



University of
BRISTOL

The Mental Wellbeing Toolbox Handbook

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If you notice that something needs updating, please tell us! Email lucy.squire@bristol.ac.uk

Mental Wellbeing Toolbox

Mental wellbeing is a spectrum

Crisis

Stressed / Struggling

Increased wellbeing

Please contact:

- Friends
- Family
- Personal tutor
- Senior tutor
- Welfare reps
- Your GP
- Student counselling
- Online charities

Stress management tool

Happier living = a **GREAT DREAM**¹

- Giving (giving to others)
- Relating (connect with others) → Understand different personalities: TA, OCEAN
- Exercising (look after our bodies)
- Awareness (live mindfully)
- Try new things (keep learning; flow)
- Direction (have goals)
- Resilience (know your triggers)
- Emotions (look for what's good)
- Acceptance (be comfortable with who we are; perspective)
- Meaning (be part of something bigger)

¹: www.actionforhappiness.org/

You need external help

You can improve your own mental wellbeing

- **Job demands**
- **Disillusionment**
- **Compassion fatigue**
- **Imposter Syndrome**

Workplace Wellbeing Influences

- **Job and personal resources**
- **Eudaimonic wellbeing**

To develop your toolbox you need: proactivity, reflection and variety

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Introduction

What is the Mental Wellbeing Toolbox?

The Mental Wellbeing Toolbox has been designed to help everyone improve their mental wellbeing; we can *all* benefit from improving our wellbeing and the Mental Wellbeing Toolbox describes various “tools” and techniques which can help us achieve this.

This handbook talks through various aspects of the Mental Wellbeing Toolbox in more detail. Depending on where you sit on the mental wellbeing spectrum will determine which part of the Toolbox will be most useful.

How has the Mental Wellbeing Toolbox been written?

Everything in the Mental Wellbeing Toolbox is based on scientific literature and includes recognised tips and techniques for improving wellbeing. Not everything will work for everyone, because we are all different, but there should be something for everyone.

How is the Mental Wellbeing Toolbox going to help me if I’m already depressed?

You will notice the crisis end of the Mental Toolbox directs you to contact someone; sometimes you need help with your mental wellbeing and this is ok. The Mental Wellbeing Toolbox has been designed to help improve mental wellbeing when we are well, but will not be sufficient if you are already struggling with your mental health. If you feel you are struggling, please contact someone. See **What can I do if I am worried about my mental health?** for details of individuals to contact and resources available.

How do I use the Mental Wellbeing Toolbox Handbook?

You are not expected to read the Handbook cover-to-cover, it is a resource to dip into to help you develop tools to improve your wellbeing. You don’t have to do everything, and you’ll easily become over-whelmed if you try to do too much, but pick areas which interest you and gradually increase these in your life.



Throughout the Handbook you will find quick tips and areas for you to write your own thoughts; look out for the star.



To develop your toolbox you need proactivity, reflection and variety

Proactivity

- It takes effort (proactivity) to increase your wellbeing and resilience (Lyubomirsky 2010).
- 40% of happiness is related to our actions, so you do have control.
 - 10% is related to our circumstances and 50% to our genetics (Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005) (see **What is mental wellbeing and why is it important?**).
- Don't feel guilty about taking time out to improve your wellbeing and resilience; it will improve your ability to deal with stress and better wellbeing is linked to better performance (Seligman 2011; Avey *et al.* 2010).

“Just like any goal in life, being happy takes effort... Just like when we want to become more fit or lose weight, we have to put work into it” (Lyubomirsky 2010).

Reflection

- The reflection process is necessary to develop many of the other personal resources (Mastenbroek *et al.* 2014d).
- You need to be able to recognise your own strengths and weaknesses to know what skills you need to develop.

“Practices such as meditation and daily self-reflection have improved my well-being and have actually made me more effective in my daily work”

A health professional following an 8-week resilience and wellbeing course (Kreitzer & Klatt 2016)

Variety

- Humans adapt to change and so changes in happiness are generally only temporary.
 - This is due to “hedonic adaption” ie. adapting to the new cause of happiness.
 - This is why our circumstances generally only make up 10% of our happiness; initially circumstances make us happier, and then we get used to it and return to our previous level of happiness.
 - For example when people get a pay-rise, they are initially very happy and gradually their happiness levels reduce to the same as previously (Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005).
- Variety and awareness prevent hedonic adaption and so changes in happiness can be long-term (Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005).
 - For example, don't go to the gym and do the same thing every time.
 - If writing a gratitude journal, don't write the same thing every time.

What can I do if I'm worried about my mental health?

If you're worried about your mental health, we urge you to contact someone. For example:

- **Friends and family**
- **Your personal tutor** (BVSc, AGEP and VNP students) or **PG mentors** (residents and interns)
- **Your senior tutor;** [REDACTED] (pre-clinical BVSc), [REDACTED] (clinical BVSc; AGEP; interns and residents), [REDACTED] (nurse programme tutor); [REDACTED] (deputy senior tutor for residents and interns).
- **Welfare Reps** (BVSc and VN students)
- **Your GP and/or Student Health Service** <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/students-health/>
- **Specific UoB resources as listed below**

UoB resources

- **Faculty Student Advisers** ([REDACTED])
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/health-sciences/student-advice-service/>

Student Advisers provide guidance and direct to support on anything non-academic that you may be struggling with e.g. physical or mental health, housing, relationships and finances

- **UoB wellbeing**

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/>

Links to all the following UoB pages – good place to start! Also to

- Disability Services, Multifaith chaplaincy
- Pages on looking after yourself; Helping someone else; Self-help resources; Much more

- **UoB Student Wellbeing Advisers**

<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/services/student-wellbeing-service/>

Available to support all students “friendly and approachable team who provide non-clinical advice and help coordinate the right support for you.”

- **UoB Student counselling services** <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/student-counselling/>

Also Nilaari, a service for BAME students

- **UoB Residential Life**

service <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/services/residential-life-service/>

A support network for students in university accommodation. Provide support on a range of issues, not just accommodation.

- **UoB Students' Union** <https://www.bristolsu.org.uk/advice-support>

Advice and support regarding your course, academic matters, exams and more

Resources for mental health

- **Vetlife** www.vetlife.org.uk/
- **Vet Minds Matter** <https://www.vetmindmatters.org/about/>
- **Samaritans** www.samaritans.org/
- **Mind** www.mind.org.uk
- **NHS 24/7 helpline for confidential immediate emotional and practical support.**
Tel 0800 126549 www.vitahealthgroup.co.uk/247supportandconnect

If you don't feel ready to contact someone you know, please consider contacting one of the resources above anonymously, or look at self-help information as outlined below. Remember, mental health is a spectrum which we *all* move up and down; don't be critical of yourself.

What can I do if I'm worried about a friend's mental health?

If you are worried about a friend's mental health, we still urge you to contact someone. For example:

- **Friends and family**
- **Your personal tutor or PG mentors**
- **Your senior tutor** (as per previous page)
- **Welfare Reps**

Remember it is not your responsibility and it is ok to pass the responsibility to someone else.

Although you may not want to break a friend's confidentiality, if you are worried they may harm themselves or others, please contact someone (tutors, senior tutor, faculty advisors).

If you do feel you have the mental energy and time to help a friend personally:

- **Encourage them to seek help**
 - Remember you can't force someone to get help if they don't want to and it is not your fault or responsibility if this happens.
 - Reassure them it is ok to get help.
 - Point out different avenues of help e.g. university tutors, pre-clinical/clinical deans, student counsellors, online resources
 - Offer to go with them to get help or look at resources together.
- **Listen to them**
 - Ask how they are, and then listen, don't feel the need to fill the silences.
 - Send them a text to show you're thinking of them.
 - Remember to set boundaries; you don't have to be available all the time.
 - It can take time to talk about mental illness, so wait until an appropriate time and be patient.
- **Don't be critical**
 - Whatever happens, don't make judgements or assumptions.
 - Be open about stress and mental illness and remember that mental wellbeing is a spectrum that we will all move up and down at different points in time.
 - Don't say "snap out of it" or "cheer up".
- **Set boundaries**
 - You do not have to be available every minute of the day
 - Remember you can not help others if you don't look after your own mental health too.
- **Look after yourself**
 - You can't help others without taking care of your own wellbeing.
 - Looking after others, or worrying about others, can put a strain on your own wellbeing.
 - Contact your own tutor or the pre-clinical/clinical dean to discuss what you're going through too.

Where can I get more information on mental health and wellbeing?

- **UoB Health and Wellbeing website**

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/students/wellbeing/>

Links to all the general UoB resources (eg student health services, counselling), plus advice on how to look after yourself, help someone else, self-help resources and more.

- **Bristol SU advice and support website** <https://www.bristolsu.org.uk/advice-and-support>

Advice and support regarding your academic course, plus the “justask” service.

- **Student health app: ESC Student App** <http://www.expertselfcare.com/health-apps/esc-student/>

Free app with fast and discreet access to reliable information and advice for mental and physical health, including details on specific mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, OCD, stress, eating disorders and self-harm. It also includes links to other areas of support, including directly to the UoB services and resources.

What signs should I look for to indicate decreased mental health?

Signs will be different for everyone, but may include:

- Being more anxious, irritable or irrational, mood swings, emotional outbursts
- Lack of interest in things which used to interest them, withdrawing or isolating themselves
- Being unable to concentrate or make decisions
- Being overly focused or obsessive about certain things, or perfectionist
- Not eating well including over- or under-eating
- Not looking after themselves well e.g. less personal hygiene, no interest in appearance
- Disrupted sleep patterns including excessive sleep.

(www.rethink.org² ; www.mindhealthconnect.org.au³)

For more information on signs of decreased mental health, including information on specific mental illness, please see the resources outlined above.

What about Fitness to Practise? Will seeking help affect this?

- Please do not worry about Fitness to Practise. Being “Fit to Practise” is about being of good character, being responsible and being worthy of trust.
- You can demonstrate fitness to practise by taking responsibility for your own physical and mental health, seeking treatment and limiting practice if necessary, and communicating with your university / training provider.
 - This does NOT mean you will be denied access to / removed from the register.
- Concerns that may affect your fitness to practise;
 - Failure to seek medical treatment or other support;
 - Refusal to follow medical advice or treatment plans.
- In short, **it is of more concern if you do nothing and/or show no insight into potential mental health problems.**
- It is an RCVS Day 1 competence to be responsible for your mental wellbeing:
 - “Veterinary surgeons / Veterinary nurses need to be resilient and confident in their own professional judgements to withstand the stresses and conflicting demands they may face in the workplace. They should **know how to recognise the signs of stress** and **how to seek support** to mitigate the psychological stress on themselves and others” (RCVS Day One Competence: Number 8, Feb 2014 / RCVS VN Day One Competence: Number 8, May 2014).
 - **It is ok and encouraged to seek support!**
- We have a professional (and moral) responsibility to provide you with the skills to be mentally healthy in a potentially stressful career.
 - We ask you to tell us if you are struggling so that we can help you.

For more information, please see: RCVS Fitness to Practise Guide⁴.

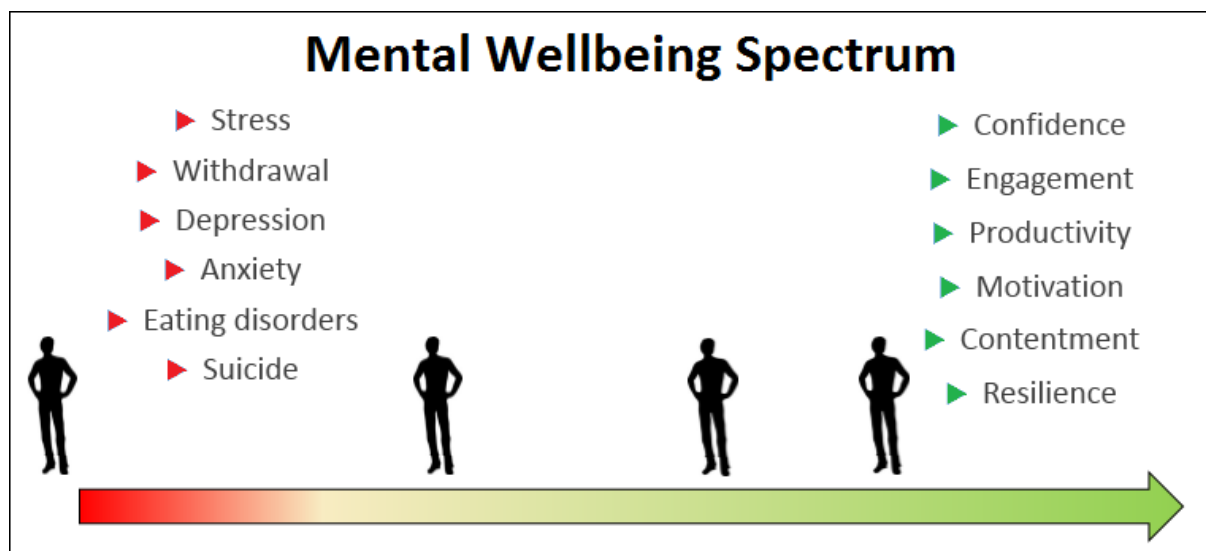
What is mental wellbeing and why is it important?

Positive mental wellbeing is about **feeling good** and **functioning well**. It means you (www.mind.org⁵):

- Feel **confident** in yourself and have positive **self-esteem**;
- Feel and express a **range of emotions**;
- Build and maintain **good relationships**;
- Feel **engaged** with the world around you;
- Live and work **productively**;
- **Cope** with the stressors of daily life;
- **Adapt** in times of change and uncertainty.

