

30-Day Stress Busting Challenge



Want to know how stressed you are, and how to combat stress?

Our 30-Day Stress Busting Challenge, adapted from Stress Management Society, encourages you to pick one action each for your Physical, Mental and Emotional wellbeing to carry out every day during the month of April.

It takes 30 days to turn actions into habits and you can also try and add actions for your social and spiritual wellness. The challenge will maximise your chances of turning useful knowledge and techniques into positive behavioural change.

Day 1 – Friday 1 April 2022

Physical: Set aside some time to stretch your body, taking deep slow breaths and engaging with your core. Visit www.health.com/fitness/everyday-stretches for some ideas on everyday stretches which help to relieve tension and support your de-stressing journey.

Mental: - Take the Stress Management Society's free online Individual Stress Test to identify areas for improvement on this link: [Individual Stress Test - The Stress Management Society](#). Please remember and revisit this at the end of the 30 days to see if your score has improved!

Emotional: Have 5 quiet minutes and use this as an opportunity to assess how you're feeling. Are you happy, content, sad, etc? Explore why you feel this way and what you can do to alter your mood.

Day 2 – Saturday 2 April

Physical: We often ignore the early signs of stress, many of which are physical. Take a moment to assess your physical state. Is your breathing fast, slow, shallow, or deep? Are your shoulders hunched? Are you thirsty, hungry, tired, sleepy?

Mental: Why should we care about stress?

Many are unaware of the link between high stress levels and a weakened immune system. Stress has been directly linked to high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes. It is estimated that around one in four people in Scotland are affected by mental health problems in any one year. Therefore, reducing our stress levels and altering how we react to stressful situations can boost our resilience and prevent illness.

Reflect on your life and the impact that stress has had on you in the past. How did you combat it? What made you feel better?

Emotional: Reflect on your past week and write down 3 things which have made you smile.

Day 3 – Sunday 3 April

Physical: Go out for a walk, even if you don't feel like it. Exercise reduces levels of the body's stress hormones and also stimulates the production of endorphins- the chemical in the brain that is the body's natural mood elevator.

Mental: Create a simple to-do list for your week ahead and get your week off to a productive start.

Emotional: Take a second to reflect on your life so far. What have you accomplished over the past 5 years? What are you proud of? What has been your best achievement?

Day 4 – Monday 4 April

Physical: Get organised and plan some health meals for the week ahead. Eating a healthy, balanced diet with all the necessary vitamins helps with both physical and mental health.

Mental: Stay connected. The pandemic has emphasised times that we might not be able to be with our loved ones in person, however, the power of technology means we can stay in touch over the phone or WhatsApp/Facetime/Zoom/Skype instead.

Emotional: Thinking positive and being able to appreciate the little things can have an enormous impact on your mind-set. Start a daily gratitude journal and write down the things which you're grateful for each day. This will get you into the habit of noticing the little positives and wholesome moments that you experience through the week.

Day 5 – Tuesday 5 April

Physical: Have a bath with some Epsom salts to relax your muscles and sooth your mind. Don't have a bathtub? Epsom salts are also great for soaking feet so make yourself a footbath.

Mental: Be kind to yourself, take time out for self-care – it's like the oxygen mask on the plane; put yours on first and you'll be in a better position to help others.

Emotional: Do you regularly watch the news and find it causes you emotional distress? If so, consider taking a break or altering how you consume the news. A useful tip is to avoid those thought-provoking headlines before bed.

Day 6 – Wednesday 6 April

Physical: It's spring and brighter weather is on the horizon. Why not give your windows a spring clean to let the beautiful sunshine in?

Mental: What is there to help you understand the impact of stress? Listen to the airing pain podcast at <https://painconcern.org.uk/airing-pain/>

Emotional: Use our tips on how to start a conversation about mental health and ask one of your friends or family how they're feeling today.

How to start a conversation about mental health:

- Are you okay?
- How are things going? - How are you, really?
- I've noticed that...
- Do you want to take a walk?
- What's on your mind?

