



*looking after
yourself*

**Steps to
achieving wellbeing**

inside this book

This book has been designed by and for people who have been in or are still in unhealthy or abusive relationships and need some ideas about how to take better care of themselves. It is your book to read, write and draw on and to use to support you in finding ways to achieve better health.

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*Treat yourself as if you were
your own closest and most
treasured friend*



what is wellbeing?



People who are confident and have a positive outlook generally seem more able to look after themselves emotionally. They are usually better able to cope with life's challenges, make healthier choices for themselves and have more control over their lives.

Wellbeing is described as 'the state of being comfortable, healthy or happy.' It is generally felt that it also brings in things like how satisfied people are with their lives, their sense of purpose and how 'in control' they feel.

As our lives have become more complex and expectations have changed, it is clear that we all need to pay more attention to our sense of wellbeing - especially if we are struggling in some way or experience loss or trauma.



getting started

Here are some ideas to improve your sense of wellbeing...

Be kind to yourself! Make a list of things you like to do, choose one each week or each day and make time to do it.

Use the ideas listed in this book to help you make a start

Be more mindful, practice being mindful at different times during the day: when you are eating, walking or simply sitting quietly - be in the moment, aware of your thoughts, sensations and impulses without reacting to them, simply being aware of them as they happen. (See also P14)

See some of our other ideas...



Write in a journal. You can record your feelings, poetry, short stories, memories, shopping lists, exciting plans or anything else you want to write. Putting pen to paper can help you to get confusing or negative thoughts out of your head so you can make better sense of them

Learn to distract and soothe yourself when you are upset or overwhelmed, we've added some helpful tools and techniques for you to try in this book

Do something creative, we like mindful colouring books, but anything that keeps the creative part of your brain focused works wonders

Relax for at least 10 minutes each day (take a bath, take a walk, listen to music, follow a guided meditation)

Drink more water, it hydrates body and brain and keeps your energy levels up throughout the day

Be active: a 10 minute walk is a start, or you could do 10 lots of walking upstairs every morning to get your energy flowing

Get some daylight, even just ten minutes each day walking or standing in daylight can help to lift your mood and provide much needed Vitamin D which has multiple health benefits

Stretch. Just stretch out every muscle in your body one by one, morning and night; within a couple of weeks you will feel stronger and more supple

Connect with people who are friendly and supportive – your family, friends, colleagues or neighbours

Keep learning – developing a new skill or interest can help improve your confidence and sense of achievement

pleasurable activities list

When you feel low or overwhelmed, it's often helpful to distract yourself for a little while until the mood or confusion lifts and you start to feel better.

Do some exercise you enjoy - maybe go for a walk or follow a YouTube yoga class

Find a peaceful area to sit outside and watch the clouds or listen to the birds

Go to a playground and play on the swings or throw a tennis ball against the wall

Give yourself a hand massage or facial, or maybe pair up with a friend for a pamper session

Put Music TV on loudly - and dance!

Watch a box set

Play googlewhack - google a word and follow where it takes you from site to site

Post positive memories or quotes on social media

Create a scrapbook

Write a blog

pleasurable activities list

What about using something from the lists on the next few pages to distract you?

Visit a friend, or if you can't do that, call or text them

Go for a swim

Feed the ducks

Stretch your muscles

Join a local group, a class or volunteer for something

Do a puzzle with lots of pieces

Read your favourite book again – or write to your favourite author or television personality to say why you like them

Google 'Mindfulness' and make a list of all the good advice

Draw or paint a picture - or take photos on your phone

Take a train journey to the end of the line and back again and watch the scenery change

more

activities

Go to a library or coffee shop and people watch

Get a haircut

Write in your journal

Do some gardening – in your own garden or a friend's

Read or write a poem outside

Spend time with your pets

Go Poundland shopping and challenge yourself to spend a set amount e.g. create a new make-up look for £5 (then blog about it)

Take a different route somewhere and notice the scenery

Eat something delicious or cook a meal you love - or a new recipe you've never tried before

Meditate or visit a place of worship



more
activities

Write a letter to someone you haven't seen for a while, or maybe to yourself setting out things you have achieved - or would like to

