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**Contents**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Helpful contacts to keep safe | 4 |
| Completing the questionnaires | 6 |
| **Session 1** |  |
| What is stress | 8 |
| What are the signs of stress? | 9-11 |
| The stress bucket | 12-13 |
| Goal Setting | 14 |
| Making a start | 15 |
| End of session 1 check in | 16 |
| **Session 2** |  |
| Start of session 2 review | 19 |
| Identifying physical symptoms of stress | 20-21 |
| Chronic stress | 22-23 |
| Caffeine | 24 |
| Relaxation techniques | 25-26 |
| End of session 2 check in | 27 |
| **Session 3** |  |
| Start of session 3 review | 30 |
| Stress and thoughts | 31 |
| Negative Automatic Thoughts (NATs) | 32-33 |
| **How to guide: Challenging NATs** | **34-36** |
| Worries | 37 |
| **How to guide: Managing worries (including problem solving)** | **38-45** |
| End of session 3 check in | 46 |
| **Session 4** |  |
| Start of session 4 review | 49 |
| Stress and behaviour | 50 |
| **How to guide: ACE** | **51-58** |
| Stress and avoidance | 59 |
| **How to guide: Overcome avoidance** | **60** |
| **How to guide: If then plans** | **61-62** |
| End of session 4 check in | 63 |
| **Session 5** |  |
| Start of session 5 review | 66 |
| Stress and sleep | 67 |
| What happens when we sleep | 68-69 |
| What gets in the way? | 70-71 |
| What helps? | 72 |
| Sleep routine plan | 73-74 |
| Looking forward stress bucket plan | 75-76 |
| Reviewing and setting goals | 77-78 |
| Self-check-in | 79-80 |
| End of session 5 check in | 81 |
| **What next?** | **82** |
| **Useful resources** | **83-85** |
| **Useful contacts** | **86** |

**Helpful contacts to Keep Safe**

**Need to contact Sheffield Talking Therapies?**

You can contact Talking Therapies Admin on **0114 226 4380. Please let us know if you are unable to attend a session or you would like to discuss other treatment options.**

**Need urgent help?**

If your mood is particularly low and you are concerned about your safety, please use the following information:

* Speak with friends and family for support
* Please make an appointment to **speak to your GP** as soon as possible
* **NHS 111 – select option for mental health support** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
* Samaritans: **116 123**
* Rethink: **0808 8010440**
* A blue silhouette of a head with a heart in the middle

  Description automatically generatedAlways call **999** in an emergency

**Introduction**

Sheffield Talking Therapies made this workbook to support you in the Managing Stress Course. It summarises each session, tasks, and suggested home practice.

It can be hard to make changes. Some techniques may take time to help. But, it's important to remember this is a normal part of the process. The workbook describes new skills for you to learn, so like any other skill this can take time and practice before it feels easier (and sometimes a few mistakes!). It can be helpful to talk to your family and friends to help you engage with the suggested changes.

**Completing the questionnaires**

Before each session, we will send you questionnaires by email or text.

These questionnaires include the PHQ-9 which looks at symptoms of depression and the GAD-7 which looks at symptoms of anxiety.

These questionnaires can measure your mood's severity. They can show any changes in your mood during treatment.

For each symptom, have a think about **how often** the symptom has bothered you over the last **two weeks** in total.



|  |
| --- |
|  |

For each questionnaire, you can add up each number scored to provide you with a total score.

**The PHQ-9 is out of 27.   
The GAD-7 is out of 21.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Session 1** | **Session 2** | **Session 3** | **Session 4** | **Session 5** |
| **PHQ-9**  Depression |  |  |  |  |  |
| **GAD-7**  Anxiety |  |  |  |  |  |

Add up your total each week to watch your progress throughout the course.

**Session stress**

**rd in stress**

**1st**

**What is stress?**

*'Stress is how we react when we feel under pressure or threatened. It usually happens when we are in a situation that we do not feel we can manage or control.' (Mind, 2022)*

Stress is an umbrella term for lots of symptoms or feelings. Reflecting on the personal impact of stress can be beneficial. It is normal to notice lots of different signs of stress. You may notice that one area affects you more. Some people have many physical symptoms, while others have hardly any. This can help you prioritise tackling stress.

**Put a tick next to the symptoms of stress you notice and jot down any others you experience.**

**Emotional:**

Anxiety

Fear

Embarrassment

Sadness

FrustrationGuilt

Anger

Shame

Others?

**Physical:**

Racing heart

Sweating

Tired

Shallow breathing

Dizzy

Achy

Quicker breathing

Tense

Restless

Nausea

Others?

**Thoughts:**

Worrying more

Being hard on ourselves

Negative comparisons to others

Hopelessness

Expecting the worst

Thinking more negatively

Overwhelmed by thoughts

Others?

**The things we do:**

Avoiding

Not doing the things we enjoy

Not doing the things we need to do

Drinking or taking drugs

Smoking or vaping more

Staying up later

Struggling to get out of bed

Working too hard

Procrastinating

Checking things more

Seeing people less

Being snappy

Others?

**How common is stress?**

In short… **very common!**

The Mental Health Foundation conducted a study in 2018 that found 74% of UK adults felt so stressed that they were overwhelmed and unable to cope.

A 2018 Mind study found that mental health issues, mainly stress, accounted for 40% of GP appointments.

This is not just having a stressful day or a couple of weeks of a bit more stress. This is stress significant enough that it has a big effect on people’s lives.

This may seem surprising. But, we know that, even when people struggle, most of us **hide our stress very well**.

**Over to you**

Have a think about what brought you to the course?

How do you feel about being here?

**The stress** **bucket**

You can look at your stress as a bucket that you are carrying around. The more pressures you face, the quicker the bucket fills up, and the more overwhelmed you feel.

