



MHELO

MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCE LED OPPORTUNITIES

SELF-CARE TOOLKIT

**Pick me up
whenever you're
feeling stressed-out,
out of control,
anxious or
just need a
bit of a boost!**

Registered charity number: 1171559

**INCLUSION
GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

BIGGER DREAMS ► BETTER LIVES ► BRIGHTER FUTURES



MHELO

Mental. Health. Experience. Led. Opportunities.

MHELO is a project within Inclusion Gloucestershire. It is an independent network for people in Gloucestershire to have a collective voice.

We exist to ensure that the voice of our experts by experience is heard.

We are a user-led network of individuals who want to speak about their experiences of mental ill health, and services, within Gloucestershire to bring about change.

Your experience and views are what empowers the VOICE of the present, and the future, of Mental Health in Gloucestershire.

This self-care toolkit was made with members of MHELO and the wider community to share what has worked for them, and to empower the people of Gloucestershire. It is to aid you in creating your own personal plan for your self-care journey.

Get involved!



www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/engagement



mhelo@inclusion-glos.org



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



[mhelogloucestershire](https://www.facebook.com/mhelogloucestershire)

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**Just remember -
it's not your job to be everything to everybody**

First things first.

This is about you.



Often, we are so busy that we forget to carve out time for ourselves.

To sit and take a minute to reflect on what's been going on and why we might be feeling, tired, stressed, anxious, angry, upset, sad or any number of other things.

To understand what works for you, the first step is having time to think about yourself.

This first part of the toolkit is exactly for that. Some time for you to start thinking about you.

You can fill this in in your own time, at your own pace. We have designed it so you can dip in and out when it suits you.

We know that this isn't accessible to all. Please seek support in being able to complete this if needed.

The importance of sharing

Your self-care doesn't just include you.

Keep everyone else who supports you involved, share this plan with others.

Who else is involved in your self-care and who do you need to share this with?

Write their names and numbers.











Your roadmap to recovery

First Stop

Friend, family member

Second Stop

Your GP

Third Stop

Community Mental Health Team

Fourth Stop

Crisis Team/Crisis Support

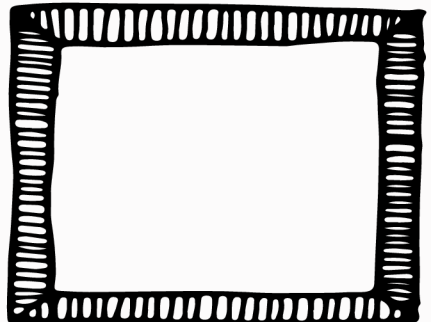
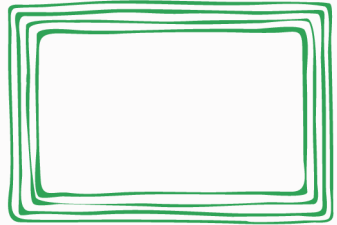
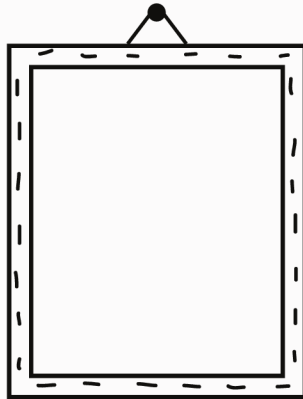
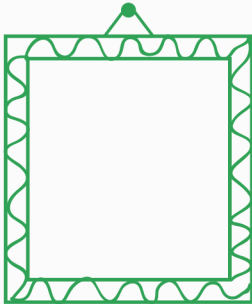
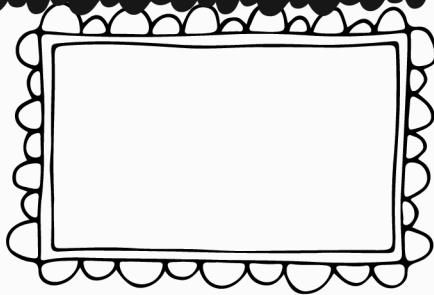
**Complete this with
contact details
for your support
points**

All about you

This is your self-care toolkit.

This is for you. No one else.

Use the frames to describe yourself in 6 positive words





5 interesting facts about **you**

How I feel
(a)



**How I want
to feel**
(b)



**Action to take
me from
(a) to (b)**

Try this on a separate sheet of paper, or a journal, to give you more space.

