

# Balancing Behaviours

Improving our work life balance

Respecting everyone  
Embracing change  
Recognising success  
Working together  
**Our hospitals.**

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## What is this guide?

This short guide is a resource designed for **all** colleagues at University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust to help support positive wellbeing in the workplace and outside of work.

Regardless of your role, as a member of the Trust you are hugely important to the care of our patients and to the running of a busy city acute Trust.

All of us can struggle at times with how we feel and can **all** get stressed at times.

This guide is one of a series of resources for you to use on your own, which may help you feel as well as you can.

However, if you feel further support would be helpful, please do speak to your Manager or other trusted colleague. Whilst this may not feel easy, it is very normal to struggle at times, and doing something proactive to seek support can be hugely positive. In addition to speaking to your relevant colleague, you can find further information at the back of this guide and on the Trust intranet within the Workplace Wellbeing section of [HRWeb](#).

If you have any difficulty in understanding the content or accessing this resource, please contact [wellbeing@uhbristol.nhs.uk](mailto:wellbeing@uhbristol.nhs.uk)

### *How does this guide work?*

*It can be far more beneficial to our wellbeing to actually change things we are doing rather than just reading about ideas.*

*That is why this guide has a technique within it, which you can practice using the worksheets provided.*

*You may find that the more you do it, the easier it can become to apply.*



## Introduction

What we *do* each day can really affect how we *feel*.

This guide focuses on how we can change how we feel by changing our behaviours or actions, i.e. the things that we *do* in our lives.

We've all experienced that good feeling of satisfaction after finishing our day's tasks, or that feeling of happiness after spending time with friends.

And we've also all felt that feeling of guilt when we avoid doing something important to us. What we do and don't do can cause us to feel well, or to feel stressed, anxious or low. The good news is that we can change what we *do*, and therefore change how we *feel*.

People often talk about having a poor 'work/life balance'. What this often means is that people feel they are working too hard, and are not making enough time to do the things they enjoy or need to do outside of work.

## Routine and pleasurable activities

It can be helpful to think of things we do as 'tasks' that are either routine or pleasurable.

**Routine tasks** are day-to-day activities such as brushing our teeth, going to work, sleeping, washing clothes, feeding the family.

**Pleasurable tasks** are activities that we enjoy; e.g. hobbies like cycling, painting, reading, music, cinema trips, coffee with friends.

When people are stressed, they often describe feeling overwhelmed, and that the routine tasks are leaving very little time for more pleasurable activities.



Consider the example scenario below:

Abdullah works at UH Bristol as an accountant. He works full time and has two children at home who he takes to school each morning. Recently Abdullah has been taking on extra work, and has started to do less of the activities he enjoys in his spare time. He tells his partner that the reason for this is that he “can’t be bothered” and he is “too tired”. Very soon his life just revolves around work and his children; with no time set aside for reading and playing guitar like he used to. This has started to impact on Abdullah’s mood and he feels low most days.

We might all recognise this behaviour in ourselves; as it is very easy for things to change when we begin to get tired or stressed.

If we don’t get a good balance of activities in our lives, it can affect our mood in various unhelpful ways; from feeling overwhelmed and unsatisfied like Abdullah, to having too much empty time with no plans where we can get bored and dwell too much on ‘the little things’. A balanced lifestyle is key to ensuring we are mentally well and feel satisfied in our lives.

## *Unhelpful behaviours*

Working in a healthcare setting, we often know what type of behaviours are healthy and what is considered a healthy lifestyle where we are taking good care of ourselves. That doesn’t mean it is always easy to remember to do them, and our desire to be healthy and take care of ourselves can be affected when we are feeling stressed, anxious or depressed.

So, you might be fully aware that you are behaving in some ways which are not actually helpful for your wellbeing (such as staying later in work, not taking lunch breaks, drinking more alcohol in the evenings, avoiding exercise), but we still get into bad habits of doing them.



Typical unhelpful behaviours include:

- Drinking
- Avoiding people or tasks
- Smoking
- Working late
- Working early
- Not taking breaks
- Not doing things you enjoy; opting to 'do nothing' instead.
- It is important to note that you don't need to suddenly turn everything around in one go. This would be unrealistic and not very appealing! Any changes you decide to make to your behaviours should be gradual and done in a considered way. That is where this guide can help you.





## How to use the 'balancing behaviours' technique

The simple technique in this guide will help you to start noticing some of your current behaviours.

Only when we can see what our life looks like, can we notice where we might need to gradually make a few helpful changes.

The five steps below and the worksheets have been designed to assist you to make positive change. Before you start, it would be useful to make a few copies of the blank diary sheet which features on the next page.

In a nutshell: you are looking at what you currently do in your life; identifying any patterns you think might be unhelpful, and planning changes to your activities so that your life is more balanced.