We all do things to empty our stress buckets. At times of high stress, you may find it hard to do the things that help.

We also all do things that feel helpful in the short term but feed back into the stress bucket. We are much more likely to do these when we are already feeling stressed.

****

**Over to you…**

**What pressures are you facing that feed into your stress bucket?**

This varies for everyone. It can include work, relationships, finances, caring duties, health, and studies. It helps to be as specific as possible.

**What are you managing to do to empty your stress bucket?**

This can include: spending time with people, hobbies, exercise, rest, a routine, and making plans.

**What are you struggling to do to empty your stress bucket?**

**What feeds back into your stress bucket?**

These can feel helpful in the short term but add pressure in the longer term. This can include: avoiding responsibility, people, and using drugs or drinking more. It can also be taking on too much, etc.

**Goal Setting**

It is important to set goals for a couple of reasons:

1. **It keeps us motivated to make change**
2. **It is helpful to check progress**

Think about what you want to achieve by the end of the course. Also, what would you notice if you were able to manage stress? Remember to keep it SMART.

**A clipboard and pen with check marks

Description automatically generated**

**My goal:**

**If I am managing my stress better this will allow me to….**

**How important is this to me? 1-10**

**How confident am I in achieving this goal? 1-10**

**Making a start**

1. Build in more of the helpful strategies you identify to release from your stress bucket.
2. Reduce the unhelpful ones.
3. When you face stress, ask yourself, *“What is the most helpful thing I can do right now?”*
4. Treat yourself with kindness. Ask yourself the question, *“What would I say to a good friend?”*
5. Remember comparison is the enemy of confidence.
6. Engage with your senses – when stress affects you, note what you can see, hear, touch, smell, and taste.
7. Try to make time for one thing you enjoy. This could be active, creative, stimulating, or watching your favourite TV show.
8. Perfection is not attainable!



**End of session 1 check in**

At the end of each session, it helps to reflect on what you have heard. Also, consider how the information may apply to your situation. It is helpful to make a note of what you are going to try and practice doing over the next week.

**Session 1 Practice**

* Review the session
* What fills your stress bucket?
* What helpful and unhelpful coping strategies do you currently use to manage stress?

**What are the main things that I am taking away from today’s session?**

**What can I try to do over the next week to manage my stress?**

**Are there any barriers to doing this?**

**Session 1 - notes**

**2nd**

**Session**

**Start of session 2 review**

It’s helpful to review the practice you have done over the last week. Don’t be disheartened if you haven’t completed all the tasks. Instead, it is helpful to think about what got in the way and consider how to overcome this next time.

**How did you get on with the between-session tasks?**

**How do you feel about this?**

**Did you come across any barriers? How did/will you overcome them?**

**Identifying physical symptoms of anxiety**

We often ‘feel’ our stress in a physical way, and how our body feels is usually a good indicator of stress.

**The Fight / Flight response**

When stressed, we feel physical symptoms. They are our 'fight/flight response'. It is our body's natural survival mechanism. It protects us from danger and it is triggered by any sense of threat. It’s our body’s way of preparing us to either fight or escape a situation.

We do need this response to keep us safe, but sometimes it can be triggered in error (a bit like a smoke alarm!). The symptoms feel very uncomfortable. But they are not harmful and will reduce over time.

A diagram of a human body

Description automatically generated**Here are some common physical symptoms…**

**How does stress affect your body?**

**Write down what you notice:**

**Do you always recognise these physical symptoms as stress?**

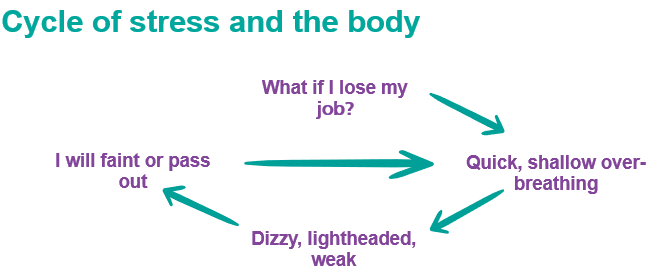
**How do the physical symptoms add to stress?**

There is a link between our thoughts, feelings, physical symptoms and behaviours.

When we find something threatening, our adrenaline increases. This triggers the fight or flight response. These physical symptoms are often seen negatively which can cause concern.

For example, if your heart is racing, and you have a tight chest, you may think you are having a heart attack. This adds to the threat and raises our anxiety, feeding the stress cycle in the diagram below.

Here is another example below:



**Chronic Stress**

Long periods of fight or flight cause chronic stress. Adrenaline and cortisol help us act quickly in danger. But they can harm our health and wellbeing in the long term.

The symptoms of chronic stress start to feed our stress, and we get caught in a vicious cycle.

Calming our bodies can help with chronic stress. Some calming activities are relaxation, grounding, and reducing caffeine. The other techniques in the managing stress course can also help.

A diagram of a human body

Description automatically generated

Stress and long-term health conditions often contribute to each other. People with long-term health conditions are, understandably, more likely to feel stress.

**The Sheffield Talking Therapies Health and Wellbeing Service supports people with low mood, anxiety and stress and problems related to:**

**• Chronic pain**

**• Fatigue**

**• Heart conditions**

**• Diabetes**

**• Irritable bowel syndrome**

**• Health anxiety**

**• Long covid**

**• Respiratory conditions**

**• Skin conditions**

**• Beyond cancer (following successful treatment)**

**• Tinnitus**

If you think one of these issues is causing you stress, you can discuss it in your course review call with the Health and Wellbeing Service. To find out more please visit:

<https://www.sheffieldtalkingtherapies.nhs.uk/health-and-wellbeing-service>.

**Caffeine**

Caffeine can physically impact the body in the same way as stress because it is a stimulant. It can cause a fast heart rate, jitters, irritability, and headaches. Just like stress and anxiety!

