

Keep learning.

Wellbeing tips and tools
for pharmacy students.

#ACTNOW



PHARMACIST
SUPPORT

Who is Pharmacist Support?

Pharmacist Support is an independent charity providing a wide variety of free and confidential support services to those working and studying in pharmacy. We provide thousands of acts of support every year and we're dedicated to championing the wellbeing of our pharmacy family. That's why we're encouraging pharmacy students to #ACTNow.

What is #ACTNow?

Through the ACTNow campaign we are encouraging pharmacy students 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 physically active, learning new skills, giving to others and taking notice of the present moment. The ACTNow campaign is specifically 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.pharmacist-support.org)

 [PharmacistSupport](https://www.instagram.com/pharmacist-support)

 [PharmacistSupport](https://www.facebook.com/pharmacist-support)

 [PharmaSupport](https://twitter.com/pharmacist-support)

 [Pharmacist-Support](https://www.linkedin.com/company/pharmacist-support)

We're proud to be able to support people from such a caring profession.

We'll never give up on what we like to call our pharmacy family.



Balance your study time and rest time.

It might feel difficult to find time to prioritise your wellbeing when you're juggling university deadlines, exams and placements.

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

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 while you're studying at university or on your placement?

Learn to prioritise and manage your time

If you are feeling overwhelmed with your studies or placement 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.

Study and placement stress

Study and placement stress can be a significant source of stress. Try to work regular hours and take breaks. Make your work environment as comfortable as you can.

Maintain a study/life balance

Revision, studying and reading are likely to take up a significant amount of your time, so it's important to find a balance between giving it your undivided attention while you are studying, and drawing a line under it when you decide to call it a day.

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 time for revision and work, 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 Revision Planner can help you to prioritise both your studies 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 revising.

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.

