

# Self management for people living with long term conditions



## INFORMATION AND TOOL KIT



*"Don't wait until everything is just right. It will never be perfect. There will always be challenges, obstacles and less than perfect conditions. So what? Get started now. With each step you take, you will grow stronger and stronger, more and more skilled, more and more self-confident and more and more successful."*

**Mark V. Hansen, The Power of Focus**



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This document is available online at [www.lgowit.org.uk](http://www.lgowit.org.uk)

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## Introduction

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### *"Self Management is a coping strategy."*

This booklet has been co-written by people living with long term conditions in Highland and local health professionals with experience of supporting people with long term conditions.

Long term conditions are medical conditions that a person has lived with for an extended period of time. They include diabetes, chronic pain, asthma, arthritis, depression, heart failure and multiple sclerosis. They have many causes and their symptoms can be variable.

Because many people have more than one long term condition we have produced this as a general guide. While each long term condition is different, and people will have different experiences and circumstances, the approaches required to improve self management are very similar.

Being diagnosed and living with a long term condition can create a sense of loss of control. Often there is no simple cure. How you feel can be influenced by many factors including lifestyle, environmental, psychological factors and how well you feel you are supported, or not.

Successful self management is about working in partnership with your family, friends, volunteers, peers as well as professionals to find the best route to your wellbeing. While your health professional will be knowledgeable in the field of medicine you are the expert in how you are. Only you know how your condition affects your life, and what matters to you in your life.

Part of the self management process requires commitment from you. To guide you this booklet provides some simple tips, tools and techniques which will help. It explains some of the way you can set goals to improve and develop how you look after yourself.

Most people with a long term condition have learned how to live with their condition and self manage without realising it, you probably already know some of the techniques. By trying some of the techniques that others have found helpful you will hopefully find better ways of living with your symptoms, feel more in control of your condition and live a fuller life.

We hope you will find this booklet useful.

Remember you are not on your own. Please ask your local health care professional if there is anything you are unsure about.

**You should use this booklet in conjunction with your "*Wellbeing and Self Management Plan*".**

## Recognising your own health and wellbeing

*"I am more self-aware and know how my condition affects me and the things I can do."*

One of the most important things that you can do is get to know your own health and wellbeing. This will be different for everyone, even for people with the same condition.

By getting to know and understand your own health you will learn to spot the signs when you start to become unwell. Recognising these signs early and seeking help will make a big difference to your long term health. For example think about:

- *How long does it usually take you to do everyday tasks on an average day?*
- *What is your appetite normally like?*
- *How well are you able to concentrate?*
- *How easy is it to make decisions?*

By understanding this information and sharing it with your health care team you will improve how you manage your condition.

You may find it useful to write these signs and symptoms down, as this may help you explain your condition more clearly.

## 3

## The importance of being able to express how you feel

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*"I feel empowered and it has extended what I can do with my life."*

Being able to express how you feel and what works best for you will go a long way to help you manage your condition.

It can strengthen relationships with your family, friends and others which in turn will help them to help you.

Everyone is different but often the hardest part is asking for help. If you are not able to express how you are feeling you may feel isolated and this can lead to relationships breaking down and you not getting the help you need.

Through good communication you will be able to share information and experiences and you will be able to ask the right questions. You should never feel afraid to ask for clarification or additional information and there is no such thing as a silly question. If you are unsure about anything just ask.

It is important to have had a think about any issues that are troubling you before you go and see your health professional(s) or whoever you want to speak to.

Write questions and queries down before you go to any appointments or meetings and also make notes when you are at your appointment. Remember that it is OK to ask questions if you are unsure. There are some tips below to guide you:

### Tips for effective communication

- *Identify any problems that are troubling you*
- *Write down any questions you have*
- *Understand what issues are of greatest concern to you*
- *Think about how you will get information across when you are at an appointment*
- *Think about the best way for you to express yourself effectively*
- *Describe some solutions you have thought about*
- *Listen and take notes if you think you are likely to forget anything*
- *Try and be concise*
- *If you are unsure about anything ask for clarification*
- *Take someone with you to your appointments if that would be supportive*

It can be tempting to let others step in and help when you are struggling and tasks are taking time. However, over time, this can reduce your ability to do things yourself. If your family, friends or carers want to help ask them to encourage and support you.

## 4

## Living with long term conditions

*"Self management is for the life I live, not the conditions I live with."*

People often experience similar symptoms even when they are living with different or more than one long term condition. These symptoms are often interlinked and can influence each other. It can feel like being part of a tangled web (Figure 1). For instance, stress can cause shortness of breath; difficulty in dealing with emotions can cause fatigue; and pain can cause depression.



