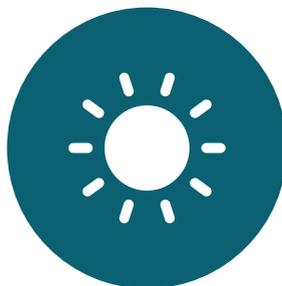


Little Book of Health and Wellbeing

A wellness tool for
healthier living



© This booklet has been based on the Seventh Edition of the Little Book of Mental Health originally compiled by Alison Sedgwick-Taylor – Clinical Psychologist, Primary Mental Health Service, Gloucestershire NHS Partnership Trust. The Primary Mental Health Service/Gloucestershire Health and Social Care Community have kindly given Public Health At Somerset Council permission to adapt this booklet from the original version.

Disclaimer:

In producing this booklet Somerset Council Public Health, has made every effort to provide advice based on up to date evidence for what is effective. It is, however, not intended as a substitute for thorough medical assessment and clinical intervention. If you are concerned about your mental health consult your GP.

Acknowledgments:

This booklet is adapted with permission from Everyday Emotional Wellbeing (2001), a BBC Learning Support and Mental Health Foundation publication. Additional material from: The Mental Fitness Guide: Managing your Mind by Gillian Butler & Tony Hope, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995 and World Health Organisation (WHO) Guide to Mental Health in Primary Care 2000, the Royal Society of Medicine Press Ltd

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Introduction

Everyday wellbeing is about how we feel, think and behave. Nobody feels blissfully happy, thinks positive thoughts and behaves sensibly all the time. However, maintaining a healthier lifestyle can make it easier to enjoy everyday life and handle its ups and downs more effectively.

Often we think more about our physical health than our mental health. It's important for us to look after our mind as well as our body. As soon as we feel a physical ache or pain we generally try to do something about it, but when we find ourselves feeling very low or stressed we tend to think it is just part and parcel of life and don't do anything to improve the situation.

If you're feeling low, anxious, or distressed, you're not alone. It's completely normal to experience emotional ups and downs, and many of us will face challenges with our mental health at some point. These challenges can range from temporary feelings of distress to more persistent or diagnosed conditions.

Top tips for health and wellbeing

Set yourself achievable goals

Set clear, achievable goals to stay motivated and track progress. Avoid goals that are unclear, too difficult, or too easy. Write down short-term changes you can make in the next few days or weeks, middle-term changes you can make in the next few weeks or months, and long-term changes you can make in the next few months or years.

Example of setting goals:

Plan A:

This week I will go for a walk on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday in the park.

My Plan B:

If I am interrupted I will change the day.

Write your goal below:

Plan A

This week/month/year I will

on..... in.....

My Plan B

If I am interrupted I will



Celebrate the wins

Take notice of your achievements, however small and reward yourself. Think about what gives you pleasure and enjoy the reward. You may like to share and celebrate your achievements with others.



Write down 3 things below you will do to celebrate your wins:

1.

2.

3.

Find your joy

Giving time to activities we find rewarding increases our sense of wellbeing, whereas a routine made up almost entirely of things that we have to do can have the opposite effect.

Taking time to do things that help you feel joy is essential for positive health and wellbeing. Self-care isn't selfish.

Practicing gratitude has been shown to increase feelings of joy and happiness. You could try writing down one thing you are grateful for each day.

One thing I am grateful for today:



Day 1

Day 2.....

