



WELL BEINGS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO GOOD
MENTAL HEALTH FOR STUDENTS

PROVIDED BY:



(space to
breathe)

■ INTRODUCTION

Well-Beings is the result of a partnership between Space to Breathe and the Student Christian Movement. In 2018 we took time to chat to students about their concerns about mental health and the results were clear.

Nearly all respondents were either facing mental health challenges themselves or were helping others who were struggling. Many noted that whilst help was available, it often took time to access that help – not to mention the tough and vulnerable choice in asking for help.

This research confirmed what other organisations have been finding.

One in four students face mental health challenges whilst at University according to YouGov (2019.)

Stress, anxiety and depression are most common but other conditions are also on the rise.

These stats also connect with the general pattern in UK life where nurses, teachers, charity workers, businesses, schools and the Police are just some of the places/organisations to report rises in reported mental health challenges.

So what can we do?

As we chatted, we realised our goal is not simply to address these concerning statistics but also to support people to thrive – that wellbeing becomes a conversation about genuinely “being well.” We all have mental health. We believe everyone should have

the opportunity to have good and thriving mental health as well as the support they need when their mental health feels more fragile.

We want students in our Universities to thrive – to become themselves more and more each day. We want students to be empowered to grow in themselves and to live life to the full.

Space to Breathe define wellbeing as **“living well, living fully and living deeply.”**

This resource aims to help make that possible. The thirteenth century poet Rumi said that:

“Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.”

(Rumi “Selected Poems”, Penguin 2015)

That wisdom is wonderful, that rather than striving for wellbeing and the fullness of life, we can instead take time to remove the things that occur instinctively in us but that get in the way of living well.

Jesus Christ put it another way, saying that the goal of his teachings was to enable people to live to “the full.”

(John's Gospel 10:10, NIV version.)

[PAUSE]

How are you doing today?

How about your friends and
those around you on your course?

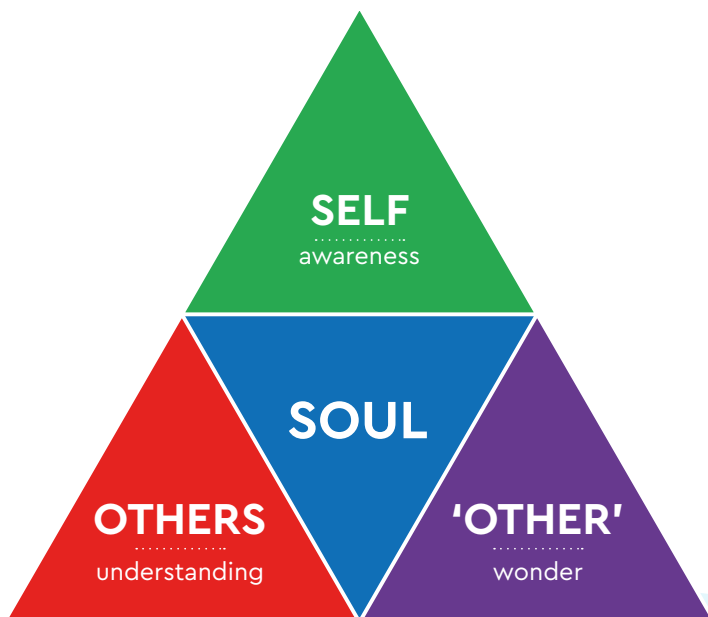
What might happen if we could
live a little more fully today?



■ A WELLBEING TRIANGLE

Many of the ideas and resources in this little booklet rely on what we call our **Wellbeing Triangle**.

At Space to Breathe we use non-religious spirituality to help people increase their wellbeing. Our wellbeing triangle is designed to give us a framework for understanding how we can live well, fully and deeply. It is an approach based in simple non-religious spirituality and is aimed at people of all beliefs and worldviews.



The Wellbeing Triangle

Triangles are geometrically balanced shapes that stand securely whichever way up they are. If one piece of the triangle was to be

removed, the shape would become unbalanced and fall. This is true of our triangle – it requires all three parts to be present for the sake of balance and stability.

All parts of the triangle are connected. There is a relationship between them.

