



SESSION 5



EXERCISES

Connecting up my mind apple

Ask each student to think of one thing they do regularly that keeps them feeling mentally well and share it with the group. Ask a couple of questions to follow up:

- What struck you about what we have all shared?
- Did anything surprise you?



TUTOR NOTES

This exercise starts the session on the basis that the students are more familiar with self-management and self-care than they may think. What the students share should highlight that there are similarities and differences - we all do things that are right for us - and that simple things can make a big difference.

We use the term 'mind apple' to emphasise that we all have mental health just like we all have physical health and that mental health is a positive thing. We know and talk a lot about what we should do to keep physically well such as eating fruit. Consequently, we need to think about what we can do to stay mentally well.



Hearing from others: Scotts story

Show the short video of Scott describing his journey and the role of self-help in his ongoing recovery.

<https://youtu.be/UGkvutZ6H5I>

This film was produced by Stigma Free Lanarkshire and Lanarkshire Links

Follow with a discussion around the following questions:

- What role did self-help and self-management have in Scott's recovery?
- What was important to him in the self-help he found?
- How has he used what he learned to manage his mood and wellbeing and continue his recovery?



TUTOR NOTES

Scott's story is one where after many years of feeling unsupported by mainstream services he started to attend a self-help group (Hope Café) where he found support and understanding. In his story he talks of not being judged, being understood and accepted for himself. Encourage the students to consider how this atmosphere could help Scott to get to know himself better and identify how he could play a greater role in managing his mental health and wellbeing. Towards the end of the video he mentions getting help from mainstream services. Encourage students to think about how his engagement in self-help and taking responsibility for managing his mental health and wellbeing could mean that he was better able to benefit from mainstream services.



What keeps me well

Ask the students to use the 'What keeps me well' worksheet and to think about five things they do regularly that keeps them feeling mentally well.

Then in small groups share with the others and discuss:

- Are there similarities between what I do and others do to stay mentally well?
- What can we learn from other people?



TUTOR NOTES

This exercise builds immediately from the Connecting Up exercise by encouraging the students to think about what they already do to keep well. Some may be very familiar with this but it may be a new experience to others. If people have difficulty with this part of the exercise you can:

- Ask them to think about things that they know or think that they should do to keep mentally well but maybe don't do them often or ever; or
- Ask them to think about what a good day feels and looks like to them and the things they do when they feel good. This could help them think of what they need to do to stay well.

The aim of the discussion is to highlight that while we are all different and on our personal recovery journeys some of what we do to stay well is similar. This could encourage mutual support such as getting a walking group together or going to an art class with others. It also emphasises that we can learn from what others do. This may not be a case of doing exactly what others do, but understanding how other people approach self-management and the range of tools and approaches they use can influence and inspire us.



Strategies to manage emotions

As a whole group start by asking the students to share some of the ways they manage their emotional wellbeing mental health. Record the answers on a flip chart.

Then ask the group to think of other tools or approaches that they could use if they were not feeling good and worried about their mental health and wellbeing.

Circulate the handout and ask the students if they are aware of and/or use any of the tools or approaches on it.



TUTOR NOTES

The aim of this exercise is to raise awareness and understanding of the wide range of tools and approaches they can use. Some may be individual tools and approaches like most of the examples on the list but others may be about being with other people or participation in groups.

There are no right or wrong answers and not everyone needs to like or agree with the tools and approaches discussed. If someone does express dislike or disagreement, then the group could explore the importance of personal preference and of choosing our own tools and approaches.

Finally, the exercise should highlight the benefits of sharing what we do and hearing from others. This can not only give us ideas of how to better manage our mental health but can validate what we are already doing.

As an alternative we have provided a second worksheet which can be used to support students to identify and articulate the pressures or stresses they experience and also the things in their life that support them or give them strength. This uses a bridge analogy to help students think creatively and with a bit of fun about the challenges they face while also focusing on the strengths and supports they can draw on to manage them.



My keeping mentally well plan

Ask the students to think about what they have discussed so far in this session and also to look back on what they have learned about themselves in the first four sessions. Using the worksheet provided the students will prepare a short plan which will outline the tools and approaches they use to keep mentally well.

The plan is very short and based around three areas:

- Understanding of what it is to feel well
- What needs to be done to stay as well as possible
- What needs to be done particularly during or after a bad day/time

The aim is for this to become a living document that they will add to and revise as they continue their recovery.



TUTOR NOTES

Most of what is in the plan has already been covered but students are also asked to think about what feeling well is like and to think about what they need to do if they are having or been through a bad day or time. This is important as we often forget or start to opt out of doing the things that make us feel good when we are not feeling well or are starting to feel unwell. An example of this could be staying up late and not getting enough sleep; not meeting up with friends and family and missing activities we enjoy.

