





# **Relaxation, mindfulness, and managing stress**

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- 
- What is stress
  - What are the symptoms and causes
  - How to practice mindfulness and relaxation
  - How to manage external pressures
  - Developing your resilience

**‘A state of mental or emotional strain caused by adverse circumstances.’**

**We’re normally talking about:**

- An event or situation where there’s lots to do, we feel **under pressure**, and/or we don’t have much **control**
- **How we feel** under pressure, our **mental** and **physical** responses



# What are the causes?

- When **the demands > the resources**
- When there is a big change, a big challenge, or lots of smaller challenges at the same time – the sense that **responsibilities are overwhelming**
- Not having **control** over the situation
- **Uncertainty**



# Why is it important?

- Too much stress is bad for your physical health
- It can lead to a mental health problem or make an existing issue worse
- It has a negative impact on your wellbeing





**What you can do:  
mindfulness**

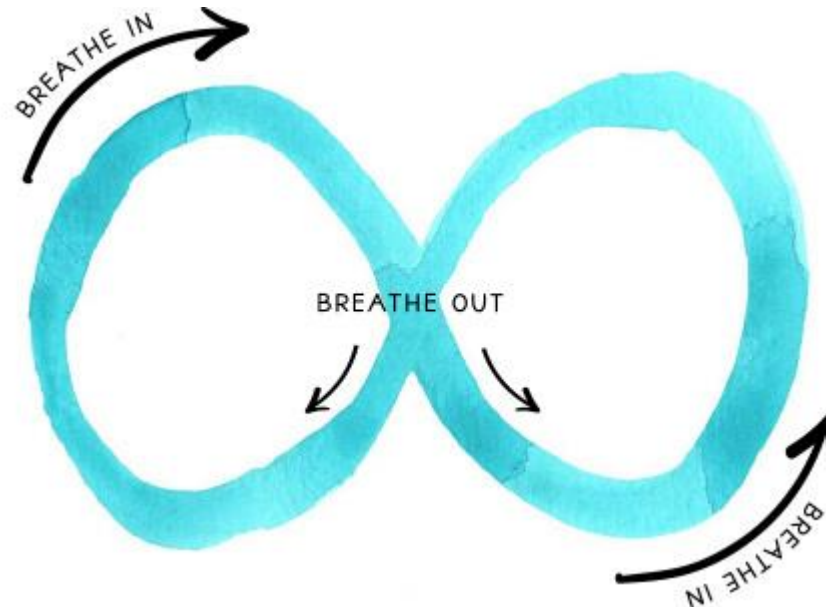
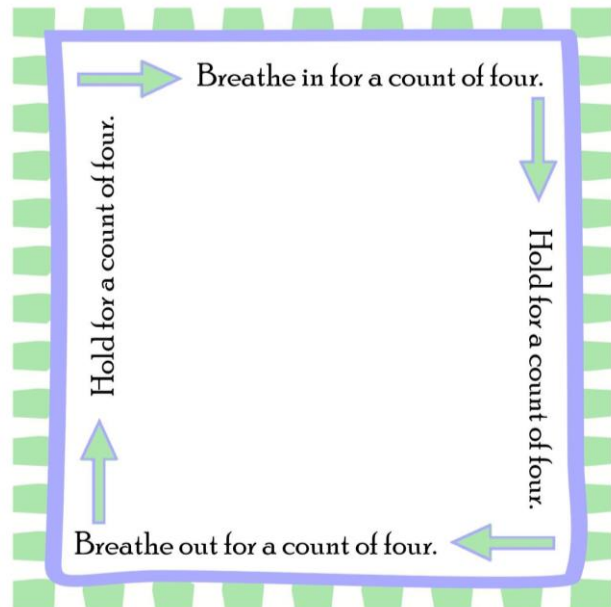
# What is mindfulness?

*‘The quality or state of being conscious or aware of something.’*

- Roots in Buddhism and meditation
- Mindfulness = awareness of the present moment
- Diverts your autopilot and helps you to be more aware of your thoughts and feelings
- Notice, understand, control and cope with thoughts and emotions
- Mindfulness helps to reduce stress, anxiety, rumination and emotional reactivity
- Improves mood, working memory and focus
- Recommended by NICE as a treatment for depression

# Mindfulness meditation

- Sit however is comfortable for you, straighten your back, breath slowly and pay attention to your breath
- Sit down comfortably. Don't try to empty your mind, but notice each thought as it appears
- Box breathing: breath in for 4 seconds through the nose, hold for 4, breathe out for 4 seconds through the mouth, hold for 4



