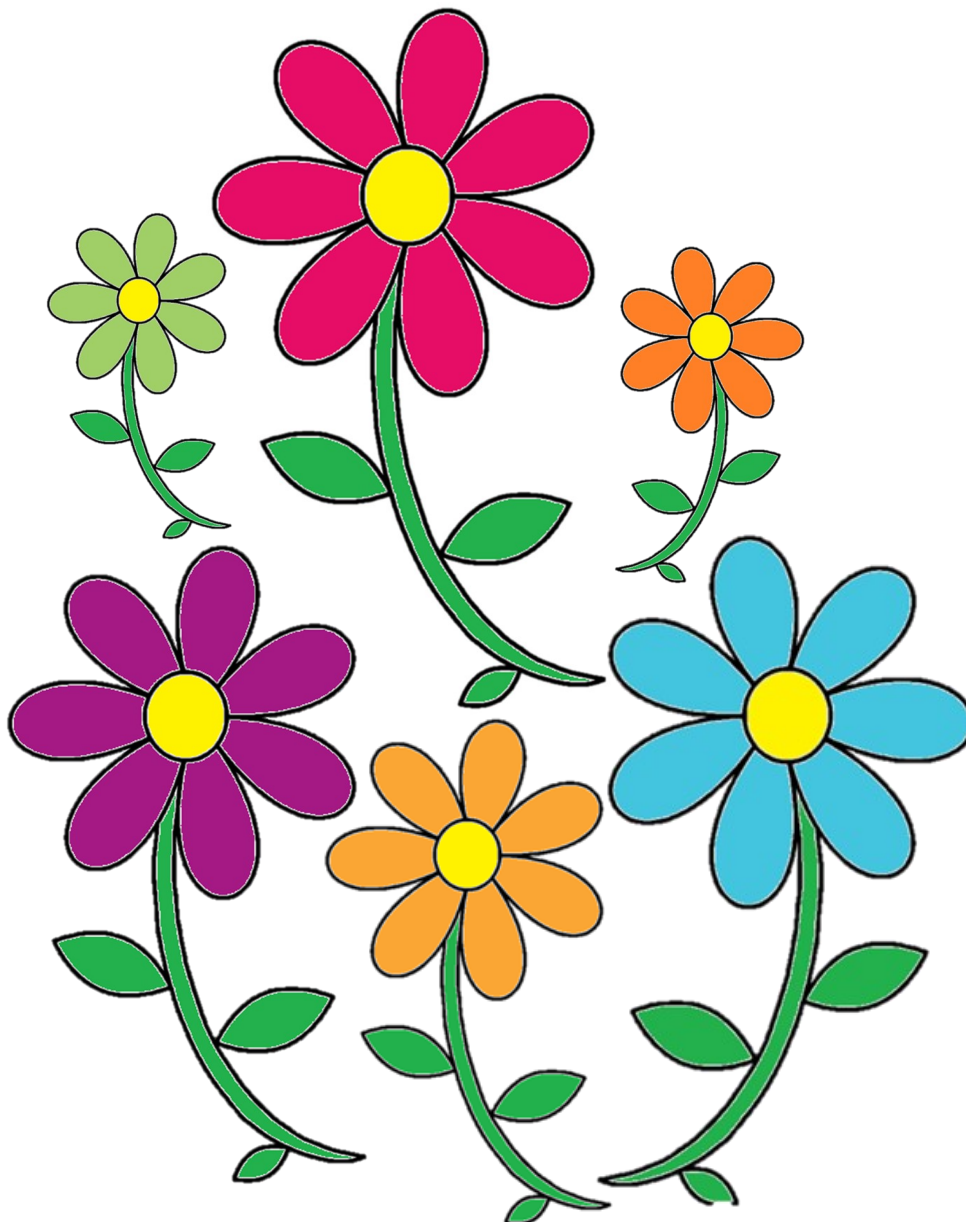




Prohealth UK
THERAPY, SELF-HELP & TRAINING

A personal guide to: The 6 Ways to Wellbeing



For more info on our 6 Ways to Wellbeing please visit
www.space4u2talk.com (for adults) www.well4u.co.uk (for children)



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Introduction:

What can you do to take some simple but reliable steps?