If you think caffeine is affecting your stress, consider reducing your intake. Limit it to earlier in the day, or try decaf alternatives.

If we can identify and understand the physical symptoms of stress, we can manage them better.

**Relaxation techniques**

Relaxation techniques can help with stress. They slow the fight/flight response and help us control our bodies. Relaxation is different for everyone. It can mean doing something you enjoy. It should focus your mind and relieve tension. We can use structured relaxation techniques to reduce stress symptoms.

**What helps me relax?**

**Belly Breathing**

Find a comfortable space, sitting upright with your eyes either open or closed. ​

1. Bring your attention to your breath​.
2. Put one hand on your belly, and one hand on your chest​.
3. Begin to breathe slowly. In through your nose, out through your mouth. Notice your belly expanding and your chest rising.
4. Breath in for 1,2,3,4​.
5. Breath out for 1,2,3,4,5,6.
6. Repeat this 10 times (or as long as it takes to relax your breathing).

**Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

For each muscle group you should: ​

1. Focus your attention on that muscle group.​
2. Tense the muscles and maintain this for 5-7 seconds​.
3. Relax the muscles, focusing on the difference in feelings. ​
4. Focus on that muscle group for 20 to 30 seconds before moving on to the next.

**Engaging with your senses**

1. Look around for **five** things that you can see and say them out loud (or in your head).
2. Pay attention to **four** things that you can feel and say them out loud (or in your head), e.g. I can feel my feet warm in my socks.
3. Listen for **three** sounds. E.g. the sound of traffic on the road outside​.
4. Acknowledge **two** things that you can smell. You might want to find something that you can sniff (if you can) or say out loud your favourite smells. ​
5. Think of **one** thing you can taste (e.g. your mid-morning coffee). If you can’t taste anything, you could say your favourite thing to taste.

**End of session 2 check in**

At the end of each session, it helps to reflect on what you have heard. Also, consider how the information may apply to your situation. It is helpful to make a note of what you are going to try and practice doing over the next week.

**Session 2 practice**

* Look at your stress bucket and the role that your body has on your stress levels.
* Set some time to do something that you find relaxing.
* Practice one of the relaxation techniques that we have covered in today’s session.

**What is the main thing that I am taking away from today’s session?**

**What can I try to do over the next week to manage my stress?**

**Are there any barriers to doing this?**

**Session two - Notes**

**2nd**

**3rd**

**Session**

**3rd**

**Session**

**2nd**

**Start of session 3 review**

It’s helpful to review the practice you have done over the last week. Don’t be disheartened if you haven’t completed all the tasks. Instead, it is helpful to think about what got in the way and consider how to overcome this next time.

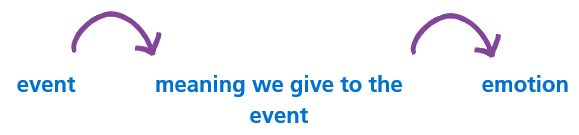
**How did you get on with the between-session tasks?**

**How are you feeling about this? What have you noticed about your stress levels?**

**Were there any challenges over the past week? How did / will you overcome them?**

**Stress and our thoughts**

There is a link between the way we think and feel, based on the way we interpret events.

****

When we are stressed, our thoughts can worsen our stress. They do this by changing how we see things. We are more likely to interpret things as negative, stressful, or more demanding. We also might think that we are less able to cope with stressors and what we are going through. Thus, our stress bucket feels fuller, and it can feel like there are fewer things we can do to empty it.

A purple bucket with a black handle and a blue arrow

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**Negative automatic thoughts (NATS)**

We all have some negative automatic thoughts each day. They just occur. We can't control or stop them. They are often very believable, persistent, and distorted. If we leave these thoughts unchallenged, we will feel more stressed, anxious, or low.

If we can identify these thoughts and label them as unhelpful, we can challenge them more easily. By doing this, we can acknowledge ‘my thought is not a fact; it is an unhelpful thinking style and my opinion’.

The table below lists some unhelpful thinking styles.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Description** | **Example** |
| **All or Nothing** | Seeing things in extreme categories. | *If it is not perfect, then I have failed.* |
| **Should/Ought/Must** | Living life by unreasonable standards | *I should be getting up earlier.* |
| **Overgeneralising** | Seeing negative things as a never-ending pattern of defeat. | *I’m never going to get another job.* |
| **Negative Mental Filter** | Seeing all situations through a negative lens. | *They gave lots of feedback, but I only believe the negative* |
| **Catastrophising** | Imagining the worst-case scenario. | *I fought with my partner so they’re going to leave me.* |
| **Mind Reading** | Assuming what others are thinking without knowing it. | *My friend is going to think I’m annoying.* |

**Over to you…**

**How do your thoughts alter when you are feeling stressed?**

**Do you notice any unhelpful thinking styles when feeling stressed?**

#

**How to Guide:**

**Challenging Negative Automatic thoughts**

**Step 1: Noticing Negative Thoughts**

To challenge our thoughts, we need to begin noticing when we are thinking in unhelpful ways. The more aware we are of our thought processes, the easier it will become to challenge them. You could do this by noticing when you feel stressed, anxious, or low. Then, capture your thoughts in a thought diary. It can also be helpful to notice if there are any unhelpful thinking styles.

Use this table to record your thoughts:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Situation** | **Thought** | **Emotion** | **Unhelpful Thinking Style** |
|  |  |  |  |

**Step 2: Challenging Thoughts**

Once you have identified unhelpful thoughts, the next step is to start challenging them. You can do this by gathering evidence for and against the thought. It's like presenting evidence in a courtroom!

Remember thoughts are not facts!