# Mindfulness meditation

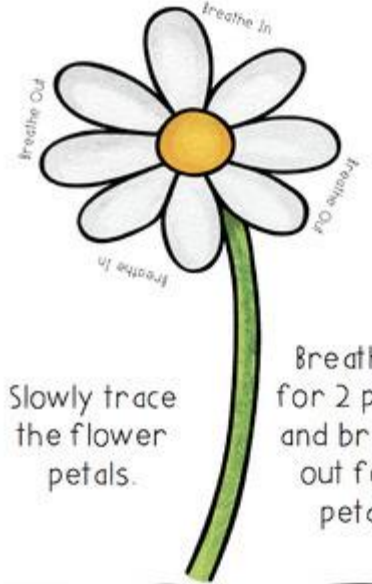
## CALM DOWN WITH TAKE 5 BREATHING



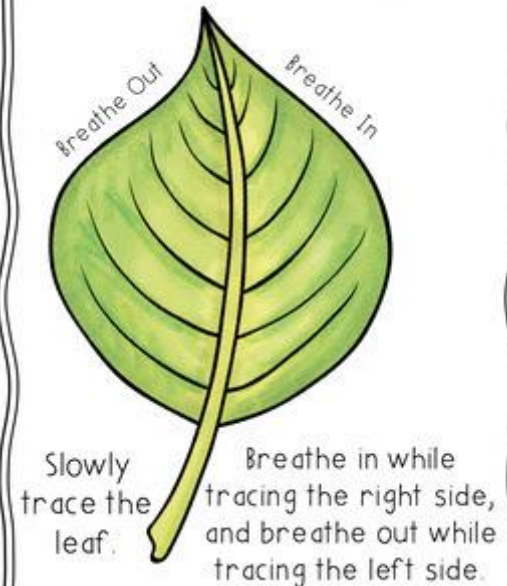
1. Stretch your hand out like a star.
2. Get the pointer finger of your other hand ready to trace your fingers up and down.
3. Slide up each finger slowly ~ slide down the other side.
4. Breathe in through your nose ~ out through your mouth.
5. Put it together and breathe in as you slide up and breathe out as you slide down.  
Keep going until you have finished tracing your hand.



## Flower Breathing



## Leaf Breathing



# Other ways to practice

**Body scan:** Scan each area of your body, from your feet to your head. What sensations do you feel? Is there heaviness? Achiness? Can you feel the floor/chair?

**Five senses:** Notice 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, two things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste

**Mindful colouring:** Focus on the sensation of the pencil and paper, pay attention to the shapes and colours, the movement of your hand and arm

**Mindful eating/drinking:** Notice the smell, texture, temperature. Try to notice each flavour. How does your body feel – full? Warmer? Energised? Sleepy?

**Mindful listening:** Tune in to the sounds in your environment. Notice as they appear and disappear

**Mindful walking:** Focus on the soles of your feet hitting the floor, and any other sensations in your body. Is there a breeze? What's the temperature like? What about the texture of the floor? When your mind wanders, use your feet as an anchor to bring you back to the present



# Tips

- **Practice:** Practicing paying attention to your daily activities, for example, focusing on the sound and feel of the water when you take a shower
- **Notice:** Don't worry when your mind wanders, just notice where your thoughts have drifted to. Think of 'thought buses' coming and going without having to get on them and be taken away. You can even name thoughts and feelings 'here's the thought that I might be late' and 'here's the feeling of anxiety'
- **Return to the present:** Use an anchor to bring your attention back to the present moment, e.g. your breath, counting, the sounds you can hear
- **Accept:** Notice and accept your thoughts and feelings without judgement
- **Be kind to yourself:** Mindfulness can be tricky, and it's natural that your mind will wander. Just gently bring yourself back to the present



**What you can do:  
relaxation**

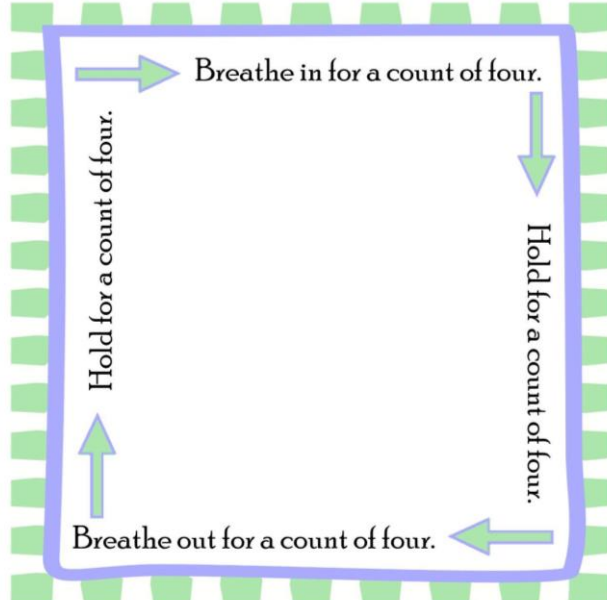
# What is relaxation?



