

# *How do I feel?*

Learning to notice how we are

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

We are all different, and whilst we might experience things in different ways to our friends and colleagues, we certainly all suffer and struggle at times.

1 in 4 of us will experience mental health difficulties at some point; it is very common and nothing to feel shame about, though we often do.

This brief guide introduces a highly important technique for helping us to develop more self-awareness. Self-awareness is the skill of checking in with ourselves: taking brief moments to actually consider how we are doing or feeling.

Without this skill, we tend to develop bad habits of ignoring signs that we might be struggling, which allows things to worsen. We don't always recognise when we are getting stressed. Sometimes it can be little changes that our colleagues or friends point out to us for example:

- we seem constantly tired
- we are now drinking 2 glasses of wine every evening instead of 1
- we keep getting into fights with our partner or friends
- we are dreading work day after day etc.

Developing self-awareness, i.e. asking ourselves regularly "How do I feel?" can be a great way to ensure that you are functioning well and preventing any issues from worsening.

### **It is not self-indulgent to want to focus more on yourself.**

Some of us are naturally quite good with the habit of checking in with ourselves. Others may be more used to ignoring symptoms we might be struggling because they favour 'getting on with the task at hand' and 'pushing through' the stress.

Whilst this might seem noble, it is not an effective long term strategy.



It could be compared to someone who continues to run a 5k race on an injured knee. They might beat the runner who stops because of the pain, but they injure themselves more and can't run again for months.

### Example scenario: James' story

James is a Junior Doctor at UH Bristol.

Recently one of the Consultants asked to meet with James because he was worried about James' wellbeing.

*"I was pretty surprised. I don't have any anxiety disorders, and I'm not depressed; I just come to work and do my job."*

The Consultant fed back to James that some of his peers had commented on his irritability and 'snappiness'. Whilst they liked him and recognised he was skilled and passionate about his work, they were sometimes wary of being around him in case he snapped at them.

Whilst James listened to this, his feelings were mixed. He felt annoyed that his colleagues had an issue with him, he felt guilty that he had caused distress, and he felt confused as these comments sounded very similar to things his partner had also said to him at home.

The consultant helped James see that it was a positive step to notice that there was an issue, rather than just ignoring it. James decided it might be useful to start checking in with himself on a regular basis, to see if he could spot when he was getting frustrated in order to do something positive about it.



## *Why might we avoid being 'self-aware'?*

In some cases we might be aware of how we feel through self-reflection, but actually choose **not** to focus on ourselves for reasons like:

- "I don't have time for this",
- "It's too self-indulgent and fluffy",
- "everyone struggles so we all just need to get on with it",
- "if I accept I'm struggling it means I'm weak and people will judge me or hold me back",
- "my patients and colleagues are more important than me, so I can't afford to struggle",
- "I'll feel worse if I think about it too much."

Whilst these kinds of thoughts might help us continue to cope in the short term, in the long term they can harm us much more.

In professions like ours at UH Bristol, so much of our work is about caring for others and putting patients and colleagues first. Whilst this is admirable, it is not sustainable. If we don't care for ourselves we simply cannot go on caring effectively for others.

## *How we can benefit from self-awareness*

The reason that self-reflection is so helpful is that it enables us to:

- recognise when something is wrong as quickly as possible before it gets worse,
- gain better understanding of how we are actually feeling,
- recognise what might have triggered our distress,
- consider how we can take positive action rather than ignoring it and risking it getting worse.



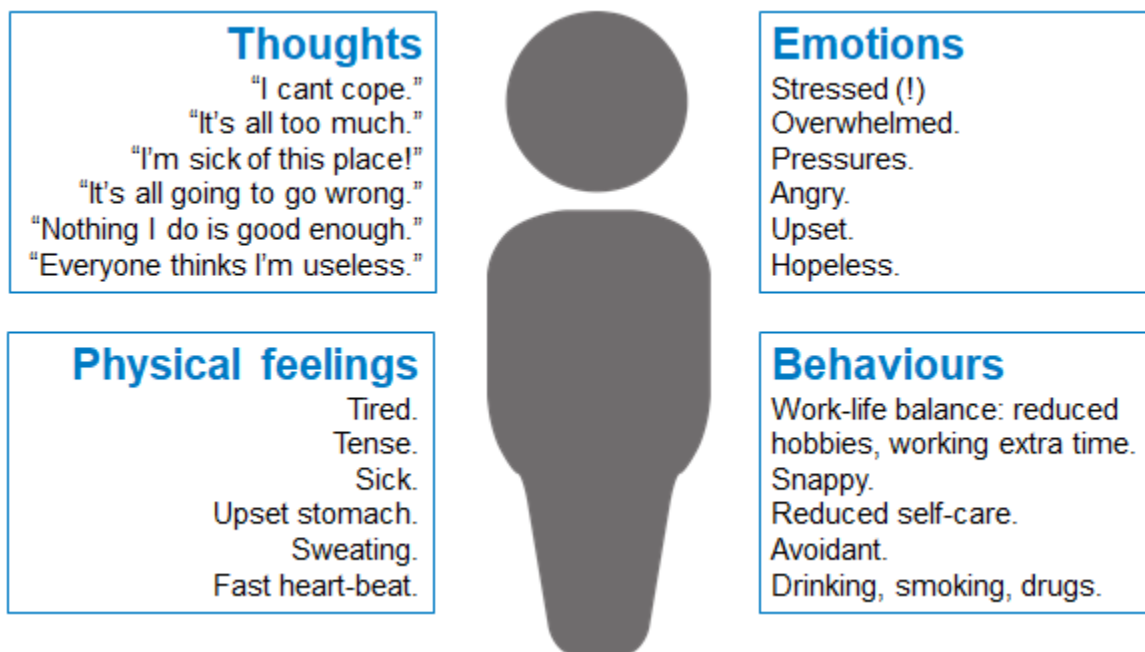
When we don't have an ability to self-reflect, and can't spot when we are feeling negative suffering or know how to help ourselves, it tends to get worse. For example,

- the negative feelings can get worse,
- we can feel confused, angry, fed-up and frustrated,
- we can become snappy and have arguments with others,
- we don't know what will help as we don't really know what's wrong,
- we can feel out of control and overwhelmed by negative thoughts.

