

Your Mental Health Toolbox



Introduction

This guide will help you to understand how a healthy mind responds to stressful conditions and life changes. You will be equipped with 4 practical tools that will enhance your well-being in daily life.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), robust mental health is a state of well-being in which one can effectively navigate everyday challenges and stress, as well as feel part of a meaningful community. This guide will help you strengthen your mental health, both in everyday life and in the long term.



How the healthy mind copes with distress

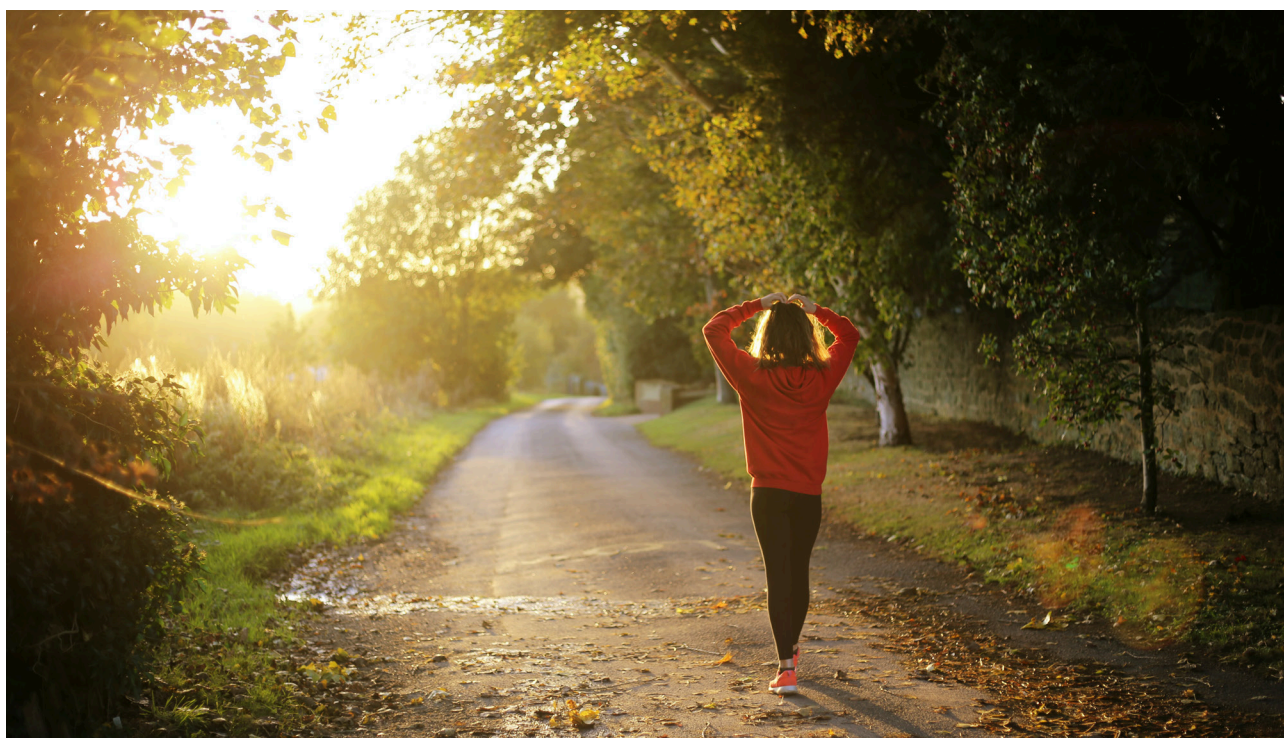
We all encounter varying degrees of distress throughout life. How we manage it significantly impacts our mental health in the short and long run.

When the body and mind react, it is a signal that adjustments are required. It's not harmful when the body and mind respond. Rather, it's a healthy indication that something needs attention and modification. Stressors may include: divorce, renovation projects, a demanding job, family life with young children, upheavals at work – perhaps several of these challenges are occurring simultaneously. At the same time, you may also wish to be an attentive friend, parent and spouse.

People usually react naturally and reasonably to life events. It only becomes unhealthy when stress persists for a longer period of time without adjustment or recovery. Normal stress responses may include poor sleep, irritability, sadness, mood swings and a diminished desire and ability to function effectively. These are completely normal reactions. The body and mind are calling for attention, adjustment and recovery.