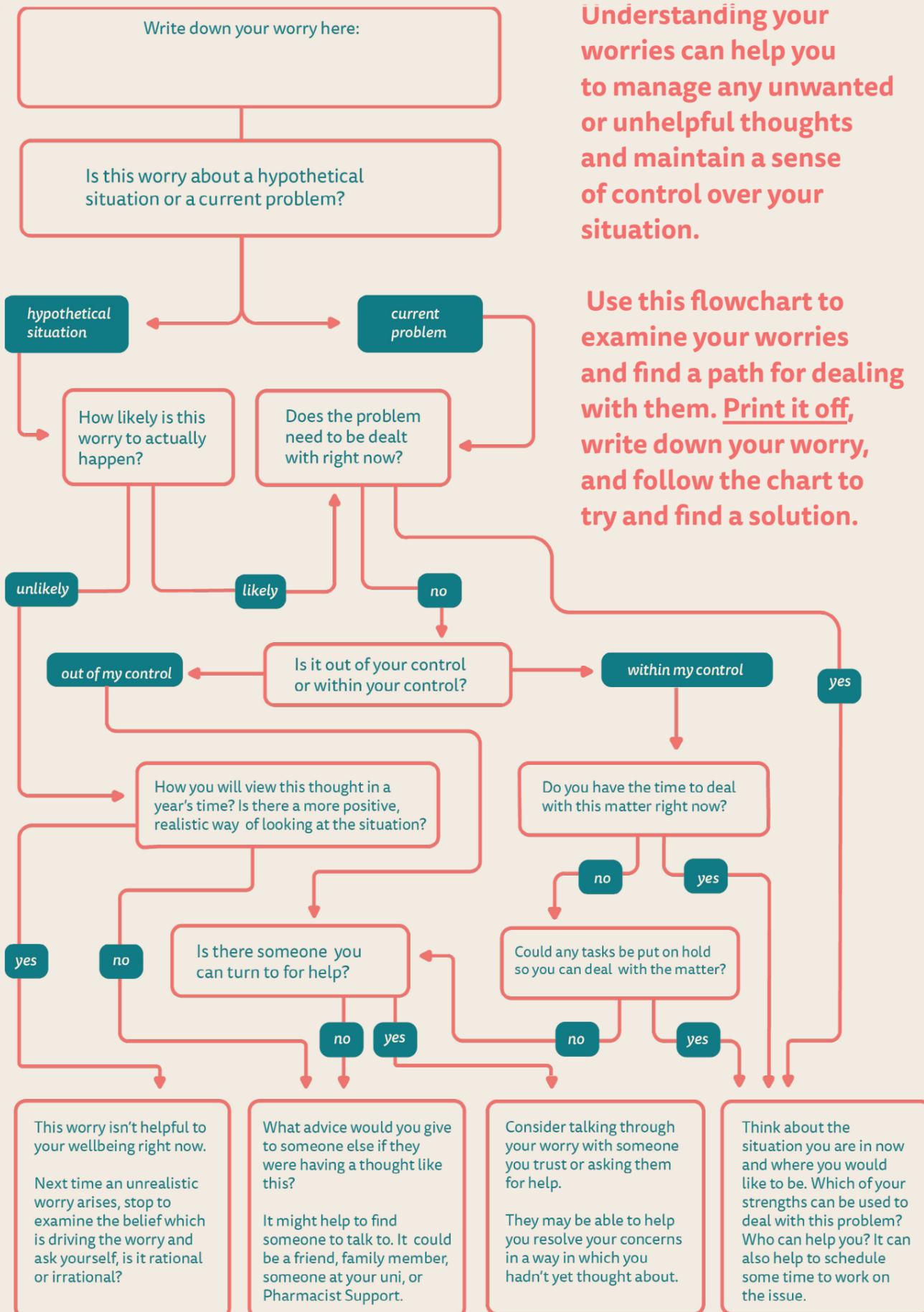
How to use this planner

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

Stay organised.

Use our revision planner to make sure you are balancing your revision time with activities inspired by the 5 ways to wellbeing: **Take Notice**, **Be Active**, **Give**, **Keep Learning** and **Connect**.
Fancy making your own? [Download a blank version here.](#)

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
08:00		Take Notice When you have a cup of tea this morning, take a moment to really notice how the heat of the liquid feels as it is warming your throat.	Be Active Integrate fitness into your day by doing press ups while waiting for your toast!	Give Who can you surprise with a cup of tea this morning?	Take Notice Really notice how your breakfast smells and tastes. Have a mindful morning.		
09:00	Revision	Revision	Revision	Revision	Revision	Keep Learning Learn a new hobby. Are you interested in pottery? Have you always wanted to play the drums? Do you want to learn to paint with watercolours? There are so many options for online learning at the moment and websites like Skillshare offer some great free courses covering many areas.	Connect Did you know that social media can actually increase feelings of loneliness? Make space for real connection with others by putting down your phone and meeting a friend for a walk. It helps our wellbeing in so many ways – with connection, with getting exercise and reducing stress, and getting out into the light can even help with sleep.
10:00							
11:00	Take Notice Why not take a moment to focus on your breath while the kettle boils? This is mindfulness in action!	Revision	Revision	Revision	Revision		
12:00	Be Active Play a sport, go for a run or a walk, do yoga... the list of possibilities is endless. But whatever you do, make sure it's fun! You are much more likely to stick with exercise if you find it enjoyable.	Give Giving doesn't always have to be about money. Ever considered volunteering or fundraising for charity? Spend your lunch looking into the different ways you can give your time to help others.	Take Notice During lunch, take a moment to really look at your food, smell it, notice its texture. Then when you take each bite, notice what textures and tastes are present. Really noticing what you are eating.	Connect Go for a walk at lunch and call someone who you haven't spoken to for a while. It's surprising how much further you can walk when you're engrossed in a good conversation!	Keep Learning Why not listen to a podcast while you prepre and eat your lunch today? Podcasts are a great source of information and cover just about every sort of interest.		
13:00	Revision	Revision	Revision	Revision	Revision	Connect Joining clubs, book groups, and exercise classes are a great ways to meet and connect with others. Online clubs and classes can provide a good substitute for the time being if you're missing that in-person connection.	Give When was the last time you sent someone a letter? Why not surprise a friend or family member with a treat in the post?
14:00							
15:00	Keep Learning	Be Active					
16:00	Take a break by reading a book about something that isn't pharmacy related.	Draw a line under your revision time by getting your body moving.		Take Notice Finish your day with a mindfulness activity, there are some great videos on YouTube.			Keep Learning Short of social plans? Get comfortable and check out a documentary on Netflix tonight.
17:00	Revision	Go for a walk, run or see how many squats you can do in five minutes!			Give Why not cook a healthy and delicious meal for someone tonight?		
18:00							