**Below are some questions that you could ask yourself to help gather evidence:**

*Is this evidence fact or opinion?*

*Do I believe the thought 100% of the time?*

*If I believe the thought 70%, what makes up the other 30% that doesn’t believe it?*

*How would I think about the situation if I wasn’t feeling this way?*

*What would I say to a friend in the same situation as me?*

*Are there any other ways that I could look at this situation?*

*Will this* *thought matter in five years’ time?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **My thought to challenge** |  |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Evidence the thought is TRUE** | **Evidence the thought is FALSE** | |  |  | | |

**Step 3: Balancing Thoughts**

After you gather evidence for and against the thought, use it to create a balanced, fact-based thought. It can be helpful to ask yourself:

*Using the evidence I have gathered, what might be a more helpful way of thinking about this situation?*

Summarise your evidence for and against in two sentences. Then combine these two sentences together with the word ‘and’ or ‘but’ to create a more balanced thought.

|  |
| --- |
| **My balanced thought** |
|  |

**Worries**

We all experience worry from time to time; it’s a normal part of being human. It helps us to feel more alert and prepared for the future. But, it can become a problem if we worry a lot about many things.

When stressed, we can become more prone to experiencing worry. We might be worrying about practical stressors or things that might happen in the future. We might find we are spending more of our time worrying and have got less time to do things that we enjoy.

Worries can fall into two categories: **practical** or **hypothetical**

**Practical worries** are about a current problem with a possible solution.

**Hypothetical worries** are worries about the future. We are anticipating what may or may not happen. Worrying will not solve anything as the problem isn’t occurring right now.

**How to Guide:**

**Managing Worries**

It isn’t possible to stop worrying completely. But, we can change the way that we respond to worries by using worry management techniques.

**Step 1: Noticing worries**

The first step involves becoming aware of your worries. You could do this by keeping a diary. Writing worries down can be a helpful way to take a step back from the worry and gain a different perspective.

It's good to be specific when recording your worries. Note the situation or trigger, and the specific worrisome thought.

Record your own worries in the diary below:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Situation** | **Worry** | **Intensity of worry** | **Classify (Practical or Hypothetical)** |
| Example  Walking to the bus stop | What if miss the bus and I am late to work? | 70% | Hypothetical (not in my control) |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Step 2: Classifying worries**

Worries can be practical or hypothetical. Being able to classify the type of worry you are having means you can then determine how to manage it. There are different techniques (outlined below).

You can identify your worry by asking, "Can I do anything about this now?" If the answer is yes, it is practical. If no, it is hypothetical.

The worry tree below is a good way to help classify your worries and then decide how to manage them.

A tree with arrows and text

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**Worry time for hypothetical worries**

When we worry, we often focus on it instead of our task. As worries appear throughout the day, we can end up spending a lot of time focusing on them. This can be time-consuming and exhausting.

Worry time is a helpful technique for managing worries. It involves postponing worry to a convenient time. This reduces its impact on your daily life.

It involves using your worry diary to notice and write down hypothetical worries throughout the day. If it's hypothetical, tell yourself, "There's nothing I can do about this right now. I'll come back to it later." Then, try to focus on the present. This can feel difficult, but you could refocus on what you were doing before the worry came along. You could also try the 5,4,3,2,1 technique to focus on your senses, or a breathing technique.

You must set a time each day to focus on your worries that you have written down. We recommend 20-30 minutes for worry time, undisturbed. Below are some questions that you may want to answer during your worry time:

***Is this worry still hypothetical? If so, how did I feel about it at the time it occurred, and how do I feel about it now?***

***Did any worries become practical? If so, how did I cope?***

***What would I say to a friend who has this worry?***

After your worry time, do a different activity. It should help you switch off from the worries and return to the present. Any worries that arise after this time will wait until the next worry time.

**Top tips for worry time**

* Set a timer for worry time so you know when it has ended.
* Try to plan worry time for the same time and place (where possible) each day to help build a routine.
* Avoid scheduling worry time just before bed. You want to switch off from your worries before sleep. Don't associate sleep with worrying.
* As you go through your worries, cross them off your list. Then, delete them from your notes or tear the paper out of your notepad.
* Don’t give up on worry time. It is a difficult skill to develop and can take many attempts to build a new skill. With practice, your mind will naturally start to let go of worries.

**Problem Solving for practical worries**

Sometimes, we may face stress from worrying about real problems. When stressed and overwhelmed, we may struggle to cope with problems. It may be harder to make decisions, and we might procrastinate or avoid things.

Common practical problems can be around finances, relationships, employment, housing, or health issues.

If you have a lot of practical problems, it can be helpful to write a problem list and prioritise them in order.

To help prioritise, consider ***what would have the biggest impact if it was solved? What feels easier to try and solve first?***

Problem solving is a seven-step method that can be used to explore and find possible solutions. The steps are outlined below:

A screenshot of a questionnaire

Description automatically generated

Use the steps below to solve a problem you are struggling to solve at the moment.

**Step 1: Identify the Problem**

**Step 2: Identify all the possible solutions**

**Step 3: Analyse strengths and weaknesses**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Solution** | **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
| *Example: Getting a second job to help with bills* | *More money to put towards energy bills* | *Increased stress and tiredness*  *Will need to organise more childcare* |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Step 4: Pick the best solution**

**Step 5: Make a plan – be specific. When, who, where, how?**

**Step 6: Carry out the plan**

**Step 7: Review, how did it go? What could you do differently?**

**End of session 3 check in**

At the end of each session, it helps to reflect on what you have heard. Also, consider how the information may apply to your situation. It is helpful to make a note of what you are going to try and practice doing over the next week.

**Session 3 practice**

* If you find the content of your thoughts impacting your mood, try thought-challenging.
* If you find yourself worrying a lot, try scheduling worry time.
* If you’re finding it hard to solve practical problems, try problem solving.

