

Get ready for the pharmacy

Simple ways to prioritise your wellbeing
as a newly qualified pharmacist



PHARMACIST
SUPPORT

#ACTNOW

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Who is Pharmacist Support?

Pharmacist Support is an independent charity providing a variety of free and confidential support to those working and studying in pharmacy. We're dedicated to championing the wellbeing of our pharmacy family and that's why we're encouraging pharmacy trainees to #ACTNow.

What is #ACTNow?

We are encouraging pharmacy trainees to:

Allow time for wellbeing **Consider the needs of others** **Take action.**

At Pharmacist Support, we're keen advocates of the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. Evidence suggests that our mental health and wellbeing can improve through following 5 simple steps: connecting with others, being active, learning new skills, giving to others and taking notice of the present moment. The ACTNow campaign is designed around the 5 Ways to Wellbeing, helping you to become familiar with the concept and supporting you to prioritise wellbeing in your everyday life.

What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing is the state of having good mental health, high life satisfaction, a sense of meaning or purpose, and the ability to manage stress. It's important to realise that wellbeing is a much deeper concept than moment-to-moment happiness, and we must actively invest in it if we want to have sustained happiness, control of our emotions, higher productivity, and good physical health.

-  [PharmacistSupport.org](https://www.PharmacistSupport.org)
-  [PharmacistSupport](https://www.instagram.com/PharmacistSupport)
-  [PharmacistSupport](https://www.facebook.com/PharmacistSupport)
-  [PharmaSupport](https://twitter.com/PharmaSupport)
-  [Pharmacist-Support](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Pharmacist-Support)

Wellbeing when at work.

Making the transition from being a trainee to working full time as a qualified pharmacist is an exciting time. You may have mixed emotions – people often experience excitement and nervousness and even some anxiety as they experience major life changes like moving into professional life.

Feeling nervous or anxious when experiencing change is natural, as you will be confronting new situations and bearing new responsibilities.

This pack aims to give you some useful tips and tools as you move from being a trainee to a fully qualified pharmacist, and to be a source of guidance on coping with challenges you might encounter when in the pharmacy.

We will also explore ways to look after your wellbeing and mental health as you start your journey in your new career. We will explore resilience and self-care, as well as managing stress and avoiding burnout. We hope you enjoy this pack and find it useful on your journey.

At times, working in a pharmacy setting can be stressful, so to help patients and support your colleagues, it's important you take simple steps to focus on your wellbeing.

1. Create a safe and healthy working environment

Take the time to arrange your work area to support a safe and effective way of working. Remember to also stay hydrated by having enough to drink throughout the day.

2. Take breaks

As highlighted in the PDA's Safer Pharmacies Charter, pharmacists must be able to take at least their statutory and contractual breaks and rest periods, and additional breaks as required to meet their professional obligations.

While on your breaks, making sure you disconnect physically and mentally is vital for your wellbeing.

3. Prioritise your time

If you are feeling overwhelmed by your workload and can't see a solution, try listing all the things you need to do in order of priority. This may sound simple but creating a 'to-do' list is one of the easiest and most beneficial ways to manage your time effectively.

4. Be assertive when needed

A responsible pharmacist finds the confidence to explain things firmly, fairly and with empathy, with both colleagues and customers. It doesn't come easily to everyone, but being assertive can improve morale and leave everyone feeling their needs have been considered.

6. Don't accept abuse

NHS and community pharmacy employers have commitments to zero tolerance of violence, which includes abuse. It is the employer who is primarily responsible for ensuring that risk reduction measures are in place, so it is important to ensure that you are aware of the procedures in your workplace and report any patient that is abusive.

7. Book time off when needed

We all have limits on our energy and output. In our busy lives, these limits can be tested the more we push ourselves to meet daily tasks, deadlines and objectives.

If we continue beyond our fatigue point, performance is likely to drop and we can become affected by negative stress. Errors may become more likely and so it is not wise to "soldier on" and risk the consequences.

This guide was developed in partnership with the PDA.

Balance your work life and rest time.

Taking time out to look after yourself is about eating and sleeping well, exercising and knowing your worth.

If we don't manage our time, it might lead to feelings of stress, which can have a profound effect on our thoughts, feelings and behaviour.