At the centre of our triangle is the **soul**. The Oxford English Dictionary defines the soul as 'a person's moral or emotional nature or sense of identity'. The soul is the non-material self, the bit that cannot be seen or quantified. In many religious traditions, it is thought to be the heart of a person; the seat of emotions and where personality originates from. Just like the body needs proactive care to thrive, the soul also needs care and attention if we are to live well, fully and deeply.

We believe that the soul is nurtured through **connection**; connection with self, others and 'Other', which some people might call the Divine, God or may perceive as a sense of wonder or awe.

■ CONNECTION WITH OTHERS

We all have an innate need for this connection. Bowlby's work on early attachment in the 1970's has helped us to understand the profound impact that connection can have on the development of the brain. Connection makes the brain synapses grow! (We used John Bowlby & Attachment Theory by J.Holmes 1993.)

More recently, psychologists have understood more about the impact positive connections can have on those struggling with addiction and even suggested that addiction be addressed by increasing people's opportunities for connection.

Connecting well, fully and deeply with self will involve ideas such as vulnerability, kindness and understanding.

Essentially we want to say that we need each other to be fully ourselves.

■ CONNECTION WITH SELF

We can only reveal to others what we know about ourselves and so connection with others is only possible when we have an awareness of self. This involves both having a sense of what makes 'me, me' (Identity) and emotional intelligence.

Daniel Goleman's work on emotional literacy has shown that emotional intelligence (EQ) is a far better predictor of success than IQ. The ability to understand and manage our emotions is a vital part of our wellbeing.

Connecting well, fully and deeply with self will involve knowing your own strengths and weaknesses, being aware of your values (what makes you tick) and growing your own sense of sense awareness to perceive all these things.

To be 'well' we will know ourselves a little more and be a little more comfortable in our own skin.

■ CONNECTION WITH 'OTHER'

If our connection with self is about realising our significance and growing our sense of esteem and value, connection with 'Other' might be about realising our insignificance in the context of the universe. Our wellbeing is supported by a healthy balance of the two.

'Other' can be described in a variety of ways. For people of faith 'Other' is often referred to as 'God', although it can also be about simply taking time to locate ourselves within something bigger than ourselves such as the world or universe.

Connecting well, fully and deeply with 'Other' will involve things such as wonder at the things around us and gratitude for the life we have.

We'd like to suggest that in some way, we all need something outside of ourselves to be ourselves. Our engagement with 'other' is a crucial axis of the triangle.

In this resource, we will lean heavily our learning from using the triangle. We hope connect in one area will help connection with the other two. We hope this will give something of a framework or understanding of yourself and what living well might mean.

[PAUSE]

We believe that the
soul is nurtured through
CONNECTION;

Connection with SELF,
OTHERS and 'OTHER'

■ SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

We are always aware in our work that sometimes more help is needed and that self-care isn't always the totality of what we need. If these exercises raise any concerns for you about your own health or that you know you're already struggling we'd suggest you take some simple but important steps to get further help.

This resource aims to provide simple and engaging self-care resources for students. We are aware though these resources are just part of the picture. If you feel you're struggling with your mental health or are worried about a friend facing challenges, then we recommend you access help immediately. Here's a few ways you can get support.

■ BEING SELF-AWARE

Mental Health is a complex and at times confusing subject. It's hard to give a definitive list of what to look for and different conditions have many and varying symptoms. But often you will become aware of yourself and any concerns first – you may not know what it is you're worrying about but it's always good to talk and seek help. Particularly you might have noticed one or any of the following:

- That you're feeling listless and lethargic.
- That you're struggling to concentrate.
- That you are worrying about a lot of things and these worries feel overwhelming.
- That you're struggling to sleep.

- That you're experiencing extreme highs and lows of emotions.
- That you're wanting to withdraw a lot more than usual.
- That things like alcohol are becoming a way of keeping yourself going.
- That you are experiencing thoughts that feel alien or self-destructive to you.
- That you're experiencing unusual physical symptoms like stomach cramps, back pain.

This list isn't exhaustive and many of the above could have other causes but if you're concerned at all seek help.

■ REACH OUT

The vulnerability to ask for help is always the hardest step. Mental Health feels like something filled with stigma and everyone worries about what will happen if you speak out about any concerns. The good news is that people are usually kind and professional help nearly always makes a difference. There's nothing in this area which is insurmountable and all mental health conditions benefit from early diagnosis. Start by talking to someone, it'll help.