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Day 6

Day 7

Believe in yourself

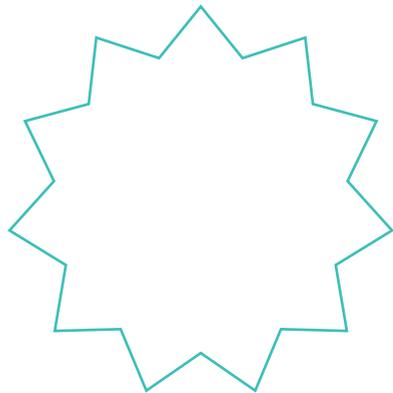
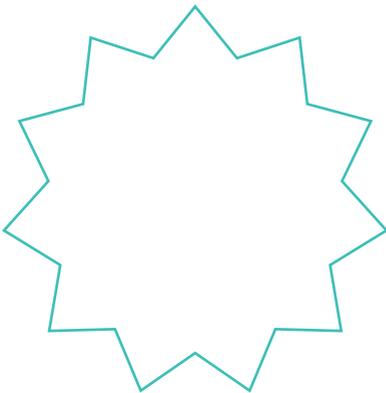
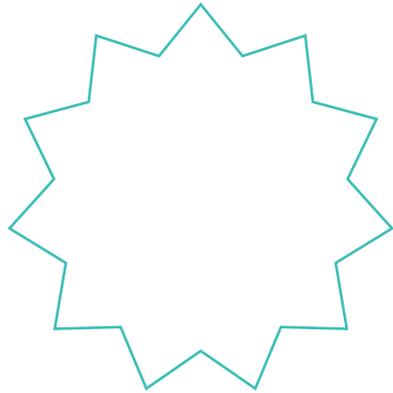
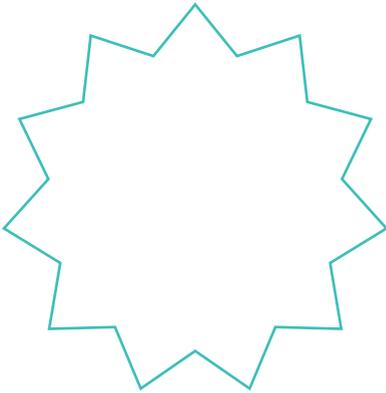
Self-confidence is concerned with how we feel about our abilities. Self-esteem is slightly different, as it reflects the degree to which we value ourselves. There are things you can do to help you feel more confident and develop your self-esteem.

Being kind to yourself during difficult times and recognising that everyone struggles can help build emotional resilience and support overall wellbeing.

To build self-confidence and self-esteem you could:

- Try acting more confident than you feel
- Try seeing mistakes as an opportunity to learn
- Practice speaking kindly to yourself
- Remember nobody is perfect, trying your best is enough
- Spend time with people you enjoy being with
- Record your achievements by noting down when you do something that felt difficult

Use the stars below to write or draw what you have done:



You could put all your achievement notes in a jar to help remind you of your successes.

Manage your time

Take some time each day for setting goals and making plans, this can help with time management. It can help to write your plans down, so you can tick things off as you go.



You could try prioritising tasks in this way:

A = Absolutely essential

B = Better done today

C = Could wait

D = Delegate/ask someone else to do it

Keeping things in perspective

There is always more than one way of seeing things. Looking at your situation with an open mind and being realistic about what you can manage can be helpful.

While you might not be able to choose what happens to you, you can practice choosing ways to react and over time choose a more positive response.

Write in the circle what is within your control and around the circle what is outside of your control:



Outside my control



Inside my control

Time for rest and relaxation

Finding ways to relax is an important tool for positive health and wellbeing, helping us to take a break from the day to day business and pressures of everyday life. Having hobbies or interests that we enjoy doing can be one thing that gives our bodies and minds a chance to rest, relax and reset.



**Colour in the activities you enjoy doing.
Add your own to the below:**

Gardening	Baking	Colouring
Dancing	Reading	Listening to music
Taking a bath	Pilates/Yoga/ Tai Chi	Watching TV or movies
Drawing or painting	Making a tea or coffee	Lighting a candle

Focusing on your diet

The foods we eat play an important part in the way we feel physically (energy) and mentally (mood).

Being mindful of the amount of sugar, caffeine and salt we consume and eating more of the good stuff e.g. fibre rich whole grains, pulses, nuts, seeds, herbs and spices, vegetables and fruit can help improve mood and energy levels.

