



SAFEVET SMART

A PRACTICAL AND COMPLETE GUIDE TO
STRESS MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE
TECHNIQUES FOR VETERINARY
PRACTITIONERS AND VETERINARY NURSES



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5th Year Student of Veterinary Medicine

This is a LifeMatters Academy publication.

All our 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.

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Love and thanks to special people, Seán, Sophie and Catherine,
and to Binky a special girl - with short legs and a snazzy coat.

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Commissioned by the
VETERINARY COUNCIL OF IRELAND

SAFEVET SMART

**A PRACTICAL AND COMPLETE
GUIDE TO STRESS MANAGEMENT
AND RESILIENCE TECHNIQUES**

FOR VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS AND VETERINARY NURSES

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DEDICATION

*SAFEVET SMART is dedicated to all
Veterinary Professionals past, present and future.*

This publication has been commissioned and sponsored by
the Veterinary Council of Ireland in support
of the health and wellbeing of all registered
veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses

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Foreword by VCI President and VCI Deputy President

Veterinary professionals are a precious resource. They make an immense contribution to society by their care and treatment of animals, their collaboration with owners and the assurance offered to all by their protection of the integrity of the food chain.

Veterinary medicine and nursing are complex professions, with more stresses and demands than most other professions. Clinical practice is satisfying and rewarding, while often unpredictable and challenging too, throughout the journey of a veterinary professional life.

To be an effective professional, as a practitioner or nurse, it is important that we all take care of our health and wellbeing. We must all learn to manage ourselves and our health, to ensure we are in a position to provide care and treatment to others. We cannot pour from an empty glass, and so resilience is an essential skill for us all in facing the evolving challenges we face throughout the journey of our professional and personal lives.

The ever-increasing challenges and pressures of professional practise as a Veterinary Practitioner or Veterinary Nurse is acknowledged. The Veterinary Council have commissioned this updated SAFEVET SMART book as a tool to assist and support the health and wellbeing of our registrants, the members of our proud professions, without whom society cannot function. This handbook contains many valuable pointers to enable you to assess your circumstances and ensure your control on your health and wellbeing. The handbook also includes details of supports available to all Veterinary Council registrants, in an effort to promote awareness of the availability and ease of access of these supports.

We must all strive to look after ourselves, our colleagues and teams. To offer good care to others, we must first nourish our own physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Tabhair aire duit féin agus dá chéile.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Moffitt".

Joe Moffitt
President



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ailís ní Riain".

Dr Ailís Ní Riain
Deputy President

Acknowledgements

The VCI wishes to acknowledge our original Health and Wellbeing Leaders, the then VCI President, Bill Cashman and Chair of the Veterinary Education and Training Committee, Fergus Smith who laid the foundations for this important work in 2015.

The VCI also wishes to acknowledge everyone who has assisted in the development of this publication as one of the intended tools to support the health and wellbeing of all VCI registrants.



Bill Cashman



Fergus Smith

Mental Health Supports

There are many organisations in Ireland that are dedicated to supporting people suffering from depression, anxiety and other illnesses.

Veterinary Supports

Irish Veterinary Benevolent Fund (IVBF)

The IVBF provides financial and other supports to veterinary professionals and their families on a strictly confidential basis. The IVBF currently provides a 24/7 support line, regular monthly income supplements, one off payments for specific purposes and short-term assistance with mortgage repayments.

☎ + 353 1 716 6099 – 24/7 support line (1800 995 955)

🌐 www.ivbf.ie

The Veterinary Assistance Programme (VetAP)

The Irish Veterinary Assistance Programme is a confidential support service with the purpose of promoting positive mental health, providing support at times of difficulty and providing crisis response during times of extreme stress. Support is free to all Veterinary professionals and their dependents (over 16 years of age). The Programme is funded by the IVBF with support from the Veterinary Council, Veterinary Ireland, Veterinary Officers Association, and the Irish Veterinary Nursing Association, and delivered by VHI Corporate Solutions. The Programme is part funded by the National Organisation for Suicide Prevention (NOSP).

☎ + 353 1800 995 955

🌐 www.ivbf.ie/vap

VetSupport Ireland

Vet Support Ireland is a voluntary organisation that provides a confidential listening and support service for all members of the veterinary professions in Ireland including email and colleague manned support services.

✉ info@vetsupportnorthernireland.co.uk

🌐 www.vetsupportni.co.uk/roi/

Vet Space Ireland

Vet Space Ireland is a platform for veterinary professionals to engage as a community with the aim of promoting good mental health in the profession in Ireland.

Vet Space Ireland run multiple campaigns which they promote on social media, with podcasts, live interviews on Instagram and articles on our website. Vet Space Ireland aim is to look after and support a large volume of veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses who leave the profession due to mental health difficulties.

✉ inspire@vetspaceireland.ie

🌐 www.vetspaceireland.ie

f Vet Space Ireland

🐦 @VetSpacelreland

Pieta House

The Pieta House centre for the prevention of self-harm or suicide has helped over 20,000 in Ireland suffering from mental illness. The group has eight centres nationwide. Three in Dublin (Finglas, Ballyfermot and Tallaght) as well as centres in Tipperary, Kerry, Limerick, Cork and Galway.

Pieta House can be contacted at (01) 6010000, after which they will organise a meeting with you in order to assess your needs. You'll be welcomed warmly, offered tea or coffee, and have a chat about what you are going through.

After this, Pieta House will match you with a therapist who you can see twice a week depending on your availability and whether you feel up to it. Sessions with your therapist will always be free of charge, and last for roughly 50 minutes.

☎ Freephone: 1800 247 247

🌐 www.pietahouse.ie

✉ info@pieta.ie

Samaritans Ireland

Samaritans is a service that can be used either if your situation feels more urgent, or if you feel like all you need is a good chat. There are 20 branches of Samaritans in Ireland with volunteers ready to answer the phone if you feel overwhelmed. You can ring their helpline whether or not you have mental health issues, if you're worried about a friend, and even if you're under 18. All conversations with Samaritans are off the record, and there is no need to give them any personal details.

There are different phone numbers for the different Samaritans branches. You can find your nearest Samaritans branch at:

🌐 www.samaritans.org/branches?circle%5Blocation%5D=tallaght.

☎ Tel no. +353 1 6710071/ 24 hour helpline 116 123

🌐 www.samaritans.org/ireland/samaritans-ireland

Aware

Aware have a support line for anyone who is worried about depression, which operates from 10am to 10pm, seven days a week, as well as a support mail service.

Aware also offer a suite of 'Wellness @Work' programmes that are ideal for helping your workplace understand the importance and value of looking after their mental health, and to use relevant coping skills to limit the impact of any challenges or concerns.

Aware also do work in schools, offering a Life Skills for Schools Programme which consists of six modules delivered to students by a professional trainer in the classroom over six weekly sessions.

☎ Helpline no. +353 1800 80 48 48 Open 10am - 10pm (Monday - Sunday)

🌐 www.aware.ie

✉ info@aware.ie

A Lust for Life

A Lust for Life is another collection of insightful articles that might help you better understand the problems that you are facing, and help you realise that you are living in a world full of people who can relate to what you are going through.

🌐 www.alustforlife.com

✉ info@alustforlife.com

Reach Out

Reach Out is an Irish website full of blogs, videos and an Ask The Expert service that is encouraging young people to learn more about their mental wellbeing and empower them to take steps towards good mental health.

☎ Tel no. + 353 1 764 5666

✉ info@inspireireland.ie

🌐 www.ie.reachout.com/

See Change

See Change is an alliance of organisations working together through the National Stigma Reduction Partnership to bring about positive change in public attitudes and behaviour towards people with mental health problems.

☎ Tel no. +353 1 541 3715

✉ info@seechange.ie

🌐 www.seechange.ie

Mental Health Ireland

At Mental Health Ireland, their aim is to promote positive mental health and wellbeing for all individuals and communities and to support people with lived experience of mental health challenges in their recovery, bringing practical expression to national policy objectives. Mental Health Ireland was founded in 1966 on the recommendation of the Commission on Mental Illness. Mental Health Ireland's Associations promote positive mental health and support people with mental health difficulties within their own communities.

☎ Tel: (01) 284 1166

✉ info@mentalhealthireland.ie

🌐 www.mentalhealthireland.ie

Mental Health First Aid

Mental Health First Aid is the help provided to a person developing a mental health problem or in a mental health crisis. The first aid is given until appropriate professional treatment is received or until the crisis resolves.

You can read a lot more about the services they provide at:

🌐 www.mhfaireland.ie/what-is-mental-health-first-aid.

**Remember, if you are feeling low – you are not alone.
There are many people and organisations out there
who will do their utmost to get you the help you need.**

First step - make contact.





A Note on SAFEVET SMART

Veterinary Medicine and Nursing are high pressure professions, with more stresses and demands than most other types of work. Long hours, complex cases, heavy workloads, paperwork, demanding owners, litigation risk, poor career advancement, and financial challenges being some of the stressors faced in practice. You need to be in the right head space to make good decisions, maintain positive relationships with the people you live and work with and be fit and flexible when life, work or even the weather sets you back.

Clinical practice is stimulating, rewarding and at times challenging. The outcomes and the environments we work in can be unpredictable. Veterinary knowledge and healthcare practice is dynamic and evolves constantly. An inevitable consequence is that some of what you learn in Veterinary School may vary in relevance over time. Educational texts and resources can become outdated and information once memorized may become redundant. The following are a few constant facts. Your physical and mental health is and should be important to you and those around you, not least because Veterinary professionals behaviour has a major impact on animals and carers experience and outcomes.

As a veterinary professional, it is important that you are healthy and well for the physical and emotional aspects of the role. You are a precious resource. If you want to be an effective clinician and practitioner it is important that you take great care of your health and wellbeing and that you learn to monitor, manage and reduce the magnitude of your stress response.

Healthy coping, managing stress and “bounce back “ after set backs – that is Resilience. We are not born with it but it is a skill that anyone can learn. Resilience is an essential skill for vets and veterinary nurses because the nature of the jobs means there will always be challenges and setbacks and factors which will be beyond your control. You can, however, coach yourself to control how you react and respond to these. This handbook presents a framework, steps and skills which enable you to develop successful strategies which work for you. You will probably refine your approach over time, but all high performing Veterinary Professionals draw on some or all of the techniques and strategies described. So whatever else changes, the SAFEVET SMART message and tools will be as important at the end of your professional life as they are at the beginning. Knowing what to do is not enough. The power of your practice is in your wellbeing, your communication skills and relationships. Your education goes well beyond vet school.

Dr Margaret O'Rourke
– Director of SAFEMED and SAFEVET SMART Programmes

Tips for New Graduates and Veterinary Practitioners

Advice, insight and ideas from experienced vets
Selected from RCVS Pocket Book of Tips and
from Tips shared by Practitioners and Nurses

A career in veterinary medicine is
a journey not a destination



1. Applying for Posts

When choosing a position be more concerned with the feel of the practice and the friendly nature of vets and staff than the perfect location or type of job. Early support and being allowed freedom to pursue cases is vital to maintain sanity in a period that is potentially stressful.

2. Building good relationships at work

If you are not busy, but your colleagues are, ask if you can do anything for them; it makes them a lot happier to assist you when you need their help.

Socialisation with colleagues is essential – take it in turns to buy doughnuts on Friday, go out for a meal together at least twice a year, and bring a cake in if it's someone's birthday.

Make an effort to join a club or get to know people away from work, especially if you have moved to a new area.

Don't be afraid to ask for help and advice. Any good vet will still be doing that no matter how long they have been qualified.

Don't be afraid to discuss any mistakes you feel you may have made – we have all been there. Some of us still are.

If you're not sure about something; ask. Colleagues would rather you irritate them with the simplest of questions than having to clean up after something has gone wrong!

Establish the limitations of your skills. Certainly give it a good attempt but don't delay asking for help until you are at the point of salvage. It is easier for a second opinion to resolve a problem en route than it is to turn back the clock.

Most vets in a practice carry mobiles. Any vet, especially new graduates, should feel able to contact any of their colleagues, whether it is for clinical advice or help to locate that farm up a dark lane in the dead of night. Put all the available practice contact numbers (branch numbers, mobile and home numbers) in your phone on the first day at a new job.

First impressions last. Presenting yourself correctly will set a client at ease. Consider your dress, the appearance of your vehicle and equipment, and the confidence you convey in discussions with the client.

Be punctual and ring ahead if you are going to be delayed – It's often easier to explain what has happened and apologise over the phone on the way than face an angry client who has been left neglected and unadvised. Most people are reasonable and accept that emergencies take precedence but try and avoid being repeatedly late for the same person.

Talk to your bosses. If you're not happy about something, let them know sooner rather than later, when the problem has escalated out of control.

If you're not happy with certain procedures, don't palm them off or avoid them. Experience is essential, so unless you persevere, you won't learn, no matter how daunting it can be in the early days. Accept the fact that learning new procedures is stressful but by taking on and mastering challenges 1 little step at a time your confidence will grow.

Keep your work colleagues on side!!! Swanning into a practice and barking orders will not stand you in good stead with staff. Nurses are likely to have a lot more practical hands-on experience than you, and their advice is usually invaluable! If you keep the nurses on your side, they will take you under their wing and look after you... Life will be unbearable if the nurses turn against you!

Perfection is the enemy of good.

Nobody owes you a living. If you want to be treated as a veterinary practitioner, then act like a veterinary practitioner.

ALWAYS do a full clinical examination, or you will eventually miss something important. More mistakes are made through failure to carry out a complete examination than from any lack of knowledge.

Keep a notebook in your pocket for the first few months. Write down commonly used drug doses, computer shortcuts etc. so they can easily be found. Write lists of jobs and cross them off as you complete them so nothing gets forgotten.

Most clients will understand if you cannot make a diagnosis immediately or if things don't always go as planned but they will remember if you haven't given of your best – Always give of your best, explain to the owner what you are doing and why and follow up on the case afterwards.

If you are unsure of a diagnosis or treatment option there is usually some way of kicking for touch. If you do kick for touch make sure to seek advice as necessary, get back to the owner and finish out the case.

Ensure clients understand the prognosis in a case and don't give them false hope. Explain the costs involved as you go along so clients don't get a nasty surprise when it comes to paying the bill. Some practices advise the clients (politely and tactfully) when a (small animal) consult is going to exceed a preset figure e.g. 80 euros. Be aware that most people have to work within a budget.

Look back regularly on the clinical records of animals you have treated in the past few weeks. Communication in your Practice may be excellent but occasionally an animal may be seen or discussed subsequent to your examination without your knowledge – It is useful to see how the animal progressed, what your colleagues found and their approach to dealing with the case

Sometimes you will come across a client who thinks (s)he is an expert in animal disease and treatment. The client may indeed be knowledgeable – Don't rush to dismiss all his experience and advice but do remind yourself that you are the qualified person in this situation. Don't allow yourself to be intimidated, take a deep breath, think calmly and proceed with the case as per normal.

Plan your day and be organised. Ensure you have the correct equipment and drugs ready before you undertake a procedure. It is stressful, unproductive and unprofessional if you are rushing around looking for something you should have had ready. Occasionally you can improvise but you will come to realise that there are some products you have to have on hand at all times.