Stress Response	Relaxation Response
↑ heartrate	↓ heartrate
↑ blood pressure	↓ blood pressure
↑ brain waves	↓ brain waves
↓ immune system	↑ immune system
↑ irritability	↑ sense of wellbeing
↑ sleep disorders	↑ sleep
↓ digestion	↑ digestion
↑ anxiety and depression	↑ mental health
↑ cholesterol levels	

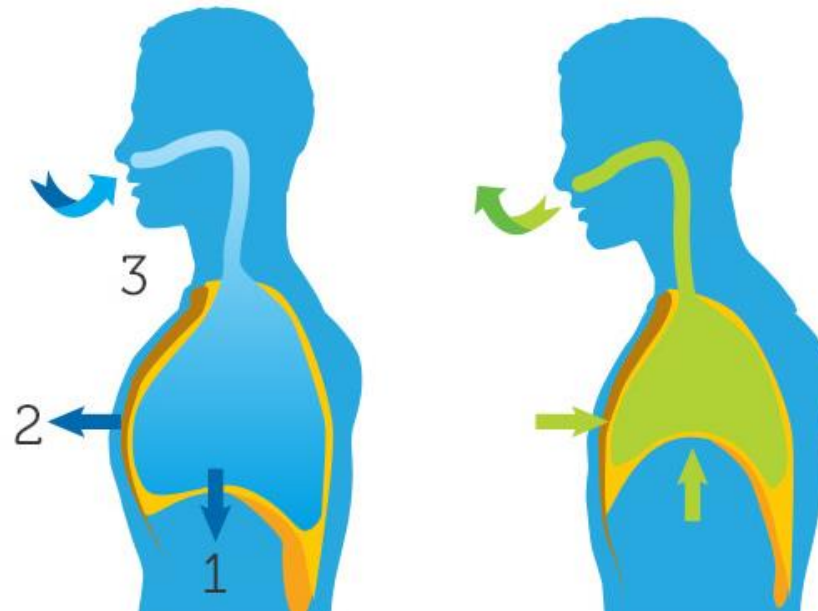
# Breathing exercises

1. Box breathing
2. Diaphragmatic breathing
3. Lazy 8 breathing
4. Alternate nostril breathing

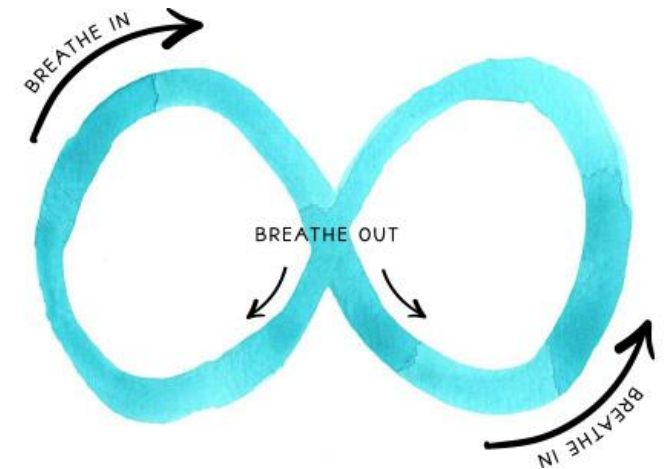


## 1-2-3 Diaphragm

- 1= Diaphragm- 2= lateral collateral-3= apical
- If two and three go first, they stop the diaphragm and it cannot function so the body remains in a sympathetic state



[More breathing exercises](#)




# Grounding exercises

## Stay Grounded Using Your 5 Senses

Relax Your Body, Take a Few Deep Breaths and Focus on the Following...

