



Welcome to Zennistoun Hub's Mental Health Toolkit

Our Mental Health Toolkit is designed to describe ways in which you can manage your mental wellbeing.

It is important to note: just because you may wish to improve your mental wellbeing does not mean that you have a mental illness.

If you feel like you may require further support with your mental health, please contact your GP.

We aim to transform lives through complementary and alternative therapies and treatments. We believe everyone should have access to these, regardless of socio-economic barriers.

What is Mental Health?



Mental health refers to behavioural, cognitive, and emotional well-being. It is all about how an individual thinks, feels and behaves; therefore when we look to improve our mental health & wellbeing, we often focus on changing or adapting our thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Our mental health can be affected by stressors and events that may happen in our lives and it fluctuates over the course of our life. We will all go through patches in our life where we feel quite stressed or low and might need to change something to make ourselves feel content again.

1 in 3 Scots are
affected by poor
mental health each
year

Mental wellbeing, just like physical wellbeing, is something that we can all work to improve no matter what state our current wellbeing is in. We should tend to our mental wellbeing in the same way that we would tend to our physical wellbeing: regularly, with the best intentions, and in a way that suits us that we can enjoy.

Stress and Worry

We can experience stress for many reasons:



Biological factors such experience of chronic physical illness or injury



Psychological or social factors such as experiences of trauma or adversity in childhood



Struggles with income or poverty



Employment status or personal and family relationships

Imagine.....

Our capacity for stress is like a bucket.

We all have different sized buckets with a predetermined amount of stress that we can cope with. The size of our bucket is determined by genetics and our early life experiences. The stressors that we experience in our lives add water to our bucket and the water builds up gradually over time until it overflows. This can feel like a breaking point in our lives; where we may become angry, sad, or always on edge. We may develop difficulty sleeping or eating, and may find ourselves not enjoying things we once did or not taking time to relax.

Unfortunately, we cannot change the size of our stress bucket; but what we can do is implement helpful techniques and strategies to manage our stress in order to stop the water from overflowing and prevent a breaking point.

Can Stress Help?

Having some stress in our lives is essential. It is important to note that being under pressure or 'stressed' is a normal part of life. It can help you take action, feel more energised and get results. But sometimes these feelings could start to become a problem.

Stress is needed to keep us motivated and help us wake up in the morning; however too much can leave us feeling 'stressed out' and unpleasant.

We need to create a balance between the stress in our lives and the coping mechanisms that we have to deal with stress.

If the balance tips and we have too much stress but not enough coping mechanisms, we may become anxious or depressed.



Coping with Worry

Worry is a type of thought that can make us feel stressed or scared. Excessive or persistent worry which, when impacting on daily life, may contribute to the development of stress or anxiety

Coping Strategies

Question your Thought Pattern



Try writing down your thoughts in a diary or journal as this can help you to question them. Ask yourself - is there any other way to think about this situation?

Are your current thoughts fair and realistic? If someone else had this thought - what would you say to them?

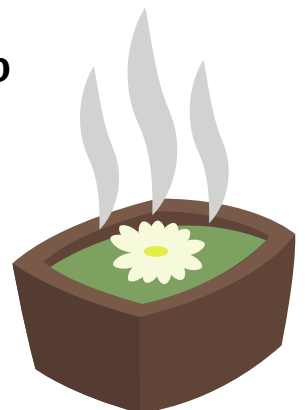
What is the evidence that this thought is true? What is the evidence that this thought is false? Remember that your thoughts are not facts.

Practice Focused, Deep Breathing

See page [...] for information on how to practice deep breathing.

Aromatherapy can also be useful. Scents like lavender, chamomile

and sandalwood can be very soothing and are thought to activate certain receptors in the brain, to ease worrying thoughts.



Create a 'Worry Time'



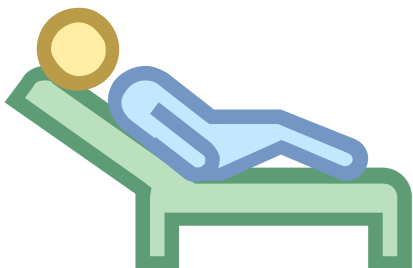
Create a set time of the day when you allow yourself to worry. Write down any worries that pop into your head during the day and save them for your worry time. Make this time in the evening, before you put the day to rest. If you allow yourself to worry too close to bedtime then this may impact your sleep. Once your worry time is over (30-45 mins), do something to distract yourself and relax.