Keep on top of your paperwork – It builds up very quickly and the more of it there is to be done the harder it is to face in to it. Record all clinical and billing details as necessary and ensure they are properly entered in to the Practice record system. Ensure you keep on top of any legislative paperwork requirements. Keep a diary or system that allows you to record not only things you have done but also things you must do in the future.

Accept the fact that some days work is stressful and life sends us all challenges to deal with. Try not to lose your enthusiasm for your chosen career as a veterinary practitioner. On difficult days think about all the work you have put in to your career so far and try to remember the positive experiences it has given you. Take pride in the fact you are a member of an established, well respected profession.

Things Vets do that Veterinary Nurses dislike

1. Communicate poorly
2. Leave a mess or leave sharps hanging around – It is your responsibility to dispose safely of your sharps.
3. Poor paperwork and/or record keeping especially letters, drug charts or instructions to owners.
4. Not communicating or miscommunicating information to owners or the team.
5. Being arrogant or patronising or not admitting when you are wrong.
6. Expecting the nurse to set up clinics or the operating environment on late of poorly communication requirements.
7. Going home/or the day or out on a visit without completion of tasks or checking in on patients.
8. Not answering your phone or bleep.



TOP TIPS FOR NEW GRADUATE VET NURSES

Vet Nurse Tips as contributed and sourced by the Veterinary Council Nursing Committee.

Stick to your values and when looking for employment search for a friendly, fun practice which nurtures your development and shares your values.

1. Practice life can be hectic and even when you're on top of your game things can get missed or forgotten. Always have a notebook for scribbling down reminders, conversations etc. and check it over at the end of your shift to make sure you've not missed anything. This is also particularly useful when handing over to the next duty nurse.
2. Note books for Drug dosages, equipment lists for particular procedures, etc. can also list important info from the back – i.e. parameters, TPRs for different species etc.
3. Get a Pocket calculator when calculating drugs. When calculating drugs... Always double or triple check your calculation... Never just do it once as it's easy to hit a wrong button...
4. If permitted by your employer having a Smart phone with a Veterinary App can be great and packed with handy info i.e. dosages, calculators, parameters
5. Label everything! Cat carriers, any pet belongings on admission and syringes, x-rays as you go. It can get messy labelling items later or at the end of a shift.

-
6. Never wash your fob watch!!! And make sure you empty all your pocket before washing your scrubs.
 7. Always write down every conversation with a client on their record. You can guarantee the one you don't will be the one to bite you!!! Always have a secret extra pen.
 8. Buy good shoes for work, not cheap ones. Never wear a fleece when grooming or dematting. Use hand cream, lots of it, all the time.
 9. Don't be macho when it comes to lifting animals or bags of food etc.; unless it's really necessary don't go solo lifting 15-20kg especially while someone else watches. Protect your back and body from the start.
 10. You're never too qualified to clean!
 11. Don't be scared to say you don't know. Never be afraid to ask for help. Everyone's been a qualified nurse at some point and no question is stupid. If you don't know the answer, ask. If you still don't know, ask again. Even if you think you know, ask!!! Mistakes can be fatal. Even little ones.
 12. Admit to a mistake! If you make it it's easier to rectify rather than cover it up!
 13. Offer assistance, support and work with your fellow nursing team, they'll keep you sane when it's busy or if you have a tough day.
 14. Communication between vets and fellow nurses is key for optimal patient care.
 15. It's not ok to clean cat litter trays without gloves!!
 16. Don't be frightened to question why? Why are we giving something? Why are we doing it a certain way? Etc. Knowing why enables us to learn and understand what we do
 17. Make sure you make time for yourself, practice life is hard physical work with long hours, it can be emotionally draining....don't burn yourself out. Have a social life! Breathe and smile.
 18. Never ask anyone to do anything you wouldn't be prepared to do yourself... i.e. dirty jobs... Respect each other. (Invest in a 10 second thermometer, especially with angry cats!)
 19. Always have a spare change of uniform and socks, animals pee a lot!
 20. Take pride in how hard you have worked to qualify as a Vet nurse and have faith in how far you can go. Learn something new every day. Everyone is still learning and every day is a learning day.
 21. Always be polite to clients... And never assume they know what you mean, how you do something... Even something as simple as taking a blood sample. Talk them through everything so they are prepared and know what to expect. Explain. Explain. Explain.

22. If you are monitoring an anaesthetic and you notice something wrong e.g. not breathing, tell the vet to stop immediately for assistance!
23. Don't try to be everything for everyone. Learn to say no if it doesn't feel right for you. Ask for help when you need it, there is no shame in it! You are only one person and if you are overwhelmed, take five minutes to calm down and start again!
24. Never say I'm just a nurse.
25. ALWAYS remember to look at a patient as an individual, always refer to each patient by their name, never by breed or procedure. Treat every patient as if they were your own beloved companion. Be a voice for your patient, don't be afraid to speak up for them.
26. Always know the gender of a pet before talking to the pet owner, saying she when it's a he doesn't go down well.
27. Reach for the highest standard of care and professionalism at all times.
28. Keep your mouth closed when expressing anal glands. Always wear glasses and face mask when doing dentals.
29. Communicate and coordinate with your team on timings i.e. premeds, procedures etc., Often you are responsible for the wellbeing of many patients at one time from inpatients to recovery post op. Don't be rushed into starting a procedure when you or the patient isn't ready.
30. Restraint – Less is more!! Never be heavy handed when restraining a patient. Never allow vets or senior staff to request or force you to provide unnecessary or inappropriate restraint of a patient.

Things Nurses do that Vets dislike

1. Poor communication skills
2. Phoning with non-urgent issues or “just to let you know” about issues that can wait.
3. Not setting up clinic or theatre after you have offered to do it.
4. Asking you to do non-urgent things just as you are leaving the practice for a visit or at the end of the working day.
5. Sit having a coffee or relaxing and chatting when you could do with assistance.
6. Being arrogant or defensive or not admitting when you or do things wrong.
7. Leaving records or tasks incomplete or poorly recorded.
8. Not being available when they call back at your request.

Introduction

Welcome to the **SAFEVET SMART HANDBOOK**. This handbook is designed to help you recognise your self-care needs and ensure that your health, well-being and resilience is the best it can possibly be.

SAFEVET SMART is a programme that has been developed over years to help people reduce stress, improve coping and build wellbeing and resilience through evidence-based strategies and tools.

Use this book to help you manage and reduce stress and help you to create a healthy, happy and contented life.

From the outset let me state that this is not a “don’t worry be happy” book. It is about building awareness and attention regarding the importance of self care and stress regulation. **SAFEVET SMART** focuses on comprehensive fitness and whole health through evidence-based stress management and resilience techniques.

The book summarises new, easy to use, proven stress management techniques organised around a Five Pillars of Health Framework.

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 stretch, cope well, withstand and recover from challenges, extremes, 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. No one’s life is stress-free.

It is important to know that there is no stigma associated with coming forward and acknowledging that something you experienced on the job or at home is affecting your mental health, wellbeing or joy in practice.

There is abundant evidence to show that long term negative stress, at any age, can lead to ill health and reduced quality of life. Some negative stress 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 build calm and wellbeing we can reduce the negative effects of stress, and deal well with the unexpected or stress we cannot avoid. When we learn to practice good self-care.

Our perception and experience of stress is improved.

Stress, coping and resilience

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 (adrenal glands) reacts by producing the stress hormones epinephrine, norepinephrine and cortisol.

These hormones, increase the blood flow to in the extremities and muscles, to allow the body to prepare for "fight or flight" against the "enemy" or stressor. A lot of energy becomes available to the individual.

This primary, non-specific reaction to aggressors or stressors is the biological mechanism responsible for the survival of us humans.

In modern life we are confronted with new aggressors: the psychological and interpersonal stressors. Many people do not work hard **physically** in modern life but they are confronted by psychological, emotional and social pressures at home and at work. The body reacts the same way to a psychological as to a physical or biological stressor. The body produces the 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 when the stress is generated psychologically or socially there is no need for "fight or flight" and all the extra energy and hormones secreted by the adrenal glands can become destructive to the body if not managed and worked out.

When psychological stress is very high the stress hormones become high and even toxic in the body. These high levels of cortisol etc. have an impact on sleep quality, appetite and even blood pressure, causing fatigue, over or under eating, gut irritation, headaches or irritability. Our immune systems are impacted negatively by stress and autoimmune conditions are prone to flaring up with stress.

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

Not all stress is bad for us. Stress can be functional and positive too. There is a lot of scientific evidence suggesting that some stress can be healthy, for example when it helps us increase energy and performance. Functional high stress that is good for us 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. Our beliefs about stress have as much to do with its impact on our health and wellbeing as the stress itself. What one person may find exhilarating and stimulating another person may find very challenging, difficult or even overwhelming.

We are all very different and perceive and define stressors and aggressors based on our personality, life experiences, learning, 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 work colleagues) who notice when we are stressed and pressured.

Coping

We all have our own ways of understanding and coping with stress and some strategies are more productive than others. Coping is a broad concept covering thoughts, feelings and behaviours we use to make stressful or challenging situations more manageable. **Coping skills** are methods a person uses to deal with life's challenges and stressful situations. Psychological science has identified three types of coping skills – problem focused, emotion focused and avoidance – the most effective will depend very much on the circumstances.

Where we have some control over the situation, and we can change things- problem focused coping tends to be most productive. Examples of problem focused coping skills are prioritising, problem solving, time management and talking through issues to find solutions.

Where we cannot change a situation, or we have no control over circumstances then emotion-focused coping can limit the negative impact and help us make things more manageable. That said, some emotion focused coping can be unhelpful and can even make stresses worse. Examples of positive emotion focused coping are seeking comfort and social support from friends or family, emotional regulation through meditation or mindfulness, journaling/ writing it all down or talking things through with a coach or therapist. Examples of unhelpful emotion focused coping are inappropriate expression of emotion, comfort eating, drinking or drug use, wishful thinking, brooding/sulking or blaming others as they leave stress or problems unresolved and possibly getting worse. It may be worth noting that **The Higher the emotion the lower the Logic.**

Coping by Avoidance rarely works – if we avoid or deny that there is an issue then we do not fix it.

It is helpful to learn several different approaches to coping, to vary the strategy from stressor to stressor and not always use the same approach. Learn to be flexible, use your best judgement and apply the right strategy and tactics to the right situation and circumstance.

Building and maintaining good **coping skills** requires situational awareness as context is very important to applying the right strategy, at the right time, in the right way. This handbook provides you with lots of tools and techniques to improve coping but it does take practice.

However utilizing / calibrating & building these **skills** becomes easier over time.



Resilience

Resilience is defined as the ability to stretch and adapt in the face of adversity, tragedy, trauma, threats or significant sources of stress and an ability to recover from and adjust to misfortune or change – such as family and relationship problems or loss, serious health problems or workplace and financial pressures.

Put simply it is your “stretch”, coping, adapting and “bounce back” factor.

Being resilient does not mean that you do not experience or suffer stress, pressure or adversity – it means that you have the ability to stretch and withstand stress, setbacks, trauma, crises and array of hardships that confront us in life.

Resilience is not something we are born with, it is something that we can learn and develop.

Life will always have its ups and downs and nobody however strong or fortunate lives a stress-free life.

Resilience is a skill set worth learning and developing as resilient people can manage stress and pressure more comfortably.

Resilient people:

- Maintain perspective and see the bigger picture
- Sustain healthy relationships
- Set positive realistic goals
- Practice compassion and acceptance
- Work within their limits and boundaries
- Cultivate self- awareness and reflection
- Do not expect themselves to have all the answers
- Learn to benefit and learn from missteps, errors and experience
- Have a range of coping strategies
- Confront problems and issues in a timely way
- Are willing to sit in silence and let silence “carry the load”
- Practice self-care

A better work and home life starts with a healthy, happy resilient you!

There are many ways to build, maintain and sustain resilience. Discovering ways to develop resilience is a personal journey and it begins with the practice of self-care.

Self-care

Self-care means paying attention to what you need and following through on the truth and the real needs of your answer. Self-care can be simple tweaks to your week like moving more, eating better, getting to bed earlier or deeper things like taking time to look inside, reflect and get in touch with how your behaviours, communications, habits, skills or actions are serving you – short term and long term.

Each and every one of us needs self-care, it can be difficult to plan and hard at times to carve out the time for personal support planning, but it is worth the effort. Self-care is a great buffer against stress – customising a self-care plan is a preventative measure. The tools and techniques in this handbook help to build great self-care and a stress proofing roadmap that is unique to you.

Use this book to help you develop your own unique and powerful self-care and personal support plan for that will give you the edge at work and at home.

There are lots of ideas, tips and tools in this workbook, we suggest that you keep a note of any strategies or tips that you think are relevant and useful to you. Keep a “BANK” or reservoir of the tips you might call on or use when you need a boost. Remember, knowledge is one thing but acquiring and maintaining positive health, well-being and resilience is quite another! It requires awareness, application and action. That means PRACTICE!

The Fundamentals of SAFEVET SMART

(Stress Management and Resilience Techniques): Three Big Ideas

Stress impacts on the way we think, feel and behave. This handbook provides detailed ways to manage and build coping and resilience. Before you start reading and using this book, please take a little time to read through and understand three very important ideas.

The first idea is all about what all humans (yes that includes YOU) need to be healthy, happy and resilient.

The second idea is all about how to use the SAFEVET SMART framework or model to plan and progress self care health and well-being using what we call the Five Systems Model.

The third idea is how to achieve effective Stress Management using the three A's ... three steps to great stress management and resilience.

The emphasis in this book is on coaching, not counselling. Use the steps and skills here to help you regulate stress, enhance your well-being and the quality of your life. The more you practice using SAFEVET SMART framework and tools, the more you will learn the habits, skills and routines of stress management, well-being and resilience.

The First Idea: Needs and Seeds and Personal Values



Our nature as human beings:

What we all need to be healthy and happy at every age and stage of life.

Lots of researchers and clinicians have tried to discover what ingredients go into well-being and making human beings healthy and happy. This book is a distillation of the evidence-based ideas and strategies from Clinical Psychological medicine and neuroscience.

To make it easy for you to use these ideas, we approach them in a practical way. Let's start by looking at the needs that we humans all share, and the ways we go about getting these needs met to match our world. We call these human seeds and personal values.

"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 self-care, to regulate stress and stay healthy, happy and well.

Human Needs & Seeds – All Humans Need:

1. To Survive, Thrive – Basic life needs (oxygen /air, water, food, light, warmth etc.)
2. Mind-body health and well-being (build and maintain good health, physical activity) – exercise
3. Safety (feel safe, comfortable, protected and secure)
4. Human Contact and Connection (attention, recognition, & harmony with other human beings)
5. Rest, Refresh, Recovery and Sleep (To sleep, to dream, relax or just to BE) Self-Awareness (to observe, understand, regulate and have discipline oneself.) Sleep is essential to health
6. Positive Emotions Self-Care (stress regulation, well-being, set limits, soothe & calm oneself and have decompression and recovery routines)
7. Engagement: Lifelong learning, be stretched and be challenged and achieve through work and play
8. Relationships: Belonging and Participation (to connect, engage with & be close to others, to love and be loved, social success)
9. Meaningful Purpose (plans, purpose and a sense of serving something greater than the self...the greater good.
10. Accomplishment: Achievement, success & meaningful contribution, legacy.) Learning through life. Being stretched, challenged and stimulated intellectually.

