

AACE mental maintenance

Personalised Toolkit

ASSOCIATION OF AMBULANCE CHIEF EXECUTIVES

The Mental Maintenance Personalised Toolkit is inspired by Mary Ellen Copeland's Wellness Recovery Action Plan® (WRAP®), an evidence-based system used worldwide by people to manage their mental health.

The toolkit reminds us to live with intentionality when it comes to managing our mental health, helping us to create our own unique toolkit of approaches.

Through reminding ourselves what works and sharing our reflections with management, colleagues, family and friends we can help create understanding, facilitate conversation and develop our own support teams.

Your toolkit is confidential and is only shared or read by others with your permission.



This is what I am like when I feel my mental health is in a good place, both in and out of work

Examples may include feeling energised, having clarity, good humour etc.

When struggling with my mental health my work can be affected as I feel...

Examples may include tiredness, lack of concentration, feeling overwhelmed etc.

My mental maintenance approach

What I do to maintain my mental wellbeing

Examples may include grounding through breathing techniques, connecting with colleagues, preparing for shift, maintaining a balanced diet, getting fresh air.

At work:

For more information, help and ideas to support your mental health scan the QR code to visit the AACE website

Examples may include a self-care routine, exercise, planning your day, reading, mindfulness practice, connections with others.

At home:

My weekly mental maintenance approach...

Examples may include checking in with management and colleagues, preparing food for the week.

Examples may include weekly running club, coffee with a friend, gym three times a week.

My support team

Being aware of my support team in and out of work and utilising their support is an essential part of my mental maintenance.

Reflect on who your 'head, shoulders, knees and toes' supports are within work and in your personal life.



Heads

Who do I go to for support around worries/stress?



Shoulders

Who do I go to for a 'shoulder to cry on', for emotional support?



Knees

Who do I reach out for to have fun, relax and enjoy myself?



Toes

Who keeps me on my toes, what are my sources of motivation?

How my manager, colleagues, friends, and family can proactively support my mental maintenance...

Examples may include check ins, being available if struggling, opportunities to take a moment.

My triggers for increased levels of anxiety and/or low mood...

Examples may include managing multiple demands or dealing with difficult incidents.

Examples may include financial stressors, time pressures, difficult conversations, losses, physical health.

When triggered, I will manage my wellbeing by...

Examples may include using grounding techniques, being open, taking time out, reflecting on demands. Reminding myself of daily mental maintenance approaches.

Examples may include reflecting on self-care routine, talking to family/friends.

My early warning signs that I am starting to struggle with my mental wellbeing include...

Examples may include poor sleep, reduced appetite, low motivation.

Examples may include being tense, frustrated, lacking clarity.

What I plan to do to try and get back on track when I notice these early warning signs...

Examples may include talking to team lead or colleagues, reflecting on working day and proactive ways of managing.

How can my management, colleagues, family and friends support me if they notice any of these signs?

Examples may include time and space to reflect on challenges and problem solving.

At work:

Examples may include support to reflect on issues, talking through solutions.

At home:

Weekly Planner

Overthinking can trigger low mood, which can lead to avoidance, withdrawal and inactivity. These actions create a cycle of negativity. The first step to reversing the cycle is self-awareness.

Look at your week and bring in activities that give you a sense of achievement, connection and enjoyment. Beware of common mistakes such as aiming too high, having too high expectations, leaving too much to chance and not being flexible.

What gives you a sense of **Achievement?**	What activities create **Connection?**	Where do you find **Enjoyment?**
Ticking off items on a to-do list, working towards a goal, paying a bill, washing your clothes	Connect with others, three healthy meals, mindfulness, fitness	Watching TV, reading, hobbies

What I THINK and DO affects the way I feel

Sometimes actions and thoughts sustain our worries.

Sometimes we overthink to reduce the feeling of uncertainty. Seeking reassurance or avoidance can only repeat the cycle. It is important to take time to reflect. Writing down thoughts and talking them through with others can help.



Tips for overcoming overthinking

- **Recognise and label thoughts**
  For example a thought about finance or work.
  Recognise thoughts as just thoughts.
- **Action plan**
  If there is an identifiable and practical solution, write it down. If not, let the thought go by focusing on the moment via your breathing, and your senses.
  Learn mindfulness to deepen this skill.
- **Focus on the moment via your senses**
  See, hear, smell, taste and touch.
- **Postpone the worry**
  To a designated worry period later in the day or week.
- **Move forward and engage**
  Try and think outwardly.
- **Build a positive lifestyle**
  And the above will come more easily.
- **Talk about it** with others.

