

# WELLBEING

DERWENT RURAL COUNSELLING SERVICE



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# Introduction

Like physical health, we all have mental health, and we can all benefit from improving our wellbeing somehow. The Wellbeing Resource Page is designed to support you to self-manage your wellbeing by working on various steps. The Wellbeing Resource Page can help you use and locate self-help information whilst in therapy. In addition, it is also used by those simply taking an interest in their mental health and wellbeing.

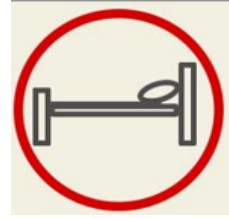
Each wellbeing step has information to help you learn:

- **What** are the steps you can take to improve your emotional wellbeing
- **Why** following these steps promotes good mental health
- **How** to use wellbeing strategies and techniques

You can access **self-help information** by clicking on the information highlighted in blue. This links you to a PDF document containing helpful information. Also highlighted in blue are **worksheets** that can help you practice some of the strategies and techniques highlighted throughout the Wellbeing Resource Page. If you would like to look at some more comprehensive treatment guides that we use with our clients in therapy sessions, check out our Treatment Manual section.

Stress, low mood, and anxiety can make it harder to get on with daily life. When we realise that we are struggling, we should not wait for mental health challenges to happen. Just like how we look after our physical health, we should also look after our mental health as well. If we do realise that things are not as good as they have been in the past, we need to act. We should never forget that our mental health and physical health are linked. The way we think impacts the way we feel.

# Practice Sleep Hygiene



If you are having difficulty sleeping, you're not alone. Sleep difficulties are common, and you will likely experience some sleep difficulties at some stage of your life. However, if sleep problems persist and become increasingly unmanageable, you may benefit from an appointment with your G.P. You may wish to address sleep problems yourself using this self-help page, or you may benefit from seeking support from one of our professionals by referring to our service.

There is a widespread view that people need 7-8 hours of sleep, which determines whether you have had a restful night. However, research shows us that the amount of sleep an individual requires varies from person to person and can depend on numerous factors, including age:

- New-born baby – 14-17 hours
- Toddler – 11-14 hours
- Adults – 6-10 hours
- Older adults – tend to need less sleep; however, long-term health conditions and medication can impact sleep quality further.

Falling asleep, staying asleep or not feeling refreshed upon wake contribute to poor sleep quality. Over time, sleep difficulties worsen, and sleep quality becomes poorer and poorer, regardless of the amount of time we spend in bed. Sleep Hygiene is a treatment used for treating chronic sleeping problems and promotes habits that help you have high quality & restful sleep.

# Why do we develop sleep problems?

We all know how lack of sleep impacts our mood, decision-making, and thoughts. By improving our sleep hygiene, we can develop better habits that help us manage stress and stay on top of our wellbeing. Poor sleep can be down to a variety of factors:

- Sleep disturbances can be connected to medical conditions (e.g., Sleep Apnoea, Restless Leg Syndrome, Narcolepsy). It's essential to get checked out by your GP who may be able to support you further.
- Difficulties managing stressful circumstances and pressure.
- Excessive drug or alcohol use stops the body from getting complete restorative levels of sleep.
- Reduced exercise and time for hobbies, making it harder to find ways to relax and switch off from your problems.
- Difficulties managing **worry** might be stopping you from falling and staying asleep.
- You are falling into unhealthy sleep hygiene habits. Many of which can be managed by applying the following **sleep hygiene rules**.

# How can we improve our sleep?

Improving sleep difficulties can be challenging at first but, by learning how to change our sleep habits and sleeping environment over time can lead to satisfying results. The activity below is aimed at improving your sleep quality.

**Step 1** – Look at the [sleep hygiene rules](#) and write down some ideas

**Step 2** – Make your ideas into reasonable and achievable goals

**Step 3** – Use the [Sleep Diary](#) to implement your sleep goals and monitor your progress.

You may be someone that prefers to use mobile phone apps. Below are some popular mobile phone apps which can be useful.