Exercise

Walking or exercising helps to release our brain's happy chemicals (endorphins) which can help us manage our stress and feel make us feel happier.



Psychological Therapies



Working through your thoughts, feelings and behaviours with a mental health professional in regular sessions over a set of period of time may help coping with worry, anxiety, stress or low mood.

Now let's explore mindfulness...



Practicing Mindfulness

When we practice mindfulness, we're practicing the art of creating space for ourselves: space to think, space to breathe, space between ourselves and our reactions.

How to Practice Mindfulness



- 1 Take a seat. Find a place that seems quiet to you.
- 2 Set a time limit. If you're new to this, start off with 5 or 10 mins
- 3 Notice your body. Sit in a position that your comfortable with and ensure that you can stay in this position for a while.
- 4 Feel your breath. Follow the sensation of your breath as it goes out and as it goes in.
- 5 Notice when your mind has wandered. When you get around to noticing this, simply return your attention to the breath.
- 6 Be kind to your wandering mind. Don't judge yourself or obsess over the content of the thoughts you find yourself lost in. Just come back.

On Mondays we post massage and meditation videos on our social media - check out our YouTube channel to view our meditation videos.

Grounding Techniques

If we notice our worry becoming particularly upsetting, it can be helpful to draw our attention back to the present to what is within our control.

Try to notice:



Five things that you can see



Four things that you can hear



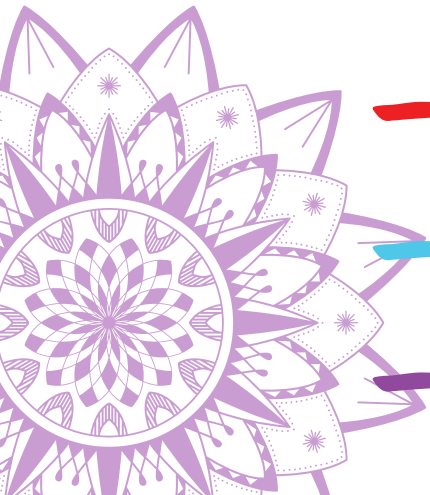
Three things that you can smell



Three things that you can feel



One thing you can taste



Take notice
of your
surroundings



Coping with Anxiety

When we worry or think threatening thoughts, our brain activates our ancient survival mechanism called the 'fight or flight' response. The 'fight or flight' response has been part of us since we were cavemen, and prepared our bodies for action so that we could fight a predator or take 'flight' and run away as fast as possible. When our fight or flight response is activated, our breathing gets faster and shallower, our heart rate increases, we may begin to feel warm and sweaty, nauseous, we might start to shake and notice tension in our muscles.

Controlled Breathing



Our physical symptoms can be controlled by slowing down our breathing, signalling to our body that we are not in danger.



Controlled breathing happens in our stomach, rather than in our chest, so it helps to place one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach while you are learning this skill.



It can be helpful if you imagine there is a balloon in your stomach. Try and inhale to the count of three. Every time you inhale the balloon inflates, and you should feel your stomach get pushed out even slightly.



When you exhale to the count of three, imagine the balloon deflating and you should feel your stomach fall. Practice this for around 5 minutes each day, or when you feel anxious to help control physical symptoms.

Loneliness



We all feel lonely from time to time, whether we live alone or with others. People feel lonely for all sorts of reasons and they are personal, so everyone's experience of loneliness will be different.

Describing Loneliness

The best way to describe the feeling of loneliness is when our need for rewarding social contact and relationships is not met.



However, loneliness is not always the same as being alone. People may choose to be alone and be content without much contact with other people, while other individuals may find this a lonely experience.



Or you may be very social and have a lot of social contact, or part of a family, or be in a relationship, and still feel lonely, especially if you don't feel cared for or understood by the people around you.

**More than
25% of UK
households
have just one
person**

**Loneliness can
increase the
risk of a stroke
or heart attack
by almost a
third**

What Causes Loneliness?

Loneliness has many different causes, which vary from each individual. Sometimes we don't understand exactly what makes us feel lonely.



Sometimes, certain life events can make us feel lonely, such as:



Starting at university



Changing jobs and feeling isolated from your co-workers



Moving to a new city or country without family, or friends.