Writing down your thoughts, and recognising when and why you felt that way, helps you keep track of what symptoms you're having each day and identify what causes them:

What happened? What was the trigger?	**Initial thought?** What was the worry?	**Why it happened?** What were the conditions?	**How I reacted?** What actions did I take?	**What I learnt?** Do I have a better perspective?

The mental health continuum

A tool to self reflect on your wellbeing.

The mental health continuum is a tool which helps us to think about our wellbeing and what actions we can take to improve it. The mental health continuum helps us to identify where our mental health is now.

Mental health is not an all or nothing concept—it can change often. Mental health is affected by lots of things, such as work, home life, bereavement, ill health and more. Even positive things can affect our mental health, like the pressure after getting a promotion or the stress of a house move. We will all experience difficulties at some point during our life. A continuum is used to show that we can move between the different states of wellbeing: thriving, surviving, struggling and crisis.

How do I use the mental health continuum?

You can use the mental health continuum alone or with others. Use the tool to answer the question "thinking about your wellbeing in the past week, do you feel...".

By looking at the different statements you can assess your wellbeing. You do not have to agree with every statement to fit into a category. For example, you may be thriving socially despite feeling you are in crisis overall.

When you have thought about where you fit best, take action using the coloured boxes at the bottom of the tool.

We all experience times when we struggle or reach crisis. It is ok to not be ok. Your loved ones, employer and professionals can help.

Thinking about your wellbeing in the past week, do you feel...

	Thriving	Surviving	Struggling	In crisis
Emotional	**In good spirits with usual ups and downs** Able to cope with the stresses of daily life.	**Sometimes irritable, impatient, nervous or sad** Mostly able to cope with stresses of daily life.	**Often impatient, nervous or sad** Coping with the stresses of daily life is often hard.	**Angry, anxious, hopeless or always sad** Overwhelmed by the stresses of daily life.
Psychological	**Positive about life most of the time** A sense of purpose in life most of the time. No thoughts of suicide or fleeting thoughts of suicide.	**Positive about life some of the time** Unsure about your sense of purpose in life. Some thoughts of suicide with no plans to act on these.	**Negative about life some of the time** Disinterested or a sense that life lacks purpose sometimes. Thoughts of suicide and some planning related to these.	**Negative about life most of the time** Disinterested or that life lacks purpose most of the time. Thoughts of suicide and active plans to act on these.
Social	**Able to take part in social activities or hobbies as much as you'd like** Supported by family, friends and colleagues.	**Able to take part in social activities or hobbies sometimes** Supported by family, friends and colleagues to some extent.	**Rarely able to take part in social activities or hobbies** Disconnected from family, friends and colleagues.	**Mostly unable to take part in social activities or hobbies** Withdrawn from or avoiding family, friends and colleagues.
Physical	**Physically well for you** Considering your shift pattern* you are able to get quality rest and sleep. Able to do as much physical activity as you'd like within your usual capability.	**Mostly physically well** Aside from any disruption caused by shift pattern* your sleep is disturbed sometimes. Able to do some physical activity within your usual capability.	**Sometimes physically unwell** Aside from any disruption caused by shift pattern*, it is difficult getting quality rest and sleep. Unable to do much physical activity within your usual capability.	**Physically unwell** Aside from any disruption caused by shift pattern*, you are unable to get quality rest and sleep. Unable to do any physical activity within your usual capability.
Addiction	**You have not used addictive behaviours** (e.g. alcohol, substances, gambling, food) to cope	**You have rarely used addictive behaviours** (e.g. alcohol, substances, gambling, food) to cope	**You have sometimes used addictive behaviours** (e.g. alcohol, substances, gambling, food) to cope	**You frequently used addictive behaviours** (e.g. alcohol, substances, gambling, food) to cope
	Maintain your wellbeing Connect with others. Be physically active. Learn new skills. Give. Be present in the moment.	**Promote your wellbeing** Actively engage in coping techniques and self-care and engage in peer support and clinical supervision. Reflective practice—what are your support needs?	**Focus on your wellbeing** Connect with your line manager, employee support services or GP. Talk about how you are feeling. Consider trying a new coping technique.	**Prioritise your wellbeing** Prioritise asking for support from employee support services, The Ambulance Staff Charity, your GP, or in an emergency 999 (you're a person too, 999 is there for you).

*if you have one

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NHS
North East Ambulance Service
NHS Foundation Trust

Thank you to North East Ambulance Service for developing and sharing these materials with the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives for dissemination and use across the UK NHS ambulance sector.