

A personal health and well-being plan for family, friends and carers

Version 1

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Supporting someone you care about who has mental health problems can easily take over your whole life. It is tempting to think only of their needs and ignore your own. If this happens then it is not good for you and not good for the person you love and care about. Your health and well-being are important.

Many people find it helpful to draw up a plan for how they can look after themselves while supporting someone they love and care about. The purpose of this booklet is to help you to do this.

It makes some suggestions for things you might want to think about in drawing up a plan to look after yourself, but there is no set formula. Different people choose to develop their plans in different ways.

We suggest that there are a number of things you might want to think about:

- **Your health and well-being maintenance plan.**

This might include things that are important to you - and where you might be able to make time for them in your busy life - as well as the things you need to do to keep yourself feeling on top of things.

- **Your health and well-being 'first-aid kit'.**

Things that you can do to get yourself back on an even keel when you feel upset, angry, discouraged or stressed out. We all have a 'first aid kit' for bodily cuts and bruises – but we also need one for the emotional cuts and bruises: the stresses and strains that threaten your mental well-being.

- **A plan for managing difficulties that arise and things that get to you.**

What you can do when things happen that knock you off balance, wear you down, upset or anger you ... to stop them getting to you too much.

- **A plan for how you can look after yourself when you are not feeling 100%.**

All of us have our off days when everything seems doubly difficult. On days like this it is easy for things to escalate from bad to worse so it is important to think about how you are going to look after yourself and get things back in balance

- **A plan for what to do when everything is getting too much for you.**

Despite your best efforts there are likely to be times when difficulties drag on and escalate. All of us sometimes get to the point when we have had enough, feel unable to cope and want to jack it all in. It is important to think about what you can do to cope at times like this, but this may also be the time to ask for help. Asking for help can be difficult but if you are to carry on being able to support your loved one then it is important that you do so.

You might find it helpful to talk your plans through with someone you trust, a mental health worker and the person you support – if they know what gets to you and what helps they may be able to assist you in keeping on an even keel.

Remember, these plans are 'works in progress' you can amend them or add to them in the light of experience.

My health and well-being maintenance plan

The things I need to do every day or week to keep on top of things

For example having a proper breakfast, having an hour to myself for reading, getting some exercise, setting aside time for household chores, speaking to friends ...

Things that are important to me outside my role of supporting the person I love and care about

Think about the things you enjoy and value like leisure activities, hobbies, religious/spiritual activities, social activities, 'me' time ...

How am I going to fit these in and what help might I need?

	When I will do the things I need to do and the things that are important to me	Do I need any help to do this (what? from whom?)
Monday		Think about whether there are friends or relatives you could ask, or maybe the person you care about could assist, or would be all right on their own for a while?
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

My health and well-being 'first-aid kit'

Things I can do to get myself back on an even keel when I feel upset, angry, discouraged or stressed out ...

For example, have a cup of tea, get out of the situation (e.g. go out for a walk or even go to the toilet for a bit of peace and quiet), phone a friend, think about something I am looking forward to like my favourite TV programme, listen to music, take a long hot bath ...

My plan for managing difficulties that arise and things that get to me

Things that happen which make me feel hurt, angry, discouraged, stressed out	What I will do to stop it getting to me too much when this happens
Think about things that the person you support does which get to you (e.g. being rude, leaving the kitchen in a mess, sitting around all day doing nothing) and other things that happen which get you down (e.g. having a disagreement with my partner, things going wrong in the house, large bills arriving)	Maybe there are things in your 'first aid kit' that could help? Maybe there have been things that have helped in the past? Maybe you could ask someone you trust for suggestions?

My plan for how I can look after myself when I am not feeling 100%.

How I know when I am not feeling 100% Think about those tell tale signs that you are having a bad day, for example feeling unusually tired, feeling irritable or over-sensitive, ruminating on something that has happened, getting upset about things you usually take in your stride	What I can do to get back on top of things Maybe there are things in your 'first aid kit' that might help? Maybe there are other things that you have found useful in the past like making a list of things to do or leaving some tasks to the next day, or giving yourself a treat?

My plan for what to do when everything is getting too much for me.

How I can tell that things are getting too much for me For example, having difficulty getting to sleep or waking up in the night worrying feeling low and dispirited all the time, not feeling hungry or over-eating, drinking more than usual, bursting into tears ...	Things I can do to start getting back on top of things For example, confiding in family and friends, arranging to get away and have a break or taking some time out, cutting down on some activities to give yourself a rest, reminding yourself that you have got through difficulties in the past	Things that other people can do to help (what? from whom?) For example, asking a friend or relative to take on some of your responsibilities, going to see your GP or calling the mental health team for support, asking the person you support for assistance

Feedback on A personal health and well-being plan for family, friends and carers

This booklet has been developed by the ImROC project team to support the development of recovery focused services. It is for use with family, friends and carers of people who have mental health problems. It was developed with the relatives, friends and carers of people with mental health problems. We hope that you have found it helpful.

In order to improve it, we would like to find out about how it works in practice: what it does well and what could be improved. We would, therefore appreciate it if you could let write any comments you have about using it below and return it to:

**Dawn Fleming (carer booklet feedback),
ImROC Project
NHS Confederation
29 Bressenden Place
London
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or email your comments to imroc@nhsconfed.org

Thank you

What aspects of this booklet did you like and/or find most helpful?	How could this booklet be improved? (e.g. content, presentation, layout, information provided)	
I am a: (please tick)	A relative, friend or carer of someone with a mental health condition	
	A mental health worker	