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The aim of these Wellbeing workshops is to help you learn more about stress and the steps which can be taken to help reduce the impact it can have on your life if left unchecked.

**What to expect at a workshop**

- The workshops are like lectures, there are no group discussions or people having to speak out in front of the group.
- If anyone is looking for more support than education on Stress Management there are contact numbers at the back of each workbook, where One to One support can be sought.
- There are four workshops in total each lasting two hours.
- You will be given a workbook for each workshop with some exercises.
- There will be time during the workshop to consider the exercises; however, it may be that you find it more useful to complete the exercises when you get home and have time to really think about your answers. We strongly suggest, to get the most from these workshops, that you do read the workbooks when you get home.
- Trainers may invite participants to give an example of stress but you don’t need to speak out if you don’t want to; it’s a general invitation to the whole group not to any individual.
- Monitoring information we gather cannot identify you and is simply for us to ensure we are reaching people.

If you have any questions please either write this down on a post-it (provided) and stick it on the board for us to read, or you can approach one of the presenters or their colleague directly.

In Session 3 we will look at:

- How stress affects our thinking
- How to identify unhelpful thoughts and negative styles of thinking
- How our thinking affects our feelings
- How to challenge unhelpful thoughts
* Exercise 1 *

How is life just now?

On the scale below where would you rate your quality of life this week?

0 _______________________________________________ 10

As bad as it could possibly be  As good as it could possibly be

What is happening in your life that might be contributing to you feeling this way? Record the positive as well as the negative as it may be that you feel okay just now:
* Exercise 2 *

Where would you need to be on the scale, for your quality of life to be good enough?

0 _______________________________________________ 10

As **bad** as it could possibly be
As **good** as it could possibly be

What would you be doing differently that would tell you that you had reached this point?
What Keeps it Going?  
The Vicious Cycle of Stress

Let’s revisit the Cycle of Stress that we’ve seen over the last couple of weeks. This time take note of the thoughts section of the cycle.

Stressful Situation
I have to speak in front of people

Worrying Thoughts
What if I make a fool of myself?

Changes in behaviour
Talking faster, stuttering

Bodily Symptoms
Sweaty, heart racing, flushed

Feelings
Anxiety/panic

It is important to recognise that as human beings our feelings come from our thoughts, so depending on how you are thinking will dictate how you feel!
How Negative Thoughts Can Snowball…

Here are some common thoughts people have that can have a knock-on effect to how we feel – you may recognise some of them!

- Typical – It wasn’t raining till I got here!
- The bus is ALWAYS late
- I’ll be late for work
- They will all be talking about me when I get in
- The boss won’t be happy
- I’ll get into trouble
- I’ll get pulled into the office
- I’ll get fired!

Each worrying thought feeds into the next. As our thoughts become more and more extreme our level of stress increases.

Recognising what we say to ourselves and changing it to more positive self-talk can be very powerful and significantly improve how we feel.
How Does Stress Affect Your Thinking?

THOUGHTS

Here are some typical examples of the way in which people can think when under stress. These also significantly increase how stressed we feel:

- I can’t cope
- I’m useless
- They will all think I am stupid
- What’s the point in trying
- Things never go right for me
- There must be something wrong with me
- I just want to get out of here
- They are all looking at me
- They all know I can’t cope

What unhelpful things do you say to yourself when you are stressed?
* Exercise 3 *

Think about the last time you felt worried, stressed or low.

SITUATION – what was going on around you? Where were you, who were you with, what were you doing?

THOUGHTS – What were you saying to yourself at the time?
Memory Point – What we think affects how we feel (pay attention to your self-talk).
Unhelpful Thoughts

What are unhelpful thoughts?

- They are automatic
- They seem to come out of nowhere – but are actually based on our beliefs
- They seem reasonable and you tend not to question them
- If the thoughts were true most people would be stressed

They can affect how we feel about ourselves and stop us from doing the things we want or need to do.