**5** Things You Can See 

**4** Things You Can Feel 

**3** Things You Can Hear 

**2** Things You Can Smell 

**1** Thing You Can Taste 

## SIX WAYS TO PRACTICE GROUNDING

with anxiety + intense emotions



### body

lay on the ground,  
press your toes into  
the floor, squeeze  
playdough



### 5 senses

wear your favorite  
sweatshirt, use  
essential oils,  
make a cup of tea



### self-soothe

take a shower or  
bath, find a  
grounding object,  
light a candle



### observe

describe an object  
in detail: color,  
texture, shadow,  
light, shapes



### breathe

practice 4-7-8  
breathing: inhale  
to 4, hold for 7,  
exhale to 8

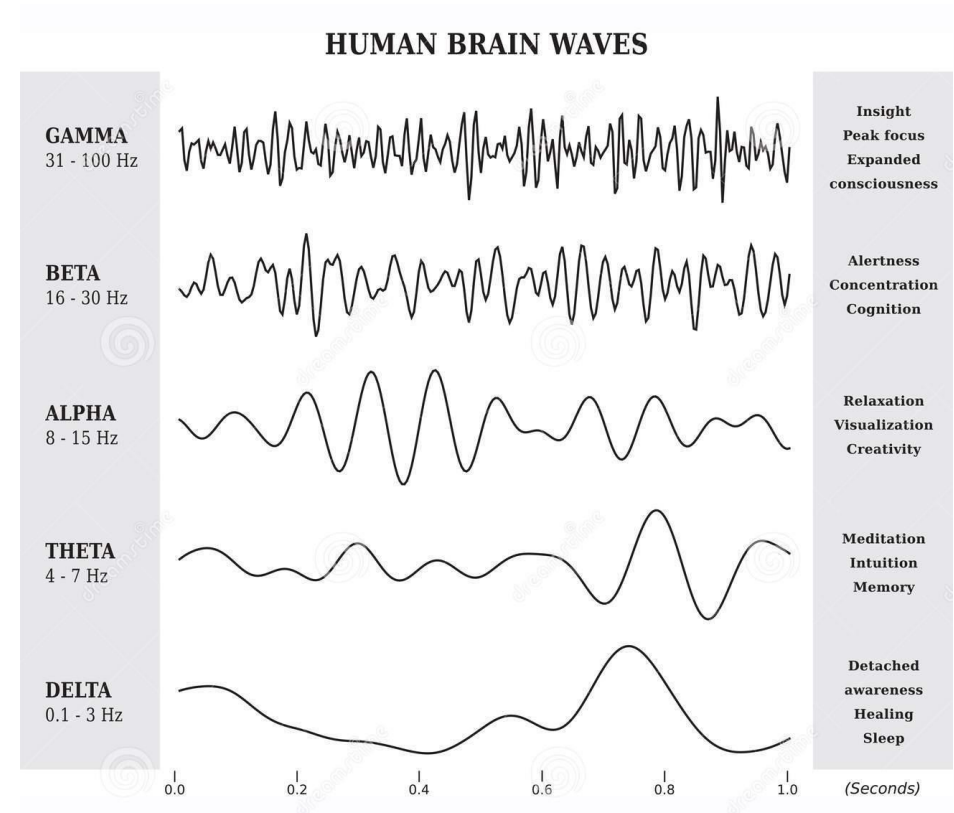


### distract

find all the square  
or green objects in  
the room, count by  
7s, say the date

# The relaxation response

- Relax, especially your eye and jaw muscles
- Choose a word, e.g. 'calm'
- Breathe in deeply, and in your mind, speak your word on the out-breath
- Alternatively, count your in-breaths



# Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Working through your muscles, tense each muscle group for 5-10 seconds, then release

- Your face, including your eyes, mouth, and forehead
- Shoulders
- Your right arm, making a fist, then your left
- Stomach (but don't hold your breath)
- Buttocks
- Your left leg, then your right
- Your left foot and toes, then your right

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation (5 mins)



# Progressive Muscle Relaxation (10 mins)



# Everyday activities for relaxation

- Active relaxation (going for walk, or gentle exercise like yoga)
- Colouring, arts and crafts
- Deep breathing
- Have a bath with Epsom salts
- Listen to music
- Spend time in nature
- Take breaks from your phone (apps like Focus Lock, Forest, Moment, and Space)