Create a list of 10 healthy staples from the suggestions above. Note 5 you challenge yourself to include in your weekly shop:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



Information on healthier eating:

[www.healthysomerset.co.uk
/focusing-on-more](http://www.healthysomerset.co.uk/focusing-on-more)

Moving more

Moving our bodies is good for us in many ways. It can increase our confidence and self-esteem, stimulate “feel good” chemicals in our bodies, provide an outlet for stress, reduce anxiety, help us sleep better and can help to prevent illnesses. Try and go outside each day and enjoy the natural things around you.

If you have concerns about your health or fitness speak to your GP.



Set yourself a challenge to get moving more, this could be with friends or for yourself. An example could be to move your body in some way every hour or complete a number of steps daily. **What will you commit to do? Write, draw or add a photo:**

Healthier sleep

Sleep helps us to physically and mentally heal and recover and is essential for our overall health and wellbeing. Getting a good amount of sleep can help to improve our mood, concentration, make us more productive and improve our concentration.

There are things we can do to get into healthy sleep routines such as:

- Going to bed and waking up at regular times, including on your days off
- Try to limit screen time and switch off devices an hour before bed
- If you have a lot of things on your mind, try writing them down before bedtime
- Try to avoid stimulant such as caffeine, nicotine and alcohol before bedtime

You could try starting a sleep diary to understand your sleep habits:



What time did I go to bed?	What time did I get up?	What did I do before going to bed?	How did I feel on waking?	What could I do differently?



Five Ways to Wellbeing

Research has shown that there are five things you can do to help your body and mind be healthy and well. Choosing one thing to do each day can help to change how you feel and improve your wellbeing. We have provided examples throughout and there is a Five Ways to Wellbeing template on page 19 For you to add your own ideas to.



Connect

Having meaningful relationships can act as a buffer against stress, anxiety, and depression. When we feel connected, we're more likely to share our struggles and feel understood helping to build emotional resilience. Being part of a community or having close relationships reinforces our sense of identity and self-worth.

Examples of this could include calling, messaging or meeting a friend or smiling at someone whilst you are out.



Be active

Being active not only improves physical health but also lowers the risk of developing long-term health issues such as heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers. Moving your body releases feel-good chemicals like endorphins and serotonin, which can help to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Being active can also support better sleep and help to boost self-esteem.

Examples of this may include gardening, walking in nature, or taking the stairs rather than the lift.



Take notice

Try to stay curious and be aware of the world around you as well as your own thoughts and feelings. It's natural to experience stress or anxiety at times. Acknowledging these emotions and choosing more positive ways to manage these can really help.

Examples of these may include, noticing the breath, try naming 3 things you can see, hear and feel.



Keep learning

Learning encourages people to try new things, develop new skills, and get curious.

It's about thinking and being open to challenge yourself and have a go at new experiences, whatever stage of life you are at. Lifelong learning can help to boost self-esteem and confidence and provide a sense of purpose and achievement. Just having a go is what matters - not the end result.

You could try joining a group or club, listening to a podcast, exploring a new place, learning a different language or watching a documentary



Give

Giving refers to acts of kindness, generosity, and contribution whether big or small. It's about doing something for others, your community, the world around you and being kind to yourself. Giving to ourselves through self-care is essential for our wellbeing too. It's important to maintain balance between looking after ourselves and giving to others, remember "you can't pour from an empty cup". Giving creates positive feelings and a sense of reward and can reduce stress and improve mood.

You could try, donating your time or money to a charity, making a cup of tea for a friend, family member or colleague, simply saying thank you or smiling at someone.

Write down what you've tried from the 5 ways to wellbeing this week



Day / Date	What did I try?	How did this make me feel?



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Working through difficulties

Sometimes we try to avoid things that are difficult because it feels easier at first. But avoiding difficulties doesn't always help later on. Taking small steps can make it easier to overcome difficulties, one step at a time.

If you have more than one problem, write them all down and put them in order of difficulty. Tackle the least difficult problem first. Use the template on the next page to problem solve.



