



# Manual

Take Charge of your Mental Health



Open  
Mental  
Health

**sasp**  
Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership

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## WHO IS THIS MANUAL FOR?

You don't have to be at your lowest to use this guide – it's all about taking charge of your mental health. Think of it like this: if your car gets a flat tyre, you wouldn't wait for all four tyres to blow before doing something about it. Sometimes, we just need to make small tweaks in different areas of our lives to stay on track and keep our mental health in check. Don't wait for things to get worse before you make a change to improve them!

This manual is separated into 4 different themes:

- Control
- Purpose
- Emotions
- Change

There are interactive elements throughout for you to reflect on yourself as well as actionable steps you can take to improve and sustain your mental health.

# SECTION 1: CONTROL

Whilst the situation you are in isn't always your fault, you have the power to take responsibility and make a difference. Nobody can make as big of a difference as **YOU**.

Good mental health isn't just something you have automatically – it's something you've gotta put work into, just like your physical health or finances. It takes effort and some upkeep, and sometimes that means making small sacrifices now for bigger rewards later. Some things, like eating junk food, might feel good in the moment, but they might not be the best for you long term. Just like with food, you can still enjoy those things, but it's smart to be mindful of it.

A lot of stuff in life is out of our control, but focusing on what we can do better gives us a sense of direction and puts us in the driver's seat for what to do next.

## THINGS WE HAVE CONTROL OVER:

- Sleep
- Environmental change
- Personal boundaries
- Social connection
- Limiting alcohol/drug use
- Getting outdoors
- Exercise
- Diet
- Stress management

Trying to fix everything all at once can feel like too much, but making small changes here and there can really start to lift your mood and your situation. Think about which one of these things you might be neglecting or could easily tweak. Don't let the idea of 'perfect' stop you from making progress – a lot of people hold back because they don't know exactly where to start. Even small improvements are worth celebrating. Little changes, bit by bit, can add up to big results. Think of a drop of water dripping onto a rock, initially insignificant but over time will create grooves, and completely reshape that rock.

# THINGS WE CAN CONTROL TO...

## IMPROVE SLEEP



- Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day
- Create a bedtime routine
- Limit screen time, caffeine, and alcohol in the evening
- Keep your bedroom cool and dark
- Exercise, and get sunlight during the day (especially mornings)
- limit naps

## REDESIGN YOUR ENVIRONMENT



- Declutter/organise your immediate environment
- Consider including some natural light or some plants
- Create boundaries between where you work and rest
- Sometimes a change of environment can help, be that just going for a walk or spending some time somewhere else



## SOCIAL CONNECTIONS



- Start small: Say hello, compliment someone, or chat with a coworker.
- Join a group or club: Find a hobby or interest group.
- Attend social events: Look for local meetups, festivals, or parties.
- Volunteer: Connect with others while giving back.
- Reconnect with old friends: Reach out with a simple “how have you been?”
- Take up a class: Learn something new while meeting people.
- Be open and approachable: Smile, make eye contact, and ask questions.
- Schedule regular meet-ups: Set up weekly hangouts with friends or family.
- Use social media wisely: Join groups or forums of interest and engage.
- Say yes more: Accept invitations to push yourself out of your comfort zone.
- Practice active listening: Show genuine interest in others.
- Join a face to face unbreakable men group in your area!

## ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE



- For more information and or help with alcohol/ drug related issues please visit the somerset drug and alcohol service (SDAS) website where there is also a self referral link.
- <https://www.turning-point.co.uk/services/somerset>



## GETTING OUTDOORS IN NATURE



Nature positively affects mental health by reducing stress, improving mood, and clearing the mind. Spending time outdoors lowers stress hormones, boosts happiness, and helps with anxiety and depression. It encourages physical activity, mindfulness, and a sense of calm. Regular exposure to nature, like walking, hiking, or sitting outside, enhances well-being and resilience.

Think about how you can link getting outdoors with some of the other sections of this manual - volunteering? litter picking, socialising?, physical activity, stress management

## WORK ON PERSONAL BOUNDARIES



### **‘Put your oxygen mask on before helping others’**

- Identify your limits (learn what feels good and what feels draining)
- Learn to say no - sometimes putting others before you can lead to burnout and you can end up resentful to them
- Don't always ignore your own needs to please others - make sure you are in a good space before you take on others problems
- Learn to recognise when you are taking on too much emotionally and take a step back



## EXERCISE



It is not easy to think your way out of overthinking, so sometimes it is useful to have a physical outlet like exercise.