**What you can do:  
managing external  
pressures**

# Time management

**Rank your to-do list**

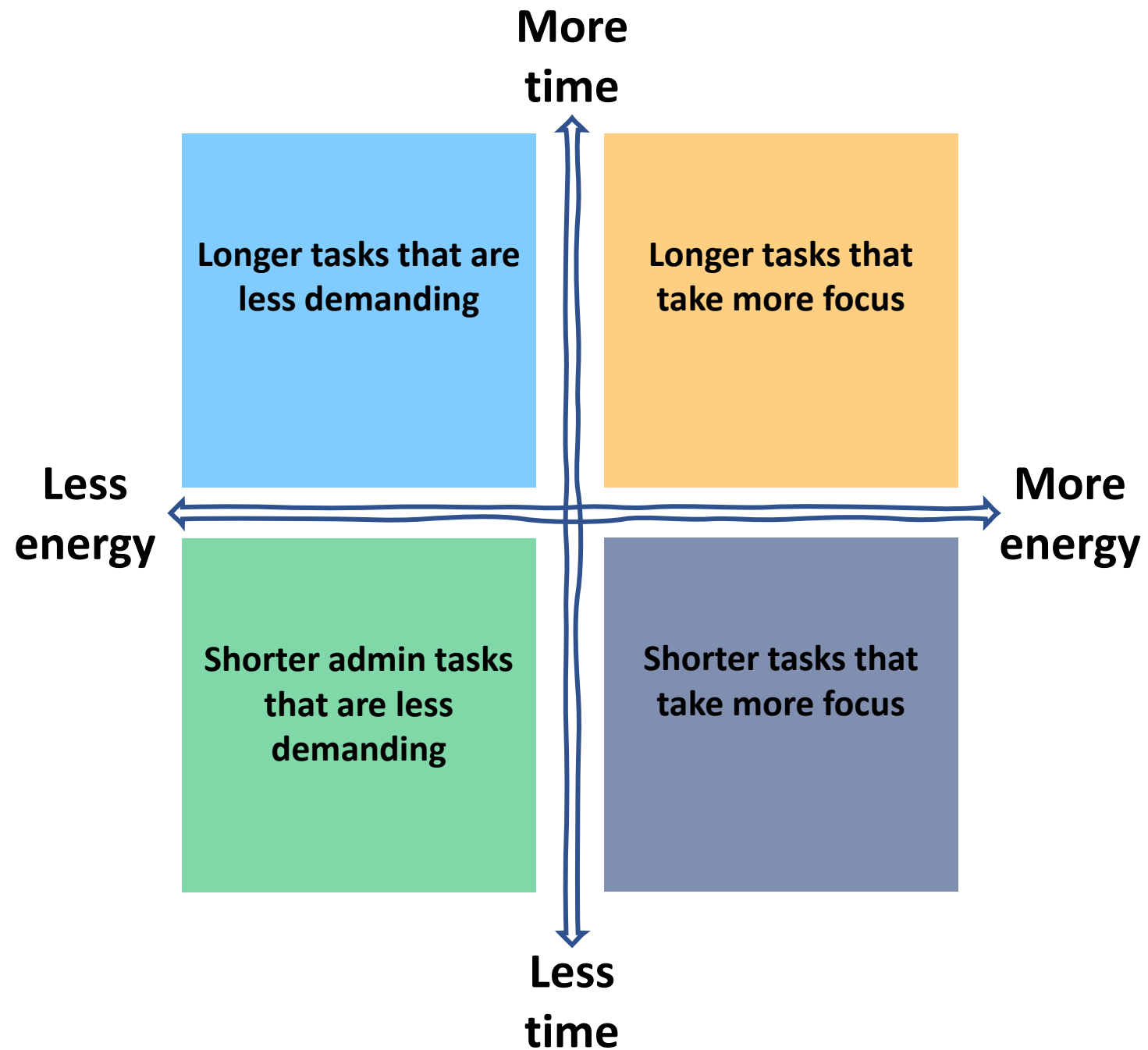
**Make your own timetable**

**Time