

CITYLIT

INSPIRING PASSIONS · REALISING AMBITIONS

Mental Health Toolkit



4 instant ways to soothe your stress

When you feel overwhelmed and unable to cope, you may experience symptoms of stress such as breathlessness, sweatiness, feelings of fear, and possible low mood and anxiety. Here are 4 things you can do in the moment to soothe your stress:



1. Breathe from your belly.

Hold your hand on your abdomen and feel the breath rise and fall. Breathe in for a count of 7. Breathe out for a count of 11. Do this for two minutes and your heart rate will slow down, and you'll feel a lot calmer.



2. Visualise the stress floating away.

With your next out breath, imagine you're blowing up a balloon. Put your stress inside that balloon and imagine it floating away. Allow yourself to let the stress go.



3. Challenge your negative thoughts.

Write down on a piece of paper one of the negative things you say to yourself. Then imagine your best friend coming in and saying something positive to you. That way you can begin to be kinder to yourself.



4. Go for a walk outside – ideally near some green space, such as a park.

Studies show that just 10 minutes spent in nature can reduce your stress levels, boost your wellbeing, and help you gain a fresh perspective on your situation.

Where to find support for your mental health

HELPLINES

Samaritans

Offers listening support over the phone or by email 24/7.

Tel: 116 123

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Web: www.samaritans.org

Sane Line

Works with anyone affected by mental illness.

Tel: 07984 967 708

Web: www.sane.org.uk

Support Line

Supports people who are isolated, vulnerable, or at risk of abuse.

Tel: 01708 765200

Web: www.supportline.org.uk

The Mix

Supports people under 25.

Tel: 0808 808 4994

Web: www.themix.org.uk

Silverline

Supports people over 55 with advice, information and guidance.

Tel: 0800 4 70 80 90

Web: www.thesilverline.org.uk

INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Mind

Offers support and guidance to people with mental health issues.

Web: www.mind.org.uk

Anxiety UK

Supports people with anxiety, stress, and anxiety-based depression.

Tel: 03444 775 774

Web: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

ONE-TO-ONE COUNSELLING SERVICES

City Lit Counselling Service

Offers short-term counselling during term times, to offer emotional support while you're completing your course.

Call or text: 07900 138882

Email: counselling.service@citylit.ac.uk

Sessions are offered online via Zoom, or by phone, during the Covid pandemic.

The Caravan in Piccadilly

Offers a core service of listening and emotional support, which can – by arrangement – evolve into counselling.

Tel: 020 7183 1802

Web: www.thecaravan.org.uk

Help Counselling

Offers open-ended counselling from its centre in Notting Hill – currently online only.

Tel: 020 7221 9974

Web: www.helpcounselling.com

NB If you are in crisis and feel you can't keep yourself safe, go to your local A&E.

You can also call 111 or speak to your GP.

Seven ways to invest in your mental wealth

The Mental Wealth Festival is a time to reflect on how we stay well mentally and emotionally. Key to that is building resilience to enable us to cope with whatever life throws at us. Taking some time to invest in our mental health can help us live richer and more fulfilling lives. Here are seven practical ways to make that investment in your emotional wellbeing...



1. Know your stressors

The first step towards optimum mental health is knowing what stresses you out. Your stressors may be lack of time, an overwhelming workload, a fractious relationship. Whatever your pressure point is, stress can burn you up and turn your energy to ashes. To keep your flame lit, get to know your triggers. Once you know them you can take steps to reduce them and look at alternatives to the stressor.



2. Contain your worries

Worry has a nasty habit of creeping into your thoughts and twisting them until your mind has created a worst-case scenario. Worrying can spoil your day and stop you living a full life. To support yourself in worrying less, try these two things. Firstly, agree with yourself that you will only worry about things that you have some control over. Secondly, if you feel worried give yourself a set time each day – say, 20 minutes – when you can allow yourself to worry, worry, worry. When the 20 minutes are up, you can leave the worry behind and take it up again tomorrow.



3. Express your feelings

Expressing how you feel is vital to mental health. Bottling things up never works: eventually the feeling you're trying to suppress will come out sideways. It's OK to have feelings. There's nothing right or wrong with a feeling. Speak to a friend or loved one and tell them how you feel. Speak to a therapist if you feel you need professional support. Or start a journal where you check in with yourself daily and write down what's happening in your inner world. You'll feel the relief of unburdening yourself.



4. Prioritise self-care

This is about putting your own oxygen mask on before you help others. You may feel it is selfish to put yourself first when there are other people who need you, but without self-care, you won't have anything to give others. By self-care, we mean ensuring you sleep and eat well, take some exercise, and build in some time to relax or meditate. Tune into your needs and aim to meet them where you can.



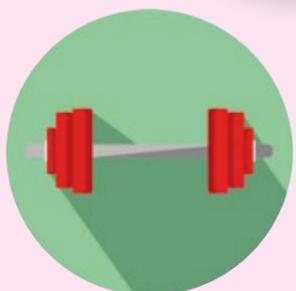
5. Stay connected

It can be so tempting to tune the world out and isolate yourself as an antidote to the 24/7 demands of life. Yet part of the definition of mental health is "making a contribution to your community". Staying connected with people – friends, family, groups, or even volunteering for a good cause – can build the feel-good within.



6. Try something new (just for fun)

Do something just for fun. Build, draw, write, paint, dance, act, knit, learn. Choose something that makes your heart sing. Do something you love just for the sake of it – not because you've got a deadline to meet or a boss to impress or a point to prove. Whether it's finishing a tricky jigsaw, crocheting a blanket, or starting a vegetable garden, having a project can give you meaning and purpose. It can put the spark back into your life.



7. Take the pressure off

A lot of frustration in life is caused by expecting perfection. Having incredibly high standards that you expect everyone to meet can often lead to feelings of disappointment. Self-pressure can be even worse. Your inner slave-driver can torture you with 'shoulds', 'musts' and 'ought tos', leaving you feeling as what you do will never be enough. That's exhausting and can lead you down the road to anxiety and depression. Taking the pressure off yourself, and giving everyone permission to be imperfect, can be so freeing. Accept that you are good enough just as you are.

Advice by City Lit lead counsellor and psychotherapist Karen Dempsey

The City Lit Counselling Service offers counselling to support students on courses at City Lit, and they can also signpost you to specialist support if you need it. You can reach the counselling service on 07900 138882.

The Samaritans (call 116 123) are available 24 hours a day if you need to speak to someone quickly. And mental health charity Mind (call 0300 123 3393) will be able to let you know of support services in your area.

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The Mental Wealth Festival provides a forum for informative, challenging and inspiring discussions, events and workshops exploring mental health issues.

www.citylit.ac.uk/mwf