

Sources of Support

Most people feel low in mood or stressed at times. For many this passes quite quickly but for others the feeling can be overwhelming, last for a considerable time or can keep reoccurring. If you feel you need someone to talk to, you should speak to your GP at an early stage. If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide it is important to take them seriously and seek support as soon as possible. Remember, in emergency situation dial 999. If your GP surgery is closed or you need to speak to someone urgently the following organisations should prove useful:

Breathing Space – 0800 83 85 87 (Monday to Friday 6pm–2am and 24 hours over the weekends) <http://breathingspace.scot>

Samaritans – 01698 429411 or 08457 90 90 90 (24hrs) www.samaritans.org

NHS 24 – 111 (24hrs) www.nhs24.com

Childline – 0800 11 11 (24hrs) www.childline.org.uk

Carerline – 0800 22 44 88 (8am–10pm) www.carers.org

Parentline Scotland – 0808 800 22 22 (Monday, Wednesday & Friday 9am–5pm and Tuesday & Thursday 9am–9pm) www.children1st.org.uk/parentline

National Debt Line Scotland – 0808 808 4000 (Monday to Friday 9am–9pm and Saturday 9.30am–1pm) www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/scotland

Well-informed (North Lanarkshire) – 0800 073 0918 (Monday to Friday 9am–5pm)

South Lanarkshire Infoline – 0330 3000 133 (Monday to Friday 10am–2pm)

For information on local information on mental health, self-help and services visit Lanarkshire's mental health website – www.elament.org.uk

Mind to Listen

An audio CD to support mental health & well-being through self-help

Introduction

Mental health is about how we think and feel and this in turn impacts on how we behave. Most people feel low or stressed at some point in their lives. For many this passes quite quickly but for at least one in four people the feelings can be overwhelming, last for a considerable time or can keep reoccurring. However, we know from research that there are many things that we can all do to help improve and protect our own and others mental health and overcome problems. This CD has been produced to support this.

There are 10 sections in the CD, which you can listen to all the way through, or you can go to the section which you feel is most suitable for you. We would recommend you listen to the full CD at least once so you can identify the best parts for you. The tracks included have information and advice to help you understand and overcome symptoms of low mood, stress, panic and bereavement. The CD includes helpful tips to improve your sleep pattern and relaxation techniques to practice daily. Remember, you must not listen to the relaxation sections of this CD while driving or operating machinery. There is also a section on how we can all improve our mental health and useful telephone numbers if you wish to speak to someone in confidence regarding your situation.

If after hearing the tracks you are interested in further reading then visit your local library that now have a healthy reading section. For local information on mental health and services you can visit Lanarkshire's mental health website. At this website you can also visit the 'self-help' section where you will find a complimentary booklet for every section of CD. Visit: www.elament.org.uk

If your symptoms persist then it is advisable to speak to your GP.

Contributors

Scripts Writers:

Sylvia Verrecchia, Kevin O'Neill, Alison McMullan, Avril Thomson & Ann-Marie Newman

Section Narrators:

Alison McMullan, Stella Eagleson & Iain Campbell

Quote Narrators:

Kevin O'Neill, Ann-Marie Newman, Avril Thomson, Liz MacWhinney, Marc Howard, Paul McAlorum, Ted Blakeway & Graeme Duffin. Special thanks to the students of Motherwell College: Blair Davidson, Jordan Mason & Danielle Tonner

Music:

Guitar Music - "Daydream for Astrid & Lydia" written and performed by Colin Fullerton

Synthesiser Music - "Time Out" written and performed by Sandy Jones

Production, Engineering and Recording:

Recorded at Foundry Music Lab, December 2009

Produced and engineered by Sandy Jones



CD Cover & Insert:

Words by Kevin O'Neill

Graphic Design by Derek York  (with thanks to Graham Taylor)

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The Healthy Reading Development Group

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Reference Group

John McGarrity, Jim Alexander, Kerri Todd, Sandra Shafii, Annie McGeeney, Dennis McLafferty, Audrey Ferrie, Jennifer Borthwick, Jacqueline Haldane, Stephen Boyd, Norma Cruickshank, Brian Norton, Bruce Thomson, John Coffey, Gabe Docherty, Fraser McLellan, John Logan, Gael McDougal, Maria Reid, Colin Sloey, Margaret Serrels, Karen Robertson, Sheila Dorrens, Tracy Stephens & Valerie Tallon

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Staying Mentally Healthy

It's said that there is no health without mental health. However, we often do not take care of our mental health or take it for granted. It's important to take care of ourselves, whether we have mental health problems or not. Everyone could do with boosting their well-being. Why not try some easy steps to help improve your mental health and well-being. Doing something positive can make all the difference - for you and others. The "Staying Mentally Healthy" section, track 2 of the CD, offers some practical information about things that we know can help. These include:

- Talking about our feelings,
- Keeping active,
- Eating well,
- Not misusing alcohol, drugs or medication,
- Staying in touch with supportive friends and family,
- Asking for help,
- Making time for relaxation,
- Learning new skills and doing something creative,
- Doing something you enjoy or are good at and
- Accepting who you are.