Negative mental wellbeing is the opposite; not feeling good and not functioning well.

Mental wellbeing refers to a psychological state at a **point in time** and so is constantly changing; mental wellbeing is a spectrum which we all move up and down (Mastenbroek 2014).



Why is mental wellbeing important?

- 1 in 4 people suffer a mental illness each year (McManus *et al.* 2009)
- Veterinary student wellbeing is significantly poorer than general population estimates and similar to that of the veterinary profession (Cardwell *et al.* 2013).
 - Over one third of vets are suffering anxiety and/or depression (Bartram *et al.* 2009a)
- We can all benefit from improving our wellbeing even if we're not unwell (it's a spectrum!)
 - "Optimal performance is tied to good well-being; the higher the positive morale, the better the performance" (Seligman 2011).
 - Better mental wellbeing is related to better job performance (Avey *et al.* 2010).

"Too often we are overly concerned about our core science courses and do not realize that, in order to be effective clinicians, we must be healthy and well-adjusted ourselves" (Lee & Graham 2001).

We can all improve our mental wellbeing

- Roughly 40% of our happiness is related to our actions (Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005).
 - "Just like any goal in life, being happy takes effort... Just like when we want to become more fit or loose weight, we have to put work into it". (Lyubomirsky 2010).

- Only 10% of our happiness is related to our circumstances (such as our job, finances and marital status); this assumes your circumstances are not adversely affecting you, such as poverty (Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005).
 - Age, gender and income (assuming sufficient to pay for life's necessities) have little effect on individual's happiness (Myers 2000).
 - Changes in circumstance such as a pay rise, new job or moving house can increase happiness in the short term, but have limited affect in the long term (assuming such circumstances aren't resulting in a negative mental wellbeing). This is due to humans adapting to change, so any changes in happiness are only temporary ("hedonic adaption"). For long-term changes in happiness, we need to engage in "intentional activities"; we need to actively engage in actions or practices (Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005).
- The remaining 50% of our happiness is genetically determined (Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005).

Improving Wellbeing by being GREAT

Giving to others

Unselfish individuals find life to be more meaningful than their selfish counterparts and will often experience better mental health (Post 2007).

Kindness is contagious; people imitate others' prosocial behaviour (Nook *et al.* 2016). Cooperative behaviour towards others can cascade through social groups, resulting in cooperative behaviour between individuals unrelated to the original cooperative act e.g. from person A → person B → person C → person D (Fowler & Christakis 2010). Why not start a chain of kindness?



*Tip: completing five random acts of kindness one day a week can increase your happiness (Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005). List 5 random acts of kindness you could carry out this week:*



- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____

See the **Appendix: Giving to others** for a list of random acts of kindness.

Relating to others

Taking time to foster relationships with family, friends and colleagues is important for your wellbeing (Hafer Jr. *et al.* 2013). Support and positive relationships with colleagues at work can mediate the decrease in productivity that is normally seen as a result of feeling anxious (McCarthy *et al.* 2016).

Have you noticed that “belongingness” including relationships and friends is the middle step in Maslow’s pyramid? This means good relationships with others are essential before you can begin to reach your full potential.

Tip: Don’t feel guilty about sometimes taking time out to spend with others.



How could you relate to others more? Send a family member a text? Talk to someone different in your DSE group? Call a friend you haven’t seen in a while? _____



Exercising (and looking after our body)

Physical fitness training leads to improved mood (Post 2005) and greater levels of physical activity are associated with lower levels of depression (Teychenne *et al.* 2006). Taking a walk in a park or engaging in relaxation exercises at lunch result in better concentration and less fatigue in the afternoon at work (Sianoja *et al.* 2017).

Physiological needs are at the bottom of Maslow’s pyramid and this includes rest; individuals getting optimal sleep show less depressive and anxious symptoms (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). Bedtime procrastination is an important factor regarding getting insufficient sleep and so affecting individual well-being. Bedtime procrastination is defined as “failing to go to bed at the intended time, while no external circumstances prevent a person from doing so” (Kroese *et al.* 2014).

High use of mobile phones can result in a low level of stress over time; demands for availability can result in disturbances when busy or resting, the feeling of never being free, and difficulties separating work and private life. Unreturned calls or messages can lead to overload and feelings of guilt (Thomé et al. 2010).



Tip: How could you look after your body more? Being healthy doesn't have to mean going to the gym every day; try walking to uni, swapping a chocolate bar for fruit, decreasing bedtime procrastination, or turning your phone off for a few hours in the evening _____



Awareness (live mindfully)

Be aware of the world around you and your feelings. Don't dwell on the past and future, try to live in the present moment.

Mindfulness can decrease stress levels in healthy people including decreasing ruminative thinking and increasing empathy and self-compassion (Chiesa & Serretti 2009). Yoga and meditation are ways to practise mindfulness (Shelov et al. 2009; Shapiro et al. 2008). See **Appendix: Mindfulness** for details and resources for developing mindfulness.



When did you last notice something beautiful? _____

When did you last do something that made you laugh? _____



Try new things (keep learning)

Lifelong learning in adults results in the development of self-esteem, self-efficacy, a sense of purpose and hope and social integration (Hammond 2007).

Flow is the state of being completely absorbed in an activity, with a perfect balance between your ability and the level of challenge (Csikszentmihalyi 2008). The more flow in our daily life, the more likely we are to feel happy overall (Csikszentmihalyi 1996). See **Appendix: Flow** for more details on flow and how to incorporate it into your life.

Tip: It is important to maintain hobbies and a life outside of your veterinary career.



When did you last learn something new outside of your academic course? _____



Motivational tip for improving wellbeing

"For athletes, being a top performer is a deeply held value, and therefore they create rituals around training; for most people, hygiene is a deeply held value, and therefore they create the ritual of brushing their teeth. If we hold our personal happiness as a value and want to become happier, then we need to form rituals around that, too." (Tal Ben-Shahar 2007).

Ben-Shahar recommends introducing only one or two rituals at once and make sure these are developed as habits before thinking about adding any more. For example, going to the gym twice a week, calling your parents every Monday evening or meditating every morning.



What one ritual would you add first? _____



Improving Wellbeing by living a DREAM

Direction

Have you ever noticed that self-actualisation and reaching one's full potential is the top of Maslow's pyramid? Happy people have projects (Lyubomirsky 2010) and individuals with authentic goals (i.e. with meaning for them personally) are more likely to feel happy in themselves (Sheldon *et al.* 2002).

Tip: The type of goal is important; individuals who demonstrate financial success as a strong goal in life, have lower satisfaction with family life, regardless of their household income (Nickerson *et al.* 2003). More money does not make us happier (Myers 2000).

★ *Write a goal you are working towards. It doesn't have to be veterinary related, but it should have meaning for you, it should help you develop as a person and it shouldn't be based on approval of others:* _____ ★

Resilience

Resilience is about "future-proofing" mental wellbeing (Mguni *et al.* 2012) and the ability to bounce back after challenges (Epstein & Krasner 2013). We can develop our resilience by being able to deal with stress, and developing techniques that help us combat negative wellbeing.

See "**Stress and Mental Wellbeing**" and "**Resilience**" for more information on dealing with stress and developing resilience.

What triggers a decrease in your mental wellbeing? _____

★ *How do you currently deal with these triggers?* _____ ★

Could you do more to deal with these triggers? Could you develop any skills to help you? _____

Emotions

Vet students with more optimism and self-esteem were less stressed than those more pessimistic or lower in self-esteem (Gardner & Parkinson 2011). Positive emotions at work are associated with greater work achievement and increased support from supervisors and colleagues (Staw *et al.* 1994).

Tip: we can change the way we think (Seligman 2011) and we can learn to be more optimistic (Seligman 2006; Lyubomirsky 2010) and feel happier (Sheldon and Lyubomirsky 2006; Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005). See **Appendix: Emotions** for techniques on improving emotions.

Acceptance

Acceptance is about being comfortable with you and your life. It involves accepting things you can't change or have no control over (an important emotion-focused strategy for dealing with stress). Don't compare yourself and your life to others; happier people pay less attention to those around them (Lyubomirsky 2010).

Tips: don't be lured into the trap of perfectionism (Bartram & Boniwell 2007). Be kind to yourself, even in times of failure, perceived inadequacy, and imperfection (Neff 2011); speak to yourself as you would speak to a friend (Neff 2017). Finally, when you make a decision, accept it and go with it, don't cling to all available other options (Schwartz 2005).

What are you currently resisting in life that you have no control over? E.g. learning a subject you don't enjoy, an EMS placement you're not looking forward to, a social event you have to attend:





Now you've identified it, try and gently accept it.

Meaning

Having meaning in life is one of the key elements to positive wellbeing (Seligman 2011). Veterinary work can provide a high level of wellbeing (Coke *et al.* 2015), but if this isn't a calling for you, try and find meaning elsewhere (Bartram & Boniwell 2007). If religion is an important part of your life, this may provide meaning for you (Myers 2000).



Take time to answer the following questions.

1) *What are your talents? Be honest, not modest* _____

2) *What are you passionate about? Things you love to do, talk about and think about.* _____

3) *What would you like to see changed in the world?* _____

4) *Combine these to form a statement: "My life's purpose is to use my talent for and my passion for to help". e.g. My life's purpose is to use my talent for engineering and my passion for alternative energy to help develop solutions to the climate crisis.* _____

Now then discuss the answer with a friend or family member. Does it reflect you?

Stress and mental wellbeing

What is stress?

- Stress occurs when an individual perceives an experience to be important, but feels he/she may not be able to cope.
 - Stress is a situation in which the demands on an individual exceed his or her coping resources (Bartram & Gardner 2008).
- Different events are stressful for different people.
 - The importance of situations varies for different people (Bartram & Gardner 2008).
 - Individuals have different coping resources (Gelberg & Gelberg 2005).
- Stress triggers the “flight or fight” stress response (Gelberg & Gelberg 2005).

What are the symptoms of stress?	
Physical symptoms	Sleep disturbances Headaches Digestive problems
Behavioural symptoms	Procrastination Increased smoking or alcohol use Withdrawal
Cognitive symptoms	Increased worry Trouble concentrating, memory problems
Emotional symptoms	Irritability, restlessness, quick temper



When you are stressed, what symptoms do you see in yourself? _____



How do I deal with stress?

“Coping” is the process of thoughts and actions used to manage the demands of a stressful situation. Coping can be **adaptive** or **maladaptive** (Bartram & Gardner 2008).

Adaptive coping acts to reduce stress and promote long-term benefits. Adaptive coping can be problem-focused or emotion-focused:

- Problem-focused coping aims to address the problem causing the distress. It is used to deal with changeable aspects of a stressful situation.
- Emotion-focused coping aims to decrease the negative emotions associated the problem. It is used to deal with unchangeable aspects of a stressful situation.

Effective coping uses a combination of strategies; it involves defining specific stressors, labelling these as either “changeable” or “unchangeable” and then dealing with these appropriately.

The “**Appraisal & Coping Model**” describes how to work through a stressful situation in a logical way and use problem- and emotion-focused coping to deal with this effectively.