Day 7 – Thursday 7 April

Physical: Why not pick some flowers for a friend? The daffodils are beautiful at this time of year and it is bound to bring a smile to their face!

Mental: Are you aware of the causes of stress identified within the workplace?

- Workload/volume of work
- Management style
- Non-work factors - family and relationship issues
- Relationships at work
- Non-work factors - Personal illness or health issues
- Pressure to meet targets or deadlines

Do any of these look familiar to you? What could you do to improve any of these factors?

Emotional: Stop for a moment and check in with yourself. What are you feeling? If you don't feel happy, reach out to a friend, family member, work colleague or anyone in your support network to improve your wellbeing.

Day 8 – Friday 8 April

Physical: Put your favourite song on and have a dance! Give yourself that Friday feeling!

Mental: Plan out your day and ensure that you have a work life balance. Keeping a schedule is useful to productivity and helps to ensure that you can make time for yourself.

Emotional: We adopt an engineer's approach to stress. We have adopted an engineer's definition of stress. Force over area equals the pressure. When a bridge has too much load on it and if it is left there for long enough, it will eventually collapse. You would be able to see the warning signs before this happens. The bridge would bow, buckle, groan and creak.

The same principle can be applied to a human being with excessive demands and challenges placed on our bridges, we will collapse. That bridge collapse could manifest itself as a nervous breakdown, or serious health issues such as heart attack or cancer.

Watch this video on the bridge here: <https://youtu.be/12qq9hR6zVA>

Have you noticed any bending, buckling or creaking on your bridge?

Day 9 – Saturday 9 April

Physical: A lot of people struggle to drink enough water throughout the day which can cause a vicious cycle: thirsty because you are stressed and stressed because you are thirsty. Woman should aim to drink about 1.6 litres per day and men should aim for 2 litres. Struggling to monitor your intake? Why not use a water bottle with measurements!

Mental: Are you keen to unlock your happy? Use the graphic below to select an activity to activate the happiness chemicals in your brain:

UNLOCK YOUR HAPPY

SEROTONIN

- Being outside in nature
- Having a massage
- Breathing exercises
- Practising daily gratitude
- Aerobic exercise

The mood stabilizer

DOPAMINE

- Celebrating success
- Getting enough sleep
- Mindfulness/Meditation
- Listening to music
- Sunlight exposure

The reward chemical

ENDORPHINS

- Having sex
- Creative activities
- Laughter
- Eating cacao rich foods
- Random acts of kindness
- Taking a hot salt bath

The pain killer

OXYTOCIN

- Practising yoga
- Cuddles and hugs
- Petting a dog
- Telling someone how much you care
- Spending time with friends

The love hormone

www.wellbeing.work
www.stress.org.uk



Emotional: Write down a list of things that you are looking forward to doing once the restrictions are finally fully lifted and “normal life” has resumed. Is it going to a concert? Booking a holiday? Have a think and plan so that you have some exciting things to look forward to!

Day 10 – Sunday 10 April

Physical: Go for a jog or a run! Not comfortable running? Have you thought about trying the couch to 5K programme? This offers a gradual introduction to running which is great for the mind and body.

Mental: Your thoughts matter!

Instead of	Try
"I'm a mess"	"I'm human"
"I can't do this"	"I can do hard thing"
"I'm a failure"	"I'm learning"
"Why is this happening?"	"what is this teaching me"

Emotional: Do you often get stuck in "what if..?" thinking? The best way to handle this is to write down all the 'what if' topics that are giving you concerns, then add what you would do if the 'what if's' come to pass. This will help to ease your worries and provide you with a practical action plan.

Day 11 – Monday 11 April

Physical: Pick a recipe that you have always wanted to try and give it a go!

Mental: Do absolutely nothing. Can you be still, with no input for 2 minutes? 5 minutes? How about 10? It's not often that we pause to stop the information and this simple act can improve our resilience.

