becomes simpler
- it is clearer, you can really see it
- you get some distance from it
- you remember it
- you act on it
- you have a record of your progress

My Learning Log for my Environment

YOUR PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN FOR ENVIROMENT

Now let's identify your **Personal Achievement Targets (or P.A.T.s)** relating to your environment. 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 context.

Remember to ensure that every target is: **SMART**

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 feel safe and confident where I live" rather than "Not to live somewhere isolated". You also make sure that your action goal is SPECIFIC, not vague. For example: "I want to get holidays organised by the end of the month" rather than "I want to quit wasting time reading brochures".

M - 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.

A - APPROPRIATE and ATTRACTIVE

The targets and action goals should fit with your life, your situation. We all have different lifestyles and different social and financial 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!

R - 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.

T - 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 P.A.T.s right here

I will take time to communicate and connect with others

I will not suffer abuse from others

I will look beyond the obvious

I will try to see the perspective of others

P.A.T.
For your
Environment



**Your
Own
ideas**

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 work or hobbies.	<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 time and care to communicate and connect with others.	<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:

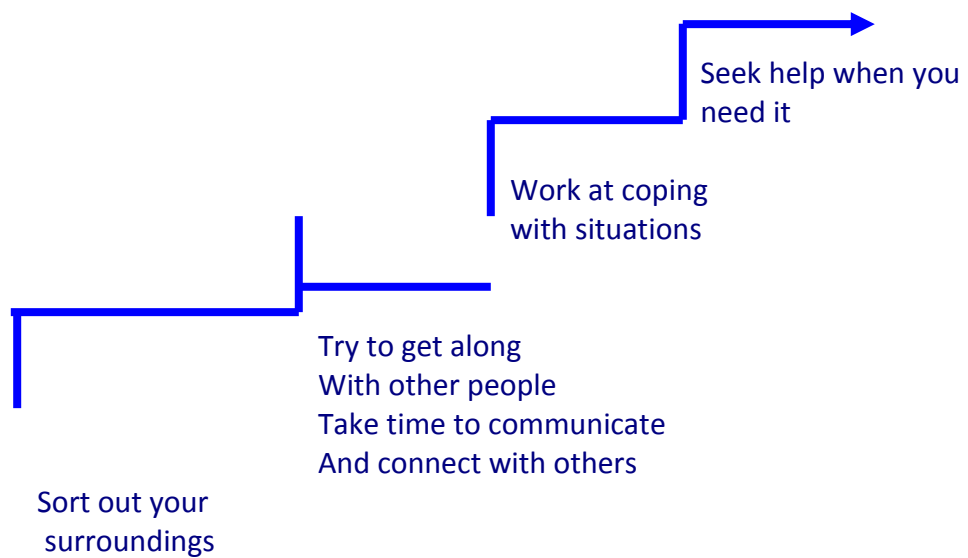
It takes us humans 21 days to build a habit. Why not take the next 21 days to build Good Habits that will help you take good care of your surroundings!

**My BANK of GOOD IDEAS for a
Healthy, Happy & Calm Context
*What tips would you like to use?
Make your own list below :***

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO OPTIMISE YOUR SURROUNDINGS?

WHAT ARE YOUR CONTEXTUAL NEEDS?

HOW CAN YOU PLANT CONTEXT SKILLS IN YOUR LIFE?



STEP 5 Take care of your exceptional spirit, Make space in your life for care of your soul.

All four systems (body – mind – behaviour – environment / context) come together to make your life. The point where they all connect is called the **NEXUS**, but you may prefer the simpler words, spirit or soul. This is where connection and the balance of all the systems make you who you are...YOU.

Step 5 of this book is all about taking care of your spirit, your soul, your energy and living your values. In building wellbeing and success, authenticity is your most precious asset and you will be uncomfortable and suffer dysfunctional stress if you over-ride or suppress your unique spirit, your values or use techniques or strategies that don't fit who you really are.

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 life and its challenges with a greater sense of ease and confidence.

Attending to your spirit's needs builds serenity, contentment and balance in life.

Looking after your soul or 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.

The key life skills here are:

- 1. Awareness : Needs and Seeds**
- 2. Living Your Values**
- 3. Mindfulness**
- 4. Meditation**
- 5. Gratitude**

This is the shortest part of the **ACTIVE AND HEALTHY AGING** self care and well-being programme but in some ways the most important. 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 soul or spirit. Your Spirit is the very private part of yourself (who you really are, what you stand for, what you value in life) where everything about your existence is experienced - your core identity.