**What is the main thing that I am taking away from today’s session?**

**What can I try to do over the next week to manage my stress?**

**Are there any barriers to doing this?**

**Session 3 – notes**

**4th**

**Session**

**Start of session 4 review**

It’s helpful to review the practice you have done over the last week. Don’t be disheartened if you haven’t completed all the tasks. Instead, it is helpful to think about what got in the way and consider how to overcome this next time.

**How did you get on with the between-session tasks?**

**How are you feeling about this? What have you noticed about your stress levels?**

**Were there any challenges over the past week? How did / will you overcome them?**

**Stress and our behaviour**

When we feel stressed, our behaviour changes. Some may feel overwhelmed and withdraw or procrastinate. Others may get anxious and avoid people. Some take on too much, trying to distract themselves or manage their stress.

This can bring short-term wins but long-term losses. So, check if your short-term behaviours are adding to your stress.

**Over to you**

**Think about what you do, or don't, when stressed. Consider if these things are short-term wins or solutions. Do they, in the long run, feed your stress?**

**Has your routine felt balanced over the past couple of weeks?**

**Are there any changes that you could make to bring more balance to your everyday life?**

**Making changes to behaviours**

Stress affects everyone differently. You can use the techniques below to help manage your stress. These are evidence-based interventions. They can change behaviours for long-term benefits and better stress management.

**How to Guide: ACE Your Day!**

A balanced routine helps us feel structured and in control. It’s important to make sure that we have a balance of activities that give us a sense of **A**chievement, **C**onnection and **E**njoyment.

The next steps are useful ways that you can begin to make some small changes to your everyday routine. It may sound simple, but it can be difficult to put into place when feeling stressed and overwhelmed. Taking small, gradual steps is the best way to begin to make changes and build motivation.

**Step 1: Understanding your current routine**

To change and balance your life, you must know what you do now. Keeping a baseline diary is a really good way of doing this. This involves keeping a log of the things that you do on a day-to-day basis.

Have a go at using the diary on the next page to do this.

When completing your diary, you might want to think about how each of the things you do impact your mood (were you feeling more or less stressed?). You could do this by rating your mood on a scale of 0-10.

**Activity Diary**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Morning** | **Afternoon** | **Evening** |
| **Monday** |  |  |  |
| **Tuesday** |  |  |  |
| **Wednesday** |  |  |  |
| **Thursday** |  |  |  |
| **Friday** |  |  |  |
| **Saturday** |  |  |  |
| **Sunday** |  |  |  |

**Step 2: Identifying Activities**

Now you know your current routine. Use this to make a list of activities to add to it. Below are some questions to help you create a list.

Looking at your diary:

* Is there anything that you are doing too much of?
* Is there anything that you are doing too little of?
* What activities bring you the biggest sense of **achievement**?
* What activities help you feel **connected** to others?
* What activities bring you the biggest sense of **enjoyment**?
* What activities form part of your routine that are helpful to continue doing?
* Are there any necessary activities that you need to complete within the week?

You might want to separate your activities into routine, necessary and pleasurable things. Use the space below to create your own activities list.

**Routine**

Example: Laundry, washing the pots

A person cooking on a stove

Description automatically generated

**Pleasurable**

Example: Seeing friends, cinema

A couple of women sitting at a round table

Description automatically generated

**Necessary**

Example: Dentist appointments, paying the bills

A person sitting in a dentist chair

Description automatically generated

**Step 3: Order your activities**

Now you have your list of activities. It helps to break them down. This will ensure they feel manageable and realistic.

It's helpful to consider how hard the activities feel to achieve. This depends on your mood or current commitments. But you should also think of ways to break them down to make them easier. For example, 'doing the housework' may feel very hard. But breaking it into smaller tasks like 'hoovering' and 'dusting' may feel easier. Below are some top tips for breaking activities down.

**Top tips for breaking down activities:**

·      Split larger tasks into several smaller tasks.

·      Reduce the time spent doing tasks, e.g. reading for 10 minutes instead of an hour.

·      Other forms of activities, e.g. instead of a run, doing a 15-minute home workout.

Use the table below to note down your ordered activities.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Routine** | **Pleasurable** | **Necessary** |
| **Most difficult** |  |  |  |
| **Medium** |  |  |  |
| **Easiest** |  |  |  |

**Step Four: Planning Activities**

Once you have broken activities down, you can then create a plan to do them. When low and unmotivated, do your plan despite how you feel. Remember the 'outside-in' approach. If you are trying to make time for yourself, a plan is helpful. It can help you to realistically schedule and prioritise this time. Problem-solving can also be helpful with this (Session 3). You do not have to account for every minute of the day. Using the SMART goal framework is a useful way to plan specific tasks.

A clipboard and pen with check marks

Description automatically generated

**Use the diary on the next page to create a plan of activities for the next week.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Morning** | **Afternoon** | **Evening** |
| **Monday** |  |  |  |
| **Tuesday** |  |  |  |
| **Wednesday** |  |  |  |
| **Thursday** |  |  |  |
| **Friday** |  |  |  |
| **Saturday** |  |  |  |
| **Sunday** |  |  |  |

**Step 5: Carry out your plan!**

Now you have your plan, have a go at using it and following it over the next week. You might want to make some notes throughout the week about how you have been finding things.

**Step 6: Review it**

Once you have completed your plan it is important to review how it went.

* Did you manage to stick to your plan?
* Did anything get in the way?
* How can you overcome the barriers in future?
* Looking at your activities list, can you add any to your routine?
* What did you notice about your stress levels throughout the week?

Use the space below to make any comments:

**Stress and Avoidance:**

When we are stressed, the pressures can feel overwhelming. Feeling overwhelmed can lead to avoidance and procrastination. This is a common occurrence and can feel beneficial in the short term because it can provide a sense of relief. In the long term, it can raise our stress. Things can pile up and feel overwhelming.