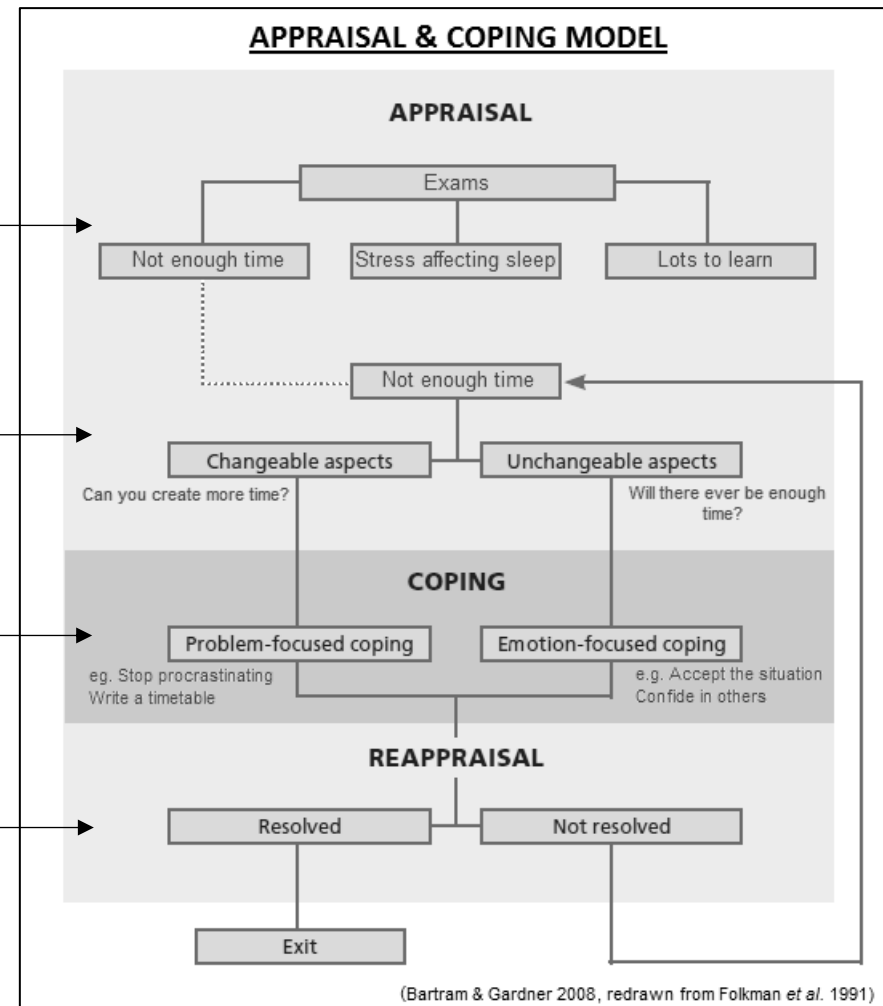
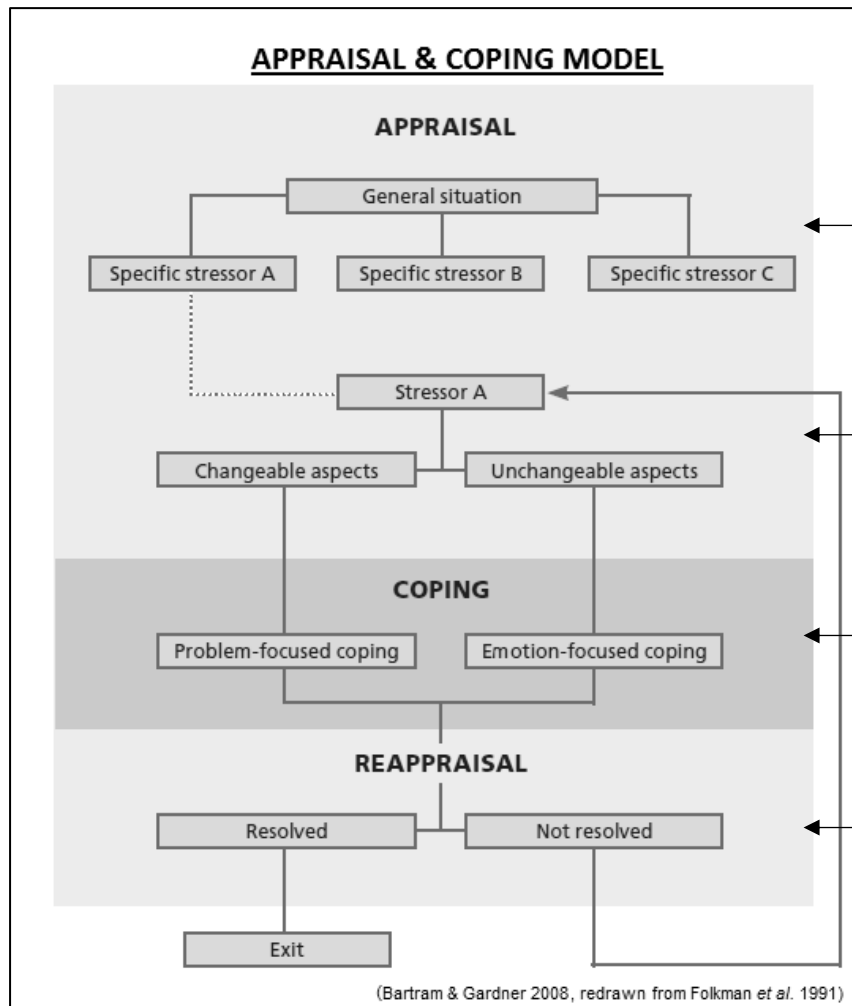
Are there bad ways to deal with stress?

Yes! **Maladaptive coping** methods may decrease stress in the short term, but can affect physical and psychological health in the long term. Maladaptive coping neither addresses the problem nor emotionally deals with the problem.

It is maladaptive to use problem-focused coping on an unchangeable situation or to use emotion-focused coping if the situation can in fact be changed.

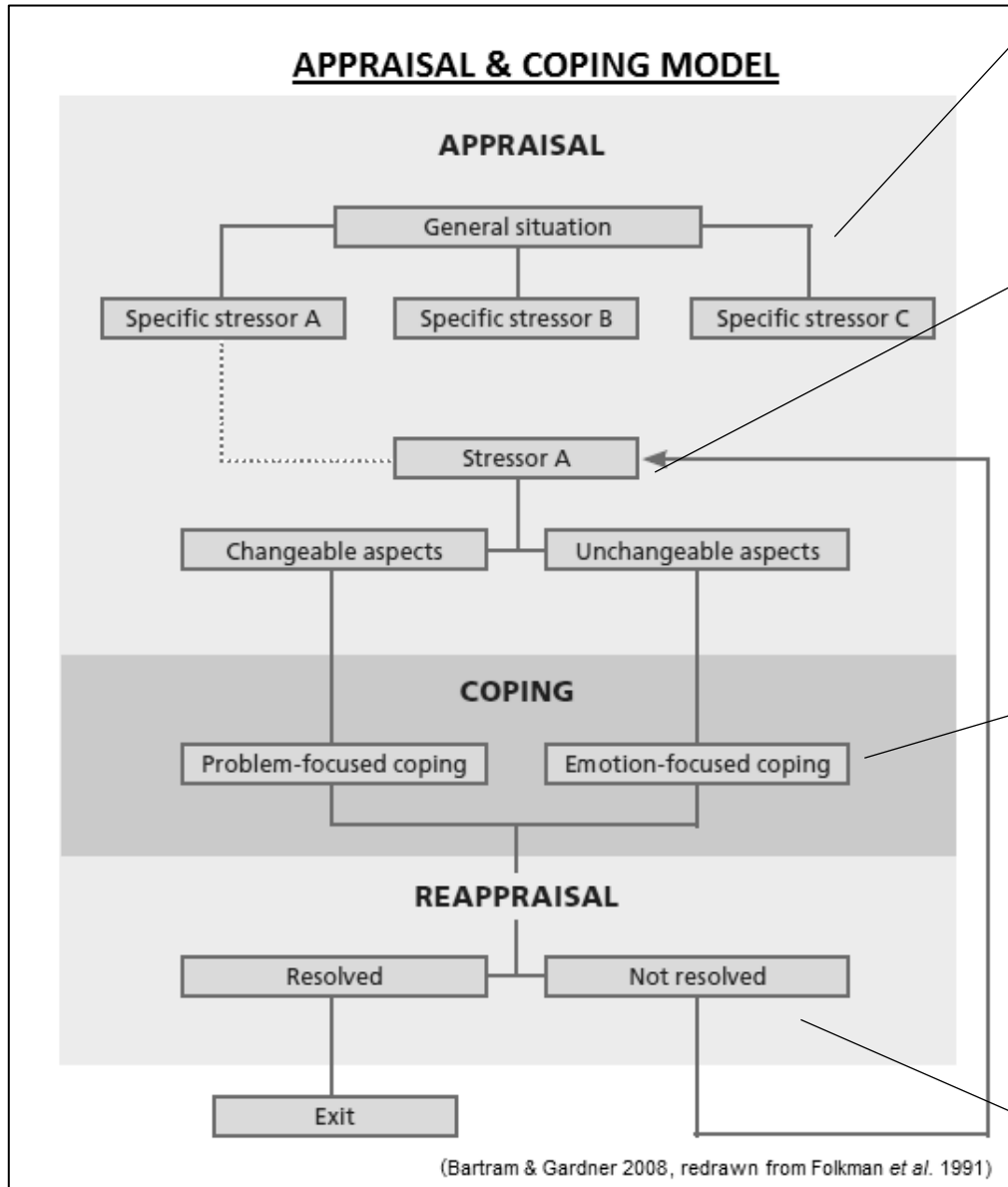
Appraisal & Coping Model for Stress

- 1) Break down the general situation into specific stressors.
- 2) Appraise each stressor to assess if changeable, unchangeable or both.
- 3) Develop problem-focused strategies for changeable aspects and emotion-focused strategies for unchangeable aspects.
- 4) Reappraise and if not resolved, repeat.





Take a situation you are currently finding stressful and break it down according to the Appraisal and Coping Model



1) Break down the general situation into specific stressors.

Stressor A
Stressor B
Stressor C

2) Choose one specific stressor. Break it down into changeable and unchangeable aspects.

Changeable aspects:

Unchangeable aspects:

3) Develop problem-focused strategies for changeable aspects and emotion-focused strategies for unchangeable aspects

Problem-focused strategies:

Emotion-focused strategies:

4) Reappraise and if not resolved, repeat.

Positive and negative stress coping strategies

Adaptive coping strategies		Maladaptive coping strategies
Problem-focused strategies for changeable aspects	Emotion-focused strategies for unchangeable aspects	
Creating a plan of action	Using humour or comedy	Drug or alcohol misuse, including binge drinking, smoking cigarettes
Applying time management skills	Confiding in someone	Engaging in risky behaviour to relieve negative emotions
Seeking practical advice from others	Attending counselling	Compulsive use of distraction activities e.g. computer games, exercising
Asking for help	Accepting the situation	Sleeping to avoid problems
Concentrating on the next step	Reframing the situation in terms of importance or long term impact	Taking frustration out on others
Drawing on past experienced	Reframing the situation in terms of any potential benefits	Wishful thinking, detachment, procrastination
Making decisions	Engaging in physical activity, relation techniques or pleasant distractions	Self-isolation
Learning appropriate skills to deal with the situation	Practise forgiveness	Criticising one-self

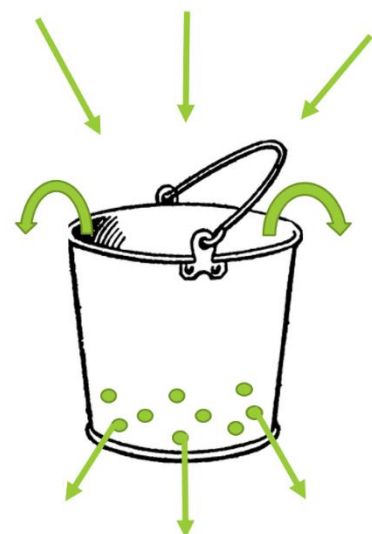
Are there other models for dealing with stress?

Yes! The Appraisal and Coping Model breaks down stressors into small manageable chunks and deals with each one individually. While this is a recognised way of dealing with stress, sometimes a broader approach is preferred.

The Stress Bucket

The “Stress Bucket” is a model for thinking about everyday stress. Causes of stress go into the bucket and cause it to fill up. If the bucket becomes full, it overflows and we see the symptoms of stress. We can stop the bucket overflowing by using adaptive coping strategies to let stress out at the bottom of the bucket (first presented in Brabban and Turkington 2002).

Everyone’s bucket will be different, and your bucket can change. At times of decreased mental health, your bucket may be smaller and so less able to hold as much stress.



Fill in the diagram opposite to represent your stress bucket.



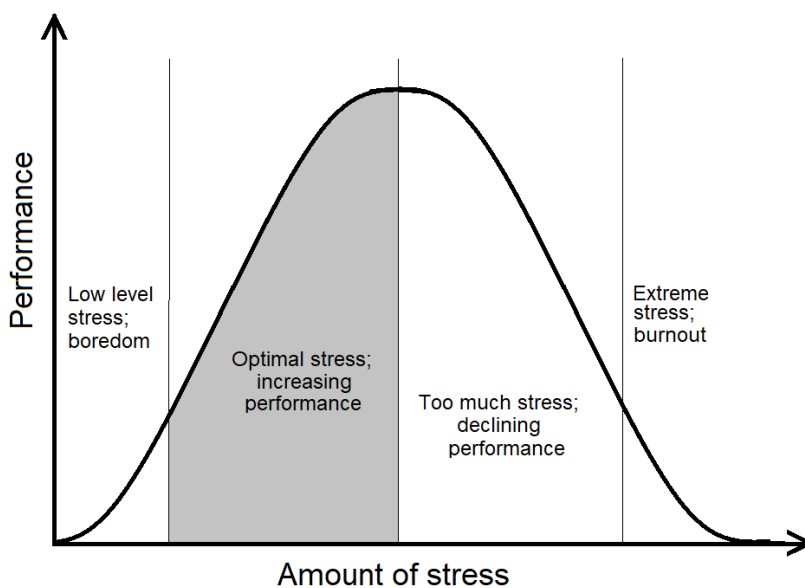
Why is this important?

- Having good mental wellbeing includes being able to “cope with the stressors of daily life” (www.mind.org⁵).
- Some stress in life is inevitable and normal (Gelberg & Gelberg 2005)
- You can learn adaptive-coping skills to deal with stress (Kennedy *et al.* 2003)
- For nearly 50% of vet students, stress is due to many small things building up (Collins & Foote 2005).
 - Using the Appraisal and Coping Model, these small stressors can be dealt with.

So is all stress bad?

- Definitely not! Some stress is positive (called "eustress") and helps us respond effectively in times of trauma or increase our performance in ordinary times (Gelberg & Gelberg 2005).

- **The Yerkes-Dodson Law of Stress** shows how some stress is positive. Look at the graph opposite. Low level stress result in boredom and low performance at tasks. A medium–moderate level of stress result in increasing performance levels (highlighted grey here). It’s only when stress becomes too high, that our performance starts to decline, eventually resulting in burnout. So we don’t want too much stress, but we don’t want a life without stress either.



- **“What doesn’t kill us makes us stronger”**. Individuals with some lifetime adversity have better mental health and well-being than individuals with no history of adversity (Seery *et al.* 2010)
- Stress is inevitable in life and it’s ok to be stressed sometimes.
 - Talk to each other, you’re all in the same position!