Everyone faces challenges in life. How big or difficult these challenges are will be different for each of us but we all know what it's like to feel drained and struggling to cope. This booklet is about ways to build on our strengths and to increase our resilience in order to meet the challenges we all encounter from time to time. It is also about going further than coping and surviving and realising that there is good evidence that a range of simple actions are strongly linked to people feeling happier and more satisfied with their lives. It is about knowing that there are actions you can take that will build up your health and wellbeing and then doing something about it yourself – taking small steps to living well.

It's all about choice and we make choices all the time. However most of the time we are not even aware of the choices we are making because we think we do not have a choice.

Consider this for a moment – what happens when someone gives us a compliment. We can choose to feel good about it or choose to feel annoyed or not even notice. Similarly when someone shouts at us, we can make a choice to shout back and feel very angry or we can choose to remain calm and forgive the person. The event does not have to determine our experience – we can choose what to make of it and how to respond.

The '6 ways to wellbeing' are about taking action and making conscious and deliberate choices to look after our wellbeing. The ideas that follow are simple evidence-based actions that are applicable to people from all walks of life. The important thing is what do they mean to you?

**For more info on our 6 Ways to Wellbeing please visit
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With the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. At home, work, school or in your local community. Think of these as the cornerstones of your life and invest time in developing them. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.

1. Connect

Being well connected is associated with increased mental health and wellbeing

When we talk about connecting, we usually think of connecting with other people. We reflected on this with different groups of people in our project and they came up with additional ways of being in touch and connected that were important to them as an aid well-being:

Connecting with self and having quiet moments

Connecting with nature, pets and animals

Connecting with one's spiritual needs or God if you are a believer

Talking about this with patients and carers, some felt they were worn down by excessive amounts of contact and this highlighted different qualities of experience. There are important differences between making contact, connecting and colliding!

Sometimes, connecting with people's distress can leave us feeling challenged and drained and too many contacts can make us feel we are not properly connected with anyone.

Whether you are a patient, carer, or a health professional you may have lots of contact that relates to seeking to resolve physical problems but may have lost contact with other opportunities, people and things that you value in life personally which are emotionally enriching.

As with all things in life, a balance is needed. You may also want to seek out "positive" connections in your life to balance time spent focussed on distress and suffering. By making choices and consciously attending to the connections we make we can be more in control of our lives, take up the driving seat and become committed to working on living well.



connect

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Questions to aid reflection

1. How would you know if you were connecting or just making contact? What makes the difference?

2. Being connected is good for your mental wellbeing. Is there anything you could be doing more of?

3. Can you think of connections that you would like to make or remake?

Kee

Learning

Try something new. Rediscover an old interest. Sign up for that course. Take on a different responsibility at work. Fix a bike. Learn to play an instrument or how to cook your favourite food. Set a challenge you enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident as well as being fun.

2. Keep Learning

A life-style that includes valuing learning is positively associated with mental health and wellbeing

It can be hard though to feel motivated to learn all the time, especially if because of our circumstances we are told we have to learn specific things whether we are interested in them or not, whether we value them or not. Learning can come to feel more like a chore and a 'tick box exercise'. If this has been part of your experience and your interest in learning has been 'spoiled' it can be reconsidered and rediscovered. Engaging with the '6 Ways to Wellbeing' is about learning what you can do to be more satisfied and fulfilled in your life and the very act of learning is part of that.

How we think about learning and what we say to ourselves about it will make it more possible and satisfying or more of a struggle or even obstacle. Everyone can learn. There is huge difference between us saying "I have to..." and "I want to..." When we use language like 'I have to', we feel pushed and see the learning as a task or a chore. There is a danger that with that kind of mindset, we not only fail to enjoy the experience but also won't be able to retain much of the new learning.

