

Practical Support for Your Mental Health

A practical, person-centred guide for the days when you need more than 'just think positively' - with tools for regulation, daily functioning, connection, boundaries, planning and knowing when to ask for more help.

Mental health support needs to be usable

When you are struggling, advice can become another source of pressure. Long lists, complicated routines and instructions to 'do more self-care' may be impossible when concentration, motivation, executive function or energy are already low. Practical support starts with the person in front of us: What is happening? What is getting in the way? What is possible today?

The aim is not to create a perfect wellbeing routine. It is to build enough support around you that difficult periods become safer and more manageable, while also addressing the circumstances that may be contributing to distress.

Start with the basics - without minimising the problem

- **Food and fluids:** Have you eaten and drunk enough for your needs? If eating is difficult, focus on accessible, safe and manageable options rather than perfection.
- **Medication:** Take prescribed medication as directed and speak to an appropriate clinician if you have concerns about effects, missed doses or changes.
- **Sleep:** Notice whether sleep loss is increasing emotional intensity, sensory sensitivity or difficulty thinking.
- **Movement:** Gentle movement, stretching, walking or simply changing position can support some people, but rest may be the more appropriate need.
- **Environment:** Reduce noise, light, clutter, demands or interruptions where possible.
- **Pain and illness:** Physical symptoms deserve attention. Do not assume every symptom is 'just anxiety'.

A person-centred starting point

Carl Rogers emphasised empathic understanding, acceptance and congruence. Practical support works best when it does not treat the person as a problem to fix. We can acknowledge distress honestly while also looking for choices, resources and next steps.

"The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change." - Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person (1961).

Ask: what would make today 10% more manageable?

A ten-percent question reduces the pressure to solve everything. The answer might be cancelling one task, eating something, asking somebody to sit with you, turning off notifications, writing down the next three steps, making a GP appointment, taking a shower, going outside, putting headphones on or simply stopping for twenty minutes.

Support is not one-size-fits-all

Some people regulate through quiet; others through movement. Some need to talk; others need time before words are available. Some need structure and a written plan; others become more stressed by rigid schedules. The useful question is not 'What should work?' but 'What helps this person, in this situation, at this level of capacity?'

Tools for Difficult Days

The STOP - SORT - SUPPORT approach

- **STOP:** interrupt autopilot. Do not add another non-essential demand.
- **SORT:** separate what is urgent, what is important and what can wait.
- **SUPPORT:** identify what you can change yourself and where another person, service or adjustment is needed.

When your mind feels overloaded

Externalise information. Write tasks down instead of carrying them in working memory. Reduce a long list to the next one or two actions. Use timers, visual prompts, reminders, body doubling or a simple 'now / later / not today' list. If a task feels impossible, make the first step smaller: 'deal with finances' becomes 'open the letter' or 'find the phone number'.

When anxiety is high

- Reduce unnecessary uncertainty by finding reliable information rather than repeatedly searching.
- Name the actual problem: 'I am worried I will...' is easier to work with than a general sense of dread.
- Separate what you can influence from what you cannot control today.
- Use grounding, movement, sensory regulation or paced breathing if these feel helpful.
- Delay major non-urgent decisions until your level of activation has reduced.
- Seek professional help when anxiety is persistent, severe or significantly restricting your life.

When low mood is making everything harder

Low mood can reduce motivation before action begins. Waiting to 'feel like it' may therefore keep you stuck. Try compassionate activation: choose one small activity linked to care, connection, achievement or enjoyment, and make it achievable at your current capacity. Success might mean five minutes, not finishing the whole task.

When emotions are intense

Regulation can come before analysis. Reduce stimulation, orient to the present, postpone arguments and non-urgent decisions, and choose a familiar settling strategy. Once intensity has reduced, ask what the emotion may be communicating: loss, fear, unfairness, overload, loneliness, shame, unmet needs or a boundary that has been crossed.

Practical support for neurodivergent people

Autistic and ADHD people may need support that addresses sensory load, executive function, transitions, interoception, communication and masking rather than assuming the difficulty is simply motivation or anxiety. Helpful adjustments can include written instructions, predictable routines, reduced sensory input, extra processing time, visual planning, body doubling, protected decompression and permission to communicate in a preferred format.

Create a low-capacity version of your day

- What absolutely has to happen today?
- What can be postponed without serious consequence?
- What can another person do?
- What can be made easier rather than done 'properly'?
- What sensory or environmental changes would reduce load?
- What recovery time needs to be protected?

Connection is practical support

Support does not always mean a deep conversation. It can be somebody bringing food, sitting quietly with you, making a call, driving you somewhere, helping organise paperwork, body doubling while you start a task, or simply reminding you that you do not have to solve everything alone.

