



WELLBEING JOURNAL

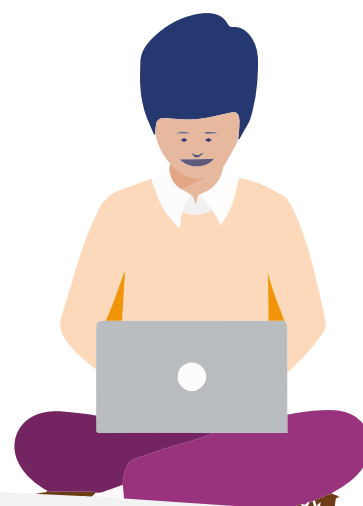
Let's Chat is a specialist package of mental health and wellbeing support developed for the further education community.

Its resources and toolkits will help staff and students to look after their mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience so they can move forward and cope with the different challenges we face today. It has been created with funding from the Department for Education (DfE) via the college collaboration fund as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the FE community.

The project is a partnership between two large further education colleges and a specialist delivery partner:

- **Weston College of Further Education**
- **Gateshead College**
- **Somerset Counselling Centre**

This journal provides a reflective and personal document to continue the development of your skills along the wellbeing journal. Each section of this journal contains practical exercises and a space that allows for personal reflection, allowing you to construct an individualised toolkit providing maximum benefit to your wellbeing needs.



WELLBEING JOURNAL

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SECTION 1

Anxiety and Stress

Feelings of Anxiety and Stress can affect us all at different times. Despite common misconceptions, they are not the same thing and do not affect the body in the same ways. Stress can come and go according to changes in the cause (Anxiety UK, 2021). Anxiety can also come and go and affect us differently but both conditions have a physiological cause and may be felt in the body.

There are different types of stress and it is useful for our own wellbeing to become aware and mindful of these as we navigate daily life. Stress management can be confusing if we are not aware of the differing types of stress that may affect us from time to time.

When we become stressed, it may bring on episodes of Anxiety and this is why it is

so useful to differentiate between the two. At its most basic level, stress is a bodily response to pressures from a situation or life event. Stress can arise from events that include uncertainty and a lack of control to experiencing something new or unexpected. When we encounter stress, our body produces hormones that may trigger a “fight or flight” response that activates the immune system (Segestrom & Miller, 2004).

Stress can also have an emotional component to it and may activate an emotional response within us. This too can have consequences on our bodies and minds and is a reason why mindfulness and the skills you have learnt in emotional and cognitive literacy are incredibly useful.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Becoming self-aware of the activating event and things that can act as stressors.

Think of the last time you felt fear. When you can connect to that episode, try and answer the following questions:

1. What was my fear response? Fight, flight or freeze?
2. What was my bodily response? Heart pounding, sweating etc.
3. Did I recognise the feeling of fear?

Notes

SECTION 1

Anxiety and Stress

Self-awareness is crucial to our wellbeing because it allows us to identify and become familiar with our external stressors and our associated emotional response. We can then also learn tools to de-escalate our physiological response and let the body

know that it is safe. It may not simply be enough to identify our stressors and get rid of them or move them elsewhere, we need to complete the stress cycle and let the body know in order to complete the cycle (Nagoski, E & A. 2019).



PRACTICAL EXERCISE: STRESS RELEASE

There are some fabulous methods to complete the stress cycle in the table below. See if you can find some ways to integrate these into your daily life.

Method	Benefits	How can I build this in my life?
Physical (walking, moving)	Increases serotonin if outside.	
Breathing exercises	De-escalates the central nervous system- techniques listed further in this toolkit	
Belly laughter	Can regulate emotional responses	
Tactile strategies	Can release oxytocin	
Crying	Physical release and expression of stress. Can often be cathartic.	

SECTION 1

Anxiety and Stress

Physical stress releases can also include basic stretches and are useful if you are desk based for your working day. These include torso twists, shoulder shrugs and basic yoga poses for example child's pose (see right).



BREATHING EXERCISES

Learning the art of breathing and relaxation can be a game changer in terms of both stress and anxiety. It can have great benefit if you can practice some of the exercises daily. One of the best techniques is known as the 4-7-8 exercise and is below for you to try:

Practical Exercise: 4-7-8 Breathing

- One cycle of 4-7-8 breathing gives an extra boost of oxygen. Effective for anxiety and stress.
- Place your tongue against the roof of your mouth and keep it there the whole time.
- Part your lips slightly and exhale with a whooshing sound through your mouth.
- Close your lips and inhale silently through your nose. Count to 4 in your head.
- Hold your breath for 7 seconds.
- Exhale (with a whoosh sound) for 8 seconds.
- Practice this mindlessly to let your brain relax.
- Complete this cycle for four full breaths.

