

# Healthy Mind Healthy Weight

## Stress Rescue: The Life rings



# Recap & Today's aims



- Previously we focussed on understanding stress and low mood
- We started to understand the main causes of stress
- We also looked at some basic stress management strategies: 'clearing the decks'.
- Today we are going to focus on psychological strategies you can develop to help combat stress and low mood.

# Aims

- Identify your own stressors
- Problem solving
- Challenging your stressful thoughts
- Asserting your self
- Mindfulness
- Doing what matters
- Goal setting

# Identifying your stressors



Work

Family

Friends

Finances

Partner

Time (lack of)

Health

Can't say no

Children

# Identify your stressors



- A stress diary can help you identify what may be causing your stress and/or low mood

Date/ day & Time	Stress Rating (0-10) 0= completely relaxed 10= extremely stressed	Notes

# Identify your stressors



Date/ day & Time	Stress Rating (0-10) 0= completely relaxed 10= extremely stressed	Notes
01/12/12 Monday 10am	(8)	Supposed to be helping a friend to pack boxes for moving. Feel unwell but don't want to let her down as she helped me pack for my move.
2/12/12 Tuesday 2pm	(3)	Kids at school, enjoying a peaceful lunch and some time to read the paper.

# Identify your Stressors



- Overtime you may be able to identify certain triggers
- The diary will also show patterns during any relaxed times
- Once you have identified stress triggers you can start to prioritise which stress triggers to deal with and consider the most appropriate

# Stress Rescue: Problem solving

- Problem solving is the process of identifying stressors and creating strategies to manage them
- Problem solving is a powerful tool to add to your stress management toolbox. Practice makes perfect!
- There are several steps in problem solving
  - (1) Identify problem*
  - (2) Step back and question*
  - (3) Brain storm solutions*
  - (4) Select and evaluate*
  - (5) Outcome and fine tuning*



# Stress Rescue: Problem solving

Step 1: identify the problem

- use your diary to help identify this.

Step 2: take a step back and ask yourself....

- *If you could solve this problem how would my life improve?*
- *Is there any part of the problem over which I have control?*
- *Can this problem be broken down into smaller problems?*

# Stress Rescue: Problem solving

## Step 3: Brain storming for solutions

- Create a list –anything that pops into your head
- Recall past problems that you solved.

*Could a similar solution work for this problem too?*

- Ask someone you trust for advice

# Problem Solving: Select a solution and Evaluate it



## Step 4: Select and evaluate

- Of all your ideas what has the most potential to work
- How will using this solution make you feel in the end. How will it make others feel
- What are the positive and negative consequences

## Step 5: What was the outcome? Any fine tuning required?

- Did your solution work for you
- Do you need to make any adjustments/fine tune?

# Problem Solving: Example

(1) Problem: you identify from your diary that you are getting stressed the two days a week that you have to be at work early for a meeting. The outcome is that you are always late, stressed and hungry as the meeting finishes at lunchtime. Also in trouble with your boss.

(2) When this problem is broken down we can see several problems

Going to bed late the night before

Not organising work clothes/bag

Not changing alarm time

Not planning an easy breakfast snack

# Problem Solving: Example

(3 + 4) From the problem list several solutions can be generated and then evaluated

**Solution 1:** Go to bed earlier on nights before meetings

**Evaluation:** This is impossible as too much to do at night and do not want to lose my evening relaxation time after getting kids to bed

**Solution 2:** Set Alarm 10 minutes earlier.

**Evaluation:** This would be sensible as it takes me a while to get going in the morning. The downside is that it will wake up my partner.

**Solution 3:** Lay out clothes and get bag ready night before

**Evaluation:** This is very easy to do. Can do during TV adverts.

**Solution 4:** Buy some healthy breakfast bars and fruit to eat at the meeting

**Evaluation:** These items just need added to my shopping list so should be easy

# Problem Solving: Example

## (5) Solutions selected:

- Get clothes and bag sorted
- Set alarm 10 minutes earlier
- Buy healthy breakfast snack for meeting

- **Outcome: Less stressed but still a bit late for work and still hungry**

Forgot to get clothes and bag sorted and forgot healthy snack for meeting.