■ CONTACT YOUR UNIVERSITY MENTAL HEALTH AND COUNSELLING SERVICE

All UK universities have improved these services greatly over the last few years. Your University website or course handbook should have details. It's likely there may be a waiting list but the University should be able to offer you some initial support

(probably through a counsellor) and be a good step towards more focused care.

■ TALK TO YOUR PERSONAL TUTOR

Mental Health challenges are real and practical and things like essay deadlines and work concerns will often be central. Your Personal Tutor is a good person to chat to, they'll be supportive and make sure you're getting help.

■ TALK TO YOUR GP

Your doctor is a good place to chat. They'll be able to talk to you about concerns honestly and provide help where they can. Again, many of us fear this step but invariably it helps and often provides the stability to move forward. If you're not registered at a surgery, you can find a Walk-In where someone can help you.

■ CONTACT YOUR STUDENT UNION

Your University Student Union should have a Student Advice Centre which should be able to provide you with options and support in a safe and confidential setting.

■ GAIN FURTHER HELP

There are lots and lots of organisations which can provide you with specialist assistance and support. We've tried to list a few here:

► MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

Provides information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities.

Web: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

► MIND

Campaigns on behalf and supports people with mental health problems.

Phone: **0300 123 3393**

Web: www.mind.org.uk

► STUDENT MIND

Charity focused on student mental health and wellbeing.

Web: www.studentminds.org.uk

► SAMARITANS

Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: **116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)**

Web: www.samaritans.org.uk

► ANXIETY UK

Charity who support people diagnosed with an anxiety condition.

Phone: **03444 775 774**

Web: **www.anxietyuk.org.uk**

► OCD UK

Specific help and advice around OCD with support groups and discussion forums.

Phone: **03332 127890**

Web: **www.ocduk.org**

► STONEWALL

Helpful advice, support and advocacy for the LGBTQ community and has great resources and support around mental health

Web: **www.stonewall.org.uk**

► BIPOLAR UK

Helpful website with resources, information and avenues for help.

Phone: **0333 323 3880**

Web: **www.bipolaruk.org**

► CRUSE BEREAVEMENT CARE

Providing care and support during times of bereavement.

Phone: **0844 477 9400 (Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm)**

Web: **www.cruse.org.uk**

► BEAT

Supporting those struggling with eating disorders.

Phone: **0808 801 0677 (adults) or 0808 801 0711 (for under-18s)**

Web: **www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk**

► RELATE

The UK's largest provider of relationship support.

Web: **www.relate.org.uk**

■ BE SAFE

Please do keep yourself safe. You are wonderfully valuable and we think you're amazing. When considering what to do and how you feel always make sure you're safe and you're making choices which prioritise your own health.

If you'd like any help at all, you can contact us and our team will reply as quickly as we can. Use info@spacetobreathe.eu and we'll get in touch as quickly as well. Our team aren't Doctors or Counsellors so it may be that we need to connect you with

someone we know and trust who can help you, but we'd be happy to hear your story and offer what help we can.

■ LOOKING AFTER A FRIEND

In our 2018 research, 74% of you said you'd helped or were helping a friend with mental health challenges.

We'd like to say thank you. Without people like you, life would be much harder.

Much of what we've already written here should be helpful as you help others, but we'd like to add this three-step approach for helping a friend.

1. DO THE ATTICUS TEST

Atticus, the brilliant and kind lawyer from the classic novel 'To Kill a Mockingbird' famously challenged his kids to a radical way of looking at others.

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb in his skin and walk around in it."

(Atticus Finch in 'To Kill a Mockingbird' by Harper Lee)

As you care for others take time to see life from their perspective. We may not understand everything but this little Atticus Test will help.

2. KEEP YOURSELF SAFE AND HEALTHY

In caring for others its possible you can lose yourself and your health. Protect yourself always with good boundaries, by getting good support and by being kind to yourself. It makes sense to make sure you're well enough to help your friend for the long-term. To do that you need to make sure you stay healthy.

3. ALWAYS SEEK EXTRA HELP

It can be tough to see a friend suffering with poor mental health. Sometimes things happen that we don't understand. In these cases, always feel like you can lean on other support. Ring helplines, read books, check-in with wise friends, talk to those who know more than you. All this will make your job of being a friend much easier.

■ THIS RESOURCE

This resource will use the Wellbeing Triangle as a framework to explore four areas of growing good mental health.