SECTION 1

Anxiety and Stress

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Therapeutic video from let's chat on the topic of stress. You can watch this video as many times as you like and it will introduce you to the emotion of stress.

www.letschatwellbeing.co.uk/resources/stress

Notes



SECTION 1

Anxiety and Stress

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Every-day journaling. There are some great tools to achieve optimum levels of wellbeing in times of stress and they include:

- The Physical Body and Being Active
- Achieving and Giving
- Connecting
- Learning
- Enjoyment and being in the present moment

Using a diary and aiming for a good balance of activities over the week can help us

ensure we are looking after our wellbeing and integrate good wellbeing into our daily lives until it becomes habitual. You can visit the NHS 5 ways to wellbeing to learn more about these also. Note down which of the above you have completed over the course of a week, you may find some are missing and you may like to make time for them.

A habitual diary/journal also allows us time to notice habits and to spot gaps where we may be able to stop and pause or integrate a positive wellbeing activity into our lives.

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

MHFA have developed an interactive stress container which is a useful exercise for yourself and colleagues. You can find it here:

[stress-container-resource-download.pdf \(mhfaengland.org\)](https://www.mhfaengland.org/stress-container-resource-download.pdf)

SECTION 2

Your Information Diet and Spheres of Influence

PLANNING YOUR INFORMATION DIET

The media is fully aware that our brains are built to fixate on threat, uncertainty and negativity. Most news sources are negatively biased; and can sometimes speculate in order to win your attention, this can be anxiety inducing. Anxiety is easily fuelled

by consuming this kind of information. To reduce anxiety, it's important to be aware of and take control over your information diet. Therefore, it's a good emotional wellbeing tool to take control over the sources of information that feed your mind.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

What are my trusted sources of information and how much time per day can I devote to them?

Let's Chat have developed a great range of resources around information sources and you can locate one about Social Media here:

[Social Media - LetsChat \(letschatwellbeing.co.uk\)](https://letschatwellbeing.co.uk)

Personal Notes from Video

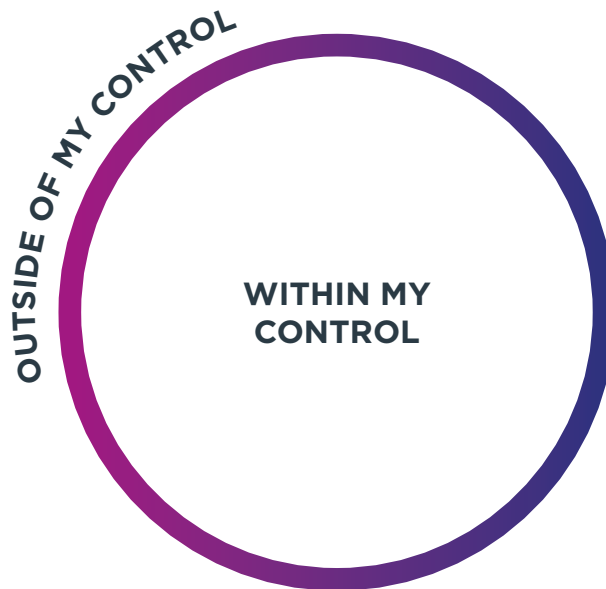
SECTION 2

Your Information Diet and Spheres of Influence

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE:

If you're prone to hypothetical worry (i.e., the 'what if?' thoughts), you may find it helpful to practice noticing these thoughts and then redirecting your attention to things within your control. Research shows that when we shift our focus to what we can control, we see meaningful and lasting differences in our wellbeing, health, and

performance. So, write down what you have control over inside the circle below. Then, note the things you cannot control outside of the circle, using the table below also. Remember: You cannot stop hypothetical worries from occurring, but you can control your response to them.



Within my control	Outside of my control

SECTION 3

Mindfulness

It can be easy to rush through life without stopping to notice much.

Paying more attention to the present moment – to your own thoughts and feelings, and to the world around you – can improve your mental wellbeing (NHS, 2021)

Some people call this awareness “mindfulness”. Mindfulness can help us enjoy life more and understand ourselves better. You can take steps to develop it in your own life.