Coping Skills

Positive

- Deep breathing
 - Stretching
 - Meditation
- Listening to music
 - Exercising
 - Reading
- Going for a walk
 - Taking a bath
- Socialising with friends
- Sitting outside and relaxing
 - Engaging in a hobby



Negative

- Yelling
- Acting aggressively
 - Overeating
- Drinking too much alcohol
 - Smoking
 - Pacing
- Biting your fingernails
 - Taking drugs
 - Skipping meals
- Withdrawing from family/friends
- Dangerous driving



Your Coping Skills

Be honest with yourself when evaluating your current behaviours!

Which strategies do you use?

Positive

Negative

**Find yourself
lashing out?**

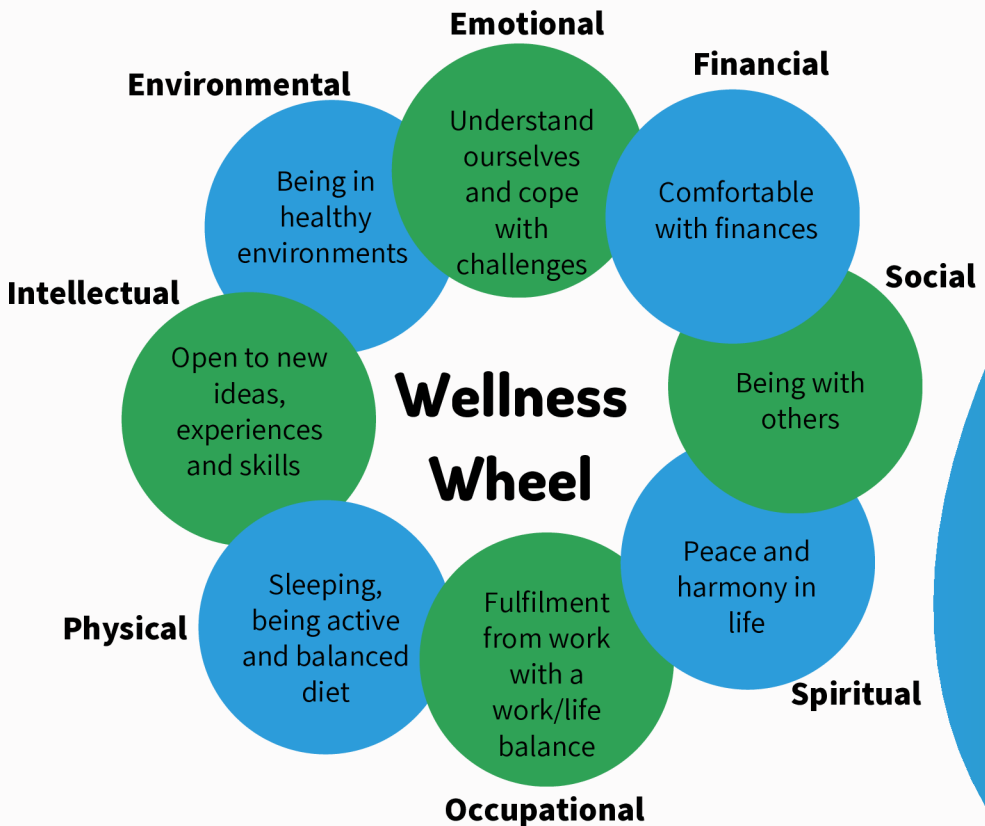
**It may be time to
re-evaluate your
coping skills.**

Identify Your Self-Care Needs

We are all faced with unique challenges. No two people have the same self-care needs.

Self-care extends far beyond your basic physical needs.

Think about your psychological, emotional, spiritual, social, financial, and workplace well-being.



Identify Your Self-Care Needs

Using the wellness wheel think about what your self care needs are

What do you value and need in your everyday life - daily self-care needs?

e.g. rest, a place to be creative....



What do you value and need in the event of a crisis - emergency self-care needs?

e.g. emotional support from family, a safe refuge....



Five ways to well-being

There are so many ways to think about self-care and what works for you. We thought we would put it into the 5 ways of wellbeing as a way for you to start thinking about what you can start doing to look after number one. You.

These 5 areas we hope will start to give you some idea of how to build your toolkit, and we hope that as you do more of the exercises, and read more of our stories, you'll find new and better ways to make that work for you.



Connect



**Keep
Learning**



**Be
Active**



Give



**Take
Notice**

Be active

“I have discovered resistance training, which has helped me with both my physical and mental health; it has boosted my mood and gave me body confidence.”

Ines

Being active isn't all about going to the gym or doing press ups! Walking or moving about regularly is also a way of being active.

Have a go!

Think of 5 different ways to get moving



Thoughts from the community

“When practicing yoga sometimes moving very slowly, sometimes a little more dynamically depending on my energy. Focusing on really small movements and feeling into the body and breath takes me into a greater sense of awareness.”

Emma

Before doing any new physical activity please ensure you consult a health professional if you have any concerns.

