



Coping Skills

Psychological Therapies
Wathwood Hospital

What is the booklet for?

We are sharing this booklet with you in the hope that it can offer you some support and tips on how to take care of yourself in terms of good mental health.

It's often a very stressful time having a loved one in hospital - but even more so now with the Covid-19 Virus.

We invite you to have a look at this booklet and see if you can try some of the coping techniques. They might help to reduce your stress and anxiety - and give you something to do too!

We wish you all the very best and hope to be able to meet with you all soon once visits are recommenced

Take care

From all the staff at Wathwood Hospital

COPING SKILLS

The best way to cope with troubling thoughts and feelings is to learn some stress management and coping skills.

The following skills include breathing exercises and some simple guided Mindfulness exercises. We have also included some mindfulness colouring

Not all of them are guaranteed to work for you but please try them and remember - practice makes perfect!

Calming Breath

If you pay attention to your breathing and **try to slow it down** this can work very quickly to calm the body and mind

- Breath in for 2
- Hold for 2
- Breath out for 4

- Repeat

Try to do this for a few rounds - as often as you like really - and when you notice yourself getting stressed out

Relaxation

Finding ways to fully relax the mind and body is very important – here are a few ideas:

- **Spend time in the garden breathing and smelling the flowers and herbs and looking up at the sky**
- **Lie down on your bed and focus on relaxing all your muscles one at a time from the tip of your head down to your toes.**
- **Listen to music that you know is calming**



Visualise or imagine a beautiful relaxed place that you have in your memory or somewhere you might like to visit someday - sit quietly with this peaceful image

Meditate – try the grounding technique, body scan or Mindfulness Breathing (Imaginary balloon) in this booklet– or maybe you have your own



Distraction

We all need distractions - and this is particularly important when we have a lot of worries or concerns on our minds

Too much thinking or 'ruminating' can be unhelpful and make some mental health problems worse.

Keep busy 'doing' stuff

Read

Listen to music

Go out in the countryside

Watch TV - programs that are not anxiety provoking

Take time for self-care (have a nice long shower or bath, put fresh clean clothes on, organise your home)



ANXIETY GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

focus on your breathing, then identify

5 things
you can
see



3 things
you can
hear



4 things
you can
touch



2 things
you can
smell



1 thing
you can
taste



Be ACTIVE

Even if you are indoors

Move your body



& stretch

See how many steps you can do in a day?

Dance in your home to your favourite music - make it fun 😊

Fuel up!

Make sure you keep hydrated - **drink enough water** (*not too much tea or coffee*)



&



Eat healthy (*more fruit and vegetables*)

This helps both your physical AND mental health!

Think of **3 things you are grateful for** in life and say why

"I am grateful for my feet because they keep me walking!"

1. I am grateful for

Because

2. I am grateful for

Because

3. I am grateful for

Because



Body Scan

Lie down or sit up tall in your chair.

Take a few deep breaths, paying attention to your breath as it goes in and out.

Slowly scan your body from head to toe, bringing your attention to each area of your body:



Take your time - do this slowly - it's not a race

- Start with the top of your head, moving to the sides of your head
- To your face, forehead, eyes, mouth and jaw
- And now to the neck and shoulders
- To your upper arms, forearms, wrists, and hands
- Take note of any sensations you may feel, without judging or trying to change anything
- Now to the chest and upper back

- Be aware of your heartbeat and your breathing
- Pay attention to your tummy and lower back
- Notice any thoughts that may be running through your mind, and just let them go, bringing your attention back to your body
- Notice your hips, thighs and knees
- Down to the shins, calves, ankles and feet
- Become aware of your body as a whole and feel how your whole body is connected
- Finally bring your attention back to your breath, and for a few moments feel your entire body expand and contract with each inhale and exhale

This simple practice can be done as much as you like. Studies have shown that regular practice of the body scan can reduce stress and have a positive effect on emotional and physical well being

Emergency Coping!



If you feel:

- Overwhelmed
- Like you can't cope
- Overanxious
- Or acting aggressively

Then you need to find a way to get through this safely – you may need some help

Please talk to someone as soon as possible

You may also like to try the following **STOPP** exercise

It may help you to take some control of your emotions and your life.

