

Your Psychological First Aid Kit:

Your PFA Kit - Transcript



Welcome to the third 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 the same approach to your mental health, your psychological first aid kit. In this module, we're going to focus on some of the things which may already be in your psychological first aid kit, which you can draw on when times get tough, as well as some of the tools you might want to add.

Firstly, let's have a think about some of the things which may already be in your kit. These are things which have the potential to improve how you experience your work environment. We know that having a sense of pride and doing a job that matters is a big part of this as is getting a sense of satisfaction from your role and being able to help others, as well as doing a job which is based on professional and often personal ethic and values. Staying true to your sense of what is right and good.

When you sign up for a role, you have a good idea of what's likely to be involved and you expect to get appropriate training. Understanding your role and feeling confident that you can do it well is very important. When emergencies come in this allows you to focus on your own role without becoming overwhelmed by the emotion of the situation. Now let's think about those around you and the role they can play in helping you stay well at work. Trusting the skills of your colleagues allows you to focus on your own role instead of worrying about others and feeling valued and respected alongside valuing and respecting others around you helps keep you motivated.

Social support is important. We're social creatures and we need other people. Camaraderie with your colleagues is a big protective factor in challenging times. Communication is key. Being able to speak to your colleagues to raise concerns, share successes, or just let off some steam allows you to develop a bond and feel you've got their support should you need it.

Interestingly, research tells us that the perception of having support can have a strong an effect on your wellbeing as actually receiving support. This suggests that just knowing that that support is there should you need it can be a big bonus. So don't be afraid to make use

of those supportive relationships. It can be hard to seek help when you're used to being the one in a helping role, but it's important to reach out to others when you need it. Humour has a place here too. It can be a great way of releasing pressure and giving you perspective. Just make sure it's not being used to mock or bully anyone.

Now let's have a think about some of the things you can do to bolster your psychological first aid kit. These are the things that you can add and although they're often personal to you, research tells us there are particular things you can add to yours that can help you through the tough times. These are known as the Five Ways to Wellbeing and they were developed by the New Economics Foundation. Let's go through them one at a time and have a think about how you can add each of them to your psychological first aid kit.

Being close to and feeling a sense of belonging with others is something we all need. Time can be a challenge, but catching up with colleagues at some point of the day is good for us. Have a conversation rather than sending an email, ask how their weekend was. Share a lift to work or go for a walk with colleagues. When you get a chance, even just stopping for a coffee will bring you together. Regular physical activity is good for us. Exercise helps reduce stress and adrenaline while increasing feel good hormones. It's also associated with lower rates of anxiety and depression. Exercise doesn't need to be strenuous. The important thing is to find a routine that works for you, staying active, whatever your level of physical ability. Although exercise is a great tool to have in your kit, it can sometimes be difficult to do due to competing responsibilities, injuries, or ill health, so it's good to have other things in there to call on too.

Taking notice is all about being in the moment, appreciating the small things, maybe getting outside or writing down your thoughts, being present in the moment, calms your stress response and interrupts any tendency you might have to ruminate over what's happened to you in the past or what might happen in the future. Try to take a few minutes to practise slow breathing while you're walking to and from work, or when you stop to make lunch or a cup of tea.

Learning keeps us mentally active. Setting goals assists us with higher levels of wellbeing. You could take up a new hobby, sign up for a class, or do a crossword puzzle. Any kind of learning helps slow down cognitive decline, and remember learning and developing new skills at work builds confidence and competence.

Helping Others is great for our wellbeing. Acts of kindness, create and strengthen connections between people as well as helping us feel better about ourselves. They don't need to be big gestures. Saying hello to a stranger or helping a neighbour with a task can go a long way. This is all about showing others the compassion you would like to be shown and your role, whether supporting or having an active role in working with others will help you stay well too. Thank you for taking the time to complete this module. Hopefully it has helped you consider some of the things which can help you stay well when things get tough.