How well do you meet your human needs and seeds?

How do these translate into your life? Match your values and what is important to you.

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

How can you meet your needs while living your values

How can you plant positive seeds in your life?

Personal Values

Research has shown that personal values are our guiding principles, the context or ‘territory’ when we live them, we are most comfortable. Our values are like seeds also: 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”. Living our values provides us with the foundation and the strongest kind of motivation for achieving the goals we most want to achieve. What “seeds” are you sowing in your life? What are your personal values? What kind of life are you setting up for yourself?

What Values Are Important to You?

Take a moment to think about your values, your life’s guiding principles. 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?

What qualities best describe you? What do you care about?

What values are important to you? 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?

Research has shown that when we do not live our values, we stress more and we find it hard to stay resilient.

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

Tool 1: Ensuring You Meet Your Needs and Seeds

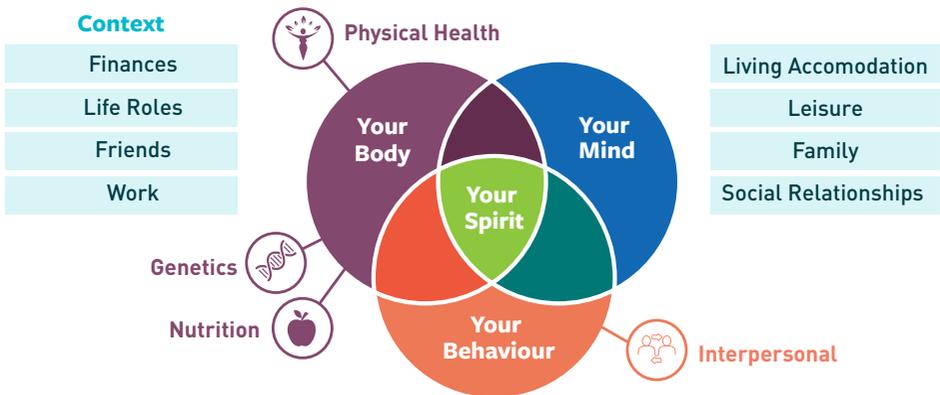
www.lifemattersacademy.org

Your Human Needs	Suggestions for how you can meet these	Your own ideas... what works for you. Match to your values
1. Basic Life needs	Mind-body needs. Take care of physical and mental health. Exercise is the top tip. EAT. MOVE. SLEEP.	
2. Nourishment and Mind-Body Care	Physical Activity. Healthy food, rest, fun, spiritual input and meditation.	
3. Safety and Protection	Be able to ask for help and support. Free from worry. Set limits, self regulation. Make priorities, Take time. Take time out. Respect others and yourself. Concentrate on positive virtues not faults.	
4. Human Contact	Sharing laughter makes hearts light and free. Eliminate expectations! Appreciate others, appreciate the bigger picture. Use gentle kindness. People skills.	
5. Rest and Renewal	Good quality sleep. Live in the now. Mindfulness. PMA.	
6. Positive Emotions	Know thy self. What one needs. Live your best life. Develop happiness habits eg. "Three good things"	
7. Engagement	Become truly engaged in the moment, situations, tasks, projects or joyful activities. Be in the moment, concentrate fully in the now, the present. The more we experience engagement the more we build well-being and resilience.	
8. Relationship	Belonging, Connections, Intimacy. Cultivate a social perspective. Love and be loved. Remember family, friends and social connections. Engage in life's celebrations and special events. Show you care about the people around you. PARTICIPATE.	
9. Meaning	Belonging to and serving something bigger than the self. Contribute. Be useful. Be generous. Random acts of kindness. Volunteer. Stimulation, Stretch, Challenge, Opportunity. Manage stress energy.	
10. Accomplishment	Achievement Legacy. Altruism, making a difference. See: www.authenticchappiness.com	

The Second Idea: Take Five! Five Systems for Whole Health



The ideas in this book are based around the bio-psychosocial (sometimes called the integrated sciences) model, we call it the Five Systems Model (shown below). The Model postulates that what we do in one area of our life affects the way we feel in another area, that is, each system (body, mind, behaviour, context, spirit) is independent and inter-dependent.



For example, in whole health, the way we feel physically affects the way our brain and mind functions (for example attention, perception, thoughts and feelings) and in turn this affects our behaviour too, 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 well-being, and you will know this from your own everyday experiences.

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.

For example a sore back or a headache makes everything more challenging and lowers our mood which in turn 'colours' our feelings, our focus, our energy and our approach to work, tasks, people and behaviours.

Getting the most out of life requires, thinking, feeling and behaving in healthy, 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.

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 Take Five steps to plan self care and personal supports to make ourselves healthy, happy and well.

Five Pillars of Whole Health

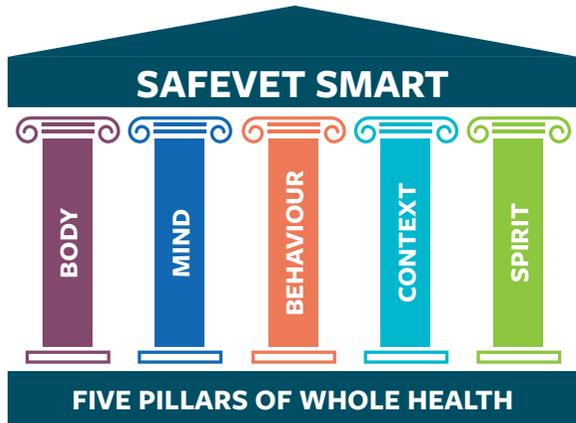
Comprehensive fitness and whole health

Systematically considers biological, psychological, behavioural, social and contextual factors and their complex interactions in health and wellbeing.

Whole health and well-being is the result of what we put into and how we balance needs in all Five Systems: body, mind, behaviour, context and spirit.

The Five Systems Five Pillars for whole health are:

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



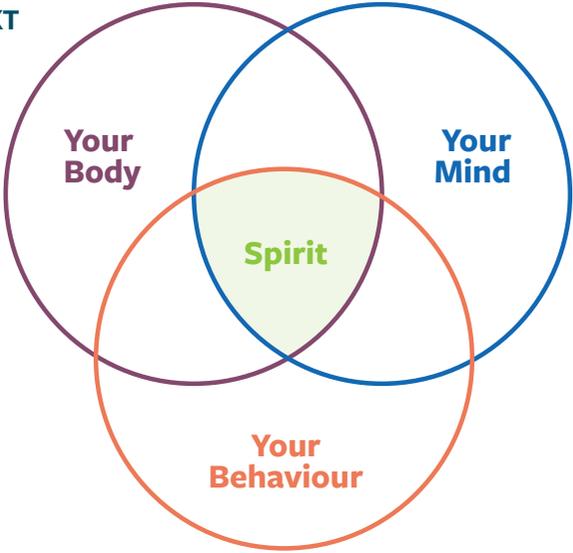
There are five pillars or drivers of health and well-being and resilience. This is an idea that can be found throughout history and all over the world. It is an idea shared by the mystics of Tibet, by top athletes, and by successful people in all areas of life. SAFEVET SMART uses this approach to help you design a framework and plan 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 successful people.

Tool 2 Worksheet can be used to help you identify what aspects need attention or change in your life.

Tool 2: Your Worksheet – What areas of life need attention?

CONTEXT



Use this to help you design your own personal prescription for mental health, wellbeing and resilience.

The Third Idea: Self Care and Triple A



Awareness, Acquisition & Action, the three steps to self-management.

Awareness is 90% of the solution to stress. Acquiring healthy habits and skills and action is the vital 10%.

Three Steps to Reduce Stress

Step 1: **Awareness** of your human needs and the steps and skills for great self-care, health, well-being and stress regulation.

Step 2: **Acquisition**. Acquire new skills for reducing stress. When you try new skills treat them as if they are seeds that you are sowing into your life. For these skills to grow you will need to practice them until they become second nature to you. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.... Repetition is the Mother of Skill.

Step 3: **Action**. Committed action is required to improve self-care and reduce stress. Take Action by designing and developing your self-care personal support plan.

Use Triple A **Awareness, Acquisition and Action** to become aware and replace negative, self-defeating or any bad habits that you may have built up.

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.

You will need to give attention to your needs and to tend to these 'seeds' 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. Develop new habits, acquire new skills. Be open to new learning, it is all about making life easier and more manageable for you.

Replenish your energy and coping reservoir by acting on all three steps. Stress is dynamic and wellbeing is affected by multiple stressors and by positive actions and techniques. The more skills you learn and develop the more you build and sustain resilience while improving how you manage stress.

To help you work on the Triple A's the three steps to self-care, it is recommended that you develop and use a personal support plan (PSP). Use this book interactively, fill in the questions and tasks, try out the tools and tips. Build your BANK of tips and become smarter about which techniques, tips and skills work best for you.

Your Personal Support Plan (PSP)

This handbook gives you lots of ideas to help you build 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.

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 and your values. 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 & spirit) takes the guess work out of what to do to prevent stress and what to do when you are highly pressured. Having a PSP helps you establish health and wellbeing actions that work for you. It means you have strategy in place to make it easier to stick to what you know helps you feel more a sense of hope and control.

This handbook 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 use out of it, pick it up and work on the different sections as often as you can. It will help you acquire new skills and techniques. 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 IT PERSONAL TO YOU.

Try to meet your needs in all five systems.

How about writing your own self care prescription

You can do this one step at a time



Take control of your life, it is your life – your responsibility, you are in the driving seat

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

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

A healthy body, a healthy mind, positive personal behaviours and good relationships with other people are important life skills that will help you get the best out of your self your life, at home and at work. This handbook is full of ideas to help you think, feel and behave in ways that reduce stress, create ease and build resilience, build around the five pillar framework. 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!

In order to improve your health and wellbeing you may need to acquire new skills or 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. Action is essential. Practice will help you calibrate and customise strategies just for you.

A Personal Support Plan is easy to use and safe to apply.

The handbook is divided into five sections, corresponding to the five pillars of health and wellbeing.

The reason for dividing things up in this way is that, as you know now, well-being is built by us attending to our needs and needs, stress can affect all these five aspects of our lives: body, mind, behaviour, social context and spirit (remember the approach).

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



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 below.

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, colleagues, seniors or faculty staff you can contact for support when you need it:

YOU are invited to use this SAFEVET SMART book to the full.

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

You will improve your whole health, your happiness and well-being. And you will build Resilience.

An example of the SAFEVET SMART approach to managing stress follows.



Stress Less with SAFEVET SMART

Learning the habits, skills and behaviours of self-care, stress regulation, health and wellbeing takes time. Awareness is 90% of the solution



Dealing with stress

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. Stress is often defined as the balance between perceived demands and perceived coping ability. 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... if you do you are not alone. Stress can be managed.

“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

If we recognise our own symptoms and how it affects our whole health, we can take steps to manage it and prevent it escalating out of control.

AWARENESS is the first step. Use the SAFEVET SMART Triple A strategy.

SAFEVET SMART Step 1

Awareness



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. In terms of general health and wellbeing. How well do you take care of your needs, seeds and personal values? Use tool 1 to help you identify how you can improve whole health to reduce stress. Think about stress or anxiety for you,

Two Questions:

What makes you stressed? and How does stress affect you?

Think of the five systems: **The Five Pillars of Health**

- 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, headaches, sweating, 'butterflies' in stomach)
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 my 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)
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 myself, 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)
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. disorganised, unsettled, pressured, negative impact/ effect on friends, family, work)
What is your recovery routine? Take action, deal with hassles/demands?
- 5. Spirit:** 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)
What is your recovery routine? Mindfulness, Meditation, journal keeping, Gratitude, Counting blessings, Quiet time?

SAFEVET SMART Step 2 Acquisition



In Step 1 above, you have increased your awareness. By answering the questions, you now have a clearer picture of how stress affects you. Why not use Tool 2 now to help you decide on what skills, habits or resources you need to acquire and address the stress. The handbook is full of tips, tools and techniques.

SAFEVET SMART Step 3 Action – Stress Less



Please take good care of yourself. Be your own best friend. Acquire new strategies and skills. 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 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.

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 angry or irritable with others sometimes, write it all down. Writing it all down 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 **HEALTHY THINKING** section in Pillar 2 of this handbook.



Prevention is of course better than cure...this handbook helps you develop a five systems self care plan to improve and maintain healthy, stress reduced living.

Body – for example, through exercise, nutrition, relaxation, sleep and Physical hygiene.

Mind – by taking a fresh look at your thinking, attitudes and feelings. Mental and emotional fitness.

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

Context – by guiding your network of family, friends, social life, leisure and work

Spirit – by living your values, nurturing your inner spirit and sense of self, ‘being you’ with comfort and ease.

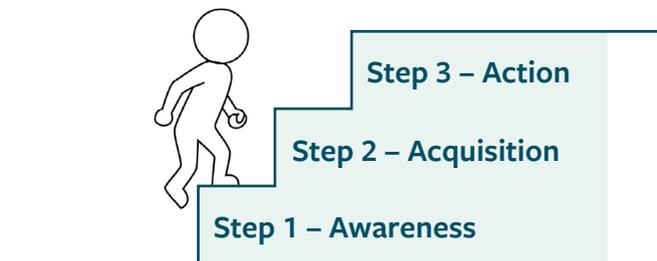
When stress gets high tell yourself you can do it, remind yourself of times you have coped. Look at the situation as the time to practice what you have learnt. Think about how pleased you will be when you succeed at this. Ask for help if you need it. Think calm to be calm.

BALANCE: Find the balance in things. Balance energy in & 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,’ mind and behaviours healthy.

This handbook is packed with ideas for reducing stress and building resilience in all five Pillars of Wellbeing.

YOU CAN DO THIS ONE STEP AT A TIME



Pillar 1 skills are presented in the next section.



Pillar 1

BODY

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 Pillar 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 over stressed, strained or even 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.

Pillar One shows you how to do this in an on-going and enjoyable way.



♥ LOVE YOUR BODY ♥



5 smart body care skills

1. Know Your Body
2. Exercise & Physical Activity
3. Make Wise Food Choices
4. Make Wise Drink Choices
5. Rest, Relax, Sleep

In order to be healthy the Human body needs:

There are 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.



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 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. Be aware of your body's needs. Work on building up its health and well-being. Pay attention to body hygiene.



Listen to your body, tune in to your body as feedback. 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.

Use 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, below we outline four other important habits, skills and behaviours for body health and well-being.

Improving your internal fitness involves diet, exercise and stress management.



Exercise & Physical Activity

Be active and exercise daily. Exercise improves cognition, self esteem, energy and improves sleep.

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



WHAT DO YOU WANT...TO BE FIT OR FRAIL?

Exercise (preferably out in the fresh air) helps you feel more relaxed about your body and your health. It boosts your energy and sense of well-being.

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

Try to get outdoors into full spectrum lighting, regularly. Outdoor activities are a great choice. Fresh air and full spectrum lighting is wonderful for your health.

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

Make this part of your life, a fun thing. Take the pressure off and lighten up – let exercise gradually become a welcome part of your lifestyle rather than a chore. Exercise is relaxing, energising and stress relieving. 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 that *“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 you’ll enjoy doing and will be happy to carry on with.
- ✓ Exercise / Gym partners makes walking / gym a social activity. Also a motivator!
- ✓ Always warm up and stretch properly before doing anything strenuous.
- ✓ Have a good Stretch every day
- ✓ 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 well-being.