A healthy and natural response to strain can be compared to an expensive water bill that arrives after a period of high consumption. If you want to economise on your bill, you need to use less water. Sometimes the bill arrives promptly, other times it is delayed and comes as a surprise. Similarly, when faced with significant challenges, you may have to cut back to the basics for a while.

If your body and mind don't react, you risk going straight over a cliff with grave consequences. Your body is your ally. When it signals distress, it wants you to take care of yourself. It is an opportunity to pause, listen and act.



4 practical tools to enhance your mental health

1.

Before you can work on your mental health, we recommend that you take time to evaluate and prioritise your own life activities – doing just a little is better than doing nothing at all. Ask yourself to identify the indispensable activities in your life and consider what you can postpone, completely drop or ask for help with. Write down your thoughts and use page 6 of this guide, if needed.

2.

Reflect on your attitude towards these indispensable activities. Can you be more flexible? If your own expectations and goals are too rigid, start there. You may want to write down your thoughts on page 6. Perhaps you need to learn to find joy in life before you achieve all your goals, and not the other way around as many in Western cultures tend to think.

3.

Examine your values closely. Ask yourself how you want to live, act and engage with others – and yourself. In stressful situations, adhering to your own personal values can be challenging. See if you can reduce your own demands on yourself. This will help you figure out what really needs your attention.

Ask yourself these three questions:

1. What is important to you?
2. Are your values based on your own wishes and needs or those of others?
3. Can you remain true to your inner resources and values?

For example, you may decide to participate in a social event for one hour instead of five. Remember to communicate clearly and free yourself of any unnecessary guilt. This way, you can avoid having to pay too high a price during a challenging period. Use page 6 of this guide to write down your thoughts as needed.

4.

The fourth and final recommendation is to use 'The ABCs of Mental Health'. It offers three practical suggestions that can help to improve your mental health, regardless of your situation. The ABCs are the largest mental health research program aimed towards the general population. Acting on its suggestions has proven to induce positive changes in mental health.

The three suggestions are:

- A: Do something active
- B: Do something with others
- C: Do something meaningful

It doesn't matter whether it's reading a book, taking a 10-minute break, talking to your neighbour over the hedge, strolling in nature or engaging in volunteer work. The important thing is to do what gives you meaning and energy.

Temporarily refraining from doing something is also an activity, such as skipping your coaching job, or demurring when asked "who can bake cake for next time" or reducing your workload by chatting with your boss. Use page seven to identify how you can do something active, do something with others and do something meaningful in your life.



Even small changes can have a big impact. Do what you have the resources and desire to do. If you maintain the status quo, you'll get the same poor result.

With this guide, you will be set on a path towards better mental health. Now the onus is on you to assess your own mental health. That is the only way it can improve.

Additional resources to strengthen your mental health:

The “Danish Center for Mindfulness” provides you with free exercises and guided meditations:

<https://mindfulness.au.dk/kom-godt-i-gang/oevelser>

Read more about ‘The ABCs of Mental Health’:

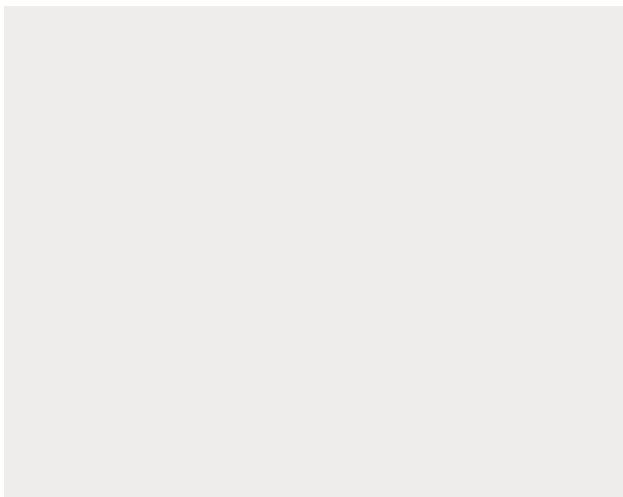
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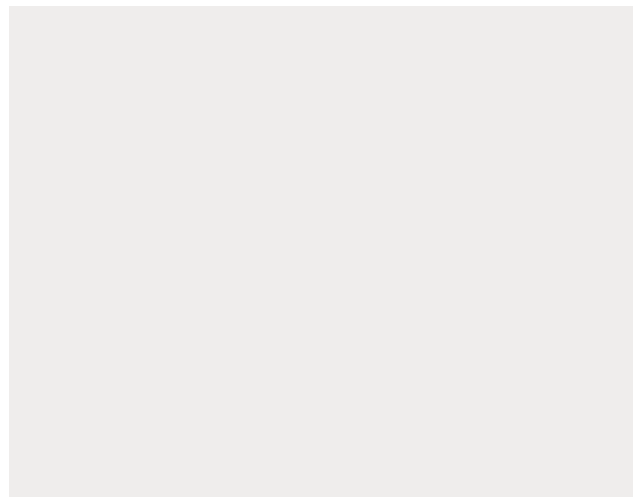
Evaluating and setting priorities