Recognise your own personal warning signs

Stress can cause us to feel anxious, out of control and unable to cope. We might start to feel irritable, withdraw from others, notice increased worrying or a negative impact on our self-esteem.

When feelings of stress become too intense and prolonged, it can lead to more serious symptoms and problems such as anxiety, depression, headaches, weight gain/loss, sleep disturbance, sweating, abdominal pain, chest pain and panic attacks.

So how can you prevent feelings of stress when you're at work?

Learn to prioritise and manage your time

If you are feeling overwhelmed with your workload or responsibilities and cannot see a solution, try listing all the things you need to do and then prioritise them.

Ask yourself, is there anything you can remove from your list? Identify what tasks you might be able to push back to a later date.

Maintain a work/life balance

Starting a new job and learning the ropes are likely to take up a significant amount of your time and mental energy. It's important to find a balance between giving your new job your undivided attention while you are working, and drawing a line under it when you finish for the day.

At the end of your shift, it may be useful for you to write up a 'to do' list for the next day so you can leave work feeling reassured that nothing will be forgotten and you can fully switch off.

Have some 'me time'

It is important to take some time just for you, to socialise, relax or exercise. Prioritise this time.

Try our self-care planner

Our planner can help you to visualise your routine, map out your work time, and build in time for self-care.

Remember that self-care is not just an optional add-on. It can be essential to maintaining your sense of wellbeing and managing stress.

Fancy making your own self-care planner?

[Download a blank version here.](#)

Self-care ACTION planner.



Monday

Make a plan

Take some time to plan out your priorities for the week. Our [168 Hours resource](#) can help you to prioritise both your work and your wellbeing.

Tuesday

Cook something

Turn up the music and make something delicious. It's great to make extra so you have something quick and healthy to grab when you are busy.

Wednesday

Be mindful

Make a hot drink and notice everything about it. The sound of the kettle as it boils, the look of the steam, the smell and taste of the tea. Savour the moment.

Thursday

Say thank you

Write down three people who have helped you and take the time to thank them, either by email, phone, or in-person.

Friday

Laugh

Whether it's watching your favourite sitcom or calling a friend, engage in an activity that makes you laugh until your belly hurts.

Saturday

Be proactive

Do something you've been putting off, even if it's as small as changing a lightbulb. Completing a task that you've been putting off can give your wellbeing an extra boost.

Sunday

Check out

Leave your phone in another room and do something for pleasure. Have a bath or shower, pull out a (non-academic!) book you've been meaning to read and relax.

How to use this planner

Do one small positive thing for yourself every day. By actively prioritising self-care now, you are investing in sustained wellbeing for your future.

Passive, aggressive or assertive?

How do you usually respond to other people's ideas, opinions, concerns and criticisms?

By identifying your communication style, you can start taking steps to being more assertive in your responses. Being assertive means that you can make yourself heard clearly, openly and honestly. It can help lower stress and anxiety, and demonstrate that you understand everyone's needs and values are equal.



In the words of a trainee pharmacist.



Hi! I'm Andrew, currently working a band 6 role in Newcastle Hospitals and last year I completed my trainee pharmacist foundation year at Northumbria Hospitals. I was also the Secretary General of the BPSA from 2019 to 2020.

I started using Headspace just before Christmas 2019 because my mental health was suffering. I had been turned down for two jobs that I wanted and was having a tough time in my trainee placement which was making me feel generally quite down and devoid of confidence.

Stress was stopping me sleeping, I was beating myself up all the time and couldn't think clearly which was affecting my work.

I'd not really been drawn to practicing meditation or mindfulness, it was my Mam who suggested that I try it because she found it useful. Being the most well-known app for mindfulness, I decided to give Headspace a try.

**Meet Andrew,
a trainee pharmacist
from 2019-2020
at Northumbria
Hospitals, now in
a band six role at
Newcastle Hospitals.**

The main features of the app are recorded guided meditations, but there are other functions such as 'sleepcasts' to help you get to sleep and some recordings for exercise. The meditations are broken up into specific packs depending on their aims, including stress, focus, grief, exams and loads more.

I started by doing the 'basics' pack of meditations, which teach you how to start doing regular sessions and have some nice, useful animations to help visualise the process. I then moved on to further packs as I progressed.