Understanding your worries can help you to manage any unwanted or unhelpful thoughts and maintain a sense of control over your situation.

Use this flowchart to examine your worries and find a path for dealing with them. Print it off, write down your worry, and follow the chart to try and find a solution.

Keep calm.

It's common to experience feelings of anxiety when one or more stressful events occur in your life. For example, adapting to life at university, a new placement or exams.

Moving away from home to study is, for many, the beginning of a whole new stage in life.

Being on your own can be overwhelming, and for some students it can be hard to control their worries on a daily basis.

Talking to others can help

Anxiety is a condition that can cause some of us to self-isolate and close off to others, but talking to people really can help. You may be surprised to find how many students share your concerns and how eager family, friends and tutors are to help.

Educate yourself

You may find that reading about anxiety can help you to understand what is happening and manage your triggers. [View our Anxiety self-study module on our wellbeing hub.](#)

Get active

Exercise can help manage physical and mental stress by reducing levels of stress hormones. Exercise also releases endorphins, which create feelings of happiness and euphoria. Studies have shown that exercise can even alleviate symptoms of

clinical depression and anxiety.

Listening Friends

Our Listening Friends service provides callers the opportunity to talk anonymously and in confidence to a pharmacist about any pharmacy-related stresses they are facing in their work or home life. [Visit our website for more information about our Listening Friends service.](#)

Challenge your worries

Understanding your worries can help you to manage any unwanted or unhelpful thoughts. In turn, this can help you to focus your energy on other priorities or relax.

Try our flowchart on the opposite page to have a go at challenging your worries. Counselling can also be a great help, and most universities offer a counselling service.

If you can't access counselling through your university, we can help. [Find out more here.](#)



In the words of an m pharm student.

What motivated you to study pharmacy?

If I am being honest, when I first applied through clearing, I didn't know the difference between pharmacology and pharmacy nor the vast roles of a pharmacist. Despite this I can say that I have fallen in love with my degree and I cannot think of a more exciting future ahead for me.

I can see myself in lots of different roles and hopefully in the future I will work in a hospital, a GP surgery and with organisations such as the RPS and Pharmacist Support.

How has studying changed since the COVID-19 outbreak and how are you coping with the changes?

So much screen time is the first thing that pops up in my head, as well as not socialising in between classes, at night and at the weekend. I have found it difficult to 'switch off' from university because it feels like the work never ends and there is not an end in sight. I had been struggling a lot with headaches from the screen time, balancing my time and feeling stressed.

Having said that, I would say that this year has been one of my best years at university. I have been fortunate to move in with my best friends this year, who have been able to face most challenges with me and we get to spend so much more time together. It makes me feel I am not alone in anything I go through.

Meet Vivien, final year student at Robert Gordon University, who has had to adapt to the changes the Covid-19 pandemic brought to her studies.

How have you been managing your sleep pattern and motivation?

I am sometimes working up to 50 hours 6 or 7 days a week, along with balancing university work and leading different university societies. My sleep and motivation did falter as I was constantly stressed, and my mind never stopped thinking. I also felt like I had so much to do and so little time, that I would have to force myself to gather some motivation and 'tick off' the tasks.