We'll look at:

- **Finding Help**
- **Facing Anxiety**
- **Building Resilience**
- **Finding Hope**

These sections don't necessarily need to be followed one after the other. Feel free to be drawn to the one that feels most relevant now.

In each section, we'll

- explore the idea
- tell a story and then
- give you tasks, ideas and activities which are simple, practical and helpful.

They'll focus on the **three elements of the triangle** – **self**, **others** and **'the other.'** We'll then give you some ideas to try out over time – something which connects with the soul, some simple wisdom, a minute mantra and then some follow up. We hope you find them helpful.

Then in our last section we ask a few questions to help you plan for the future.

We hope this resource is helpful to you.

Do let us know what you think – connect with us on social media and have a chat.

Cheers for reading.

SPACE TO BREATHE



spacetobreathe.eu



[@space2breathe](https://twitter.com/space2breathe)



[@spacetobreathecic](https://www.instagram.com/spacetobreathecic)



[Space2breathe-290405687744403/](https://www.facebook.com/Space2breathe-290405687744403/)

STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT



movement.org.uk



[@SCM_Britain](https://twitter.com/SCM_Britain)



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student
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(space to
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FINDING HELP

FINDING HELP

"We cultivate love when we allow our most vulnerable and powerful tools to be deeply seen and known, and when we honour the spiritual connection that grows from that offering with trust, respect, kindness and affection."

(Brene Brown, 'The Power of Vulnerability')

The hardest thing is to ask for help when you're struggling.

If you're in that place now, you'll know how true that is. The vulnerability of sharing your own pain and struggle, the fear of what others think, the sense of letting people into something you can hardly make sense of yourself – this is a difficult thing to do.

Maybe you're in a place where you're doing fine and your mental health is good. That's great. Even here though asking for the day to day support from others can be hard. Think of all the ways you've needed help today; asking directions maybe or asking for help with a task. These things can be tricky. Giving yourself to someone else and asking for help can be hard and feels risky.

But throughout our history of being human, asking for help has been one of the most important things people can do.

Spend a moment remembering a time when someone asked you for help. How did it feel to be on the receiving end of such a request? Probably you were only too willing to help. Probably this ask for help deepened your friendship. Probably that vulnerable request to you increased trust, developed a bond and was deeply touching.

Poet Maya Angelou put it this way:

“When we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed.”

(I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings – Maya Angelou)

Amazingly, that moment of being vulnerable does something incredible. It creates new and deeper bonds between you and another person.

As human beings, we need each other. We are more than just ourselves and we even find ourselves in other people. African culture calls this ‘Ubuntu’ – ‘I am because you are.’

This fast-paced world so often emphasises me in isolation – what do I want, what are my needs. These things are important, but when you’re struggling and you ask for help you find the beautiful element of human community – and it makes a difference.

If you want to ask a friend for help why not:

- Think about what it is you’re struggling with and how you’ll explain it
- Think about who you want to ask and why
- Think about what you want to happen when you ask them
- Think about how you’d feel if it was them asking you (this will help)
- Then ask them

And if you're a friend worried about someone else think about how you can help them to feel confident to ask you for help. How can you be best the friend you can be at this time?

Sometimes you'll find it hard if not impossible to say something. Don't worry. The time will present itself.

In those moments make sure you're not withdrawing or isolating yourself from others. If you've not been able to ask for help yet its ok – even then people can still support you.

Stay connected.

REFLECTION

Imagine a Sea Captain and her crew navigating their boat through a storm. Not many of us will have experienced that sort of stress but in your imagination think about all the emotions that must be present as you try to sail through strong winds and turbulent seas.

Your aim is the harbour. If you can get to safe moorings in the protection of a harbour, you'll be safe. Here you can find care and rest. Here your boat can be protected, meaning that you'll be able to travel another day. Here you can find a dry place to sleep and eat.

If you've ever been out in a storm, think about how it feels to get to shelter and the comforting feeling of being somewhere warm when rain is beating on a window.

[PAUSE]

Ask yourself:

Where is your harbour, your safe place?

Who is there?

Why is that place safe for you?

How might that place of safety be a support?



■ FINDING WELLBEING

■ SELF : EXAMEN

Sixteenth Century Mystic and Teacher Ignatius of Loyola created several spiritual exercises which are still practised today. The most famous is one called the 'Examen' and we've adapted this into a short exercise which we help you'll find helpful. Why not try it...

