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Personal Resilience Workbook

Self-confidence and Self-efficacy

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Self-confidence and Self-efficacy

In health and social care, professionals often work independently, using their expertise, skills and values to make decisions. Professional self-efficacy is the belief you have in your own abilities to tackle challenges and achieve goals. Self-efficacy helps people cope more effectively in difficult situations, making it crucial for personal resilience. Self-confidence, believing in one's abilities, qualities and judgement, empowers individuals, especially in building relationships. The following characteristics are particularly important:

- Feeling that you make a valued contribution at work, and that you can use your individual talents and abilities effectively.

- Being confident enough to seek help when needed. Knowing support is available to assist you with reflection and problem-solving, while maintaining a belief in your own skills and abilities.

- Having the confidence to voice your opinions even when standing alone.

- Effectively utilising your professional networks to work collaboratively.

Self-confidence and self-efficacy questions
1. I feel that the contribution I make is appreciated and valued.
2. I can generally maintain a strong belief in my professional skills and abilities.
3. I feel able to seek help and support when things go wrong.
4. I am confident that my interpersonal skills are effective.
5. I feel I am respected for my knowledge and experience.
6. I have some autonomy in planning and carrying out my work.

7. I can usually find solutions to difficult problems.
8. I generally feel confident to express my thoughts and opinions, trusting in my skills and knowledge.
9. I feel comfortable among people from diverse backgrounds in different social situations.
10. I feel trusted to do a good job.
11. I am generally able to handle unforeseen situations resourcefully.
12. I am usually able to accomplish my work goals.
13. I am aware of my personal strengths and how I can best use them.

Self Confidence and Self-efficacy - Core Actions

Core Action 1: Recognising And Celebrating Success - Sparkling Moments

Reflective Pause:

How comfortable am I with discussing my achievements openly? What factors influence my willingness or reluctance to share my successes with others?

Recognising and embracing our strengths and skills is essential for nurturing self-efficacy and self-confidence. A valuable approach to doing this is to recognise our successes and draw lessons from them. Success stories serve as invaluable sources of inspiration and learning opportunities, not only aiding in problem-solving but also fuelling our drive to excel. Embracing our own achievements while respecting those of others will boost self-esteem, heighten engagement and strengthen working relationships.

Nonetheless, while people are often all too happy to talk about their failures, they can be reluctant to disclose their achievements due to concerns about appearing arrogant or boastful. This reluctance to share their accomplishments can lead to a disproportionate focus on shortcomings. This not only undermines motivation but also means we are restricted to learning from errors rather than successes. 'Sparkling' (or 'peak') moments is a technique that can help you and your colleagues share their success stories.

Sparkling Moments

Sparkling moments are times when you feel your best self. These moments often sparkle with positivity, excitement, or happiness, leaving a lasting impression on us. For example, you may have achieved something at work that you thought made things better for someone and enabled progress. Identifying sparkling moments is a powerful way to recognise the individual skills and strengths that contribute to such achievements and how you can use them more effectively in the future.

The sparkling moments technique involves reflecting on positive experiences with a colleague or friend.

2   **Celebrating success: The sparkling moments technique**

One person (person A) asks the other person (person B) a series of questions:

- What did you do when you felt you were 'at your best'?

- What skills, knowledge and attributes did you use?

- How did you feel?

Person A listens carefully and notes down the skills, knowledge and attributes that Person B describes, as well as any key themes or behaviours that emerge from their description.

When Person B has finished speaking, Person A provides feedback on the specific skills and attributes that have emerged. They then ask Person B:

- What have you learned about your key skills?

- How could you use these to manage a problem you are experiencing right now?

- What steps could you take to increase the opportunity for more experiences like this?

Participants then swap roles, and Person B asks the same questions of Person A.

The '*sparkling moments*' technique has been used extensively in training sessions with health and social care practitioners. It can be particularly effective in peer coaching (see Core Action 3.3) to encourage people to talk about their strengths and resources and how these can be used to face new challenges.

Core Action 2: Practicing Gratitude

Reflective Pause:

How often do I consciously take time to reflect on and express gratitude for the positive aspects of my life? How could this practice impact my overall well-being and relationships?

Practicing gratitude involves recognising and appreciating the positive contributions that others make to our lives. Research has shown that practicing gratitude has significant benefits for wellbeing, by reducing stress, improving physical and mental health, improving sleep and increasing vitality (Wood et al., 2010).