Learning new skills and practicing and refining old ones are keys to personal growth. It keeps us interested and focused, breaking the monotony of life and opening us to new possibilities.

We don't necessarily have to sign up for a college course degree or complete masters degree, simple daily opportunities really count. We could learn how to cook a new recipe, play a new computer game, visit a museum or go online to find out information about something we are curious about.

We can also learn something new about the people we meet. For example, we may wish to learn more about the other person's hopes and wishes, what makes them smile, what they value in life, their strengths and inner resources etc. Or the environment we are living in – what's going on that may be interesting to visit or take part in?

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Learning

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Questions to aid reflection

1. What do I think about 'Learning'? Would I like to learn some new thing each day?

2. What would I like to learn about? What interests me, what do I value, what would be useful?

3. What do I need to do to make learning fun and something I look forward to?

B e

A ctive

Go outside. Play a game. Garden. Do any exercise that makes you feel good. Choose an activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

3. Be Active

People who are active have improved mental health and wellbeing

Different people engage in different forms and different levels of activities. Being active is important for both our physical and mental health. Small changes in levels of activity can make a big difference. Just ten minutes of physical activity has been shown to be beneficial for wellbeing. This doesn't mean we have to use our whole body either, if some movements are painful then only chose activities which are comfortable and possible for you.

We need to consciously make an effort to be a little more active. Sometimes we may complain that we don't have enough time or we are too busy to take on activities. The reality is we all get 24 hours in a day. It is up to us to be willing to make slight adjustments to our lifestyle or our daily routine thereby creating a bit more space to be active. It all comes back to choice and how we set our personal priorities.

Sometimes it may feel as if we have been very active during the day as we feel exhausted and drained towards the later part of the day.

When we reflect back on the day, we may find that although our mind has been very active, we have not been that physically active. Mental fatigue can be overcome by keeping our physical health in good shape and the key to this is committing to some form of physical activities as part of our routine.

During our research, some people acknowledged feeling guilty about taking a break from to focus on their emotional needs. They also felt they had several items in their list of "Things to do" that they had yet to complete and worried that by taking the break they could be merely wasting their time and get more distracted rather than feeling invigorated and focussed. Actually, it is the other way round. When we take even a 5 minute break to positively refresh ourselves we can end up being in a more resourceful state and then use our time more productively.

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ctive

Go outside. Play a game. Garden. Do any exercise that makes you feel good. Choose an activity you enjoy and that suits your level of mobility and fitness.

Questions to aid reflection

1. What activities do I engage in on a regular basis? How would I like to develop this?

2. Who can support me to be more active at home / work? What can we do together?

3. Are there any minor adjustments I can make in my life that can help me be more active? (Remember 'small changes can make a big difference')

Take

Notice

Be curious. Catch sight of the beautiful. Remark on the unusual. Notice the changing seasons. Savour the moment, whether you are walking to work, eating lunch or talking to friends. Be aware of the world around you and what are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.

4. Take Notice

Taking Notice, being aware and mindful is associated with mental health and wellbeing

Most of us are fairly busy. Our mind is active throughout the day. We constantly seem to be doing something. We focus on the next step and the next task in hand. More often than not, we focus on the various things that need to be sorted, project deadlines that need to be met, unpaid bills, the various phone calls we need to make, the appointments we need to keep etc. When we complete all the things on our 'to do' list or our chores, we then may switch on the TV or read the paper. The contrary can also be true. We may not be doing much but we may be lost in our thoughts, focussing on the things that are not working in our life - we can be busy doing nothing.

Most importantly we forget to take notice, to be aware and mindful of any beauty and peacefulness in our surroundings, to be alert and awake rather than lost in thoughts or forgetful of where we are and what is happening around us.

To take notice is to pause, even if for a brief period, to spend some time in silence and reflect on our experiences, to look up and give time and attention to being aware of where we are and what is before us.

To take notice is to be in the present, in the 'here and now' and tune in not only to our bodily sensations, our breathing and our experiences but also to what is going around us, in our surroundings.

