SECURE CORTEX

Helping organisations thrive.

Supporting Remote & Hybrid Workers



Practical ways to stay connected, healthy and productive wherever you work.

PRACTICAL
Real-world strategies you can use every day.

CONNECT
Build stronger relationships and reduce isolation.

THRIVE
Boost your wellbeing, manage stress and stay productive.

PERFORM
Healthier people create stronger teams and results.

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Small actions.
Big impact.

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CONTENTS

Everything you need to support mental wellbeing for remote and hybrid workers.

- Welcome 03
- Why Remote & Hybrid Working Matters 04
- Common Challenges 05
- The Remote Work Wellbeing Wheel 06
- Staying Connected & Managing Isolation 07
- Creating Healthy Boundaries 08
- The Remote Work Battery 09
- Self-Care That Actually Works 10
- Your Healthy Working Week (worksheet) 11
- When to Seek Help 12
- Continue Supporting Your Wellbeing 13
- Help & Support 14
- Support Organisations 15



> When we support each other, whether over a screen or in the office, we all flourish.

Use this guide to build practical habits, reduce stress, stay connected and create a healthier work-life balance, wherever you work.

This guide will help you:

Protect
Safeguard your mental wellbeing.

Manage
Handle challenges with confidence.

Connect
Build stronger relationships.

Thrive
Stay motivated, focused & productive.

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WELCOME

Wellbeing Support for the Flexible Future of Work



Hello and welcome. Thanks for downloading this guide. Whether you're supporting a remote or hybrid teammate, or looking for ways to support your own wellbeing while working flexibly, you're in the right place.

I'm Richard McQuirke, Counsellor and founder of Secure Cortex. Our mission is to deliver focused, actionable workshops that quickly and sustainably boost mental wellbeing – no matter where people work from.

This guide is packed with practical strategies, self-care tools, and real-world tips to help you stay connected, manage stress, build resilience and maintain a healthy balance.

Remote and hybrid working can bring incredible flexibility and freedom. With the right support and habits, it can also support strong mental wellbeing, better performance and a more fulfilling work life.

The purpose of this guide

The shift to remote and hybrid working has changed the way we work – and the challenges that come with it.

This guide is designed to help you understand those challenges and give you practical tools to protect your mental wellbeing, build healthy habits and thrive wherever you work.

Whether you're new to remote work or have years of experience, we hope this guide supports you every step of the way.

Inside, you'll find:

Practical Strategies
Simple, effective ways to support your mental wellbeing.

Connection Tips
Ideas to strengthen relationships and reduce isolation.

Self-Care Tools
Everyday practices to manage stress and recharge.

Actionable Exercises
Worksheets and checklists to help you put learning into action.

Support Resources
Information on when and where to seek help if you need it.

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Why Remote & Hybrid Working Matters for Mental Wellbeing



Remote and hybrid working have transformed the way we work.
They offer flexibility, autonomy and convenience but they can also create new pressures that affect our mental wellbeing.

Without the natural structure, social connection and boundaries of a traditional workplace,
it can be harder to switch off, stay motivated and feel supported.

Looking after mental wellbeing isn't just about feeling good
it's essential for sustaining energy, focus, creativity and resilience in the long term.

When mental wellbeing is prioritised,
individuals thrive, teams perform better and organisations benefit from higher engagement, lower absence and a healthier, more positive culture.

> **The future of work is flexible. Our wellbeing support should be too.**

This guide will help you understand the unique challenges of remote and hybrid working and give you practical tools to protect your mental wellbeing, build healthy habits and thrive wherever you work.

Strong mental wellbeing helps you to:

Manage Stress
Build resilience and cope better with everyday pressures.

Stay Connected
Maintain relationships and feel part of a team.

Boost Productivity
Stay focused, motivated and get things done.

Create Balance
Protect your time, energy and personal wellbeing.

Feel More Fulfilled
Experience greater satisfaction in your work and life.

"Mental wellbeing isn't a luxury in remote and hybrid work. It's the foundation for sustainable success."

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Common Challenges



Remote and hybrid working can bring freedom and flexibility, but it can also come with challenges that affect our mental wellbeing.

Recognising these challenges is the first step towards managing them effectively.