Challenge yourself to smile and say hello to five strangers

Sing or play a musical instrument

Create a playlist of happy music – and then listen to it

Make a movie on your phone

Polish your furniture - or anything else in the house and make it sparkle

Watch trashy TV

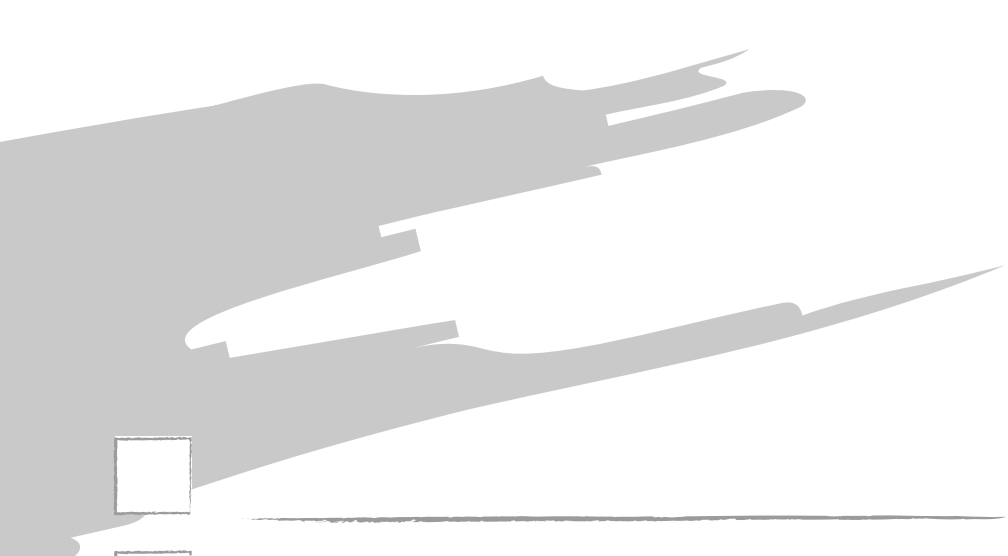
Make a list of everyone you admire

Make a list of all the good traits you aspire to

Write a bucket list of ten things you would like to do, making it as impossible as you like – then write a bucket list that seems more achievable



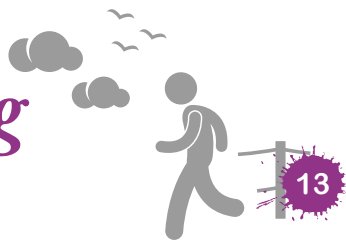
your own
pleasurable
activities list



when I feel low

i could do something

from this list



mindfulness

Being calm and being contented are closely linked. Scientific studies have shown that practicing mindfulness daily can improve emotional stability, increased focus and creativity and reduce stress levels.



the two key elements to mindfulness are:

- 1** Focus - focus on this moment, your breathing, your thoughts, feelings, sounds... anything in this moment, here, now
- 2** Acceptance – this is difficult, but the trick is to recognise your thoughts, feelings and responses and just accept them, don't assign negative or positive attributes to anything you notice, simply acknowledge: I'm feeling uncomfortable, I'm experiencing sadness

Tiny changes in your behaviour such as being more aware of your breathing can make a huge difference to how you feel over time.

Once you have accepted your thoughts and feelings without judgement, you can try letting them go. Imagine them as a butterfly, dancing away from your mind; or picture them as clouds, floating by without affecting you.

Practicing mindfulness daily, even for five or ten minutes, will get you in the habit of self-soothing so you will be ready to deal with difficult experiences without becoming so overwhelmed.

find ways to soothe yourself when things feel overwhelming

When things feel out of control, soothe yourself with one of these activities...



Relax. When you are relaxed you feel better, and it is hard to remain angry, upset or overwhelmed when you are relaxed and soothed. You could try mindful techniques to help you relax.

Your sense of smell could help. Use a fragrant oil you like and massage it into your hands. Or maybe visit a bakery or florist and breathe in those lovely aromas. Lie down on the grass and smell the fresh green scent.

Perhaps you can create a fragrance card with your favourite perfume?

Sound may be the key to soothing your spirits. Try to identify the different instruments in a favourite song or imagine the make and model of the cars passing outside.

Turn on the television and flick through the channels with your eyes closed while you try to identify what programmes are on.

Simply play your favourite music and really listen to it.

Learn to centre yourself by focusing on something:

touch - your feet on the ground as you walk

taste - the flavours in your food

know yourself

Often, we become so overwhelmed with how we feel that we don't notice why we might be feeling that way.

A great way to get to know yourself better is to keep a 'map' of your moods over time. In her book *Mood Mapping*, Dr Liz Miller sets out four quadrants of mood as shown here.

The first step is to plot your mood at this moment by estimating how much energy you have and putting a mark on the vertical axis.