**Sleepio** – An online sleep programme to help you sleep.



**Calm** – An online meditation program designed to help you relax and sleep better

For more information about [Getting Better Quality Sleep, click here.](#)

For more comprehensive work on sleep difficulties or treating Insomnia, you may benefit from being supported further by our psychological therapies service.

# Eat Healthy Foods



Lots of research points to our diet having a real impact on our mental health. We might have all heard the expression 'brain food', and we have all probably used the term 'comfort food'. What we eat can impact how we think and what we do. Poor eating habits can develop for a variety of reasons.

- A response to managing anxiety or other stressful life events
- A reliance on convenience foods. These are typically high in sugar and saturated fat.
- Poor time management due to stressful circumstances
- Lack of motivation.
- Lack of education about **food**.
- Changes in your appetite can be a side-effect of certain medications. If this is the case, it might be worth speaking with your G.P

All the above are common reasons why so many of us fall into periods of unhealthy eating. Unfortunately, poor eating habits contribute to symptoms of depression and anxiety and can make them harder to manage. By changing our eating environment and eating behaviours, you can further understand your relationship with food and create better eating habits. The best way to succeed is to set a long-term plan and set reasonable and achievable goals.

# Why change and eat more healthily?

Changing our eating environments and behaviours can offer various benefits, particularly when it comes to trying to improve common mental health problems like anxiety, depression, and sleep problems. Having good eating habits can help reduce the following consequences below.

- ✓ Improved sleep quality
- ✓ More energy so you can be more active
- ✓ Increased concentration
- ✓ Improve mood
- ✓ Remove triggers for anxiety, e.g., caffeine
- ✓ Remove feelings of lethargy & get more enjoyment out of things
- ✓ Strengthen our bodies' defences against illness and disease
- ✓ Save money by not purchasing as many convenience foods that are usually more processed and expensive.



# How can I eat more healthily?

Finding a healthy way to improve your eating can be challenging if you have not found strategies that can work for you. Below are ten ways you can improve your healthy eating.

1. **Have a plan** – Sometimes, poor planning can cause poor food choices and let uncomfortable hunger get the better of you. Preparing lunches for the following day and taking the time to plan your meals will help you reduce food cravings and help you stick to your plan.
2. **Try and limit dairy foods.** – A common mistake when trying to eat healthily is when we consume too much dairy. Nutritionists suggest that we only need approximately 5% of our diet to be dairy-based. If you think you may struggle without milk, try semi-skimmed milk or a sweetened milk alternative.
3. **Involve your friends and family** – Don't have the time to cook? Cooking can be an enjoyable activity with friends and family, ensuring you aren't giving up on valuable social time. Why not choose something nutritious and straightforward and make cooking an enjoyable social activity.
4. **Learn to manage portion sizes** – When feeling stressed or in a rush, a common mistake is to lose track of how much you are eating. Heavy portion sizes can cause lethargy, and food rich in calories require lots of energy to digest. Taking your time and not rushing your food can help you know when you feel full. Try waiting for 20 minutes after a meal before deciding if you need more food.  
**Write a shopping list and don't go food shopping whilst you are hungry** – This one may seem simple. When we buy food in a hungry state or on impulse, we can end up being surrounded by temptations that make it challenging to eat healthily. A shopping list serves as an
6. **Don't feel under pressure to go on a diet** – Often, people go through cycles of healthy eating. This is because specific diets can be

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challenging to maintain. Long-term goals and maintaining healthy eating habits often bring the best results long-term. Be kind and compassionate to yourself when setting healthy eating goals and be aware that slip-ups and mistakes are inevitable.