*Figure 1 - The tangled web of symptoms and feelings*

Dealing with these symptoms and feelings can feel overwhelming and therefore it is important to focus on your wellbeing. A self management approach can help you to achieve this. You will need to think about your lifestyle, body, mind, who you are connected with and how you communicate. Start to think about the small changes you could make that might help you to break free from the web.

In this section we focus on four common symptoms often experienced: pain, fatigue, anxiety and depression. You may experience one or more of these at some point. If your symptoms can be addressed or improved, it will make a big difference to how you feel and cope.

### Common symptoms experienced by people with longterm conditions are:

- *Pain*
- *Fatigue*
- *Anxiety*
- *Depression*

#### 4.1 Pain

For most of us pain is an unwanted and unpleasant sensation experienced in response to injury or illness. It can be very distressing and frightening but it is sometimes partly influenced by how we are in general. For most people, the pain they experience after an injury, illness or an operation will respond to rest, exercise, ice, medication, heat, and other interventions allowing normal function to be resumed after a short period of time (acute pain). Chronic or persistent pain, however is pain that lasts for three months or more despite medication and treatment.

#### Two main types of pain

- ***Acute pain*** - short-term pain related to a specific injury or obvious event
- ***Chronic or persistent pain*** – this is pain that has lasted for three months or more despite medication and treatment

### 4.1.1 Chronic pain

Chronic or persistent pain can affect anybody of any age and any part of the body. It is common for people with long term conditions like diabetes, arthritis, irritable bowel and back problems to have chronic pain. Fibromyalgia, also called fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS), is a long-term condition that causes pain all over the body. Often medical tests don't tell us why someone is experiencing chronic pain.

People describe having varying amounts of pain from one day to another, or even within the same day. This may lead people to attempt to do too much on a better day but then having to spend several days recovering from it. This is referred to as the "boom and bust approach" or activity cycle and is further explained in pages 10 and 11.

#### *How to manage chronic pain*

Putting up with chronic pain can really impact on your health and quality of life. It can lead to depression, fatigue, anxiety, inability to work and challenges within relationships. This pain can be very difficult to understand and manage from day to day as it can be very distressing and frightening. You may worry about harming yourself further or be reluctant to use medication.

However there are things you can try such as stretching, being active, relaxation, using a TENS machine, and over the counter or prescription medications, to name just a few. If one approach doesn't work for you another one might. When it comes to managing chronic pain we are all individual. You may need to use a combination of approaches. Keep a note of any techniques you try and how you respond.

It is also worth finding out whether there are local support groups in your community which you could join to help you with this.

## Tips for managing your pain

- *Set personal goals*
- *Develop an action plan for your own personal self management*
- *Pace yourself*
- *Try distraction techniques*
- *Practice relaxation techniques*
- *Share how you are feeling with people who can help you*
- *Join a local support group*

### 4.1.2 Coping with flare-ups

From time to time, you may experience periods of increased pain, sometimes called flare-ups.

Although these usually do not last very long, they come on quickly and sometimes without warning. Therefore, they can be difficult to cope with. At these times it may be tempting to go back to your old habits, like going to bed. Try not to do this. Instead, recognise what is happening. Don't panic. If you have medication, take it regularly. This will allow you to keep active even if it is at a reduced level.

## 4.2 Fatigue

Fatigue is a complex symptom which can present itself in many ways either physically or mentally. Symptoms include overwhelming feeling of tiredness, a feeling of 'walking through treacle', visual disturbance and poor memory or concentration. It is an 'invisible' symptom which makes it very hard for others to understand how it can affect you. It can be caused by the physiological effects of your condition itself or by secondary factors:

## Secondary factors linked to fatigue

- *Medication side effects*
- *Infections, such as a cold or urinary tract infection*
- *Disturbed sleep*
- *Stress*
- *Poor fitness and lack of exercise*
- *Depression/low mood affecting motivation to be active*
- *Sensitive to lighting and temperature and changing behaviour to save energy*

Often people with fatigue describe having varying amounts of energy from one day to another, or even within the same day (Figure 2)



*Figure 2 - Common activity cycle*

This lack of energy may lead you to attempt too much on a good day and then spend several days recovering from it.

### 4.2.1 Some ways to manage fatigue

Learning to manage fatigue is a slow process and involves patience. It is not always possible to make fatigue go away completely, but by having awareness, and using some of the tools discussed in this booklet, it is possible to start to manage fatigue and take steps to reduce its impact on your daily life.

#### Tips for managing your fatigue

- *Develop an action plan*
- *Pace yourself*
- *Practice relaxation techniques*
- *Share how you are feeling with people who can help you*

## 4.3 Anxiety

Anxiety is a natural part of living a full and interesting life. However, for some people it can be quite intense and interferes with their day-to-day life. If you feel anxious it may be related to your long term condition (perhaps concerns about future health), to life in general (work, relationships, money, children), for no apparent reason or a combination of factors.