Regular exercise helps in so many ways; adding structure to your days and weeks, setting and achieving goals, improving self-esteem, improving your ability to create habits and discipline.

Exercise releases endorphins in the brain, making it a natural antidepressant. It also can help with increasing social interaction, increasing energy, can improve sleep, and is a great tool for blowing off some steam.

Start small and gradually build it up. Set the bar for success low to start. For example aim to just get out of the house each day for a walk rather than hitting a 10,000 step target. It is easier to build a habit and then perfect it, so make getting out for a walk as part of your routine consistently the goal initially before increasing the distance.

Sports can really help to improve social life as well as feeling part of a team, or club and being able to improve a skill over time can help give focus and improve self esteem.



## EXERCISE (CONTINUED)



A common barrier to exercise is thinking that you have to do loads for it to be worthwhile. Remember that doing anything is still better than nothing.

Try to work up to hopefully reach the physical activity guidelines in the UK. But remember something is better than nothing!



A chunk of this target could be achieved by coming to an unbreakable men group. See if there is one in your area at <https://www.sasp.co.uk/unbreakable-men>

### DIET



Asides from the chance to change and improve your physique, good nutrition can improve many areas of day to day function such as energy levels, mood, sleep, brain power.

Improving nutrition doesn't need to be revolutionary, and it doesn't always just mean removing things from your diet. It is just as important to discover things you could include to become healthier, and feel better.

This could be ensuring you eat more fruit, veg, pulses, healthy fats, and just whole foods in general.

Ideally aiming for eating a majority unprocessed food diet. A good target is 80% unprocessed, but if this feels too difficult initially just aim to increase this percentage over time.

Aiming to drink more water each day, this can be made easier by starting each day with a glass of water, having a water bottle, setting reminders to drink, flavouring it with squash.

Learn to cook or practice new recipes , there has never been an easier time to learn a new skill with thousands of tutorials online and on YouTube.

A goal of making sure you are eating something no matter how small at regular points throughout the day in some routine can be an improvement

Even something as simple as adding dried seasoning to foods can improve the nutritional quality of meals as well as making them more enjoyable.

If you require some further guidance with diet or physical activity ask your doctors surgery if you can book in with a health and wellbeing coach or if you are in Somerset self refer here: <https://www.sasp.co.uk/health-coaching-service>



## SECTION 2: PURPOSE

Chasing purpose rather than happiness provides stability, as it can offer longer lasting fulfilment. Happiness can be fleeting and dependent on circumstances, making it a more fragile ambition.

### Purpose can create resilience

**“He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.”**

A true sense of purpose can help you to push through difficult times, and help you to bounce back from adversity. Purpose can also help to navigate uncertainty, and assist with direction in life.

Purpose often aligns with your core values, take a moment to consider what is important to you, this could be anything for example, family / nature / sport / humour/ supporting others Living true to your personal values makes you live more authentically which is crucial for mental stability.

Think about what you feel passionate about and what interests you both now and in the past, think also of things you have done that you feel proud of and see what really resonates with you. If you are struggling to come up with these interests then consider stepping outside of your comfort zone, and explore some different opportunities. Consider volunteering or just giving your time to others or other causes. Giving back can really help with improving self worth whilst also having a positive impact on our relationships and surroundings.

Try visualizing an ideal day in your life in the future, consider what sort of person you wish to be and who you have around you, as well as how you spend your time and look for the obvious discrepancies with your current existence.



Have a go at listing things you are interested in and what your strengths are as an individual, this can help point you in the right direction.

## Interests

## Strengths


If you can't think of things for yourself try writing what you think others would say about you instead.

