



PROJUVENATE®

## MENTAL WELLNESS

An educational resource supporting self-directed strategies for improved mental wellbeing – with a focus on the mind–body connection, stress regulation, emotional intelligence, and resilience.

# How to Use This Guide

**Use this as a practical workbook you can read end-to-end or dip into. Each section explains the science in plain language, then gives you simple actions and printable tools you can use today. Small, consistent steps create meaningful change.**

What you'll find inside

- Key ideas: mind-body basics, stress science, emotional intelligence (EI), resilience.
- Everyday practices: micro-habits that take 1–10 minutes.
- Worksheets & trackers: to build awareness and momentum.
- A 4-week starter plan and a simple daily rhythm.

**Note:** This guide is for proactive wellbeing and skill-building, not illness management or crisis guidance.



## Context & Philosophy

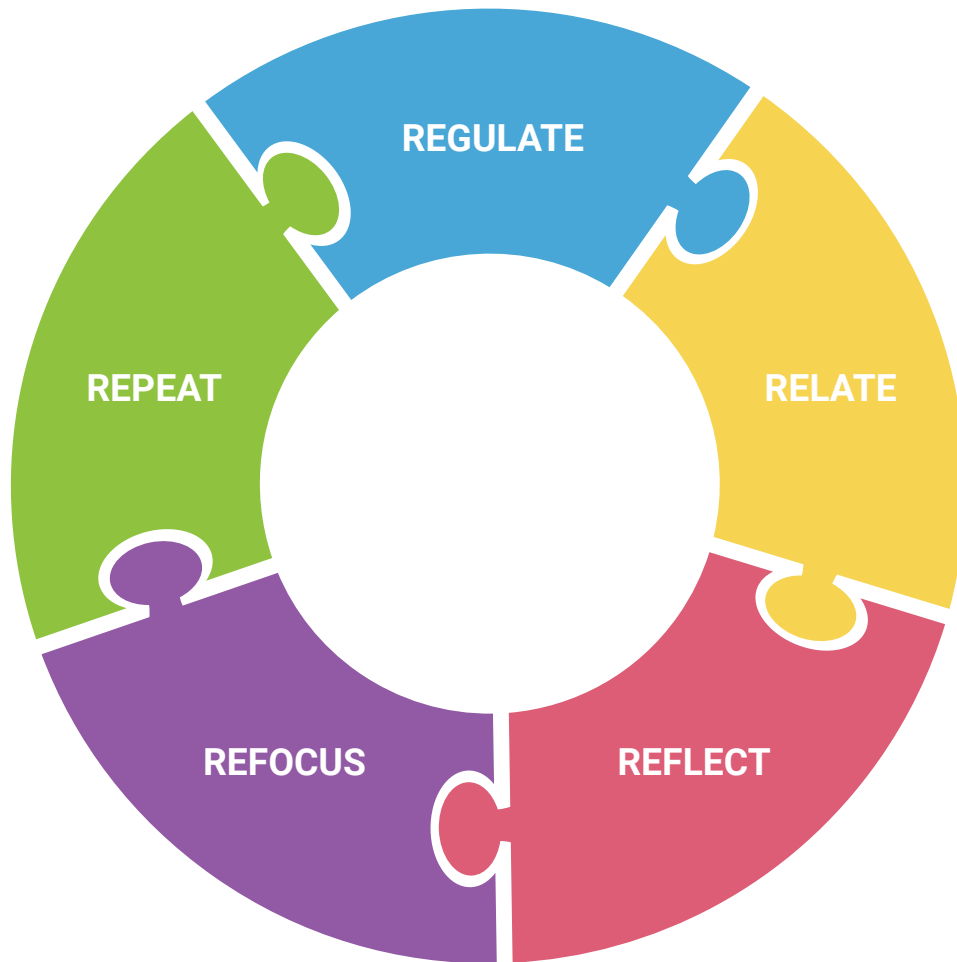
**At Projuvenate, our approach to wellbeing is guided by simple principles designed to help you build sustainable balance and resilience.**

These ideas shape how we design our programmes and how you can apply self-directed strategies day to day:

- **Proactive, strengths-based:** Build capacity before you need it.
- **Skills first:** Focus on simple, repeatable techniques you can master quickly.
- **Body ↔ Mind:** Use breath, movement, light and posture to strengthen the connection between physical balance and mental wellbeing.
- **Micro-doses over marathons:** Small, frequent practices add up to meaningful change.
- **Environment design:** arrange your surroundings so that the choices supporting your wellbeing are the easy, natural ones to make.
- **Intentional response:** pause to notice, name what's happening, and take the next helpful step forward.
- **Compassion & curiosity:** Personal growth beats self-criticism.