In order to manage this, I decided to prioritise myself and my wellbeing. Doing home workouts, hiking, cooking and baking, watching TV and connecting with friends have all contributed to a better mindset and wellbeing. I have also tried to say no to extra shifts in all of my jobs (although I am still working on this one!).

What has been the most unique challenge you've faced this year and how did you overcome it?

Having to adapt all of my ideas and ways of working to online and still deliver the same or even better quality of learning and support for our student members. As co-president of the pharmacy society and president of the inter-professional education society, it's been important to ask for lots of feedback so I can learn and adapt. However, the biggest change I've had to make is to my mindset, to not be so hard on myself and count every small win.

Do you have any tips to help others who may be in a similar situation to yourself?

I think a big step in helping yourself is acknowledging that you are struggling. Reach out to someone – anyone – they could also be needing someone to rant/cry/chat to and you could potentially help each other. If you are worried about adding an extra burden onto your friends or family, but would still like to talk it out, there are university listening services, Night Line and Pharmacist Support.

Make sure to take time to think about and look after yourself, even if it's something small like opening the window and breathing in some fresh air.

Make a list with all of the big tasks you have to do and break them down as far as you can into manageable small bites. It makes me feel better when I have ticked lots of boxes, even if the task is to eat food!



Keep Moving.

Being physically active on a regular basis can make a huge difference to your happiness and wellbeing.

from depression or anxiety (or those who are just feeling blue) pencil in plenty of exercise time.

Make small daily gains

You don't need to fork out for an expensive gym membership or attend classes to incorporate physical activity into your everyday life. Making small but sustained adaptations can be beneficial too: -

- Walk wherever possible: get off the bus or train a stop early, park your car further away from where you work
- Why not do some press-ups or dance around the kitchen while the kettle boils?
- Find exercise you love: choose something active that you enjoy and fits in with your lifestyle, and try to do it 2-3 times a week
- Having sufficient energy makes exercise easier: eating well and sleeping well will ensure you have enough energy to exercise.

Make exercise work for you

If you're at the start of your journey, try using our 7 Days of Movement Plan on the opposite page.

This week, complete one of the activities on the poster each day and then tick it off in the circle.

Exercise can help boost your confidence, improve your self-esteem, help you feel better about your appearance, improve your energy and sleep, as well as reduce your risk of stress and depression.

It's good for your mind

Physical activity gives you a chance to unwind, enjoy the outdoors or simply engage in activities that make you happy and lead to a sense of accomplishment.

Exercise can also encourage you to connect with family or friends in a fun social setting. And even better, exercise can help manage physical and mental stress.

Physical activity stimulates various brain chemicals that can leave you feeling happier and more relaxed. Because it can be so effective at helping people with symptoms of anxiety or depression, doctors often recommend that people suffering



Stretch your whole body for 10 minutes in the morning **4**

3 Challenge yourself to a 20 minute workout video



2 Get active with a family member

Do ten lots of star jumps, squats, press-ups or sit-ups **5**



7 Days of movement

Being physically active on a regular basis can increase your self-esteem and sense of accomplishment, and in turn improve your sustained mental wellbeing. This week, complete one of these activities every day and then tick it off in the circle.



1 Try a beginner online video lesson of an exercise you've never done before

Take a 15 minute walk on your lunch break **6**



7 Put on your favourite childhood record and dance like no one is watching

#ACTNOW



My sleep journal.

My sleep goal:

Date of day one:

	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
What time did you go to bed last night?	<input type="text"/>						
How long did it take you to fall asleep?	<input type="text"/>						
How many times did you wake up?	<input type="text"/>						
How long were you awake during the night?	<input type="text"/>						
At what time did you wake up?	<input type="text"/>						
At what time did you get up?	<input type="text"/>						
How many hours did you spend in bed? last night?	<input type="text"/>						
Rate the quality of your sleep out of five	<input type="text"/>						

Get a good night's sleep.

Getting a good night's sleep is essential for our wellbeing. A sleep journal can help you to identify patterns and behaviours that impact your sleep, and setting a goal keeps you focused on forming good habits. Starting on a Monday, complete this sleep diary every morning for one week. Don't worry about giving exact answers, an estimate will do.