Emotional: Have a think about those around you and all the qualities that you like and admire. Challenge yourself to tell those people your thoughts and brighten their day.

Day 12 – Tuesday 12 April

Physical: Take the stairs instead of the lift! There are many reasons why physical activity is good for your body- having a healthy heart and improving your joints and bones are just two but did you know that physical activity is also beneficial for your mental health and wellbeing? Looking for ideas on how to get more active?

See: [How to...exercise.pdf \(mentalhealth.org.uk\)](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-exercise.pdf)

Mental: Did you know that just 6 minutes of relaxing into a good book can reduce blood pressure and muscle tension? Why not visit your local library or pick up a magazine with your weekly shopping?

Emotional: Why not arrange a group activity for you and your friends? This could be as simple as a group video call or you could challenge your work colleague's team skills with a virtual escape room!

Day 13 – Wednesday 13 April

Physical: Are you sleeping well at the moment? Why not have a look at your sleep hygiene and identify improvements that you can make? Find out more at [Sleep problems - Every Mind Matters - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sleep-problems/)

Mental: Find a few minutes of your day to practice mindfulness as this is a great stress-busting activity. This needn't be a long or complex process; it can be as simple as practicing mindful breathing or eating. We offer mindfulness sessions via our spiritual lead which can be arranged via Tosh Lynch our Spiritual Care Lead

Emotional: Tune in with yourself and finish the sentences below:

- 'I am feeling...'
- 'I think that...'
- 'I am happiest when...'
- 'I am looking forward to...'
- 'I can't wait for...'

Day 14 – Thursday 14 April

Physical: Move every day. Take time to stand, stretch, adjust and improve your posture.

Mental: Guided Imagery is like taking a short holiday in your mind. It can involve imagining your "happy place" Take a few moments and picture yourself perhaps sitting on a beach, listening to the waves, smelling the fresh sea air and feeling the warm sand beneath you.

Emotional: April is a perfect time to wiggle your green fingers – plant some seeds as it can give us a real lift to see them growing in the spring sunshine.

Day 15 - Friday 15 April

Physical: Sign up to a workout class today! Can be face to face, online or following a YouTube video.

Mental: Can you name your favourite memory? Take a moment to pause and remember all the little details. How things looked, smelt, tasted and felt. What emotions did you feel in that exact moment?

Emotional: Public Health Scotland published a rapid review of the impact of the impact of Covid-19 on Mental Health in June 2020. Evidence from the rapid review indicates that a number of key groups are at higher risk of adverse mental health outcomes, these could include frontline staff who are working with Covid-19 patients, women, those with a low educational level and individuals with underlying mental health conditions.

However, social and family support, hygiene measures and physical activity appeared to safeguard mental health. Some of these consistent with protective factors recommended for good mental health in general. Does any of this sound familiar to you?

Full report available at: [Rapid review of the impact of COVID-19 on mental health \(publichealthscotland.scot\)](https://publichealthscotland.scot)

Day 16 – Saturday 16 April

Physical: Set some time aside to clean and organise a specific space. For example, this could be clearing out a kitchen cupboard, reorganising your wardrobe or venturing into the dreaded loft! Sorting provides a sense of achievement and will help to get your weekend off to a productive start.

Mental: Try a simple grounding exercise to get your Saturday off to a good start.

Can you name:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can hear
- 3 things you can touch
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Emotional: 3 Things to notice today:

- What you're grateful for
- What energises you
- What's not working and why

Day 17 – Sunday 17 April

Physical: Have a relaxing evening and get an early night's sleep in preparation for the week ahead.

Mental: Want to learn something new today? Why not listen to a TED Talk at www.ted.com/talks

Emotional: Eating cacao rich foods produces endorphins which can improve our mood. Remember this is only in small quantities, we're not advising you to binge on endless amounts of chocolate!