When you feel anxious stress hormones are released into the bloodstream which can cause a range of symptoms as listed below. All of these symptoms are a normal response to anxiety and you may experience all or just some of them at different times.

#### Common symptoms of anxiety

*(listed in alphabetical order)*

- *Anger*
- *Breathlessness*
- *Difficulty concentrating*

- *Feeling agitated*
- *Feeling apprehensive*
- *Feeling irritable*
- *Feeling spaced out*
- *Frequently feeling there's too little time to do too many things*
- *Headaches*
- *Increased heart rate*
- *Intense frustration*
- *Muscle tension*
- *Nausea and butterflies*
- *Panic*
- *Planning for things going wrong*
- *Shaking*
- *Sweating*
- *Worrying about things going wrong*

#### **4.3.1 Some ways to manage anxiety**

Learning to manage anxiety takes time. The first step is to recognise your symptoms, then start to communicate how you feel and what helps you. Start with small steps and try any new techniques for at least a couple of weeks.

By having awareness, and using some of the tools discussed in Part II, it is possible to start to manage your anxiety and reduce its impact on your daily life.

#### **Tips for managing anxiety**

- *Set personal goals*
- *Develop an action plan*
- *Practice relaxation techniques*
- *Share how you are feeling with people who can help you*

## 4.4 Depression

It is natural to feel low or down at times during our lives but depression is more than feeling low. It is often associated with significant changes in life, particularly negative changes, for example bereavement, job loss or relationship breakdown. However, some people are unaware of, or do not have, specific reasons for feeling depressed.

Being diagnosed with a long term condition is also a significant change and therefore may lead to feelings of depression and low mood. Depression (Chronic and Clinical) is a long term condition in its own right, as is anxiety. Both have dedicated health professionals and voluntary organisations that can help.

### Common symptoms of depression

- *Disturbed sleep*
- *Feeling guilty*
- *Feeling hopeless*
- *Feeling sad and low*
- *Feeling unmotivated*
- *Having little energy*
- *Having the same negative thoughts going round and round in your head*
- *Having thoughts about not being good enough*
- *Less interest in socialising*
- *Not doing things you used to enjoy*
- *Significant change in eating patterns*

#### 4.4.1 How to manage depression?

Learning to manage depression takes time. The first step is to recognise your symptoms, then start to communicate how you feel

and what helps you. Start with small steps.

By having awareness, and using some of the tools discussed in Part II, it is possible to start to manage your depression and reduce its impact on your daily life.

### Suggested approaches for managing depression

- *Set personal goals*
- *Develop an action plan*
- *Practice relaxation techniques*
- *Share how you are feeling with people who can help you*
- *Participate regularly in activities you enjoy*
- *Stay connected with people around you*

## Five important steps of change

*"Self management gives you more control over your condition, allowing you to be in the driving seat."*

In this section we go through five important steps to place you on the road to self management and wellbeing.

The five steps are: 1) understanding your condition, 2) acceptance, 3) what matters to you, 4) being positive and 5) how to make change happen.

### Step 1 - Understanding your condition?

*"I have learned to see when warning signs occur with my anxiety"*

Recognising the signs and symptoms of your long term condition at an early stage is really important. It will allow you to take action to control them, rather than have them control you.

### Step 2 - Acceptance

*"I have learned to accept my condition"*

Being diagnosed with a long term condition and the reality that your life will have to change can be difficult to accept. This is quite natural and so you need to allow yourself time to adjust and get to the point where you accept you are living with a long term condition.

### Step 3 - What matters to you?

*"If it's important to you, you will find a way. If not, you'll find an excuse."*

You might have been given some advice about lifestyle changes by a health practitioner. You might have some other ideas yourself about what might help. How you plan to approach managing yourself depends on what you want to achieve. By focusing on your own solutions you will hopefully return to a sense of normality which will be positive even if it is different to how you lived your life before. So think about what really matters to you. Some examples are given below:

#### What matters to you?

- *Who matters to you?*
- *Do you want to feel more in control of your own life?*
- *Do you want to feel competent and able to make decisions and carry them through?*
- *Would you like to feel connected with others - friends, neighbours, family, and the services that can help you?*

Once you have thought about what matters to you start to set about planning some positive changes. To support this think about the following three questions:

- 1. *What information do you need?***
- 2. *What are your strengths?***
- 3. *What sorts of approaches work best for you?***