Additionally, individuals who regularly practice gratitude tend to be more empathetic, optimistic and emotionally resilient, making them better equipped to meet their personal and professional goals. Gratitude practices also foster self-esteem by reinforcing the belief that we can overcome setbacks through positive reflection. It is therefore important to integrate gratitude into our daily lives to support our own wellbeing and that of those around us.

Evidence suggests that keeping a gratitude journal (where people write down the positive things in their lives) or reflecting on things to be thankful for before bedtime has many benefits. Some templates, ideas and apps to help you keep a gratitude journal can be found here. Moreover, gratitude extends beyond the individual level and is also beneficial to others; team cultures that are built on a foundation of gratitude are not only more satisfying to work in, but more efficient and creative (Fehr et al., 2017; Waters, 2012). It is important to note, however, that practicing gratitude does not mean ignoring challenges or difficulties. It involves acknowledging that even amidst adversity, there are still reasons to be grateful.

Ways to Show Your Gratitude to Yourself and Others

Here are some ideas that can encourage gratitude to develop.

Practicing self-gratitude

1. **Take a gratitude walk.** Spend time outdoors, appreciate the seasons and what nature has to offer. Reconnecting with simple beauty can be grounding and remind us of the constancy of nature and how it continues even if things in our lives are currently complex and shifting.

2. **Keep a gratitude journal:** Jotting down three things down each day that you are grateful for serves as a reminder of the simple things in life that help you keep going.

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4. **Morning reflection:** Start your day by reflecting on things you are grateful for. This sets a positive tone for the day ahead and helps you focus on the good in your life.

5. **Gratitude jar:** Write down moments of gratitude on slips of paper during the day and put them in a jar. At the end of the week or month, read through the notes to remind yourself of the good things in your life.

2 Practicing self-gratitude

1. **Express thanks.** Take the time to express gratitude to those around you. Sending a simple 'thank you' note to a colleague or simply saying 'thank you' can demonstrate genuine regard and boost their feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy. Always make sure you are clear what you are saying thank you for.

2. **Listen attentively:** Show gratitude by being present and actively listening to others. Give them your full attention, validate their feelings, and offer empathy and understanding.

3. **Offer support:** Show gratitude by offering support to someone who may be going through a challenging time. Whether it is offering a listening ear, providing practical assistance, or offering words of encouragement, being there for someone is a powerful way to express gratitude.

4. **Celebrate achievements:** acknowledge and celebrate the achievements and milestones of others. Whether it is a work accomplishment, personal success, or special occasion, taking the time to recognise someone's achievements shows that you value and appreciate them. If appropriate, publicly acknowledge someone's contributions or achievements in front of others.

5. **Random acts of kindness:** Practice gratitude by paying it forward. Perform random acts of kindness for others, such as volunteering, helping a neighbour, or buying coffee for a stranger.

Core Action 3: Working With Your Strengths

Reflective Pause:

"What do I consider to be my THREE core strengths or talents? How do I use these strengths to achieve my personal and professional goals?"

When tackling problems, we often focus on our weaknesses and think of ways to overcome them. This approach, however, can be demoralising, draining and stressful. The first step to enhancing self-efficacy and self-confidence is to become aware of our strengths and how we can use them effectively. As health and social care professionals, you understand the significance of working with strengths – identifying what people excel at, that energise them, and that they find enjoyable. Nonetheless, we often fail to apply these principles to ourselves, concentrating more on areas for improvement rather than recognising the strengths we already possess.

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It is common to confuse strengths with skills – learned behaviours that can become ingrained and automatic over time. It is easy to mistake skills for strengths, but they do not energise or engage us in the same way. Unlike skills, strengths are not static: a person can build, grow, adapt and develop them to help themselves in various situations. Individuals who harness their strengths are more likely to achieve their goals, experience less stress, and have more self-esteem and confidence. They also tend to be happier and more resilient.

Being Aware Of Your Personal Strengths

Peterson and Seligman (2004) introduced the concept of 'signature strengths', suggesting that each person possesses between three and seven of the character strengths shown below. Recognising and nurturing these strengths has been linked to increased happiness, increased confidence and more positive relationships (Proyer et al., 2015).

Signature Strengths

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence	Bravery	Creativity	Curiosity	Fairness	Forgiveness
Gratitude	Honesty	Hope	Humility	Humor	Judgment
Kindness	Leadership	Love	Love of Learning	Perseverance	Perspective
Prudence	Self-Regulation	Social Intelligence	Spirituality	Teamwork	Zest

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When building self-belief and personal resilience, it is crucial to work with your strengths. Completing this [survey](#) will help you identify your signature strengths – those that matter most to you and are most central to your personal identity. Using our strengths effectively makes it easier to overcome negative experiences and setbacks.