7. **Try not to consume too many liquid calories** – Some drinks have addictive properties, are high in calories, sugar, caffeine and offer little nutritional value. These drinks are usually alcohol-based or contain stimulants, e.g., coffee or energy drinks, both of which contribute to sleeping problems. If you are interested in learning more about the calories you may be consuming, you can use the Drinkaware unit & calorie app. If you have challenges letting go of any of these drinks, try turning to lower sugar alternatives. Through practising these habits, they can become preferable and second nature.
8. **Drink more water** – Sometimes, an increased appetite can be confused with dehydration and thirst. Feeling hydrated is an essential component of maintaining good energy levels and managing mood. Stress and life's distractions can often get in the way of keeping track of water intake. Carrying around a large bottle of water, keeping it visible, and aiming to consume it all each day may help you drink more water. Alternatively, writing a post-it note on your computer may serve as a reminder.
9. **Be compassionate to yourself when you slip up** – Diets are sometimes ineffective, as it effectively ends after the first significant slip-up, which can usually result from not eating enough and feeling overly hungry at the wrong time. Frustration and guilt can often lead to poorer eating choices. If you struggle with being hard on yourself, you may be interested in managing negative thoughts further by [clicking here](#).
10. **Start with Breakfast** – Sometimes, people get into the habit of overeating in the evenings. Some people also struggle to feel hungry in the mornings. By slowly introducing different **foods** upon wake, you can reduce cravings later in the day. If you are struggling knowing where to start with eating more healthily, start with trying to eat a nutritious breakfast every morning for a week. If done every morning, you will have taken care of 33% of your diet.

# Eating more healthily in 3 simple steps

**Step 1** – Use the **What am I eating today Diary** like in the example below, so you can assess your current eating habits.



Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks
Monday	X2 poached eggs on x1 Sourdough bread	Microwave Chicken & Pasta meal	Beef stew & chips	Pot-noodle Wispa Chocolate bar 3 small Beers X3 Teas with x2 sugars

**Step 2** – Once you have completed step 1, reflect about your positive and negative eating habits. Think about some achievable healthy eating and drinking goals you can use to form new habits.

**Step 3** – Use the **What am I Going to Eat Tomorrow Diary** so you can continue to log what you eat and drink. Write down your goals using the column on the left hand-side. Once you have stopped eating or drinking for the day, place a tick or a cross in the next column so you can make yourself accountable to your goals. The diary below shows an example of a completed day

**Step 4** – Review how your week has gone and praise yourself for any improvements made. Remember, if you make just one change then this is very much a success.

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Day	Healthy Eating Goal	Goal Achieved?	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Drinks/Snacks
Monday	Use sweetener in every tea rather than sugar Alcohol-free day Avoid takeaways during the week Drink 3.0 litres of water	  ✓ ✓ ✗ ✓	2 Poached Eggs on x1 Sourdough Bread	Beef Stew & rice	Battered Fish & Chips (from the chippy)	X2 Ryvita Bread with low fat cheese spread X1 diet coke X1 Wispa Chocolate bar 3.0 litres of water X3 cups of tea with sweetener

### Tips

- Try to make your goals achievable and realistic
- Try and be kind and compassionate to yourself if you do not achieve a goal. Remember, just achieving one goal shows that you have actively improved your eating and/or drinking habits.
- If you are struggling with feeling hungry, but you know you have eaten a substantial amount, think of a soothing activity you can do for 20 minutes before you make the decision to eat more so you can allow yourself time to feel full and satisfied, before making the decision to eat again.



## Learn how to relax

Relaxation can be achieved through learning short, guided meditations or by simply engaging in activities that can help us relax. Relaxing is firstly learning the art of making time for yourself and then choosing to engage in activities which reduce stress within that time.

## Why take time for yourself and relax?

Living in a fast-paced society, current events and dealing with change, can make it increasingly challenging to find time to practice relaxation. Key life events, the news and difficult circumstances sometimes demand a lot of our time, energy and resources. With the danger being that we sometimes end up offering none of those things to ourselves.

When our demands outweigh our coping, our **Stress Scales** become unbalanced. This can often make meeting our demands more challenging and feeling stressed can cause us to become negative, less productive and feel stuck.

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# How can I become better at relaxing?