## Step 4 - Being positive

*"I now approach things differently- with a more positive, confident manner"*

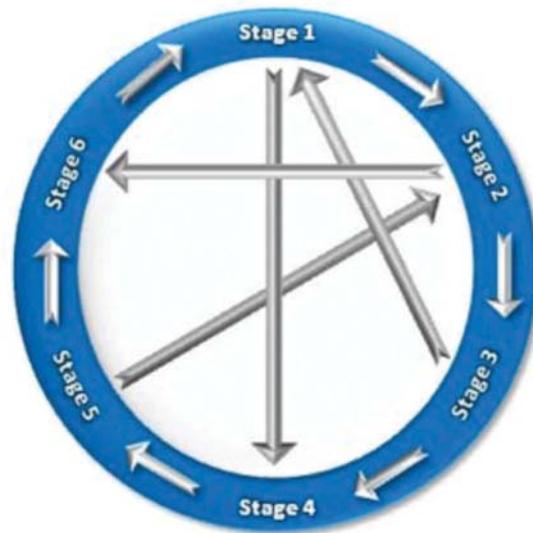
The next step on the road to self management is about being positive. We all hold conversations with ourselves but sometimes our self-talk becomes negative especially when we are struggling with something. Recognising and changing your outlook will help you.

Try and open your mind to new possibilities. There are a number of ways to approach change. For example, start by turning negative statements into more positive ones. Instead of saying "I can't do this" try asking yourself: "How can I make this possible?"

Negative thoughts	Positive thoughts
I've never done it before	I am looking forward to learning something new
It's too complicated	I can break it down and keep it simple
I'm too lazy to get this done	I am going to make an effort and prioritise this
There's no way it will work for me	I am going to try hard to make this work for me
It's too radical a change	I can tackle this from a different angle
No one bothers to communicate with me	I will open the channels of communication
I'm not going to get any better at this	If at first I dont succeed, try, try again

## Step 5 - How to make change happen?

Finally making changes involves different stages and they don't always flow in one direction. They can go backwards and forwards until the change sticks (Figure 3). In the next chapter each stage is described.



*Figure 3 - The cycle of making change stick*

**Remember there is no right way to do things, only the best way for you.**

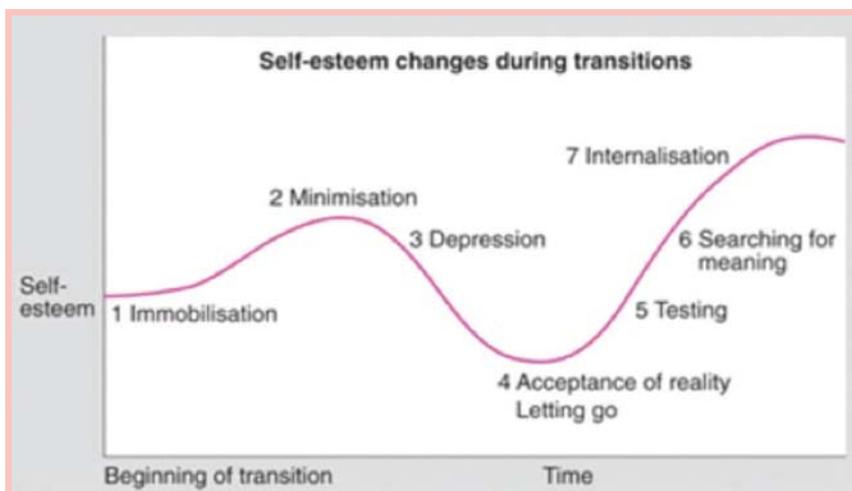
## The process of change

*"Self management lets you retrain, set your goals and work out how to achieve them."*

Most of us find coping with change difficult. The seven stages of transition (Figure 4) are transferable to varying degrees and may help to cope with personal change and emotional upset.

We can often very clearly observe similar reactions in people confronted with a wide range of life issues such as redundancy, enforced relocation, crime and punishment, disability and injury, relationship break-up, financial despair and so on.

Any change can have an impact on your sense of wellbeing and self esteem. Psychologists have studied this and suggest that some changes may bring about a period of transition. Most transitions are



*Figure 4 - Self esteem changes during transitions*

(Adapted from Hopson and Adams, 1975, pp. 9–12)  
<http://labspace.open.ac.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=369014>

associated with significant life events which require radical adjustment.

Long term conditions are life changing and therefore it is very likely that you will experience the emotions and reactions commonly associated with making major changes in life.