Experiencing a bereavement



Going through a relationship breakup



Research also suggests that individuals who live in particular situations, or belong to certain groups, are more vulnerable to loneliness. For example:



Those with no family or friends



Single parents or cares for someone else - you may find it hard to maintain a social life



Those belonging to minority groups and live in an area without others from a similar background



Those experiencing discrimination and stigma because of a disability or long-term health problem, including poor mental health



Those experiencing discrimination and stigma because of your gender, race or sexual orientation



Those who have experienced sexual or physical abuse - this makes it a lot harder to form close relationships with other people

Tips to Manage Loneliness



Tip #1 Take it Slow

If you have experienced loneliness for a long time, it can be terrifying to think about opening up to people for the first time or trying to meet new people. But you don't need to rush into anything.



Go somewhere you can be around people, but not expected to talk to them such as a café, the cinema, or an event. Being around other people may be enough to help with your feelings of loneliness.



Go to a class where everyone is focused on an activity and where you are not expected to interact straight away.

Tip #2 Make New Connections

If you are feeling lonely because of a lack of social contact in your life, you could try to meet more, or different people.



Try to join a class or group based on your hobbies or interests, or take up a new hobby.



Volunteering is also a great way of meeting people. Helping others can also really help improve your mental health.



Tip #3 Try to Open Up

You might feel that you know a lot of people, but what you might find wrong is that you may not be close to them, or they don't give you the attention and care you need.



In this circumstance, it might help to open up about how you feel to friends and family.



If you don't feel comfortable opening to those that you know, it might be beneficial to speak with a therapist or using a peer support service.



Tip #4 Talking Therapies

Talking therapies allow you to understand and explore your feelings of loneliness which can help you to develop positive ways of dealing with them. For example, talking therapies can provide a safe space for you to discuss the emotional problems that make it difficult for you to form good relationships.



Coping with Redundancy and Job Hunting

We're living in unprecedented and hugely difficult times. Worrying about the virus is made worse by worrying about the economic effects of the pandemic. The state of our mental health is often dependent on our work and financial situations; and right now many people are facing redundancy, uncertainty and fear for their livelihoods having a negative impact on our mental wellbeing

JOB

Tips and things to remember to support our mental health if looking for work:



Rejection isn't personal. Neither is being ignored. As horrible as it is, sometimes you will never hear back from applications. Maybe send the organisation an email to get an update on your application, but try your best to be resilient.



Try to put yourself in the shoes of companies and recruiters – they're under pressure to process hundreds (maybe thousands) of applications as quickly as possible so this could be why people are treated so impersonally.



Get as much feedback as possible from applications and interviews. Constructive feedback will help with future applications and finding out what you're doing well will boost your confidence.



Remember to take time out from job hunting – set a specific time to do it and try not to overwork; make time for what you love.



If you find yourself checking your emails every five minutes, try setting specific times during the day to check.



If you find yourself in the house for much of the time, create a routine and give yourself structure in your day.



If you find yourself with more free time, take up a new hobby or volunteer for a worthwhile cause - keep yourself active to take your mind of your worries.



Speak to someone about how you're feeling. Don't let worries and negative thoughts build up.



Signposting to Online Help and Resources



Employability in Scotland – Glasgow:

<http://www.employabilityinscotland.com/partnership/local-employability-information/glasgow-city/>



Jobs and Business Glasgow: <http://www.jbg.org.uk/>



Glasgow Life – Work and Money:

https://libcat.csghlasgow.org/en_GB/web/arena/work-and-money_



Glasgow's Advice and Information Network:

<https://www.gain4u.org.uk/>



Skills Development Scotland – Employment and Redundancy Advice:

<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/coronavirus-covid-19/employment-and-redundancy-advice/>



Wellbeing Support:

<https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/wellbeing-support>



My World of Work – redundancy help in Scotland:

<https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/wellbeing-support>



<https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/employed>

Debt Advice – Signposting

Help is available if you are struggling with debt:



National Debtline: <https://www.nationaldebtline.org/>



Citizens Advice Scotland:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/debt-and-money/>



Step Change: <https://www.stepchange.org/how-we-help/debt-advice-scotland.aspx>



Money Saving Expert:

<https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/loans/debt-help-plan/#checklist>

Practicing Gratitude

Take time out of your day to reflect on the things you are thankful for. This helps you focus on more positive emotions and can help your mental and physical health.



Keep a gratitude journal. Start small and build up - this will help you feel calmer and increase your self-awareness as you reflect on the positive emotions and experiences in your day. Read your journal when you need a boost.



Remind a family member or friend how much they mean to you. This can make both of you happier and help you nurture strong relationships.