What if I think I’m not coping well with stress? Or I think a friend isn’t coping with stress?

Please contact someone. The Appraisal & Coping Model is for dealing with stress in daily life, it will not be sufficient if you are already severely stressed. Please see **What can I do if I am worried about my mental health?** for details of individuals to contact and resources available.

For more information on resources for dealing with stress in general, please see **Where can I get more information on mental health and wellbeing?**.

Resilience

What is resilience?

- Resilience is the process of being able to bounce back when faced with stress and adversity (Epstein & Krasner 2013).
 - Remember that mental wellbeing is a spectrum and so when we are unable to deal with stress and adversity, we may slip down this spectrum.
 - Part of having good mental wellbeing is being able to deal with the stressors of daily life (www.mind.org⁵) i.e. having resilience.
- Mental resilience can be measured and can be improved (Connor & Davidson 2003).

What is the difference between wellbeing and resilience?

- Wellbeing is related to psychological state at a point in time. Resilience is more dynamic.
- Resilience adds an element of “future-proofing” to mental wellbeing.
- An individual can appear to have good mental wellbeing when times are good but crumble easily when they hit hardship if they don’t have any resilience (Mguni *et al.* 2012)
- Resilient individuals not only cope but “bounce back” after challenges while also growing stronger (Epstein & Krasner 2013).

How do I develop my resilience?

- If resilience is the ability to bounce back from stress and adversity, we can develop our resilience by learning to deal with stress (Yehude *et al.* 2006).
 - Think about what causes you stress and causes you to slip down the spectrum; what are your triggers?
- We can develop our mental wellbeing and resilience by developing techniques that help us use the Appraisal and Coping Model to deal with our triggers.
 - i.e. we can learn and develop problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies.
 - Note that many of the coping strategies are related to the GREAT DREAM ways to wellbeing – by using the toolbox, we will improve both our wellbeing and resilience.

Adaptive coping strategies	
Problem-focused strategies for changeable aspects	Emotion-focused strategies for unchangeable aspects
Creating a plan of action	Using humour or comedy EMOTION
Applying time management skills	Confiding in someone RELATE
Seeking practical advice from others RELATE	Attending counselling RELATE
Asking for help RELATE	Accepting the situation ACCEPTANCE
Concentrating on the next step AWARENESS (MINDFULNESS)	Reframing the situation in terms of importance or long term impact DIRECTION, ACCEPTANCE
Drawing on past experienced RESILIENCE	Reframing the situation in terms of any potential benefits EMOTION (OPTIMISM)
Making decisions	Engaging in physical activity, relation techniques or pleasant distractions EXERCISE, MINDFULNESS
Learning appropriate skills to deal with the situation TRY NEW THINGS (LEARNING)	Practise forgiveness



Which of the above strategies do you use when dealing with stress? _____



Which of the above strategies could you develop to help you deal with stress? _____

Can you create a SMART action to develop these strategies? i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-sensitive: _____

Can my mindset affect my resilience?

- Yes; individuals with a growth mind-set show greater persistence when faced with a challenge
 - Individuals with a growth mind-set believe intellectual abilities can be developed and value effort more than getting good grades.
 - Individuals with a fixed mindset believe intellectual abilities are fixed and value appearing smart more than learning (Dweck 2007).

See **Appendix: Growth vs Fixed Mindset** for more information on the differences.

Self-care plans

Self-care is about taking care of yourself, physically, mentally and emotionally. It's easy to decrease the priority of our own health when we are stressed and busy, so self-care plans can help ensure we are taking care of ourselves appropriately

La Jeunesse
(2012)

The importance of formalizing self-assessments and self-care plans cannot be overstated. "Guesstimating" where you are and how to get where you'd like to be is not likely to be effective.

The Mental Wellbeing Toolbox gives us lots of ideas for improving and maintaining wellbeing; we can use this to create a self-care plan. Self-care plans will be different for everyone but can involve:

- 1) Creating and checking a personal check-list
- 2) Identifying strengths and weaknesses
- 3) Developing our skills / creating an action plan based on this

1) Creating and checking a personal check-list

- Different self-care checklists will work for different people.
- You can make checklists as specific or general as you like:
 - e.g. How often do I include each aspect of a GREAT DREAM in my life?
 - e.g. Have I had 30 minutes to myself to relax today?
- Answers can be yes/no, values on a scale, or open-ended (or anything that works for you!).
- You can create and check your list as often as you like:
 - e.g. Write a short one to complete weekly (or daily) to check your on track.
 - e.g. Write one to complete when you're feeling down.
- You can create lists for specific times in your life
 - e.g. checklist for during exam season, EMS, when feeling low.
- Self-care plans can also include instructions
 - e.g. "If you are struggling to exercise, try..."
 - e.g. "If you're feeling negative, try..."
- You can include positive affirmations to look back on
 - e.g. "Remember to feel proud of yourself for ..."

2) Identifying strengths and weaknesses

- Once you have created and checked your check-list, use this to identify your strengths and weaknesses. Where can you improve your wellbeing?

3) Developing our skills and creating an action plan

- With your strengths and weaknesses identified, write an action plan to improve your wellbeing.
- Actions should be SMART i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-sensitive (La Jeunesse 2012). So rather than "I will be more optimistic", try "I will re-frame in writing one event daily according to the 3Ps of optimism for the next week".
- Remember everyone's actions will be different; don't compare yourself to others and don't set yourself an action that doesn't feel relevant to you.

The best time to think about our wellbeing is when we are well; don't wait until you're struggling!

Having tools in place to minimize and recover from stressors is the foundation of maintaining balance.

La Jeunesse
(2012)

**We asked some veterinary professionals how they maintain their positive mental wellbeing.
Notice how different they all are:**

Friends are really important. I also find if I say or do something nice for someone else I feel better myself. A few years ago, I got some professional help at one really low point... the techniques I was given and taught have become life tools. It was difficult to reach out for help at first but realising it was OK and really useful has been so valuable.

Retired vet in practice

Final year vet student

You've got to enjoy the journey! In a high-pressure career, I think it is easy to fall into the trap of setting a goal and thinking "life will be better when I reach that stage, or when I have that thing". I remind myself regularly that there are so many things to be grateful for right now and that life has to be enjoyed in the moment.

I walk my dog at least one every day so I get out in the fresh air come rain or shine. I read girly trashy novels for my down time. I also enjoy watching crime scene TV! Again, trashy but I don't need to engage my brain too much. I often (twice a week at least) walk the dogs with a close girlfriend when we chat and put the world to rights / moan about life/ have a laugh / put things in perspective etc!

Veterinary nursing teaching fellow

By exercise and support from friends and family

3-year qualified vet

Faculty of Health Sciences Admissions and Recruitment Officer

For a start I try not to identify myself entirely through my job and have a lot of other facets to my life (wife, mother, daughter, sister, pet owner, gardener, church member, swim coach). I follow the principles of the 5 ways to well-being (and have done so for a long time and well before I discovered there was actually science behind it). I try to be mindful of what is going on in my life and if it looks like something is going to come up which might take a lot of physical or emotional energy I compensate by backing off on some other areas and finally I have learnt through life that 'good enough' is pretty much always fine.

I meditate daily to practise being mindful and find this helpful for grounding me in the present and stopping me worrying about the past or future. I've found I need to exercise regularly, even if I don't want to, or my wellbeing slips. Finally I keep a "gratitude journal" to remind myself of everything positive in my life (particularly after a bad day; there's always something to be grateful for, even if it's just "the cat gave me a good cuddle!").

2-year qualified vet

I always try to make sure I have a good work/life balance. I try to leave annoyances and frustrations at work and not bring them home with me. I enjoy going out for walks with my husband and that always helps me feel positive about life. I mean how can you feel sad when you're in the fresh air and looking at beautiful scenery?

Deputy head nurse

How do you maintain your positive mental wellbeing? _____



How can I manage my own self-care?

- Why not complete the GREAT DREAM self-care plan opposite and see how you can improve your mental wellbeing? Or create your own; see **Appendix** for a blank template of a self-care checklist which may help to get you started.
- Throughout the Mental Wellbeing Toolbox Handbook there are questions and tips, which can be used to help direct your own self-care. Look out for the star.
- See <https://www.blurtitout.org/self-care-starter-kit/> for a free self-care kit.

What if I'm too stressed for a self-care plan?

Please contact someone. Self-care plans are to help you deal with the daily stressors of life and to help you spot a decrease in your wellbeing before it becomes more serious. Self-care plans will not be sufficient if you are severely struggling; please see **What can I do if I am worried about my mental health?** for details of individuals to contact and resources available.

GREAT DREAM Self-care plan

★	In your life, do you....:	Yes all the time	Yes, most of the time	Half the time	No, not very often	No, never	Examples to add more of this to your life ★
Give	Give to others, or carry out actions which will benefit others?						Perform random acts of kindness eg. help a friend revise, tidy the kitchen, volunteer.
Relate	Relate to others, or spend time connecting with other people?						Call a friend you haven't spoken to in a while, ask someone how they are
Exercise	Exercise? Eat well? Get sufficient sleep?						Try a new exercise, walk somewhere you would normally drive, try a new recipe, substitute one unhealthy snack for fruit
Awareness	Have awareness of the world around you, your strengths and weaknesses?						Make an effort to look at the world around you, put your phone away, try meditation or yoga.
Try new things	Try new things, ask questions and experience "flow"?						Have hobbies. Do things which stimulate you; read, draw, sing, dance, do a puzzle...
Direction	Have direction, or goals to work towards?						Work towards goals which have meaning to you, not based on external factors.
Resilience	Show resilience and bounce back when faced with adversity?						Identify and build on weaknesses eg. develop optimism through a best-possible-self journal
Emotions	Express a range of emotions; positive and negative, optimism, gratitude?						Keep a gratitude journal, challenge negative thoughts with the "3Ps" of optimism
Acceptance	Accept things you can not change, including your own strengths and weaknesses?						Don't aim for perfection. Practise self-compassion; be kind to yourself.
Meaning	Have meaning or purpose in your life?						Combine your talents and passion to achieve something you care about.

Name: _____

Date completed: _____

Using the above table, what are your wellbeing strengths? _____

What are your wellbeing weaknesses? _____

How can you incorporate more of the GREAT DREAM into your life? It doesn't have to be big but try and be SMART i.e. Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Sensitive

Remember, don't try to do everything at once; choose one area to improve and focus on that.

Veterinary practice; the positives and the challenges

The Positives

According to an RCVS study (Robinson & Hooker 2006) the “best things about being a vet” are:

- Variety;
- Working with animals;
- Challenges / using skills;
- Job satisfaction;
 - For vets in practice, good clinical outcomes and relationships with colleagues are the greatest sources of satisfaction (Bartram *et al.* 2009b).
- Clients;
- Interest / enjoyment;
- Status;
- Colleagues.
 - Working relationships between veterinarian colleagues have been shown to be higher than that of the general population (Bartram *et al.* 2009b).

In the 2014 RCVS Survey of the Veterinary Nurse Profession (Williams & Robinson 2014), nurses were asked about the “best thing about being a VN”;

- Working with animals (mentioned by 89% of respondents);
- Job satisfaction;
- Making a difference;
- Challenges;
- Client relationships.

What do you anticipate enjoying about veterinary practice (or any career you are considering)? Why?



Is there anything you can do to help maximise your future enjoyment? eg. Choosing EMS and /or a job that reflects the areas you most enjoy? _____



We asked some veterinary professionals what they found most rewarding about their jobs:

The best bit about being a nurse is making your patients well again. Nothing feels better to me than seeing an animal that has suffered a terrible injury or is feeling terribly sick start to become more like themselves again. When you have spent time getting to know your patient and you begin to see them improving you can't help but walk around the practice happy. Just doing simple tasks in nursing, like wet grooming a patient that can't clean themselves or hand feeding an animal that hasn't eaten for days, can really make it all worthwhile.

Deputy head nurse

I love my colleagues and feel proud when we work well together as a team to treat an emergency or get through a busy day. I feel rewarded being able to ease owners' pain and worry, either by explaining something, fixing something or in the worse-case scenario, helping them through a euthanasia

2-year qualified vet

Retired vet in practice

I worked in practice for 20 years and I loved being a vet; I can truly say I didn't have a day when I questioned why I was going to work - I don't think there are many jobs you could say that about!

3-year qualified vet

Gaining trust of farmers and good clinical results

The Challenges

Veterinary practice is failing to meet the expectations of many young vets and final year students, resulting in disillusionment. The causes of this have been ranked as (Ridge 2016):

- Lack of opportunity for career development;
- Lack of management/support from bosses;
- Insufficient pay;
- Long working hours;
- Unreasonable client expectations;
- Unrealistic job expectations;
- Public perception;
- Monotony;
- Moral fatigue.

A cross-sectional study of veterinary surgeons found number of hours worked and making professional mistakes were the main reported contributors to stress (Bartram *et al.* 2009b).

The 2014 RCVS Survey of the Veterinary Nurse Profession (Williams & Robinson 2014), also asked nurses “what would make the veterinary nursing profession a better profession to work in?”;

- Better pay / remuneration (mentioned by 89% of respondents);
- More respect / recognition from the public;
- Better work-life balance;
- Better opportunities for career progression;
- More responsibility;
- Flexible working hours.

Compassion fatigue is an “occupational hazard” for those in a health care profession (Mathieu 2007). See “**Compassion Fatigue and burnout**” for more information.