Becoming more aware of the present moment can help us enjoy the world around us more and understand ourselves better.

When we become more aware of the present moment, we begin to experience afresh things that we have been taking for granted. The description of mindfulness from Professor Williams (cited by the NHS) is:

“Mindfulness also allows us to become more aware of the stream of thoughts and feelings that we experience, and to see how we can become entangled in that stream in ways that are not helpful.

“This lets us stand back from our thoughts and start to see their patterns. Gradually, we can train ourselves to notice when our thoughts are taking over and realise that thoughts are simply ‘mental events’ that do not have to control us.

“Most of us have issues that we find hard to let go and mindfulness can help us deal with them more productively. We can ask: ‘Is trying to solve this by brooding about it helpful, or am I just getting caught up in my thoughts?’

“Awareness of this kind also helps us notice signs of stress or anxiety earlier and helps us deal with them better.”

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Take a look at our four pillars of wellbeing; these can all be integrated into daily mindfulness practice.

[Four Pillars - LetsChat \(letschatwellbeing.co.uk\)](https://letschatwellbeing.co.uk)

Personal Notes from Video

SECTION 3

Mindfulness

HOW TO BE MORE MINDFUL

Reminding yourself to take notice of your thoughts, feelings, body sensations and the world around you is the first step to mindfulness. These are the recommended NHS steps to becoming more mindful and can be located via this website:

[Mindfulness - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Notice the everyday

“Even as we go about our daily lives, we can notice the sensations of things, the food we eat, the air moving past the body as we walk,” says Professor Williams. “All this may sound very small, but it has huge power to interrupt the ‘autopilot’ mode we often engage day to day, and to give us new perspectives on life.”

Keep it regular

It can be helpful to pick a regular time – the morning journey to work or a walk at lunchtime – during which you decide to be aware of the sensations created by the world around you.

Try something new

Trying new things, such as sitting in a different seat in meetings or going somewhere new for lunch, can also help you notice the world in a new way.

Watch your thoughts

“Some people find it very difficult to practice mindfulness. As soon as they stop what they’re doing, lots of thoughts and worries crowd in,” says Professor Williams.

“It might be useful to remember that mindfulness isn’t about making these thoughts go away, but rather about seeing them as mental events.

“Imagine standing at a bus station and seeing ‘thought buses’ coming and going without having to get on them and be taken away. This can be very hard at first, but with gentle persistence it is possible.

“Some people find that it is easier to cope with an over-busy mind if they are doing gentle yoga or walking.”

Name thoughts and feelings

To develop an awareness of thoughts and feelings, some people find it helpful to silently name them: “Here’s the thought that I might fail that exam”. Or, “This is anxiety”.



SECTION 3

Mindfulness

Free yourself from the past and future

You can practise mindfulness anywhere, but it can be especially helpful to take a mindful approach if you realise that, for several minutes, you have been trapped in reliving past problems or pre-living future worries.

Research has shown that gratitude has a positive relationship to mental health and wellbeing. Cultivating gratitude has a plethora of benefits, including:

- Reducing stress and anxiety
- Boosting mood
- Strengthening your immune system
- Improving sleep.

A simple way to cultivate gratitude is to keep a gratitude log. Each day at a set time in your daily routine, write down one thing you're grateful for on the below circle. This one has been developed by the Wellness Society and is a fantastic tool.

GRATITUDE LOG

The image shows a circular gratitude log template. At the center is a purple circle with the text "I'M GRATEFUL FOR..." in white. Surrounding this central circle are 18 segments, each representing a day for writing a gratitude entry. The segments are arranged in a ring around the center, with lines radiating from the center to the outer edge of the circle.