Child's Pose

Kneel on the floor with a cushions/pillows or rolled/folded blankets vertically in front of you. Keeping the toes together, let the knees spread apart wide and lengthen your torso and arms forward over your cushions with your head turned to one side, then turn your head the opposite way halfway through the time you're taking here.



Reclined Butterfly

Place a pile of pillows or cushions on the floor, then lie down on your back onto the pillows (you may want an extra cushions or folded blanket under your head). Bring the soles of your feet together and allow your knees to move apart adding as much additional support (cushions etc) as you need under the outside edges of your knees/thighs.

Legs Up The Wall

Place some pillows horizontally a few inches from the wall. Sit on the floor and turn onto your right side, propping yourself up with your hands. Arrange your lower back on the pillows. Lift your legs up and inch up closer to the wall until the back of your legs rest on the wall. Adjust your position on the pillows so that the lower back feels lifted and supported. You may want to place a folded blanket under the neck and head.



Thoughts from the community

“Sometimes even yoga teachers don’t know what to do when they arrive on their mat so to help me shift some energy and get into my body and out of my head, I find these techniques super helpful. Literally just tapping the whole of my body with my hands and then having a good old shake out, even a minute of this can make a real difference. ‘When in doubt shake it out’ is a motto I live by at the best of times!”

Emma



Have a go!

**Make a playlist of songs
which you can shake it
out to!**



Connect

Human connection is such a wonderful tool.

Sounds simple, but it's so powerful.

How else can we know that we are not alone in the world unless we connect with each other?

“We all need somebody to talk to. It would be good if we talked.... not just pitter-patter, but real talk. We shouldn't be so afraid, because most people really like this contact; that you show you are vulnerable makes them free to be vulnerable.” – Liv Ullmann

Have a go!

Make a list of all the people you chat to.

(this can be anyone from the postman to the cashier at the corner shop!)



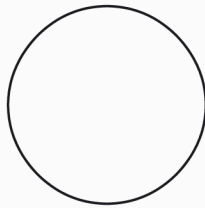
Who you can talk to

Have a go!

Put yourself in the middle of the circle.

Create a spider diagram of all the people in your life that you might be able to turn to for help or advice, or just talk to if you had a problem or were feeling down.

You can add external services such as the Samaritans helpline.



Thoughts from the community

One simple way to ease a burden: share it with others

“Ask for help!

I can't deal with the supermarket shopping, and am getting the assistance of my mother coming round with me.

I didn't think to ask, but after the second time of ending up distressed (out of two) she said we'd do it that way.”

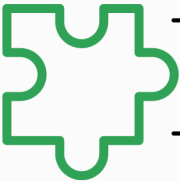
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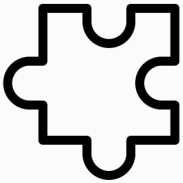


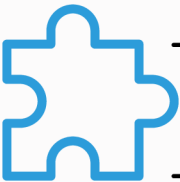
What's missing?

What support
do **you** need









Thoughts from the community

"In one session with a counsellor that I had at the time, she asked me to imagine myself standing on a station platform. She said she could see me struggling to carry very heavy suitcases. Each of those cases contained a different trauma –abuse, anxieties and so on –that was weighing me down.

She encouraged me to draw a picture of myself, and to add suitcases, writing on each one the many things that were making me anxious.

I lost count of how many there were.

After this the counsellor asked me to close my eyes, to imagine trying to carry all the cases at once, and then to let them go, walking away and leaving them where they were.

The idea was not to walk away and not pick any of them up again, that would be impossible, but to pick one up at a time, to open it, look inside, and deal with whatever the anxiety or problem was. I have done this many, many times since that day, as I am quick to try and pick them all up. The release you feel when you drop the cases is immense, and I have encouraged others to use this exercise many times since then."

Jane



Easing the load

Fill the suitcases with different things that are making you feel anxious

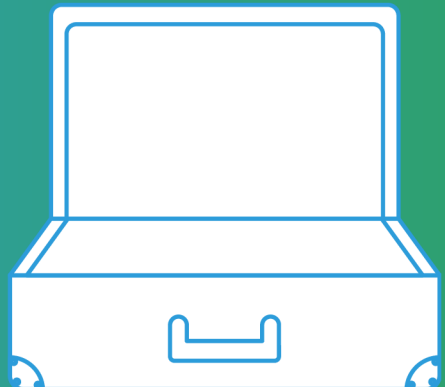


Once they are full,
close your eyes.

Take each suitcase and
close each one firmly shut.

When you are in a
comfortable space,
open up each one and think
about its contents.

ONLY OPEN ONE AT A TIME



Be Kind

Don't forget about being kind to yourself!