Identifying types of unhelpful thoughts

- They happen with an emotional change – when we are stressed
- They create more stress
- If you don’t tackle them they become a habit and get much worse

These thoughts can take many different forms:

Words and sentences:

- I will collapse if I have to wait in a big queue at the shop
- No-one will talk to me if I go into the staff room
- I can’t do this job anymore, it’s too much for me and everyone knows that I can’t cope

Images:

- Seeing yourself lying on the shop floor, ambulance outside
- Seeing yourself making a fool of yourself or imagining everyone talking about you when you leave

Memories:

- Seeing someone else who had collapsed in a shop in the past
- Remembering the last time you felt low or the last time you didn’t do so well at work or did something wrong
Types of unhelpful self-talk

Here are some common types of thoughts that we say to ourselves:

- “What if …”
- “I can’t cope with …”
- “What is the point …”
- “How do I get out of …”

* Exercise 4 *

Look back at Exercise 3, and the thoughts you wrote down then. Did you notice:

- “What if …” thoughts? (or something similar?)
  Yes ☐  No ☐

- “I can’t cope with …” thoughts (or something similar?)
  Yes ☐  No ☐

- “What is the point …” thoughts (or something similar?)
  Yes ☐  No ☐

- “How do I get out of …” thoughts (or something similar?)
  Yes ☐  No ☐
Common Unhelpful Ways of Thinking

Noticing unhelpful thinking styles

Common unhelpful ways of thinking include:

**Being hard on yourself**
I overlook my strengths and focus on my weak points

**Looking on the negative side**
I tend to focus on the black side of things

**Gloomy view of the future**
I overestimate the chances of bad things happening

**Jumping to conclusions**
I tend to assume that the worst will happen

**Mind reading**
I tend to assume other people don’t like me / think badly of me

**Taking on responsibility**
I take on responsibility particularly for things going wrong even when a situation has nothing to do with me

**Over personalising**
I focus on or blow small slights out of proportion

**Making extreme statements / rules**
I often say I “must”, “should”, or “have to” I want things to be just right / perfect
* Exercise 5 *

Look again at the thoughts you wrote down earlier.

What are the ways in which you tend to think about yourself, others, the world and the future when you are stressed or low?

You can use the following pages to help you identify some of your unhelpful ways of thinking and space to comment.

**Being hard on yourself** – I overlook my strengths and focus on my weak points

☐ Yes  ☐ No

**Looking on the negative side** – I tend to focus on the black side of things

☐ Yes  ☐ No
**Gloomy view of the future** – I overestimate the chances of bad things happening

- Yes  
- No

**Jumping to conclusions** – I tend to assume that the worst will happen

- Yes  
- No

**Mind reading** – I assume other people don’t like me/think badly of me

- Yes  
- No
**Taking on responsibility** – I feel responsible for things not going well; It is my fault when things don’t work out – ☐ Yes ☐ No

**Over-personalising** – I focus on or blow small slights out of proportion 
☐ Yes ☐ No

**Making extreme statements/rules** – I often say I “must”, “should”, or “have to”; I want things to be just right/perfect – ☐ Yes ☐ No
Remember you can learn to be more positive in the same way that you learned to think negatively. You have to practise. So here are some positive statements to practice daily.

- I can overcome this
- I am able to deal with this situation
- I can ask for help if I need it
- Things will get better for me
- I can take control
- I do have choices
- I’ve done this before so I can do it again

**Memory Points**

- The way we think affects the way we feel and act
- Stress is associated with certain ways of thinking
- Unhelpful thinking can cause us to see situations as threatening or pointless
- These ways of thinking become a habit

**IF WE CAN BREAK THIS HABIT WE CAN HELP OURSELVES**

Now, logic would say that in order to stop these unhelpful thoughts we should stop thinking about them…unfortunately it’s not always easy. For example:

**Pink Elephants**

In your mind, picture a pink elephant. Now, stop thinking about the pink elephant. Can you stop?

Often when we try to **NOT** think about something, we actually think about it **MORE**.

The pink elephant is just an example of how easy it is for this to happen.

**So the question is, what can we do to tackle unhelpful thinking?**
Tackling Unhelpful Thoughts

Sadly we can all find ourselves thinking negatively, so don’t beat yourself up about it!

Here are some questions you can ask yourself that may help in tackling unhelpful thoughts:

1. Firstly, do not judge yourself for having negative types of thinking. Balance it with other more positive points of view.

2. Secondly, ask yourself, what is the evidence to support this thought? Is the thought actually true?

3. What alternative views are there? What would other people say?

4. Does this thought help me? Does this way of thinking hold me back? How?

5. What unhelpful thinking styles have I noticed (see p10)? What was the result of those unhelpful thoughts?

6. What can I do to change the situation?

Imagine you were walking down the street and saw someone you knew walking towards you. This person walked past without speaking to you. What would be going through your mind?