**The technique is broken down into 5 steps so you can work through this by yourself.**

1. **Last week:** First you need to get a snapshot of what your life currently looks like; i.e. what activities are you filling your time with, and are you allowing time to do pleasurable things as well as routine tasks?  
Using the blank week diary (Sheet 1) on the next page: write down what activities you did **last** week: e.g. Monday morning: *"8am-9am I took the kids to school."*
2. **Notice patterns:** When you have a diary which shows an average week's activities, you can use that to spot any patterns of unhelpful behaviour to see what you might need to change. A common pattern is that we are doing mostly routine tasks which have to be done each day (cooking, cleaning, going to work, taking the children to school), but not purposely making time for ourselves to do the pleasurable tasks we really enjoy.

Go back over your diary and notice:

- "How much of the stuff I do is routine?" (It might be helpful to write an 'R' next to the task on your diary).



- “How much of the stuff I do is pleasurable?” (Write a ‘P’ next to the task).

3. **Consider changes:** spend some time asking yourself what you would like to do more of. Use the table in Sheet 2 to help identify activities you want to do more of. This essentially means asking yourself; what goals do you have? What makes you happy as a unique person? What did you used to do which you’d like to reintroduce in your life? What fun activities fit with your values in life?

The sheet will then ask you to consider what might get in the way; i.e. what obstacles might make it harder to plan and complete those activities.

The final box in Sheet 2 is about rating how easy or difficult you would find actually adding those new behaviours to your life. So it might be that you have identified reading for 30 minutes as quite an easy task, whilst going for coffee with your friend actually feels quite hard to make happen.

4. **Make a plan:** This time, using the diary on Sheet 3, you are going to plan the week ahead; adding in some of those new activities which you think would be helpful. Think about how you can gradually plan in some of the things from the ‘**easiest**’ table in Sheet 2.

Try your hardest to stick to the plan; it can be very easy to ‘forget’, de-prioritise, or avoid doing pleasurable things; but without them our mood can be significantly affected.

5. **Notice & change:** Keep using the diaries to plan, keep gradually adding things you enjoy, and keep noticing whether it is making you happier and more balanced. This system is one you can keep using. You won’t always get it right, and some weeks your plans will have to change for reasons you can’t control. But having a plan like this is proven to increase your chance of doing something different and displaying the behaviours that are healthy and balanced.





## Sheet 1: My activities last week

Use this worksheet to write down what your average week currently looks like. It is helpful to notice which activities are 'routine' and which are 'pleasurable' for you.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Midday							
Afternoon							
Evening							

**Sheet 2: What would I like to do more of.**

**What patterns did I notice in Sheet 1?**

*E.g. I have lots of free time in the evenings but just fill it with routine tasks.*

**Pleasurable tasks I would like to make more time for:**

*E.g. I want to read more. Perhaps have at least 2 evenings a week where I allocate time to read.*

**What is stopping me from doing these activities?**

*E.g. I end up just watching TV out of habit, when actually I'd rather read.*

**Which activities are easiest to introduce into my life?**

**Easiest:**

**Medium:**

**Most difficult:**

### Sheet 3: My plan for next week

Use this worksheet to plan in a few activities you identified in Worksheet 2 as 'pleasurable' and 'easy to do'. Make the plans specific so you are more likely to do them.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Midday							
Afternoon							
Evening							

## Key tips

- Don't try and change your behaviours too quickly; a gradual approach is best.
- Introduce pleasurable activities that are personal to **you**, rather than suggestions from others.
- Be creative with your planning. If you feel particularly low at certain times in the day; plan something nice for that specific time.
- The more specific you make your plan (i.e. what time, who with), the more likely you'll be to do it.
- If you don't want to use the worksheet, you can just use your own diary or perhaps a calendar in your mobile phone.
- Use the technique and the worksheets for as long as you find helpful, or until the new behaviours become habit.
- You can keep adding new behaviours whenever you like; just remember to plan them in a gradual, achievable way.
- If you plan an activity that relies on someone else, it can be helpful to have a back-up activity in case they cancel. Same thing with the weather. If your plan is weather dependent, have a back-up – we live in the UK!
- If you are struggling with taking work home with you (even just in your thoughts) it can be helpful to find a behaviour which helps you to mentally switch off from the workplace. For example, some police officers will make a point of changing out of uniform and into civilian clothing before they leave work.
- Have clear boundaries so you are not responding to emails when not in work.

## Taking breaks at work

Taking breaks is a key part of staying well at work. On the next page you can find a map of the various greenspaces across the Trust you might like to explore on your next break.



# Greenspaces Map

Explore the gardens across our site



- Evidence shows that spending time in a green space can have a positive impact on both your physical and mental health. There are ten garden areas across our site to help support the health and wellbeing of our patients, visitors and staff.
- 1 **St Michael's Hospital** - Two courtyards in the gynaecology outpatient's department. One in the waiting area accessible to patients and visitors. The other in the treatment area, accessible to staff only.
  - 2 **Marlborough Hill allotment** - To the right of the car park entrance, open for everyone to use.
  - 3 **Woodland Walkway** - Open for everyone to use. Wheelchair friendly.
  - 4 **Bristol Heart Institute ground floor garden** - Staff access only. Wheelchair friendly.
  - 5 **Bristol Heart Institute entrance garden** - Open to everyone. Wheelchair friendly.
  - 6 **Bristol Heart Institute roof garden** - Located on level 7, staff access only. Wheelchair friendly.
  - 7 **Sterile services garden** - On the pathway leading from zone A of the Bristol Royal Infirmary to the dermatology department. Wheelchair friendly.
  - 8 **Montague Hill South** - a very small food growing plot-open for everyone to use. Wheelchair friendly.
  - 9 **Education and Research Centre** - The SOS garden located behind the building is staff access only.
  - 10 **Bristol Eye Hospital - St Odilla's Garden** (patroness saint of good eyesight) is located next to the ground floor main waiting areas and is open to everyone. Wheelchair friendly.



