



# SESSION 5



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## SELF-MANAGEMENT AND SELF-CARE

### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this session is to introduce the concept of self-management and self-care and to explore how individuals can manage their own wellbeing.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this session students should have:

- Good understanding of the concepts of self-management and self-care
- Awareness of the ways in which they can manage their emotions and maintain good mental health and wellbeing
- Developed an outline personal self-management and self-care plan



## SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

ACTIVITY	METHOD	MATERIALS
Welcome	Trainer led	
Connecting up	Group exercise: My mind apple	
Scott's story	Group exercise	Film
What keeps me well	Individual and group exercise	Feedback sheet
Strategies to manage emotions	Whole group exercise	Handout
My keeping mentally well plan	Individual exercise	
Reflection	Individual exercise	Worksheet

## INFORMATION

Self-management and self-care are central to recovery. In Session 3 we explored what helps recovery and looked at CHIME – connections, hope, identity, meaning and empowerment. A key part of recovery is moving towards an identity or sense of self that includes all aspects of our lives and us as people as well as mental health challenges and wellbeing. It is important to be able to make choices, take responsibility and therefore take ownership and be in control of our recovery and lives.



If we think back to Session 4 when we looked at how we experience a range of emotions. Emotions that make us feel agitated and worried can often feel very overwhelming and be overpowering. In many situations this can be disruptive to our lives and have an adverse impact on our mental health and wellbeing. Being able to influence what emotions we experience and when and how we experience them can help us to maintain good mental health and wellbeing. Self-management tools and approaches can help with this. This may also be called emotional regulation strategic and approaches.

The range of strategies, tools and approaches that people can use is very wide. Indeed, it is without limit. People are always looking for new ways to stay mentally well and developing their own ways to manage their mental health and wellbeing.

“Wellness is a conscious, deliberate process that requires a person to become aware of and make choices for a more satisfying lifestyle. A wellness lifestyle includes a self-defined balance of healthy habits such as adequate sleep and rest, productivity, exercise, participation in meaningful activity, nutrition, social contact and supportive relationships. It is important to note self-defined because everyone has individual needs and preferences, and the balance of activity, social contact, and sleep varies from person to person” (Swarbrick, 2011)

In her work Swarbrick identifies eight dimensions to wellbeing

DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION
Emotional	Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships
Financial	Satisfaction with current and future financial situations
Social	Developing a sense of connection, belonging and a well-developed support system



Spiritual	Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life
Occupational	Personal satisfaction and enrichment derived from one's work
Physical	Recognising the need for physical activity, diet, sleep and nutrition
Intellectual	Recognising creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills
Environmental	Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support wellbeing

This provides some indication of the range of factors that can affect our mental health and wellbeing. For some people some factors may be more important or more relevant than others but it is important that we acknowledge that there are many aspects to consider when managing our emotional wellbeing and taking control of our recovery.

## SELF-MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND APPROACHES

‘Recovery means I stay in the driver’s seat of my life. I don’t let my illness run me. Over the years I have worked hard to become an expert in my own self-care’ (Pat Deegan 1993)

There are many different ways that people can manage their own mental health and wellbeing and get in the ‘driver’s seat’. This is often called self-help or self-management. The terms can be interchangeable but refer to a wide range of opportunities such as self-help groups, self-management tools and other approaches developed by people to manage their wellbeing and take control of their recovery.



There are many different types of self-help groups. Some are run by organisations and others run by the members of the group themselves. Self-help groups are an opportunity for people to share their experiences and knowledge and offer social support in a community of people who have mutual trust and understanding.

There is also increasing emphasis at governmental and practice levels on the development of self-management tools and approaches. This has come with the recognition that better self-management can not only reduce the strain on pressurised services but also promotes a greater degree of self-direction and control amongst people experiencing mental health challenges.