We can develop habits of avoiding things that cause us anxiety or stress. We may even avoid things that can help us feel better, like good coping strategies. Avoiding what causes us stress can help in the short term. But, when faced with the same situation again, our anxiety peaks. So, we avoid it again to reduce those unpleasant feelings. The more we avoid things, the harder it can become to complete these tasks or start doing things again.

**How to Guide: Overcoming Avoidance**

Re-working your routine and reintroducing activities can help overcome avoidance. But, we know it isn't always as easy as it sounds. Creating a new routine and getting back to doing things again often works best when you grade it. We don't want to fail by planning too much or difficult activities.

Below are some of our top tips that you might want to try when planning to do things you have been avoiding!

* Make a list of things that you are currently avoiding.
* Order them from what feels easiest to what feels hardest.
* You may want to break some activities into smaller chunks. For example, you could split cleaning the house into tasks like, 'hoover the living room'.
* Start with aiming to complete 10 mins of a task, not the whole activity. ​
* Asking a friend or family member to help (this could be with the task, or with breaking things down) ​
* Remember... no activity is too small to start with!

You might want to use some worksheets from the 'ACE your day!' how-to guide (page 51). They can help with creating lists, ordering, and breaking activities down.

**How to guide: If Then Plans**

If-then plans can help start doing what you're avoiding. They acknowledge that there are barriers and things can feel overwhelming. But, they help find ways to overcome that. They focus on the idea of doing something, rather than nothing, to gain a sense of achievement. Here’s an example:

**Avoided activity:** I usually enjoy exercise. But’ I have been avoiding it due to stress.

**Plan:** I will go to the gym 3 times a week for one hour – Monday, Wednesday, Friday at 6 pm.​

**Overcoming barriers**: ​

* If I am too overwhelmed, then I will do a home workout instead.​
* If I am tired or can’t be bothered, then I will go for half an hour instead.​
* If I don’t have time today or I am late home from work, then I will go tomorrow instead.

**If then** plan can also be used as a way of rewarding yourself for doing the things that you have been avoiding. This can help create balance. It allows time for both important and enjoyable tasks you may have been putting off due to stress. Here are some examples:

* **If** I go through my work emails, **then** I will make myself a cup of tea​
* **If** I do a load of washing, **then** I will sit and watch my favourite show for 30 minutes​

Below is a space for you to note down what you have been avoiding and what the activity is that you are planning to do. You can then use the If Then templates. They can help you find ways to overcome barriers and reward yourself.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What am I avoiding?** |  |
| **Activity to do ….** |  |
| Overcoming barriers:  If\_\_\_\_\_\_ , then \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |
| Increasing rewards:  Task\_\_\_\_\_,  Reward \_\_\_\_\_\_ |  |

**End of session 4 check in**

At the end of each session, it helps to reflect on what you have heard. Also, consider how the information may apply to your situation. It is helpful to make a note of what you are going to try and practice doing over the next week.

**Session 4 practice**

* Keep an activity diary
* Consider how your behaviours alter when stressed
* Make some changes to your current routine
* Create an ‘If Then’ plan to help overcome barriers to activities

**What is the main thing that I am taking away from today’s session?**

**What can I try to do over the next week to manage my stress?**

**Are there any barriers to doing this?**

**Session four - notes**

**Session**

**5th**

**Start of session 5 review**

It’s helpful to review the practice you have done over the last week. Don’t be disheartened if you haven’t completed all the tasks. Instead, it is helpful to think about what got in the way and consider how to overcome this next time.

**How did you get on with the between-session tasks?**

**How are you feeling about this? What have you noticed about your stress levels?**

**Were there any challenges over the past week? How did / will you overcome them?**

**Stress and Sleep**

It is rare to experience stress without some impact on sleep. Anyone who has had one night of disturbed sleep knows how stressful it is.

A cartoon of a person

Description automatically generated**How does stress affect sleep?**

A couple of people talking to each other

Description automatically generated

A person smiling with text above her

Description automatically generated

Difficulties with sleep affect different people in lots of different ways. Understanding how your sleep is affected can help.

**Do you relate to any of these examples? How is your sleep affected by stress?**

**What happens when we sleep?**

In short… we don’t know! We still don't know much about sleep. But, what we do know helps us understand why sleep problems can have a big impact.

**A graph with lines and numbers

Description automatically generated with medium confidence**

Sleep works in a cycle lasting between 1.5 and 2 hours, which repeats until you wake up. As you move through the cycle, you go through different stages of sleep. A good night's sleep leaves you rested and refreshed. You will go through 4-6 cycles on average.

1. **Stage one – lightest**

Between sleep and awake. Muscle activity reduces. Brainwaves slow. You may be aware of your surroundings.

1. **Stage two – light**

Heart rate and breathing slow down. Muscles are more relaxed. Brainwaves and eye movements slowed right down.

1. **Stage three – deeper**

Heart rate and breathing are much slower. Muscles are very relaxed. Brainwaves are much slower. Disoriented if awoken.

1. **Stage four – deep sleep**

Heart rate and breathing slowed right down. Muscles completely relaxed. Brainwaves very slow. Very difficult to awaken.

1. **Stage five – Rapid Eye Movement (REM)**

Eyes move rapidly behind the lids. Blood pressure and heart rate rise. Brain very active and dreaming. Muscles paralysed to prevent acting out dreams.

**The Good Stuff!**

Any sleep is helpful. But, we get the most from deep and REM sleep, the good stuff.

We don't fully understand deep sleep and REM. Research shows some likely helpful things are going on.

**Deep sleep**

• Muscle repair

• Boosts immune system

• Process learning

**REM (Rapid Eye Movement)**

• Emotional processing

• Brain development

• Sorting memories

**What gets in the way?**

Lots of things can get in the way of getting enough of the good stuff. Some of them are within our control, but some of them we can do very little about. Consider what might be causing your sleep issues. Then, think about what changes you want to make.