The first thing you need to do if you are struggling to relax is to find some 5–10-minute pockets of time within your schedule to practice relaxation.

**Managing Your Mood** is often about creating a structure for coping with demands, stress, and activities.

Ideal pockets of time that you make for yourself could be:

- During your lunch break (if you don't get time for one, consider why it might be important to have one).
- When you don't have childcare responsibilities or other distractions.
- In the morning combined with a nutritious breakfast.
- Attending a yoga or relaxation class should you wish to combine it with socialising and structure.
- Planning mini breaks during the day where you allow yourself to stop what you are doing and be more mindful.
- Trying a new relaxing creative activity or getting back into one you have stopped doing might be more enjoyable to do with others. For more information, visit [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com).
- Creating more relaxing spaces in your home or work environments will make relaxing easier. Somewhere calm, free of clutter and quiet make ideal places for relaxation.
- Mobile phone apps like **Sleepio** and **CALM** can provide you with meditations from your phone.

## **Quick Relaxation Activities**

[Mindfulness](#)

[Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#)



## Exercise



**Exercise** acts as a natural anti-depressant. Even if we do not feel like exercising, we almost always feel better after exercising. Remember, moderation is key. We do not need to run three marathons a week. Walking the dog three days a week will be a good start.

Regular exercise is a proven way to reduce stress, anxiety, feelings of depression, boost self-esteem and improve sleep. Other health benefits are increased energy levels, lower blood pressure, improving muscle tone and strength, and reducing body fat.

## Why is exercise so important?

Becoming more active can be a barrier for people for various reasons.

- Difficulties with feeling motivated due to depression
- Anxiety about attending gyms and meeting new people
- Significant life events which create less time for exercise, e.g. having children, new work opportunities
- Managing unpredictable long-term health conditions and disabilities

Due to what we know about the positive mental health benefits of **exercise** therapists are now encouraged and trained to support clients become more active.

The next page gives you some ideas for becoming more active that can work for you.

## How can I become more active?

If you lack time to be more active, why not combine exercise with other activities that you already have the time to do?

- Exercising in the park whilst your children or grandchildren play.
- Exercise with your partner as an active date rather than going to a restaurant or having a takeaway.
- Park your car further away from work or cycle instead of driving.
- Use the mornings to exercise so that it doesn't eat into work or family time.
- If exercise interferes with your social time and meeting new people, why not use Meet.up.com or the National Trust website and turn it into an opportunity to meet new people?

### **Lack of motivation**

**Motivation** is increased by breaking down activities and doing them in small steps. Set small goals rather than waiting for the inspiration to come to you. Why not try one of these strategies to make you feel more motivated?

- Find a gym buddy so that you are accountable for one another
- Find a group of people and enter a local team sports league
- Use a mobile phone app like Couch to 5K to help you remember and feel proud of your achievements
- Enter a charity or park run such as Race for Life so that you feel motivated to train for it
- Once you have set some goals, try and break them down into parts to make them more achievable



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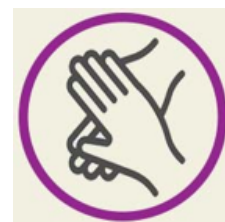
**Health issues**

As we get older or encounter health issues, we can feel excluded from being more active. However, this should not stop you from being more active or participating in a sport you used to enjoy. You may benefit from more inclusive types of sporting activities or smaller things you can do each day.

- Walking Netball
- Walking Football
- Water aerobics
- Yoga
- Coaching
- Refereeing
- Join a running club
- Going on a walk during your lunchbreak
- Parking your car further away from your destination
- Using the stairs rather than the lift
- Setting a steps goal on your smart phone each day

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# Manage negative thoughts



Negative thoughts are something we all experience, particularly when coping with stressful circumstances and mental health challenges like low mood and anxiety. Using techniques based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy can help you identify and challenge negative thinking. Over time, you can address negative thinking habits. Negative thinking impacts how we behave and the way we feel.