Before completing this page, use the tools and reflections on page 4 to provide clarity and a healthier prioritisation of activities.

My indispensable activities:

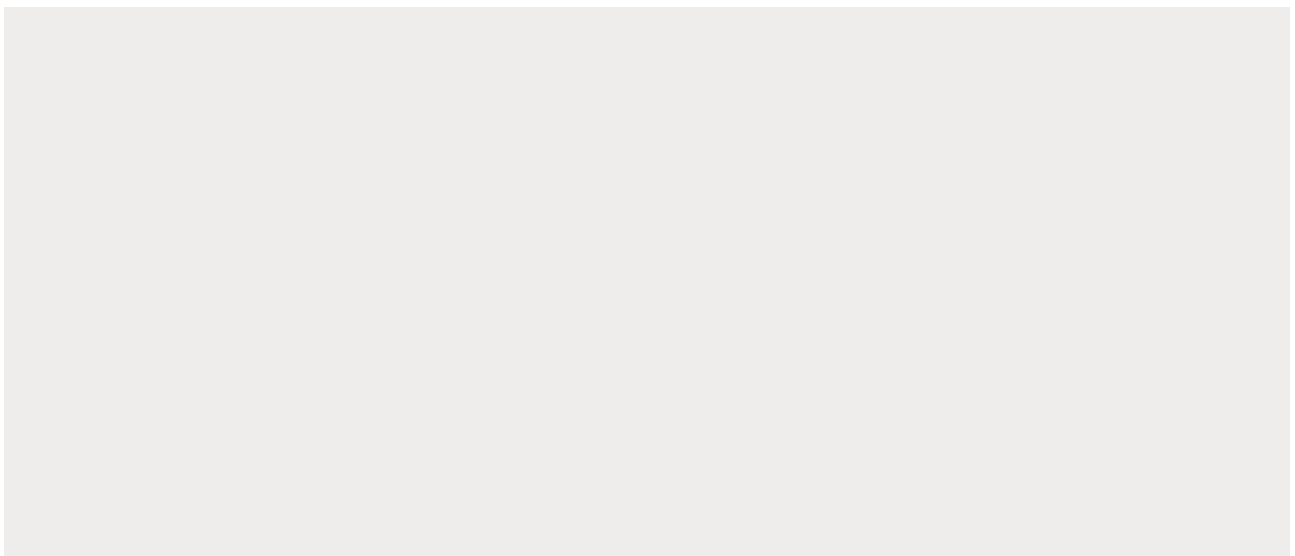


Activities that I can postpone or ask for help with:



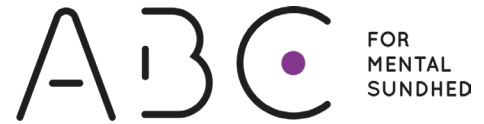
Your values:

1. What is important to you?
2. Are your values based on your own wishes and needs or those of others?
3. Can you remain true to your inner resources and your values?



What is good mental health for you?

What are your ABCs? Fill out the worksheet with those activities in A, B and C that matter most to you. This is your ABCs of mental health.



A Act: Do something active

B Belong: Do something with others

C Commit: Do something meaningful

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