Try not to be too hard on yourself. We can all have difficult days from time to time and we all cope with things differently. Every day we cope with something different we learn how to survive and live.

Stress & Anxiety

Stress is the word that many people use when they are describing how the demands of their life seems to be becoming too great for them to cope with. This ability to cope varies from person to person and what one person finds stressful may not be a problem for another. Stress affects our bodies (heart racing, tense muscles), our thoughts (worrying) and our behaviour (avoiding things). Whilst many of us suffer with stress at times in our day to day lives, long term stress is not good for our health and many of us would like to find ways to gain some control over it. It's important to know that stress is not something we need to accept in our lives. The "Stress and Anxiety" section, track 3 of the CD helps us understand stress, how it affects us and offers some helpful techniques to manage it. The CD also includes helpful tips to improve your sleep pattern and relaxation techniques to practice daily. Remember, stress is very common and there will be many people who have been through similar things to you. The quote below is from someone who has used the advice on the CD:

"At first when the GP mentioned exercise I thought 'I don't have time', however I started by walking a little more each day and noticed I didn't feel as stressed, now I am a member of the local walking group!"

For further information on how to stress less and enjoy life visit www.stepsforstress.org

Keeping a Diary

Keeping a diary is very good way of taking time to reflect on the day, day(s) or week that have just gone by. By asking ourselves; what has went well and what has not gone well, gives us the chance to learn from it. This then gives us the chance to do more of the things that helped and less of the things that did not help. **Because we tend to focus on the negative, try making a rule that for everything that we list that did not go well, try to find something that did go well or you enjoyed no matter how small it may seem.**

The table below is an example. Please do not write on the CD cover, copy the table onto paper.

What went well?	Why did it go well?	What can be learned?

Taking Control of Our Worries

We can spend a lot of time worrying about our problems or sometimes we can feel overwhelmed by our problems and don't know where to start. Writing down our problems is a good place to start. Once we have written them down then we can think about what steps we can start to take to solve them. The table below is an example. Please do not write on the CD cover, copy the table onto paper.

Problem	What steps can I take that may help?	When	Did it help? Rate: 1 - - - - 5 (not helpful) (very helpful)

Panic

Panic attacks are very common. They come from our body's normal healthy reaction to situations where we feel under threat. It's our body's alarm system. The problem with panic attacks is that they usually occur when there is no clear physical threat at all. Your body is reacting as though it was about to be attacked when in reality it is not. The good news is that panic attacks are easily treated. You may find that your panic attacks have already started to reduce because you have begun to recognise and understand, and accept that they are not harmful.

In the "Panic Section", track 4, you will hear about how panic affects your body, your mind and your behaviour and learn how to change each of these areas. If you have not already done so we would recommend listening to the "Stress and Anxiety" section of the CD first as this is very closely related to panic. You are also encouraged to listen to the relaxation section.

Here is an example of how someone's panic has been improved by listening to the CD:

"I used to think that the feelings that panic attacks gave me was me having a heart attack, which made me even more worried. Now I understand them and have learned a simple breathing exercise to reduce my stress, I no longer experience them."

Low Mood and Depression

Most people feel low in mood at some point in their lives. For many this passes quite quickly but for others the feeling can be overwhelming. Depression is one of the most common reasons why people attend their GP. One in five adults will at some time experience symptoms of depression. In its mildest form depression does not stop us from continuing with our day-to-day life, but the most severe forms of depression can lead people to have thoughts of suicide.

If you or someone close to you is experiencing suicidal ideas, please see the 'Information and Support' section of the CD and booklet.

Depression affects us physically (loss of energy or agitated), how we think (thinking negative) and how we feel (guilty, angry, despair). In the "low mood and depression" section, track 5 of the CD, we will provide information and advice to help you understand what the symptoms are of low mood as well as giving you advice to help you through this.

Below are the thoughts of one person who has used the information in the CD:

"The last thing I thought would help me was getting out the house, at times I couldn't face seeing people, but I started going to the local shop and gradually my confidence grew and now I feel much more confident."