Remember, the value of taking action - doing something- in response to all of these suggested 'ways to wellbeing' may be amplified by noticing what we are doing and being thoughtful, attentive and appreciative of our actions:

It may not be enough to 'connect' - notice that you are connecting and choose to feel good about the connections you are making and your positive experiences from them.

It may not be enough to 'learn' - notice that you are learning something new and choose to feel good about it.

It may not be enough to be 'active' - notice that you are physically active and choose to feel good that you are keeping yourself fit and healthy.

It may not be enough to 'give' - notice that you are giving and choose to feel good that you are contributing in some way, however small it might seem to you.

It may not be enough to 'respect your body' - notice that you are looking after yourself and monitor the progress you make physically and emotionally.

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otice

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Questions to aid reflection

1. If noticing enhances wellbeing, what opportunities can I make to take notice more often?

2. How can I practice slowing down and pausing more often?

3. What difference will incorporating this in my day to like make?



Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, as linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

5. Give

People who enjoy giving and are open to receiving have improved mental health and wellbeing

Every relationship is one of give and take. 'The more we give the more we receive' is a wise old saying. Giving is associated with mental wellbeing.

There is a difference though in giving for the sake of politeness, obligation or duty and giving because your intention is to feel good. When you are in a frame of mind in which you feel good in the very act of giving, this is going to enhance your wellbeing and can also contribute to the wellbeing of the person whose life you touch.

When you give, give openly and from the heart. There are many opportunities to give in small ways every day:

- Giving a smile, a compliment, encouragement.
- Giving a hand, giving way to other car drivers.
- Giving your time, a silent or prayer.
- Give yourself the gift of connecting, of being active, of noticing, of respect for your body.
- Giving thanks i.e. being grateful for whatever good is happening in your life.
- Give yourself a break when you need one — be kinder to yourself too.

Some people say that they find giving easy, but that they don't feel as comfortable to receive. This is especially true when it comes to receiving compliments. They may murmur a quick 'thank you' but don't really accept the compliment or are dismissive. Giving is a two way process - your acceptance is what someone else gives is good for them as well as you. By becoming more comfortable with the 'give and take' of everyday life, we build ourselves up as well as give opportunities to others. So try to give yourself some compliments too sometimes.



Do something nice for a friend, or a stranger. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Join a community group. Look out, as well as in. Seeing yourself, and your happiness, as linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

Questions to aid reflection

1. What do you give others on a regular basis? Do you notice what it's like for you when you give to others?

2. What else could you give others that you hadn't thought of before? What small gifts can you offer that you will good about?

3. What do you give yourself? How can you be more generous and appreciative to yourself? What 'treats' would improve your experience of life?

Respect

Exercise, eat a balanced diet and get plenty of sleep. Avoid harming your body through risky behaviours. Looking after yourself physically contributes to your overall wellbeing.

BYour
body

6. Respect Your Body

Looking after your physical self also promotes good mental wellbeing

A nutritious, well-balanced diet – along with physical activity and refraining from smoking – is the foundation of good physical health and can also have a huge effect on your emotional wellbeing. Healthy eating is particular to each individual and includes consuming what your dietician tells you is best for you and avoiding foods that may be harmful. Eating in this manner helps you maintain your body's everyday functions, promotes optimal body weight and can assist in additional symptoms or associated diseases and illnesses developing. Our brains also need our bodies to be nourished with certain nutrients like vitamins that make up the chemicals that make us feel happy too. Without these chemicals in our body we can feel depressed or stressed.

When we are asleep, the body can concentrate on healing itself. Minimal amounts of energy are needed to maintain body functioning while we sleep. When we don't get enough sleep, we can experience a variety of other symptoms, such as fatigue and a lack of concentration. It can be difficult, but try to have at least 6-8 hours sleep each night. Look for information on "Sleep Hygiene" and talk to your GP if you regularly struggle with sleep.