**“Walking
is man’s
best
medicine.”**

– Hippocrates

3

Make Wise Food Choices

Eating poorly can prevent you getting the nutrients you need to stay healthy. It can change and damage the composition of your gut microbiome causing an inability for proper nutrient breakdown. 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 2 litres of water each day. Make sure you replenish this and hydrate your body every day.



MAINTAIN YOUR IDEAL WEIGHT AND LIMIT TOXINS SUCH AS ALCOHOL, CAFFEINE AND TOBACCO

When we give our bodies the right foods at the right time it does its own repairs and produces the energy for everything we want it to. Everything we put into our bodies, whether it is good or bad, has an effect. Why not choose to keep check of what you are eating and opt for healthy choices. Eating healthily means getting wise about what foods will replenish, nourish and make you feel good. It means giving your body a healthy variety of foods which provide it with essential vitamins and minerals. Go for a balanced approach to proteins (e.g. meat, fish, and eggs); carbohydrates (e.g. bread, rice); fresh fruit and vegetables; oils and fats; and dairy products in your diet. Ensure your body gets foods rich in Tryptophan, Tyrosine and Indole 3 Lactic Acid (ILA) for a healthy microbiome.

It is also important to look at how much you eat/drink. 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).

Be healthy and choose carefully

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

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

What are you putting into your body?

Try to balance your diet with plenty of variety. Think nourishment. Think Diversity.

- ✓ Lots of fibre and whole foods
- ✓ Lots of fruit and vegetables and plenty 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
- ✗ Cut down on junk food and brain drainers
- ✗ Limit your use of alcohol, caffeine and other toxins, they are brain drainers
- ✗ Cut down on sugar... food affects mood!
- ✗ Eat very little saturated fat, avoid 'trans' fats

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
- ✗ Do not eat just before exercise
- ✗ Do not eat rich foods or drink caffeinated drinks within two hours of sleep.



TOP TIP
'Take Five':
Eat 5 portions of
fruit or vegetables
every day.

How do you eat?

Try to resist the temptation of 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 & thoroughly enjoy your food

4

Make Wise Drink Choices

Limit your use of alcohol, caffeine and other toxins

Take good care of your body through hydration and by keeping alcohol and substance 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
11 17	SAFE maximum for females SAFE maximum for males
18-40 units	Hazardous
41-60 units	High Risk
Above 60 units	Dangerous

Alcohol impacts the Immune System, your 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 alcohol with a glass of water.

Caffeine a real favourite of busy clinicians 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 other psycho-active substances) can be enjoyable, but they all have a cost. They affect not only our bodies but also our minds, behaviours, and social relationships. Sometimes it is hard to see what certain substances are doing to us, and to the people around us, unless we stop and really take a look. Think about cigarettes for example, how do they affect each key area? What is the cost?

The cost for Your Body

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

The cost for 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. This may affect your study and academic progress ... Brain Drain!!

The cost for 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 of even theft. Seeds are being sowed for deceitful habits and perhaps a deceitful life.

The cost for Your Environment

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

The cost for Your Spirit

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

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

Continue the list below.

Advantages of creating a healthy balance:

- Save money
- A healthier body, mind and behaviours
- Greater confidence in my own ability to tackle difficult circumstances without relying on the false feeling that alcohol or drugs will make things better
- Developing a lifestyle in which I am in control and am not controlled by substances.
-
-
-
-

*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 handbook*

5 Rest, Relax, Sleep

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.

‘Letting go’ physically and mentally helps build resilience. 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.



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 “

Muscle 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, technology or the telephone.
3. Have your arms relaxed at your sides or with your hands gently resting on your tummy. You may like to cover yourself with a warm blanket and, if lying down, place a cushion or pillow under your head.
4. Allow yourself some time to focus in on your body and then gradually on your breath. You don’t need to do anything or change anything in connection with your breathing – just watch and listen and allow yourself to feel all the sensations of your physical being as you breath in and out.
5. Your breath will naturally begin to slow down and deepen – you may wish to close your eyes after a while.
6. Slowly, in your own time, start to focus in on the different parts of your body. Start with your feet, just becoming aware of them – the skin on the soles of your feet. Then focus on your toes, your ankles, your heels.
7. Remember that it’s perfectly natural for your mind to wander off to other things during this exercise. Just keep bringing your attention gently back to the sensations in your body, and to your breathing. You may sometimes find it helpful to work up each muscle in your body by first tensing or tightening it for a few seconds and then letting it relax again. For example, curling up your toes and then releasing them again.

8. Let your focus gradually move up your body from your feet: step by step, focus on your calf muscles, your knees, your thighs, your hips, your buttocks. If you find tension in any area, just relax it gently with your awareness. You can use the breath to help you: breathe in a sense of kindness and care; breathe out all your tension and worry.
9. Continue moving your focus up your body; up your spine, into your shoulders – relaxing and softening your muscles all the time – back of the neck, down your arms, elbows, into your hands. Relax your hands, allowing the fingers to curl naturally and easily.
10. Then bring your attention gently to your face. Are you frowning? Allow the skin of your forehead to relax and gently expand width ways towards your temples. Soften all the little muscles around your eyes; then likewise with your nose, your lips and mouth. Let your jaw relax and open a little bit. Relax your tongue and your throat. Being silent now, just enjoy the ease of letting your voice, tongue and throat totally relax into this peaceful quietness. Allow your kind awareness to flow into each area. Just let go!
11. Gradually bring your attention down to your abdomen area. You may like to gently place your hands here, just on the ‘solar plexus’ at the centre of your tummy. Allow yourself to feel any sensations and emotions deep in there. Remember your breath – breathe in kindness, breathe out tension.
12. In your own time, move your awareness gently up to your chest. Still staying with the breath, noticing how your chest expands as you breathe in, and then relaxes down again with the out-breath. Softly begin to focus in on the area around your heart. Breathe in kindness; breathe out all the old tension, pain, hurt. Allow yourself to feel deeply. Accept your feelings – whatever they are. You may feel a whole lot of different feelings – pleasure, pain, worry, even a sense of laughter. Go with the flow! Allow yourself to cry, laugh, groan or whatever! Your feelings are always natural and helpful. They are an important part of you, like the blood flowing in and out of your heart.
13. As you focus on the heart area, you might like to imagine the warm rays of the sun shining into your heart, nourishing and warming you. Allow yourself to bask in this sense of warmth and nourishment. Stay with it for as long as you like.

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



VISUALISING OR MENTAL RELAXATION

At any time of the day or night, you can use this 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 you, warming your heart and body? Create the scene exactly as you wish. Enjoy this safe and happy place for as long as you wish. Allow yourself to let go completely and fill your mind with all the sensations that being in this relaxed place brings. When you are ready, gently bring yourself back to your current surroundings again.

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

Everybody is different when it comes to relaxation. Some of us like to chill out with some good music, others like to read or watch TV and some just like to sit and think. What are the ways that work for you?



SLEEP: 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. **Sleep is your super power.** Adults require between 7-9 hours sleep to restore energy and maintain health (WHO Advice).

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

Not sleeping affects your systems in the following ways:

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 well-being 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.

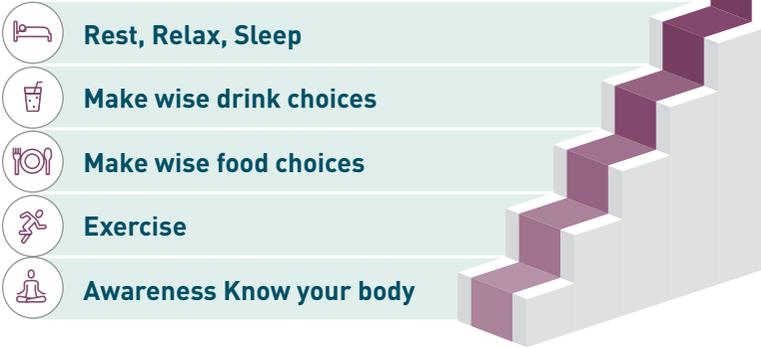
8 hours good quality sleep makes the other 16 hours of the day more manageable.

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, exercise etc
- ✔ 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.
- ✘ Do not drink sugary drinks, tea, coffee or fizzy drinks within 4-5 hours of bedtime as these may keep you awake.
- ✘ Do not watch TV, listen to the radio, smoke, eat or drink in bed.
- ✘ Avoid work or studying in bed, especially at times when you need to sleep.
- ✘ 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.
- ✘ Do not use medication to help you sleep. In the long run it will only throw your body rhythm off its natural timing and sleep medication can be very addictive.
- ✘ Do not drink alcohol. It does not help sleeplessness, as it will only make you feel 'unslept' the next morning.

A Summary of Essential Skills for Pillar 1 – Body



What do you need to optimise your body health?

Step 1 – Awareness: Take a look at your body health

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

My BANK of GOOD IDEAS for Body HEALTH

What tips would you like to use. Make your own list below:

Top Tip

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

- You can observe it, see objectively
- 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



For Whole Health Use Triple A, Three Steps

Step 1 – Awareness

Now Take the Quiz

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

	True	False
1. I take good care of my body all the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I do not use alcohol or other drugs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I am an active person	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I exercise at least 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 take quiet relaxation time to myself most days	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I make sure I get plenty of fresh air	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. 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... ONE STEP AT A TIME.

Step 1. Awareness → What does your body need?

Step 2. Aquisition → Activate good habits, acquire new skills.

**Step 3. Develop a Personal Support Plan (PSP)
with Personal Achievement Targets (PATs)**

Step 2 – Acquisition: Learn New Skills

My Body Learning Log: What relaxes me?

Make your own list below:

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?
- What do you need for whole health?
- How can you build these body skills and habits in your life?

Step 3 – Action

Why not have some self care goals for Pillar 1. Write your own self care prescription. Develop your Personal Support Plan (PSP). It will help you respond to your life more resourcefully.

Your Personal Support Plan

In order to help you regulate stress, to build and maintain well-being and resilience it is important to have self care 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

My Pillar 1 Self Care Personal Support Plan Body Health

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

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



♥ LOVE YOUR BODY ♥

2

Pillar 2

MIND

Healthy Thinking and Emotions

Humans are multi-sensory beings. Our brain tries to make sense of everything we hear, smell, touch, taste and feel. We don't see things as they actually are, we make our own sense of everything we see and hear, filtering it as if through a coloured veil, by way of our inner thoughts and feelings. Our thoughts and feelings are themselves coloured by our past and present experiences and context. 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 is just bored to tears! It is exactly the same with what happens in our everyday life: we are interpreting things with our own filter in our own way all the time. Our "filter" is our perception, interpretation and our thinking style.

The way you think affects the way you feel, both emotionally and physically. A healthy body helps to create a healthy mind. Pillar 2 gives you lots of ideas for creating health through the power of your mind – that is, through developing healthy thoughts and feelings. Pillar 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'.

Pillar 2 highlights steps and skills that will reduce stress and build wellbeing and resilience.

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.

The way we think has a major impact on how we feel about ourselves, our world and our future. The way we think; whether positive or negative impacts on our sense of peace, calm and happiness. It impacts on our physical health and well-being also. Remember the model.

It is not the load that you carry it is the way that you carry the load



5 smart skills for supporting mental health are:

1. Brain Health
2. Mental Fitness: Train your brain, keep it fit, stimulated and stretched
3. Mindset and Mental Attitude
4. Healthy Thinking Skills
5. Emotional Health and Wellbeing

1

Brain Health

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
- ✓ To be free of toxins, accident and injury
- ✓ Good quality sleep

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 and numbers, music 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. Rest and sleep are essential also.

Your brain thrives on different kinds of sensory experience and loves it when you use all your senses. Unlike computers, we do not have limitless capacity for information. We need to learn to pause, rest, stop, stand back and simplify. Creating a routine and rhythm such as regular sleep balanced by structured work demands will work best. Research has shown that when the brain is deprived of sensory input it creates its own through hallucination.

In today's busy world, human brains are much more vulnerable to over stimulation than under stimulation. Our 24/7/365 life is tiring our mental energy. Using our senses to focus our attention on the present moment can be helpful for our health.

Humans are multi-sensory information processors; we use all five senses in learning and communicating.



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



Imagination: Stimulate your brain through work, play and day dreaming. Put some nice images in your mind, use your imagination. IMAGE-IN... IMAGINE

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 multi-sensory experience. Admire the view, Saviour the moments. The so called "golden hour" (around dawn and again at dusk) is a great time to get out, clear your mind and enjoy the outdoors. Get full spectrum lighting and lots of fresh air.

You cannot run good software if your hardware is not taken good care of.



Mental Fitness: Train Your Brain

Some of us spend hours in the gym each week training our bodies to do healthy things, why not 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. (Opens both visual fields).

Co-ordinate movement so that when one arm moves, the leg on the opposite side of your body moves at the same time. Try this for one minute each day.

If you have got exams or major assignments coming up, try it for three to five minutes each day. It really helps your brain to function at its best!



BRAIN STRETCH

To open up and stretch the brain.

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

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



BRAIN ENERGY EXERCISES: TO KEEP ENERGY LEVELS HIGH

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

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



ENERGY MASSAGE

To cut down distractions, build focus and clear thinking.

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

3

Mindset and Mental Attitude

There are two types of MINDSET: these are called Growth and Fixed mindset.

People with a Growth MINDSET, tend to be less stressed and have more robust resilience. Developing a growth mindset is a discipline and skill ANYONE can learn. Having a growth mindset ensures you never stop learning.

The ability to adapt and learn new ways of solving issues helps serve individuals and teams well especially during challenging or high stress times.

Setbacks, failures and mistakes are all opportunities improve and grow.

Face challenges and new experiences with a growth mindset and allow yourself to be human.

“Anyone who has never made a mistake
has never tried anything new”

– Albert Einstein

When you encounter obstacles & barriers and ACT to remove them quickly, notice and name solutions and small wins.

When you have a difficult or hectic day make sure you seek out the “wins” of the day, list at least 3 wins of the day and remind yourself how much you are growing, learning and achieving in the most challenging of times.

With a FIXED Mindset:

- ✓ Focus on scarcity
- ✓ believe that things stay the same
- ✓ Believe skills are innate and do not change much
- ✓ Tend to be judgemental
- ✓ Tend to be rigid and reluctant to try new approaches
- ✓ Are fearful or negative about the future
- ✓ Become negative about errors and mistakes

With a GROWTH Mindset:

- ✓ Believe life has plenty and is full of abundance
- ✓ Open to new ideas
- ✓ Are always in learning mode
- ✓ Believe that abilities develop, change and grow
- ✓ Enjoy challenges and finding new ways to approach challenges
- ✓ Are optimistic about the future
- ✓ See errors/mistakes as opportunities for growth

A Positive Mental Attitude (PMA) is a really important life skill that is managed through discipline and positive self-talk. Deciding to have a PMA is an effective way of setting yourself up for success each day. It is a good way of preparing yourself for difficult situations. PMA will give you both the confidence and the ability to respond well to stress and other 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. Do you have self-limiting attitudes or beliefs? Think about it. Be curious about it.