blocking**

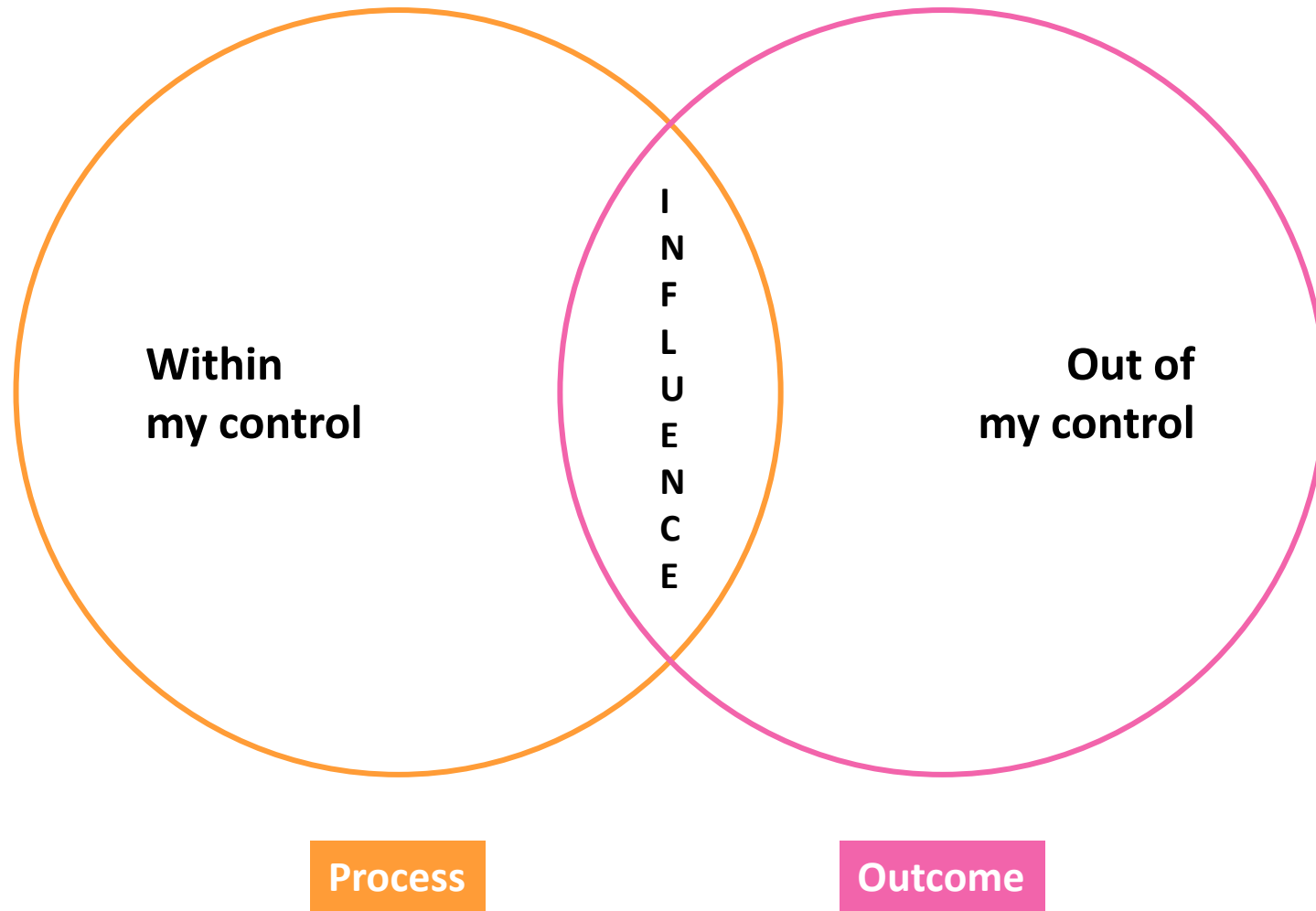
**Set aside time for planning**



**Break your task into targets**

**Don't rush**



# Control and influence





**What you can do:  
developing emotional  