AWARENESS : NEEDS AND SEEDS

Balance is the key to wellbeing and to happy healthy living.

Remember your Needs and Seeds.

The life skills you pick up from this workbook 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.



When your body, mind, behaviours and context are healthy, your spirit and your soul will thrive and flourish. This sets you up for good psychological health and well-being. In this book we have emphasized that you should act for your greater good. Look at the life that you are living -

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 plans and dreams to become reality?

The best way to make your Spirit healthy and happy is to try out some the life skills you have learned in this workbook.

Take good care of your wonderful Body, your beautiful mind, your best Behaviours and your surroundings family, friends, and work and your Spirit will soar.

Living Your Values

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 grey 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 married with four children, I have two grandchildren and I live in a small town').

Whoever you are, there are lots of ways that you can answer that simple question. In fact, the woman 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.

Remember the way you think really does affect the way you feel. Use power thinking skills to support you to be the best you can be now.



REMINDER: Optimism is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Make space in your life for Mindfulness or Meditation

Mindfulness

Being fully aware of and full attention in the present in the moment.

Stress experts have shown that if people make space for mindfulness in their life they can greatly improve their health and well-being.

Medical expert Jon Kabat-Zinn describes Mindfulness best,

“Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; on purpose, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally”.

Have a look at Jon Kabat-Zinn’s clip ‘[Coming to our senses](#)’ on [Youtube](#).

Learning to focus and engage fully in the immediate present moments, attending to the NOW.

Mindfulness will help you cultivate a feeling of awareness, calm and stability. This can help build resilience within yourself. It provides an essential ingredient of well-being and strength. It helps you connect with your inner resources and your power.

Power is much more useful to you than Force.

Many of us spend a lot of time in mindlessness... the opposite to mindfulness, where we spend time doing things on auto pilot, unthinking and unconsciously and without awareness to what is happening inside us or around us.

Mindfulness is also about paying careful attention to the present moment, being fully present and not judging or jumping ahead in our thoughts.

Practise mindfulness and enjoy the health and well-being benefits.

HOW MINDFULNESS HELPS HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Psychological research has discovered that mindfulness has a number of personal and social benefits such as:

- increased positive emotions
- Better control of emotions and thoughts
- Better self awareness and self control
- improved working memory and concentration
- Reduction in anxiety and depression
- improved physical health
- increased flexibility in thinking and behaviour
- reduced negative emotion and reactivity
- reduced rumination (‘nagging doubts’ or dwelling on negative thoughts and emotions)
- Improved awareness of self-care and appreciation of the good in your life.

Mindfulness has huge benefits for both physical and psychological health.

There are lots of ways to get into this practice.

One simple way is to dedicate a short time, say 5 minutes, and take a seat, slip off your shoes, put your feet flat and comfortably on the floor. Your back

comfortably against the back of your chair. Gently close your eyes. Bring your attention 'home', in to your body. Spend a few moments settling down to be fully present in the moment, notice and accept things as they are then.

- Bring your attention to the soles of your feet, the soft skin touching the surface below.
- Focus on the point of contact between your feet and the surface of the floor and start to be aware of this being a point of stability, of the ground being sturdy and strong.
- Bring your attention to the soles of your feet touching the ground beneath you.
- Breathe naturally, but allow your attention to be on the soles of your feet and how stable the ground beneath feels.
- Allow this grounded feeling move up through your body.

Meditation – (Loving, Kindness Meditation)

Meditation is another uplifting activity which is also joy and energy building. Meditation helps you build resilience and inner resourcefulness

Step 2 in this book has lots of ideas for mental relaxation and meditation. There are also lots of resources on the web.

As with Mindfulness, develop your own unique style by trying lots of different meditation exercise before you settle on what method you like and benefit from best.

Mindfulness and Meditation practices will help your heart sing... your spirit soar..all good stuff. When you practise the mindful or meditation state, you can strengthen your feelings of peace and calm.

Try [Breathe2Relax App](#) or [Tacticbreather App](#).

These are great stress management tools.

Gratitude: A Key Happiness Habit

Practice: Priming yourself for happiness through Gratitude Practice

You are here for a worthwhile purpose.

You deserve to be happy and do something wonderful with your life.

