

Your Psychological First Aid Kit: Emotional Wellbeing - Transcript



Welcome to the first module in our series, which aims to help you consider how you can look after yourself and those around you to help each other stay well.

Being kind to yourself is just as important as being kind to others. We all have mental health and like our physical health, our mental health varies and can be affected by what's going on around us. You probably have a first aid kit somewhere at work with a range of things in it to meet different physical needs.

This series aims to help you consider a similar approach to your mental health and wellbeing, your psychological first aid kit. In this module, we are going to focus on your emotional wellbeing, Understanding what can affect your emotional wellbeing, and some of the things you can do to improve it are great tools to have in your psychological first aid kit, but what do we mean when we talk about your emotional wellbeing and why is that important to have in your psychological first aid kit?

Having good emotional wellbeing means you're aware of your own abilities. You can cope with the normal stresses and strains life throws at you. You're able to work productively and feel you can make a meaningful contribution to your community. There are always going to be situations which might threaten your emotional wellbeing, which is why it's so important to understand what you can do to look after yours.

We base our understanding of emotional wellbeing on something called the Bio-psychosocial model. That's a bit of a mouthful, so let's break it down into three nice easy chunks, biological, psychological, and social. These three aspects interact, influence how we feel in just about any situation. First, you have biological factors. These could be things like genetics or your physical health. Next, you have psychological factors. These could be things like your emotions or coping mechanisms. Finally, you have social factors. These could be things like your social environment or the availability of good social support. Understanding why these biological, psychological, and social factors matter puts you in a better position to see how adverse situations might affect you and identify ways to minimise this impact. Spending more energy, focusing on the things within your control and less on the things out with your control is one of the ways we can manage.

It might sound obvious, but your emotions are a key part of your emotional wellbeing. Let's consider this further. We all have emotions. What varies between us is how much we express them. Some of us like to share how we're feeling with those around us, whereas others are more inclined to keep quiet and keep things bottled up. Sharing Our feelings helps us connect

with others at happy times and access support when we're troubled. If you are not someone who naturally feels comfortable sharing how you're feeling, that doesn't mean you need to change your personality in order to look after your wellbeing. Some of us are more self-contained, and that's okay. Talking isn't the only way to express emotions. We can do this on our own through writing and other forms of expression. There are a couple of things that are important to understand about emotions which will help us cope with the more difficult ones. Firstly, emotions come and go. Remembering that they are temporary experiences gives us a better chance of coping with the painful ones, and secondly, understanding that you are not defined by your emotions is an essential step in learning to manage them.

Now, let's think about two specific aspects of personality which are important when it comes to experiencing and expressing emotions, rumination and emotional inhibition. Rumination is the tendency to worry about or repeatedly think over past events and worry about the future. This can be a risky tendency to have as while we are worrying and ruminating, we are staying quite emotionally and psychologically wound up. Emotional inhibition is a tendency to bottle up your emotions. It doesn't mean that you're feeling any less emotional. It just means you're less prone to sharing or expressing these emotions. If you are someone who's prone to ruminating and you also tend to bottle up your emotions, then you can see why that might be a bit risky. You have all these emotions churning over, but you're not getting any release from that. As we said earlier in the module, we all express our emotions differently, and we all have our own natural way of dealing with our emotions. The important thing here is to understand and recognise your own way and having a think if there is anything you want to tweak. If you are a ruminator, perhaps doing something that engages your brain to interrupt the circular nature of worrying about the worry. If you are emotionally inhibited, you could consider writing your thoughts down or do an activity that helps release some of your tensions.

How inhibited or open you are with how you're feeling can be heavily influenced by those around you and how you think they may react. If you think back to the bio-psychosocial model, you'll remember how important social factors are. It's common for people working in caring professions to report that stigma around mental health prevents them from seeking support. Sometimes this is because there may be an assumption that as people who resolve problems for others, they shouldn't be seen to have problems themselves. Other times, it can come from a fear that admitting to mental health difficulties may impact your career prospects or lead to ridicule within your organisation. Sometimes people experience what we call self-stigma. This is where you feel ashamed of difficulties you may be going through, whether you experience stigma from yourself or from others. The more we talk about how we're feeling and the more we understand mental health and wellbeing, the more likely we are to reach out for support when we need it. In order to best support yourself and others, you need to show yourself some compassion. So before moving on to the next module in this series, why not take a few minutes to complete the [reflective exercise](#), which accompanies this module, encouraging you to identify some of the positives in your life.