Starting Headspace can be difficult and requires a commitment to find 10 minutes regularly (ideally every day), to practice mindfulness.

You won't be a zen-master overnight, but I certainly noticed progress within a few days. It helped me to clear my head, sleep better, and be a lot more realistic and less self-critical in my thoughts, which definitely improved my mood, focus and confidence.

I found the 'sleep casts' really useful as I was often lying awake with my mind racing or worrying. They basically consist of someone reading a story, but the stories are relaxing and keep you from focusing on anything while you try to drift off.

Sleepcasts don't require any skill or practice so they can be used by anyone, with meditation experience or not.

I took a number of steps over the following months to improve my mental wellbeing, including using the 'Listening Friends' service offered by Pharmacist Support, but having a method of switching off for a few minutes was, and still is, an invaluable tool.

I still use the app when I feel I need to, finding 10 minutes in a lunch hour is doable and sometimes really helps on those stressful days!

"Headspace helped me to clear my head, sleep better, and be a lot more realistic and less self-critical in my thoughts, which definitely improved my mood, focus and confidence."

Build resilience.

The great news is that resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. It involves behaviors, thoughts and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone.

Let's explore some areas we can strengthen in our lives in order to increase our resilience.

- We are more resilient to stress when we do things that we love. You can think of this as your daily dose of pleasure.

- Good relationships and accepting help and support from others can help us to be more resilient.

- Mindset helps too, so try to see crises as challenges that can be figured out and overcome. Try to visualise what you want instead of worrying about what you fear.

- Keep moving towards goals, even in a small way. You may ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"

- Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.

- Keep things in perspective. Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective.

It is worth remembering that stress is not always bad. When we perceive stressful situations as a challenge rather than a threat, stress can lead to excitement, positive motivation and better performance, and can help build resilience.

In order to gain resilience, we need to have experienced some adversity in our lifetimes, so it can help to embrace stressors and see them as opportunities to grow!

You can use the resource opposite to help you to build resilience into your life.

To be resilient is to adapt well in the face of adversity.

We can think of it as being able to "bounce back" from difficult experiences.

Monday

Establish goals.

Think about some goals you may want to set yourself. What steps do you need to take to achieve your goals and what support might you need to achieve them?

Tuesday

Be optimistic.

Develop a positive mantra to use to change the way you currently think and feel this week.

Wednesday

Feel inspired by the success of others.

Ask a colleague who you look up to for advice.

My weekly resilience planner

This weekly planner outlines seven key characteristics of resilience. Introduce one small action each day to nurture your self-confidence and make small but simple positive changes to the way you respond to stressful situations.

Thursday

Know your strengths and have confidence in them.

Write down three of your strengths.

Friday

View feedback as constructive. Ask a colleague to tell you one thing you could improve.

Saturday

Make time for yourself. Do an activity you enjoy.

Sunday

Connect with others.

How can you build on and improve your social networks?



Managing your time is not only about completing all of your tasks, but also **making time for you.**

Some of us may be more organised by nature but managing our time is a skill that can be learnt with a few simple strategies.

Be intentional.

Keeping a to-do list is one of the easiest and most powerful ways to become more productive and efficient with your time.

Be disciplined.

The golden rule is to do the thing you least want to do first. Then throughout the day, identify potential distractions and manage them before they arise.

Be refreshed.

A series of short breaks throughout the day can help give your brain that well needed rest and improve accuracy. Breaks allow you to achieve more than if you try and work all day.

Be assertive.

Managing your time well isn't so you can take on more (and other people's) work. Saying 'no' is an important part of managing your time.

It isn't selfish or rude. It helps manage expectations and is considerate to yourself and your valuable time.

Be smart with your time.

Be realistic

If you don't have time for a task, reach out to another team member who can support you with it.

Allow time for wellbeing.

Looking after your wellbeing is as important as all of the goals you have to achieve.

Allowing yourself time to switch off and relax, connect with people, engage in conversation, take notice of the world around you and learn something new can help manage your stress and boost your self-esteem.

This is an excerpt from our [Time Management self study module on our Wardley Wellbeing Hub.](#)



Manage stress and prevent burn out.

Making yourself aware of stress management and the risks of burn out ahead of time can help you to feel prepared.

It can also prevent you from feeling overwhelmed and finding yourself in a place of burnout.