If you have learned negative thinking habits, it can be energy draining; mood lowering and more difficult to cope with stress or pressure.

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

‘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”. A negative mental attitude.

Experts tell us that the average person has approximately 50,000 thoughts a day. Many of these thoughts will be positive and helpful. However, some may be negative, unproductive or stress inducing.

Ask yourself, ‘Do I think in positive and helpful ways?’ or ‘Do I look on the pessimistic side of things?’ Be aware that when negative thoughts built up into a habit, 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 and compassion towards yourself 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, compassionate ones. When you do that, you will have mastered an important life skill, the skill to build resilience and reduce stress.

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. 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 PMA.

Remember the model... making positive changes to your attitude – will help your body, your behaviour, your environment and the nexus, or spirit. (The core of your being, your values, your beliefs and the way you 'go about' in life.)

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 your mental attitude really does affect the way you feel.



Healthy Thinking: A Really Useful Life Skill

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?

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.

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

On the next few pages we will be looking at the way you think (your thinking skills) and thought patterns. We will examine how you can help Yourself to clarify and understand the link between the way you think, the way you feel 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 building awareness and understanding the way we think and interpret things, we can begin to influence on how we feel, and what we do in response to all the things that are happening in ourselves, our world and our future.



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 are unhelpful – they 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....

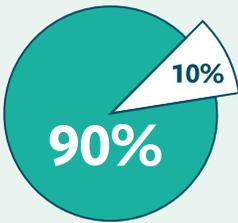
These are...

- **‘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** – 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 the only 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 can not do something.

- **Overgeneralisation** – when things go wrong – assuming that they will always go wrong, that is the way things will always be for you. Watch out for absolutes ‘Always’, ‘Never’ etc.....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” only a fool would do that.

Clinical experience leads me to add two more, especially when it comes to health professional and others who work in high intensity services. These are:

- Guilt
- Perfectionism.... **caution, PERFECTIONISM is an ever moving target.**



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, challenge and change 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 to question, and an alternative way of thinking.

The new way of thinking is called reframing – the antidote to stress inducing thoughts. Reframing is a skill like any other. To reframe thoughts, use the three C’s: **Catch it, check it, change it!**

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. Reframing is a skill well worth acquiring.



QUESTION 1 – Am I thinking in all or nothing terms?

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

Toxic / Negative thought: I didn’t do well in that test. I’ve messed my course up. I’m useless.

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

.....



QUESTION 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.

Reframe / 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 thought: I can’t manage now that Jane is gone. I can’t cope with being alone.

Reframe / Antidote / New ways to think: I was alone before I met her. Even when she was here there were times that I was alone... I coped. It may have been difficult but I managed. I can manage now.... I'll make an effort to get out and meet people... take up old 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 Mislabeled**

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?

Reframe / Antidote / New ways to reduce stress & think positively: 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

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



QUESTION 6 – Am I applying double standards?

One tough, rule for me, one more flexible more 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 affect 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.



Three C’s: Catch it, Check it, Change it!

Top Tip

Challenge your thinking by asking:
‘It may be feeling... but is it a fact?
It is your life... power it with PMA, try a growth mindset, healthy thinking and positive self-talk.



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.

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

- Say to yourself each day, 'I can succeed and I will succeed "I am loveable just the way I am'
- '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'

Today's reminder:

If you want to become skilful 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 resilient you.



5

Emotional Health And Wellbeing

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.



PAY ATTENTION TO 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. Practice a growth mindset.

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. (See Mindfulness in Pillar 5)



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.



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)
- **Spirit:** (e.g. effect on how you feel about you, your self esteem)

There are two common problems with 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 risk becoming 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 behaviour. Sometimes we excuse ourselves, saying “everyone does it”, or we claim that we had no choice, or that we were provoked. We pretend that our wrongs don’t count. But they do. Ask yourself: is anger working for or against me? List the benefits of managing anger – e.g. I will get on better with others, I will feel in control of myself. I can hold my head up high. I’m giving my best, 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**; 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 coping or 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 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 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 or unreasonable behaviour. Do not add to the problem by using cruel or clever words to humiliate a fellow human being, because 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.

Anyone can increase their health and well-being. It takes discipline and practice and understanding one's emotions is a huge part of that.



MANAGING DEPRESSION AND LOW MOOD

Depression is a common problem in modern living. Given the stresses and strains of modern society it is a natural for our moods to fluctuate, especially in response to stress or to upsetting or difficult circumstances. However, some people feel they are 'down' much more than they are 'up' and cannot necessarily relate it to a specific event. Their low mood may interfere with many aspects of their lives, they may feel sad and tired, and may see their life as too difficult or worthless. This persistent low mood is called depression.

Depression can vary from mild to severe depending on a number of things. Seek help early if you find your mood consistently low.

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. Spirit: (e.g. feeling low in spirit or life energy)

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

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.**

Mild, intermittent depression can be treated like psychological flu. You can help yourself. Here are some suggestions that have shown success.

When Emotions are difficult**CHALLENGE YOUR THINKING**

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

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

Try to challenge negative thoughts with **facts not feelings**. Ask yourself, what is the evidence for my thoughts/beliefs? Try to limit and control any self-limiting thoughts or beliefs. Use the 3 C's, Catch it, Check it, Change it!



BE ACTIVE GET MOVING!

Physical activity (however limited) is a very good way to manage stress and lift depression. It will give you a well-needed break and actually produces a natural 'high' in your body. Take an exercise class or a 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 more productive. Research has established the link being exercise and psychological well-being 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 well-being and reduce (psychological and physical) pain. Exercise can lift your mood. Think about what you can do to make things better for you. Do not let your low mood or worry stop you from taking the steps you need to manage your depression. Physical exercise is the best medicine for low mood or frazzled nerves. Can you really afford not to exercise every day – less than 30 minutes out of every 24 hours has huge physical, emotional and health benefits?



LET OTHERS HELP OR SUPPORT YOU

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

Whilst alcohol may appear to give a short-term 'block out' from problems, it has the potential to do more harm than good in the long run. Chemically, alcohol is a depressant and lowers your body's tolerance to stress. It can cause you to think in negative ways. **DO NOT 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. Have a retreat, time off, down time. Try new things, yoga, 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.



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. Look through the Resources section or ask 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
-
-
-
-
-
-

Top Tip

Plan your day in advance so that you are busy or distracted at times when you may feel down.



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.



CONTROL YOUR BREATHING: TRY THE 7-4-11 TECHNIQUE – SLOW YOUR BREATHS

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 as you count from 1 to 7, as you breathe in, then hold the breath for the count 1 to 4 then follow 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, mentor or your doctor.



DEAL WITH FEAR

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'
8. Work on building your self confidence

Confidence comes from enjoying and labelling successes and skills, trying new things and proving you yourself that you are able to cope. This means sometimes accepting the short-term discomfort of anxiety symptoms for the long-term gains of control over your life. It can mean staying in the anxiety-provoking situation until the symptoms of fear and panic subside... because they will eventually. One thing that is certain in life is change. 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.

**Be gentle with yourself:
Contact professionals
if you need extra support**



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.

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 any positive feelings. Resilient people pay attention to ordinary pleasures of ordinary activities and routines. They get inspired by others (how they cope), they relish and value the comfort of friends and family and they remind themselves to “count their blessings”.



BUILDING UP SELF-CONFIDENCE MEANS:

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

If you tell yourself you can cope then you probably will. Let go of fear with a great self care plan.

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 your assignments). 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 & well-being.

Self-confidence builds from within. It has a major impact on well-being and resilience. Positive self-talk; leads to positive thinking, inner strength, and positive feelings and 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.

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.

Things I like about myself

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

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.

What is your favourite.....

- Family Photograph?
- Friends Photograph?
- Holiday photo?
- Song? Music? Film?
- Joke?

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

A Summary of Essential Skills for Pillar 2–Mind



Set yourself up for success by getting clever about what builds your happiness and well-being. Build your awareness.

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 well-being, mental health and resilience.

THREE STEPS TO MENTAL HEALTH: AWARENESS, ACQUISITION & ACTIONS

Step 1 – Awareness

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 study skills, 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... what do you need to optimise your mental health?

Take the Challenge

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

What do you need for your mind to flourish?

What are your brain's needs and how can you meet them?

How can you promote mind and brain skills in your life?

Activate skills you have already, build new skills?

Step 2 – Acquisition

My bank of good ideas for a healthy mind.

- Use healthy thinking
- Develop PMA
- 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 parent
-
-

Step 3 – Action

Why not have some self care goals for Pillar 2. Write your own self care prescription and develop your personal support plan. It will help you respond to your mental health & wellbeing more resourcefully.

Your Personal Support Plan

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

Remember to ensure that every target is: **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 achieve them.



My Pillar 2 Self Care Personal Support Plan

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

I will watch my thoughts and challenge negative thinking

I will try a few brain exercises each day

I will work on building my self-confidence



Pillar 3

BEHAVIOUR

Behaviour impacts
health and wellbeing

“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 family, your friendships, work, social relationships and the quality of your life at home.

Everything about you says something about you.

Pillar 3 here looks at habits, skills, especially communication skills and behaviour and suggests effective ways to stay positive, calm and in control of your behaviours. 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 help you behave in ways that are helpful and supportive to you.

Pillar 3 is all about discovering the habits, skills and behaviours that reduce stress, build wellbeing and help you act and achieve your own best interests.

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

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 Pillar 3 are:

1. People Skills
2. Be Proactive
3. Self Regulation
4. Pressure, Problem Solving And Smart Decisions
5. Build Healthy Habits And Routines



People Skills

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 indicates whether we wish to be friendly or distant 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 other people easily.

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. A growth mindset leads to different perceptions, interpretations and behaviours as we have seen.

What behaviours define you?

Friendliness / Unfriendliness

Warm / Distant

Chatty / Shy / Withdrawn

Open / Closed

Develop awareness about what defines you. What do you think of your behaviour in general? Observe yourself. Reflect on your behaviours towards yourself and towards others. What do you give your attention to ? What do you give time attention and energy to?

Think and act positively with discernment and reflection and you will act/ behave in ways that will serve you well. Thoughts and mindset really do count. Positive self-talk really helps. Act positively and you will cope well 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. Is your time and attention focused on positive helpful thoughts and behaviours ? If you need to adjust or make changes to your attention or behaviour then do. No big deal. As we live we learn. If some behaviours need adjusting, just do it. Observe what works best then keep adjusting and learning. Learn to break down tasks or challenges and bit by bit successfully adjust your attention and behaviour until it is more pro-social and positive. Remember the model...develop awareness and focus your attention on making positive changes to your behaviour and this will help **body, mind, context and spirit as well.**



Awareness is **90%** of the solution!

Attention to Habits, skills and behaviours are the next **10%**

Invest time and energy in becoming aware of your behaviours, it will be time well spent.

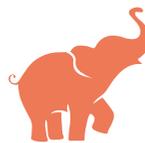
What do you want? What are your goals? What outcomes do you want?

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?





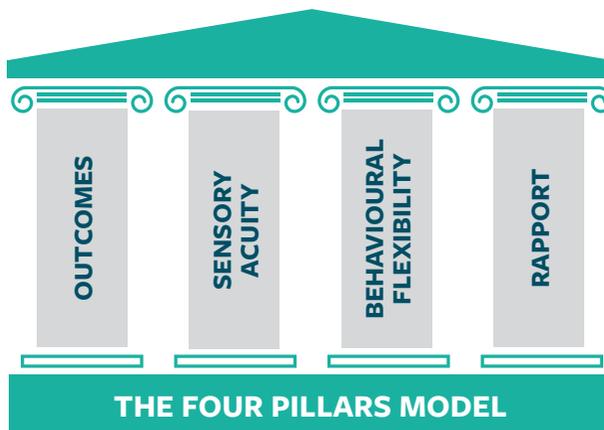
COMMUNICATION IS KEY

“ 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. An effective communicator will learn and use the four pillars skills – A framework for communication excellence.

Effective communication is central to good quality, safe clinical care and professionalism in veterinary healthcare. When veterinary professionals use communication skills effectively their patients, their colleagues and they themselves benefit. The benefit derived by the clinician is that they identify their patient's problems more accurately; owners benefit by feeling more satisfied, engaged and concordant with the assessment and care and thus can better understand their problems, investigations and treatment options. Vet and owners well-being is increased and anxiety is reduced. Colleagues and other treating clinicians also benefit through concordant vet – owner interactions.



The Four Pillars Model is derived from Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) and from Psychological Medicine clinical practice experience. Briefly, the model outlines four “pillars” or foundations for communication and consultation excellence.

The first pillar is Outcome.

This refers to the importance of being clear about the goals and objectives of each and every encounter and communication (discussions with colleagues, history taking, consultation etc). Having robust objectives, leads to well formed, clinically appropriate processes and outcomes. It also helps you prioritise and build your skills in vet – owner interactions.

The second pillar is Sensory Acuity.

This refers to the fact that humans are multi-sensory information processors and thus the vet must become skilled in observing and attending to both verbal and non-verbal communications with owners. This skill is important for mental acuity, concentration and for building empathy and rapport. It also builds your intuition and compassion. Think about your body language. Positive Eye Contact (PEC) is a very useful technique.

The third pillar is Behavioural Flexibility.

This refers to the necessity for clinicians to be responsive and respectful of owner's opinions, values and worldview and being flexible without compromising safety or good quality veterinary care. This skill increases your capacity for connection, stress reduction and builds better relationships with others.

The fourth pillar refers to Rapport.

The “glue” that holds good consultation between vet and owner. There are two types of rapport in this model: (1) internal or intrapersonal rapport, that is, the rapport within the clinician (e.g. preparation, organisation, reflection, confidence and comfort felt) and the (2) external or interpersonal (“relationship”) rapport with the owner and with other colleagues, family and friends.

Rapport is extremely important when it comes to patient safety and quality of care not just patient care, SELF CARE...YOUR Well-being also. Rapport helps you connect with yourself and build better relationships with others.

Apply these pillars to your clinical, professional and personal life.



BUILDING PEOPLE SKILLS

Good ideas for healthy relationships include

- **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 chose or 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, life is just like that – 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 “..... the full story. Try to hear people out.

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

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.

“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

“Good to forgive, best to forget”

Robert Browning



Be Proactive

What do you want, and are your behaviours in-line with your values and desired outcomes?

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?

Firstly 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.

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.

You can have everything you want in life but not all at the same time.

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.

REMEMBER:
The journey of 1,000 miles
begins with a single step!



3

Self Regulation

Life is complicated, humans need routine and structure as well as self discipline and organisational skills.

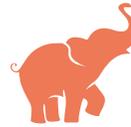
Learning to manage our time, our day, is an important way of making life easy and stress-free. The person who rushes about at speed does not necessarily arrive earlier or complete tasks more quickly than others! More haste can mean less speed. Continually rushing has a very draining effect on all parts 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 quarter, this year? Remember to build in time for leisure and pleasure. Balance work and play. Set goals. Write down your intentions.

Manage Time!

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. Time spent with friends and family or on self care.



STRESS IS A BIG ROAD BLOCK FOR PRODUCTIVITY – HERE ARE SOME EASY-TO-DO TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS, THINK BASICS

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.



Plan your moves then move your plans.