Smoking, drinking alcohol and taking drugs can harm your health and cancel out the effects of a good diet and exercise. Doing these things can lower the immune system and cause mental health problems too. It's also important to maintain your sexual health.

Pain and stress are known to interact and to have a negative impact on one another. Trying to help your body and mind relax by using mindfulness techniques, progressive muscle tensing and generally looking after your body so it isn't overtired or harmed are very important to prevent extra pain from occurring and can even lessen the sensation of pain for some people.

Staying healthy physically can help you stay healthy emotionally too. If you are keeping fit to the best of your ability, your body will be strong and help you to cope with stresses and fight illness.

R

espect

B

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ody

Exercise, eat a balanced diet and get plenty of sleep. Avoid harming your body through risky behaviours. Looking after yourself physically contributes to your overall wellbeing.

Questions to aid reflection

1. What behaviours do you have which may be damaging for your body?

2. What ways can you think of to improve your sleep, diet and exercise levels?

3. Set yourself some goals for changing how you treat your body -what, when , how much

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Building the '6 ways to wellbeing' into a healthy lifestyle

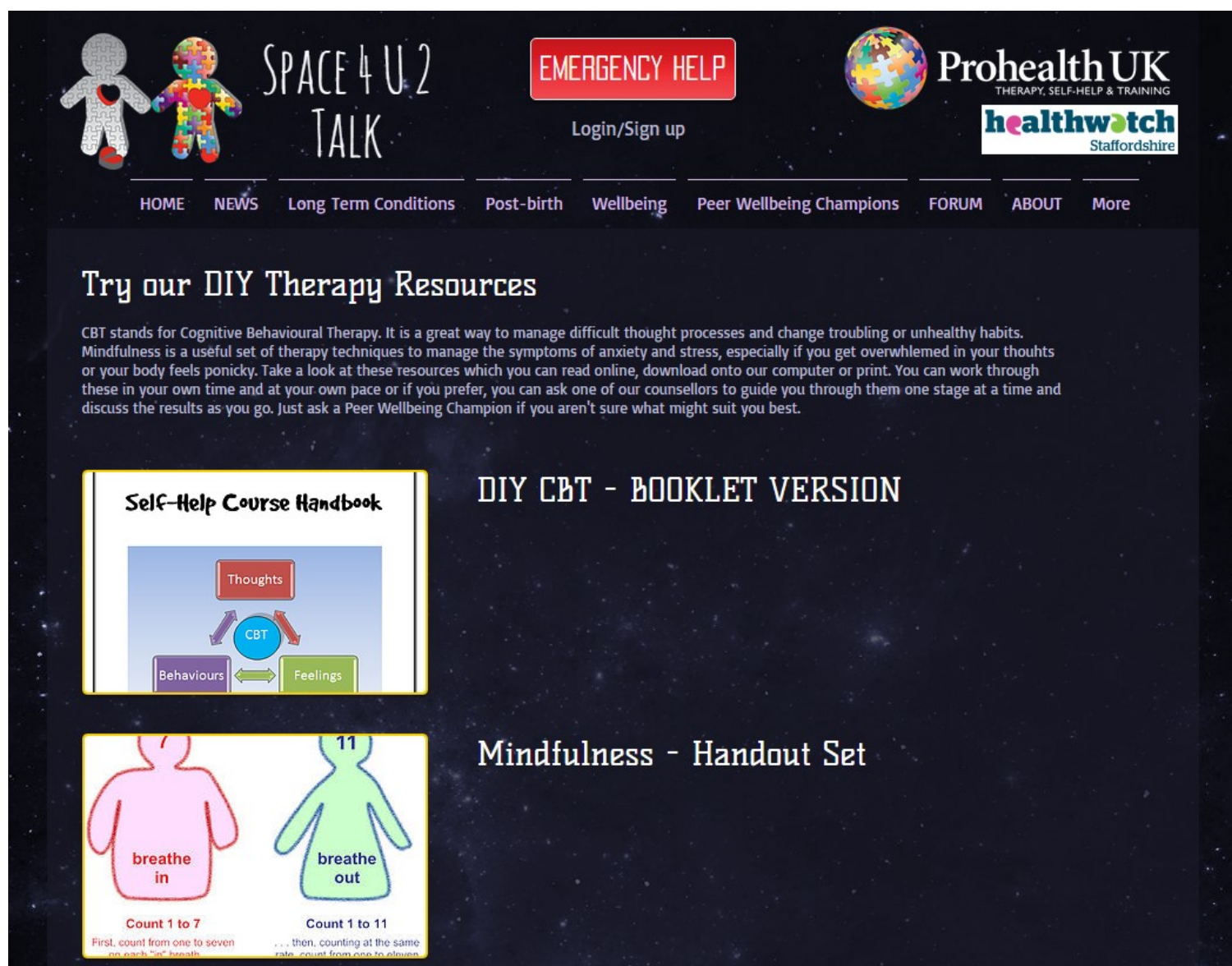
The '6 Ways to Wellbeing' are based on an extensive review of the actions people can take that are positively associated with mental health and wellbeing. In effect they describe some of the key components of a healthy emotional or social 'diet'. All 6 of these suggestions are free, easily achievable and applicable to anyone's life regardless of their circumstances. Many of us will in some measure be already doing some of the '6 ways' some of the time without even being aware of it.