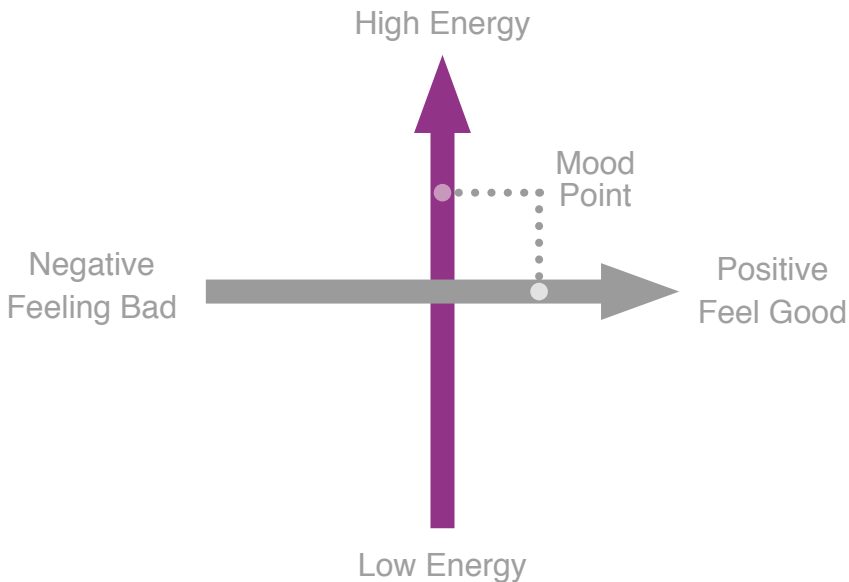
Then estimate how good or positive you feel and plot that on the horizontal axis. The Mood Point is where vertical and horizontal marks on the graph cross. The Mood Point can be labelled with the time and perhaps a quick note why you feel the way you do. You may want to note things that might affect you such as how much sleep you've had, if there has been an upsetting incident or if you have been drinking alcohol.

If you want to improve your mood, then maybe think about what you have done in the past that has helped you do that. Plot another point later, to see if your choice has been effective.

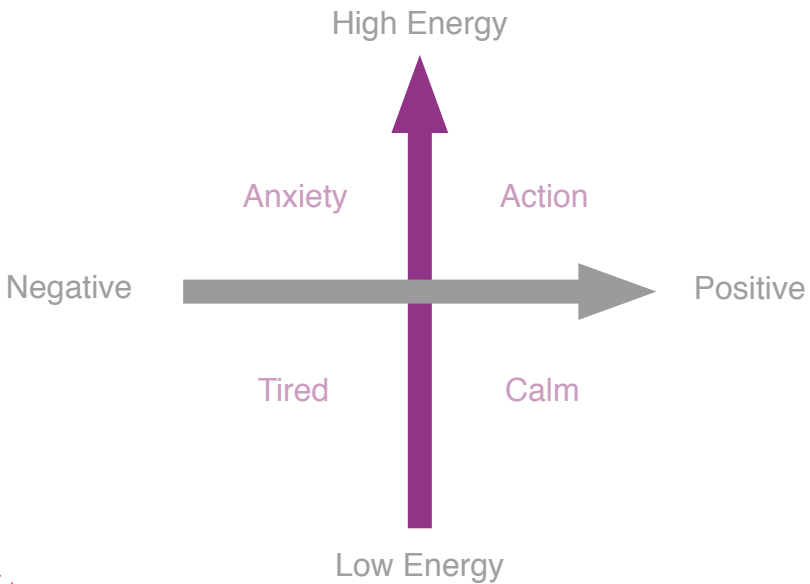
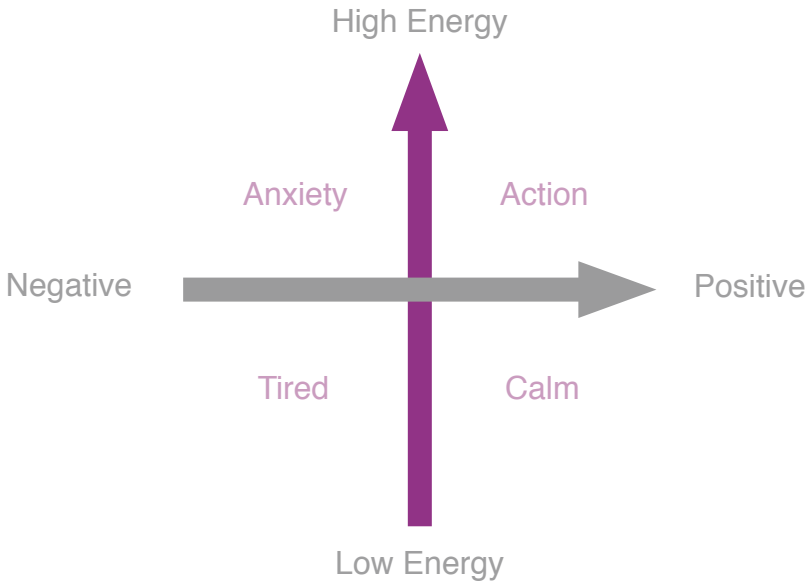
Over time, by checking in on the chart, you learn about what helps you and what harms you and record these things so that you can plan for better wellbeing.