What do you anticipate finding difficult about veterinary practice (or any future career you are considering)? Why? _____



Is there anything you can do to help alleviate this? Don't forget that if something is genuinely unchangeable, “acceptance” is an acceptable form of emotional-coping. _____



We asked the same veterinary professionals what they found most challenging about their jobs:

I found it difficult when a case had gone wrong or a client wasn't happy but I learned to train myself to 'Let it go' (I'd actually say that to myself) so I could keep going and continue to do my job for the next client. I'd then think it through at a better time e.g. discuss it with a colleague after I'd finished a set of consults or got back from a round of calls, and see what I could do differently next time.

Retired vet in practice

When clients can't or won't do what is best for their animal or what is needed to prevent them being in pain or discomfort. I'm learning to take a step back and have realised that as long as I've done my best to explain the options, I can't beat myself up for not being able to treat every animal perfectly.

2-year qualified vet

Money. When you know what you need to do to improve a patient's welfare but can't do it because they aren't insured or the client doesn't want to pay for treatment. It is often money that causes clients to snap at you or become aggressive and we know it's not our fault that the client has said the things they have, but it doesn't stop you feeling rubbish.

Bad clinical results and being alone when things don't go to plan!

3-year qualified vet

Deputy head nurse

The positives should outweigh the challenges

- Many vets, while reporting workplace stress, remain highly satisfied in their work and perceive a net benefit to their wellbeing (Coke *et al.* 2015)
 - While 83% of the UK veterinary workforce believe veterinary work is stressful...
 - ...93% of UK vets believe their work is enjoyable (RCVS Survey Robinson & Hooker 2006).
- On a five-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (scoring 1) up to 'strongly agree' (scoring 5), VNs strongly agree that that VN work is stressful (score 4.17) ...
 - ...and strongly agree that their work gives job satisfaction (score 4.23) (Williams & Robinson 2014).
- **It is possible for work to be both stressful and enjoyable!**
- Remember that to develop your Mental Wellbeing Toolbox, you need to be proactive and reflective. It is important to think about the positives and challenges ahead of you now, so you are better able to deal with them in the future.

What if the challenges outweigh the positives?

Please contact someone. When graduated you will not be able to access the general UoB resources such as Student Counselling, but there are still many resources available to you. See **What can I do if I am worried about my mental health?** for details of individuals to contact and resources available.

Compassion fatigue and burnout

What is compassion fatigue?

- Compassion fatigue is described as “the cost of caring for others”.
 - "Compassion Fatigue is a state experienced by those helping people or animals in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper" (Dr. Charles Figley⁶).
- Individuals suffering from compassion fatigue often continue to give even when there is nothing left to give.
- Compassion fatigue is an “occupational hazard” for those in a health care profession (Mathieu 2007).

How does compassion fatigue present?

- Following repeated compassion towards others, compassion fatigue presents as:
 - Physical and emotional exhaustion;
 - Pronounced change in ability to feel empathy for patients, loved-ones and colleagues;
 - Increased cynicism at work;
 - Loss of enjoyment of career (Mathieu 2007).
- Higher levels of compassion fatigue is related to higher levels of burnout in medical professionals (Ray *et al.* 2013; Alkema *et al.* 2008). See **What is burnout?**

What is compassion satisfaction?

- Compassion satisfaction is the process of feeling good about giving to others (Ray *et al.* 2013).
- As compassion satisfaction increases, compassion fatigue decreases (Alkema *et al.* 2008).

How can you prevent compassion fatigue and turn it into compassion satisfaction?

- Improved self-care is the cornerstone of compassion fatigue prevention (Mathieu 2007).
 - Don't feel guilty for looking after yourself sometimes too.
 - Don't be afraid to say no sometimes.
 - Be aware of your thoughts and feelings, so symptoms of fatigue can be noticed early.
 - “There are simply times when we must cut back, take a break, or limit what we do so that we have the emotional energy and resources to take care of ourselves” (La Jeunesse 2012).
 - It's ok to keep a distance from patients and owners sometimes (La Jeunesse 2012).
 - Try and show empathy, rather than always engaging in sympathy (Cohen 2017).
 - Talk to colleagues or friends if you are finding a particular case difficult.
 - Have a “transition routine” to help you leave work at work (Dobbs 2014).
 - Enjoy your successes.
 - Focus on the positives and what you find satisfying about the job (La Jeunesse 2012).
 - Remember, as compassion satisfaction increases, compassion fatigue decreases (Alkema *et al.* 2008).
-

What's the difference between empathy and sympathy?

- Empathy involves understanding the patient's experiences while keeping a distance.
- Sympathy involves sharing in the suffering.
- Clinicians quickly become emotionally exhausted if using sympathy and not empathy (Cohen 2017).
- It is ok to use empathy rather than always engaging in sympathy: keeping a distance from patients and owners sometimes doesn't mean you don't care.



What do you think will be important for you in turning compassion fatigue into compassion satisfaction? _____



Do you think you show sympathy or empathy when dealing with cases? How can you show more empathy and less sympathy? _____

What is burnout?

- Burnout is defined as failure or exhaustion because of excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources (Freundenberger 1975).
- Higher levels of compassion fatigue is related to higher levels of burnout in medical professionals (Ray *et al.* 2013; Alkema *et al.* 2008).
- Burnout is a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job (Maslach *et al.* 2001).
 - Note the reference to “on the job”: burnout is a syndrome of work and so can not be solely attributed to an individual.
 - Burnout is the impact of the job environment (Maslach & Goldberg 1998).
- Burnout is linked to depression and anxiety (Maslach *et al.* 2001).
 - The difference between burnout and depression is work; burnout is work-related, whereas depression is context-free (Bakker *et al.* 2000).
- Work engagement is recognised as the direct opposite of burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004).

How does burnout present?

There are three dimensions to burnout (Maslach *et al.* 2001; Maslach & Goldberg 1998), which occur sequentially (Mastenbroek *et al.* 2014a):

1) Exhaustion

- Feeling emotionally overextended and depleted of emotional resources
- Feeling drained, without source of replenishment
- Lack energy to face another day / patient in need

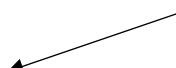
2) Cynicism and depersonalisation

- Self-protective initially, to put distance between oneself and the job
- Detachment to others
- Loss of idealism
- Feelings of frustration and anger

3) Inefficacy

- Perceived decreased personal accomplishment
- Decline in feelings of competence and productivity at work
- Feelings of ineffectiveness and failure.

Notice that burnout includes inefficacy while compassion fatigue does not



Can I do anything to prevent burnout?

Firstly remember that burnout is related to the workplace (Maslach *et al.* 2001), and so individuals are never solely responsible for burnout. However, within the same workplace, some employees experience high levels of burnout while others do not, so personality and temperament *do* make a difference (Langelaan *et al.* 2006).

Maslach & Goldberg (1998) present the following strategies aimed at the individual to try and prevent burnout:

- Choose work patterns to suit you, including not working excessively, taking regular breaks, avoiding over-time where possible and finding a balance between your work and the rest of your life.
- Develop preventative coping skills to decrease the impact of the stressors e.g. discussing with others, time management techniques.
 - Having strong mental resilience decreases the chance of burnout (Epstein & Krasner 2013): see **Resilience** for more information.
- Social support from friends and family but also from colleagues and supervisors.
- Develop a relaxed lifestyle to offset stress responses, with relaxation strategies both for at work and when at home.
- Take care of your physical health too.
- Self-awareness of your own personality, needs and motives and how burnout may affect you.
 - Following an 8 week mindfulness stress-based reduction course, medical clinicians were found to have significant decreases in stress and burnout (Dobkin *et al.* 2016).

We asked some veterinary professionals what they do after a stressful or difficult day at work:

Sing along to my favourite playlist the whole way home so I'm not tempted to ruminate. Then depending on how stressful the day was, talk it through sensibly with someone and/or cook a tasty meal (I enjoy cooking and you can't be in a bad mood when you're eating good food!). If I'm particularly stressed, I'll go for a run and/or seek out something funny to watch.

2-year qualified vet

I really wanted to do my job well so when I'd had a bad day I'd replay it in my mind... I did try to train myself to 'leave the job at the door' and do something quite unrelated when I got home, focus on something different (it didn't always work but I got better at it and I didn't wear myself out quite so much!).

Retired vet in practice

Veterinary nursing teaching fellow

Faculty of Health Sciences Admissions and Recruitment Officer

Depends – on a swim coaching night two hours in a hot and sticky pool with full concentration on my swimmers is really good to take my mind away from the problems. Otherwise I like to chill out at home on the sofa cuddled up with some of the animals either watching rubbish TV or reading a book.

I walk the dog, think about what has happened, ask myself how I could have handled things differently, what would I do should that situation arise again...then I 'park it', 'put it in its box' and try to move on.....(often by having a glass of wine/G&T, having one of my two favourite dinners (curry or spag bol) and treating myself to a couple of squares of galaxy chocolate...)

Deputy head nurse

Talk about it! I find if I have had a difficult day at work and I leave the issues floating around in my head without airing them they become bigger problems than they need to be. If I get home and talk it out with a friend or family member, I can put the problem aside and relax and enjoy my evening. Cuddles and head boofs with my cat never fail to help me switch off after a hard day either.

A few things that have helped me are; playing squash, going for a run, cooking fajitas with my housemates and ultimately, getting a decent night's sleep

Final year vet student



Do you have a transition routine? What could you do to help you leave work at work? _____



What if I think I'm experiencing compassion fatigue and/or burnout?

Please contact someone. See **What can I do if I am worried about my mental health?** for details of individuals to contact and resources available. When graduated you will not be able to access the general UoB resources such as Student Counselling, but there are still many resources available to you.

Imposter Syndrome

What is imposter syndrome (or phenomenon, IP)?

- Imposter syndrome is when high achieving individuals chronically question their abilities and fear that others will discover them to be intellectual frauds (Henning *et al.* 1998).
- Such individuals maintain a strong belief that they are not intelligent and even multiple outstanding achievements do not appear to change this belief (Clance & Imes 1978).
- A person with imposter syndrome attributes his/her success to chance or fate and doesn't believe in his/her success (Ghorbanshirdi 2012).

Example of imposter syndrome
(Clance & Imes 1978)

"I was convinced that I would be discovered as a phony when I took my comprehensive doctoral examination. I thought the final test had come. I was shocked when my chairman told me that my answers were excellent and that my paper was one of the best he had seen in his entire career."

How does imposter syndrome present?

Imposter syndrome will be different for everyone, but individuals may;

- **Experience a terror of failure;** Individuals may think that if they fail at something, or simply make a mistake, they will feel like a fool and be humiliated (Clance & Imes 1978; Clance & O'Toole 1988; Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch 2016).
- **Overestimate others while underestimating themselves;** This includes comparing their own weaknesses with other people's strengths (Clance & O'Toole 1988).

"Obviously I'm in this position [as chairperson of my department] because my abilities have been overestimated."

Example of imposter syndrome
(Clance & Imes 1978)

- **Define intelligence in a skewed manner;** They may also have "myths" about what defines intelligence and these will usually reflect negatively on themselves (Clance & O'Toole 1988).
- **Not reveal their own ideas or opinions in case discovered as "stupid";** As a result, the individual is never able to realise whether or not their own ideas or opinions are in fact valid (Clance & Imes 1978).
- **Use charm to win approval of superiors;** If the superior then compliments the individual, they assume it is due to their charm, rather than their intelligence or skill (Clance & Imes 1978).
- **Struggle accepting positive feedback** (Clance & O'Toole 1988).

"When a client requests to see me again, I frequently just assume it's because I was nice to them, rather than because I'm actually a good vet. Which is silly; if I'd been nice but not good at my job, they wouldn't want to see me again. I have to keep reminding myself that."

2-year qualified vet

- **Engage in an "imposter cycle";** Worrying about intelligence and/or having a fear of failure → over-working → achieving good marks or high level performance at task → assume due to luck and/or hard work (Clance & Imes 1978; Clance & O'Toole 1988).
- **Experience anxiety, depression, lack of self-confidence, frustration** (Clance & Imes 1978; Clance & O'Toole 1988; Bernard *et al.* 2010; Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch 2016).

- **Guilt and/or fear about success;** possible due to a fear of how this will affect their relationships with others and how others view them (Clance & Imes 1978; Clance & O’Toole 1988; Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch 2016).



Do you notice any of the above features in yourself? Which and why? _____



Why is imposter syndrome important?

- All the potential features listed above!
- Imposter syndrome may inhibit success of an individual, as the individual will likely have a skewed impression of their own competence and ability, and so may turn down opportunities they are actually capable of managing (Clance & O’Toole 1988).
- Individuals with IP often do not feel happy about their achievements, as they do not believe they are “true” achievements (Clance & O’Toole 1988).

Who can be affected by imposter syndrome?

- Anyone can be affected by imposter syndrome.
- It tends to be high achieving individuals (Clance & Imes 1978; Clance & O’Toole 1988).
- In relation to the “Big Five Personality Traits” imposter syndrome is related to high levels of neuroticism and low levels of conscientiousness (Bernard *et al.* 2010).
 - See **Navigating People Management: The OCEAN of personalities** for details on personality traits.

How can I treat imposter syndrome?