Here are some of the most common challenges people face:

Isolation and Loneliness
Less face-to-face contact can lead to feelings of disconnection and loneliness.

Blurred Boundaries
It can be difficult to switch off when work and home life overlap.

Increased Stress and Pressure
Balancing workloads, deadlines and personal responsibilities can feel overwhelming.

Burnout and Fatigue
Long hours, constant availability and lack of recovery time can drain energy and motivation.

Lack of Structure and Routine
Without a clear routine, it can be harder to stay focused and productive.

Communication Challenges
Misunderstandings and feeling out of the loop can impact confidence and team connection.

Changes in Motivation and Engagement
It can be harder to stay motivated and feel engaged when working remotely.

Remember

These challenges are common, and you're not alone in experiencing them. The good news is, there are practical ways to manage and overcome them.

In this guide, you'll discover:

- Simple strategies to protect your mental wellbeing
- Tools to set healthy boundaries and reduce stress
- Practical tips to stay connected, motivated and resilient

Small changes can make a big difference.

By understanding these challenges and taking proactive steps, you can create a healthier, more balanced and fulfilling remote or hybrid working experience.

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The Remote Work Wellbeing Wheel

Wellbeing is made up of many connected parts. When we nurture each area, we build balance, resilience and long term happiness.

This wheel highlights eight key areas that support your mental wellbeing while working remotely or in a hybrid environment.

Take a moment to reflect on each area. Where are you feeling strong? Where could you use a little more support?



There is no perfect balance every day. Small, consistent actions in these areas can make a big difference to how you feel and perform.

How to use the wheel

REFLECT
Take a few minutes to think about how you're feeling in each area.

RATE YOURSELF
Use a scale of 1–5 (1 = struggling, 5 = thriving).

IDENTIFY ONE FOCUS
Choose one area to improve this week.

TAKE SMALL ACTIONS
Small steps every day create lasting change.

"You don't have to do everything perfectly. You just have to keep taking small steps towards your wellbeing."

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Staying Connected & Managing Isolation

Working remotely can offer flexibility and freedom, but it can also feel isolating at times. Connection is a key part of our wellbeiing.

We all need a sense of belonging, and it is something we can actively nurture, even from a distance.

Why connection matters

Strong social connections can:

- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Boost mood and motivation
- Improve resilience
- Increase job satisfaction and engagement
- Support better physical health

Common challenges

Lack of daily interaction
Fewer casual conversations and spontaneous check-ins.

Feeling disconnected
Being physically apart can lead to feeling "out of the loop".

Loneliness and low mood
Long periods of isolation can impact emotional wellbeing.

Video fatigue
Too many virtual meetings can be exhausting and less fulfilling.

Blurring of boundaries
Always being at home can reduce feelings of connection with work and others.

Practical ways to stay connected

Schedule regular check-ins
Set up regular 1:1s or team catch-ups. It helps build relationships and trust.

Create informal moments
Start meetings with a quick personal check-in or use a virtual coffee break.

Reach out intentionally
Don't wait to be invited. A quick message to a colleague can make a big difference.

Make time outside of work
Connect with friends and family. Protect time for the people who matter to you.

Join communities
Be part of professional networks, interest groups or online communities.

Move and connect
Go for a walk and call a friend or join a local group activity.

Share how you're feeling
Being open about how you feel can encourage others to do the same.

Get out and about
Work from different environments when you can. A change of scene helps.

When isolation starts to impact you

It's important to pay attention to the signs:

- Feeling persistently lonely or low
- Loss of motivation or interest
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling disconnected from colleagues
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Withdrawing from others

You are not alone

Talk to someone you trust, whether that's a colleague, manager, friend or family member. Reaching out is a sign of strength.

"Connection is not just about being with others. It is about feeling seen, heard and valued."

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Creating Healthy Boundaries

Boundaries help protect your time, energy and wellbeing. They allow you to be fully present in your work, while also making space for rest, relationships and the things that matter to you.

Clear boundaries are not about saying "no" all the time. They are about saying "yes" to what matters most.

Why boundaries matter

Healthy boundaries can help you:

- Reduce stress and prevent burnout
- Improve focus and productivity
- Protect your personal time
- Build better relationships
- Maintain your health and wellbeing

Key boundaries to consider

TIME BOUNDARIES
Set clear start and finish times for your workday and stick to them. Your time is valuable.