resilience**

# The PERMA+ model for wellbeing

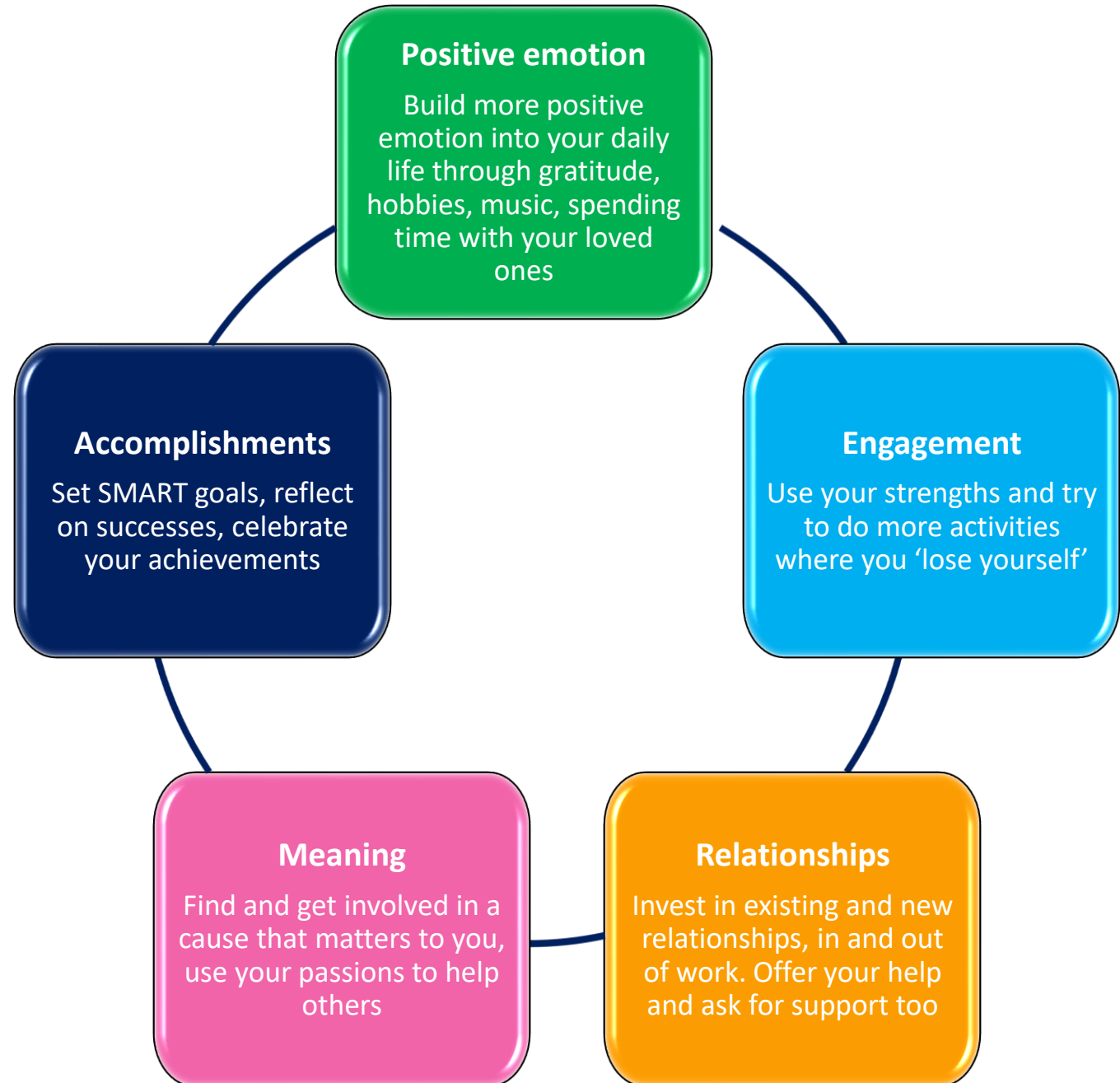
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**Nutrition**