- As imposter syndrome is often related to anxiety and depression, Bernard *et al.* (2010) recommend getting treatment for this as a priority, before tackling the IP specifically.
 - If you think you might be experiencing depression and/or anxiety, even at a low level, we urge you to contact someone.
 - Please take a look at **What can I do if I am worried about my mental health?** for details of individuals to contact and resources available.
- Realising that some feelings of self-doubt are normal can be helpful (Oriol *et al.* 2004).
 - Can you discuss with friends or colleagues how you are feeling? You might find you’re all looking at each other strengths and missing your own.
- Clance & Imes (1978) recommend the following exercise for dealing with imposter syndrome;



Record positive feedback regarding competence: _____



Record how you stop yourself accepting this feedback: _____

How can you now let yourself accept this feedback?: _____

If you think imposter syndrome affects you, can you start keeping a regular record of compliments and/or positive feedback you receive and how you respond to this?

- If you use charm and flattery to gain approval, Clance & Imes (1978) recommend trying to notice when you do this. When you recognise yourself doing it, try being yourself and see what happens.

Job demands, job resources and personal resources

What is the job demands, job resources, personal resources (JD-R) model?

This model looks at both positive and negative wellbeing of employees in the workplace, by taking into account specific workplace and individual characteristics (Mastenbroek 2014).

What are job demands, job resources and personal resources? (Mastenbroek 2014)

Job demands require mental and/or physical effort and are associated with psychological and physiological costs to the individual. In the veterinary context, these include;

- Work-overload
- Shift work
- Work-home interference
- Role Ambiguity
- Role conflicts
- Client demands / expectations
- Euthanasia
- Physical demands

Job resources are aspects within the workplace which help employees deal with high job demands and which stimulate personal growth. They help employees achieve goals. In the veterinary context, these include;

- Social support from colleagues
- Coaching from colleagues
- Feedback
- Career / professional development opportunities
- Autonomy (*the condition of self-government / independence*)
- Decision latitude (*how freely one can make decisions*)
- Job satisfaction
- Rewards

Personal resources are aspects of the individual which are linked to resilience. Personal resources can act as mediators for some job demands and job resources and lead to sense of being in control and being able to influence the environment. These include;

- Optimism
- Self-efficacy (*Perception of own ability to meet demands e.g. I can always solve difficult problems if I try hard enough*)
- Self-esteem (*Confidence in own worth, self-respect. e.g. I am important to the organisation*)
- Reflection (*Being aware of own emotions e.g. recognising when things are too much*)
- Thoughtfulness (*Thinking about why you do what you do e.g. why certain rules are in place*)
- Pro-Activity
- Motivation



The JD-R model can be used in other occupations; if you don't intend to be a practising vet, can you think of any other specific job demands or job resources that might be relevant? _____



How are job demands, job resources and personal resources linked to wellbeing?

- Job demands (work-home interference and workload) are positively related to exhaustion i.e. as job demands increase, so does the chance of exhaustion.

- Exhaustion is the first stage of burnout, followed by cynicism and distancing oneself from the job and then perceived decreased personal accomplishment (See **What is burnout?** in **Compassion Fatigue and Burnout**) (Mastenbroek *et al.* 2014a).
- This means that **all of us have the potential to experience mental illness if put under excess strain** (too high job demands) which we are not able to cope with.
- Job resources (opportunities for professional development) and personal resources (self-efficacy and proactive behaviour) are positively linked to work engagement and therefore productivity (Mastenbroek *et al.* 2014a).
- Personal resources mediate some of the difficulties associated with job demands and can help gain access to additional job resources (Mastenbroek *et al.* 2014b).
- Positive emotions at work are associated with greater work achievement and increased support from supervisors and colleagues (Staw *et al.* 1994).
- Stronger personal resources are linked to resilience (Yehude *et al.* 2006)
 - Strong resilience results in decreased error in work, decreased chance of burnout, greater tolerance of clinical uncertainty and positive mental health (Epstein & Krasner 2013).

Which job demands do you think will affect you the most? _____



Which job resources do you value most? _____

Which are your strongest personal resources? Which could you develop more? _____

What can I do to manage and improve my job demands, job resources and personal resources?

- Getting the right balance of job demands, job resources and personal resources can help you achieve a good mental wellbeing.
 - When choosing a job, think about which aspects are most likely to affect you and try and choose a position which reflects this.
 - Remember we are all different and the “perfect job” will be slightly different for everyone.
- You can improve your personal resources (Lyubomirsky 2010; Mastenbroek *et al.* 2014c) and your resilience (an aspect of personal resources) (Connor & Davidson 2003)
 - Use the Mental Wellbeing Toolbox to develop aspects of your wellbeing.
 - Remember that to develop your mental wellbeing, you need to be proactive (Lyubomirsky 2010), reflect (Mastenbroek 2014) and include variety (Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005).
- Having strong personal resources includes recognising when things are too much (reflection), and doing something about it (proactivity) (Mastenbroek *et al.* 2014d).
 - It is ok to not be ok; please talk to someone.
 - For more information on dealing with your mental health and who you can talk to, see **What can I do if I am worried about my mental health?**.

Eudaimonic wellbeing in the veterinary workplace

What is eudaimonic wellbeing?

- Eudaimonic wellbeing is experienced as a result of a living a life that is deeply fulfilling and satisfying. It is being more concerned with living well than achieving pleasurable outcomes.
- It is different to hedonic wellbeing, which is related to happiness, positive emotion and the pursuit pleasurable outcomes.
- There is overlap between eudaimonic wellbeing and hedonic wellbeing, but there are some distinct examples too (circumstances positively related to a life of meaning (eudaimonia) and negatively to a life of pleasure-seeking (hedonia));
 - Being a giver, rather than a taker;
 - Thinking about the past and future, rather than the present moment;
 - Volunteering;
 - Aspects of veterinary work.
- **“Eudaimonic wellbeing is more stable and enduring than hedonic wellbeing”** (Cake *et al.* 2015).

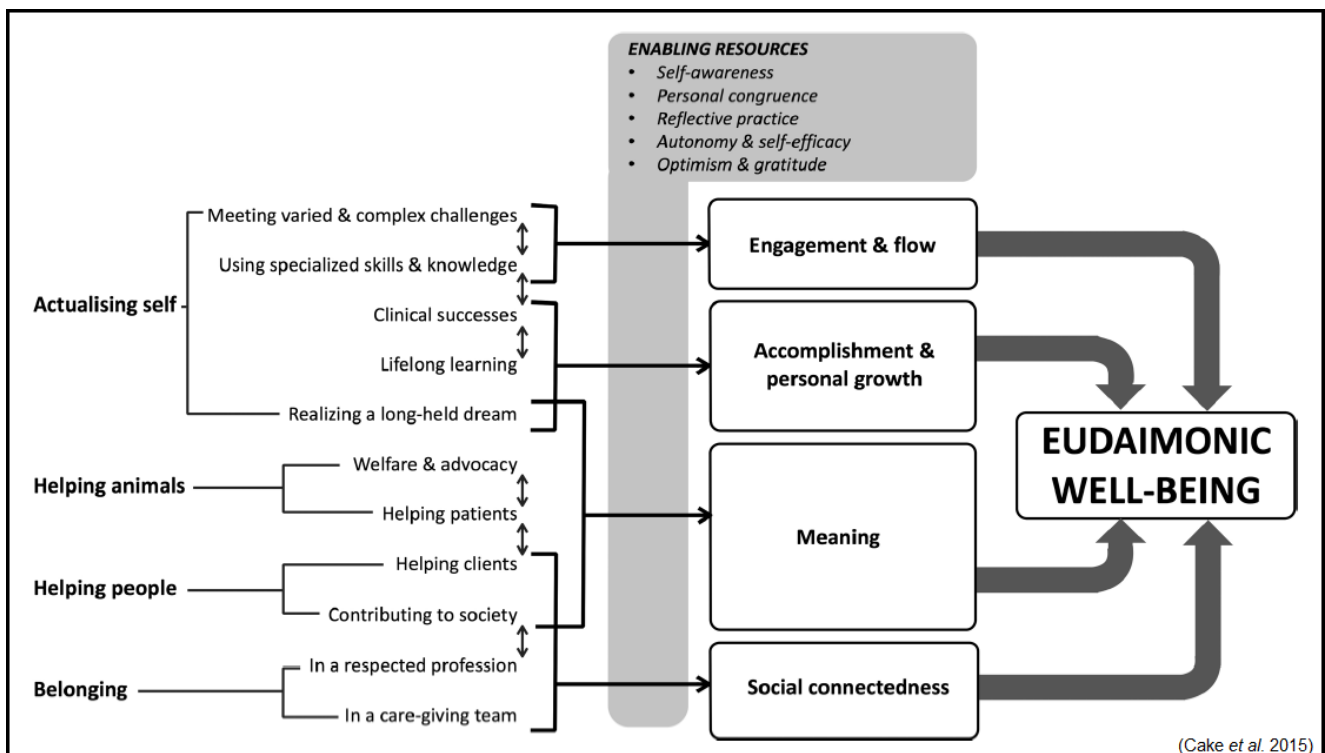


Can you think of any examples of eudaimonic wellbeing in your life? _____



How does eudaimonic wellbeing relate to veterinary work?

- Many sources of satisfaction in the veterinary profession are based in meaningful purpose, relationships and personal growth (see diagram below).
 - Veterinary wellbeing is more founded in eudaimonia than in hedonia.
 - A veterinary career can be richly satisfying and fulfilling (Cake *et al.* 2015).



A model of the positive contributions to eudaimonic wellbeing from veterinary work (Cake *et al.* 2015).

- By developing your personal resources (as shown in grey in the diagram) you aid the development of eudaimonic wellbeing.



Which personal resources could you develop to help you achieve eudaimonic wellbeing? How could you do this? _____



How can I find out more about veterinary work and eudaimonic wellbeing?

Check out the paper Cake MA, Bell MA, Bickley N, Bartram DJ (2015). The Life of Meaning: A Model of the Positive Contributions to Well-being from Veterinary Work. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*. 42 (3): 184-193.

Navigating People Management: Transactional Analysis

What is Transactional Analysis (TA)?

TA is a theory of personality, and provides a way to understand our relationships with others and the communication we use in these relationships. In doing this, TA offers a variety of models to explain different relationships and situations (UKATA).

The TA model is based on the theory that each person has three ego states, Parent (P), Adult (A) and Child (C) which interact in “transactions” (see below).

UK Association of
Transactional
Analysis (UKATA)

“TA is a humanistic philosophy. This means we focus on each individual's potential and stress the importance of growth and personal development. We fundamentally believe that **people are innately good** and that mental and social problems result from deviations from this natural tendency.”

Why is it useful to know about TA?

Individuals move between the different ego states and so continually induce different responses from other individuals. Understanding this, and the TA model in general, can be used to incite personal growth and change (UKATA).

Many things affect your wellbeing including the interactions that you have with others (and yourself). Understanding these interactions can help promote wellbeing. Training in TA can result in an increased communication skills and self-assertion and a greater understanding of others (Mohammadi *et al.* 2010) as well as increasing leadership skills (Ciucur & Pirvut 2012).

What are the “ego states” in TA?

Ego-states refer to three major parts of each individual's personality, and they each reflect an entire system of thought, feeling and behaviour. These determine how individuals express themselves, interact with each other and form relationships.

These are:

- **Parent ego-state (P):** A set of thoughts, feelings and behaviours learnt from our parents and other important people. This part of our personality can be supportive or critical.
- **Adult ego-state (A):** Relates to direct responses in the 'here and now' that are not influenced by our past. This tends to be the most rational part of our personality.
- **Child ego-state (C):** A set of thoughts, feelings and behaviours learnt from our childhood. These can be free and natural or strongly adapted to parental influences (UKATA).



In which ego-state do you think you spend the most time? _____

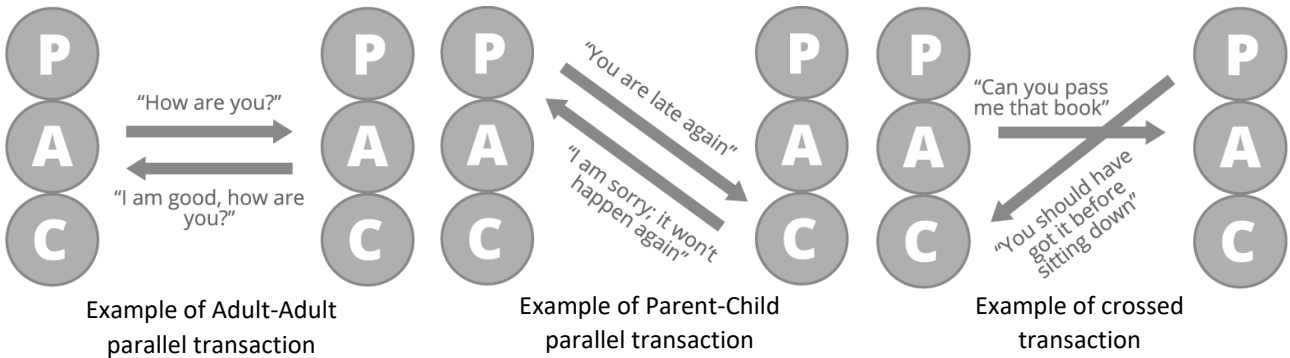


What are “Transactions” in TA?

Transactions are simply interactions between people and involve a stimulus and a response. Transactions can be verbal or non-verbal e.g seeing a friend and shouting hello (stimulus) and your friend waving back (response) (UKATA).

Each transaction can be related to a specific pair of ego traits and this be straightforward (parallel) or crossed (UKATA). Understanding these different transactions is key to conflict resolution.