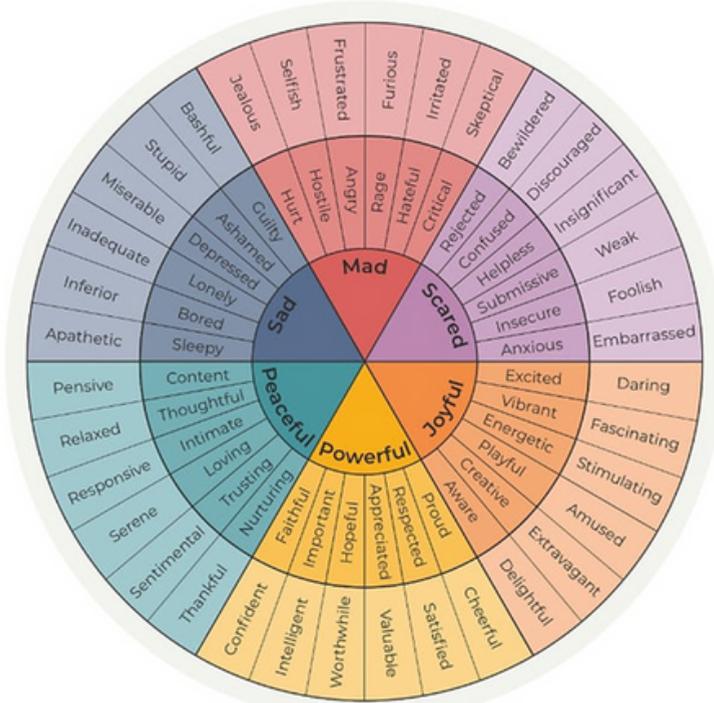
**If you don't know your strengths, think about what you would like to be able to write in that column and work on improving them little by little.**



# SECTION 3: HANDLING EMOTIONS

Recognise and name your emotions to better understand them. Pay attention to physical and mental cues, and identify the cause, such as "I feel anxious about tomorrow's presentation." Avoid suppressing emotions, as this can intensify them. Acknowledging your feelings helps you process and manage them effectively.

**Look at this graphic below** and try to identify true emotions and see how easily they can be misunderstood by ourselves. Being able to identify and label our emotions can help us to be able to understand and express them with greater emotional intelligence.



Practice separating behaviours from emotions - Emotions can drive behaviors that reinforce your mood (being sad – less likely to socialize – perpetuate bad mood) or result in you misdirecting emotions such as anger at people close to you.

## TASK

Think about recent situation where you reacted quickly and perhaps irrationally. It is something we all do, be it road rage or feeling wronged by someone. Consider how you could have reframed the situation in a way that makes it feel less personal, or less destructive and work through these 6 steps.

### Reframing negative emotions

1. **Acknowledge the emotion:** Recognize and accept what you're feeling without judgement.
2. **Identify the trigger:** Pinpoint the situation or thought causing the emotion.
3. **Challenge negative thoughts:** Question the accuracy of negative beliefs and consider alternative perspectives.
4. **Find a positive angle:** Look for lessons, growth opportunities, or silver linings in the situation.
5. **Practice gratitude:** Focus on what is going well to shift your mindset.
6. **Take constructive action:** Use the emotion as motivation to make positive changes.

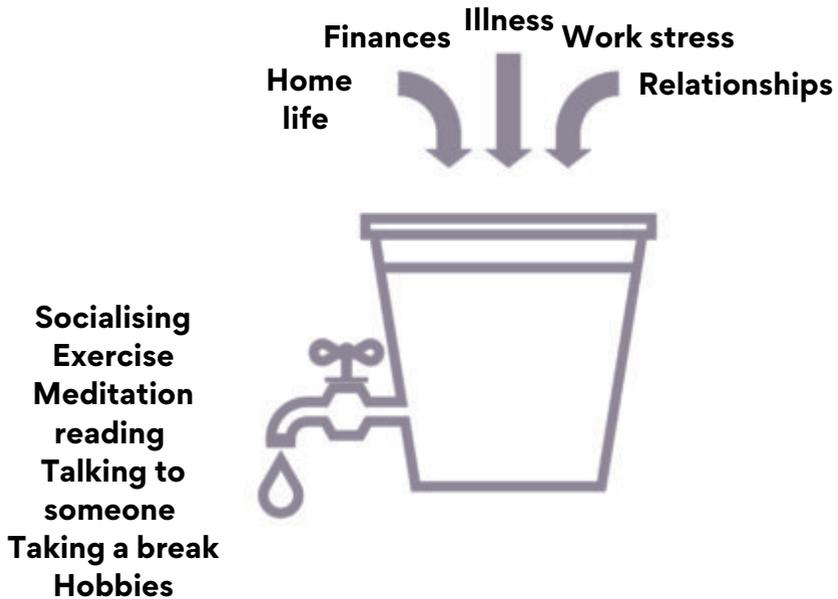
Using this framework in the moment takes a lot of practice but it can be a really useful tool in improving your day to day wellbeing and resilience.

You may not feel like you can do this in this moment it is okay to sit and think about it and keep it in mind in the future and revisit this section.