- Fine tuning
  - Set phone reminder re clothes and bag
  - Put breakfast snacks in the bag the night before

# Stress Rescue: Challenging your stressful thoughts



- When you notice a change in your stress/mood levels you may also notice that you have thoughts filled with threat and worry.
- Often these thoughts can be automatic
- Although we sometimes cannot change a stress trigger we can try to change our automatic thoughts that arise from such triggers.
- Before challenging these thoughts we first have to identify these thoughts, which are often unhelpful and make us feel worse

# Recording stress thoughts



Date & Time	The Lead up context	The event	What thoughts jumped into your head
.	<i>Where was I?</i>	<i>What did I notice?</i>	<i>What do you fear/worry might happen?</i>
	<i>What was I doing?</i>	<i>How stressed did I feel?</i>	<i>Any 'what if thoughts'?</i>
	<i>Was anyone else there?</i>	<i>What did I feel emotions? physical symptoms</i>	



# Recording stress thoughts



Date & Time	The Lead up context	The event	What thoughts jumped into your head
<p>Mon 1/12/ 10am</p>	<p><i>Due to help a friend pack boxes for house move.</i></p> <p><i>But...feel really unwell</i></p>	<p><i>Felt quite tense and worried</i></p> <p><i>Afraid of cancelling</i></p> <p><i>Stress (8)</i></p>	<p><i>'What if my friend thinks I am making my illness up'</i></p> <p><i>'What if she thinks I am a bad friend for letting her down'</i></p> <p><i>' I will have to just to this no matter how bad I feel'</i></p> <p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>Help friend. Feel more unwell next day and more stressed.</p>

# Challenging unhelpful thoughts

## Key questions to challenge your thoughts

- What evidence do you have that your fear will happen?
- What was the worst that could happen?
- What if the worst scenario did happen?

# Challenging unhelpful thoughts

- Is there a more likely chain of events or scenario
- What would you say to friend or family member who told you about their stressor or fear?
- What are the costs/benefits of thinking this way?

# Challenging unhelpful thoughts

e.g. diary exert

- Situation: friend wants me to drive her to shops – but I am really busy today and I had told her two days ago that I was going to be very busy
- How you feel: stressed/angry
- Automatic thoughts : ‘why can’t people listen to me’  
‘if I say no she will fall out with me’

# Challenging unhelpful thoughts

Is there any evidence that contradicts this thought/s?

- My friend can be forgetful
- A good friends would not reject me for saying I am too busy. She has not fallen out with me before.

# Challenging unhelpful thoughts

What would you say to a friend who had this thought in a similar situation?

- I am sure x won't mind that you can't take her today.
- It is not as if you are fobbing her off – you are genuinely too busy

# Challenging unhelpful thoughts

What are the costs/benefits of thinking this way?

Costs: I am getting angry at a friend before knowing the facts.  
This thought puts me under more pressure than I need.

Benefits: Can't think of any!

OUTCOME: gently let friend down. She understands!

# Stress Rescue: Asserting yourself



- People who suffer from stress/low mood can find it difficult to be assertive.
- Being assertive is to recognise our rights and communicate them
- We can let people take advantage of us (passive) or sometimes we might react with anger or hostility (aggressive).



# Communication styles



<b>Passive</b>	Allow others to make decisions for us. Don't let others know how we feel.	'Easy life', few confrontations, can be well liked.	Can lead to frustration and resentment because our needs are not being met. Feeling like a martyr.
<b>Aggressive</b>	Stand up for our own feelings and opinions without considering other peoples feelings and opinions.	We are likely to get what we want. Feel like our needs are met.	Can lead to an escalation of anger followed by guilt. We can lose the respect of other people.
<b>Assertive</b>	Expressing our feelings, needs, views and opinions directly and honestly, without rudeness or hostility.	Communicate in a way that respects our rights while taking into account the rights of other people.	

# What are my rights?



I have the right to:

- Be treated with respect as an equal human being.
- Express my needs, thoughts and feelings.
- Say ‘no’ or ‘yes’ for myself.
- Make mistakes.
- Change my mind.
- Not depend on others for approval.
- Ask for what I want and refuse what I don’t want.

These are also the rights of other people.

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# Stress rescue: Developing Assertion

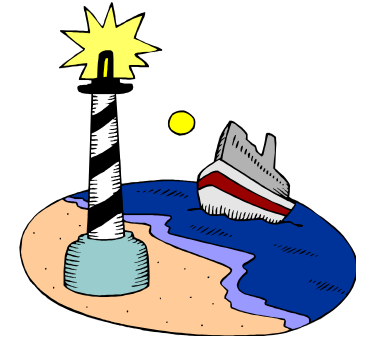


- Scratched record
  - Repeat the same statement until you get what you want.
- Saying no
  - Calm, firm, direct, don't apologise.
- Planning in advance
  - The event
  - Your feelings
  - Your needs
  - The consequences

# Stress Rescue: Mindfulness

- Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way:
- Mindfulness can simply be noticing what we don't normally notice, because our heads are too busy in the future or in the past.