Start by reflecting on your day and all that's gone on in it. Allow your day to be illuminated with light. What do you see?

Reflect on all the parts of your day. See scenes like a movie or remember incidents that have made your day up.

Begin to allow the emotions involved in these incidents to come to the surface. What did you feel? Ignatius felt emotions were very telling in understanding ourselves.

As you reflect try to narrow down to one incident or moment which you feel has significance. Reflect on it.

As you reflect what can you learn from this incident and what might it say to you tomorrow?

We recommend you try the Examen for a few days in a row and see what happens. It can be a very useful tool to understand yourself and understand how you relate to others.

OTHERS : WHO HELPS

Find some space and ponder who it is that helps you? This could be friends or family or maybe its people who help you for a job – a taxi driver, a health professional, the person who made you your takeaway coffee. Be thankful for each person.

Who might you be able to express your thanks to?

■ THE OTHER : OUTSIDE OF OURSELVES

Many great religious figures and wisdom-teachers have spoken about community. This speaks to the way these faiths encourage kindness to others but also speak to the idea of 'the other' – whether we call that God, spirituality or something else entirely.

Think about all the things that sustain you outside of yourself.

- Maybe you come alive in nature or when you're with animals or in a garden.
- Maybe you find spirituality a source of comfort and strength.
- Maybe you find a trip to a gallery or hearing music lifts you.
- Maybe you find silence a comfort or maybe great conversation.
- Maybe its playing sport that lifts you.

How can you make more space for these things in your life?

Recognise their significance and what they give to you.

■ TOOLS FOR WELLBEING

MOMENT FOR THE SOUL : SPIDERS WEB

Get hold of a ball of string. Weave the string in and out of a frame – you can use an upside-down table, a tree, wind it around some Tupperware or anything that gives the string some shape. Make a criss-cross pattern that looks a bit like a spider's web.

Use the web to peg pictures, paper or anything else which represents your friendships – the people who support you.

We all live in webs of inter-connected relationships. Take time to consider the people who hold you up and give you support.

SIMPLE WISDOM : ALONE

Writer Brene Brown said:

“One of the greatest barriers to connection is the cultural importance we place on “going it alone.” Somehow we've come to equate success with not needing anyone”

(Brene Brown from 'The Gifts of Imperfection')

It can be hard to ask for help if we feel its somehow not the thing to be done.

Ponder the quote.

Does this apply to you? How might you act differently?

MINUTE MANTRA

Take a postcard, a post-it or piece of paper and write on it:

"It's ok to ask for help"

Put it on your bathroom mirror, with your books or by your bedside.

Allow this phrase to encourage you to share with others and to ask for help when you need it.

■ FOLLOW UP

One of the ways you may wish to ask for help is through a counselling or support service. Your University will have a Mental Health or Counselling Service. These services are friendly and safe and often made available for a period of six sessions to get you started in addressing a mental health challenge.

Information should be in your Handbook or on the University website but contact your Personal Tutor if not, they'll be happy to help.

[PAUSE]



It's OK to ask for help.



FACING ANXIETY

■ FACING ANXIETY

Anxiety is a very normal human response. We can become anxious when we're conscious of stress or danger – our body responds to this in a basic way to protect ourselves, something referred to as 'flight or fight.' This reaction involves adrenalin being quickly pumped through the body, sharpening the senses and getting us ready to respond.

However, anxiety can become a problem when the response isn't proportionate to the danger or challenge in front of us. We can find ourselves worrying about things that wouldn't normally concern us.

- "Have I switched the lights off?"
- "Did I pay that bill correctly?"
- "Have I offended someone?"
- "What really happened last night?"

If you struggle with anxiety you're not alone.

Approximately 13% of the UK population will develop some sort of anxiety problem during their life.

You might find your worries come with physical symptoms like nausea or sweating, or affect you emotionally – again that's very normal.

There are lots of brilliant ways available to help us address anxiety. These can range from professional and medical help

to attending meditation classes or taking up a new hobby or pastime.

Here and for you, try and allow yourself to become aware.

Savour life, slow down. Be observant of yourself and what's around you.

What's on your mind? What's concerning you?

Often we spend time worrying about things that never happen and about things we can't affect that much.