**Here are some of the key features of each transition phase:**

Change during transition	Description
<b>Immobilisation</b>	<i>You get a sense of being overwhelmed, and unable to act. Unfamiliar transitions, and those of which we have negative expectations tend to intensify this stage.</i>
<b>Minimisation</b>	<i>As a way of coping with the change it is common to deny that it is happening. This is a frequent reaction to a crisis which is too difficult to face.</i>
<b>Depression</b>	<i>People often get depressed when they face up to the implications of change.</i>
<b>Accepting of reality</b>	<i>At this point you begin to let go of your old state and accept the reality of what is happening.</i>
<b>Testing</b>	<i>Having begun to accept the situation then it becomes possible to test out new behaviours to cope with the new situation.</i>
<b>Searching for meaning</b>	<i>This is a reflective stage where you work out how and why things are different.</i>
<b>Internalisation</b>	<i>You have an understanding of the situation and new meanings become internalised and accepted.</i>

This section offers some more information around six stages of change.

**Stage 1** Think through the changes you need to make

**Stage 2** Prepare for change

**Stage 3** Take action and start to change

**Stage 4** Maintain change

**Stage 5** Coping when you slip back

**Stage 6** Pace yourself

Please read through each stage and consider where you think you are at? You may feel at different stages for the different things you want to change.

**Stage 1** Think through the changes you need to make

Perhaps you sometimes spend a long time being in two minds about changing your behaviour or you may find it difficult to get started. The change may not seem important enough, or you may not feel confident enough make a start.

However, if you've been thinking about change, you already have a lot of motivation. It can be helpful to revisit that motivation and reconsider why you want to change, where you want to be in the future and what is holding you back.

**Stage 2** Prepare for change

Once you've made up your mind that you really do want to change then you need to prepare. Start by identifying some simple steps you can take. Find out what works for you and who can help you. Think about what could get in the way and how you might tackle it. Make a plan and try and stick to it!

**Stage 3** Take action and start to change

At this stage you are actually going to take some action. Once you start taking control you might notice that you feel a little better and

a bit stronger. Most of all you might feel your confidence growing as you have managed to do some of the things you planned. Hang onto this feeling!

#### **Stage 4**    **Maintain change**

It will be easier for you to stick to your plans when they are going well but what about when you are tired, stressed, depressed or busy? What then? This will happen and so you need to plan how you will deal with things when they don't go to plan or you don't feel motivated. Maintaining the changes you have made still involves effort. Reward yourself for making change and sticking with them.

#### **Stage 5**    **Coping when you slip back**

Even with a good plan and support slipping back is normal – it happens to us all. Most people don't maintain changes until they have 'relapsed' a few times. So don't panic. Think back to that good feeling you had when you did what you had planned. You had the ability to do it once and so you can do it again, and next time it will be easier.

#### **Stage 6**    **Pace yourself**

*"I have learnt how to not overdo it with any activity, to pace myself and listen to my body. But doing exercise is good and very necessary."*

Managing your energy through planned periods of activity and rest will mean that you are more likely to be able to do the activities that you want to do, when you want to do them. It can be helpful to think of your available energy as being a bit like a rechargeable battery:

- *If you completely drain the battery you will have to wait a while for it to recharge*
- *If you use some of the battery and make regular top-ups then it will always be ready for use when you need it*



## 7

## Healthy approaches to mind, body and lifestyle

*"Planning and taking steps in bite-sized chunks is very important and will allow you to do more in your life."*

Taking a holistic approach to your health is really important. Three of the most common things that can help you to feel well are; 1) physical activity, 2) healthy eating and 3) healthy connections. Further information is provided below to guide you as to how you might have a healthier lifestyle and sense of wellbeing.

### Physical activity

If you are not feeling well it can be daunting to be active especially if you've not enjoyed exercise in the past. However, activities include lots of things you do on a daily basis such as looking after yourself, housework, gardening and walking. It's also important not to sit down for long periods of time. Moving more during the advertisement breaks on T.V. is a great start.

Plan small bursts of being more mobile and use tools in the self management plan to guide you (Part II, pages 29 to 41). Find enjoyable ways of moving, stretching and relaxing your body. Be realistic and set some achievable goals. Slowly build up the amount of time you spend being active by breaking it down into small chunks of time. At first, you might aim at doing ten minutes of activity at a time. Look for something that you enjoy and will work for you. And remember you can always talk to your health professional if you need any advice.

### Why be active?

- *Your body needs to move to keep going.*
- *Your sense of wellbeing is improved by doing things.*
- *Your self esteem improves when you achieve things.*

### Think about it?

- *What activities make you feel better?*
- *What makes activity fun for you?*
- *Do you want to be alone or be part of a group?*

### Healthy eating

Healthy eating can have positive effects on how you feel both mentally and physically. It can improve your mood, energy levels and reduce any tiredness. Good food can help manage conditions such as diabetes, gout, heart burn, bloating and constipation. It can also protect against cancer, heart disease, and osteoporosis. It is important to improve both what you eat and how you eat (see box below).