Progressive Muscle Relaxation cont..

- 6 Breathe in and pull up your shoulders to your ears, notice the tension in your shoulders and neck. *Breathe out, relax, and notice the difference.*
- 7 Breathe in and lift your eyebrows towards the top of your head, wrinkling your forehead, notice the tension. *Breathe out, relax, and notice the difference.*
- 8 Breathe in and clench your eyes closed, notice the tension around your eyes. *Breathe out, relax, and notice the difference.*
- 9 Breathe in and clench your jaw, notice the tension in your mouth and jaw. *Breathe out, notice how comfortable your whole face feels as you allow it to relax.*
- 10 Continue to relax, breathing calmly, using comfortable stomach breathing.

Practice this exercise regularly to make it easier to let go of tensions when you're under pressure.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

When stressed, we carry tension in our muscles without noticing it. This exercise makes you aware of that tension so you can let it go. It is based on the idea that **we can't be tense and relaxed at the same time. Switch on relaxation and switch off tension.** Sit or lie down and make yourself comfortable. As you do this exercise, use the comfortable stomach breathing from Exercise 1.

- 1 Breathe in, make a fist with your right hand, notice the tension in your hand and arm. *Breathe out, relax, and notice the difference.*
- 2 Breathe in, make a fist with your left hand, and notice the tension. *Breathe out, relax, and notice the difference.* Notice how comfortably heavy your hands and arms feel when you let them relax.
- 3 Breathe in, tighten your thighs and buttocks, and notice the tension. *Breathe out, relax, and notice the difference.*
- 4 Breathe in, point your feet up towards your face, and notice the tension in your legs and feet. *Breathe out, relax, and notice the difference.*
- 5 Breathe in and point your toes away from your body, notice the tension in your legs and feet. *Breathe out, relax, and notice the difference.* Allow the relaxation to deepen. Notice the pleasurable sensation of heaviness in your legs and arms as you relax them.

Bereavement

It is difficult to come to terms with the loss of someone close to us. Everyone reacts in a different ways and each person will need time and support to come to terms with their loss. Most people feel overwhelmed by their first reactions to the death of a loved one or you may feel very little in the beginning as you deal with all the practical arrangements. Some people find that these feelings are with them for months or years. In some ways there will be a permanent change in how a person feels following a significant loss. However, over time there will usually be a decrease in the way the feelings affect day-to-day life. The 'Bereavement' section of the CD, track 6, helps us understand what is happening to us and offers some advice on things that may help at this difficult time:

"When my wife died I thought I would never be able to carry on with everything; nobody seemed to understand. They said 'you're young, you'll find someone else' but I didn't want to. I wanted her back so that she - we - could live the life we'd hoped for. After a few months I started to get on with my life but I would say it took me three years to fully come to terms with that loss and to be able to move forward - job, socialising, relationships that sort of thing. I still feel that sense of loss, but it's getting much better."

Sleep

There is no correct amount of sleep that everyone must have. Sleep is a natural process that is not directly under our control. Our bodies take what they need. In the short-term our bodies will adjust the type and quality of sleep to make sure we stay healthy. However, when sleep is disturbed then this can leave people feeling quite anxious, the more we worry about not sleeping the worse it can make us feel. There is no quick solution to sleep problems. We have to train ourselves and our bodies to behave in a way that helps us have a good sleep pattern. The best way to get a better night's sleep is to develop a good routine and stick to it. The 'Sleep' section, track 7 will help us look at ways to help improve our sleep and it will give us useful tips to aid sleep. It will also be helpful to use the relaxation track within the CD to help improve our sleep further.

Quick Relaxation

Controlling our breathing is key to relaxation. Here is a simple exercise that can help. Sitting comfortably, breathe gently, slowly and evenly. Count in your mind, letting each count last about a second. Use a clock if you like:

- 1 Rest your hand on your belly button. Take a normal breath in and hold it as you count to 5.
- 2 Breathe out slowly, relaxing your shoulders, face and body, as you count to 4.
- 3 Breathe in slowly, letting your hand move outwards with your stomach, as you count to 4.
- 4 Breathe out slowly and let your hand and stomach move inwards, as you count to 4.
- 5 Breathe like this for 5 more breaths, focusing on your hand and stomach as they rise and fall, relaxing more with each breath.
- 6 Hold your breath like you did at the beginning and repeat the whole exercise again. Notice the stretching sensation as you breathe in. As you breathe out notice the relaxation that follows. With practice, you may find you can breathe more slowly.

Practice this exercise regularly so it's easy to use any time you feel anxious. You can also use it in bed to help you sleep.