STOP!

Just pause for a moment

TAKE A BREATH

Notice your breathing as you breathe in and out. In through the nose, out through the mouth.

OBSERVE

- What thoughts are going through your mind right now?
- Where is your **focus of attention**?
- What are you reacting to?
- What sensations do you notice in your body?

PULL BACK - PUT IN SOME PERSPECTIVE

- DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU THINK!
- What's the bigger picture?
- What is another way of looking at this situation?
- What advice would I give a friend?

- What would a trusted friend say to me right now?
- Is this thought a **fact or opinion**?
- What is a more reasonable explanation?
- How important is this? How important will it be in 6 months' time?
- **It will pass**

PRACTISE WHAT WORKS - PROCEED

- What is the best thing to do right now?
- What is the most helpful thing for me, for others, for the situation?
- Where can I focus my attention right now?
- Do what will be effective and appropriate

BASIC GROUNDING Exercise

Aim: To bring yourself 100% into the present, where you are in control.

Exercise: Take your attention away from your thoughts, away from your head and into your body.

Awareness of body

- o Notice what it feels like to be a body sitting in a chair
- o Notice your weight on the chair
- o Notice how your back feels against the chair
- o Notice all the things you can feel
- o Things that normally our mind does not notice because they are not 'interesting'

Awareness of breath

- o Notice your breathing
- o Going in and out – keeping you alive
- o Connecting you with the world

Awareness of thoughts and letting these go

- o If we are quiet for a minute, you will notice thoughts coming into your head
- o Perhaps taking you away – into the past or the future
- o Away from the present. That is what thoughts do
- o Note them and let them go
- o Come back to the breath and to the present moment.

Feel grounded and still - as though you are a ship at sea and you have just dropped anchor



Mindfulness Breathing Exercise (Imaginary balloon)

The primary goal of this breathing exercise is simply a calm, non-judging awareness, allowing thoughts and feelings to come and go without getting caught up in them.



- Sit comfortably, with your eyes closed and your spine reasonably straight.
- Bring your attention to your breathing.
- Imagine that you have a balloon in your tummy. Every time you breathe in, the balloon inflates. Each time you breathe out, the balloon deflates. Notice the sensations in your abdomen as the balloon inflates and deflates. Your abdomen rising with the in-breath, and falling with the out-breath.
- Thoughts will come into your mind, and that's okay, because that's just what the human mind does. Simply notice those thoughts, then bring your attention back to your breathing.

- Likewise, you can notice sounds, physical feelings, and emotions, and again, just bring your attention back to your breathing.
- You don't have to follow those thoughts or feelings, don't judge yourself for having them, or analyse them in any way. It's okay for the thoughts to be there. Just notice those thoughts, and let them drift on by, bringing your attention back to your breathing.
- Whenever you notice that your attention has drifted off and is becoming caught up in thoughts or feelings, simply note that the attention has drifted, and then gently bring the attention back to your breathing.

NB - It's okay and natural for thoughts to enter your awareness, and for your attention to follow them. No matter how many times this happens, just keep bringing your attention back to your breathing.

Self-Soothing

Practice the self-soothing techniques below to prevent getting overloaded by the stress of the world or your internal stress.

Place your hand over your heart



Sit like this with your eyes closed if you are comfortable with this and try to smile softly and relax all the muscles in your face neck and shoulders.

This is something that might help if you are missing the company of your friends or loved ones.

Other ways to soothe:

- Take a nice warm shower or bath with your favourite scented body wash
- Hugging your pillow
- Slowly sipping a hot chocolate while getting cosy and watching a film

Any others?

Discover what works for you

We hope you have found this booklet helpful

Just remember.....

These skills often feel difficult or
'weird' when you first try them but
with practice they will get easier

*“Whatever you practice grows
stronger “*

(and that goes for good **and** bad habits
too!)

**Best wishes from all
the Carers Link Team
at
Wathwood Hospital**

**Booklet produced by the Psychology Team
at Wathwood**