Day 18 – Monday 18 April

Physical: Why not volunteer to a cause that's important to you? You can find out more about volunteering projects at www.gov.uk/government/getinvolved/take-part/volunteer

Mental: Write down a list of things that you want to achieve by the end of the week.

Emotional: Eventually, our time will all come to an end. Take a moment to consider how you want to be remembered by your friends, family and community. It's common for people to prioritise the goal of earning money and building a career, only to

realise that they want to be recognised and remembered by personal values. This exercise is great at identifying priorities and unveiling what's truly important to you. You can then use this knowledge to bring it to life and become your best self.

Day 19 – Tuesday 19 April

Physical: Get up and do some quick short bursts of activity to get the blood pumping.

Why not try:

- 30 star jumps
- 1 minute of high knees
- 15 burpees
- 30 seconds of skipping

Mental: The Stress Management Society, has written a stressbusting book, which has identified a 10-Step Stress Solution and includes:

- Prioritize your health
- Get a good night's sleep
- Don't be a slave to technology
- Learn to say 'no'
- Get moving to combat stress
- Adopt a positive mind-set
- Master your time
- Practice deep breathing
- Stay hydrated
- Eat for wellbeing and NOT for stress

You can find out more about this at www.stress.org.uk

Emotional: Are you holding any grudges? Is there anything in life that you regret or would change if you had the chance? Take a moment to think about this and then let go of anything that is weighing you down. Life is a journey and we're only moving forwards.

Day 20 – Wednesday 20 April

Physical: A digital detox refers to a period of time when a person refrains from using tech devices such as smartphones, televisions, computers, tablets and social media sites. "Detoxing" from digital devices is often seen as a way to focus on real-life social interactions without distractions. By forgoing digital devices, at least temporarily, people can let go of the stress that stems from constant connectivity.

Before you decide if this is right for you, consider some of the potential benefits and methods of doing a digital detox.

Further information can be found at: www.verywellmind.com/why-and-how-to-do-a-digital-detox

Mental: Why not try some brain training exercises with Sudoku, crossword or word searches?

Emotional: If you're feeling a little blue, remember that you are the sky and your emotions are the weather. You can acknowledge and accept them, without making them part of who you are. For example, instead of saying "I'm Sad", learn to say "I feel sad".

Day 21 – Thursday 21 April

Physical: Here are some of the best stress-busting activities:

- Practicing mindfulness
- Being outside in nature
- Getting a good night's sleep
- Staying well hydrated
- Making time for fun and laughter
- Aerobic exercise
- Unplugging from digital devices

Pick one for your "it's almost the weekend" activities!

Mental: "Pace Yourself" Pacing is a useful strategy for managing your time and energy. By spreading out activities in manageable chunks and resting in between, you can get things done without feeling like your health or wellbeing has to suffer. This can help to avoid a "boom and bust" cycle of pushing yourself too far and burning out. Why not give it a go? Further information can be found at:

www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/coronavirus/long-term-health-conditions-and-mental-wellbeing/

Emotional: Find a quiet spot and write a letter to your future self.

Day 22 – Friday 22 April

Physical: In need of a relaxing activity to wind down ready for the weekend? Try our downloading some free colouring pages at <https://www.crayola.com/free-coloring-pages>

Mental: Ikigai is a Japanese word for the thing that is your reason for being and the thing that gets up in the morning. Have you found your Ikigai? For more information visit

[Ikigai: A Japanese concept to improve work and life - BBC Worklife](https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200415-ikigai-a-japanese-concept-to-improve-work-and-life)

Emotional: Take the time to think about the mental state of those around you and identify who may be struggling. Is anyone who comes to mind and if so, what can you do to help?

Day 23 – Saturday 23 April

Physical: Why not trade that sugary snack for a piece of fruit and help towards your 5 a day!

Mental: Reach out to someone you haven't spoken to in a while. A call or text can make someone's day!

Emotional: Think of 3 things good things which have happened to you over the past week.