Useful ways to ask

- "I don't need advice; could you just listen for ten minutes?"
- "Could you help me work out the first step?"
- "I'm struggling to make this call. Can you sit with me while I do it?"
- "I need some company, but I don't have much energy to talk."
- "Can you help me decide what can wait?"

Build Your Practical Support Plan

Your mental-health support map

AREA	WHAT HELPS?	WHO / WHAT CAN SUPPORT?
Body & basics	_____	_____
Sensory needs	_____	_____
Emotions	_____	_____
Tasks & organisation	_____	_____
Relationships	_____	_____
Work / study	_____	_____
Professional support	_____	_____

Your 'when I am struggling' plan

- My earliest warning signs are: _____
- I know I am reaching overload when: _____
- The first three things to reduce are: _____
- Things that reliably help my nervous system: _____
- People I can contact: _____
- Professional services / numbers I may need: _____
- A sentence I want to remember: _____

Boundaries are a mental-health tool

Sometimes support means reducing what is harming or depleting you. Boundaries can protect sleep, sensory capacity, recovery time, money, relationships and workload. Try phrases such as: 'I cannot take that on today', 'I need more time', 'I can do this part but not all of it', or 'I need this information in writing'.

Work and study adjustments

Practical adjustments may include quieter space, written instructions, flexible breaks, altered hours, predictable communication, reduced interruptions, assistive technology, changes to workload or additional support. In the UK, disabled employees may be entitled to reasonable adjustments, and Access to Work may provide support in eligible circumstances.

A weekly practical review

- What has been taking the most energy?
- What helped enough that I want to repeat it?
- Which basic need did I keep missing?
- What am I carrying that could be shared, delegated or postponed?
- Where do I need a clearer boundary?
- Do I need medical, therapeutic or specialist input?
- What one support can I put in place before next week becomes difficult?

When self-help is not enough

Practical tools can support mental health, but they should not be used to delay appropriate treatment. Speak to a GP or qualified mental-health professional if symptoms are persistent, worsening, significantly affecting daily life, or if you are unsure what kind of support you need. Physical health problems, medication effects, trauma, substance use and other factors may also require specialist assessment.

Urgent and crisis support

If you are in immediate danger or experiencing a medical or mental-health emergency in the UK, call 999 or attend A&E.; NHS 111 and local urgent mental-health services can help direct you to urgent support. If you are worried you may harm yourself or cannot keep yourself safe, seek urgent help and involve another trusted person where possible.

A Message From Maggie, Books & Resources

A message from Maggie

Mental health support does not always need to begin with a huge change. Sometimes what helps most is something very practical: somebody sitting beside you while you make a phone call, a quieter room, a meal you can actually manage, one appointment written clearly in the diary, or permission to stop carrying a task that does not need to be yours.

I want this guide to move away from the idea that struggling means you simply need to try harder. Often people are already trying incredibly hard. What may be missing is the right support, an adjustment, a boundary, understanding, treatment, rest or a way of making the next step manageable.

Please use the tools here flexibly. Keep what helps and leave what does not fit you. If you are neurodivergent, chronically unwell, grieving, exhausted or under sustained pressure, your needs may look different from somebody else's. That does not make them less valid.

And if practical strategies are no longer enough, asking for professional help is not a failure of the toolkit. It is part of using support well.

Recommended reading

Carl R. Rogers - *On Becoming a Person*. Foundational person-centred writing about acceptance, congruence and growth.

Russ Harris - *The Happiness Trap*. ACT-informed tools for relating differently to difficult thoughts and feelings while moving towards what matters.

Emily Nagoski & Amelia Nagoski - *Burnout*. Explores stress, exhaustion and the stress-response cycle.

Deb Dana - *Anchored*. Accessible nervous-system-informed ideas for noticing states and building cues of safety.

UK resources and routes to support

NHS: GP, NHS Talking Therapies where available, NHS 111 and local urgent mental-health services. **Mind:** mental-health information and support. **Samaritans:** listening support. **Access to Work:** employment support for eligible disabled people. **ACAS:** workplace rights and reasonable-adjustment information. Condition-specific charities and local voluntary organisations may also provide practical support.

Clinical notes & references

Rogers, C. R. (1961). *On Becoming a Person*. Houghton Mifflin. • Harris, R. (2019). *The Happiness Trap*, 2nd ed. • Nagoski, E., & Nagoski, A. (2019). *Burnout*. • Dana, D. (2021). *Anchored*. • NICE guidance relevant to depression, anxiety and other mental-health conditions should be consulted alongside individual assessment where appropriate.

Important: This resource provides coaching reflection and psychoeducation. It does not diagnose a condition or replace individual medical, psychological or emergency care.

Space to Breathe Therapy - Maggie's Coaching