TECHNOLOGY BOUNDARIES
Decide when and how you will check emails and messages to avoid constant interruptions.

PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES
Create a workspace that helps you focus and signal to others when you're working.

RELATIONSHIP BOUNDARIES
Communicate your needs clearly and respect the boundaries of others.

ENERGY BOUNDARIES
Protect your energy by making time for rest, recovery and the things you enjoy.

Practical tips to create healthy boundaries

Set your working hours
Agree your core hours with your manager and let others know when you're available.

Use tools to protect your focus
Use 'Do Not Disturb', turn off non-urgent notifications and batch your communications.

Create visual signals
Use a sign, headphones or a closed door to let others know when you're in focus mode.

Schedule breaks and personal time
Block time for breaks, exercise, hobbies and family. Protect these times.

Communicate your boundaries
Be clear and kind when sharing your availability and needs with colleagues and family.

Be mindful of others' boundaries
Respect when others are offline or not available. Good boundaries go both ways.

Check in with yourself
Regularly ask: "What do I need right now?" Adjust your boundaries as needed.

Give yourself permission
You don't have to be available all the time. Rest is productive.

Start small

Choose one boundary to focus on this week. Small steps create lasting change.

Boundaries are an act of self-respect. They help you thrive, not just survive.

Try this

Write down one boundary you want to strengthen.
Share it with someone you trust.
Hold yourself accountable.

You deserve balance.
You deserve boundaries.

> *Boundaries are the distance at which I can love you and me simultaneously.*
> – *Prentis Hemphill*

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The Remote Work Battery



Just like your phone or laptop, your energy isn't unlimited. Throughout the day, different things drain or recharge your battery.

The key is to become aware of what uses your energy, and what helps you recharge.

Why it matters

Managing your energy (not just your time) helps you:

- Stay focused and productive
- Reduce stress and overwhelm
- Make better decisions
- Feel calmer and more in control
- Sustain your wellbeing long term

Your battery levels

Check in with yourself regularly. How is your battery feeling right now?

VERY LOW
Exhausted, overwhelmed, struggling to cope.

LOW
Tired, unmotivated, irritable, not as productive.

MODERATE
Managing okay, but energy dips are starting.

GOOD
Focused, positive, handling things well.

FULL
Energised, resilient, performing at your best.

Aim to spend more of your time in the **GOOD** and **FULL** zones.

Common energy drainers

These can quickly deplete your battery:

- **Constant email and message interruptions**
  Context switching drains focus and energy.
- **Back-to-back virtual meetings**
  Little time to think, process or recover.
- **Unclear priorities and unrealistic deadlines**
  Create stress and mental overload.
- **Poor boundaries between work and home**
  Always "on" leads to exhaustion.
- **Negativity and worrying**
  Focus on problems, not possibilities.

Common energy boosters

These help recharge and sustain you:

- **Natural light and time outside**
  Even a short break can lift your mood and energy.
- **Movement and stretching**
  Boosts energy, improves focus and reduces tension.
- **Regular breaks and downtime**
  Step away to rest your mind and body.
- **Positive connections**
  Meaningful conversations energise and uplift.
- **Doing things that you enjoy**
  Fuel your motivation and sense of purpose.

Quick ways to recharge

BREATHE
Take 3 slow, deep breaths. Reset.

MOVE
Stand up, stretch or take a short walk.

HYDRATE
Drink some water. Dehydration drains energy.

STEP OUTSIDE
Get fresh air and natural light.

CONNECT
Message a friend or have a quick chat.

PLAN
Focus on 1–3 priorities for the day.

BE KIND
To yourself. Small acts matter.

Top tip

Check in with your battery at least twice a day. Make adjustments early, before you hit empty.

You don't have to be on 100% all the time. The goal is **balance, not perfection.**

"Protect your energy the way you protect your time. You can't pour from an empty battery. Recharge so you can thrive."

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Self-Care That Actually Works

Self-care isn't selfish – it's essential.
It helps you manage stress, build resilience and show up as your best self, both at work and in life.

The key is choosing self-care that fits your life, your needs and your values.