It's important that what we do for others, we also do for ourselves. You do this by being kind to yourself.

Self-kindness can also be called self-compassion; being your own best friend.

How you use it really depends on you.

Are you struggling with critical thoughts and want to remind yourself of nice things?

Or perhaps you really need a pick-me-up like a treat.

Imagine if your friend was upset. You would try to find what would help them feel better, and do kind things for them.



Be Kind

Have a go!

**Take a 2-minute self-appreciation
break every day this week.**

Slow down, take a break and answer this question:

What are 3 things I can say to be kind to myself?

Write 6 examples below to help you with this practise.

Examples, 'Let whatever you do today be enough', 'I don't
have to change myself' or 'I am good enough'.



Give

According to research from Emory University, when you are kind to another person, your brain's pleasure and reward centres light up. It's as if you were the recipient of the good deed and not the giver.

This phenomenon is called the “helper’s high”.

There are many different ways you can be kind to another!



Have a go!

Try some of these and see how it feels.

Offer to take your neighbours bins in for them.

Offer to buy something from the shop for your housemate or partner

Making a card for someone just to say they are special.

Thoughts from the community

“For me, it's really rewarding to be able to give people something.

It's really satisfying to be able to think about what a person might like or need and show them in a gift.

It makes me feel really positive knowing that I've made a difference to someone's day, even if it's just something really small.”

Jane



Have a go!

How about giving someone a gratitude box?

The gratitude box is a thoughtful way to share your feelings with loved ones and cultivate your own sense of gratitude.

On the paper, write down a heartfelt message of gratitude to your loved one.

If you're not sure how to start, here are some suggestions to begin your message

- 1) "Thank you for..."
- 2) "What I love about you..."
- 3) "My holiday wish for you..."

You can also collect messages from others about your loved one, to pack the box with multiple messages of gratitude and love.

Place the message(s) into the box, wrap it up or put a bow on it, and give it to your loved one as a special gift, to both your loved one and yourself.

Self Acceptance

It can be a real challenge to accept yourself as you are now, to recognise that who you are in this present moment, is enough.

“Because one believes in oneself, one doesn’t try to convince others. Because once one is content with oneself, one doesn’t need others’ approval. Because one accepts oneself, the whole world accepts him or her.” — Lao Tzu



Self Acceptance

Have a go!

Some examples could be:

I am kind and caring

I have a positive influence on others around me.

I am resilient and adaptable

I know that in difficult times I can find ways to cope.

I am creative and enjoy making things for my own pleasure.



Keep Learning

“It can be really stressful and have a negative impact on my mental health to set myself goals or be too caught up with needing to succeed.

But for me I know that keeping my brain active is really important.

It’s less about the goals and the needing to have something done, it’s more about being able to keep my brain alive with new thoughts and ideas.

For me, learning new things without a set goal in mind has a really positive impact and keeps me going even if it’s just little things along the way”

Jo



Keep Learning

Have a go!

Think about 5 different things that you would like to learn.

There could be all sorts of different things. It could be a new recipe, a new skill like knitting or crochet, circus skills or yoga, learning how to grow vegetables or doing some training. Maybe you want to know more about mental health or learn a new language.





Resources Page



www.futurelearn.com
A huge range of online courses.



www.makebox.com
For packs to learn a new craft skill.



www.bbcgoodfood.com
A huge range of new recipes.



www.instructables.com
A huge amount of all sorts of things!!

Local things to try

Adult Education in Gloucestershire
Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing College
The Butterfly Garden

THE
MUSIC
WORKS



Creativity

Tapping in to creative energy can improve your overall health.

It might sound too good to be true but by doing creative things, even as simple as colouring books, improves brain function and mental and physical health.



Let the ideas flow.

The more you can let go of getting things perfect or overthinking then the more creative you are and the more ideas you have.

You can use this idea in lots of different areas of life, but try the exercise on the next page to get you started.

Creativity

Have a go!

Give yourself 5 minutes.

Fill in as many circles on the next page as possible.

The aim is quantity, not quality.

Maybe all your circles are variations on a theme, perhaps they are all emojis.