1. Make time to wind down. Run a warm bath, stretch or read
2. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day
3. Avoid going to bed until you feel tired
4. Exercise every day
5. Ennsure your mattress and pillow are comfortable
6. Make sure your bedding is appropriate for the weather
7. Keep your bedroom dark and cool
8. Make sure your bedroom is clean and clutter-free
9. Don't eat a heavy meal late in the evening.
10. Switch to decaffeinated drinks at least 10 hours before you want to go to bed.



Eat well.

Healthy eating is one of the factors that contribute to our wellbeing, but what constitutes a healthy diet?

First things first: hydration

People need between 1.6 to 2 litres of fluid every day in order to prevent dehydration.

Try to avoid sugary soft and fizzy drinks. All non-alcoholic drinks count, but nothing hydrates like good old water!

Tips for a healthy eating plan

Ideally, a healthy eating plan will allow for people to eat the right amount of calories for how active they are. Ideally each meal should contain a combination of:

- good fat
- good protein
- fresh fruit and vegetables for vitamins
- good starchy foods and carbohydrates.

Good fat

Not all fat is bad for you. Examples of healthy options include fish, nuts, seeds, olive oil, flaxseed oil, sesame oil, eggs, avocado and olives.

The food we eat will either enhance our health and energy or detract from it. Eating a healthy diet doesn't have to be time consuming or expensive, it just takes a bit of planning.

Good protein

Protein is an essential part of a balanced diet and is also an important source of vitamins and minerals. Healthy options include chicken, fish, nuts, seeds, tofu, lentils, beans, pulses, and eggs.

Fruit and vegetables

Eat plenty of fresh vegetables, salad and seasonal fruit. Make sure you vary the types and colours of fruit and veg that you eat, and try to eat the rainbow every day.

If you eat fruits and veg from all the colours of the rainbow, it helps to ensure that your body is getting the essential phytonutrients it needs. Government guidelines say that people should have at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day.

The NHS has a [good selection of recipes](#) to help people to get started on their five a day, including options for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Eat the rainbow.

When we eat colourful fruits and vegetables, we are eating some amazing compounds called phytonutrients.

Phytonutrients help heart health, fight cancer cells, reducing inflammation, and reversing brain aging.

Red



Found in:

Apples, tomatoes, grapefruit, strawberries, chillies.

Benefits:

Reduce the risk of some types of cancer and heart disease.

Orange and yellow



Found in:

Carrots, pumpkins, peppers, sweet potatoes, peaches, corn, mangoes.

Benefits:

Benefit our immune system and promote healthy vision.

Green



Found in:

Broccoli, cabbages, lettuce, spinach, kiwis, peas, grapes.

Benefits:

Boost blood, bones, immunity, help block cancerous properties.

Blue and purple



Found in:

Aubergines, blueberries, blackberries, plums, dates, figs.

Benefits:

Help to lower blood pressure naturally, anti-aging properties.

Stay connected.

“Communicating regularly with friends and family enabled me to gain a different perspective on my struggles.”

My name is Vishnupriya and I am a third year Mpharm student. Although I grew up in Kenya, I’m studying at the University of Nottingham.

Moving across the globe and leaving behind family and friends to pursue university in England was what I thought would be the most challenging part of studying abroad... until the pandemic arrived!

I had been working on my four week laboratory sessions in preparation for my dissertation when I started to receive an influx of emails advising me to return home before the international travel ban was announced.

Following countless numbers of phone calls with airlines to get me a flight, I finally arrived back in Kenya but then had to self-isolate alone in my room for two weeks.

The situation was everything but peaceful and when I arrived home and I spent the weeks worrying about how I could possibly cope with the uncertainties around me.

At some point, I decided that it was in my best interests to embrace the situation. Before the outbreak, deadlines, extra-curricular activities and even laundry made it challenging to keep in touch with friends and family. One lesson the global health crisis has taught me is the importance of staying connected with loved ones.