Why self-care matters

Regular self-care can help you:

- Reduce stress and prevent burnout
- Improve your mood and energy
- Increase focus and productivity
- Build resilience and confidence
- Support your overall health
- Create a better work–life balance

What self-care really is (and isn't)

Self-care IS:

- Actions that support your physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.
- Setting boundaries and saying no.
- Resting, recharging and doing things that bring you joy.
- Small, consistent actions that make a big difference.

Self-care ISN'T:

- Being perfect or doing everything.
- Ignoring your responsibilities.
- Buying things to fix how you feel.
- A one-time treat that doesn't support your wellbeing long term.

Self-care is more than bubble baths – it's looking after all areas of you.

PHYSICAL

- Move your body
- Eat nourishing food
- Sleep well
- Stay hydrated

MENTAL

- Take breaks
- Limit information overload
- Engage in hobbies
- Practice mindfulness

EMOTIONAL

- Notice and name your feelings
- Practice self-compassion
- Express how you feel

SOCIAL

- Stay connected
- Build meaningful relationships
- Ask for support

SPIRITUAL

- Connect with what matters to you
- Spend time in nature
- Practice gratitude

Build your own self-care plan

Make it practical and personal.

1. **KNOW YOURSELF**
   What helps you feel calm, recharged and happy?
2. **CHOOSE SMALL ACTIONS**
   Pick 1–3 simple things you can do regularly.
3. **SCHEDULE IT**
   Put it in your diary. Your wellbeing deserves time too.
4. **REVIEW AND ADAPT**
   Check in with what's working and adjust as needed.

Ideas to get you started

- Take a short walk
- Enjoy a good book
- Listen to music
- Do a 5-minute stretch
- Practice deep breathing
- Spend time outdoors
- Journal your thoughts
- Call a friend or loved one
- Cook a healthy meal
- Try a new hobby
- Unplug for an hour
- Do something creative

There is no one-size-fits-all.
The best self-care is the kind that works for you.

Permission to pause

You don't have to earn rest.
You don't have to feel guilty for taking care of yourself.

Start today

Choose one small action from this page and commit to it this week.
Your future self will thank you.

You matter.
Your wellbeing matters.
Make it a priority.

> *Self-care is how you take your power back.*
> *You can't pour from an empty cup.*
> *Take care of yourself first.*

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Your Healthy Working Week *(worksheet)*

Creating a healthy working week is about balance, not perfection. Use this worksheet to reflect on your current routine and plan small, positive changes that support your wellbeing.

Small changes this week can lead to big results over time.

How to use this worksheet

- Set aside 15–20 minutes for honest reflection.
- Complete each section.
- Choose 1–3 actions to focus on this week.
- Review and adjust regularly.
- Progress, not perfection.

You have the power to design a week that works for you.

1 CHECK IN: How is your current week looking?

Rate each area from 1 (needs attention) to 5 (strong)

Wellbeing (rest, stress management)	Workload (manageable, achievable)	Time (balanced use of time)	Connection (relationships and support)	Focus (concentration and productivity)	Energy (physical and mental energy)
1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

What's one area you'd most like to improve? _____

2 PLAN: Design your healthy working week

What will you prioritise this week to support your wellbeing and productivity?

FOCUS AREA	WHAT WILL I DO?	WHEN WILL I DO IT?	HOW WILL IT HELP?
Wellbeing			
Work & Tasks			
Connection			
Energy			
Focus			

Remember:
Aim for progress, not perfection.
Choose actions you can realistically stick to.

This week, I will focus on:
1–3 key actions that will make the biggest difference for me.

Tips to keep in mind

Plan with purpose
When you plan your week, you protect your time and focus.

Be realistic
Build a week that works with your energy, not against it.

Include what matters
Make time for rest, connection and the things you enjoy.

Review and adjust
Your needs change. Review weekly and adapt as needed.

Celebrate progress
Small steps create meaningful change over time.

A healthy week supports a healthy you. You're worth the time.

3 REFLECT: End of week review

Take a few minutes at the end of the week to reflect on how it went.

What went well?
What am I proud of?

What was challenging?
What got in the way?

What will I do differently next week?
One small change I will make:

What am I grateful for?
Three things from this week:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My intention for next week:
I will...

My commitment

I commit to creating a week that supports my wellbeing, balances my priorities and allows me to thrive.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

You've got this.
One week at a time.