Tick off which of these relate to you and add any extras that you feel make a difference.

**Emotional:**

Anxiety

Fear

Embarrassment

Sadness

Frustration

Guilt

Anger

Shame

Others?

**Physical:**

Racing heart

Sweating

Tired

Shallow breathing

Dizzy

Achy

Quicker breathing

Tense

Restless

Nausea

Others?

**Thoughts:**

Worrying more

Being hard on ourselves

Negative comparisons to others

Hopelessness

Expecting the worst

Thinking more negatively

Overwhelmed by thoughts

Others?

**The things we do:**

Avoiding

Not doing the things we enjoy

Not doing the things we need to do

Drinking or taking drugs

Smoking or vaping more

Staying up later

Struggling to get out of bed

Working too hard

Procrastinating

Checking things more

Anything else?

**Your environment:**

Too hot or cold

Too bright

Old mattress

Snoring partner

Other noise

Anything else?

**What helps?**

If stress has a big impact on sleep, then learning to manage stress can be one of the best ways to help with sleep difficulties. The techniques we have looked at throughout the course can all help with sleep.

**Relaxation and grounding** –Belly breathing, progressive muscle relaxation and 5-4-3-2-1 can help calm the body and mind. Do them before bed.

**Thought challenging** – Unhelpful thinking can often be a problem when trying to sleep. Learning to challenge these thoughts can help give your mind some rest.

**Worry time** – Those who struggle to sleep often fret about hypotheticals. Recognising when there is nothing you can do about a worry, noting it down and moving focus can help. Remember that worry time right before bed can make it more difficult to sleep.

**Problem solving** – Worrying about practical problems, big or small, can make sleep difficult. Getting up and making even a rough plan about how to deal with issues can put your mind to rest.

**Activity planning** – Stress can sap your motivation. But, activities that build up sleep pressure can help. Plan activities that stimulate your mind and body.

**Facing your fears** – Doing things you have avoided builds confidence and reduces worries.

**Sleep Routine Plan**

A predictable, relaxing bedtime routine helps children. But, it is no different for adults! We often lose sight of this, particularly when we are stressed. Having a plan for a helpful routine can help with this.

Here is an example of what a plan might look like. Everyone’s plan will look different.

**What time will I go to bed?**

11pm

**What time will I get up in the morning?**

7am

**When will I start my wind down time?**

10pm

**What can I do in my wind down time?**

* Leave my phone downstairs
* Do my breathing exercises
* Read
* Have a bath
* Get my bag packed for work in the morning

**What can I do if I’m struggling to sleep?**

* Get up after about 20 minutes and read
* Jot down my worries and come back to them later
* Do belly breathing

**What can I do to help during the day?**

* Go for a run
* Stop caffeinated tea at 2pm
* Avoid napping – go for a walk if I’m feeling sleepy
* Drink alcohol free beer at the pub

**Your Sleep routine plan**

Have a go at creating your own sleep routine plan. Remember, as much as it helps to have a predictable routine, it’s less helpful to worry about it. Making changes can be difficult, so it’s ok to not always manage to stick to the plan.

**What time will I go to bed?**

**What time will I get up in the morning?**

**What time will I start my wind down time?**

**What can I do in my wind down time?**

**What can I do if I’m struggling to sleep?**

**What can I do to help in the day?**

**Looking Forward**

Life is full of ups and downs. As you move on from the Managing Stress course, consider how to use any skills and techniques you learned in the last five weeks.

**Stress Bucket Plan**

A stress bucket plan can help you keep your progress. It can also help you spot when you might be starting to struggle again. Here’s Sarah’s stress bucket plan from the session.

A purple bucket with arrows pointing to the left

Description automatically generated

**Warning signs**

* **Low energy**
* **Feeling tense**
* **Sore stomach**
* **Feeling guilty**
* **Scrolling on my phone**
* **Not seeing friends**

**What fills up your stress bucket?**

* **Lots of appointments for mum coming up**
* **Busy summer holidays for kids**

**What helps?**

* **Activity planning**
* **Breathing exercises**
* **Making sure I plan time with my friends**
* **I can make an appointment with talking therapies if needed**

**Your Stress Bucket Plan**

Have a go at making your own stress bucket plan. This can help you become aware of potential setbacks and prepare to deal with them.

A purple bucket with arrows pointing to the left

Description automatically generated

**What might fill your stress bucket?**

**Warning signs**

**What helps?**

**Reviewing Goals**

In session one we discussed how helpful goals can be and encouraged you to set your own goal for the course. Take some time to consider how things have gone with your goal.

**What was my goal?**

**Did I manage to achieve it? What helped?**

**Did I struggle to achieve it? What got in the way?**

**Did I lose sight of my goal? What could I have done differently?**

**Setting a new goal**

If you achieved your goal for the course, it may help to set a new goal for after the course. This can help you keep focus and give you a chance to practice the skills you have learned. Just remember to keep your goal SMART!

**My new goal is:**

**I would like to achieve this by:**

**What might get in the way?**

**What will help?**

A clipboard and pen with check marks

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**Self-Check-in**

Many people find the Managing Stress course helpful. It gives them time and space to focus on making changes to reduce stress. It can be challenging to move beyond the course and not have the weekly anchor of the sessions. It's common to drift back into unhelpful habits, especially when things go well and we take our eye off the ball.

Planning your own check-in can help to give you more focus and accountability. It is up to you when you would like to do the check-in. It could be in a couple of weeks, a month, or two months. Whenever feels right for you.

Some people find it helpful to check in with themselves using their stress bucket plan. Some people also find it helpful to include a close relative or friend to help them go through the check-in.