It's important to be aware of stress and burn out, and looking at stress management is key. On an individual level one thing we can focus on is ensuring we have adequate space during the day for rest and recovery, both during work and after work.

This includes doing enjoyable activities on days off and by taking holidays. It can also mean taking time to do something relaxing and rejuvenating – this is highly individual and could be anything from taking a bath, reading a book for pleasure, or going for a walk to even washing the car!

Sometimes taking breaks during the workday can feel difficult but taking time to decompress during the day can be essential for mental health.

Getting outside and being in natural light has tremendous benefit for reducing stress and improving sleep, as does taking exercise.

If you can get outside for a walk during your breaks, this can do a lot of good.

There are also several great mindfulness apps that can help to bring a sense of calm to your day, and can increase your feelings of control.

Making sure to take part in exercise you enjoy can be hugely beneficial in terms of burnout prevention and has positive knock-on effects for sleep, mental health, fitness, and even social connection if you find ways of exercising with others.

Connecting with others and finding ways to combat feelings of isolation can provide very important benefits to mental health, and this is one area where the workplace can really help by providing a source of support and friendship.

Give back.

“I believe if you put positivity out into the world, hopefully it will start a domino effect of positivity so it flourishes from all angles.”

Sureena, a pharmacist and curator of Sureena Speaks, shares with us why she set up her YouTube channel to help trainee pharmacists, and why continuing to give whilst working in the pharmacy is so important.

My name is Sureena and I create videos on my YouTube channel called Sureena Speaks. The videos support MPharm students, trainee pharmacists and established pharmacists, and anyone really who's interested in knowing more about medicines, plus some sprinkle of motivation along the way.

Later this year will mark five years since embarking on this journey and I do often get asked why do I take time out to make these videos and why did I start this channel?

I guess it stems from my own trainee experience, the word I use to describe the year is, well, overwhelming. Trying to balance work life, social life and fit revision in between that time,

it just felt really overwhelming. And at the time I didn't feel like there were many accessible resources available.

I wanted to create something in a format and a way in which I feel I would have benefited from, in the hope that it will benefit others.

Over time, I have thoroughly enjoyed being part of trainee pharmacists' journeys, engaging with them from when they embark on their pre-reg year, or now as it will be known foundation training year, and seeing them through to becoming newly qualified pharmacists.

And even at times time consoling those who may not have been successful in the assessment and trying to motivate them. I genuinely want to see people flourish and I believe if you put positivity out into the world, hopefully it will start a domino effect of positivity so it flourishes from all angles.



I never take for granted when someone sends me a kind message. The fact that someone would even think 'Oh, I want to thank Sureena for making that video' but then actually takes time out of their day to do so means so much.

That act of kindness and that act of giving, means everything to me.

I screenshot positive messages and keep them in a folder to reflect on because it really does feel like a gift. It motivates me to continue making content.

For me personally, I found the first lockdown the most challenging. In all honesty, I was not motivated to make any videos because I just wasn't in the head space to do so.

What took me out of that headspace was those kind messages. It was what others gave to me that I wanted to reciprocate.

I have been in contact with some truly amazing people and hearing the stories that some trainee pharmacists have had to go through to get to the position that they're currently in really grounds me.

Within the small world of pharmacy, giving is so important.

By supporting or advising a pharmacy colleague or patient, you could really spark something in them to pass on that act of giving.

That act of giving helps the recipient but it also helps your own wellbeing and centres you.

So, thank you for taking the time out of your day to read this. A question I want to leave you with is this: what can you give today that will benefit someone else tomorrow?

As a pharmacist, you will spend your whole career looking after others and we understand it may be difficult to prioritise yourself and find time for wellbeing.

This pack is to help you to become familiar with the concept of wellbeing and show how easy it can be to incorporate simple wellbeing activities into your everyday life.

Your journey to good and sustained wellbeing doesn't need to end here. If you would like more support, guidance, activities and inspiration, head over to our [Wardley Wellbeing Hub](#).

The Wardley Wellbeing Hub is dedicated to your wellbeing needs, providing you with information and practical resources to prioritise and manage your physiological, psychological and emotional health.

-  PharmacistSupport.org
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Your journey to wellbeing starts **today.**



Wardley Wellbeing HUB