You may want to reflect on a happy or sad time and think about where your mood and energy were at that point to help you start your mood mapping journey.

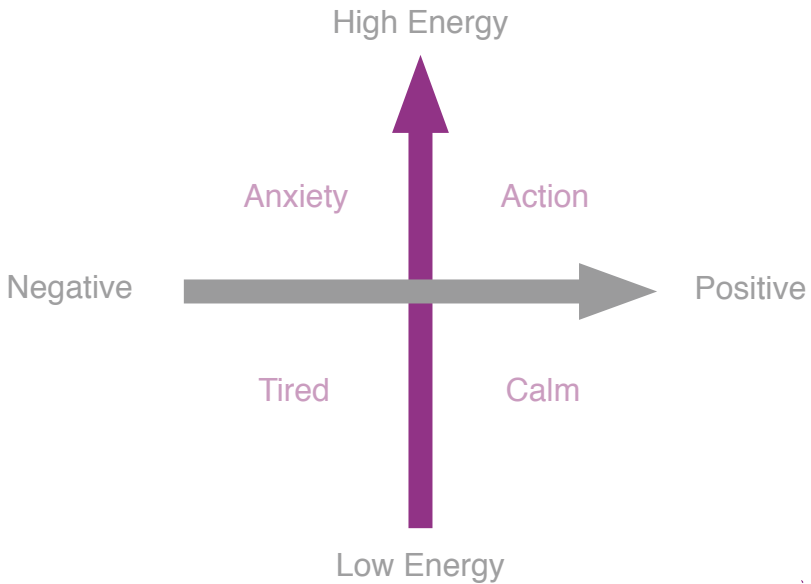
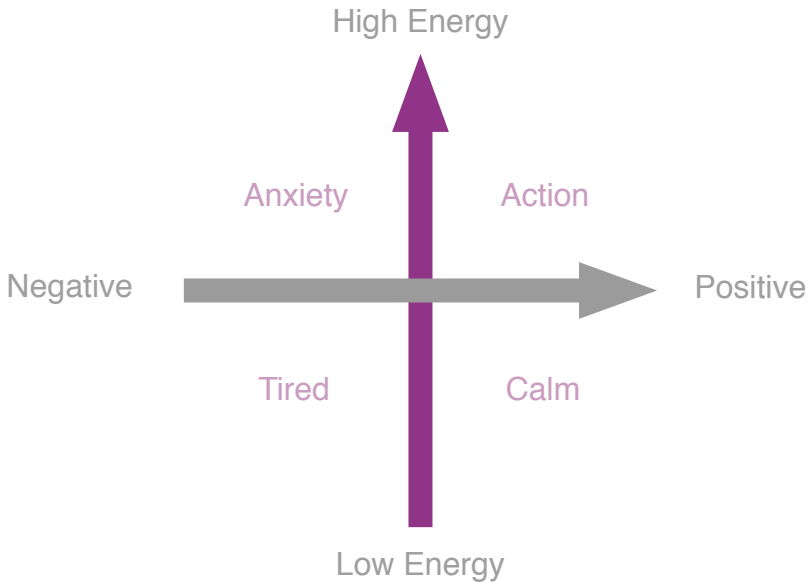
how to map your mood



make your own mood map



make your own mood map



journal your journey

Use a journal to help offload troublesome thoughts and track your progress – it will be there to look at when you need a little help



Some of the most famous people in the world have kept journals of their experiences.

Perhaps one of the most famous examples is that of Anne Frank; despite the terrifying times she was living through in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam during the second world war, her journal of pain, frustration and hope has inspired millions of people.

There is something very powerful about words. Sometimes the simple act of writing down your feelings can take the heat out of them and free your mind a little.

Be creative with your journal. Draw and doodle in it. Paint or scribble on it – stick quotes or articles in it. Put your mark on the pages and you may find it becomes a treasured companion. Write poetry or stories. Write your own story, perhaps.

Many people who have experienced the trauma of an abusive relationship find that a journal helps them to manage their feelings and untangle them a little. It's like having a special vault for all the thoughts you wrestle with; nobody should see it but you.



self care

to do list



Write down any thoughts that haunt you

Be kind, no matter what



Bring home flowers





Talk



Think



When you can't have a conversation, try reading instead



Try not to lie, even to yourself



the highest priority

Start to treat yourself as your highest priority, mentally and physically



On a plane, people are advised to put their own oxygen mask on first; this is because it's harder to take care of anyone else unless you are strong and well.

Taking care of yourself should be your number one priority.

This doesn't mean you have to stop caring about others, or be selfish or unkind. It means that you recognise that if you are happier, you will be able to say no when you need to and be stronger.



24 hour helpline 0300 123 5101

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