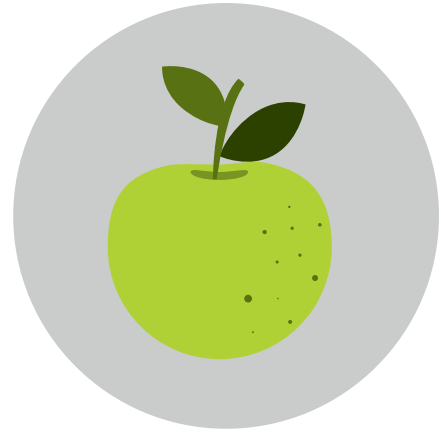
Emphasise to students that this is the start of a living plan that they can add to and revise as their journey continues. Over time our situation and preferences may change and we may discover new activities, tools and approaches that help us to stay mentally well.



HANDOUTS OVER PAGE

WHAT KEEPS ME WELL?

THINK ABOUT THINGS YOU DO THAT
GIVE YOU JOY; HELP YOU FEEL GOOD
AND IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH
AND WELLBEING





STRATEGIES TO MANAGE EMOTIONS WHAT DO YOU DO TO KEEP MENTALLY WELL?

WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Planning)

A structured approach to developing a wellbeing plan built around five key concepts of hope, personal responsibility, education, self-advocacy and support. WRAP is a planning process that involves assessing self-management tools and resources and then using them to develop your own plans for staying well. This includes developing a personal wellness toolbox; a daily maintenance list; identifying early signs that things are breaking down and a crisis plan. WRAP is best experienced in a group environment which support mutual learning and emphasises that the group members are experts in themselves.

Mental body scanning

Start in a comfortable position, eyes open or closed. Turn your focus to the different parts of your body and notice any sensation you feel while continuing also focus on your breathing. Move from your toes on your feet, calves, knees, thighs, stomach, chest, shoulders, neck and your head. Take enough time for each body part and continue to breathe in a relaxed manner.

Journaling

Take a few minutes each day to think about what happened that day and how you felt. Reflect on any thoughts and feelings you have been having and write them down.

SMART goal setting

Set goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound. In other words, a goal that is very clear and easily understood.

Time management

Spend time planning and organizing your activities. Organize in a way that makes sense to you. Prioritize tasks that are important for you.



Visualisation

Create in your mind an ideal spot to relax. It can be real or imaginary. Imagine it in as much detail as you can – use your senses to make it as real as possible. Now close your eyes and take a slow breath in through your nose. Focus on your relaxation place in all its detail and breathe slowly.

STOP technique

When you are feeling overwhelmed, stop and step back. Don't act immediately and instead pause. Take a breath and notice as you breathe in and out. Observe your feelings and thoughts. Put the situation in some perspective – try to see the situation as an outside observer.

Cognitive coping cards

Try to identify some thoughts or actions that are helpful when you are feeling upset and write them on a card. It can be anything from reminders that the situation will pass, reminders of the skills that help you (e.g.: take a deep breath) or some calming thoughts. Use it when you are feeling overwhelmed.

Reattribution technique

When you are feeling upset, stop and try to identify the thoughts are crossing your mind. Try to come up with alternative explanations of the events.

Attention refocusing

When you notice yourself focusing on something that is unhelpful choose to refocus your attention elsewhere. Choose an activity that is interesting or challenging enough to engage your mind, such as reading or thinking about a pleasant memory. Many people get involved in activities such as gardening, art, crafts and sport as a way not only to enjoy themselves but also as a way of distracting themselves.

Take ten breaths

Take ten slow, deep breaths. Focus on breathing out as slowly as possible until your lungs are completely empty, and then allow them to refill by themselves.



Worry time

Schedule worry time each day for one week. Put it in your calendar. Start by setting aside 15-30 minutes during the morning or the afternoon. That will be your worry time. It is best not to schedule worry time right before you go to bed, for obvious reasons.

Strategies to manage emotions

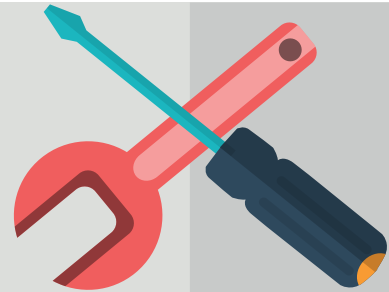
Imagine you are a bridge. What pressures or stresses does your bridge experience regularly? Write them below



Every bridge has foundations and structure that support it and help it to withstand pressures. What are your foundations and supports? Write them below



MY KEEPING MENTALLY WELL PLAN



When I am well, I am....

This about what you are doing, how you are feeling

What I do to keep myself as mentally well as possible...

List the main things you do and how regularly you need to do them

When I'm having a rough time I need to....

Make a short list of what you need to remember to do particularly when things aren't great

