

Your guide to wellbeing

Thinking about wellbeing can be challenging. We often think that wellbeing means feeling good all the time, but even without lymphoma, daily life may have many challenges. Wellbeing is about balancing three things: having the skills and resources to manage challenges, being able to focus on the things that matter to us most, and being kind and compassionate to ourselves so we can live well.

Finding this balance can be tricky. Our brain likes to be 'better safe than sorry', so when we are faced with situations that are worrying, or make us feel low or anxious, it automatically switches into a 'safety mode' that can feel like being hijacked. Safety mode has just three settings: fight, flight or freeze/flop. This process is automatic and floods your body with adrenaline and cortisol to get you to safety quickly. But in 'safety mode' you can't think about what would help or what you need to do. There are different signs that tell us when we're in 'safety mode', including physical symptoms or having a very busy brain.

Signs of a busy brain are:

- worried thoughts
- 'should' and 'must' thoughts (I should have done this, I must do that)
- withdrawing or isolating
- struggling with memory or concentration
- being short tempered
- feeling tired but wired
- feeling exhausted.

It might be physical symptoms that alert you to being worried. A racing heart, sweating, stomach churning, tunnel vision, lack of energy, and snappiness, are all key indicators. The ideas on the following pages are aimed at helping you to get back control.

A thought diary can help you to spot and explore signs and patterns: things that trigger low mood or anxiety and things that improve your mood or manage worry (see ideas on pages 18 and 19). Often we think are doing nothing, but if you keep an activity diary for a couple of days you may well see that you are probably achieving far more than you think. Along with the wellbeing diary (page 18), these tools can help you to plan, and find the recharge points and balance that are so important for wellbeing.

Wellbeing diary

Finding your wellbeing balance can be a challenge when you are affected by lymphoma

A wellbeing PACE-ing diary can help you to notice the things you are doing that help, the things you might want to do more of and areas where you might need some help. You might notice that many things you do fall into a number of the areas.

PACE stands for Physical and health, Achievements, Connections and Enjoyment.

Physical and health	Went for a walk, had 8 hours sleep
Achievements	Baked a cake, helped kids with homework
Connections	Attended a support group, had coffee with a friend
Enjoyment	Read a book, went out for lunch, enjoyed the garden

Monday

Physical and health
Achievements
Connections
Enjoyment

Tuesday

Physical and health
Achievements
Connections
Enjoyment

Wednesday

Physical and health
Achievements
Connections
Enjoyment

Thursday

Physical and health
Achievements
Connections
Enjoyment

Friday

Physical and health
Achievements
Connections
Enjoyment

Saturday

Physical and health
Achievements
Connections
Enjoyment

Sunday

Physical and health
Achievements
Connections
Enjoyment

My wellbeing plan

When you are feeling very stressed, low or upset, it can be hard to remember what you have found to be helpful, and who is there to support you

Making a note of these things and keeping it somewhere that's easy to find (perhaps a photo on your smart phone or a printed copy) can make it easier to recover your wellbeing balance at these times and decide what to do next.

What's happening now?

How I hit the pause and reset button is:

What helps to calm me or lift my mood is:

The people who help or support me are:

Some helpful contact numbers or websites are:

Things that recharge me are:

Ideas to help you pause

Rectangular breathing

You can do this in just a few seconds.

- Notice any rectangle around you (it could be the TV, a window, a book).
- On the short side of the rectangle, **take a normal breath in.**
- On the long side of the rectangle **take a long breath out** (maybe 3 seconds or more).
- **Feel your shoulders drop down.** This gives a message to your brain that you're not fighting any more.
- **Repeat five times.**

Focus on your surroundings

Think about other things, by focusing on your surroundings. Consider:

- 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.

Explore what worked before

It might help to write a list of what helped you before you had lymphoma.

What made you feel better if you were worried about something?

It may be going out for a walk, a run or a swim, gardening or simply enjoying the sun on your face.

To do lists

Lists can help with planning and bring a real sense of achievement. By crossing things off, you appreciate how much you have done. You can focus on the day, the month or even the year.

Four little questions

Ask yourself these questions to help you identify what is causing you worry and anxiety:

- **What can I notice in my body?**
(Heart racing, exhaustion, tension/pain, stomach churning)
- **What's going through my mind?**
(What if I have to start treatment, I can't do anything, things will never be normal)
- **What am I doing?**
(Being snappy, withdrawing, doing too much, ruminating)
- **How do I feel emotionally?**
(Scared, sad, lonely, angry, frustrated, worried)

Take your attention away from the threat

Have something else to focus on.

- Put something in your pocket, like those little yellow stretchy men or a pebble.
- Put an elastic band on your wrist and give it a little snap; it will give you something else to focus on.

