

## **Activity 1: hand breathing**

Place one hand out in front of you, flat, palm facing down. With your other hand, use a finger and place it at the bottom of your wrist.

Slowly move your finger up to the top of your thumb, taking a deep breath in as you do it.

Then, move your finger down from the tip of your thumb to the crease between your thumb and index finger, slowly breathing out as you do so.

Repeat this movement and breathing with each finger, inhaling as you trace upwards, exhaling as you trace downwards. Repeat this exercise as many times as you need.

## **Activity 2: stress bucket**

We all have a mental capacity for stress which is the maximum capacity that we can manage before our mental wellbeing starts to suffer and that is our stress bucket.

Imagine a bucket in your mind – a large container that holds water. Above the bucket are several taps. Each tap above the bucket represents a different thing that causes you stress. It might be too much homework, back to school anxiety, friendship issues and so on. Visualise that the things that make you stressed are running like water from each tap into the bucket underneath.

When it gets full, water flows over the top. When our stress buckets overflow, we can start to feel anxious, have a low mood, irritable or tearful and our mental well being can really start to suffer. So to keep our stress buckets from overflowing we need to let out some water.

Imagine that there is a tap at the bottom of the bucket. Imagine the things that release stress - the things that would release the tap at the bottom to allow water to pass through. These can be things that you usually do to manage your stress and improve your mental wellbeing, such as talking to friends, exercise or spending time with pets. Create a list of things that are your 'release taps' - consider these in moments where you feel anxious, overwhelmed or low mood to help reduce this.

### **Activity 3: wellbeing bingo**

You can do this alone or as a game of bingo with a friend.

Which of the following activities have you done in the past week?

- Sung in the shower.
- Played with a furry friend.
- Had a good sleep.
- Spent some time with my family/ friends.
- listened to my favourite tune.
- Read a good book.
- Watched a great movie/TV show.
- Eaten something delicious.
- Done some exercise.
- Stayed hydrated.
- Drawn a picture.
- Laughed until my cheeks hurt.
- Spent some time in a park.
- Danced.
- Treated myself.
- Visited somewhere new.

Which is your favourite thing to do from the list?

See if anyone has done the same acts of self-care in the last week as you. The first person to get five must shout 'Bingo!'

### **Activity 4: whole self MOT**

There are simple steps you can take to look after your whole self. Use this MOT to check on your own and other people's mental health and wellbeing.

#### **Check in 1: how is my mental Health today?**

- How do I feel today?
- How do I feel today physically?
- How do I feel today mentally?

## **Check in 2: my stress container**

- How full is my container?
- Am I using helpful coping strategies?
- Are they working?
- You can learn more about your stress container and use interactive tools to explore further on the mental health first aid england training resources website.

## **Check in 3: looking after my wellbeing**

- How did I sleep last night?
- Am I eating a balanced diet and drinking enough water?
- Tips on supporting your mental health, especially when working from home can be found on the mental health first aid england's website under mental health resources for remote working.

## **Check in 4: how's my thinking today?**

- How are my thoughts making me feel?
- Am I having unhelpful thoughts?
- Create a mind plan with Every Mind Matters. Go to mental health first aid england's website to get tips on how to help deal with stress and anxiety and boost your mood.

## **Check in 5: my mental health journey**

Our mental health is part of the wider journey of our lives. You can learn more about this by watching the mental health continuum video on mental health first aid england's youtube channel.

## **Activity 5: grounding techniques for anxiety**

This five-step exercise can be very helpful during periods of anxiety or panic by helping to ground you in the present when your mind is bouncing around between various anxious thoughts.

Before starting this exercise, pay attention to your breathing. Slow, deep, long breaths can help you maintain a sense of calm or help you return to a calmer state. Once you find your breath, go through the following steps by noticing and observing to help ground yourself.

- Five things you can see.
- Four things you can touch (it can be the floor, the chair you are sitting on, your clothes, a bag etc).
- Three things you can hear (radio, talking, sound made by objects or distant sounds / noises).
- Two things you can smell (perfume, food, coffee).
- One thing you can taste (or imagine the taste of your favourite food).