Example transactions within the ego states (UKATA)



Can you think of examples you have experienced for each of the above interactions? How did they make you feel?:



- Adult-adult transaction _____

- Parent-child transaction _____

- Crossed transaction _____

In hindsight, could you have changed any of these interactions to make them more positive? _____

Is there anything else in TA?

Yes! There are many aspects to TA; the ego states and their transactions is just the basic model.

• **Scripts**

As young children, we write a life plan for ourselves, a “script”, based on thoughts about who we are and how we fit into the world. By adulthood, we are generally unaware of this life script and consequently it may alter our interactions with others (UKATA).



What do you think your script says? _____



How do you think this script influences your actions? _____

TA therapists use script theory to identify unconscious scripts. They will use the ego-state model to help individuals realise how certain permissions and prohibitions they received as a child are impacting their lives and how they communicate. These “unconscious scripts” often exist as repetitive patterns of behaviour, thoughts and feelings - characteristics that suggest the child ego-state is overbearing and tainting other parts of a person's personality.

• **Strokes**

A “stroke” is a unit of human recognition and can include compliments, acceptance and attention in general. Strokes can be positive or negative and will be slightly different for everyone; what one person perceives as a positive form of attention, may be deemed as negative to another person.

Strokes influence how people lead their lives; we all have a basic need for interaction and recognition from other people, and so we initiate transactions to receive strokes that match our needs (UKATA). TA therapy recognises that we are greatly motivated by the reinforcement we get as children, and if this was dysfunctional, we are likely to adopt dysfunctional patterns as we get older.



What kind of interactions (or strokes) do you tend to seek out? _____



- **Redecision**

This refers to an individual's capacity to redecide and make changes to certain decisions made as a child that stem from unconscious scripts. Redecision reflects the assumption of TA therapy that individuals have the potential to lead their lives as they choose.

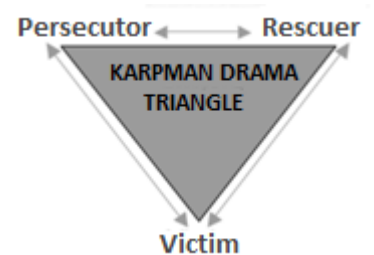
UK Association of
Transactional Analysis (UKATA)

“Understanding and changing our life scripts can lead to positive and lasting change in all areas of our life.”

This relates to the fundamental beliefs of TA; that people are ok; that everyone has the ability to think (and therefore decide) for themselves; and that people decide their own future (and this can be changed) (UKATA).

- **Karpman's Drama Triangle**

Karpman's Drama Triangle describes a negative way in which life scripts can be acted out. The triangle involves three roles, victim, rescuer and persecutor and “drama” occurs when these roles are established and when individuals swap roles (Karpman 1968).



The Victim: The Victim's stance is "Poor me!" The Victim feels oppressed, and seems unable to make decisions, solve problems, take pleasure in life, or achieve insight. If not being persecuted, they will seek out a Persecutor and also a Rescuer.

The Rescuer: The rescuer's line is "Let me help you." A classic enabler, the Rescuer feels guilty if he/she doesn't go to the rescue. Yet his/her rescuing has negative effects: it keeps the Victim dependent and gives the Victim permission to fail. The rewards derived from this rescue role are that the focus is taken off of the rescuer. When he/she focuses their energy on someone else, it enables them to ignore their own anxiety and issues. This rescue role is also very pivotal because their actual primary interest is really an avoidance of their own problems disguised as concern for the victim's needs.

The Persecutor: The Persecutor insists, "It's all your fault." The Persecutor is controlling, blaming, critical, oppressive, angry, authoritative, rigid, and superior.



Can you describe a drama triangle which you have seen or been involved in? _____



Do you often seek out a role as victim, rescuer or persecutor? How could you change this? _____

“Once the drama triangle can be seen as it is, the key to unlocking the game is to no longer play.”
(Thorpe, 2011).

Navigating People Management: The OCEAN of Personalities

What is OCEAN?

- There are many models describing difference personality types, but it is generally agreed that there are five main factors, or traits, of personality. Each trait is made up of a variety of personality characteristics, habits and behaviours (Digman 1990).
- OCEAN is an acronym for the “Big 5” personality traits; **O**penness; **C**onscientiousness; **E**xtraversion; **A**greeableness; **N**euroticism.
- “These five factors do not provide completely exhaustive explanations of personality, but they are known as the “Big Five” because they encompass a large portion of personality-related terms” (Ackerman 2017).

Why is it useful to know about OCEAN and personality traits?

Many things affect your wellbeing including the interactions that you have with others (and yourself). Understanding different personalities can therefore help promote wellbeing by understanding why people act the way they do.

What are “personality traits”?

- Traits can be used to explain an individual’s behaviour and describe “what people are like”. Traits can be positive or negative but do *not* serve as a standard for judging the behaviour of ourselves or others (Roccas *et al.* 2002).
- Values can also be used to explain an individual’s behaviour but are slightly different to traits; values are “what people consider important” and are generally deemed positive (at least to a set group of people). In contrast to traits, values do serve as standards for judging behaviour (Roccas *et al.* 2002).
- A combination of traits can be used to build up an individual’s “trait profile” and this is relatively stable over time (Soldz & Vaillant 1999).
- Different traits relate to different individual outcomes (such as happiness, humour, ability to cope), interpersonal outcomes (such as relationships and/or conflict with others) and social outcomes (such as occupational choice, involvement in the community and political values) (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006).

What is involved in each personality trait?

Openness

Openness to experience relates to how willing an individual is trying to new things (Ackerman 2017) and refers to both openness to experience and intellect (Douglas *et al.* 2016).

In a nutshell, “open” individuals are inventive and curious, rather than consistent and cautious, and show an appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas and variety. They tend to dislike conforming and strict routine. High levels of openness to experience can result in individuals being risk-takers. Individuals low in “openness” prefer structure and dislike change.

How do you respond to change? _____



How do you feel when following a strict structure? _____



Conscientiousness

This trait relates to an individual's ability to control impulses to facilitate goal-directed behaviour (Ackerman 2017).

In a nutshell, "conscientious" individuals are efficient and organised, in contrast to being easy-going and care-free. They tend to show self-discipline and aim for achievement but at high levels this can appear obsessive. Individuals low in conscientiousness may be more flexible but less reliable.

What do you do if something isn't perfect? _____



How do you find working with a care-free person? _____

Extraversion

This trait refers to individuals' interactions with others and the extent to which individuals seek out interactions with others (Ackerman 2017).

In a nutshell, "extraverts" are outgoing and energetic, rather than solitary and reserved. They seek stimulation in the company of others. High levels of extraversion can be seen as attention-seeking. Individuals with low-extraversion ("introverts") prefer being alone or in small, intimate groups rather than large social events.

Extroverts tend to draw energy from and seek out interactions with others (Ackerman 2017) and so are assertive, active and sociable (Roccas *et al.* 2002).

Introverts recharge their energy when alone (Ackerman 2017) and are reserved and cautious (Roccas *et al.* 2002). It is important to note that introversion is not the same as being shy (although they do overlap); shyness is a fear of negative judgement while introversion is just a preference of solitude (Cain 2012).

How do you feel when with a large group of people? _____



How do you respond to being on your own? What do you do? _____

Agreeableness

Agreeableness refers to how well individuals get along with other people (Ackerman 2017). Individuals with low levels of agreeableness tend to be ruthless, suspicious, and uncooperative (Roccas *et al.* 2002).

In a nutshell "agreeable" individuals tend to be friendly and compassionate rather than analytical and detached. They are cooperative and tend to get on well with others. Individuals with high levels of agreeableness can be perceived as naive or submissive while individuals with low levels of agreeableness tend to be argumentative and antagonistic.

Do you ever feel people take advantage of your co-operative nature? _____



How do you find confrontation? _____

Neuroticism

This trait relates to the way people express their opinions and manage relationships (University of Cambridge⁷) and is linked to individuals' emotional stability (Ackerman 2017).

In a nutshell, "neurotic" individuals are sensitive and nervous, rather than secure and confident. They experience negative emotions easily and individuals with high neuroticism tend to be less emotionally stable and more impulsive and reactive. Low neuroticism is associated with being emotionally stable, calm and self-confident but can be seen as being uninspiring and unconcerned.



What triggers negative emotion in you eg. Sadness, anger, anxiety, stress? _____



How confident do you feel in yourself? _____

How can I find out my personality traits?

Please note: there is no "perfect" personality. Learning about your own and other peoples' personalities can help you understand why you act the way you do and why other people may act differently to you. **You do NOT need to change yourself or try to be something you are not.**

You can do free tests online which will tell you your personality profile according to the Big 5 traits. For example:

<https://www.123test.com/personality-test/>

<https://discovermyprofile.com/>

For more information on the different OCEAN personality traits, how they relate to different values and characteristics and more detailed references, see **Appendix: OCEAN personality traits.**

Final few wellbeing tips...

Don't compare yourself to others

- We all have different ways of learning, revising and dealing with our mental wellbeing.
- We all find different things easy and different things stressful.
- What works for one person's wellbeing, doesn't always work for someone else.
 - You need to reflect on your own mental wellbeing before you can act to improve it (not reflect on someone else's!)
- "The happier the person, the less time she spends comparing herself to others" (Lyubomirsky 2010).

It's ok to be stressed sometimes

- Being a vet, a vet nurse and a student can be stressful at times and that's ok.
 - Talk to each other! You're all going through it together.
- Just because something is stressful doesn't always mean it's bad.
 - Some stress is positive ("eustress") and it helps us respond effectively in times of trauma or increases our performance or efficiency in ordinary times (cited in Gelberg & Gelberg 2005).
- **"What doesn't kill us makes us stronger."** Individuals with some lifetime adversity have better mental health and well-being than individuals with no history of adversity (Seery *et al.* 2010).
- If stress does become too much, there are things you can do; please talk to someone at university (tutor, pre-clinical/clinical dean).
 - Occupational stress is a manageable risk, not an intrinsic condition of the veterinary profession (Cake *et al.* 2015). Yes some stress is normal, but that does not mean you should just keep going at a detriment to your health; you need to recognise when the stress is too much (see **What can I do if I am worried about my mental health?** for resources a list of contacts).
 - **It's ok to not be ok.**

There is more to mental wellbeing than just "not being ill".

- We can all improve our wellbeing; mental wellbeing is a spectrum, we can all move up this, even if we are not unwell.
 - It takes effort, but will make you a better person, a more successful vet and happier!
- You can't look after your friends or colleagues without first looking after yourself.
 - "Even in a healthcare profession, it is paramount to take care of oneself – it is the foundation of being able to give to others consistently" (Kreitzer & Klatt 2016).
- Don't feel guilty about taking time out to look after yourself.

Remember, you are more than just a veterinary professional.

Resources for improving mental wellbeing

What else can I do if I want to improve my mental wellbeing?

Check out the following resources:

- These easy to read papers:
 - Bartram & Boniwell (2007). The science of happiness: achieving sustained psychological wellbeing. *In practice*. **29**: 478-482. Excellent article summarising how vets can achieve better wellbeing.
 - Bartram & Gardner (2008). Coping with Stress. *In Practice*. **30**: 228-231. Summarises how to cope with stress in a veterinary context.
 - Cake MA, Bell MA, Bickley N, Bartram DJ (2015). The Life of Meaning: A Model of the Positive Contributions to Well-being from Veterinary Work. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*. **42** (3): 184-193
 - Lyubomirsky S, Sheldon KM, Schkade D (2005). Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change. *Review of General Psychology*. **9** (2): 111-131. Good overview of the literature regarding positive psychology and achieving happiness.
- www.actionforhappiness.org
Creators of the GREAT DREAM way to happiness, with lots of tips for improving wellbeing, including references
- Google NHS 5 Ways to Wellbeing (same as the GREAT part of a GREAT DREAM)
- See **Where can I get more information on mental health and wellbeing?** for resources that can be used to improve your wellbeing at any time, not just when you may be unwell.

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Appendix: Giving to others

Check out this list of examples of random acts of kindness. Notice how most of these don't require you to spend any money and don't even take up much of your time. How many have you completed?

- Do your housemate's washing up
- Help a friend with revision
- Text someone to say you're thinking of them
- Hold the door open for a stranger
- Give blood
- Write a thank-you letter to someone who's been kind to you
- Compliment a stranger
- Let someone go in front you in a queue
- Run an errand for someone
- Cook a friend dinner
- Leave random happy notes for someone to find
- Lend someone something you love
- Walk a friend's dog for them
- Leave change in vending machine for the next person
- Tidy up a communal space
- Ask someone you don't normally talk to about their day
- Save a bumble bee
- Donate clothes you don't wear to charity (or a friend!)
- Teach someone a new skill
- Volunteer your time
- Clean out the cat litter tray for a friend
- Share your chocolate bar
- Call someone you haven't spoken to in a while
- Write a positive review for something and include someone's name

Any other ideas?



- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



Appendix: Mindfulness (Awareness)

What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is quite simply about “being mindful”; being aware of what we are doing, as we are doing it and so not being on auto-pilot. This includes being in the present moment, rather than thinking about the past or future and includes being aware of our thoughts and feelings as they occur.

What are the benefits to being mindful?

Mindfulness-based courses decrease stress levels in healthy people including decreasing ruminative thinking and increasing empathy and self-compassion (Shapiro *et al.* 2008). More specifically, mindfulness courses have been shown to decrease stress and burnout in medical clinicians (Dobkin *et al.* 2016) and Borrell-Carrió & Epstein (2004) believe medical errors can be decreased by increasing clinicians self-awareness, a key component of mindfulness.