Challenges and mistakes can knock our confidence, but they are valuable learning opportunities and catalysts for personal growth. Reflecting on our strengths enables us to counterbalance these negative experiences, pinpoint our innate strategies for avoiding similar situations in the future, and serves as a reminder of the unique resources we possess during difficult times. For instance, if you have had a challenging meeting with your line manager, rather than reacting with distress or frustration, consider how strengths like curiosity or courage (for example) could empower you to engage in constructive dialogue with them about the issue.

Make a conscious effort to engage in strengths spotting over the next week or so. This can be very insightful. Pay attention to your energy levels when you are doing different activities and tasks.

- What gives you energy and enthusiasm?

- What do you get a buzz out of?

- When does time seem to fly by effortlessly during your workday?

- What would your ideal day at work look like? What activities would make it fulfilling for you?

Observing these patterns will help you identify your strengths, enabling you to use them to tackle challenges or re-energise yourself when things get tough. This process can provide valuable clues about your natural abilities and preferences, empowering you to utilise them effectively in your professional and personal life.

Three Quick Wins below (2.3, 2.4, 2.5) provide some additional techniques to raise awareness of personal strengths in the self and in others. They can be used in various settings such as meetings and supervision.

Core Action 4: Coping With Uncertainty

Reflective Pause:

How do I typically respond to uncertainty and change? What strategies do I find effective in managing feelings of uncertainty and maintaining my resilience during challenging times?

Dealing with uncertainty can significantly affect stress levels and self-confidence, often leading people to feel overwhelmed. Most people are uncomfortable with uncertainty, but some find it more challenging than others. People with perfectionist tendencies (see Core Action 2.5) tend to find uncertainty particularly difficult, as there is no clear-cut 'right' or 'wrong' action to take.

Intolerance of uncertainty describes a tendency to react negatively, both emotionally and cognitively, to uncertain situations and events (Buhr & Dugas, 2009). People who struggle to tolerate uncertainty may behave in the following ways:

- Actively avoiding situations or decisions that involve uncertainty, preferring familiar and predictable circumstances.

- Engaging in meticulous planning and preparation to reduce uncertainty, sometimes to an excessive degree.

- Seeking validation or reassurance from others to alleviate feelings of uncertainty or doubt.

- Struggling to make decisions, especially when there are multiple outcomes or possibilities.

- Setting excessively high standards or expectations to reduce uncertainty, leading to stress and dissatisfaction when these expectations are not met.

- Delaying important tasks or decisions due to uncertainty about the best course of action, often seeking multiple opinions before proceeding.

- Engaging in extensive research and information gathering, frequently making multiple lists.

- Experiencing physical symptoms such as tension, restlessness, or fatigue in reaction to uncertain situations.

- Engaging in repetitive, intrusive thoughts or 'what-if' scenarios about uncertain situations, intensifying anxiety and distress.

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Anticipating and responding to the unexpected is crucial in health and social care work. While we cannot control the future, we can become more resilient to future uncertainties. Mason (2022) highlights the importance of developing '*safe uncertainty*', where the level of unpredictability or risk is manageable or acceptable due to adequate resources, support systems or contingency plans. In safe uncertainty, individuals feel confident in navigating and adapting to the unknown without feeling overwhelmed or excessively stressed.

As a health and social care practitioner, you will encounter considerable uncertainty on a day-to-day basis. Building a tolerance for uncertainty promotes a sense of safe uncertainty, where you can accept situations that are unclear, uncertain, or novel and work effectively in ambiguous environments. Strengthening your capacity to tolerate uncertainty helps prevent feeling overwhelmed by change and enhances your sense of control. Ways to enhance our tolerance of uncertainty include:

- *Redefine the way you see uncertainty:* While you do not have to see uncertainty as desirable, regarding ambiguous situations as threatening or potentially dangerous will only reinforce your belief that you cannot handle them. Remaining calm when routines or habits are disrupted can also be beneficial.

- *Expose yourself to uncertainty:* Gradually exposing yourself to uncertain situations in a controlled way can help desensitise you to ambiguity and build confidence in dealing with the unknown.

- *Create a healthy relationship with threat:* When determining the probability of an event, use your rational mind instead of letting anxiety take over. Recognise that it is natural to feel some degree of anxiety during challenging times. Adopting an optimistic yet realistic approach involves viewing challenging situations as temporary and situational rather than permanent and pervasive. This mindset helps you keep uncertainty into perspective.