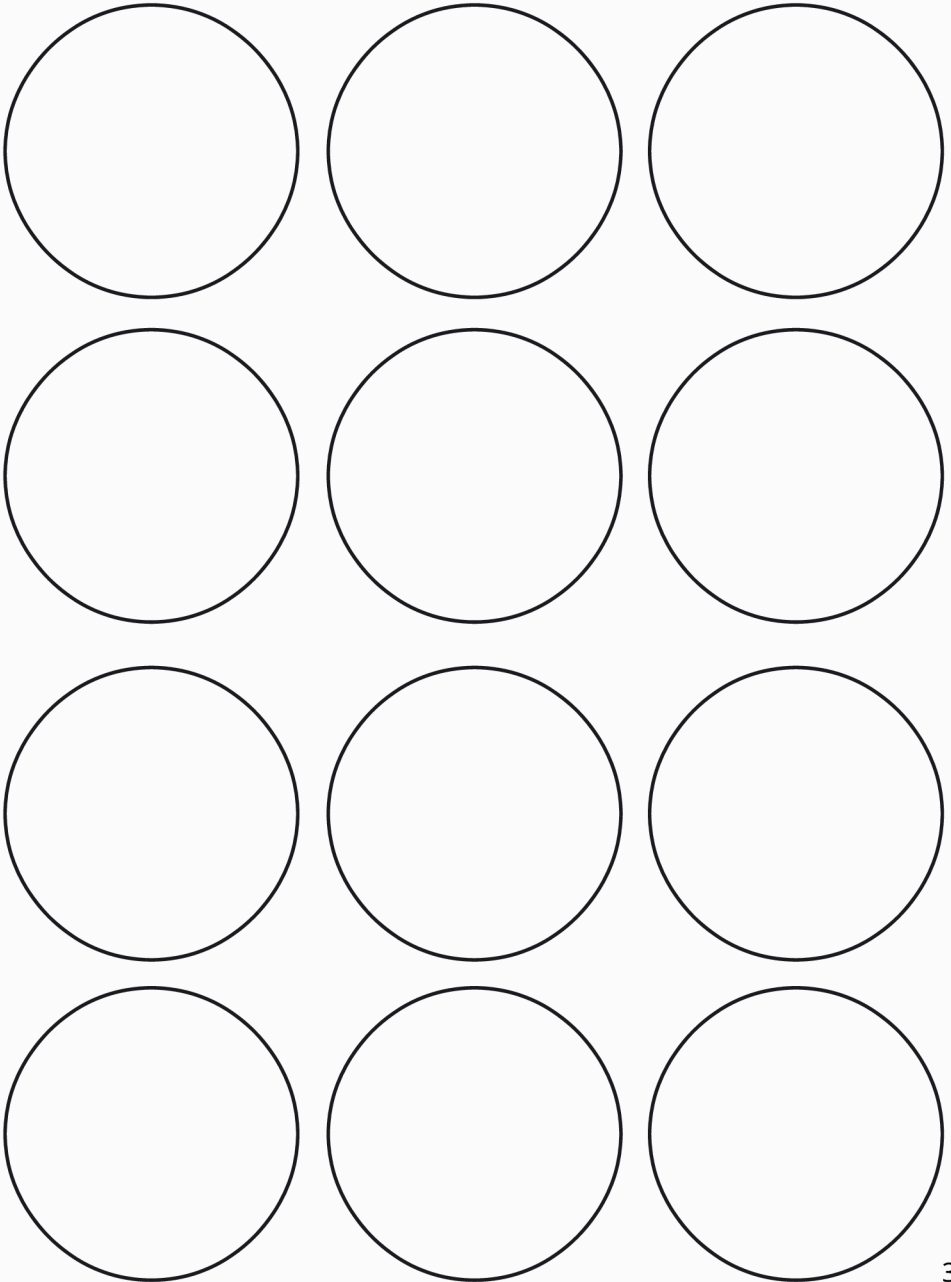
Your goal is to fill out as many as possible.

The idea is to stop yourself from self-censoring.

When you go for quantity, you don't have time to think your idea is bad, you can edit later.