Thank and acknowledge all that you are and all that you have contributed.

Thank and acknowledge significant people in your life.

Develop an **attitude of gratitude** for all you have been given, the character qualities that you possess.

Gratitude Practice is best when you take some time each day to **write down** the things (however small) that you are grateful for in your life.



PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Psychologically healthy living is a daily balancing act in which you care for yourself on every level and every system: body, mind, behaviours, context and soul.

Some things to think about.....

1. Remember you are a child of the Universe, no less than the trees or the stars, you have a right to be here. Take great care of you and your highest good
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. Strive to live in harmony with all around you
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 everyone is unique. You are you, they are they.
7. Remember that silence and quiet reflection are often as invigorating as noise and bustle.
8. Try to be cheerful and seek out the positive even if things look bleak. Use power thinking and 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. Develop an 'attitude of gratitude'. Be thankful for all the good things that happen, this aids positive thinking and positive well-being.

YOUR PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

Now let's identify your **Personal Achievement Targets (or P.A.T.s)** relating to your spirit. 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 spirit.

Remember to ensure that every target is: **SMART**

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 invest more time in my spiritual practice” rather than “Not to ignore my spiritual life”. You also make sure that your action goal is SPECIFIC, not vague. For example: “I want to be more dedicated to daily, morning meditation” rather than “I want to make time for meditation”.

M - MEASURABLE:

The action goals should be such that you can measure progress easily. For example, if you have decided to practice mindfulness 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.

A - APPROPRIATE and ATTRACTIVE

The targets and action goals should fit with your life, your situation. We all have different beliefs and different spiritual needs, and it is important that our targets should be consistent with this. They should also be what you desire or aspire for yourself, rather than what someone else wants for you.


R - 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.

T - 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 P.A.T.s right here

<i>I will identify my values, skills and needs</i>	P.A.T. For your spirit
<i>I will draw up a plan to meet my needs</i>	
<i>I will make a list of my priorities in life</i>	
<i>I will take good care of me</i>	
<hr/>	
<hr/>	Your own
<hr/>	
<hr/>	
<hr/>	
<hr/>	

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.
2. I take time to be still and reflect each day.
3. I am playful each day.
4. I can always see the good in myself.
5. I can always see the good in others.
6. I will focus on doing positive things with positive people.
7. I reach out and ask for help and advice if I need to when times are tough.
8. I take good care of my beautiful brain.
9. I take good care of my wonderful body.
10. I take care to show healthy, kind behaviours even when others are mean.
11. I allow time for rest and renewal.
12. I acknowledge all the good things in my life.

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!



**My BANK of GOOD IDEAS for a
Healthy, Happy & Calm Spirit**
*What tips would you like to use
Make your own list below :*

WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR YOUR SPIRIT?

WHAT ARE YOUR SPIRIT'S NEEDS?

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

Thank you for taking the time to read this workbook. 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 your health and wellbeing and give yourself a happy, calm and content life.