4

Pressure, Problem Solving & Smart Decisions

Managing pressure is as easy as ABC

- A** Advanced Planning
- B** Behavioural Flexibility
- C** Care and Committed Action



ADVANCED PLANNING

Advanced planning and preparation are essential elements of managing a stress regulated life. If you want to enjoy this important time 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 own or their family life.

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

Be clear about what outcomes you desire especially under pressure:

What you want? What do you need as an outcome?

Why you want it?

When you want it

How are you going to go about managing the pressure? The task?

How long will it take?

Where do you need help / extra input?



BEHAVIOURAL FLEXIBILITY

Be aware of your actions and behavior(s) – Your children will soon copy. Being aware of your own and the behaviours and needs of others.

Make things manageable and easier for yourself. Be flexible.

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 the to be understood. Pace yourself. Be flexible. Do not be afraid to change plans or strategies when needed.

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



CARE & COMMITTED ACTION

Set up for success early! Begin with the end in mind. Take care and time to familiarize yourself with the context and environment you are 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.

What outcomes do you want?

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

Action Changes Things – ACT
Be proactive: Begin with the end in mind.



Problem-solving and decision making

What do you want? What do you want for your work and home life now and the years ahead? 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.



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 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. deciding on a new job): Think about what you really want...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

Decide to make decisions

Leaving decisions unmade can leave you in a stressful rut. Make at least one decision every day – even if it is not a big move.



SIX TIPS FOR SMART 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



5

Build and Maintain Healthy Habits and Routines

Well-being, happiness and self care are healthy habits worth developing. 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. Healthy habits for well-being improve coping when pressured or stressed.

“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.

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 healthy behaviours and 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 favourite:

→ Music / Song / Dance?

→ Opera / Movie / Art?

→ Book / Magazine / Journal?

→ Family Photograph?

→ Friends Photograph?

→ Holiday photo?

→ Joke / Hobby / Game?

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

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.

Break the pattern

When you find yourself under pressure, do something different. Stand where you wouldn't normally stand, sit where you wouldn't normally sit, think the way you wouldn't normally think.

Compassion

When we are gentle and kind towards ourselves we are more able to act with kindness and empathy for others.

Compassion includes the desire to take actions that will alleviate suffering or distress in ourself or others. Showing compassion in practice has a very positive effect on emotions and the human connection. Developing compassion helps us to relax, let go and stay present.

Compassion helps us understand others and increases our capacity for listening generously, finding meaning, forgiveness, kindness, hope and calm. Compassion helps us change our perspective and rise above energy draining stress, anxiety and fear.

Being compassionate and giving compassionate care starts with self compassion.

“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 See www.safenowproject.org

S Stop and Think

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

A Act to protect yourself

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

F 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

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

R Remember...

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.



THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNET SAFETY & PRIVACY

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

TLC’s for safety

Talk	with peers or friends if you come across anything on the Internet which makes you feel uncomfortable. <u>Always</u> tell someone if an internet contact wants to meet you outside your home.
Leave	a chat room if you feel uncomfortable about what’s being said and talk to your friends about it. It’s easy for people on the Internet to lie about who they really are and it’s hard sometimes to be sure about who you’re really talking to.
Check	out the organizational rules about Internet use, opening e-mails, using chat rooms etc. Remember all your communications in cyber space are ‘held’ forever. What you put up on the web does not come down. Potential employers routinely check out facebook, my space and other sites.
Set Rules	Set privacy settings high, do not live your life in a highly public way. As a healthcare professional you are expected to show discretion, discernment and respect for privacy and confidentiality. If you are asked to give any kind of personal details over the Internet (e-mail address, financial details, photos of yourself, etc.) – make sure these details are in safe hands, think it through. Make sure you are controlling the amount of time spend on the internet, many good quality study and learning hours are wasted on the internet everyday!

Remember: Digital interaction blurs reality and your image



- No eye contact
- No body language
- No dialogue
- No context
- No feedback
- No control over where all your “stuff”/personal details go.....
Exercise caution!

A Summary of Essential Skills for Pillar 3 – Behaviour



THREE STEPS TO SMART BEHAVIOURS

Step 1 – Awareness

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 ways towards others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I manage my time 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 behave in an assertive way.	<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!

Remember to ensure that your goals are SMART.

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

My Pillar 3 Personal Achievement Targets

I will think win-win, and the best self care for me

I will treat everyone I meet with kindness & compassion

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 pause before acting

P.A.T.
For your
Behaviour

←
Your
own

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





Pillar 4

CONTEXT

Your Home, Environment, Finances, Work And Leisure

Pillar 4 looks at your context and how you can make it work best for you. By context we mean your home, finances, family, friends, social life, leisure, pleasure and resources.

It is also important to consider your care of the environment. This pillar suggests ways on how to develop habits, skills and behaviours that make your work, finances and your family life happy, healthy, content and safe. Even if you are going through tough times, Pillar 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 financial, work or social life. This section 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. **Your Home**
2. **Friends, Family and Supports**
3. **Your Money**
4. **Work and Professional Life**
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 neighbourhood. But in reality our environment is taken up by people and activities just as much.

Therefore, your family, your friends, your home, your work, your money, 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.

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 context, 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.



Your Home: Create Calm Around You



Create calm in the world in which you live and play. Take care of your environment and our world with the 3R': Reduce, Re-use and Recycle. Create calm in your family's world so that your children can grow and change with ease and wellbeing.

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 home, surroundings or environment.



SORTING OUT YOUR SURROUNDINGS MEANS:

- Understanding how important your environment is to your comfort and safety.
- Clearing out clutter. Reduce, Re-use, Recycle.
- Examining your living space, your home, your bedroom, your resources – take a 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! **SIMPLIFY**
- 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.



Friends, Family and Supports



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

‘Friendship is a sheltering tree.’

– Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Develop and maintain your friendships, keep in touch.

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. Trauma, illness or uncertainty can be very difficult to deal with take great care of yourself by going gently and taking your time. 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 supported and given help when you need it.

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.

The world can be a big old lonely place! When you are feeling “down” or have experienced loss or severe 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 stress themselves or at least have a really good understanding of the issues you are coping with. They will know what you are talking about and will 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 coping with your life’s ups and downs.

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.

“Life is not the way it is supposed
to be, It is the way it is”

– Virginia Satir

MY SUPPORT SERVICES NUMBERS

Keep track of services and people that are may be helpful to you. Include the Police, your GP, telephone helplines, as well as your friends.

3

Your Money



Managing your money wisely will help you reduce stress and anxiety in your life. It may be of interest to you to know that it is not the money you get that is more important but the money you spend. Spend wisely and follow the 7 steps to financial freedom below.

7 Steps to financial Freedom – Jennifer Dennehy, SYS Wealth Group

1. Save minimum 10% of all you earn
2. Control your expenses
3. Invest your capital and let compound interest do the work for you
4. Protect and preserve your capital
5. Buy your own home and put a tax efficient estate plan in place
6. Insurance is the foundation to your financial wellbeing – insure yourself against loss of income and illness
7. Invest in your biggest asset – yourself

Disclaimer – The information provided is not financial advice. Please seek independent financial advice.

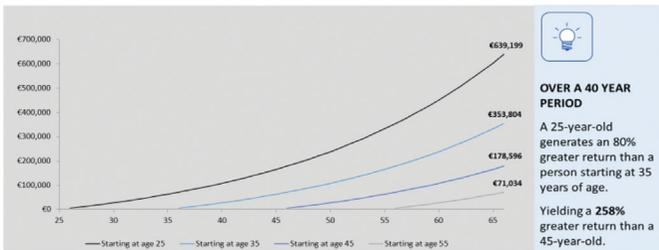
STEP 1 Save minimum 10% of all you earn

- ✓ Decide now to Pay Yourself First
- ✓ Will power doesn't work – Automate it – set up a standing order for a minimum of 10% of all you earn
- ✓ As you begin to earn more, increase the standing order amount – otherwise the you WILL spend the extra income and will not become any wealthier.

STEP 2 Control your expenses

- ✓ Spend less than you earn
- ✓ If you automate your savings, you will quickly get used to having €90 to spend instead of €100
- ✓ Don't borrow for lifestyle expenses e.g., a holiday – save for it instead
- ✓ If you have debt – start a repayment plan now.

STEP 3 Invest your capital and let compound interest do the work for you



General Rules to Investing

	Stay disciplined		Volatility is part of investing
	Cash is not the long term answer		Over the long term risk is rewarded
	Time in the Market		Diversify, Diversify, Diversify

- ✓ Once you've built up some savings then it's time to get it working for you.
- ✓ Pensions are a highly attractive and tax efficient way to save – especially if you are self-employed or a company director. Make sure to get the right structure for your needs.

STEP 4

Warren Buffet – Rule # 1 “Don’t lose money”

“It’s not how much you earn, it’s how much you keep so it is important to monitor and manage your spending.”

If You Lose	Gain Required to Break Even
5%	5%
10%	11%
25%	33%
40%	67%
50%	100%

STEP 5 Buy your own home and put an tax efficient estate plan in place

Easier said than done – however with focus and discipline it can be done.

Never use your home or assets as an ATM

Ensure to make a will and if you love your spouse and children more than the revenue ensure to have a proper estate plan in place.

STEP 6 Insure yourself against loss of income and illness and provide for your family in the event of something happening to you prematurely

- ✓ Protect yourself against loss of income and serious illness
- ✓ Buy income protection insurance once you start earning and have dependants
- ✓ It is much cheaper to buy it in your 20’s than in your 40’s
- ✓ Life Cover, Income Protection & Serious illness insurance are the foundations to every proper financial plan

STEP 7 Invest in your biggest asset – yourself

- ✓ You are your biggest asset – protect this asset as well as investing in you
- ✓ Keep learning and growing and invest in increasing your skills
- ✓ Being Well and well-being is an important factor in becoming wealthy

4

Work and Professional Life



Working life involves getting along with other people. Communicating and interacting well with others helps us get the job done. Sometimes it can be frustrating when a person irritates us or challenge 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 at work is best when you:

- Remember 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 culture, dignity and world view.
- 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.



**Many tribes
one people**

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

Veterinary Practice/Healthcare has never been more complex than it is now

The magnitude of the stress and burnout problem and the growing consequences for veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses suggest veterinary societies and leaders should compel seniors and systems to make a commitment to improve work and clinical environments to reduce and manage stress and build wellbeing. and resilience. In a dynamic complex clinically orientated service like veterinary care, professionals encounter new and varied challenges every day. It is important and expected that you will engage in and value constant learning and Continuous Veterinary Education (CVE). This will support and empower you.

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

If you are going to be a leader, authenticity is your most important life skill and you risk suffering dysfunctional stress if you use techniques that do not fit with your values and strengths. This is why it is so important to be clear about your values.

NEW ON THE JOB

A lot of newly qualified vets and nurses have the feeling that they somehow beat or fooled the system into admitting them and that they are never going to match up to the demands or to their peers. Quimby call this the ‘imposter syndrome’ – “It is really common among high achieving people: lots of self doubt, fear with the first challenging experience that they are the only one having trouble and a genuine sense that they don’t belong”.



These are the feelings (fairly universally felt) but what are the facts?

The facts are:

- ✓ **You are here**
- ✓ **You did not beat the system**
- ✓ **You deserve to be here, you worked to get here**
- ✓ **You can succeed**
- ✓ **You will not be at full capacity straight away but you will get there. Everything is set up to make this happen for you.**

So how do you get there? Seniors (at all levels) tell us these are the top 5 tips:

1. Get comfortable in your surroundings:

- Go to induction settings’ to ‘Meet with your employer/superior who will introduce you to the personnel and routines of the practice.
- Walk around and get familiar with where everything is in the hospital or clinic.
- Get familiar with the surrounding area and all the transport links to and from work to town, station, airport, etc.
- Get accommodation set up as early as possible.
- Make sure you are in your comfort zone in terms of surroundings.
- Ask if you need help.

2. Learn to manage work commitments and time

- Be proactive, get organised early. Prioritise.
- Take a step by step approach; get strategic about outcomes, attendance at Teaching and Learning activities and keeping up with assignments.
- Focus on the core concepts and skills you are learning. Ask questions, make comments and discuss things with colleagues.
- Always admit to mistakes or errors. Discuss, learn and move on
- Remember there is more to the job than veterinary. Try to integrate with other professionals on the team/firm to develop your skills sets in the discipline you are working.
- Be open to new ideas, be flexible in your thinking and learning. Develop yourself and the discipline.

3. Connect with your discipline

- Read broadly, stretch yourself.
- Try to see connections and patient benefit.
- Feel part of something awesome, join in, contribute.

4. Keep trying to learn new things right from the start and consider research as part of your career

- Invest time in following up references and reading papers.
- Think about research ideas that will hold your personal interest.
- Keep your thinking broad and give yourself plenty of time to develop ideas.

5. Take good care of yourself

- Communicate and connect with others.
- Find people both within your profession and in the team community to connect and spend time with them.
- Join clubs and societies
- Keep fit and well
- Use the TAKE FIVE steps and develop life skills and skills for life.



STILL IN TRAINING

The fact is that University and clinical training is a major part of your environment where you meet your friends and future colleagues and learn about life, patient care as well as academic subjects. So doing well at University and in clinical practice really means doing well at life. Your grades may not be the best but as long as you are trying and that you are disciplined in working towards your goals and are happy that is the most important thing.

Doing well at University and in clinical practice means:

- Personal, social and future success. Do your best. Stay active and protect your health, be an exemplar for well-being and positivity.
- Caring about the place, the property and the people! Try to be respectful and take good care of all. Remember, it is **your** environment.
- Show you care about making it a safe and happy place for everyone. Reach out to others. Smile, be friendly.
- Show you care about the clinical or academic purpose to grow and learn for life. Develop good study, time and organizational skills.
- Join in. Join local clubs, societies and veterinary organisations. The more you engage with these organisations the more benefit and enjoyment you will derive from them.
- Be positive, never encourage or make it easy for others to do bad, bullying or unkind things.
- Dare to be different, don't always go with the crowd.
- Do right by yourself and others, especially patients, owners and colleagues

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

– Joseph Newton



DEALING WITH DIFFICULT OR CHALLENGING PEOPLE

The world is full of wonderful people but every so often we come up against someone who is negative or unhelpful. 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 with. If you cannot walk away – seek help, consider your support network.

→ Watch your behaviours and your boundaries

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

→ 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, or back off.



FOUR TIPS TO HELP YOU HANDLE DIFFICULT PEOPLE

The first tip is Awareness, think about it. What is actually going on?

1. Think about the situation/person carefully and what mind state are you in?

Think before you speak. – Ask yourself “what is really going on here?”
 “How can I turn this conflict into collaboration?”

2. Stop trying to change other people –

It is wasted effort, do positive things with positive people, stay away from negativity. Stop depending on what others do, say or feel to determine your own well-being or to decide on how you act or what you believe. Give angry or aggressive people a wide berth! Stay away from them!