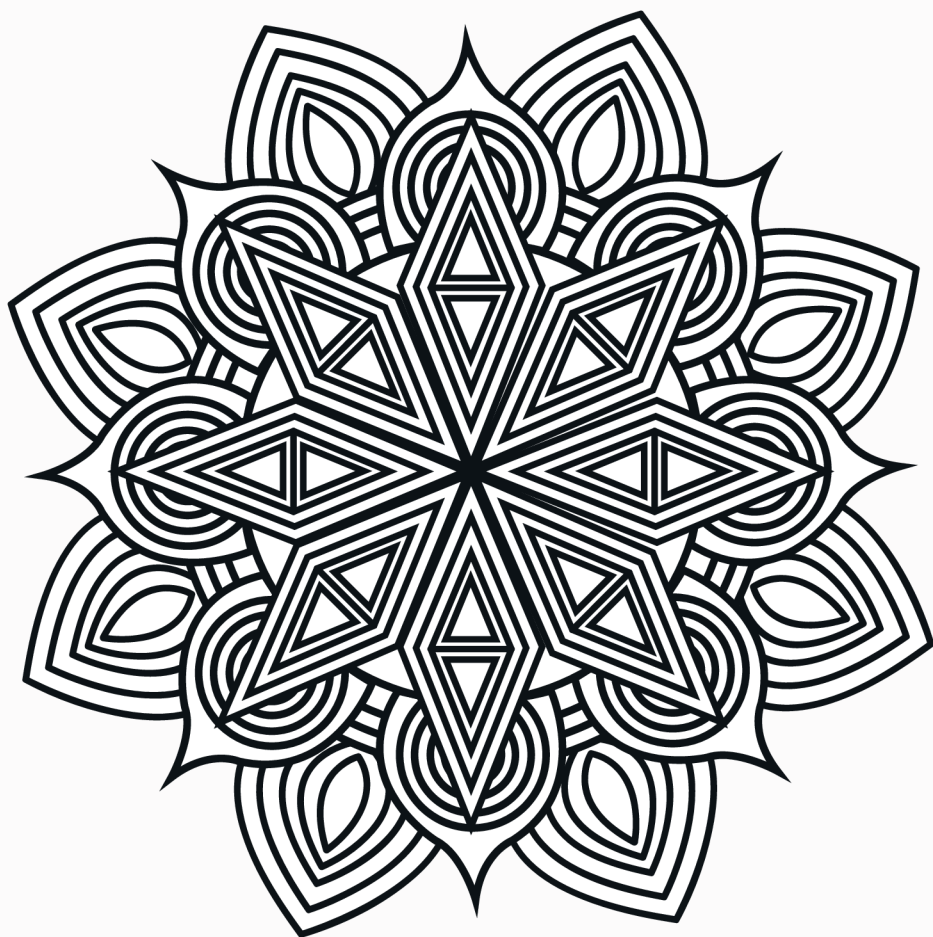
This is the stage where creativity flourishes.

Creativity



Creativity – Colouring

You might think colouring is just for kids! But it really concentrates your mind, you'll wonder where the time has gone! It's really beneficial when you've got a lot on your mind and need some respite.



Thoughts from the community

“I’ve always found songwriting really helps with my mental health – it keeps me relaxed when I need it to, and give me a way to vent when things are tough.

I love being creative, and I’ve bought a new microphone and audio interface to do some recording from home which is definitely a work in progress!

This didn’t cost too much, and has really helped recently – I think recording once I get used to the software, it’ll be the beginning a nice little project for lockdown.”

Dan

Have a go!
Are you musical?
Could you do something similar?



Take Notice

We spend so much time moving around being busy, or being in the same space over and over again that we forget to stop and take notice of our surroundings.

How many times have you seen a sunset and not stopped to take it how beautiful it is?



Take Notice

Have a go!

“If you see something that moves you, and then snap it, you keep a moment”

Linda McCartney

Go out and try some mindful photography, just with your phone if you don't have a camera.

Just take a moment to soak it in and keep it as a photograph in your head.

Be present don't focus on the shot you just took, or the one you might take if only the sun would drop behind the tree.

Be aware of the moment you are in and respectfully give it your full attention.



Thoughts from the community

“When a challenge comes, it’s good to know the moment will pass and things will get better. Don’t let a moment become a setback. ”

Andy

Have a go!

Write down all the things you can be proud of in the last 5 years.

These don’t have to be big things. It could be being able to get out of bed 2 days in row, or being able to speak to a friend when you needed it.



Thoughts from the community

“Connect with nature, however you can, with whatever you have.

Not everyone has a garden but if you have or can get somewhere to feel your feet on the actual earth, smell some flowers, hug a tree, sit quietly outside, there is no better medicine.”

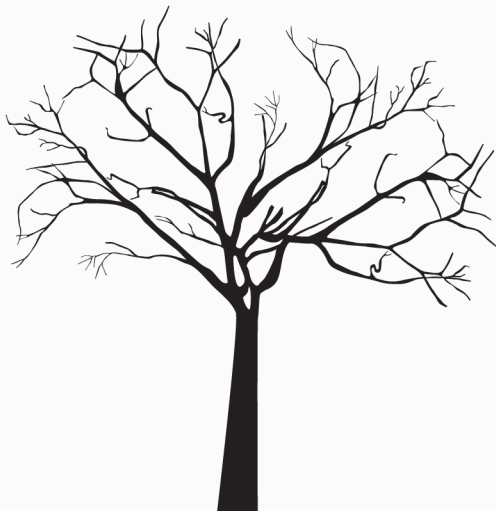
Meg



Thoughts from the community

Have a go!