	What is the problem that's causing you concern?	What is the problem that's causing you concern?	What is the problem that's causing you concern?
Write down the problem. Be specific.			
Write down a list of possible solutions.			
Write down the advantages and disadvantages of each solution.			
Choose a solution and break it down into steps.			
Tackle each step, one at a time.			

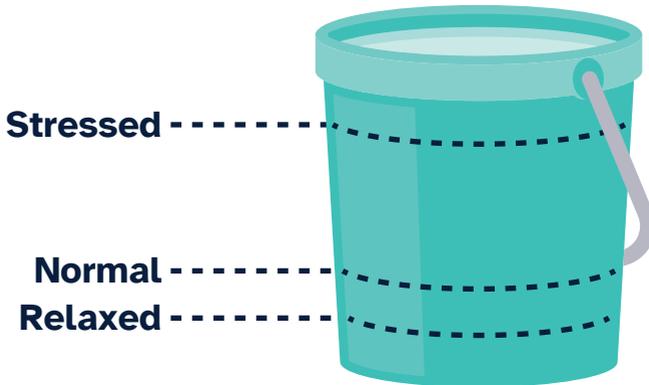
Managing Stress

Practising relaxation, in whatever way works for you has been found to reduce stress. We all experience stress and choosing healthier ways to manage stress can positively impact both our physical and mental health. In small doses, it can be helpful as it can push us to work harder to achieve our goals. Too much stress can make us feel overwhelmed and feeling like this over a prolonged period of time can have a negative impact on our health.

You can think of stress as a bucket. Things that cause stress fill up the bucket gradually. You can add 'taps' to empty the bucket by doing things you enjoy, which may improve your wellbeing.

We have covered some examples of healthier options for stress management throughout this booklet, including the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. Additionally breathing exercises or mindfulness practices have all been shown to help reduce stress.

Mark at the side of the image how full your bucket feels at the moment.



Write what is currently filling up your bucket on the image below.



How do you know when your bucket is full or nearly full?



Current 'taps' - what do I currently do to manage stress?

'Taps' to add - what healthier options could I try?

We know that too much stress is unhealthy for us in many ways and can increase your risk of high blood pressure. It's easy to have a blood pressure check at many locations including pharmacies, libraries or at your doctor's surgery.

Additionally, if you are aged 40 – 74 you may be eligible for a free NHS health check.



For more information visit the
Healthy Somerset website:

www.healthysomerset.co.uk/health-checks



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Unhealthy approaches

So far, we've been exploring positive ways for coping with the ups and downs of life. Sometimes, people may use approaches that are not healthy in the longer term.

This part of the booklet now looks at what some unhealthy approaches may be.

Once we know what these are, we can pause, check in with ourselves and notice what approach we are using.

Drugs and alcohol

Check your drugs and alcohol intake

Sometimes, people drink alcohol or take drugs because they feel sad, worried, or stressed. At first, it might seem like it helps them feel better. But it doesn't really fix the problem.

Alcohol

The UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) have established guidelines to help individuals understand the health risks associated with alcohol consumption and make informed decisions about their drinking habits. The guidelines recommend that adults should not regularly drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week. These guidelines are based on up-to-date scientific evidence and aim to help individuals keep their health risks from alcohol to a low level.

As a rough guide, there's one unit of alcohol in:



Half a pint
of ordinary
strength beer,
lager or cider



One small
glass of wine



A single pub
measure of
spirits

Spread your drinking over three or more days with several drink-free days, and avoid binge drinking. For young people under 18, the healthiest and safest option is to remain alcohol-free up to the age of 18.

Recommended alcohol limits for men and women:
14 units a week, which is:



6 pints of beer (4% strength) OR



7 glasses of wine (11.5% strength 175ml) OR



14 single shots of spirits (40% strength)

(Source: Chief Medical Officers)

Drugs

Using any drugs or illegal substances carries potential risks. Users can never be sure of exactly what they are taking, what the drug is mixed with, and how strong it is. The effects can be unpredictable. Mixing different drugs is especially risky, and combining any drug with alcohol adds an extra layer of risk.