**Physical activity**

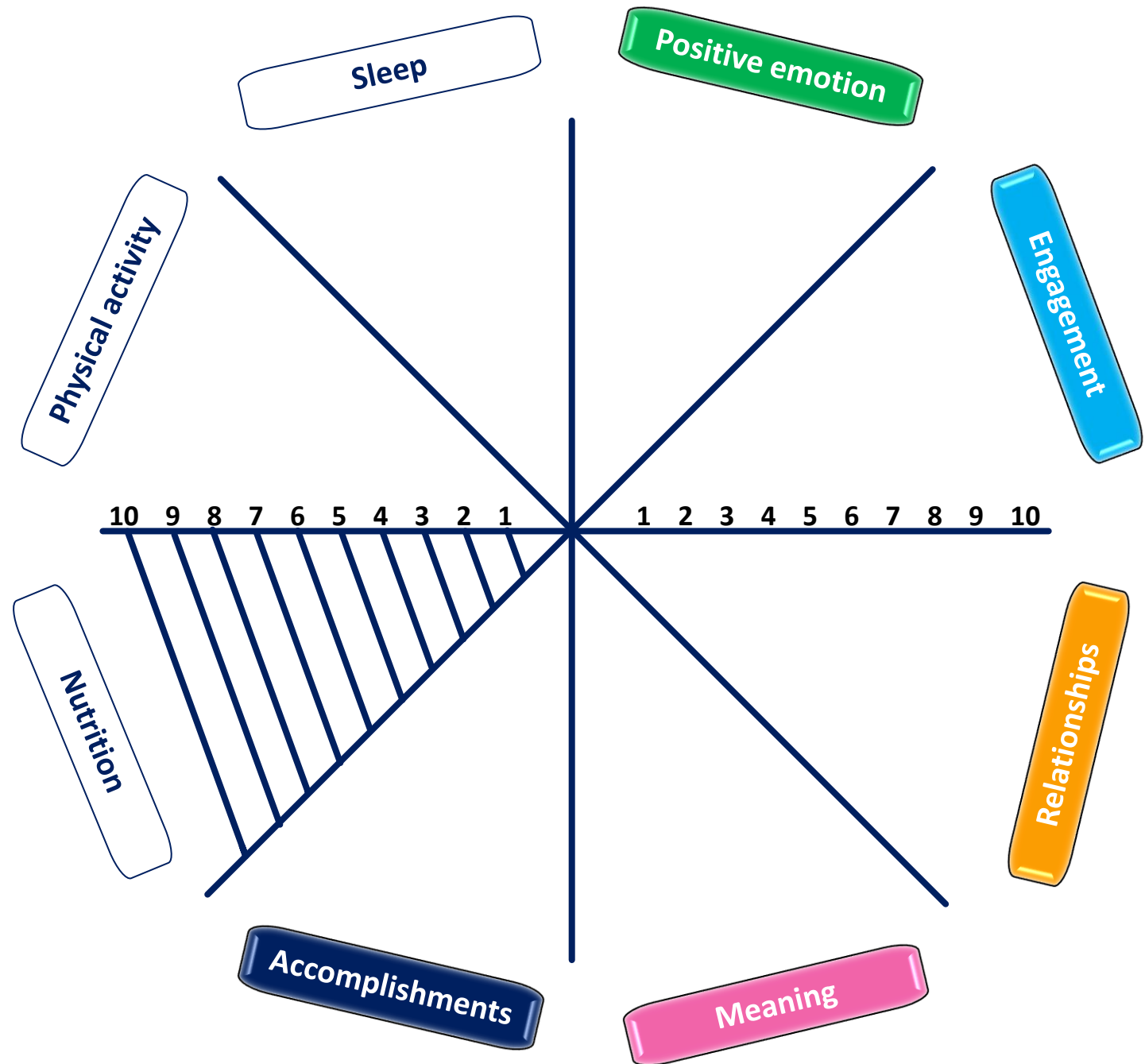
**Sleep**

**Optimism**



# Wellbeing wheel

Reflect on  
and colour  
your score  
for each  
area



# Apps



**The Smiling Mind**  
App and website  
with programmes  
for adults, kids, and  
school



**Insight Timer**  
Award-winning app  
with 55,000  
meditation and  
music tracks



**MyLife meditation**  
Award-winning app  
for checking in with  
how you're feeling  
and completing  
short mindfulness  
activities

# Apps



## **Moodnotes**

Mood tracker and journaling for positive thinking



## **Shine**

Created by and for women of colour. Self-care, journal, meditations, community



## **Stress and Anxiety Companion**

Breathing exercises, mindfulness (NHS recommended)



## **What's Up?**

Grounding activities, breathing techniques, how to overcome your negative feelings

# Resources

## Mindfulness

- A free [Introduction to Mindfulness](#) course **the Oxford Mindfulness Centre**
- [Mindfulness Activity Pack](#) activities for all ages **Time to Change**
- [Mindfulness breathing exercise](#) **Every Mind Matters**
- [Mindfulness Calendar](#) five-minute, daily activities for kids **Mentally Healthy Schools**
- [Training and a free online mindfulness class for kids](#) **Mindful Schools**

## Relaxation

- [Relaxation activities for young people](#) **NHS Every Mind Matters**
- [Relaxation exercises](#) **Mind**

# Resources

- [ABC model to manage stress](#)
- [Breathing exercises](#)
- [Find out more about the 3 Ps and explanatory styles](#)
- [Find out more about the PERMA+ model](#)
- [Find out more about learned optimism](#)
- [Reframing your thoughts and cognitive restructuring](#)

# Resources



## Squeeze a lemon!

Imagine you have a lemon in your hand. Squeeze it really really tight. Think about how your hands and arms feel.  
Count to 5... and relax. How do they feel now?



## Stretch like a giraffe!

Imagine you are as tall as a giraffe.  
Stretch your neck, your arms and your legs as far as you can. Think about how they feel.  
Count to 5..... and relax. How do they feel now?



## Hide in your shell!

Imagine you are a little snail and have a shell on your back.  
Lift your shoulders up and pull your shell up as high as you can. Think about how your shoulders, your neck and your back feel.  
Count to 5..... and relax. How do they feel now?



## Wiggle your toes in the sand!

Imagine you standing on the beach and you have the sand under your toes.  
Wiggle your toes and push down into the sand as far as you can. How do they feel when you are wiggling them?  
Count to 5..... and relax. How do they feel now?

# Resources





# Thank you for attending!