Your personal plan for Psychological PPE

Stressful situations, like the current pandemic, can trigger our threat system. It is likely that this could leave us feeling physically and emotionally exhausted, finding social situations difficult, and reaching for unhelpful coping strategies to keep us going. We can learn to calm our threat system and look after our psychological wellbeing with some Psychological PPE. This page shows examples of different signs of stress, using a traffic light system. You can then use the traffic light system to help you identify your own warning signs, and start to apply some skills to calm your threat system.

This plan was created based on: NHS education for Scotland (2020) ‘Psychological First Aid’ and the Nightingale Hospital London (2020) ‘Psychological PPE skills station plan’.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Wellbeing warning light** | **Physical health and body** | **Emotions / feelings** | **Social** |
| **Green****I’m managing well** | * Sleeping well
* Feeling rested
* Eating and drinking as normal
* Exercising as you usually would
* Feeling physically well
 | * Feeling mentally well
* Feeling able to manage daily stresses and worries
* Being able to concentrate
* Feeling interest and enjoyment in leisure activities
 | * Regular and meaningful contact with friends and family
* Feeling connected with your work colleagues
* Regular opportunities for catch-ups
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| **Amber****I’m noticing early warning signs** | * Not sleeping well
* Feeling more tired than usual
* Starting to reach for higher energy foods or drinks such as caffeine or energy drinks
* Reduced physical activity, possibly due to feeling more tired than usual
 | * Starting to feel anxious, low, sad, frustrated or angry frequently
* Struggling to manage difficult feelings
* Finding it hard to concentrate on work
* Struggling to switch off from work when you go home
 | * Starting to feel disconnected from colleagues or loved ones
* Reduced social contact
* Opting not to join check in’s or virtual catch-ups
* Withdrawing from loved ones
 |
| **Red****I’m feeling burnt out** | * Severely disrupted or no sleep
* Feeling exhausted
* Feeling physically slowed down or lethargic
* Relying on high energy foods or alcohol to manage
* No energy to exercise
 | * Experiencing overwhelming emotions almost all of the time
* Becoming angry or ‘snapping’
* Feeling unable to cope
* Unable to switch off from thoughts
* Not able to concentrate on work at all
 | * Feeling completely isolated from friends, family or colleagues
* Completely cut off from social contact
* Avoiding or dreading any social contact
 |



During work

* Give yourself permission to take breaks.
* Eat and drink well.
* Pace yourself.
* Focus your attention on what you can control.
* Notice when your stress response is becoming triggered.
* Check in regularly with colleagues.
* Work with colleagues or a buddy where possible.
* Keep up social contact with friends and family in breaks.

Here are some general tips for work and home, and some useful psychological PPE skills.

Have you tried any already? Which ones might be helpful for you?

Some of the skills are explained in more detail on the next pages.

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Do what works for you – use the helpful coping skills you’ve used in the past

Tense and relax

Leaving work

* Check in with yourself – ask ‘Am I ok?’
* Figure out what steps you need to take to be ok.
* Take a moment to yourself, tell yourself ‘today’s shift is over, I have done what I can’.
* Reflect on the day. How do you feel now? What went well today?
* Switch your attention to home and time to recharge and rest.
* Connect with colleagues before going home. Have a group check-in. Reflect on the day together.

Count backwards from 20 in your head

At home

* Try and keep a work-life balance. Have activities you know will help you relax or have fun.
* Prioritise rest, exercise and eating.
* Keep to a routine. A wind-down routine after work or before bed is especially helpful.
* Take time to mentally switch off from work.
* Keep in contact with friends and family.
* Keep doing activities that are important to you.

90 second rule

Stretching or Yoga

Grounding: face in cold water

Play **Tetris**

Mindfulness

The 5 4 3 2 1-grounding technique

Breathing exercises

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Wellbeing warning light** | **Signs and symptoms** | **Self-care actions I can use** |
| **Green** |  | Things I do to keep myself well day-to-day |
| **Amber** | My own early warning signs  |  |
| **Red** | What I notice when I’m feeling burnt out |  |



**Situations / things that cause me distress**

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**Now create your own plan for Psychological PPE**

1. First, it’s useful to know the things that cause you distress.
2. Try and identify the signs that indicate whether you’re in Green, Amber or Red.
3. Think of self-care and wellbeing strategies that can help you at each stage. Focus on the things you know work for you and then add some of the strategies from the training.