- *Think flexibly and embrace complexity:* Allow information that you know to be accurate to shift your thinking and influence your behaviour. Instead of viewing situations in binary terms like 'good' or 'bad', 'right' or 'wrong', consider them along a spectrum. This will broaden the scope for potential changes and solutions.

- **Take control:** Remaining passive and avoiding action can lead to feelings of powerlessness. Even if you do not have all the answers, offering suggestions and using your judgement can help cultivate a sense of mastery, competence and self-efficacy, especially in rapidly changing circumstances. However, there are times when it is appropriate to wait for more information and clearer circumstances before taking action.

- **Adopt a future time perspective:** Dwelling on mistakes or missed opportunities can make us fearful of change, blind us to future opportunities, and discourage creativity and willingness to take risks.

- **Encourage collaboration:** Fostering a culture of collaboration and teamwork can provide practitioners with additional support and resources when facing uncertain situations, reducing feelings of isolation and increasing their sense of control.

- **Problem solve:** Engage your rational mind not your anxious one when devising a plan. If you find yourself making decisions when you are feeling anxious, review them the next day before putting them into action.

- **Avoid over-relying on plans and goals:** Being excessively rigid increases the likelihood of automatically rejecting uncertainty or ambiguity. Given that situations can change rapidly, the goals that you set yourself (or those set by others) may not be achievable within the expected timeline or in the envisaged manner.

- **Break actions down into smaller steps:** Trying out ideas on a smaller scale allows you to assess risks while minimising potential negative consequences, thereby reducing fear of the unknown. Test theories quickly and rigorously, evaluate the outcomes, and then decide whether to proceed with or reject that course of action.

- **Promote reflective practice:** Reflecting on past experiences of uncertainty and identifying successful coping strategies can help people learn from experience and develop effective approaches for managing future uncertainties.

- **Embrace the inevitable:** Things rarely go the way we anticipate. By preparing for the worst-case scenario, you equip yourself to manage disasters if they occur. Negative visualisation, also known as a 'pre-mortem', can help you maintain emotional stability during stressful situations. Taking time to contemplate the worst plausible outcome allows you to identify fears, anticipate setbacks and navigate them effectively.

Core Action 5: Recognising And Reducing Perfectionism

Reflective Pause:

In which ways does my pursuit of perfectionism impact my productivity, well-being, and relationships? How can I cultivate a healthier balance between striving for excellence and accepting imperfection?

Although striving for excellence is commendable, it can be problematic when perfectionism undermines our mental health, relationships, and overall quality of life. Achieving a balance between pursuing excellence and accepting imperfection is essential for health and social care practitioners to set realistic goals, practice self-compassion and maintain wellbeing.

To manage perfectionism, it is important to recognise it in ourselves and others. Perfectionism is a tendency to:

- Set unrealistically high standards for our performance with a meticulous attention to detail.

- Tie our self-worth and sense of fulfilment directly to our achievements and success.

- Be excessively committed to work, work long hours and be reluctant to take time out.

- Evaluate our performance critically but be hypersensitive to criticism from others.

- Experience imposter syndrome, characterised by persistent feelings of inadequacy,self-doubt, and the fear of being exposed as a 'fraud' despite evidence of our success or competence.

- Procrastinate and ruminate about our performance.

- Be reluctant to delegate tasks or trust others to meet our own standards.

- Struggle with work and personal relationships due to rigidity or overly high standards.

- Find it difficult to acknowledge and celebrate our achievements.

- Experience high levels of stress and anxiety due to self-imposed pressure to meet our unrealistic standards and expectations.

2 Three types of dysfunctional perfectionism have been identified (Hewitt & Flett, 1991):

- *Self-oriented perfectionism:* Setting exceedingly high standards for oneself and being highly self-critical when they are not met.

- *Other-oriented perfectionism:* Imposing high standards and expectations on others and being critical of their performance.

- *Socially prescribed perfectionism:* Perceiving external pressure from others to meet unrealistic standards of performance.

Research suggests that health and social care practitioners are particularly susceptible to dysfunctional perfectionism, which can be a major cause of stress and burnout (Filipkowski et al., 2021; Melrose, 2011). This arises from various factors, including the 'high stakes' nature of their work (where even small errors can have major consequences), the need to adhere to high standards of professional conduct, ethics and competence, as well as a profound sense of responsibility for the welfare of people who access services.