> *You don't have to do everything.*
> *You just have to do what matters most.*

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When to Seek Help

It's normal to feel stressed, overwhelmed or down sometimes. But when those feelings don't go away, or start to interfere with your daily life, it may be time to reach out for support.

Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.



Why seeking help matters

Getting support can help you:

- Feel better sooner
- Prevent things from getting worse
- Gain support and perspective
- Build coping strategies
- Improve your wellbeing and resilience
- Strengthen relationships
- Create positive change in your life

You are not alone, and help is available.

Signs it might be time to seek help

If several of these feel familiar and are lasting more than a few weeks, it may be time to reach out.

Persistent low mood
Feeling sad, empty or hopeless most of the time.

Constant worry
Racing thoughts, worry or feeling overwhelmed.

Exhaustion
Feeling physically and mentally drained, no matter how much you rest.

Sleep problems
Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep or sleeping too much.

Difficulty focusing
Struggling to concentrate, make decisions or remember things.

Changes in appetite
Eating much more or much less than usual.

Withdrawal
Pulling away from people, activities or things you usually enjoy.

Feeling irritable
Easily frustrated, on edge or short-tempered.

Loss of motivation
Losing interest in work, hobbies or goals.

Thoughts of self-harm
Thinking life isn't worth living or feeling like you want to disappear.

These feelings are not your fault. They are signs that you need support, not that you are failing.

Where and how to seek help

Talk to someone
A trusted friend, family member or colleague. Talking can be the first step to feeling better.

Use employee support
Many organisations offer Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) or wellbeing helplines. Check what's available to you.

Speak to a professional
A GP, counsellor or therapist can provide expert support and treatment options.

Online support
Reputable websites and online communities can offer information and peer support.

Charities and helplines
There are many organisations offering confidential help and advice (see alongside).

You don't have to have it all figured out.

Reaching out is the first step towards feeling like yourself again.

If you are in crisis

Please seek help immediately.

Call 999
if you are in immediate danger or at risk.

Samaritans
116 123 (UK & ROI)
24/7, free and confidential

Text SHOUT to 85258
for free, 24/7 support (UK)

Find local support
Search online for mental health services in your area.

Remember

Everyone goes through difficult times. *It's okay to ask for help.* You deserve support, and things can get better.

Be kind to yourself.
Reach out.
You matter.

> *You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.*
> – *Martin Luther King Jr.*

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Continue Supporting Your Wellbeing



> *Small steps every day lead to big change over time.*

Wellbeing isn't a one-off action – it's an ongoing journey. By making small, consistent choices, you can create habits that support your wellbeing and help you thrive, both at work and in life.

You have the power to take care of yourself today, tomorrow and every day.

Building habits that last

Try these simple strategies to keep your wellbeing front and centre:

Set intentions, not just goals
Focus on how you want to feel, not just what you want to achieve.

Start small
Tiny changes are easier to maintain and still make a big difference.

Make it a routine
Link positive habits to triggers in your day (e.g. after lunch, before bed).

Track your progress
Notice what improves your energy, mood and focus.

Be kind to yourself
Some days will be better than others – and that's okay.

Stay connected
Maintain relationships and reach out – connection is powerful.

Your wellbeing toolkit

Keep these tools handy and use them when you need them most.

- **Breathing exercises** – reset your mind and body in minutes.
- **Movement breaks** – get up, stretch, walk and re-energise.
- **Mindfulness moments** – be present, even for just a few breaths.
- **Journaling** – gain clarity and release stress.
- **Boundaries** – protect your time and energy.
- **Connection** – talk, share and don't suffer in silence.
- **Gratitude** – focus on what's going well.
- **Professional support** – don't hesitate to ask for help.

Keep learning & growing

Continue to invest in your wellbeing and development.

Access resources
Webinars, articles, podcasts and toolkits can inspire and support you.

Learn new skills
Build resilience, emotional intelligence and communication skills.

Seek feedback
Ask for support, reflect and be open to different perspectives.

Celebrate progress
Recognise your wins, no matter how small.

Your action plan

Choose 3 actions you will commit to this week.

MY 3 ACTIONS	WHEN WILL I DO IT?	HOW WILL IT HELP ME?
1		
2		
3		

Remember

Looking after your wellbeing helps you to show up as your best self – for you and for others.