Day 24 – Sunday 24 April

Physical: Green therapy: if you have a garden, go outside – if not, use your exercise time wisely and plan a route where you can get a nature fix – green is good!

Mental: Perform a random act of kindness for someone around you. You'll be surprised about how much a little act can impact upon someone's day.

Emotional: Send a motivational text to someone that you know is struggling or maybe would just appreciate a message to know someone is thinking of them.

Day 25 – Monday 25 April

Physical: Clean and organise your workspace / room for the busy week ahead. A useful tip is to start with what you see around you and gradually increase your circle of influence.

Mental: Why not stimulate a different part of your brain and try learning a new language? There are plenty of fantastic language apps including Duolingo, MemRise, Babbel, Hello Talk... ¡Puedes hacerlo!

Emotional: Take some time to reflect on the past week and the one ahead. What were the positives? What challenged you? What did you overcome? What do you hope to achieve in the upcoming week?

Day 26 – Tuesday 26 April

Physical: You're never too old to get creative! Try a creative activity today, whether it's writing, crafting, baking, cooking or photography – the world's your oyster!

Mental: Create a jar for your happy memories and add them as you go along. At the end of the year, you can open the jar and remind yourself of all the wonderful things that happened and what you achieved.

Emotional: If you're in a position to do so, donate some supplies to your local food bank. Not in a financial position, why not donate some time to a local charity or a neighbour? Offering to collect a few essentials from a local shop can sometimes make all the difference to someone in particular if they live alone.

Day 27 – Wednesday 27 April

Physical: Make a note of the support resources available to you:

Employee Assistance Program is available to all NHSGJ employees via AXA Health (and anyone in the same house as the employee over the age of 16) offering guidance on coping strategies, access to counsellors, mental health practitioners, nurses pharmacists and midwives.

For more information visit our [Staff Health and Wellbeing Hub](#), while other helpful information can be found at the following:

Mental Health Foundation

Website: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health)

Website: www.samh.org.uk

Phone: 0344 800 0550

Email: info@samh.org.uk

Mind

Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm)

Website: www.mind.org.uk

Samaritans

Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)

Website: www.samaritans.org.uk

Breathing Space Phone

0800 838587

Website: www.breathingspace.scot

NHS 24

Phone: 111

Website: www.nhs24.scot

Mental: Smiling can alter our brain chemistry and make us feel happier. It is also infectious so smile at someone you pass and kick start a chain reaction!

Emotional: Evidence suggest there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life. Find further information at: [5 steps to mental wellbeing - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health/5-steps-to-mental-wellbeing)

Day 28 – Thursday 28 April

Physical: Have you ever thought about buying a plant for your home or room at work? Adding a bit of green is good for our health and brightens up our space!

Mental: Is there a hobby or activity that you've always wanted to try? Why not find out more and sign yourself up to some sessions!

Emotional: Thank a friend or someone close to you for the benefits that they bring into your life.

Day 29 – Friday 29 April

Physical: Why not try and learn a new breathing technique to help you slow down and unwind? See [Breathing exercises for stress - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health/breathing-exercises-for-stress)

Mental: Meditate: there are many different types, try a few out and at least one will work for you. No-one can tell you if you're doing it right, you can be guided but you'll figure it out yourself – the way you do it is the right way!

Emotional: Learn to say no! If you try to do more than you can handle, you will only end up frustrated and stressed out. If someone asks you to do something you absolutely can't do. Say No. At the very least, ask for help. And if you can't do it, explain why kindly, but firmly.

Day 30 – Saturday 30 April

Physical: Your body is the only one that you'll get, treat it better and it will reward you. Feed, water and let it out once in a while – change things up to keep it guessing!

Mental: Complete our Individual Stress Test to see if your score has improved over the past 30 days!

Emotional: Take a moment to check in and look inwards. How are you feeling now your 30-day challenge is complete? What are you looking forward to from the next 30 days?

Remember to be kind to yourself and others: you're only here to do the very best you can... that's it, very well done!