Typical thoughts might be:

I must have done something to upset her and she is ignoring me.

They do not like me and don’t want to talk to me.

How dare they walk by me like that!
The following examples show how you can take an unhelpful thought and change it to a more positive thought.

**Unhelpful thought**

I’ll look like an idiot
People will be looking at me

**Positive Coping Thought**

- People have their own stuff to think about, why would they look at me?
- There are plenty of people not looking at me
- Even if they do, what does it matter. What makes me think their judgements or opinions are so valuable?
- The last time I had to do this no-one thought that I looked like an idiot and I did okay
- Would they have asked me to do it again if I’d come across as an idiot?

Can you think of another positive coping thought to balance the unhelpful thought “I’ll look like an idiot”? You can write it in the box below:
Unhelpful thought

‘My heart is beating so fast
I am going to have a heart attack’

Positive Coping Thought

- This has happened before and I’ve been OK
- These feelings are not dangerous
- This is just my body’s reaction to fear
- I can manage this
- I cannot die from a panic attack
- I am jumping to the worst conclusion

Can you think of another positive coping thought? You can write it in the box below:
Unhelpful thought

“I am useless”

Positive Coping Thought

- I might not feel good about myself right now but I have done things that are worthwhile
  (Think of examples and remind yourself)
- Everyone has bad days that doesn’t mean that they are useless
- Okay that didn’t go as well as it may have but that doesn’t mean I am useless – people wouldn’t say I did a good job if that was true

Can you think of a different positive coping thought? You can write it in the box below:

Coping Cards

People who suffer panic attacks or who at times feel overwhelmed by worry can find it useful to make a coping card. If this is for you, write your positive coping thoughts on one side of your card and practical things you can do to help yourself on the other.

For example, on one side you could write ‘this is just my body’s reaction to fear’ and on the other side ‘use your breathing exercises’. Keep it concealed in your wallet or another handy place for if and when you need it.

Think back to your earlier unhelpful thoughts and consider what would be a more positive / balanced view point?

You can use the exercise over the next page to note down your answers.
* Exercise 6 *

Think back to your earlier unhelpful thoughts

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**Memory Points**

- Notice what you say to yourself when you feel stressed or low
- Notice unhelpful thinking in what you are saying to yourself
- Challenge unhelpful thoughts to become more helpful / realistic thoughts
- Review your approach to the situation
And Finally

**Over the next week**, notice what goes through your mind when you feel stressed or low.

- If it helps, write it down

If you can, **try to tackle it** by using the techniques we have discussed. When you identify unhelpful thinking, ask yourself the following questions:

- What is your evidence for this thought?
  - What alternative views are there?
  - Does this thought help me?
  - What thinking errors have I made?
  - What can I do to change the situation?
- Write down the unhelpful thought and beside it write a more positive coping thought
- Notice how you feel differently when you are able to change the way you are thinking

- **If you are struggling**, you can ask for help from some of the agencies listed at the back of this workbook or from someone close to you. Check out if your thought is realistic or not; whether you are being too hard on yourself or thinking in an unhelpful way

---

**Good luck and hope to see you at**
**Session 4 – Problem Solving and Staying Well**

Thanks for coming!
COPE
COPE offer a professional confidential service to individuals aged 16 and over experiencing mental or emotional distress. Due to demand we are beginning to deliver in other locations full details are on the website www.cope-scotland.org or phone 0141 944 5490 or visit 20 Drumchapel Rd G15 6QE.

Lifelink
Lifelink works with young people and adults, offering a range of support to deal with stress, personal problems and emotional distress. The service is free and confidential and offered in various locations throughout Glasgow, please see most up to date info on our website www.Lifelink.org.uk or call 0141 552 4434. (Lifelink is the trading name for Royston Stress Centre. A registered Scottish charity No. SC025643)

Primary Care Mental Health Team
We are an NHS service, offering help to adults experiencing common psychological problems, like stress, anxiety and depression. We offer different kinds of help, including courses, groups, and one-to-one therapies. The service has no upper age limit. The teams are based in Partick and Woodside, but we see clients in a range of venues throughout West Glasgow. For people with GPs in West Glasgow, you can ring and make an appointment on 0141 232 9279. For people with GPs in Woodside and Maryhill, you can see your GP and ask for a referral.

If you would like to know more about up and coming workshops or services near you, which could help you manage stress, please make contact with any of these agencies.

Adapted 2010 from Pathways 2005