# STRESS MANAGEMENT

The stress bucket illustrates how stress accumulates in our lives. The bucket represents our capacity to handle stress, while the water symbolizes stressors such as work, personal issues, or health problems. When the bucket fills up, it indicates rising stress levels, and if it overflows, it leads to burnout or overwhelm. To manage stress, we can either reduce stressors (reducing the input) or by letting some water out of the bucket, this is done by actively finding ways that you can de stress.



**Remember: everyone has a different sized bucket / capacity for stress and that is okay.**

## TASK

Spend some time considering what is filling up your bucket (stressors) and how will you empty it (coping mechanisms).



Stressors

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De-stressors



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## PLANNING FOR A CRISIS

Sometimes our mental health can spiral and things can feel impossible to manage. It is a good idea to plan for these scenarios, having an action plan ready can make these lows feel slightly more manageable. Start with writing down the warning signs you experience prior to a crisis, for some people this manifests as breathing quicker, or feeling knots in the stomach. Planning can just be things like writing down healthy coping mechanisms, such as slow controlled breathing as well as contacts to call be that a professional, or a friend.

**Numbers for mindline Somerset:**

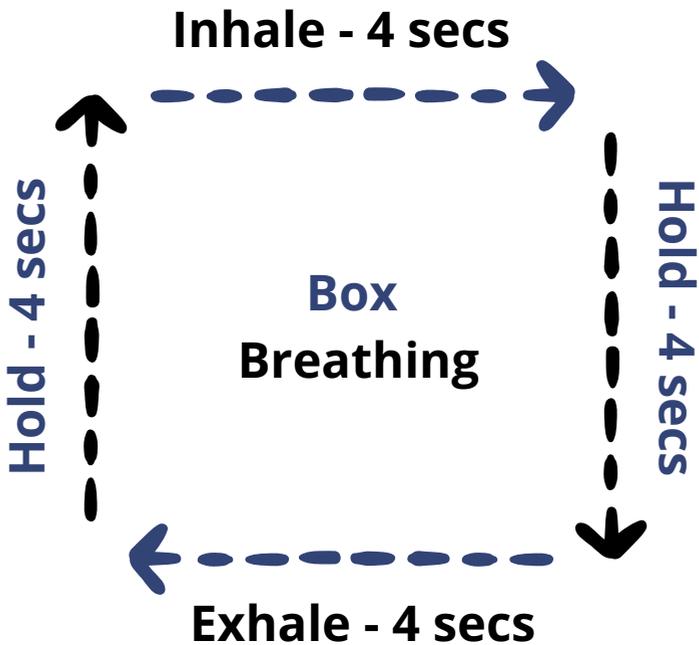
**01823 276 892**

**0800 138 1692**

**There is also a crisis button on the Unbreakable Men app**

## TASK

Try this breathing exercise below and see how it makes you feel - repeat as many times as you like.



## TIP

Treat yourself and your problems like you would if a close friend came to you with those problems. We often hold ourselves to a higher standard than we do anybody else.



# SECTION 4: CHANGE

## Set Your Goals

These can be set within the groups or can be individual goals.

Make sure they are realistic try and achieve each day and use the tick boxes to track progress

Set as many or as few as you want to:

Try and set one physical, one emotional, and one lifestyle...

## Examples

Reducing screen time -  
specifically - turn phone  
off 1 hour before bed...