Research with social workers (Kinman & Grant, 2022) found that socially prescribed perfectionism and other-oriented perfectionism were significant risk factors for burnout, especially among less experienced social work practitioners. Other studies have found strong links between perfectionism and burnout in healthcare professionals, with implications for the quality of patient care (Martin et al., 2022)

Overcoming perfectionism in the workplace involves adopting strategies to challenge perfectionistic tendencies and cultivate a healthier approach to tasks and goals. Here are some steps to help you address perfectionism:
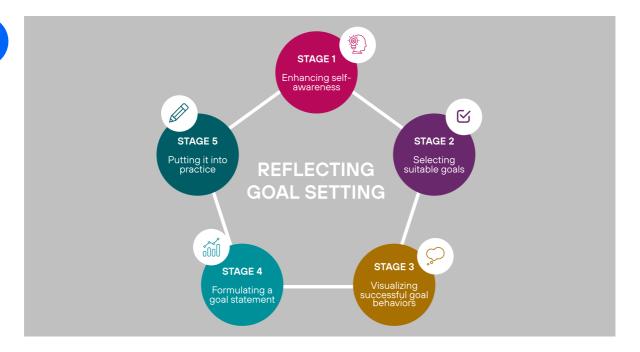
- *Aim to be good enough:* Set realistic goals for yourself, breaking larger tasks into smaller manageable steps to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Focus on progress rather than perfection and celebrate your accomplishments.

- *Challenge negative thoughts:* Practice identifying and challenging perfectionistic thoughts and beliefs. Replace self-critical or all-or-nothing thinking with more realistic and compassionate self-talk. Remind yourself that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process.

- *Prioritise tasks:* Focus your time and energy on tasks that have the greatest impact on your goals or objectives and be prepared to delegate or let go of tasks that are less essential.

- **Practice acceptance:** Accept that perfection is unattainable and it is OK to make mistakes or experience setbacks. Embrace imperfection as a natural part of the human experience and an opportunity for growth and learning.

- **Set (and maintain) boundaries:** Establish clear boundaries between work and personal life to prevent burnout and maintain well-being. Allow yourself to disconnect from work during non-work hours and prioritise self-care activities that replenish your energy.

- **Seek feedback:** Rather than fearing criticism, actively seek feedback out as an opportunity for growth and improvement. View feedback as valuable input rather than a reflection of your worth or competence.

- **Practice self-compassion:** Treat yourself with kindness and compassion, especially when you make mistakes or encounter challenges. Acknowledge your efforts and achievements and be gentle and forgiving with yourself during times of difficulty.

- **Focus on progress:** Shift your focus from achieving perfection to making progress and learning from experience. Embrace a growth mindset that values effort, resilience, and continuous improvement.

- **Delegate tasks:** Recognise that you do not have to do everything yourself. Delegatetasks to others when appropriate and trust in their abilities to contribute to the team's success.

- **Seek support:** If perfectionism is significantly impacting your wellbeing or work performance, seek support from colleagues, mentors, or mental health professionals. Talking to others can offer valuable perspective and encouragement.

Guidance provided in other sections of this workbook will be helpful in tackling dysfunctional perfectionism, particularly cognitive behavioural strategies and being more self-compassionate (Core Actions 5.2 and 5.3).

Core Action 6: Reflective Goal Setting

Reflective goal setting is a five-stage process created to support personal development (Travers, 2022). This provides a structured, evidence-based framework for setting and achieving goals.

The five stages are:

1. **Enhancing self-awareness:** Bring together relevant information about yourself and your strengths and weaknesses gleaned from appraisals, feedback, personality tests etc. Document these insights and reflections in a Reflective Goal Setting diary.

2. **Setting suitable goals:** Focus in on a relevant, specific and challenging goal area, that resonates with your personal and professional values. Identify current situations and behaviours that need attention and document your findings in your diary.

3. **Visualising successful goal behaviours:** Visualise your desired outcome, imagining how achieving the goal would look and feel. Drawing inspiration from best practice and role models, identify any performance gap between how you do things now and your future goal success. This will help you generate ideas for how to measure your progress. Record this information in your diary.

4. **Formulating a goal statement:** Write out your goal in detail, including specific actions, techniques to apply, relevant scenarios, progress measurement, the anticipated impact on yourself and others, and the support you require from various sources. This statement will be your roadmap for progress that should be documented in your diary.

5. **Putting goals into practice:** Identify ways to test your goal, adapting it if necessary, continuing to record your goal-related attempts in your diary. Regularly review and evaluate your progress and feed this information into your future goal setting attempts for continued growth and progress.