Corrie Ten Boom was a Dutch watchmaker who with her family helped many Jewish people escape the Holocaust by hiding them in their home. The tension, worry and sheer pressure of the situation is evident in her books like *Clippings from my Notebook*.

She wrote:

"Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength."

(Corrie Ten Boom, from 'Clippings from my Notebook')

Think about that.

What is it that worry is going to achieve today? How is worry affecting your physical, mental and emotional strength?

We hope these reflections, ideas and resources will lift the burden and ease the stress.

Allow yourself to be lifted.

REFLECTION

This poem is called "Anxious Earworm":

*Anxious earworm.
You wriggle in my soul.
This worry sits with me,
Discussing its needs over coffee.
When did you appear?
Why did you come?
Our first meeting eludes me
But you're present now.*

*Anxious earworm.
You're troubling me about tomorrow.
You speak sharply:
Pained words without peace.
What if this ...
What if that.
You're itching my mind
Persistent and without salve.*

*Anxious earworm.
I'm asking you to leave.
You bring me news of stress
Yet I choose to live.
I ponder the worst and find
The best is yet to come.
I'm sure you won't leave
But they'll be no cake for you.*

Poem by Andy Freeman 2019

■ FINDING WELLBEING

■ SELF: BODY SCAN

Sit comfortably and relax.

This exercise is called a Body Scan. We often hold anxiety and stress physically – in our back or shoulders maybe or in our stomach.

In a body scan the idea is to allow yourself to become aware of your body systematically. First become aware of your head – how does it feel? Is there any pain or tension? Become aware of that and try to relax if you can. Then move to shoulders, back, pelvis, legs, feet etc. Each time you become aware of tension, pain, tightness or stress just gently relax yourself and allow it to ease a little.

The scan won't solve everything but is a simple way to become still and relax.

■ OTHERS: SHARE & RECEIVE

Intentionally share a worry with someone else. You can do this in any way that fits for you – face to face, in a text or online. The idea is to be intentionally vulnerable with someone and to share something that is troubling you. Once you've done that offer to do the same for them.

■ THE OTHER: LIGHT

Throughout history people have lit candles as a simple reflection to bring light and peace into stress or darkness. In Cathedrals, at

Protests, at Home – people light candles and there's something magical about them as their flame flickers and dances.

Take some time to light a candle today. Let it symbolise light in whatever darkness you're facing or something you're anxious about. Look at the flame intentionally for a while. Allow it to be an act of peace.

■ TOOLS FOR WELLBEING

MOMENT FOR THE SOUL : WORRY BOAT

Take a sheet of paper and on it write everything you're worried or concerned about. Then make a paper boat out of the paper and find somewhere to sail it (making sure you can retrieve and recycle your paper once you're done.)

Our worries feel heavy and can drain our strength but sometimes they're lighter than you'd imagine. There can be hope.

Watch your worry boat float on the water and consider how you might lighten your load.

SIMPLE WISDOM

Take these three questions and use them as some simple wisdom when you're concerned and anxious. Think about the anxiety you're facing and ask yourself:

1. **What's the worst that can happen here?**
2. **What is in my power to change and what isn't?**
3. **What's the next step I need to take?**

If this helps, use it as a simple process to help face anxieties.

MINUTE MANTRA

Take the phrase "I am ..." and then conclude it with positive words or phrases which you'd like to choose. Make sure they remain positive.

For example, you could say

"I am loved," "I am at peace" or "I am hopeful."

Each time, repeat the phrase three times slowly and let the words calm you and give you strength.

FOLLOW UP

Anxiety can be a debilitating and difficult thing to face but when you come up against anxiety challenges remember they're overcomable. Sometimes this will be through simple exercises like the ones above, sometimes through professional or medical help and sometimes a combination of the two.

If you're worried at all about anxiety and its effect, contact your GP for some advice.

We also recommend:

- Student Mind (www.studentminds.org.uk)
- Anxiety UK (www.anxietyuk.org.uk)

who have some excellent resources.

[PAUSE]

I am loved.
I am at peace.
I am hopeful.





BUILDING RESILIENCE

BUILDING RESILIENCE

"The human capacity for burden is like bamboo – far more flexible than you'd ever believe at first glance."

(Jodi Picoult from My Sister's Keeper)

Resilience is our ability to adapt or bounce back when life is difficult. This isn't a personality trait or an aspect of character but something that we can all develop.