SDAS Telephone Number: 0300 303 8788
(This line operates 24/7)

Information and resources for
young people:

[www.cypsomersethealth.org
/drugs_and_alcohol_toolkit](http://www.cypsomersethealth.org/drugs_and_alcohol_toolkit)



Information and resources for
adults:

[www.healthysomerset.co.uk
/alcohol-and-substance-use](http://www.healthysomerset.co.uk/alcohol-and-substance-use)



Smoking

Smoking might feel like it helps you feel better or less worried. But really, it just stops the bad feelings that happen when your body wants more nicotine.

Quitting smoking is really good for your body and your mind. It helps your heart and lungs work better. It can also make you feel less sad, worried, or stressed. You might feel better about yourself, happier and more confident. And you'll have more money to spend on other things!

If you want to stop smoking or need help to quit, you can talk to our free stop-smoking service or contact us online. We're here to help.



www.smokefreesomerset.org.uk

smokefree@somerset.gov.uk

01823 356222

(Mon – Fri 9.00am – 5.00pm)

Sexual Health

Sexual health is a big part of feeling good and staying healthy, no matter your gender, sexuality, or where you are in life - whether you're starting a new relationship or have been in one for years. Sex can be positive, enjoyable, and even life-enhancing. That's why looking after your sexual health matters—it helps keep things safe, comfortable, and fun.

Somerset Wide Integrated Sexual Health Service (SWISH) is a specialist sexual health and contraception service. It is part of the NHS and offers a comprehensive range of services regardless of age, gender, or sexual identity. This is a confidential service, it does not link back to Doctor's notes unless in agreement.

The Somerset Wide Integrated Sexual Health Service (SWISH) website features 'Ask Swish' where you can ask anonymous questions or read what others have asked and their replies.

The service can be contacted on **0300 1245 010** or check out their website:



www.swishservices.co.uk

Gambling

Gambling can seem fun at first. Maybe it's playing cards, betting on a game, or just trying to win a prize. But sometimes, it stops being fun and starts causing problems. What begins as a game can lead to feeling worried, sad, or guilty. People can feel stuck and not know how to stop.

Gambling problems are serious. It's not just about losing money, it's about losing control. People who can't stop gambling often feel stressed, angry, and have trouble focusing at work, on learning or with friends.

Many people don't notice the problem at first. They might hide how much they gamble or keep secrets about money. Friends and family often see the signs first, like staying away from people, getting angry easily, or having money problems.

If this sounds like you or someone you know, you're not alone. Help is out there.

The South West Gambling Service from the NHS offer a range of support, including recovery courses for gambling, cognitive behaviour therapy, support for affected family members and access to an online community.

You can refer yourself directly to the service either by calling **0330 022 3175** Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm or you can self-refer by the online form.



www.awp.nhs.uk/our-services/az-services/south-west-gambling-service

Reaching out for help

In this book we have focused on things you can do to help to look after yourself. If you have friends or family around you, we encourage you to talk to them if you feel able, as help and support may also come from the people around you.

Sometimes, problems in life can take a while to change. If you're feeling sad or tired, it's normal to feel like not doing much. But even small steps, like trying some of the five ways to wellbeing, can make a big difference. Taking time for self-care can help you feel stronger and more in control.

While this book offers tools and ideas to support your wellbeing, it's important to recognise that sometimes self-care alone isn't enough.

If you're experiencing persistent feelings of low or poor emotional or mental health, please know that help is available and you are not alone.

Reaching out for professional support is a strength, not a weakness. Talking to a GP, mental health professional, or support service can make a real difference.

Details of professional help can be found here:



www.healthysomerset.co.uk/support-with-your-mental-health

If you would like to read more about specific mental health conditions please visit:



www.nhs.uk/mental-health



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Notes

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