Improving <i>what</i> you eat	Improving <i>how</i> you eat
Plenty of fruit and vegetables	Eating when you're physically hungry
Including oily fish, nuts and seeds	Stopping when you're full
Trying more fibre foods – wholemeal bread, oats, peas, beans, lentils and high fibre breakfast cereals	Recognising if you're eating because of how you feel (too much or too little)

## Key messages about eating

- *Enjoy a varied and healthy diet and eat regular meals and snacks*
- *Keep well hydrated by drinking water and non sugary drinks*
- *Be aware of your body's signals like being hungry and being full and respond*

## Healthy connections

One of the best ways to stay healthy is to get involved in whatever you are interested in or spend time with people you enjoy being with. Having friends and family or networks can transform your life. Even if you have strong connections you may find additional benefits in becoming involved in a group that is for your specific condition or one for people living with other long term conditions. Then again it might not be for you but don't dismiss things out of hand until you have really thought it through.

If you are feeling isolated there are lots of groups these days for walking, art, allotments, friendship clubs, walking football, Men's Shed and so on. Obviously it depends on your interests and where you live but the point is try and participate and you will be able to connect with old friends, or make new ones. And you may be able to help others too.

Think about providing peer-support or being a 'buddy' to someone who has a long term condition. You have a lot of experience and knowledge you can share with others about your journey.

## Remember these three helpful things

- *Feeling in charge of your own life will help you*
- *Feeling competent and able to make decisions and carry them through will help you*
- *Feeling connected with others and services will help you*

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**Record some your thoughts so far here**

## Part II - Tool kit

*"I am a leading partner  
in my own healthcare."*



**This section should be used alongside your  
Wellbeing Self Management Plan**

*"Everyone needs to pace themselves, learn their energy levels and plan accordingly"*

## **Introduction**

This section contains information about seven tools designed to help you self manage and record your progress. It provides examples of activities which might help you to manage your condition and your symptoms.

Using these activities and tools takes time and will require practice to gain the best results.

- Tool 1** Know your symptoms
- Tool 2** Set your personal goals
- Tool 3** Pacing
- Tool 4** Plan for set backs
- Tool 5** Manage your medication
- Tool 6** Distraction techniques
- Tool 7** Relaxation techniques

There are also some excellent, condition specific, self management plans available, which can be used alongside this plan.

**Ask your health professional to point you in the right direction for these.**

## Tool 1: Know your symptoms

It is important to understand your condition. Part of this is about recognising your symptoms, when you are well and when you are becoming unwell. If you know that a certain feeling or symptom indicates your condition is worsening, it is worth recording it. Remember, not all indicators are medical and it can be useful to have a record of your indicators.

Think about:

I feel OK when...

I know I am managing my condition less well if...	If this happens I will...	If things are getting no better then I know I will...
I lose my concentration and get tingling in my legs and arms	Rest, drink more water and pace myself	Take time out and allow time to rebalance
Have the same negative thoughts going round and round	Try listening to a relaxation CD	Talk to a friend
I can't go to the loo, my temperature goes up and I am in pain	I will need to rest and drink more water and take painkillers	Need to hand a sample into the doctor

This tool can be found on page 2 of the Wellbeing Self Management Plan.

## Tool 2 Set your personal goals

### Personal goals

Goal setting is an important part of practicing your self management as it is important to have something to aim for. It must be something you want to do and something that you feel is achievable. It helps to be specific with your goal and to break it into do-able steps.

You can have more than one goal. Think about adding to your goals and keeping a record. By writing it down it will encourage you to reach your goals.

#### Examples:

- *I will walk to the end of the road once every day*
- *I will only have one glass of wine with weekend meals*
- *I will learn to pace myself and take breaks when I need them*
- *I will have two meals including oily fish every week*
- *I will find an exercise or dance class to go to*
- *I will join a community group*

### Confidence

When you have thought about some of the changes you would like to make on a scale of 0 -10 how confident are you that you can make the changes? Mark the scale



### If you score seven or above

It sounds like you are really ready to do this. If so, go straight to the plan of action section below.

### If you score below seven but above one

You must have reasons for feeling some ability to change or you would have scored zero or one. Write a list of what these reasons are:

#### Think about

- *What is making the change difficult for you?*
- *How could you overcome these difficulties? List your ways of managing difficulties*
- *What other support might you need?*
- *How might you get this support?*
- *What else would need to happen for you to place yourself higher on the confidence ruler?*

Remember self management isn't just about what you can do but also what others can do to help you.

### Plan of action

*"I am now able to challenge myself to do what I can on good days"*

Once you have set your goal(s), you will need to think about the actions that will support you to achieve your goal(s).

It can be helpful to think in more detail about how you behave at the moment. You might see patterns in how you drink or smoke, what you eat, how things get in the way of you being more active, or even getting out to meet people. Some people find writing a diary helps them to be more aware of their lifestyle patterns.