Susan Kobasa suggests there are three keys to building resilience:

Challenges, Commitment, Personal Control

(Susan Kobasa 'Personality & Resistance to Illness 1979')

How can we see difficulties as **challenges**? This can be hard, but sometimes these tough times can grow us and help us develop.

How can we learn the **commitment** to be fully involved in the world around us? Everything we experience, even the difficulties, can widen our experience of life and enable us to learn new skills and taste new experiences.

How can we learn the **personal control** that encourages us to feel we can shape and develop events around us rather than feeling we are swept along by them?

These are tough approaches and when life is hard this kind of mantra can be very difficult to follow but at its heart, this is an approach of positivity. Can I remain positive even when circumstances are tricky?

It was Gandhi who said

“Man often becomes what he believes himself to be.”

(Gandhi)

Positivity can be an investment in you. It can be the belief that you're enough and that you're more than alright.

Belief in yourself just a little more today.

REFLECTION

Across the world, the art of creating a dry-stone wall is a unique way of construction. A dry-stone or dry-stack wall is made by stacking stones without using mortar to hold them together. Dry-stone walls are strong, look beautiful and can last hundreds of years. The key to a dry-stone wall is stack stones in a way where together they hold the strength of the wall. This design is incredibly resilient.

Reflect on these walls. If there's any near you, go and take a look.

What is it that makes you strong?

Sometimes we worry that we haven't got the latest thing or the typical antidote to what we're facing in life. These walls don't use mortar but still stay together and are strong. Sometimes, what we think we need isn't it at all.

What makes you strong?

All that we experience in life, rather than being a pressure or setback can sometimes be the experiences that strengthen us and build resilience.

■ FINDING WELLBEING

■ SELF : POSITIVE OPPOSITE

Think about what pressures you're facing or things that are causing you stress and anxiety. What are the opposites of those things?

The idea of this approach is to find a 'positive opposite'. What emotion, force or approach can come as a positive against the negative thing you're facing? Maybe where you feel lost think of hope, where things feel dark think of sunlight, when you feel tired think of sleep or exercise.

Reflect on this and then focus in on one issue you're facing and one positive opposite to this. How can you bring more of the positive into your life to balance out the negative you're feeling?

Write a simple plan with three steps to achieve this. For example:

- 1) I am feeling **anxious**.
- 2) The positive opposite is **peace**.
- 3) I will bring more peace into my life by:
 - Taking more time to be still and meditate.
 - Getting out into nature.
 - Sharing my worries with a friend.

■ OTHERS : KNOTTED CORD

Take a piece of string and tie five knots into it.

Then think about five things in your life where you'd like to see change.

Spend five minutes each day for a week holding this piece of string and take time to hold each knot. As you do so visualise these five situations changing for the better.

If any new approaches or ideas strike you then note them down and try them.

■ THE OTHER : SILENCE

Silence can be a great tool for reducing stress and building resilience.

A 2004 study by Dr Craig Zimmering showed that noise elevated the blood pressure and rate of neo-natal children. Silence did the opposite. Similarly, a 2006 study in the Journal 'Heart' showed the relaxing and de-stressing qualities of silence.

Take five minutes to be still and silent.

If you find this a helpful thing, repeat it each day and see what happens.

■ TOOLS FOR WELLBEING

MOMENT FOR THE SOUL : STONE

Building resilience takes time.

Pick up a stone, wash it and hold it in your hand.

These small pieces of rock may have faced all kinds of weather and conditions. They usually smooth over time as they face the elements.

Hold this stone in your hand as a reminder that becoming resilient is a life-long task. Be kind and patient with yourself and ponder that each day you're becoming a little more resilient and growing more into the person you are.

If you find the reflection helpful, keep the stone with you.

SIMPLE WISDOM

Martin Luther King once noted that

"Only when it is dark enough can you see the stars"

(from his 'Been to the Mountaintop' Speech 1968)

Even in dark places, hope can be just around the corner.

MINUTE MANTRA

Each time a worry or anxiety comes up today use the phrase “I am strong” to counter it. You can say this out-loud or in your head.

You may not feel strong, but you are, even in your weakness. You can do this.