Hence this may come across as common sense. However, as we know, common sense is not necessarily common practice and choosing to change our habits can be hard work. It may also be helpful when thinking of the '6 ways' to focus on what we're doing least of, and attending to those things in order to gain a better balance.

When we decide to change our behaviour or learn new skills, we need to put them into practice and make conscious attempts to keep doing them regularly. Making anything part of our life needs commitment and perseverance. It is just so easy to slip back to previous lifestyle patterns and not make and sustain changes. We know that we will not get fit just going to the gym once or twice.

We need to keep exercising to stay fit and we won't have a healthy diet by incorporating the '5 a day' fruit and veg for just a couple of weeks. Similarly the power and value of the "6 Ways to Wellbeing" is a simple concept which lies in us finding ways that work for us, consistently taking action and noticing the difference. It then becomes possible to sustain our commitment to living a healthier and more satisfying life. As we develop our strengths and resources we will also be more resilient and be more able to deal with challenges as and when they arise.

For more info about Prohealth UK services please visit
www.prohealthuk.org or call 01543 480360
or email admin@prohealthuk.org



The screenshot shows the Prohealth UK website interface. At the top, there are logos for 'SPACE 4 U 2 TALK' (two figures made of puzzle pieces), 'EMERGENCY HELP' (a red button), and 'Prohealth UK' (a globe logo). Below these is a navigation bar with links: HOME, NEWS, Long Term Conditions, Post-birth, Wellbeing, Peer Wellbeing Champions, FORUM, ABOUT, and More. The main content area is titled 'Try our DIY Therapy Resources'. It contains a paragraph about CBT and Mindfulness, followed by two resource cards. The first card is 'Self-Help Course Handbook' featuring a diagram of the CBT model (Thoughts, Behaviours, Feelings) with 'CBT' in the center. The second card is 'Mindfulness - Handout Set' showing two figures with breathing instructions: 'breathe in' (Count 1 to 7) and 'breathe out' (Count 1 to 11).

Try our DIY Therapy Resources

CBT stands for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. It is a great way to manage difficult thought processes and change troubling or unhealthy habits. Mindfulness is a useful set of therapy techniques to manage the symptoms of anxiety and stress, especially if you get overwhelmed in your thoughts or your body feels ponicky. Take a look at these resources which you can read online, download onto our computer or print. You can work through these in your own time and at your own pace or if you prefer, you can ask one of our counsellors to guide you through them one stage at a time and discuss the results as you go. Just ask a Peer Wellbeing Champion if you aren't sure what might suit you best.

Self-Help Course Handbook

DIY CBT - BOOKLET VERSION

Mindfulness - Handout Set

For more info on wellbeing please visit
www.space4u2talk.com www.well4u.co.uk