3. Learn to back off and let go – STAND BACK

S Set a pleasant helpful professional tone

T Think before you respond

A Acknowledge the person’s concerns. Act Professionally

N Notice the patterns. Note how the person is responding

D Don’t personalise things. Don’t engage emotionally

B Be aware of your body language and behaviour

A Actively seek solutions

C Consider your options. Change tone to calm. Collaborate

K Keep things on a professional basis – not personal non-emotional

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. Cut yourself some slack... Mind you. **Ask for help when you need it.**

Difficult or Challenging People

TYPE	SIGNS & SYMPTOMS	SEDATIVES & HYPNOTICS WHAT HELPS	CONTRA INDICATED WHAT HINDERS, SO....
“The Bully” (Aggressive)	A bully, tyrant, actively aggressive, expert “button pushers”, frequently interrupt, don’t listen, unpleasant, frequently shout/order people around. Everything quickly and now. Loses temper easily.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask them to be specific, ask for more information • Stand firm, stick to the point • Find a way to break the momentum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t get personal/annoyed/ copy • Don’t buckle or laugh • Don’t pretend it isn’t happening
“The Smiling Knife” (Hostile)	Quietly hostile, indirect, master of innuendo, use their knowledge as power, gossip, half truths, hide what they do but render themselves indispensable by using information as power, undermining. Does several jobs at once. Highly competitive. Time conscious.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Address their attack directly” • Disarm them by coming straight out with it e.g. “I noticed you....” • “I sensed a criticism” • Be comfortable with silence • Ask open ended questions • Remain task focused 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t fill the gaps • Don’t mumble or be vague • Don’t join in the intrigue or reinforce gossip • Don’t copy or join in the unpleasantness
“The Swiftly Expert at Manipulation”	Make out they know everything/ are really intelligent, up to date, air or superiority, not renowned for taking responsibility, impulsive... make snap decisions, always blame other factors, frequently knows the information / data but not how to engage others. Spindocter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do your homework • Know your ground • Ask them to talk you through their decision....Socratic questioning • Make factual and relevant comments if they lord it over you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t “get into” or argue over details • Don’t ask open ended questions • Don’t knuckle under, insist they talk to you first. • Don’t accept at face value
“The Moaner” (Critic)	Constantly complaining, highly stressed, pessimistic, cast a negative cloud over everything, assume nothing will work, critical. Enjoys periods of idleness. Not time-conscious	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to complaint but re-frame it. Stay task focused. • Tag negativity with a positive/ neutral spin • Add the word “and” not “but” • Stay out of negative spin • Ask for their preferred outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t challenge/get personal • Don’t try to cheer them up • Don’t agree • Don’t engage in negativity
“The Wreck” (off loader)	Anxious, worrier, will say anything to please, does little, pannicker, noisy, needy, disorganised, unreliable, distracted, poor concentration. Not time conscious. Moves slowly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be specific about when, where, how • Lead them to solutions, be solution focused • Be supportive but clear • Provide focused support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t pressurise • Don’t leave loose ends • Don’t do their work for them
“The Judge”	Critical, explicit or subtle messages that you fall short, competitive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-direct the conversation to neutral topic • Move to positive • Realise that it is the judge that feels bad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reacting with hurt or annoyance • Judging back or arguing

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 forgiveable! You/they can do better when you/they know better.

Ask yourself who is being affected/hurt by resentment?

Often we find we are only punishing ourselves. BE GOOD TO YOURSELF.



SEEKING HELP

In some cases a situation may arise in which you cannot avoid conflict. Clearly, you cannot allow another person to abuse 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 educators, mentors, a coach or even the police. If you are being threatened or abused do not hesitate to seek help.

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

Never blame yourself for another person's behaviour

5

Leisure & Pleasure



Rest, relaxation, leisure and pleasure, free and fun time are essential to our energy and wellbeing.

Emotional health and fitness are difficult to achieve if we are overworked, frazzled or fatigued.

Leisure and pleasure time is very important for positive emotions, life satisfaction, freedom from the negative effects of stress. It is good to slow down and give some attention to self renewal.

Health is not simply the absence of illness: it is flourishing and excellence in all aspects of the human condition. This includes play.

If you want to actively promote your wellbeing and resilience then enriching your life with leisure and pleasure is a must. There are many benefits to leisure time . Engaging in physical leisure activities, especially outdoors will improve your physical and consequently your mental health. Participating in hobbies and other recreational activities and having fun improves your psychological wellbeing and physical health this includes improved immune system and better heart and brain health.

Freedom from the demands of work or duty and time to enjoy hobbies,sports or social connections can boost energy and help us reset.

Through leisure, pleasure and free time you can replenish yourself and “washout” stress, stagnant energy allowing opportunity and flow for new energy.

Getting your “ head in a different space” is a really important and useful strategy for stress reduction and lifting mood. Try to build in free and fun time every day.

Look for something soothing and beautiful in each day.

What is your favourite activity outside work and chores?

What is your most fun relaxing thing to do?

Your favourite music, song, film or joke?

Take some time to engage in leisure and pleasurable things. Use leisure and pleasures to help reset or refresh. Lighten up, have fun and laughter in your day.

Work, Rest then Play
If you want to keep stress at bay!



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.

A Summary of Essential Skills for Pillar 4 – Context

It is your life. Your Life matters. You create it.



THREE STEPS TO A HEALTHY CONTEXT

Step 1 – Awareness

Take The Quiz

How well do you look after your Context?
Please tick true or false after each sentence.

	True	False
1. I make time for leisure and pleasure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I act to keep my home 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 work and professional goals.	<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 work on building financial security.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I do not put up with negative behaviours 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... what do you need to optimise your context?

Step 3 – Action

Why not have some self care goals for Pillar 4. Write your own prescription for health and wellbeing in your context. Identify your Personal Achievement Targets (PATs) relating to your context. Remember to ensure that your goals are SMART.

Your Self Care Personal Support Plan

Now let's identify your **Personal Achievement Targets (or P.A.T.s)** relating to context and 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, the way forward and 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.

My Pillar 4 Personal Achievement Targets

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

I will take time to communicate and connect with others

I will try to understand not change others

I will look beyond the obvious

I will try to see the perspective of others

P.A.T.
For your
Environment

←
Your
own

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





Pillar 5

SPIRIT

Take Care of your Exceptional Spirit

Make space in your life for the care of your soul.

Take Five states that the five systems (body – mind – behaviour – environment/ context and spirit) taken together make up the complexity of your life. Each system is independent of and also interdependent on the others. The point where they all connect we call the **NEXUS**, but you may prefer simpler words such as spirit or soul. This system is all about the connection, the pulling together and the balance of all five systems making you who you uniquely are... the essence of YOU.

Pillar 5 of this book is focused on the steps and skills for working on **BALANCE** and taking care of your spirit, your soul and your energy.

In building wellbeing and success, knowing and living your values helps you live authentically and is your most precious asset.

Evidence from stress studies has shown that you will be uncomfortable and suffer dysfunctional stress if you over-ride or suppress your values or engage in behaviours that do not align with your values or that do not fit your spirit or who you really are.

Life may be full of uncertainty, but if you take care of your spirit, your values and your unique needs, 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 coping.

Attending to your spirit's needs builds serenity, contentment and balance in life. Understanding and looking after your soul or spirit is easier when you decide 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 for Pillar 5 are:

1. Meaningful Purpose
2. Belief in Yourself
3. Mindfulness
4. Meditation
5. Gratitude

The life skills you pick up from this book and from other places are seeds for a calm, contented 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 lots of practice.

In addition, you will need to *weed out* any negative or self-defeating behaviours, habits and feelings in your life so that healthy and positive ones can thrive. It is helpful if you can watch and observe the effect of these skills. Are they working for you? If not, weed them out of your life, if they are working for you, then nurture and develop them. There is a great freedom in knowing that if you don't like the results of a previous choice, you can always choose again.

Finally, *water your seeds*, keep things fluid, be flexible let good things in and try new ideas and opportunities. That way you will Flourish.

Use the FLORISH Formula

- F:** Friends & family – connect with the people around you
- L:** Love, Laughter, Lighter side of Life, and Let go physically & mentally
- O:** Opportunities: Be open at work and play time, Optimism
- R:** Relationships & Resources & Reflection
- I:** Intimacy & Involvement, Immerse yourself in uplifting and inspire things
- S:** Simplify, Slow Down
- H:** Health & Happiness Habits – your physical, emotional & spiritual well-being



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. This book emphasises how you can act for your greater good. Look at the life that you are living –

BALANCE is the key to wellbeing and to happy healthy living. if you want to achieve balance in everything – learn to give and receive equally.

Take care of you too.

1 | Meaningful Purpose

Care of the soul is central to wellbeing and to finding your purpose. It is important to work at feeling part of something worthwhile. You are a resourceful capable person. What makes your heart sing? What makes your heart sink? Build what is strong, less attention to what is wrong.

Get meaningful purpose in your life by knowing who you really are, what is really important to you. How do you want to contribute in this life?

Know what you want and your mind can use its genius to create what you need, in a way that is meaningful to you.

You can fine tune plans and adjust.

What you place your attention on, you get more of.

1. Think about the ideal authentic you. Revisit your core values and your priorities. What brings your life meaning and purpose?
2. Imagine yourself in your ideal situation at home and at work.
3. Make sure your goals are in harmony with each other, this makes them easier to achieve, and keeps stress manageable.
4. Reinforce every positive thought you have had about yourself.
5. Imagine your ideal self. Ask yourself this... Am I focusing my time and energy in the right place? For a worthwhile purpose?
6. Think about the resources you will need to create your ideal and meaningful life. Work at creating and being part of a worthwhile purpose contributing to something bigger than yourself. Contribute.
7. What love, energy, support do you need ? Who, what should you connect with to meet this ?
8. Imagine great health and wealth flowing towards you. Imagine the difference you can make in the world, your unique part.

SIT IN A CHURCH

Regardless of what you believe in, churches and temples are extraordinary places of peace. Take a pew and absorb the atmosphere of absolute peace and calm that permeates them.

The best way to make your Spirit healthy and happy is to try out some the ideas and life skills presented in this book.

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.



Belief in Yourself

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 blonde 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 two children, I have a brother and a sister 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 comfortable with or proud of and the bits you want to work on, is very important. It helps you to develop awareness and 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 healthy thinking skills to support you to be the best you can be now.

The more attention, reflection and thought you give, even the simple tasks, the better the return and benefit to you.

Know Your Strengths

Strengths are those personal qualities/abilities which energise us, which feel like us and which enable optimal performance. It is very helpful to know your strengths because this awareness can help you:

- feel like ‘the real you’, less stressed, more resilient
- help you improve your performance and energy

If you are interested in a really good assessment of your personal strengths (called character strengths in Positive Psychology). Why not try the *Values in Action Inventory of strengths (VIA-IS)*.

VIA-IS

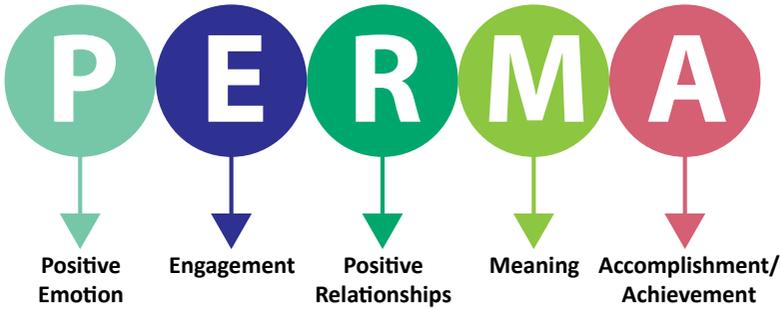
The **VIA-IS** is one of the best known and easiest to use. It is made up of 24 character strengths. You can do the assessment on-line for free. It comes with a short report... also for free and if you would like a more detailed report there is a small fee. The **VIA-IS** is a safe and easy to use, it takes about 25 minutes to complete and it can be found at www.positivepsychology.org This website is at the University of Pennsylvania’s Positive Psychology Centre which is directed by my colleague Professor Martin Seligman one of the founding fathers of the Positive Psychology movement. His work is scientifically proven, safe and easy to use.

If you want to figure out your strengths without visiting the website above that is fine also. Just take some time to think about it and make a list of all the things that make you feel like the **real you**. What energises you? What makes you feel good? What are you good/talented at? Here are some ideas:



Being aware of and then using your strengths regularly increases your well-being, energy and performance. Playing to your strengths has extra benefits also, for example research has shown that it can reduce stress and build resilience and faith in yourself.

Psychological research has discovered that wellbeing and resilience can be built and enhanced with five core ingredients . The acronym PERMA is the easiest way to remember the five important building blocks of wellbeing – all things that will be helpful in practice and in your personal life.



Positive Emotions are a powerful resource. will build and support confidence & self-belief, creativity, flexibility, optimism, perseverance, physical and mental health productivity and energy.

Engagement: Being fully focused on and engaged on the task at hand and getting wrapped up in the activity is very good for the mind and for wellbeing.

Relationships: Positive relationships help us build resilience, reduce stress and improve wellbeing. No matter what happens at work try to ensure you work at keeping relationships positive and supportive

Meaning: Meaning and Purpose, belonging to and serving something bigger than ourselves is an excellent way to build wellbeing and resilience.

Accomplishment: Veterinary is a noble profession. Your family, friends and community salute you and want to support you in your practice especially on those stressful and challenging days. Take a bow for all that you achieved in training and that you will accomplish in practice and professional work and in your personal life.

Slow Down

“Be not so busy making a living that you forget to make a life.”





Mindfulness – a Powerful Way to Reduce Stress, Pain and Discomfort

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, while reducing their stress.

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, skills and helps you build personal power.

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

Mindful Attitude

The Mindfulness in Medicine Centre at University of Massachusetts highlights the following seven strategies to help improve mindful practice;

1. **Develop non-judging:** Embrace an open mind to trying out mindful exercises.
2. **Allow a beginners mind:** Approach each moment of mindfulness as if it is your first. Have no expectations just let it emerge.
3. **Trust:** Listen to your intuition and go with what makes you most comfortable.
4. **Be Patient:** Your attention will wander, let it be. Don’t expect to be perfect or even to get it right all the time.
5. **Non-striving:** Don’t force yourself to think or feel anything. Be gentle and try without pressure.

6. **Acceptance:** Allow things as they are, even when “as they are” are not how you would desire. If there is something about yourself that you are not happy with, let it be. Concentrate on the present moment without judgement, with acceptance.
7. **Letting go:** “Don’t push the river let it flow”. Do not cling to feelings or thoughts, try to observe them without judgement. Let them come and let them go.

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
- Helps build better control of emotions and thoughts
- Better self-awareness and self-control and more self compassion
- Improved working memory and concentration
- Reduction in anxiety, stress 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 Mindfulness 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 go within.

- 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, 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.

TAKE THE FIRST STEP

Surprisingly, the moment you decide to become calm and mindful, you are already on the way to becoming mindful. The decision is all it takes.

4

Meditation (Loving, Kindness Meditation)

Meditation is another uplifting activity which is also joy and energy building. Meditation helps you build resilience, inner resourcefulness and joy. Pillar 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 you slow down, let 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. It slows you down and helps you appreciate more.

Try **Breathe2Relax App** or **Tacticbreather App**. These are great stress management tools.

Bask in the afterglow

In those peaceful moments when you have completed a meditation practice, your mind is calm, creative and alert. It is a great time for reflection, problem solving and creative thinking. Remember that silence and quiet reflection can be as invigorating as noise and bustle.

Be calm now

If every activity you undertake is accompanied by concerns for what is ahead, you will be living in a state of restlessness. Instead practice mindfulness and meditation, make plans and apply your full attention to following through. Then your efforts are directed in the present – the most calming way to operate.