SECTION 3

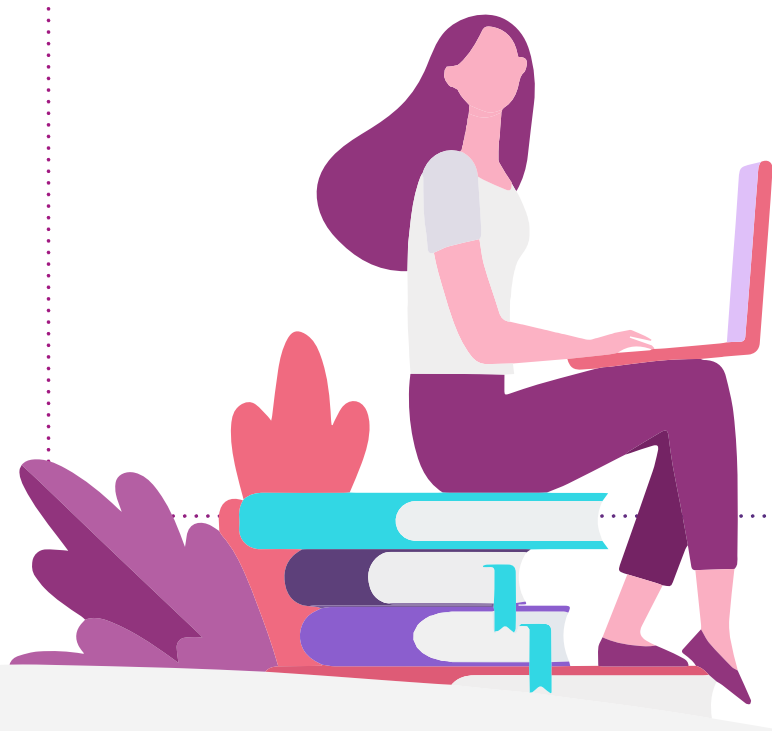
Mindfulness

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Take a look at this video on Relaxation and breathing. See if you can develop a routine to become mindful via your breathing.

[Relax - LetsChat \(letschatwellbeing.co.uk\)](https://letschatwellbeing.co.uk)

Personal Notes



SECTION 4

Relaxation Techniques and Action Planning

This section will enable you to begin planning your own wellness practice, utilising the tools and resources from this journal and from the Let's Chat resources, all of which can be located at www.letschatwellbeing.co.uk

This section provides you with some methods to prevent and reduce anxiety. Choose the ones that appeal most to you to begin your wellness planning.

Maintaining structure and routine can be essential to our wellbeing and can increase our sense of wellbeing. There are some tips below:

Schedule regular breaks. Take time to mindfully drink your tea or focus on your breathing. Apps, such as Calm are wonderful to instil this habit.

- Write a weekly goals list. Identify what you need to do to achieve your weekly goals. Break tasks down into smaller steps and cross them off as you go to maintain a sense of progress throughout the day.
- Identify 1-3 "Most Important Tasks". Creating a daily MIT list helps you prioritize your most important and urgent tasks.

- Review your crossed off items at the end of the day. Taking stock of your achievements can help boost mental wellbeing.
- Try a to do list app. You may prefer a digital format such as Google Keep.
- Experiment with productivity techniques such as The Pomodoro Technique and Eat The Frog.
- Write your daily to do list the night before. You might find that being able to start work straight away helps increase your productivity. Also, this practice can help you clear your mind and switch off in the evening.
- Tidy your workspace at the end of the day. Research finds that cluttered environments interfere with your ability to focus.
- Decide on a regular sleep schedule. When it comes to improving sleep, research suggests that maintaining a regular sleep schedule is of high importance.

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SECTION 4

Relaxation Techniques and Action Planning

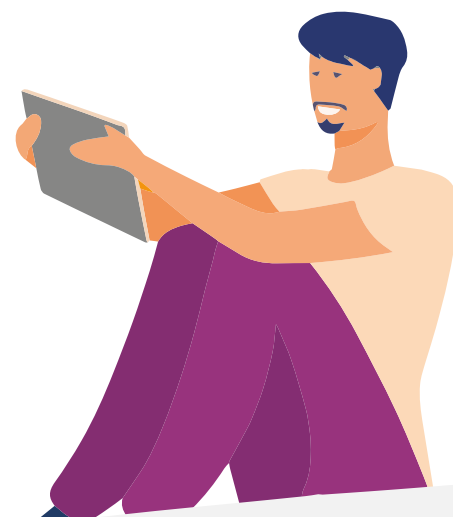
The Wellness Society have some wonderful tools for integrating the above wellness tips into our daily lifestyle and you will find an example of a daily planner below.

Writing things down can ensure we regain a sense of control and do not become overwhelmed. It can also help us to keep things in perspective and allows us to prioritise our tasks and our time.