YOU CAN DO IT, YOU WILL SUCCEED

**ENJOY YOUR LIFE
NOW!**



YOUR NOTES

YOUR NOTES

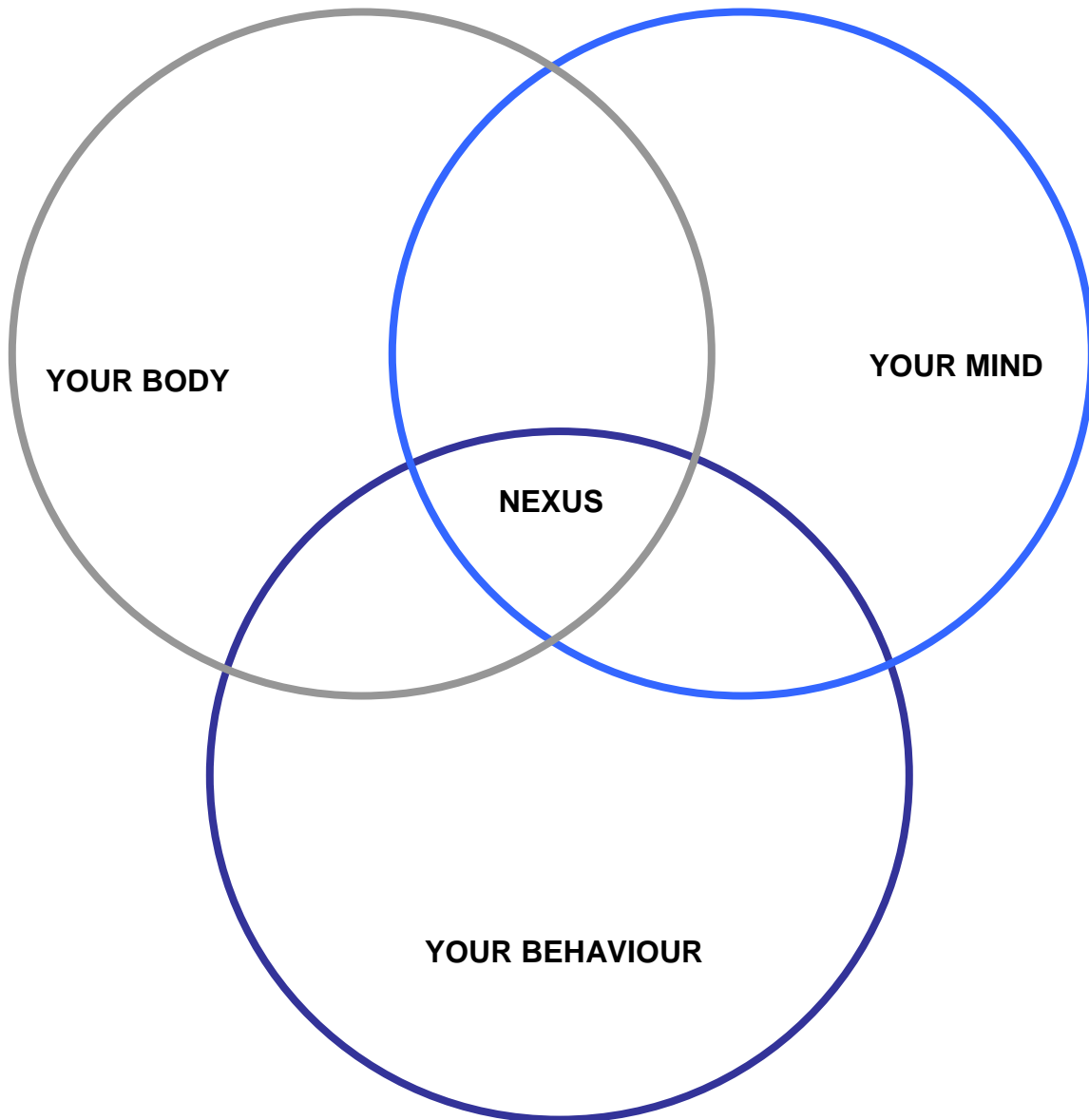
YOUR NOTES

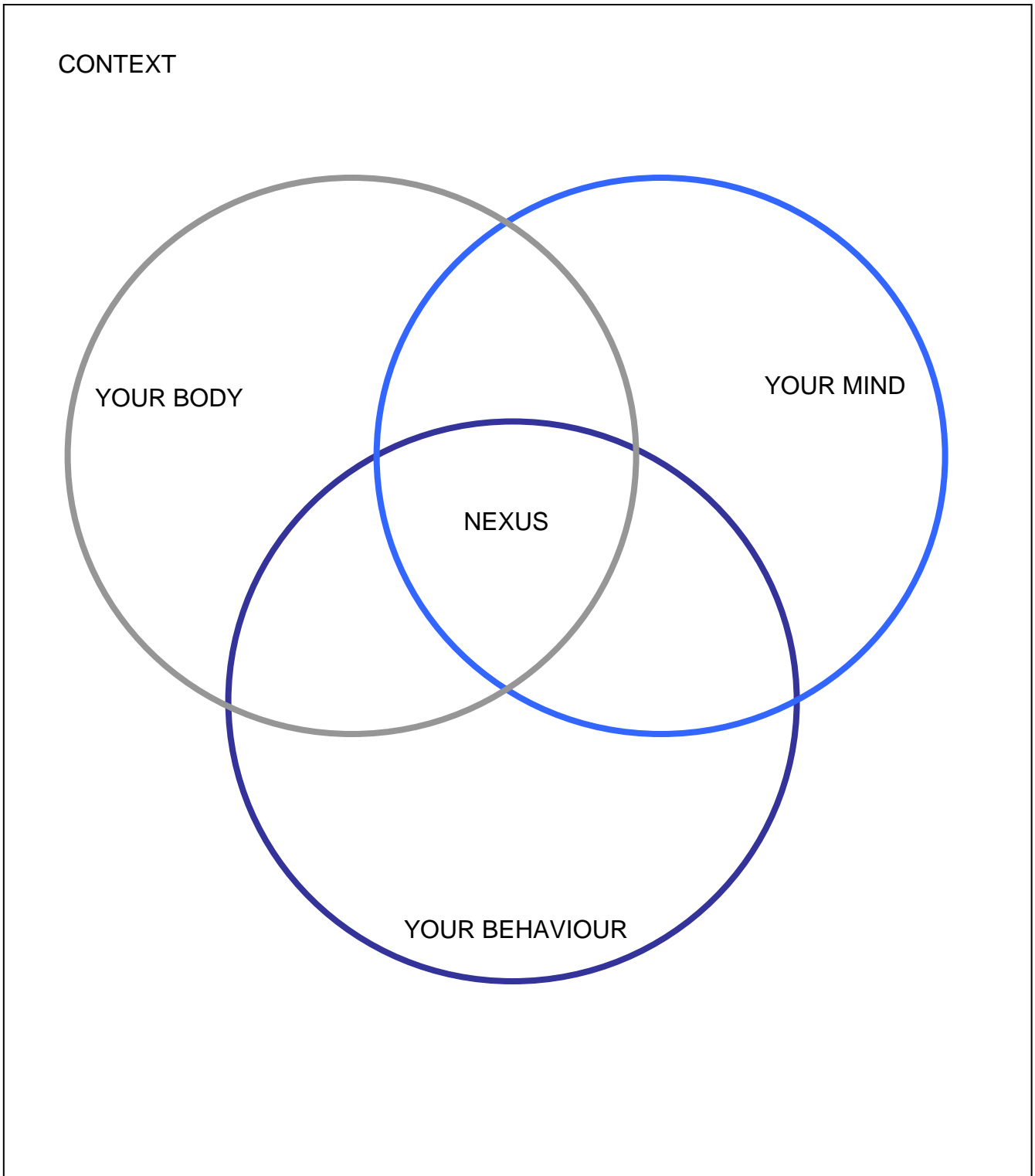
BACK COVER

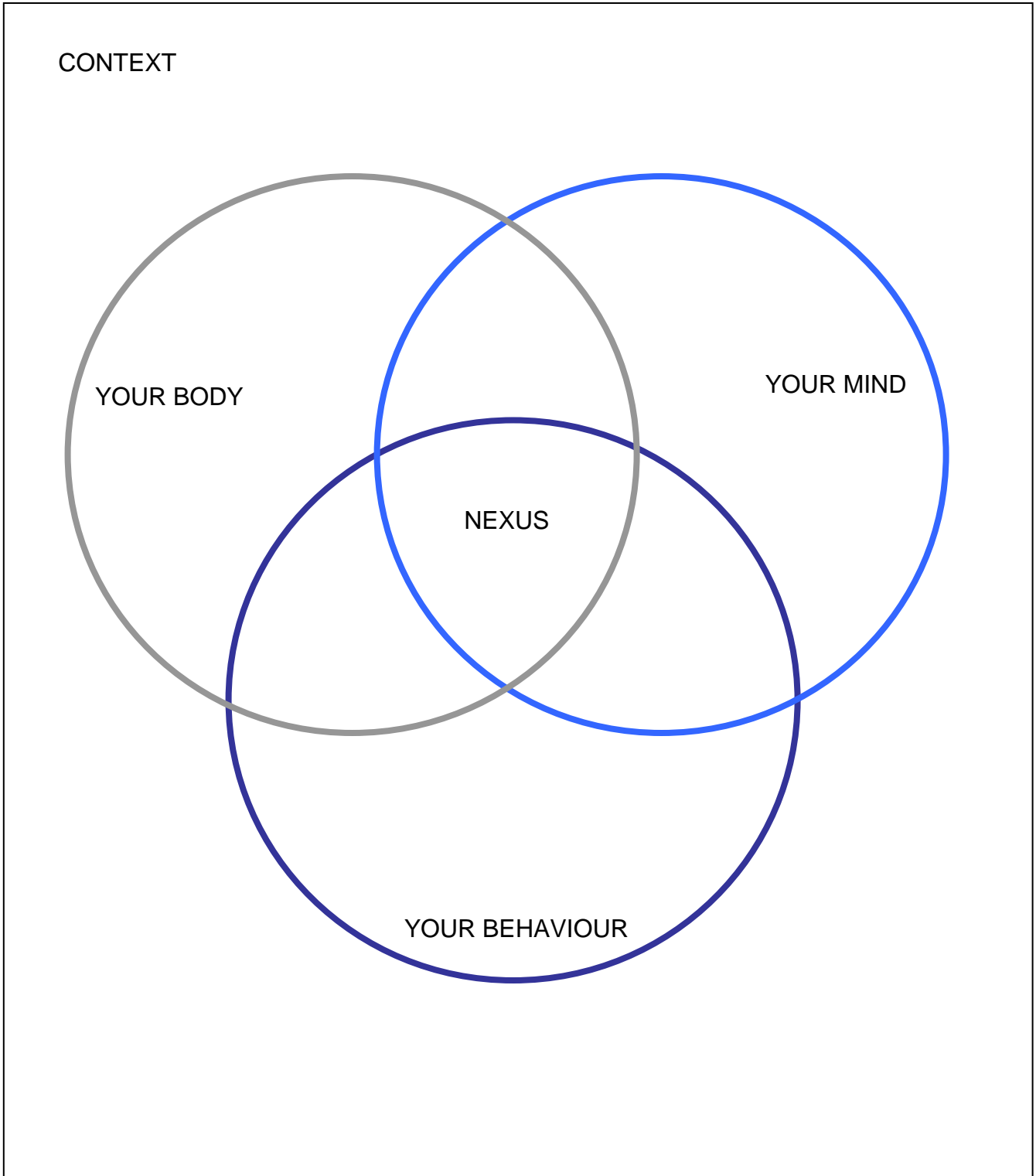


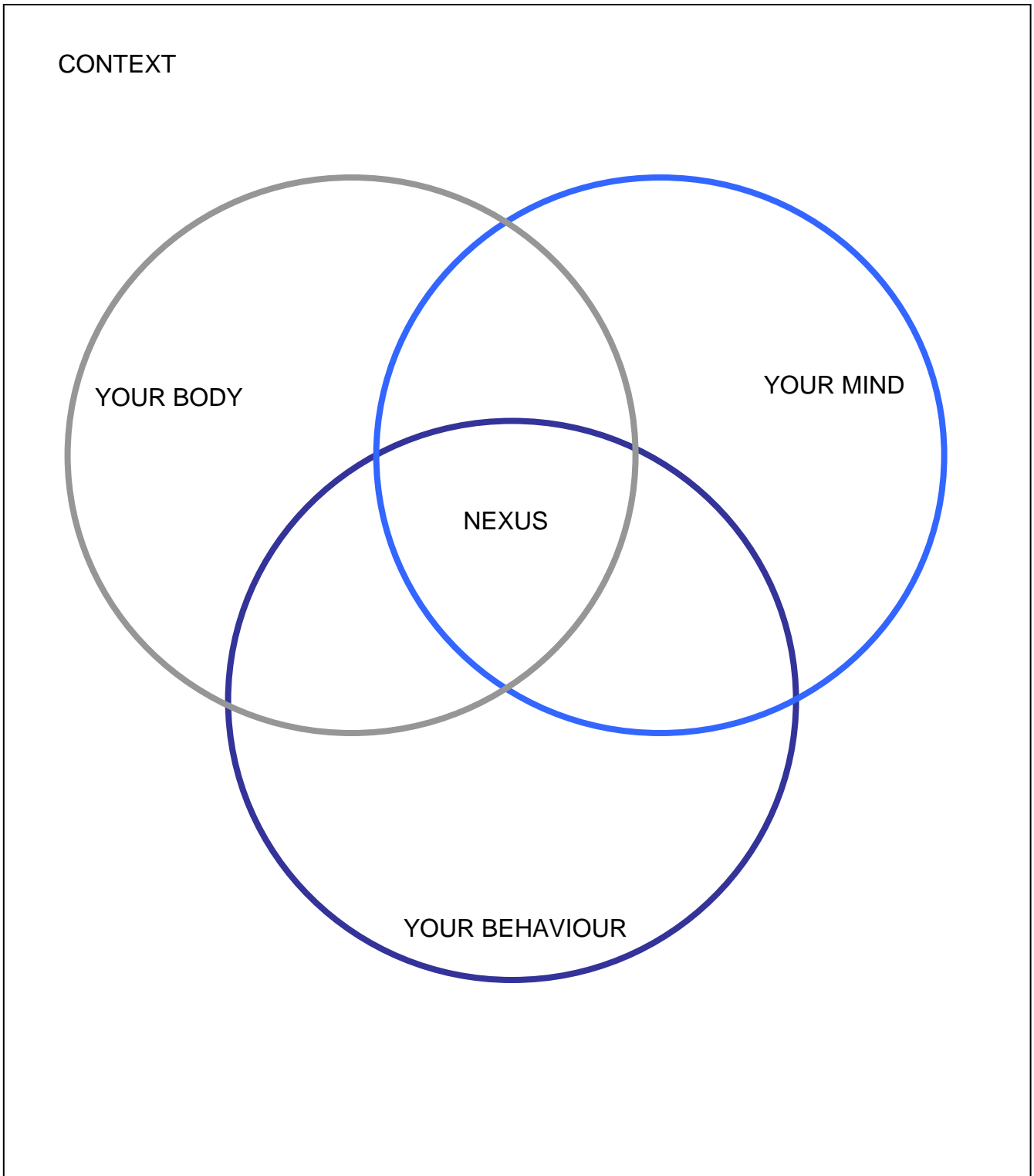
YOUR WORKSHEETS

CONTEXT









This workbook was created to meet your needs. We gave it our best shot. We would really appreciate your best shot also, so that it may be further developed to aid students in the future.

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?

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. Any suggestions for improving this book?

5. Would you recommend this book to your friends or family?

Yes

No

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

Please send to Dr Margaret O'Rourke, Consultant Forensic Clinical Psychologist/
