



Queen Victoria Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Wellbeing in Hospital



We understand that being in hospital can be stressful physically, emotionally and financially. Changes in your physical health can be frightening, and bring up questions about your future.

Being in hospital can mean that you do not have a familiar environment where you feel comfortable. It might also be more difficult to use the same ways of coping with difficulties as you do when you are at home. It is understandable that whilst in hospital you can feel more worried or stressed than usual or feel depressed.

The ideas in this leaflet are to help you whilst you are at Queen Victoria Hospital. There is a space for you to write down your own ideas about what can help you.



## Why do I feel this way?

Anxiety, sadness, frustration, anger and stress are human emotions. These are emotions which let you know that something is happening which might be harmful in some way so that you can respond to the situation. When you feel this way, your brain and body send signals to each other which help prepare you to run away from danger, or to fight it. This is why you feel physical changes such as increasing heart rate, shortness in breath and tension in your body.

When you feel anxious you tend to be 'on alert' which means you look out for the things which might be dangerous or negative in some way and you also underestimate our own abilities to cope. This is how your mind tries to look out for you so that you can prepare. However, it can leave you feeling worried, low in mood and stuck.



*Here is some space you can use to write down some of your worries.*

## Managing Pain

When your body is hurt, the nerve cells in that area send a signal through the nerves to the spinal cord and then up to the brain. This is like an alarm system. Pain is normal and has helped humans to survive so far because it warns you of danger and keeps you safe. Pain is never just "in your body" or "in your head" alone, but is an interaction between your mind and body. The signal enters the processing centre in the middle of your brain. It then goes to the emotion centre and to the thoughts centre in the front of your brain. As the signal is processed you develop thoughts and emotions.

The ideas below may also be useful to help with managing pain, as well as supporting your emotional wellbeing in hospital.

## What can help?

### Grounding Techniques



Grounding techniques can be very useful when you feel really distressed, particularly when the distress makes you feel very unreal or detached, or it feels like we are in a different situation to where we really are.

Use **5,4,3,2,1**: Think about 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch (and touch them), 2 things you can smell or like the smell of, and 1 slow, deep breath.

**Look** around the room, notice the colours, the people, the shapes of things. Make it more real.

**Listen** to and really notice the sounds around you: the traffic, voices, washing machine, music etc.

**Notice your body**, the boundary of your skin, how your clothes feel on your skin, movement in your hair as you move your head, really feel the chair or floor supporting you - how that feels in your feet, your legs, your body.

If you can, stand up and put your feet firmly on the ground

**Move about**: stretch, stamp your feet, jump up and down, dance, run on the spot, rub your arms and legs, clap your hands, walk, remind yourself where you are right now.

Carry a **grounding object** with you. Some people carry a stone or other small object, perhaps one which has personal meaning, to comfort and touch when you need to.

## Breathe Mindfully

Breathe deeply down to your belly; put your hand there and breathe so that your hand gets pushed up and down. Imagine you have a balloon in your tummy, inflating it as you breathe in, and deflating as you breathe out. When you get scared, you breathe too quickly and shallowly and your body begins to panic because you are not getting enough oxygen. This causes dizziness, shakiness and more panic. Breathing more slowly and more deeply will stop the panic.

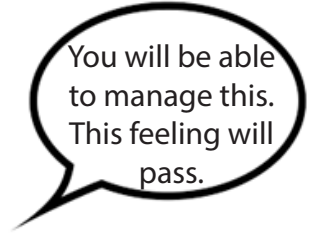
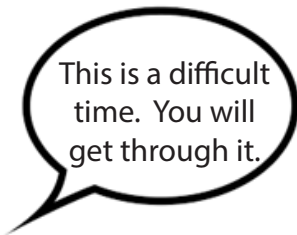
## Talk to others

Speaking to your friends or family on the phone or to a member of the staff team about how you are feeling can help you to feel more supported.

## Managing difficult thoughts and emotions

Trying to “get rid” of distressing thoughts and feelings is very hard, and unlikely to work. This is because they are an understandable reaction to the difficulties you are experiencing. Instead, give yourself permission to feel whatever emotion you are feeling and think about how you might respond to these feelings in this situation.

- What would you say to a friend in this situation? How would you help them to feel supported?



*Here is some space to write down some reassuring and encouraging phrases which can help you to cope.*

## Distraction techniques

- Activities such as reading, colouring, watching TV can help.
- Talk to your friends or family on the phone.
- Focus attention outside of you – external rather than internal focus
- Try to **think about different things**, almost like playing mental games, for example: count backwards in 7s from 100, think of 10 different animals, 10 blue things, one animal or country for each letter of the alphabet, say the alphabet slowly, say the alphabet backwards, etc.

*Distraction techniques I can try are...*

## Finding out information and asking questions

It is important that you ask your medical team questions about your treatment so that you understand what to expect. Worries can often arise when you feel you do not fully understand something or that you have unanswered questions.

It is important that you feel you understand what options there are and what the pros and cons are for each option. Please ask these questions so that you can think about what the best decision is for you and what support you might need.

It can be easy to forget what you want to ask and so we have made some space here for you to write any questions

Questions I would like to ask my doctor are...  
Eg – what are the options? What are the pros and cons?

## Free Apps



WorryTree: aims to help you take control of worry wherever you are.



Feeling Good: relax your body and mind with a series of audio tracks designed to help you build confidence, energy and a positive mindset.



Stress & Anxiety Companion: helps you handle stress and anxiety on-the-go. Using breathing exercises, relaxing music and games designed to calm the mind, the app helps you change negative thoughts to help you better cope with life's ups and downs.



Calm Harm: designed to help people resist or manage the urge to self-harm. It is private and password protected.

These are some of the apps which are recommended within the in the NHS App library. The apps are assessed against a range of NHS standards. More information can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/>

We hope these ideas are helpful for you.

If you have any questions or feel you require further support, then please contact The Department of Psychological Therapies

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Please ask if you  
would like this leaflet  
in larger print or an  
alternative format.

Psychological therapies

Issue 1 – Ref 0179

Approved by the Patient Information Group

Print February 2021 – Review February 2024

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