FOLLOW UP

One of the keys to resilience which is often overlooked is looking after our physical wellbeing. To do this you may need to make some lifestyle challenges. Have a think about these three areas:

- **Sleep.** Am I sleeping well? Experts suggest we should get 7-8 hours sleep a night. Things like coffee and alcohol can affect the way we sleep. What can you do to prioritise sleep?
- **Diet.** Am I eating well? Is my diet healthy? Am I eating regular meals and getting the right nutrients that I need?
- **Exercise.** Am I looking after my body well through exercise or being healthy? What can I do to improve this?



FINDING HOPE

■ FINDING HOPE

Classic author GK Chesterton wrote a lot about fairy tales (*Orthodoxy, GK Chesterton*). He believed they were crucial in teaching children – not just to imagine the impossible but that things can be overcome.

Hope is a subject which can be found in most walks of life. Religious and spiritual stories are founded on it. Politicians try to engender it. Sports fans take it with them to every game. Parents lean on it as they look for their children to grow and succeed.

Hope can be incredibly beneficial when it comes to our mental health.

Hope takes us outside ourselves into what is possible. It is powerful.

The apostle Paul urged people in his letters to “know hope” (*Ephesians 1:17-19*.) Hope was a presence and a gift that wasn’t just to be dreamed of but that was tangible and within sight. Hope could be a mentality, a way of being positive.

This section will include some reflections, tools and ideas on the theme of hope.

REFLECTION

Use this simple poem to reflect on hope and the releasing and reviving power that it has.

*Hope grows,
Feeling shows,
Little steps,
Believing grows.
All the "no's"
Oh, God knows!
Smashed the light
That hope bestows.*

*Hope knows
Fears froze,
Brighter clothes,
Future knows,
Hope I chose
When worries flow
This I know
Hope grows.*

Andy Freeman 2019

■ FINDING WELLBEING

■ SELF : BREATHING IN

■ OTHERS: BREATHING OUT

Spend some time reflecting on your breathing. Get used to the rhythmical nature of deep breaths, the in and out. As you breathe in reflect on what it is that you need today, what things will grow your own hope and wellbeing. As you breathe out reflect on how you can bring hope and wellness to others.

How can you achieve this simple balance today?

■ THE OTHER : SEEDS

Get hold of a packet of seeds and plant them.

As you plant the seeds think about what things you'd like to grow in your life.

The amazing thing about nature is that it is outside of ourselves. We can water seeds, plant them well in good soil and tend them. We can even speak to them.

But they grow because of systems and principles that exist within the fabric of our world. It is a wonder.

As your seeds grow into plants remember to reflect on a world which is bigger than yourself.

■ TOOLS FOR WELLBEING

MOMENT FOR THE SOUL : HOPE TREE

Find a bush or tree and get a set of luggage tags with strings.

Write hopes you have for the future on the tags and then hang them on the branches of the tree.

When you've finished consider what things will enable your hopes to grow and develop.

SIMPLE WISDOM: HOPE FOR THE BEST

Sometimes a positive attitude can make all the difference.

Hope for the best in what you're doing today.

MINUTE MANTRA

Spend a week using the following phrase three times a day, in the morning, at midday and at night.

Each time say "I am hopeful."

As you do so, allow the phrase to grow hope in you.

FOLLOW UP

Anne Frank wrote the following in *Diary of a Young Girl*, the story of her time in hiding from the Nazi regime.

"It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because despite everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart."

(Anne Frank, 'Diary of a Young Girl')

It's hard to grow hope alone but in the lives and support of others we have the chance to genuinely find friends who bring us hope. Why not give a friend a call today?

[PAUSE]

A hand holding a lit sparkler over water at dusk. The background is a deep blue sky with scattered light spots, and the water below shows ripples and a reflection of the sparkler's light.

Hope takes us outside ourselves into what is possible.



CREATING A PLAN

■ CREATING A PLAN

In this last section, we'd like to encourage you to make a very simple plan to support your wellbeing.

Often when life challenges hit us we can be taken by surprise by them but we can also think and plan simply and securely, so that when difficulties arise we know something of how we can respond.

FIRST STEPS

Get hold of some paper and pen, make yourself a drink and give yourself some time to reflect on how you're doing.

Start with the question "what does being well look like?" Then ask what helps that and what hinders that health

WHAT DOES BEING WELL LOOK LIKE?

WHO AND WHAT HELPS MY WELLBEING?

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

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Resource available to download from:

www.movement.org.uk

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