## Further support

There are other guides in this range available on Connect (staff intranet).



### Reading Well

Reading Well is a scheme where you can access self-help books through the library. It helps employees to understand and manage their health and wellbeing using helpful reading. The books are all endorsed by health experts, as well as people with living with the conditions covered and their relatives and carers (you can view the Reading Well list on Connect).

Staff can find the books in the UHB Library (The Education and Research Centre, Level 5).

### Talking therapies

If you feel that you need additional support, then it is readily available free of charge both through the Trust, or externally if you prefer. These services are usually referred to as 'talking therapies'.

Talking therapies are psychological treatments for mental and emotional problems like stress, anxiety and depression. There are lots of different types of talking therapy, but they all involve working with a trained therapist.



This may be one-to-one, in a group, over the phone, with your family, or with your partner. The therapist helps you find answers to the problems you're having. For some problems and conditions, one type of talking therapy may be better than another. Different talking therapies also suit different people.

All employees at UH Bristol are able to access talking therapies through work via Occupational Health, or outside of work through their local IAPT service. There is more detail below on each of these resources, but to explain a little more about different types of talking therapy you can and might like to access:

### **Guided self-help**

Guided self-help is recommended as a treatment for depression, anxiety and panic disorder.

With guided self-help you work through a CBT-based workbook or computer course with the support of a therapist.

The therapist works with you to understand your problems and make positive changes in your life.

Guided self-help aims to give you helpful tools and techniques that you can carry on using after the course has finished.

During the course your therapist will support you with face-to-face appointments or phone calls.

### **Counselling**

Counselling is a talking therapy where you talk in confidence to a counsellor. They help you find ways to deal with difficulties in your life.

Counselling on the NHS usually consists of 6 to 12 sessions.

### **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy**

The aim of CBT is to help you explore and change how you think about your life, and free yourself from unhelpful patterns of behaviour.

You set goals with your therapist and may carry out tasks between sessions.

A course usually involves around 12 to 20 sessions.

CBT has been shown to work for a variety of mental health problems.

You can enquire further about these different types of support through the following services.





## **Occupational Health**

Avon Partnership Occupational Health Service offer free confidential onsite counselling service. To talk to an advisor or make an appointment, telephone Occupational Health on (0117) 342 3400.

## **IAPT**

Anyone in England can get talking therapies like counselling for depression and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) on the NHS.

Referral can be through individual's GP or they can refer themselves directly to a psychological therapies service. Through IAPT, people can access different types of talking therapies, such as guided self-help, counselling, and CBT amongst others. There is more information below or by going to this website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/types-of-therapy/>

## **Private support**

You may wish to access a service which is private and incurs a cost. The benefits of these services can be a greater flexibility in location, and a reduced waiting time.

You can search for accredited professionals by postcode using the following website: <https://www.bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists>

## **Spiritual, pastoral and bereavement care**

The Healthcare Chaplaincy team provide spiritual care that is equal, just, humane and respectful to staff, patients and their visitors; irrespective of their faith or spiritual tradition. For further information about the services they provide contact [the.chaplaincy@UHBristol.nhs.uk](mailto:the.chaplaincy@UHBristol.nhs.uk) or find further details at <http://connect/Governance/patientexperience/spiritualcare/Pages/default.aspx>



## Experiencing unacceptable behaviour from others

All employees have the right to be treated with consideration, dignity and respect, and we all have a responsibility to set a positive example by treating others with respect, and to act in a way which is in line with the Trust's Values. When this doesn't happen, we may benefit from help to sort out the problem.

The first thing to do if you are concerned about the way a colleague is behaving towards to you is to talk to someone about it -

- If you feel you can, speak to the individual and tell them how their behaviour is making you feel.
- Speak to your manager, another manager or a senior colleague and ask them to help you resolve the problem.
- If you have tried all the informal ways of resolving the problem and they haven't worked, the Dignity at Work policy includes information about the formal process. You can contact Employee Services on 0117 34 25000 for support and advice about the policy.
- If the problem is something which can't be resolved in an informal way, or is too serious to resolve in an informal way, please contact: Employee Services and Medical HR- 0117 34 (25000) or Freedom to Speak Up – 0117 34 (22888).



We hope that you have found this guide useful. If you have any feedback on this guide please email [wellbeing@uhbristol.nhs.uk](mailto:wellbeing@uhbristol.nhs.uk)

### *Author*

Mike Sheppard, Workplace Psychological Wellbeing Lead.

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