## Why negative thoughts should be challenged

Negative thoughts have such a strong influence on how we behave and feel. Be mindful of confusing them with facts, opinions, or heavy bias. **Negative Thought Habits** are usually biased and based on opinion, making it harder to have a balanced view.

## How can I challenge negative thoughts?

Thought Challenging is an easy-to-use technique based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. By using the steps below, you can learn to identify negative thoughts so that you can use the challenging process to arrive at a more balanced and healthy view. Our thoughts have a significant impact on our behaviour.

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**Step 1: Catching Negative Thoughts**

Using a **Thought Monitor** is an effective way to identify which negative thoughts contain unhelpful thinking habits. The example below shows someone using the Thought Monitor to observe their negative thoughts.

Situation	Thoughts	Feelings
Sat in the kitchen thinking about my friend who cancelled on me	I bet they had better things to do and just didn't want to see me	Sad 75%

**Tips for catching negative thoughts**

Avoid challenging questions or facts. focus more on your negative thoughts and perceptions.






Try and record the thought exactly as it was said at the time. You may need to log these within your mobile phone or private notebook if you are busy or cannot locate your **Thought Tracker**.

**Step 2: Challenging Negative Thoughts**

The next step is to use the CBT **Thought Challenger** to observe your thoughts further and challenge them. Weigh up the evidence both for and against your negative thought, just like in the example below.

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Situation	Emotion % 	Negative Thought 	Evidence +	Evidence -	Alternative thought based on evidence 
Sat in the kitchen, thinking about my friend who cancelled on me...	Sad 75%	I bet they had better things to do and just didn't want to see me.	They sent me a text cancelling.	They may be going through a difficult time.  I don't know the reason they cancelled.  They haven't cancelled before.	By assuming they cancelled on me because they had better things to do, is mind-reading on my part. Although I am disappointed, I do not know the reason why they cancelled. They have not cancelled <u>before</u> and I am sure they will tell me when they are ready.

You can use the [Prompts for challenging negative thinking](#) worksheet if you are struggling to come up with evidence that does not support your negative thought.

- **Evidence that supports the thought** – This allows you to clarify why your situation is negative.
- **Evidence that does not support the thought** – This allows you to take on the role of a defence lawyer, providing counterarguments based on evidence, previous experiences and seeking the truth.
- **Alternative thought** – This allows you to use evidence from both sides for a more grounded and balanced view.

### Tips for challenging negative thoughts



You can use the [Prompts for challenging negative thinking](#) worksheet if you are struggling to come up with evidence that does not support your negative thought.



Try and remain objective and look at evidence from both sides, similar to how a judge would when hearing both defence and prosecution during a court case.

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**Step 3: Practice**

The final step is to practice using the worksheets and diaries to train your mind to use less harmful thinking habits. Use the worksheets to help develop and practice your thought challenging skills.

If you would like to learn more about [Challenging Negative Thinking](#), [click here](#).

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# Doing things for yourself?



Doing things for yourself is an essential part of looking after your emotional well-being. When demands are high and our resources, e.g., time, energy, motivation, are low, we can develop stress and become quickly overwhelmed. Doing things for yourself balances out your **Stress Scales**. By making a habit of consistently doing things for yourself, you will benefit from the 'feel-good factor'. This helps boost motivation and energy levels.

## Why Do things for yourself?

Sometimes due to what life throws at us, we sacrifice activities that make us feel good. This is usually for the benefit of others, e.g., our family members, our bosses, or our friends. The Stress Bucket below shows how excessive demands can create stress. When we focus too much on our demands in the absence of doing things for ourselves, our stress levels overflow. The holes at the bottom of the bucket represent things we can do for ourselves to relieve stress. By doing things for ourselves, we build up the resources we need to manage the flow of our stress pressure & demands better.