**When will I have my check-in?**

**What will help me remember to do it?**

**Have I had to deal with any expected stressful situations? How did they go?**

**Have I had to deal with any unexpected stressful situations? How did they go?**

**Have I noticed any of the early warning signs from my stress bucket plan? If so, which ones?**

**Have I been keeping up with practicing the skills and techniques that help?**

**If I’ve had a setback, what can I do to help?**

**End of session 5 check in**

At the end of each session, it helps to reflect on what you have heard. Also, consider how the information may apply to your situation. It is helpful to make a note of what you are going to try and practice doing over the next week.

**Session 5 practice**

* **Sleep routine plan**
* **Stress bucket plan**
* **Review goals**
* **Self check in**

**What is the main thing that I am taking away from today’s session?**

**What can I try to do over the next week to manage my stress?**

**Are there any barriers to doing this?**

**What next?**

Well done for making it to the end of the Managing Stress course. It takes a lot of dedication to spend time and energy on tackling stress.

For some, this course will have been enough. No more support will be necessary. If you feel you've got what you need from this course, please keep practising. Use the stress bucket plan and self check-in to manage your stress.

For others, the Managing Stress course will be the first step in getting the right support for their needs. The NHS Sheffield Talking Therapies service has many treatment options.

If you've kept up with the questionnaires and things seem unchanged, you will likely be contacted by our admin team. They will invite you to a follow-up review call. It will be a brief chat to discuss the course. We'll cover any difficulties you still face and what support you might need. You will normally be contacted 4-6 weeks after the course. This is to give you a chance to practice the skills we introduced.

Even if you are not contacted, you can still get in touch to look at what other options may be available. We recommend taking time to practice the techniques before doing this.

You can book in for a further assessment by calling **0114 226 4380** or visiting our website <https://www.sheffieldtalkingtherapies.nhs.uk/>.

**Feedback**

We are constantly updating the Managing Stress course. Feedback from attendees is really helpful. We would like to hear what you found helpful. Also, please tell us what didn't work, and what you would change about the course.

**Useful Resources**

This section of the workbook has links to useful resources. They will be shared in each session.

**Session One Resources**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **‘What is Stress’ booklet** | <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/resource/stress-workbook/> |
| **MIND what is stress?** | <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/stress/what-is-stress/> |
| **SMART goal worksheet** | <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/SMARTgoals.pdf> |

**Session Two Resources**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Fight/flight/freeze video** | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEHwB1PG_-Q> |
| **Belly Breathing Video** | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Ep5mKuRmAA> |
| **54321 Grounding Technique** | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ao4xdDK9iE> |
| **My Mind Plan (NHS)** | <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/your-mind-plan-quiz/> |
| **Tips and exercises to help you relax** | <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/relaxation-tips/> |
| **Stress Control relaxation exercises** | <https://stresscontrol.org/relaxation-mindfulness/> |

**Session Three Resources**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Thought Challenging workbook** | <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/resource/cognitive-restructuring/> |
| **Unhelpful thinking habits** | <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/UnhelpfulThinkingHabitsWithAlternatives.pdf> |
| **How to manage your worries video** | <https://www.bbc.co.uk/ideas/videos/how-to-manage-your-worries/p03rwr72> |
| **Worry management workbook** | <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/resource/worry-management/> |
| **Worry tree** | <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/worrytree.pdf> |
| **Problem Solving video** | <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/resource/problem-solving-video/> |

**Session Four Resources**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Likewise Sheffield – alcohol and drug support** | <https://likewisesheffield.org.uk/> |
| **Drinkaware** | <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/> |
| **Smokefree Sheffield – stop smoking support** | <https://smokefreesheffield.org/> |
| **Behavioural Activation video** | <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/resource/behavioural-activation-2/> |
| **Behavioural Activation Workbook** | <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/resource/behavioural-activation/> |

**Session Five Resources**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sleepful.me – Insomnia support app** | sleepful.me |
| **Getting Better Sleep Resources** | <https://www.talkplus.org.uk/resource/getting-better-sleep/> |
| **Sleep diary** | <https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/docs/SleepDiary.pdf> |
| **Sheffield** **STEP understanding insomnia course** | <https://www.shsc.nhs.uk/services/short-term-educational-programme-step/understanding-insomnia-and-improving-sleep> |
| **Sheffield Talking Therapies** | <https://www.sheffieldtalkingtherapies.nhs.uk/> |

**Useful contacts**

**Community Support Workers** – <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/social-care/adults/community-support-workers> 0114 205 7120

**Citizens Advice Bureau** – <https://citizensadvicesheffield.org.uk/> 0808 278 7820

**Cruse Bereavement** – <https://www.cruse.org.uk/> 0808 808 1677

**Sheffield MIND** – <https://www.sheffieldmind.co.uk/>

**Relate Relationship support** - <https://www.relate.org.uk/>

**Employment Support**

**Sheffield Talking Therapies Employment Advisors –** Our employment advisors can offer you free, confidential advice. They can help you find work, stay in work or return to it after a break. You can access this support if you are in, or awaiting, treatment in our service.

**Ambition Employment Support (Sheffield City Council employment projects)**; [opportunity@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:opportunity@sheffield.gov.uk)

**Big Ambitions;** [Big Ambitions](https://www.bigambitions.org.uk/)

**Working Win**; [Working Win - Shaw Trust Main](https://shawtrust.org.uk/what-we-do/working-win/)

**Sheffield Occupational Health Advisory Service (SOHAS);** 0114 2755760 [Patients - Sheffield Occupational Health Advisory Service (sohas.co.uk)](https://www.sohas.co.uk/help/patients/)

**Able Futures**; [Mental health support for people at work | Able Futures Mental Health Support Service (able-futures.co.uk)](https://able-futures.co.uk/individuals)