Mindfulness meditation programmes have even been shown to result in changes in the brain. Following an 8-week mindfulness meditation programme, individuals showed an increase in brain activity and an increase in anti-body titers to an influenza vaccine given at the end of the 8-week programme, when compared to a control group. The greater the increase in brain activity, the greater the increase in response to the vaccine (Davidson *et al.* 2003).

Being aware of your thoughts and feelings is important for developing many other aspects of the Mental Wellbeing Toolbox e.g. noticing pessimistic thoughts as they occur, being aware of your strengths and weaknesses, being aware of resistance to something and so enabling gentle acceptance. It is also important in sustaining long-term changes in happiness by preventing hedonic adaption i.e. preventing adaption to a new thing (Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005) (see **To develop your toolbox you need proactivity, reflection and variety**).

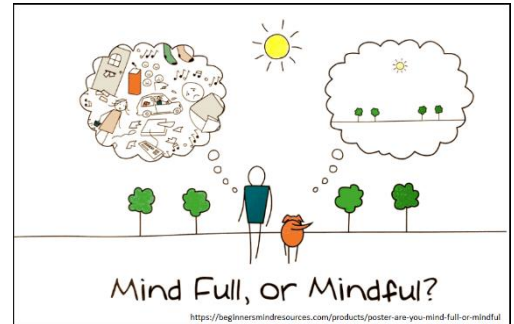
How can I be more mindful?

We are all capable of being mindful, or being aware of what we are doing, but it takes practise, especially to integrate into every-day life. Meditation (Shapiro *et al.* 2008) and yoga (Shelov *et al.* 2009) are recognised means of practising mindfulness.

Although meditation may sound awkward at first, it’s often not what people expect. Simply focusing on the present moment is enough e.g. sitting and concentrating on your breath, thinking about how your body feels or paying attention to something (e.g. clouds in the sky, a meal you’re eating).

What resources are available?

- <https://www.mindful.org/> Great articles and information on mindfulness, what it is, how to get started and how to integrate mindfulness into your life.
- The Webinar Vet Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) 8-week course, specifically for veterinary professionals. There is sometimes a charge for this, but it has been free for veterinary students in the past. <https://www.thewebinarvet.com/>. Other MBSR courses are available.
- Download the Insight Timer app, free of charge and available for IOS and Android. Has thousands of recorded meditations, organised in playlists of different themes, so good for starting out and trying different types of meditation <https://insighttimer.com/>. Other apps are available eg. <https://www.headspace.com/>, <https://www.calm.com/>
- <http://mindfulnessforstudents.co.uk/> Discusses mindfulness with an emphasis on students at university. Includes free guided meditations.

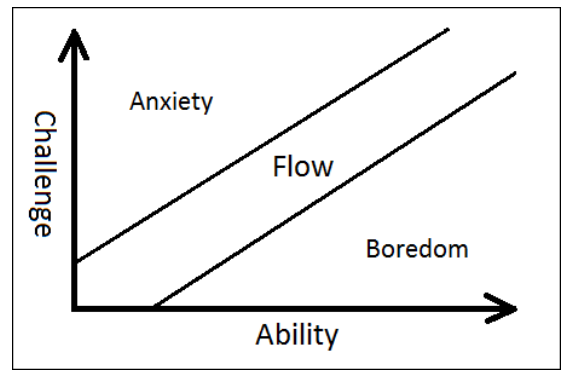


Appendix: Flow (Trying New Things)

What is flow?

Flow is the state of being completely absorbed in an activity, with a perfect balance between your ability and the level of challenge (Csikszentmihalyi 2008).

When completely an activity, if we don't have the ability to match the level of challenge, we experience anxiety. Conversely, if our level of ability exceeds the level of challenge, we experience boredom. Flow is the state perfectly balanced in the middle.



How does this relate to me? What are the benefits to experiencing flow?

The more flow in our daily life, the more likely we are to feel happy overall (Csikszentmihalyi 1996). So having a hobby you enjoy and spending time being engrossed in this (i.e. being in flow), will therefore help to improve our positive wellbeing. This is one of the reasons that learning new things can be good for our mental wellbeing.



What activities induce flow in you? Common activities include playing an instrument or learning a foreign language. _____



Think of an activity in which you find yourself bored. How can you increase the challenge to bring yourself into a state of flow? _____

Now think of an activity in which you find yourself anxious. How can you bring down the challenge to meet your level of ability? eg. set more realistic goals or do something to develop your ability. _____

How do I create more flow?

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) says there are nine main elements involved in inducing flow:

- 1) There are clear goals every step of the way.
- 2) There is immediate feedback to one's actions.
- 3) There is a balance between challenge and skills.
- 4) Action and awareness are merged.
- 5) Distractions are excluded from consciousness.
- 6) There is no worry of failure.
- 7) Self-consciousness disappears.
- 8) The sense of time becomes distorted.
- 9) The activity becomes autotelic

There is an intense state of focus

i.e. activity have an end or purpose in itself / not to achieve anything externally.

Bartram & Boniwell (2007) recommend allocating leisure time intelligently and away from passive activities such as watching TV, so it contributes to your wellbeing.



How can you create more flow in your life? _____



Appendix: Emotions

If you decide to do any of these techniques regularly, remember to keep variety in what you write, don't choose the same thing every time. Variety is important to prevent hedonic adaptation ie. variety is important to ensure you continue to get enjoyment from something (Lyubomirsky *et al.* 2005).

Tip 1: Developing optimism through the "3Ps"; Permanence, Pervasiveness and Personalisation (Seligman 2006).

Optimistic individuals tend to see bad events as non-permanent, contained to just one area of their life and due to external events. Positive events are seen as permanent, likely to affect all areas of life and due to internal factors (or themselves)

Pessimistic individuals think the opposite; bad events are permanent, extend to all areas of life and are due to themselves, while positive events are non-permanent, contained to just one area of life and due to external factors.

You can change the way you think; when you notice a pessimistic thought, try and reframe it according to the 3Ps.

Write a recent event you experienced (this can be positive or negative): _____





Now frame this according to the 3Ps: _____

"Pessimists can learn to be optimists... Changing the destructive things you say to yourself when you experience the setbacks that life deals all of us is the central skill of optimism" (Seligman 2006).

Tip 2: Remember the "ABCs" of feelings and emotions (Seligman 2011).

Beliefs (B) about an adversity (A) cause consequent (C) feelings. An adverse event itself does not cause emotion, it is the belief and thoughts about the adverse event which cause bad feelings. It takes practise but you can change the way you think and don't have to feel bad about an adverse event. Sometimes this tip can be used in conjunction with Tip 1; try writing your ABCs about an adverse event, then see how you can reframe your beliefs and emotions according to the 3Ps.



Write a recent adverse event which caused you to feel bad: _____



What were your beliefs about the event? _____

How could you change your beliefs? Are your beliefs accurate? Remember you are able to choose the way you think: _____

How do you now feel about the event? _____

Tip 3: Developing optimism through writing a “best possible self” journal (Lyubomirsky 2010).



Take 20-30 minutes to think about how you want your life to be in 1, 5 or 10 years time. In doing this, imagine you have tried your best, worked hard and achieved all your goals. Be honest, you don't need to be modest! Just doing this helps you to recognise your goals and how you can achieve them, which in turn makes you more optimistic.



Individuals who were asked to “think about your best possible self” and write this down, as often and for as long as they liked for 4 weeks, were found to have significant lift in mood compared to those who were asked to simply write about their daily life (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky 2006).

Tip 4: Developing happiness through the “what-went-well” exercise (Seligman 2011).



Every day for a week, write down three things that went well, and then write a reason why this went well. The things can be important or relatively minor e.g. I passed an exam because I put lots of work in and deserved to pass or I remembered my anatomy dissection kit because I was organised and packed last night. Try one now:



1) What went well?: _____

Why did it go well?: _____

2) What went well?: _____

Why did it go well?: _____

3) What went well?: _____

Why did it go well?: _____

Seligman says this helps with decreasing depression and increasing happiness.

Tip 5: Developing gratitude and happiness through a “grateful journal” (Lyubomirsky et al. 2005; Emmons & McCullough 2003).

Participants completing a grateful journal rated more highly one's life as a whole and expectations for the coming week, than those keeping a journal of a list of hassles of life or neutral life events. They also experienced fewer physical illnesses (Emmons & McCullough 2003).



Write three things for which you are grateful. They don't have to be big, but they need to be significant for you:



1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

You can complete this daily, a few times a week, or weekly; different frequencies will work for different people.

Appendix: Growth vs Fixed Mindset

Students with a growth mindset show greater persistence when faced with a challenge (Dweck 2007). Individuals who care more about learning itself rather than about showing that they are smart, achieve higher grades overall (Dweck 2007).

Growth mindset	Fixed Mindset
Intellectual abilities can be developed	Intellectual abilities are fixed
Show higher achievement across challenging school transitions and greater course completion rates	Show lower achievement across challenging school transitions and greater course completion rates
Learning more important than good grades	Looking smart more important than learning
Hold hard work in good regard; the harder you work at something, the better you become	Effort seen as a bad thing; having to work hard at something is a sign of low ability
Even geniuses have to work hard to achieve their accomplishments	A person with talent or intelligence does not need to work hard to do well
When confronted with set-backs, they work harder or try a different strategy	When confronted with set-backs, they blame their own ability and would then avoid the task in the future
More likely to broach problems in a relationship and try to solve them; believe people can grow and change.	Less likely to broach problems in a relationship and try to solve them; think personality traits are more or less fixed.

(Yeager & Dweck 2012; Dweck 2007)



Which mindset do you think you fit? _____

How could you develop more of a growth mindset? _____





Appendix: Self-care plan



Name: _____

Date completed: _____

Today / in the last week / the last month, have you...?	<i>Insert scale/ answers here</i>					Examples or motivational tips to add more of this to your life

Using the above table, what are your wellbeing strengths? _____

What are your wellbeing weaknesses? _____

How can you improve your wellbeing? It doesn't have to be big, but try and be SMART i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-sensitive

Remember, don't try to do everything at once; choose one area to improve and focus on that.

Appendix: OCEAN personality traits

Openness

Openness is positively related to;

- Pursuit of novelty and change (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Intellectual and emotional autonomy i.e. thinking for oneself (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Forgiveness (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Creativity and artistic interests (Soldz & Vaillant 1999; Douglas *et al.* 2006);
- Universalism values i.e. promoting peace and tolerance and seeing all people as equal (Roccas *et al.* 2002; Douglas *et al.* 2006);
- Substance abuse (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006).

Openness is negatively related to;

- Conformity, security, “maintaining the status quo”, structure and stability i.e. routine (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Traditional values (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Power values i.e. control of the surrounding environment (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Conservative political views (Soldz & Vaillant 1999).

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness is positively related to;

- Achievement (Roccas *et al.* 2002) and occupational performance and success (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Conformity, security and aiming to maintain smooth relationships with others and avoid social disruption (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Satisfaction with relationships with peers and family (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Adjusting to life’s challenges and resilience (Soldz & Vaillant 1999);
- Religious beliefs (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Forgiveness (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006).

Conscientiousness is negatively related to;

- Depression (Soldz & Vaillant 1999);
- Smoking, alcohol abuse (Soldz & Vaillant 1999) and risky behaviour (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Antisocial and criminal behaviour (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006).

Extraversion

Extraversion is positively related to;

- Achievement (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Hedonism values i.e. the pursuit of pleasure (Roccas *et al.* 2002) and subjective well-being (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Resilience (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Satisfaction with romantic relationships (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Community involvement and volunteering (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Leadership (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006; Barrick & Mount 1991);
- Maximum income (Soldz & Vaillant 1999);
- Conservative political attitudes (Soldz & Vaillant 1999);
- Satisfaction and commitment to occupational choice (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006).

Extraversion is negatively related to;

- Traditional values (Roccas *et al.* 2002);

- Depression (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006).

Agreeableness

Agreeableness is positively related to;

- Benevolence i.e. well-meaning and kindness (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Tradition (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Aiming to avoid disruption of relationships (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Relationships with others (Soldz & Vaillant 1999);
- Forgiveness (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Community involvement and volunteering (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Leadership (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Religious beliefs (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Humour (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);

Agreeableness is negatively related to;

- Achievement (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Power (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Pursuit of hedonism or selfish pleasures (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Creativity (Soldz & Vaillant 1999).

Neuroticism

Neuroticism is positively related to;

- Self-consciousness and vulnerability (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Angry hostility and impulsiveness (Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Dissatisfaction with romantic relationships and increased conflict (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Depression (Soldz & Vaillant 1999; Roccas *et al.* 2002) and anxiety (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006; Roccas *et al.* 2002);
- Smoking, drug use and alcohol abuse (Soldz & Vaillant 1999).

Neuroticism is negatively related to;

- Subjective wellbeing (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Humour (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Coping and resilience (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Satisfaction with family relationships (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Satisfaction and commitment to occupational choice (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Achievement (Roccas *et al.* 2002) and occupational success (Ozer & Benet-Martinez 2006);
- Maximum income (Soldz & Vaillant 1999).

Please note: there is no “perfect” personality. Learning about your own and other peoples’ personalities can help you understand why you act the way you do and why other people may act differently to you. You do NOT need to change yourself or try to be something you are not.

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If you notice that something needs updating, please tell us! Email lucy.squire@bristol.ac.uk