You are capable.
You are resilient.
You are worth it.

Keep talking
Stay connected and keep the conversation going.

Keep caring
Look after yourself so you can keep thriving.

Keep going
You're making a difference every single day.

> *Take care of your mind, body and heart. They are your greatest assets.*

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Help & Support

Asking for help is one of the strongest things you can do.

You don't have to face things alone.
Help is available, and you deserve support.



> You don't have to have it all together all the time.
>
> Reaching out is a sign of strength, not weakness.

When might you benefit from support?

You need someone to listen
You may just need to talk things through.

You're struggling to switch off
Your thoughts won't stop and you feel on edge.

You're exhausted
You feel drained no matter how much you rest.

You're feeling isolated
You feel alone or like no one really understands.

You're finding life overwhelming
Everything feels too much and hard to manage.

Work pressures are becoming too much
Demands at work are affecting your wellbeing.

What happens when you ask for help?

1. **Reach out**
   Make contact with someone you trust or a professional service.
2. **Have a conversation**
   Talk openly about how you're feeling. You don't have to have all the answers.
3. **Explore what you need**
   Identify what support would help and what changes might make a difference.
4. **Decide what feels right**
   Look at your options together and choose the support that suits you best.
5. **Take one step at a time**
   Small steps can lead to big changes. You don't have to rush.

Remember...

You don't have to wait until you're in crisis before asking for help.
The earlier you reach out, the sooner things can start to feel better.

You are not alone.
Support can help you feel better, get back on track and move forward.
You matter. Help is here.

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Support Organisations

These organisations and services can offer confidential support, advice and guidance when you need it.

Reach out. You are not alone.

Samaritans

A safe place to talk about anything that's on your mind, any time, day or night.

- 116 123
- jo@samaritans.org
- www.samaritans.org

24/7, 365 days a year

Mind

Support for your mental health and wellbeing. Information, advice and local services.

- 0300 123 3393
- www.mind.org.uk

Mon–Fri 9am–6pm

SHOUT

Text service for anyone struggling to cope. Free, confidential mental health support.

- Text SHOUT to 85258
- www.giveusashout.org

24/7 free text support

NHS 111

Health advice and guidance from NHS professionals, 24 hours a day.

- 111
- www.111.nhs.uk

24/7 health advice

Your GP

Your first point of contact for health concerns. They can help, refer or signpost you.

- Contact your local GP practice directly.

During practice opening hours

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Confidential support for you and your family, often including counselling, advice and practical guidance.

- Contact your HR department for details.

Check what is available to you

Local Community Support

Local charities and community organisations can offer guidance, support and a listening ear.

- Search online or ask your local council for details.

Local support near you

If you are in crisis

Please seek help immediately.

Call 999	If you are in immediate danger or at risk.
Text SHOUT to 85258	for free, 24/7 support (UK)
Find local support	Search online for mental health services in your area.

Asking for help is a brave step.
Support can help you find a brighter path forward.
You matter. Help is here.

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Final Thoughts



You Are Not Alone.

Work may look different, but the pressures can feel just as real.

Looking after your mental wellbeing isn't a luxury – it's essential. It helps you feel better, work better and live better.

Small actions. Every day.
Big impact. Over time.

You matter.

Your wellbeing matters. Your experiences matter. Your needs matter. You have value – not just in the work that you do, but simply for being you.

Keep going with what helps

Know what helps you
Keep doing the things that support your wellbeing.

Make it part of your routine
Consistency is more powerful than perfection.

Stay connected
Relationships and support make a huge difference.

Check in regularly
Notice how you're feeling and don't ignore the signs.

Be kind to yourself
You wouldn't talk to a friend the way you talk to yourself.

Celebrate progress
Every small step forward is a step in the right direction.

> *Taking care of yourself isn't selfish.*
> *It's how you show up – for your work,*
> *for the people around you, and for your life.*

Remember...

- It's okay to not be okay.
- You don't have to have all the answers.
- Support is available.
- You deserve to feel well.
- You are capable of change.
- Better days are possible.

Thank you

for taking the time to invest in your wellbeing. We hope this guide has given you useful ideas, encouragement and support.

Be well.
You've got this.

Small actions today. Stronger tomorrow.
You matter. Help is here.

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