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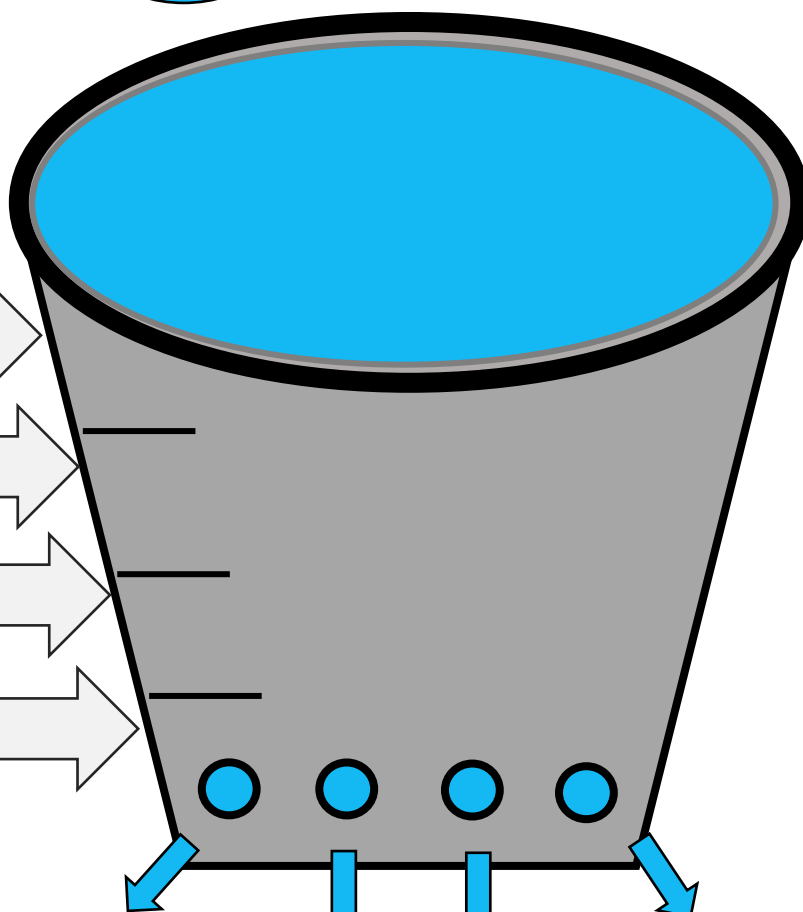
More deadline at work

Child struggling to sleep

Arguing with partner

Struggling to focus

Worry



Try a new hobby or activity

Say no to things more often to make time for yourself

Have a self-care night

Exercise more often

# How can I practice doing things for myself more?

Re-learning how to do things for yourself can be challenging. The steps below show you how you can practice the Stress Bucket technique and reduce your stress levels.

**Step 1** – Download the [Stress Bucket Worksheet](#) and write down your stress & demands in the blue circles above the bucket.

**Step 2** – Gauge/mark how stressed you are via the arrows on the left-hand side. If you are starting to feel stressed or overwhelmed, you may benefit from moving on to the next step.

**Step 3** – Use the boxes at the bottom of the bucket to think of some ideas to reduce stress and do something for you.

**Step 4** – Turn your ideas into goals. People usually fall at this hurdle because their ideas lack structure. Try to be **specific** with what you want to achieve, give it a **time frame** and state **when** you will do it.

## Do something for yourself tips



When choosing something to do for yourself. Select an activity which will charge your battery rather than drain it. For more information on this, look at this [Energy Giving vs Energy Draining](#) worksheet.



Try and make your goals realistic and achievable to begin with. Hard to reach goals may mean you miss out on that sense of achievement and 'feel good factor' that you need to stay motivated.





## Ask for help

Why should we ask for help? A problem shared is a problem halved. It can feel difficult talking to those close to us, even though they are probably the most eager to help. Some find it better to talk to someone we do not know. Always remember that helplines, therapy services and other organisations help everyone.

## Why asking for help can feel challenging?

We know asking for help will benefit our well-being but asking for help doesn't always feel second nature to everyone. It can be challenging for various reasons.