You can find their website here:

[Self-Help, Therapy and Coaching Tools | The Wellness Society](#)

Notes



SECTION 4

Relaxation Techniques and Action Planning

JOURNALING

There are well documented benefits of journaling. The Wellness Society describes them below:

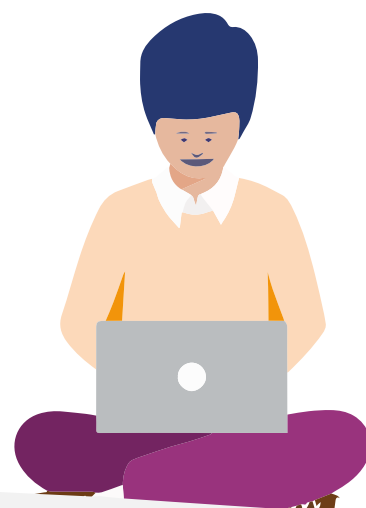
Benefits of Journaling

It helps you slow down your thoughts
You cannot write as fast as you think. In this way, you help your mind slow down the thinking process, helping you to feel less overwhelmed about the number of thoughts that you're being flooded with.

It helps reduce rumination
Rumination is the process where you start from a single thought and then you keep going and going and going until you split everything into a million pieces. You ruminate because you believe that if you keep analyzing things in detail - going over them again and again and again - you might find a solution or have a way to fix or change something. But

this is rarely the case! Rumination can be very intense and extremely difficult to get out of. By slowing down your thoughts, journaling helps you reduce this unhelpful thinking habit.

It helps you gain clarity
Your thoughts can move extremely fast, and by deciding to write things down, you can choose what to pay attention to. After you've finished writing, you can look at what you've written and decide what you want to do with what's there. Remember: you don't have to solve or manage every single thought right then and there. Very often after looking at your written thoughts, you'll find yourself thinking: "Yeah, I might be catastrophising here" and "That thought might not actually be true". In this way, journaling helps you gain clarity and put things into perspective.



SECTION 4

Relaxation Techniques and Action Planning

THE DAILY MENTAL HEALTH JOURNAL

Write down your thoughts or emotions below

When did this occur (e.g day, time)? Can you identify any potential triggers?

How intense was your emotion on a scale of 1-10? Approximately how long did it last?

How did you respond to these thoughts/emotions (e.g what behaviour did you do, what strategy did you use to cope)?

How would you like to respond in future?

SECTION 4

Relaxation Techniques and Action Planning

BREATHING

Breathing is a scientifically proven way to reduce stress and anxiety and there are many different methods to try in terms of maintaining optimum levels of wellbeing.

Below is a calming breathing exercise that you can integrate into your daily wellbeing practice if it suits you. This one focuses on maintaining a sense of calm.

If you're lying down, place your arms a little bit away from your sides, with the palms up. Let your legs be straight, or bend your knees so your feet are flat on the floor.

If you're sitting, place your arms on the chair arms.

If you're sitting or standing, place both feet flat on the ground. Whatever position you're in, place your feet roughly hip-width apart.

- Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it.
- Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from 1 to 5. You may not be able to reach 5 at first.
- Then, without pausing or holding your breath, let it flow out gently, counting from 1 to 5 again, if you find this helpful.
- Keep doing this for 3 to 5 minutes.

Notes

SECTION 4

Relaxation Techniques and Action Planning

PRACTICAL EXERCISE: RELAXATION

Let's Chat's lifestyle series has some great resources for integrating relaxation and breathing techniques into your wellbeing practice. Follow this link to find them:

[Relax - LetsChat \(letschatwellbeing.co.uk\)](https://letschatwellbeing.co.uk)

Notes

EXERCISE

Physical activity has a huge potential to enhance our wellbeing. Even a short burst of 10 minutes' brisk walking increases our **mental** alertness, energy and positive mood. Participation in regular **physical** activity can increase our self-esteem and can reduce stress and anxiety.

When we say exercise, it doesn't have to be high impact like running or cardio- anything that gets you moving has proven impact for our wellbeing. The NHS published 5 recommended ways to well-being and this is one of them. Walking, Yoga, Skipping, running....anything that gets us moving is great for stress.

PRACTICAL EXERCISE

Watch the video from Let's Chat about how exercise can help via this link [Four Pillars - LetsChat \(letschatwellbeing.co.uk\)](https://letschatwellbeing.co.uk) and see how you can integrate this into your week. Half an hour, 4-5 times a week is a good goal!

Notes

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This resource was written by Georgie Ford, Advanced Mental Health and Wellbeing Practitioner at Weston College and MHFA England Instructor.





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