## Where do we start?

This guide contains a helpful worksheet which will be explained a little later, but before we look at how you could check in with yourself, we need to know what to look for.

The model below is a quick way for helping to look at yourself in a different way.



Every person on the planet is made up of these things:

- **Body:** physical feelings in our bodies
- **Behaviours:** actions that we do or don't do
- **Thoughts:** thoughts in our heads
- **Emotions:** our mood

You might find that you are usually quite aware of how you feel physically in your body; e.g. "I always get tense pain in my neck and shoulders when I'm tired."

Or perhaps you are better at noticing your behaviour (i.e. what you do or don't do); e.g. "Every time I get angry I take myself off for a walk to get some space."

It is useful to notice what we do and how we feel, and knowing that we are made up of these four areas can be helpful way of getting better at 'noticing'.

It can be harder than it sounds! Sometimes we feel that there is barely time in the day to get a drink or go to the toilet. For some of the reasons mentioned earlier, we might really struggle to actually focus on ourselves; it needs to be a conscious action. To help with this, you can use the 'how do I feel' worksheet which asks helpful questions to help you notice how you are doing.





## Using the 'How do I feel' worksheet

Skip ahead to page 12 of this guide now and you will find a blank worksheet that you can use as a tool to help notice how you actually are. It might be helpful to make some spare copies.

The worksheet takes you through a series of quick questions to help identify how you are doing.

- How stressed was I?
- What caused this feeling?
- How did it make me feel?
- What did I think?
- What did I do?
- How stressed am I now?

You might feel confident to answer those questions without reading more (in which case please skip to 'when to use the worksheet'); but if you want to learn a bit more about what these questions mean, please stick with us.

### **How stressed was I?**

When this started, how stressed did you feel? Rate it from 0 (not at all) to 10 (the most stressed). If you find it easier to rate it using a % or even a picture, then do what feels helpful to you.

### **What caused this feeling?**

Identifying what causes your distress is one of the most useful parts of self-awareness.

By knowing your triggers you will be better able to anticipate difficulties so that they do not escalate. You may not always be able to avoid your triggers, but if you know them it may be that you can put things in place to reduce or even prevent your distress.



If helpful, consider:

- “When did those feelings start today?”
- “What was it which seemed to set me off?”
- “What caused me to feel this way?”

### **How did it make me feel?**

Write whatever feels useful here; whether it is emotions you feel, or if you notice it more as physical feelings. For example “I felt really angry”, or “I felt really tense in my shoulders.”

If this is distressing, don’t write too much. But it can be helpful for us to just notice how much our thoughts are affecting our mood.

### **What did I think?**

What thoughts were going through your head? What did you think? You may find it quite easy to notice your thoughts, but some of us can find this trickier. If you struggle to notice your thoughts you may find another guide in this series helpful (‘Noticing our thoughts’), also available on HR Web.

### **What did I do?**

What actions did you take? Or to put it another way, how did you react? Did you remove yourself from the situation, or perhaps made an excuse to go to the bathroom, or maybe you sent a friend a text message. Learning what we *do* when we feel negative is a helpful exercise.

### **How stressed am I now?**

It can be useful to re-rate your distress now. If it is the same, that is no problem; but it can be interesting to notice whether our distress has actually reduced as a result of going through this ‘noticing’ process.



## *When to use the worksheet?*

It is recommended that you have a go at filling out one of these worksheets on a regular basis – perhaps every day if you can, to help develop a habit of making time to reflect on yourself. If this feels too much for you, then you can use the worksheets at times when you feel something ‘isn’t right’; perhaps you feel like you are just having a bad day or a bad week. That would be a good time to use the worksheet to explore what is going on.

## *Useful tips*

- set an alarm on your phone or online calendar
- put a ‘how are you doing?’ post-it note on your desk, bathroom mirror, by the kettle, on your mug or anywhere else helpful
- create a new habit: e.g. every time you clean your teeth you ask yourself “how am I feeling?”
- Going to the gym is seen as a healthy act. Whilst exercise is great for your body and mind, sometimes we can over-exercise as a way of having control and trying to deal with stress or other negative emotions.



## How do I feel?

Is this a typical day? \_\_\_\_\_. Fill out the columns below to better understand how you feel and what you can do.

Time of day	How stressed was I?*	What caused this feeling?	How did it make me feel?	What did I think?	What did I do?	How stressed am I now?
E.g. 09:30	8/10	Dave's comment in the Team meeting about us not performing.	Angry & like I'm not doing enough.	"He is talking about me. He thinks I don't work hard enough."	Went quiet. Didn't say anything. Thought about it all day.	6/10

\* (Score yourself 0-10, where 0 is calm and 10 is very stressed)

## 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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