Consider your responses to the following questions:

- *What do you want to achieve?*
- *What will be the first small signs of your progress?*
- *How have you achieved change in the past?*
- *What's your timescale?*
- *What will you feel like when you achieve your goal?*

It really pays to be very specific about what you will do.

Here are three examples of health changes that you might want to make and the goal and actions that will help you achieve them:

1. **Healthy Change:** Reduce stress levels  
**Goal:** Spend 15 minutes each day relaxing  
**Action:** Listen to a meditation tape
  
2. **Healthy Change:** Start walking more  
**Goal:** Plan daily walks  
**Action:** Walk for 15 minutes every morning
  
3. **Healthy Change:** To feel less tired  
**Goal:** Keep blood sugar levels stable over the next month  
**Action:** Eat carrots for a snack instead of chocolate. Cut back on energy drinks and eat fresh fruit or oat cakes instead. Eat more wholemeal bread and breakfast cereals.

Some people find it useful to go through this with someone else. Perhaps a friend, a family member, or a health practitioner can help you.

You may find it useful to use the action plan template on page 35 to guide you through the steps.

Example of personal goals and action plan	
<b>Name:</b> Joe Smith	<b>Date:</b> Monday 2nd January 2017
<b>The change I want to make is:</b> Start walking more	
<b>To make this change, my goal for the next month is:</b> To walk three times per week	
<b>To achieve my goal I will:</b> (what, when, where, how much, how often) I will go for a walk for 15 minutes, directly after I get home from work on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.	
<b>People that could help me achieve my goal:</b> My friend	<b>How they might help:</b> They could walk with me
<b>Reminders that will help me make the change or sustain the change:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Set a reminder on my phone</li> <li>● Post-it reminders on the fridge</li> </ul>	
<b>The things that could make it difficult to achieve my goal include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● My sister may need to talk on the phone after work</li> <li>● I don't like to walk in the dark</li> <li>● Sometimes I feel really tired when I get home</li> </ul>	<b>My plan for overcoming these difficulties includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I can ask my sister if she could phone at a different time</li> <li>● I could ask a friend to go with me if it is dark</li> <li>● If I have to miss a regular walking time, I can make up for it at the weekend</li> </ul>
<b>Support/resources I will need to achieve my goal include:</b> I need to buy a new pair of trainers and extra-cushioned socks so that my feet don't get blisters	
<b>I will know that my plan is working when I see these results:</b> I'll find it easier to walk for 15 minutes and want to walk for longer.	
<b>My confidence level is:</b> 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 <i>Not at all confident</i> <span style="float: right;"><i>Extremely confident</i></span>	

This tool can be found on pages 3 and 4 of the Wellbeing Self Management Plan. There is also an extra copy on pages 10 and 11

## Tool 3 Pacing

It can be useful to colour a chart for a week to look at the amount of energy you use.

**Please use colour to identify types of activity throughout the week:**

**Red** = High energy activity    **Orange** = Medium energy activity

**Blue** = Low energy activity    **Green** = Rest

Weekly Activity Schedule							
Week beginning:	Name:						
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Wake - 9am	Wash/dress/ breakfast	Wash/dress/ breakfast	Wash/dress/ breakfast	Wash/dress/ breakfast	Wash/dress/ breakfast	Rest	Rest
9am - 10am	Work	Work	Work	Work	Work	Rest	Rest
10am - 11am	Work	Work	Work	Work	Work	Wash/dress/ breakfast	Rest
11am - 12 noon	Work	Work	Work	Work	Work	Walk	Wash/dress/ breakfast
12 noon - 1pm	Work	Work	Work	Work	Work	Coffee with friends	Lunch
1pm - 2pm	Lunch - rest	TV	Read				
2pm - 3pm	Work	Work	Work	Work	Work	Shopping	Church
3pm - 4pm	Work	Work	Work	Work	Work	Shopping	Walk
4pm - 5pm	Housework	Rest	Rest	Reading	Reading	Rest	Read
5pm - 6pm	Walk	Rest	Make dinner	Rest	Rest	Make dinner	Make dinner
6pm - 7pm	Make dinner	Make dinner	Evening class	Exercise	TV/ computer	Get ready to go out	Rest
7pm - 8pm	TV/ computer	Walk	Evening class	TV/ computer	TV/ computer	Cinema	TV
8pm - 9pm	Rest	TV/ computer	Evening class	TV/ computer	TV/ computer	Cinema	TV
9pm - bed	Get ready for bed	Get ready for bed	Get ready for bed	Get ready for bed	Get ready for bed	Get ready for bed	Get ready for bed

This tool can be found on pages 5,6 and 7 of the Wellbeing Self Management Plan.