In these times of uncertainty, communication has reduced my stress levels and permitted me to remain optimistic, which I would urge everyone to do. Communicating regularly with friends and family enabled me to gain a different perspective on my struggles.

Whether it’s sitting at home and watching a series on tv, participating in online quizzes or impromptu video calls – my self-confidence has been boosted and I’ve facilitated an overall healthier mindset.

Although my experience during lockdown had a rocky start, now I can acknowledge that people have faced different struggles.



My advice to get through times of uncertainty are:

Connect with loved ones

Take advantage of this unprecedented time when you can be even more so in the company of those who lift your spirits and make extra memories to treasure.

Set yourself a routine

Waking up knowing that there is no urgency to be anywhere is difficult so setting a routine keeps you motivated and away from lethargy.

Exercise

Setting aside 30 minutes every day to exercise keeps you physically fit, healthy and keeps your mind at ease.

Move beyond social media

Use this time to minimise screen time and try something different like learning a new language, reading or maybe even updating a playlist.

Therapy sessions

If you’re finding these challenging times particularly stressful, there are various online counselling sessions that you could engage in to share your issues and overcome your struggles.

I started off with reading a good book that I hadn’t had time to previously, practising yoga and spending a lot of quality time with my family.

I witnessed a shift in mentality from feeling trapped to being glad that I have finally been able to focus on myself, embrace my flaws and work on aspects that I wish to improve.

If there is anything this pandemic has ‘gifted’ us – it is time. Time to do the things we have always enjoyed but never had time for, time to broaden our knowledge and plenty of time to introspect!

Be Mindful.

The next time you get a cup of tea or coffee, sit down with it on a table in front of you.

Spend a few moments looking closely at the cup or mug without touching it, taking everything in about it that you can without making judgements about what you are noticing.

Then take a moment to close your eyes and really tune in to your other senses. What can you hear as you sit there? Do you hear birds chirping? People talking? Cars driving past?

Whatever you hear, try to notice it without judgement.

Now shift your attention to your body. What physical sensations do you feel? Do you notice the feeling of your clothes, the pressure from the chair or the floor?

Next, move on to your tea or coffee. Pick the cup up and notice the feeling of the warmth on your hands.

Notice the aroma, and finally take a small, mindful sip, really noticing the taste, smell, and physical sensations as you do.

If thoughts come up as you do this exercise, it can be helpful to simply notice them with compassion and without judgement, and then bring your mind back to your mindfulness practice.

Taking a few minutes each day to focus on your surroundings or to focus on your breathing can have a huge impact on your wellbeing.



Student Ambassadors form an integral part of the Pharmacist Support team.

They are our people on the ground at each university, helping us ensure that those at the beginning of their pharmacy journey are aware of the support available to them.

Student Ambassadors help raise awareness and vital funds to support us – hosting information stands, delivering presentations and organising fundraising events.

As part of our new 5-year strategy, we're enhancing our volunteer schemes and look forward to sharing details of how people across the profession can get involved with our work.

We will be releasing further details on these opportunities over the coming months but encourage those of you interested to keep an eye on our website and social media pages, or better still – [sign up to receive our newsletter](#).

- To donate £3, text PHARM001 to 70331
- To donate £5, text PHARM001 to 70970
- To donate £10, text PHARM001 to 70191

Give.

Giving to others can make a big positive impact on our mental health and sense of wellbeing. It can be as simple as sharing a smile, or reaching out to a friend and giving them a few minutes of your time.

Some people choose [to give money](#) to a cause they care about but for others giving their time as a volunteer is more rewarding.

Here at Pharmacist Support we have a number of volunteer opportunities.

Your journey to wellbeing starts **today.**

We know it can be difficult to find time to prioritise wellbeing, especially right now through lockdown, studying, revision and exams.

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.

We hope you have enjoyed reading the information and doing the activities, and they have helped you to put self-care into practice.

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](https://www.PharmacistSupport.org)
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