Go outside, sit in the garden or look out the window. List as many things from nature that you can see, and add them to the end of the branches



Thoughts from the community

“Someone once said to me, whatever it is you are worried or stressed about take a moment and ask yourself, 'will this matter in 5 years time'?

If the answer is yes, then take 5 minutes now to think about it.

If not then forget about it. This stops me from worrying about absolutely everything and only the things that matter.”

Izzy

Have a go!

Take a piece of paper and take a moment to think about what you worried and stressed about.

Write down all the things that you're worried about that will matter in 5 year time.

Then screw up the piece of paper and throw it in the bin.



Barriers and Areas for Improvement

Think about the existing coping strategies and self-care tools you have used so far.

What is working?

e.g. I found the mindful photography really useful and really like the photos I've taken.



What is not working?

e.g. I get stressed about having to exercise regularly.



Keep the helpful tools and ditch the stuff that does not help you!

Barriers and Areas for Improvement

Think about

Are there barriers to maintaining your self-care?

e.g. I find it difficult to talk to people when I'm feeling down.



How might you address these barriers?

e.g. I can write things down and share it with others.
I can remind myself that something little will make me feel better and start small.



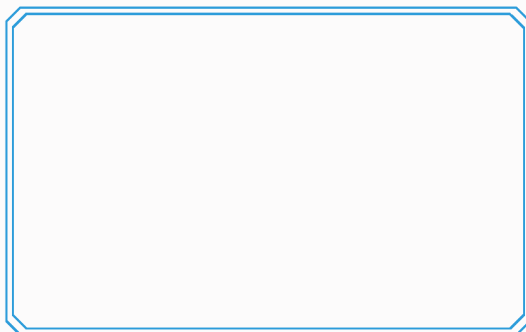
If you find yourself using negative strategies, then begin by choosing one action you feel is most harmful and identify a positive strategy to replace it.

Positive coping skills are an important part of your self-care toolkit.

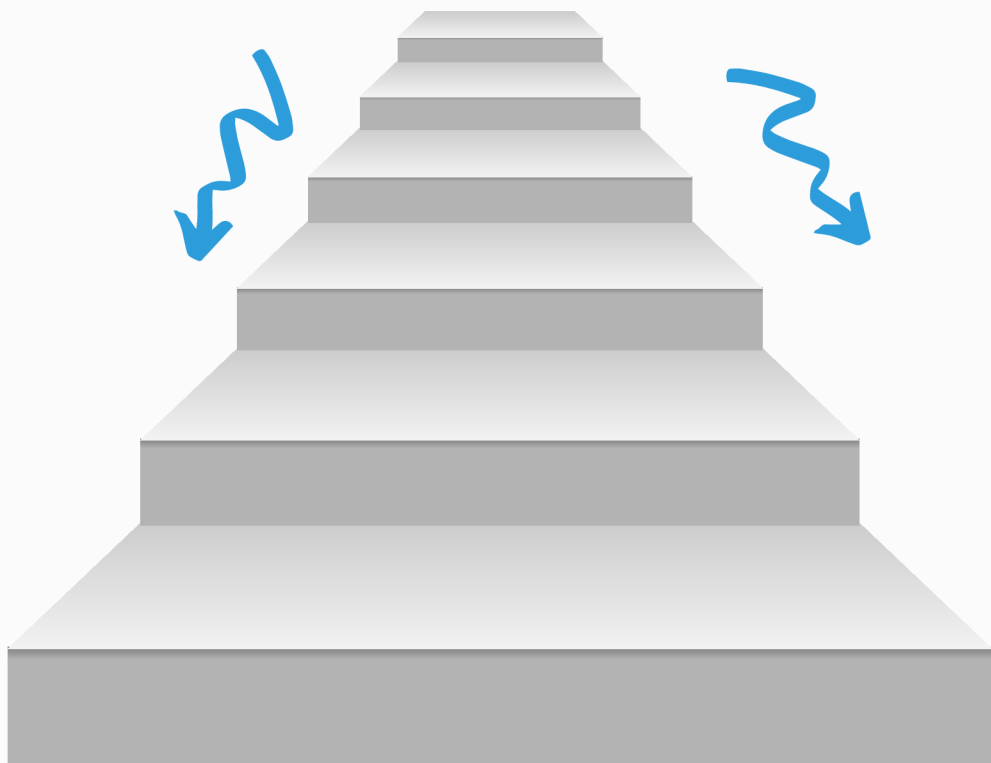
Over To You

Use these worksheets and resources to devise your own self-care plan.

Your Goal



the small steps



Over To You

Day Plan

To do

Drinks



Sleep

The Best Bit

The Worst Bit

Self-Care

Overall Feeling



My Self-Care Declaration

I promise to:

I will remember to:

**At all times, particularly in times of
uncertainty and stress, I will:**

I will try my absolute hardest to:

I will choose kindness. *Always.*

Signed:

My Emergency Self-Care Plan

List your top five emergency self-care practices.