Director of Behavioural Science, School of Medicine, Brookfield Health Sciences
Complex, University College Cork, Ireland.

SOME OTHER BOOKS FROM THE LIFEMATTERS ACADEMY

My Lifematters

O'Rourke, M and Hammond, S (2006)

Lifematters: Personal Support Plan

O'Rourke, M. (2004)

Time to Stop: A Step By Step Guide To Help You Stop Taking Drugs

O'Rourke, M. (1992, Revised 2002)

Thinking About Drinking: A Step By Step Guide To Help You Change Your Drinking Habits

O'Rourke, M. (1993, Revised 2003)

Keep Your Cool: A Step By Step Guide To Help You Manage Anger Problems

O'Rourke, M. & Hammond, S. (1994)

Keep Safe At Work: A Guide For Dealing With Difficult Situations and Hostile Or Aggressive People

O'Rourke, M. & Davies, J. (1995)

Tough Love: A Step By Step Guide To Preventing Domestic Violence

O'Rourke, M. & Davies, J. (1996)

Home Improvements: A Step By Step Guide To Ending Domestic Violence and Abuse

O'Rourke, M. & Davies, J. (1996)

LifeMatters: A Simple Guide To Important Life Skills

O'Rourke, M., Stone Pearn, H. & McGeachy, O. (1999)

Triumph Over Trauma: A Thoroughly Practical and Structured Guide To The Road To Recovery From Trauma

O'Rourke, M. & Titley, K. (1999)

All publications combine "what works" in clinical practice with modern science to bring the reader not only new insights but also more importantly skills and techniques which can be used in daily living.

For further details contact: [Dr Margaret O'Rourke \(m.orourke@ucc.ie\)](mailto:m.orourke@ucc.ie)

BACK COVER

Would you like to wake up each morning calm, rested and eager for the coming day ?

Would you like to be able to remain calm & alert under pressure ?

Would you like to be able to relax and feel good ?

Would you like to end your working day feeling just a little physically tired but with your soul fully charged ?

Would you like to build up your inner strength and bring more pleasure, power and joy to everything you do ?

Then this new, proven programme is for you !

INSERT IMAGE

Dr. Margaret is a leading clinical psychologist, researcher and author. Over the past 25 years Margaret O'Rourke has helped hundreds of people successfully reduced stress, increase energy, well-being and resilience. She has a particular interest in mental health and well-being and is actively engaged in philanthropic service through the LifeMatters Academy worldwide. (www.lifemattersacademy.org)

Dr. Sean Hammond

Dr Mike Murphy

Dr Helen Hynes