Include an act of kindness each day. This is a good way to share your gratitude and positivity with others, no matter how big or small your act of kindness is.



Notice the beauty in nature each day. While it is easy to get absorbed in daily worries, being open to the beauty in nature around you can help you feel grounded in the present moment and brighten your mood.



Muscle Relaxation



When we are stressed, and our body becomes tense as a result of the 'fight or flight' response becoming activated again and again. This tension can often lead to muscle soreness and increased back pain, neck soreness and even headaches. Practicing muscle relaxation techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation can help to release this tension, and help our minds relax in the process.



1

Tense your facial muscles - furrowing your brow, pouting your lips, squeezing your eyes tightly shut. Hold for a couple of seconds. Now release.

2

Tense your jaw tightly, and release.

3

Lift your shoulder towards your ears and hold for a couple of seconds. Then release.

4

Stretch your arms out directly in front of you. Feel the tension down your arms. Hold and release.

5

Tense your core, press your stomach muscles tightly in towards your back.

6

Press your legs tightly together and feel the tension on the outside of your legs. Hold for a couple of seconds and release.

7

Lift your toes and point them towards the ceiling. You should feel a stretch up the back of your calves. Feel the tension and then release.

8

Curl up your toes as tightly as you can. Hold for a few seconds and notice the tension disappear while you release.

Self-Care



Self-care is all about improving ourselves, having more energy and being more satisfied with the events happening around us.

Practicing self-care isn't always easy as most of us are really busy, have stressful jobs, or are too consumed with technology to make time for ourselves. However, self-care is really important and here are some ways to get started with yourself:

ZHub's Self-Care Tips

Tip #1 Eat Well

The food we eat has the potential to keep us fit and healthy; or contribute to weight gain and diseases such as heart disease and diabetes.

Eating the right food can also keep our minds alert and working, as well as preventing inflammation and short-term memory loss. Examples of self-care foods include fatty fish, nuts, blueberries, broccoli and green leafy veggies such as spinach



Tip #2 Sleep

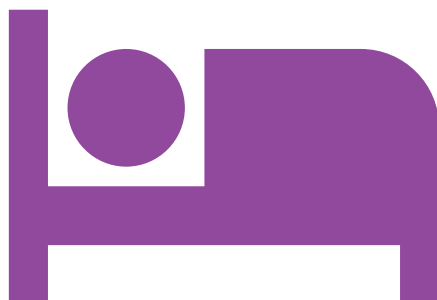


Sleep can have a huge effect on how you feel both emotionally and physically, and is incredibly important.

Getting the right amount of sleep promotes mental wellness; poor sleep habits can lead to negative thinking, irritability, and even mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety.

"Poor sleep habits can lead to negative thinking, irritability, and even mental health problems"

Sleep also maximises exercise performance as it allows your muscles that have broken down during a workout to build back up - remember, recovery is just as important as exertion.



Tip #3 Exercise



We all know exercise is good for us, but do we really know how good it is?



Consistent exercise is linked to increased productivity and mental focus as it allows you to be more present with your partner, children, and with yourself.



It can help improve your mood, give you energy, and even extend your life span.



Promotes better sleep.



Exercise increases cardiovascular activity, burns extra calories, but most importantly, it releases endorphins in the brain, which have a role in reducing stress and managing depression, as well as decreases the stress hormones in the body, like cortisol.



Self-Care Activities

Gratitude Journal

Include three things you were grateful for and 3 things you were able to accomplish each day.

Experiment

Try a new recipe, write a poem, take up painting. Creative expression and overall well-being are linked.

Spend time with family and friends

Go to a park, have a cookout, or play a game.

Walk in nature

Such as the park, or a hike as being in nature can increase energy levels, reduce depression and boost well-being.

Take care of your body

Eat nutritious meals, avoid smoking, exercise, drink plenty of water, get enough sleep.

Value yourself

Make time for the things you love. Treat yourself with kindness and respect, and avoid self-criticism.

Notes and ideas



About Zennistoun Hub C.I.C

Can you envision a community where everyone can access alternative and complementary therapies, regardless of socio-economic barriers and challenges?

Based in Dennistoun in Glasgow's East End, we are a non-profit Community Interest Company, meaning all of our profits go straight back into the local community via accessible health and wellbeing services. Glasgow's PAY IT FORWARD Community Health Hub.



Visit us at www.zennistounhub.org
or connect with us on social media:



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