List five practises, people, places, or things to avoid during times of crisis or stress.



Now that you have created your self-care plan, look at it regularly. It takes time to form good habits. Make a commitment to yourself and practice your self-care routine as often as possible – you are worth it.

Who to talk to



- **Adult Education Gloucestershire** www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/adult-education-in-gloucestershire. Providing learning for individuals, employers and communities
- **Age UK** www.ageuk.org.uk/gloucestershire
- **Art Shape** Runs a countywide programme of arts course. www.artshape.co.uk
- **Be Well Gloucestershire** A huge list of local resources. www.bewellglos.org.uk
- **Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)** A leading movement against suicide supporting anyone affected by suicide or having suicidal thoughts. www.thecalmzone.net
0800 58 58 58 Open 24/7
- **CCP - Cheltenham Community Projects** Supporting people to prevent homelessness and promote independence. www.ccp.org.uk
- **Change Grow Live** Supporting people with alcohol and substance misuse, reducing, controlling or stopping your substance use. www.changegrowlive.org
- **Citizens' Advice Bureau** www.gloscab.org.uk/formcitizen
- **Cheltenham Open Door** Supports vulnerable, disadvantaged and lonely people www.cheltenhamopendoor.org.uk
- **Connect and Offload** Emotional and practical support, for anyone. Also includes carers, professionals, and family. Text: 07537 410 022 Call: 0808 801 0606
2:00pm-9:00pm
365 days per year



Who To Talk To

- **GDASS** Supporting victims of domestic abuse.
www.gdass.org.uk
01452 726 570
support@gdass.org.uk
- **Gloucestershire Counselling** Affordable counselling.
www.gloscounselling.org.uk
- **Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Support** www.glosrasac.org
- **Health Watch Gloucestershire** Info about local health and social care services - find the care and support you need.
www.healthwatchgloucestershire.co.uk
- **Inspired Minds** Faith based mental health charity. Affordable video and telephone counselling.
www.inspiredminds.org.uk
- **Kingfisher Treasure Seekers** Variety of support from social through to volunteering.
www.kftseekers.org.uk
- **Listening Post** Affordable counselling.
www.listeningpost.org.uk
- **Mental Health Matters** 24/7 phone and web chat for emotional support and signposting to services.
www.mhm.org.uk
- **NHS Crisis Team** Crisis Team Available 24/7
0800 169 0398
or 111 option 2.
www.ghc.nhs.uk/crisis
- **NHS Talking Therapy** Gloucestershire Talking Therapies
0800 073 2200.
www.talk2gether.nhs.uk

Who To Talk To

- **Paint It Yourself Pottery Co** Based in Cheltenham.
www.piy.co.uk 
- **Samaritans** 24/7 support
116 123
www.samaritans.org
- **SANEline** Out of hours helpline offering emotional support and info to anyone affected by mental health.
0300 304 7000.
- **Shout** www.giveusashout.org. 5-midnight
Text 'shout' to 85258. Web chat
- **Suicide Crisis** Available 24/7 Tel: 07975 974455
www.suicidecrisis.co.uk 
- **The Butterfly Garden** www.thebutterflygarden.org.
An educational, therapeutic and recreational scheme for people of all ages dealing with disablement of any kind
- **The Nelson Trust** Offering community women's service.
www.nelsontrust.com
- **Qwell** Free anonymous online counselling and self-help resources. www.qwell.io
- **The Music Works** Specialists in working with young people in challenging circumstances to help them reach their full potential in music, in learning, and in life.
www.themusicworks.org.uk
- **Your Circle** A directory to help you find your way around care and support and connect with people, places and activities in Gloucestershire.
www.yourcircle.org.uk
- **You're Welcome** An inclusive online directory and forum.
Find social events, clubs, groups or places to visit.
www.yourewelcomeglos.org

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank those who made this booklet possible and who put in content, shared stories and gave their own experiences of mental ill health to inform the exercises and local organisations who have helped them in crisis.

- MHELO members
- Blurt Foundation UK
- Recovery College
- Inclusion Gloucestershire
- Forwards
- University of Gloucestershire
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Emma Parker (Design and Layout)

We would like to thank everyone who help those living with mental ill health for their time, patience and support.

Without these people, who have a listening ear, and don't judge in times of crisis, some of us might not be here today.

We always welcome feedback on the work we have done. If you would like to give feedback, please email us on mhelo@inclusion-glos.org.

Thank you.



www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/engagement



Registered charity number: 1171559