# Mindfulness: Automatic Pilot



- In a car, we can sometimes drive for miles on “automatic pilot”, without really being aware of what we are doing.
- In the same way, we may not be really “present”, moment-by-moment, for much of our lives.
- On automatic pilot, we are more likely to have our “buttons pressed”.

# MINDFUL BREATHING EXERCISE

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# Letting go...

Think of your mind as the surface of a lake or an ocean.

*"You can't stop the waves,  
but you can learn to surf"*

Kabat-Zinn, 2004



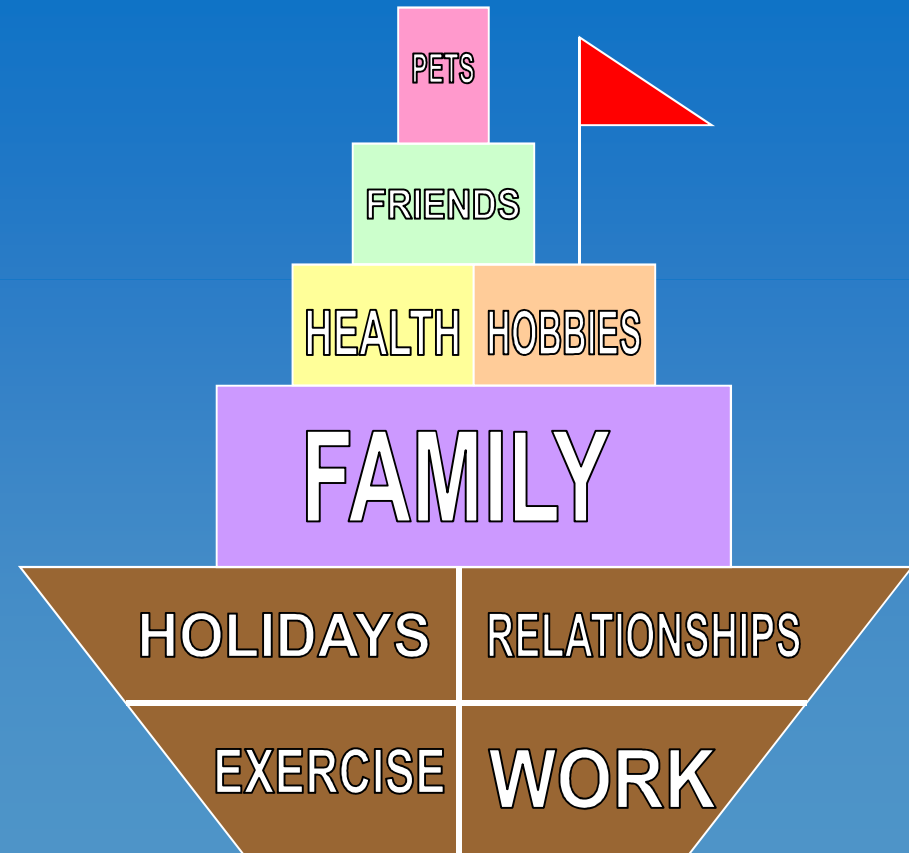
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# Stress Rescue: Doing what matters

- Stress might make it hard for you to find time to do the things that really matter to you.
- You might find that you are doing less overall.
- You might have given up on things you used to like doing.
- You might feel that you are unable to do things that really matter.

# Which boat would you like to be on?



# Stress Rescue: Doing what matters.....



- If this left hand boat is you, it can be useful to take some time to re-evaluate life, and work out what is really important to you.
- It can help to think about values...
- Values are things that define you; they are what you find inspiring and about how you would like you to do or be.

# What are my values?



People can hold values in different areas of their life.

You may want to consider the following areas:

- Family life
- Friendships
- Work
- Health
- Hobbies / Interests
- Learning
- Personal growth
- Religion / Spirituality

# Values: Goal setting



- Goals are things that tell you that you are a step along the way towards living a life that agrees with your values.
- For example, if someone were to say that “being a good friend” was an important value, then they might set the goal for themselves of spending more time with their friends.
- A goal is a signpost along the way. It is something that you can actually achieve.

# Key factors in goal setting



Making sure that the goals you intend to work on are in areas of your life that really matter – so tie them to your values.

Use the S.M.A.R.T. guide to goal-setting:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**imed

# Stress Rescue: Doing what matters

Life value SMART goal

- To call best friend 2 x month
- To go out with the girls 1 x month



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# The way forward...



Life is a journey, not a destination.

Enjoy what you see along the way!



# Further information

- [www.strepsforstress.org](http://www.strepsforstress.org)
- [www.get.gg/mindfulness.htm](http://www.get.gg/mindfulness.htm)
- [www.getselfhelp.co.uk](http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk)



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