- Lack of assertiveness skills
- Not sure where to start or who to ask?
- Pride and perfectionism

Adopting **Assertiveness Principles** demonstrates the ability to express your thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and opinions in a manner that doesn't violate your rights or the rights of others. Being passive often leaves you feeling like your needs are not necessary. By practising being more assertive, your confidence in asking for help increases. Asking for help gives you a better chance to find the solutions and answers that you need.

Not sure where to start or who to ask for help? **Problem-Solving** is a strategy used in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to help people find solutions to problems. If you are unsure where to start or who to ask for help, use the **Problem-Solving template** and the steps below.

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**Step 1: Identify the problem**

Being specific and narrowing down problems helps you focus on what you are dealing with. So, for example, if you have money problems, what is the problem specifically? Is it that you cannot pay a mortgage? Not saving enough money? Are you in debt? Owe some money to a friend? The more specific you are, the better.

**Step 2: Brainstorm all possible solutions**

You may have heard the phrase 'back to the drawing board'? By naming as many solutions as possible, you will have a range of avenues where you can get help and solutions to your problems.

**Step 3: Analyze each solution's strength and weakness and give it a score out of 10**

Now that you have a variety of sources of help in the form of solutions consider each one carefully and rate each one out of ten. Once you have chosen your preferred solution, you are ready for the next step.

**Step 4: Action Plan**

Most ideas stay as exactly just that, due to a lack of action plan. When turning your chosen solution into an action plan, consider:

- **What** are you going to do?
- **Where** are you going to do it?
- **Who** is involved?
- **When** are you going to do it?

If you would like to see a [Problem-solving Example](#), click here

Perfectionism and a lack of confidence is a common reason why some people find it challenging to ask for help.

- "People won't think I am up to the task if I ask for help".
- "What's the point in asking for help? I'll just fail anyway!"
- "If I ask for help it won't be done my way!"

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By working together with friends, work colleagues and our family, you are much more likely to save time and find the support needed. Asking for help is crucial to managing your emotional wellbeing.

### **Task**

If you are someone who struggles to ask for help, think about the reasons why. Try to address them by taking small steps. The more you practice asking for help, the more natural it will start to feel.

### Helpful organisations

- Citizens Advice
- Shelter
- Sure Start
- Relate
- Derwent Rural Counselling Service
- Derbyshire County Council Education Service



## Learning new things?

Why do we need to exercise our minds? Gaining new skills is in itself very rewarding. It provides a sense of purpose and achievement. We can reduce the amount of time spent thinking about the past and look forward and think about the future. No matter your age or intelligence, learning new things strengthens your mind and is a journey that never stops.

## How can I learn new things?

Learning new things occurs by developing your curiosity and accepting new challenges. Could you ask a friend about something they enjoy? Or encourage your family to engage in a new hobby together? Below are some helpful organisations that can help you on your journey to becoming more curious about learning new things.

- University of the Third age – Education for older people.
- Sleepio – An apps which teaches you how to sleep better and relax
- Meetup – An internet site that helps you meet new people and try new things.
- National Trust – Gives you information about visiting historical sites
- Dulingo – A poplar mobile phone app that helps you learn a new language



## Help others

Helping others, especially those who are less fortunate than yourself, can help to put things into perspective and make you feel more positive and grateful about your circumstances. Like exercise, helping others helps give you that 'feel-good-factor.'

## How can I help others more?

The benefits of helping others can range from helping someone in significant need to small acts of kindness. Below are just a few examples.

- Be more complimentary to others
- Donate to a charitable cause
- Consider voluntary work to support someone less privileged
- Call someone out of the blue and ask if they are OK
- Reach out to someone feeling isolated and include them
- Offer additional praise and encouragement to someone short on confidence

# Treatment Guides

[Manage Your Mood](#)

[Challenge Negative Thinking](#)

[Help with Panic Attacks](#)

[Manage Your Worries](#)

[Help with Obsessions & Compulsions](#)

[Improve Social Anxiety](#)

[Get Better Quality Sleep](#)