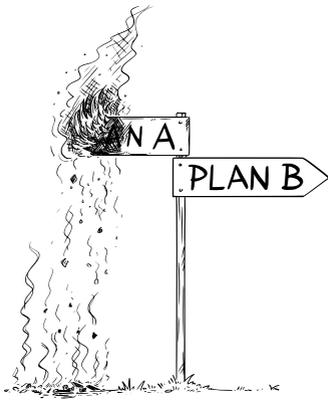
Drink 2L of  
water a day

Write down something that  
you are grateful for each day

Go for a 10 minute  
walk each day

## Plan for Failure

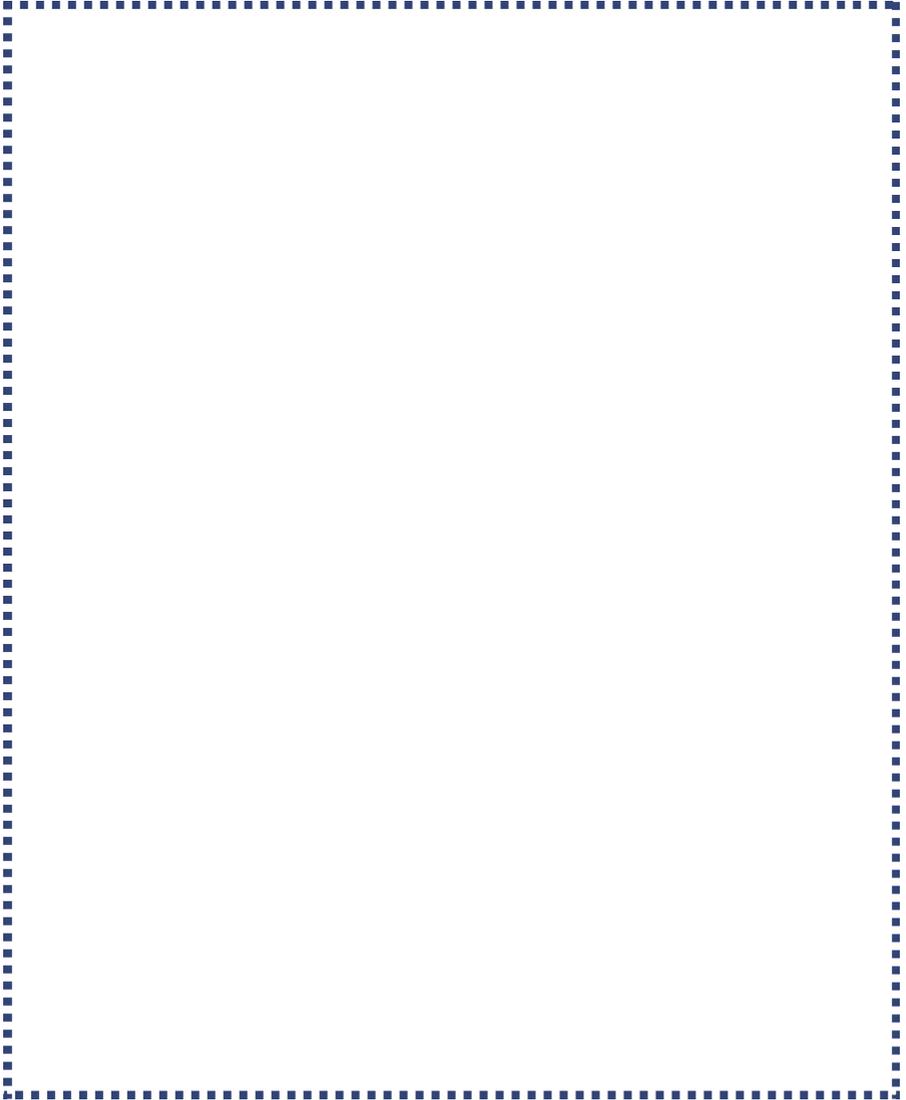
It is difficult to maintain habits forever, if you slip up be it for a day, or a week try not to give up completely but instead get back on track as soon as possible.





## SECTION 4

Use this space to write about the challenges you undertook and what the effect of them were for you:

A large rectangular area defined by a dashed blue border, intended for writing. The border consists of small, evenly spaced blue dots forming a continuous line around the perimeter of the space.

# USEFUL LINKS

**Mind infoline:** Information on types of mental health problems, where to get help, and more at **0300 123 3393**

**Samaritans:** 24/7 emotional support at **116 123**

**Shout:** 24/7 confidential crisis text support at **85258**

**You can also call NHS 111, which is available 24 hours a day.**

If you are concerned about developing a mental health problem, you should seek the advice of your GP.

## What to expect when calling mindline



**01823 276 892**

**0800 138 1692**

Mindline is a confidential listening service which provides a safe place to talk if you, or someone you know, is in distress. They also give basic information about mental health and local support services.

The listeners treat all callers, regardless of background, in a non-judgmental way with dignity and respect.

They do not trace calls and your number will not display on the phones. They will not ask for personal details to be shared unless you or someone you know would like them to find immediate help from other services for you or them and that you agree to giving it. They will not pass on any information unless you have said it is ok to do so.



# YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Taking care of your mental wellbeing is a journey, and Unbreakable Men is here to support you every step of the way.

Scan the QR code below to access our resources, our Unbreakable Men app, Facebook community, and next in-person sessions in your area.



[www.sasp.co.uk/  
unbreakable-men](http://www.sasp.co.uk/unbreakable-men)

Download on the App Store  
and Google Play Store today!