## Tool 4: Plan for setbacks

If you don't succeed straight away with your plan don't give up. Sometimes you will have to adapt and change a few things before you find what suits you.

The most difficult step can be realising you have a problem and figuring out best to solve it.

Plan for setbacks, problems and solutions	
<b>Identify the setback/problem</b>	Why did it not work? Was it fatigue, lack of motivation, too much too soon?
<b>List possible solutions</b>	What else could I try?
<b>Select one to try</b>	Give it a try
<b>Assess the results</b>	Did that help?
<b>Substitute one idea for another</b>	Go back to you your list and try something else
<b>Use other Resources</b>	Ask for help or research online

This tool can be found on page 8 of the Wellbeing Self Management Plan.

## Tool 5: Manage your medication

When you are managing your long term condition if you are taking medication make sure you continue to take it as prescribed. It is also useful to carry a copy of your repeat prescription with you at all times. You might need to share information about your medication.

When communicating with your health professionals it is important to share your experience as well as to ask the right questions.

The table below has some useful pointers.

What you should SHARE with you health professional(s)	What you should ASK your health professional(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What medication you are taking – this should include all prescription medication, over the counter medicines and/or herbal remedies (*).</li> <li>■ Any unusual or allergic reactions you have had to medication you have taken in the past.</li> <li>■ Any other medical conditions you have.</li> <li>■ What medication you have tried in the past.</li> <li>■ The effects of the medication on you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Do I need/still need this medication?</li> <li>■ What does the medication actually do?</li> <li>■ How and when do I take this medicine?</li> <li>■ Should I avoid any food, other medicines or herbal remedies?</li> <li>■ Are there side effects and if so what are they?</li> <li>■ I am on several medications at the same time – can these all be taken together?</li> </ul>

(\*). Keep a list of these, along with the dosage you take. There is a space in the Self Management Plan for this.

Remember your pharmacists are there to offer information, help and advice about your medications. Do you know where your nearest pharmacist is and when it is open? If not it's a good idea to find out.

**Attach a copy of your repeat prescription here or list items below.**

Name of Medication	Strength	How often do you take it?

**This tool can be found on page 9 of the Wellbeing Self Management Plan.**

## Tool 6: Distraction techniques

Using your mind and distraction techniques you can shift your attention so that whatever is bothering you isn't the only thing on your mind. Try to distract yourself by thinking about something else (counting in your head, humming a tune, thinking of objects alphabetically) or doing something else (a few suggestions are listed below). By focussing on a thought or activity it is possible to forget symptoms.

- *Hobbies: make things, draw or paint, baking, playing music, writing*
- *Listen to music*
- *Go for a walk*
- *Do a jigsaw or puzzle*
- *Have a bath*
- *Phone a friend*
- *Play computer games*
- *Read a book*
- *Use the internet*
- *Watch TV or a film*
- *Yoga, meditation, deep breathing*

Think about adding these to your action plan and see how you get on. As with the other tools in this booklet, you may need to try a few different things to see which ones work for you.

**Be sure to try techniques a few times before you dismiss any!**

## Tool 7: Relaxation techniques

Relaxation can also help you to build up your reserves of energy, ease your muscles and give you a general sense of wellbeing.

Some people enjoy guided imagery where you are listening to someone take you on a journey; other people prefer just music or silence.

Add it to your action plan and try a few to see what works for you, such as:

- *Complementary therapies: massage, reflexology, acupuncture, aromatherapy*
- *Yoga, meditation, mindfulness, tai chi*
- *Breathing techniques*
- *Muscle relaxation*
- *Guided imagery*
- *Listening to relaxation music*

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# NOTES

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## NOTES

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# NOTES



# Let's Get On With It Together (LGOWIT)



This is a partnership made up from Voluntary Sector, NHS Highland, Local Authorities, University of the Highlands & Islands and Private Sector

If you have found this self management plan helpful and you would like further information in self management, please contact:

[www.lgowit.org.uk](http://www.lgowit.org.uk)  
[lgowit@highlandtsi.org.uk](mailto:lgowit@highlandtsi.org.uk)  
01349 807061

## Other useful websites for self management

LGOWIT      [www.lgowit@highlandtsi.org.uk](http://www.lgowit@highlandtsi.org.uk)

Living it Up      <https://portal.livingitup.org.uk/>

NHS Inform      [www.nhsinform.co.uk/](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/)

The Health and Social Care Alliance  
[www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/](http://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/)

*Based on Living a healthy life with chronic conditions and Arthritis Care*

*Quotes in this booklet are from participants of LGOWIT course and  
The positive living support group, My Condition, My Life.  
[www.myconditionmylife.org](http://www.myconditionmylife.org)*