5

Gratitude – A Key Happiness Habit

Gratitude Practice helps us refocus our thoughts and emotions to appreciate what we have.

Practice: Priming yourself for happiness through Gratitude Practice

You are here for a worthwhile purpose. To feel gratitude, consider all the wonderful things in your life.

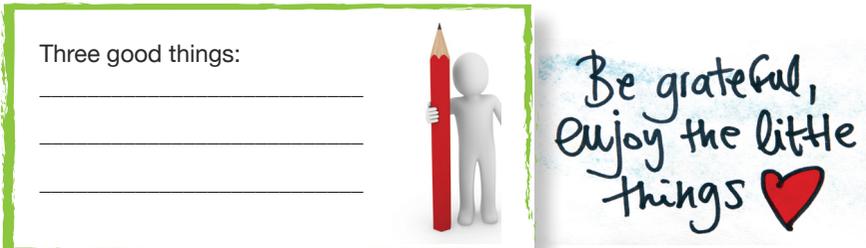
You deserve to be happy and do something wonderful with your life.

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. When you experience gratitude it enables you to connect with your deeper, inner self. The real authentic you.

Surround yourself with positive people. Strive to be happy, fill your day with compassion, love, Optimism and Joy. Prolong moments of pleasure by paying more attention to them. Appreciate them.



5 Examples of Gratitude Practice

1. Each day try to write down 3 things you are grateful for that day.
2. Count your blessings: List the things you are grateful for in your life. This will increase your happiness and life success.
3. Light a gratitude candle and reflect on all that is wonderful in your life. The more good things you notice, the more you give attention to and are grateful for these benefits, the more you strengthen good feelings, healthy well-being and calm. If you write stuff down, you can re-visit again and again. It can give you a real lift if you are a bit low.

Happiness is an inside job. You get to decide how happy you can be.

4. Begin collecting a book of Magical Memories, a track of good things in life or a gratitude journal or even grateful reframing.
5. Grateful Reframing. Take time to get a new perspective on a negative event or experience. What can you learn from it? Can you find a way to take a positive from it?

Psychology research has shown that grateful people are more joyful, attentive, energetic, helpful, content and optimistic than people who are not. The evidence is also that gratitude is strongly linked to ‘psychological coherence’ which is the belief that your life is manageable, meaningful and understandable. At the end of each day, think about three good things that went well for you that day. Research shows this improves your well-being over time. It is a good way to build a happiness habit. When you practice the habit of gratitude regularly it gradually becomes second Nature to you. It takes effort at first but soon it brings peace and calm and reflective space.

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.



A Summary of Essential Skills for Pillar 5 – Spirit



ONE STEP AT A TIME

♥ It is your life. Your Life matters. You create it ♥

THREE STEPS TO OPTIMISE YOUR SPIRIT

Step 1 – Awareness

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

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!

Step 2 – Acquisition

What new habits, skills or rituals can you use to support your spirit?

What do you need to optimise your spirit?

What are your spiritual needs?

How can you plant spiritual skills in your life?



Use the Worksheets at the back of this book

These will help you plan ways to take good care of your spirit.

Step 3 – Action

Why not have some self care goals for Pillar 5.

Your Self Care Personal Support Plan

Now lets 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 self care 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, the skills and not on the problem or deficits. It is helpful to 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“. Try also to 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

MY PILLAR 5 SELF CARE PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

I will identify my values, skills and needs

P.A.T. For your Environment

I will design up a plan to meet my needs

I will make a list of my priorities in life

Your own

I will take good care of me

Your own



SAFEVET SMART Summary

Stress Management and Resilience Techniques at a Glance

Over the next few weeks, you can prepare for success by taking care of your Body, Mind, Behaviours, Context and Spirit. Here are some suggestions:

Body

- Exercise daily to reduce stress and increase energy
- Keep Hydrated – drink water
- 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
- Sleep
- Cut down / out 'brain drainers': junk food, caffeine, alcohol, sugars

Mind

- Increase wellbeing by trying mental relaxation to calm the mind
- Use reflection
- Try puzzles & crossword to focus the mind
- Brain Gym to get clear thinking and confident decision making
- Develop mindfulness
- Develop healthy thinking
- Visualize Health & wellbeing
- Sleep

Behaviours

- Engage
- 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
- Make wise food and drink choices

Context

- Make your environment comfortable
- Get plenty of rest and "step back" periods, leisure or pleasure with friends or family
- Work in 'chunks', don't have an unrealistically heavy workload
- Cut down / out hectic days or late nights
- Cut down 'jobs' and being busy with stuff, focus on outcome
- Manage money wisely

Spirit

- Meaningful Purpose
- Gratitude Practice
- Mindfulness
- Compassion for self and others

Some Final Thoughts

Let go a little. All will be well.

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, as a healthy cascade unfolds.

Develop a growth mindset. Label and enjoy your successes, learn from setbacks and missteps. 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 well-being and give yourself a happy, calm and content life.

YOU CAN DO IT, YOU WILL SUCCEED

You can make this Your best year yet!

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



Q How do I know the if it is a bad day or burnout?

There is a world of difference between a run of bad days which everyone has from time to time and real burnout.

Burnout is a state of chronic unmanaged stress that leads to:

- physical and emotional exhaustion
- cynicism and detachment
- feelings of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment

Burnout is when everyday is a struggle or bad day and you begin to feel that you are not able to function effectively on a personal, professional or inter-personal level, that things are futile and overwhelming and nothing you do will make a difference. Being burned out leads to feeling empty and mentally exhausted, devoid of motivation, emotionally drained and even beyond caring. People experiencing burnout often don't see any hope of positive change in their situations. If excessive stress feels like you're drowning in responsibilities, burnout is a sense of being all washed up.

Burnout is something which can take you by surprise, it creeps up on you and most people do not recognise that stress has been escalating to this serious point. Burnout is the end result of unmanaged or unchecked stress – this handbook helps you develop stress management and resilience to build wellbeing and prevent burnout.

Q The course talks about Recovery Routines, I don't see how I can set aside recovery time for myself when I have so much to do.

A Actually, you can't afford not to. It is a mistake to think that by just working harder and longer you are going to get more done.

Think about it... what would happen an athlete if she/he trained 12 hours a day and didn't take time to rest, recover and restore? Within a short period of time they would be unable to perform. The truth is without recovery time you maintain stress at a high level longer and risk burn out much faster.

Ask yourself: what will be the cost of carrying on the way you are now over the next six months...the next Year.... the next 5 Years?

Don't let things build up. Maintain **BALANCE**. Taking a bit of time each day to relax, rest and restore, whatever way you like to is a good way to start. Over time, you will find you have become so much more efficient and effective in managing your energy that you can afford to take even more time off without diminishing the amount you are able to achieve. (See Tips on staying productive in the appendix)

Q How can I avoid worry, panic and anxiety?

A By taking great care of your energy and well-being in all five domains. See especially Pillar 2, and try healthy thinking skills. You might also think about having a few coaching or even psychology sessions if worry becomes a real burden to you. No big deal if you need help with this take time and care to meet your needs.

Q My work load is so high. I have too much on the go at the same time. I feel I am constantly juggling too many plates. How can I cope?

A Firstly you need to prioritize. Decide what is really important. What must get done ? Then start every day by looking at what is on the 'To Do' list and giving each task an A, B or C.

A = urgent and must be done ASAP.

B = Important but can wait.

C = everything else.

Stress levels will drop immediately knowing that you can work your way through the As, the Bs, and if you have some time left, get around the Cs.

Try to have a list of 3 things, your top priorities, that you will ensure are completed by the end of each day. When you use this simple system for yourself, you will find that nothing important gets missed or falls through the gaps – the worst thing that ever happens is a few lower-priority tasks have to wait a day or two to get done.

Use the Worksheets at the back of this book to help you plan ways to take care of your spirit (see pages 151 & 152).

See Brian Fade First AID on p148.

Notes on pages 149 & 150.

Q I don't like disappointing people. How can I learn to get others off my back and say no?

A As with any non-productive behaviour, agreeing to do too much has a positive intention, which is generally to be kind or of greater service to others. But watch out that you do not develop “people pleasing” routines as these will only make things worse for both you and those you are trying to please. The irony is that in your effort to please as many people as possible, you may end up disappointing them all, because you can only do so much and you end up doing everything only half as well. You are far better off doing fewer things, but doing them to the best of your ability.

Prioritise... Meet your professional and personal responsibilities first. Ask yourself ‘If I could get only one thing done today, what would it be? Do that one thing as if it was the only thing you had to do today. When it’s complete, go back, ask yourself the question again and repeat the process.

When you recognize that you have too much on, you could say: ‘I would love to help, but I am overloaded at the moment. I don’t want to let you down. I will let you know when I am able to do it’.

Q I think I am a perfectionist which means I end up spending too much time on tasks that others complete quickly. Why can’t I just get on and do things?

A Remember. Perfection is a moving target. Being a perfectionist has a positive intention- however, when it’s taken to an extreme, it stresses you and everyone else around you.

Trying to get everything ‘just so’ can become habitual and like any habit, the more you feed it the stronger it gets. So it may be helpful to decide you are going to allow some things not to be quite perfect.

Think about this... One could create an orchestra where all the instruments were played by computer. Every note would be absolutely perfect, but it would have no soul. What actually brings the music to life are the tiny imperfections.

Q What has the biggest impact on wellbeing? What makes the biggest difference?

A Exercise, mostly walking, so no special equipment required. It works to alleviate so many health problems including stress. It reduces anxiety by 48%, depression by 47% and it is the number 1 treatment for fatigue.

See also tips on staying productive p153.

Q What is the single most important thing I can do to manage stress?

A Healthy thinking (HT) is the number 1. It is your thinking that brings you stress. The more you use HT the better you deal with stress.

Appendix: Tips for Staying Productive

Minimising distractions, improving concentration.
Build job satisfaction.

- 1. Work backwards from goals to milestones to tasks.** Writing “launch practice website” at the top of your to-do list is a sure way to make sure you never get it done. Break down the work into smaller and smaller chunks until you have specific tasks that can be accomplished in a few hours or less: Sketch a wireframe, outline an introduction for the homepage video, etc. That’s how you set goals and actually succeed in crossing them off your list.
- 2. Work on your own agenda.** Don’t let something else set your day. Most people go right to their emails and start freaking out. You will end up at inbox-zero, but accomplish nothing. After you wake up, drink water so you rehydrate, eat a good breakfast to replenish your glucose, then set prioritized goals for the rest of your day.
- 3. One task at a time.** Multi-tasking/switching from task to task quickly does not work. When you multitask, it drops by an average of 10 points, 15 for men, five for women (yes, men are three times as bad at multitasking than women).
- 4. Be disciplined about eliminating distractions.** Lock your door, put a sign up, turn off your phone, texts, email, and instant messaging. In fact, if you know you may sneak a peek at your email, set it to offline mode, or even turn off your Internet connection. Go to a quiet area and focus on completing one task.
- 5. Schedule your email.** Pick two or three times during the day when you’re going to use your email. Checking your email constantly throughout the day creates a ton of noise and kills your productivity. Remember the OHIO Rule, Only Handle It Once.

-
6. **Use the phone.** Email isn't meant for conversations. Don't reply more than twice to an email. Pick up the phone instead.
 7. **Work in 45-50 minute intervals.** Your brain uses up more glucose than any other bodily activity. Typically you will have spent most of it after 90 minutes. (That's why you feel so burned out after super long meetings.) So take a break: Get up, go for a walk, have a snack, do something completely different to recharge. And yes, that means you need an extra hour for breaks, not including lunch, so if you're required to get eight hours of work done each day, plan to be there for 9.5-10 hours.

BRAIN FADE – FIRST AID!

If you get a mental block ... don't fret, this is normal and use the Take 2 Rule.

Take 2 Rule

Take 2 minutes to get yourself calm, alert and effective

→ First

Take a break, sit back and take a slow deep breath. Activate mindfulness.

→ Second

Say to yourself "I can do this, I just need to focus my attention to all that I have learned"

"I will remain calm, relaxed and effective"

"I will open both sides of my brain to maximize my recall"

Use your pen and paper to draw a big figure of 8

Resume the task

Your Worksheets

CONTEXT



Your Worksheets

CONTEXT



About the Authors

Dr. Margaret O'Rourke

Consultant Forensic Clinical Psychologist / Director of Behavioural Science and Psychological Medicine, School of Medicine, University College Cork.

Dr. Margaret O'Rourke is a practicing clinical Psychologist, researcher and medical educator. She has worked on a number of high impact public safety, child protection, mental health and well-being programmes in the UK, USA and Canada.

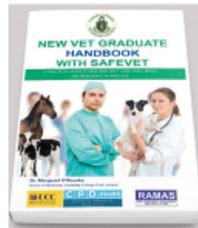
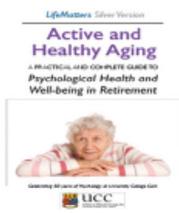
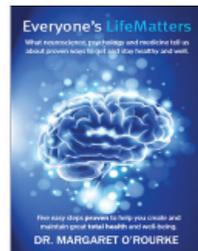
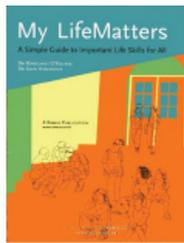
Over the past 25 years Margaret has helped hundreds of patients and clinicians successfully reduce stress, anxiety and increase healthy thinking, coping, well-being and resilience. Margaret is actively engaged in philanthropic service through the LifeMatters Academy worldwide. (www.lifemattersacademy.org).

Contributor

Catherine Hammond is a fifth year veterinary student of the University of Life Sciences in Warsaw, Poland. She began studying Equine Science at University College Dublin before transferring to Veterinary Medicine at WULS. She has taken interest in animal health and well-being and this extends to the importance of health and well-being in veterinary practitioners.

Catherine has worked for the Lifematters Academy and is trained in the SAFEVET SMART and SAFEMED programmes. She has contributed to the LIFEMATTERS programme for children and young adults and she is keen to apply these principles to the context of Veterinary Medicine.

LIFEMATTERS PROGRAMMES FOR ALL AGES AND STAGES OF LIFE



Useful contacts

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Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

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The LifeMatters Academy is a virtual institute that actively promotes health, well-being and resilience across the lifespan. We provide evidence based well-being and performance programs, that have been designed to help manage stress, prevent burnout and keep people well.

SAFEVET SMART

SAFEVET SMART is an evidence-based health and well-being programme that has been designed to help manage stress, prevent burnout and keep veterinary practitioners and veterinary nurses well.

SAFEVET SMART vets in training and in practice how to prevent burnout and build health, well-being and resilience for work and life.

Would you like to learn to manage stress well?

Would you like to thrive and progress well in practice?

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

Would you like to remain calm and alert under pressure?

Would you like to build resilience... your 'bounce back' factor?

Then SAFEVET's new, proven programme is for you!

The Framework, tools and tips in this book are a distillation of what the world's leading psychologists and doctors are saying will improve your health and well-being and what many of the world's successful business leaders say will increase your wellbeing and performance at home and at work.

SAFEVET's steps and skills are brought together in this clear, evidence-based powerful book that will help you harness more energy and less stress.

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