Sometimes people use self-management skills without realising it but the skills can also be learnt on courses. Many organisations run courses which introduce one or more self-management tools or approaches and help people to develop self-management skills and the confidence to use them. Sometimes these courses are run by people with direct experience of mental health problems who are able to share their own skills and support others to develop their own self-management skills and approaches. There are also many online tools and groups, and an increasing range of smart apps which can help us manage our mood.

Examples of tools and approaches include:

### **WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Planning)**

A structured approach to developing a wellbeing plan built around five key concepts of hope, personal responsibility, education, self-advocacy and support. WRAP is a planning process that involves assessing self-management tools and resources and then using them to develop your own plans for staying well. This includes developing a personal wellness toolbox; a daily maintenance list; identifying early signs that things are breaking down and a crisis plan. WRAP is best experienced in a group environment which support mutual learning and emphasises that the group members are experts in themselves.

### **Mental body scanning**

Start in a comfortable position, eyes open or closed. Turn your focus to the different parts of your body and notice any sensation you feel while continuing



also focus on your breathing. Move from your toes on your feet, calves, knees, thighs, stomach, chest, shoulders, neck and your head. Take enough time for each body part and continue to breathe in a relaxed manner.

### **Journaling**

Take a few minutes each day to think about what happened that day and how you felt. Reflect on any thoughts and feelings you have been having and write them down.

### **SMART goal setting**

Set goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound. In other words, a goal that is very clear and easily understood.

### **Time management**

Spend time planning and organizing your activities. Organize in a way that makes sense to you. Prioritize tasks that are important for you.

### **Visualisation**

Create in your mind an ideal spot to relax. It can be real or imaginary. Imagine it in as much detail as you can – use your senses to make it as real as possible. Now close your eyes and take a slow breath in through your nose. Focus on your relaxation place in all its detail and breathe slowly.

### **STOP technique**

When you are feeling overwhelmed, stop and step back. Don't act immediately and instead pause. Take a breath and notice as you breathe in and out. Observe your feelings and thoughts. Put the situation in some perspective – try to see the situation as an outside observer.

### **Cognitive coping cards**

Try to identify some thoughts or actions that are helpful when you are feeling upset and write them on a card. It can be anything from reminders that the situation will pass, reminders of the skills that help you (e.g.: take a deep breath) or some calming thoughts. Use it when you are feeling overwhelmed.



### **Reattribution technique**

When you are feeling upset, stop and try to identify the thoughts are crossing your mind. Try to come up with alternative explanations of the events.

### **Attention refocusing**

When you notice yourself focusing on something that is unhelpful choose to refocus your attention elsewhere. Choose an activity that is interesting or challenging enough to engage your mind, such as reading or thinking about a pleasant memory. Many people get involved in activities such as gardening, art, crafts and sport as a way not only to enjoy themselves but also as a way of distracting themselves.

### **Take ten breaths**

Take ten slow, deep breaths. Focus on breathing out as slowly as possible until your lungs are completely empty, and then allow them to refill by themselves.

### **Worry time**

Schedule worry time each day for one week. Put it in your calendar. Start by setting aside 15-30 minutes during the morning or the afternoon. That will be your worry time. It is best not to schedule worry time right before you go to bed, for obvious reasons.

### **Observing your thoughts and letting go**

This guided mindfulness exercise takes you through a practice of observing your thoughts, letting them come and go without engaging with their content. It uses the metaphor of “placing” your thoughts visually on the sides of buses as they pull in and out of a bus stop.

In order to achieve the best results possible, it is important to practice these strategies regularly.

Underpinning self-management is the acknowledgement that you need to know you – what nurtures you, what your vulnerabilities are, how to re-energise yourself when you feel overwhelmed or depleted, what supports your sense of wellbeing and what gets in the way of it. It is only by getting to know you that you understand





how to care for yourself and identify the self-management tools and approaches that will work for you. Recovery recognises that we are all experts in our own experience. Tuning into your own knowledge and expertise rather than looking to others to tell you what you need is what can make self-management a reality.