## The Projuvenate Mental Wellness Model

- 5Rs



**Regulate:** Use breath, movement, light and consistent sleep routines to help restore physical and mental balance.

**Relate:** Connect with people and purpose to strengthen support and belonging.

**Reflect:** Notice patterns, identify needs, and recognise what helps you feel balanced and effective.

**Refocus:** Align your actions with your values and take the smallest next useful step.

**Repeat:** Track, adjust, and celebrate progress and part of sustainable wellbeing.



## 4 - Week Starter Plan

This four-week guide helps you apply to Projuvenate Model in small, practical ways. Each week focuses on one 'R' - simple, low effort habits that build awareness, connection and sustainable balance. Use it as a framework and adapt timings and practices to suit your lifestyle.

### Week 1 - Regulate

Begin by stabilising your body clock and calming your system. Gentle consistency helps restore energy and focus.

- **Morning light** (2–5 min) and one **slow-breath practice** (2–3 min) each day.
- Keep a **regular wake time** and take a **10–20 min walk outdoors** on four or more days.

*Goal: Anchor your rhythm and create reliable recovery moments*

### Week 2 - Relate

Connection with others supports motivation, perspective and emotional steadiness.

- Plan **two short connection moments** this week (a walk-and-talk, coffee catch-up or brief call).
- Send **one message or note of appreciation** each day to someone who's helped or inspired you.

*Goal: Strengthen relationships and sense of belonging*

### Week 3 - Relate

Turn awareness into learning. Reflection helps identify what restores you and what drains you.

- Take a **90-second pause** when emotions run high; label what's happening and note, 'What matters here?'
- Write a **two-line evening reflection**: what helped today, and the first next step for tomorrow.

*Goal: Recognise and understand patterns and reinforce what works for you*

### Week 4 - Refocus

Refocus your attention and actions on what truly supports your wellbeing and goals.

- Schedule **two focus sessions** (10–20 min) on your priorities - phone out of sight.
- Do **one meaningful action** this week that reflects something important to you - such as learning something new, helping someone, supporting your health, or expressing creativity.

*Goal: Act with purpose and maintain progress*





## Why Invest in Mental Wellness

Mental wellness is not just the absence of problems - it's a positive, trainable state that supports clarity, steadiness, motivation and meaningful relationships. When we invest in it, we tend to sleep better, focus longer, recover more easily from setbacks, and feel more able to make decisions that support our long-term health.

Supporting your mind is just as important as caring for your body - because the two are deeply connected.

We can be physically active and eat well, but if the mind is overwhelmed or constantly under pressure, it's difficult to feel well or function at our best. When the mind is clear, balanced and steady, everything else becomes easier.

In the context of health optimisation, mental wellness means building mental strength: clarity, emotional balance, motivation and resilience. These mental capacities directly support physical wellbeing - influencing hormones, recovery, sleep, digestion and immune function. Mental and physical health aren't separate systems; they work together as one.

## Mental Wellness at a Glance

- **Wellbeing is more than the absence of problems** - it's energy, clarity, connection and contribution.
- **Short, regular practices** create meaningful, lasting benefits when woven into your day
- **Your environment matters** - work and home settings can amplify or dilute your wellbeing efforts.
- **Strengthening mental wellness strengthens physical health** - supporting focus, recovery and long-term vitality.



## The Mind-Body Connection

Your brain and body are in constant conversation. What you think and feel can change breathing, heart rate, muscle tension and sleep; and signals from the body influence how clear, settled or reactive the mind feels. This two-way system affects everything from recovery and focus to motivation, appetite and energy.

Scientifically, this connection is driven by a continuous feedback loop between the brain, nervous system and the body's major systems - hormones, immune function, digestion and inflammation. Stress, overload or low mood can cause real physical shifts, just as pain, fatigue or disrupted sleep can affect attention, emotional balance and decision-making.

The positive news is that you can use physical practices to support mental steadiness, and mental practices to support physical balance. Small, repeatable actions help you regulate both sides of the system.

## Four Practices to Try

These simple physical practices help regulate the body, which in turn supports mental clarity, steadiness and overall mind-body balance.

### 1. Breath

Slow, gentle nasal breathing (around 5–6 breaths per minute for 2–5 minutes) to support regulation and restore balance.

### 2. Posture and muscle

Unclench the jaw or shoulders; try 5-10 second tense-release cycles to soften physical tension.

### 3. Movement

Short, regular movement breaks (walk, stretch, stand) to refresh energy and reduce the build-up of stress signals.

### 4. Temperature & Light

Cooler, dimmer evenings to wind down; natural light exposure soon after waking to anchor your body clock and support daily rhythm.



## Stress: What it is and How to Work With It

Stress is a natural response that helps us deal with pressure, challenge or change. A certain level of pressure can be motivating and can sharpen focus and performance. However, when pressure becomes too high or lasts too long, the body's stress system becomes overloaded. Performance then declines, and both physical and mental wellbeing can be affected.

This pattern is reflected in the Yerkes-Dodson Law, which describes how performance improves with pressure only up to an optimal point before dropping as demands exceed capacity.

Longer periods of unrelieved stress are associated with increased fatigue, poorer sleep, reduced concentration, and a higher risk of experiencing anxiety or low mood.

Recognising stress early, and having strategies to reset, helps keep the stress response short and recovery phases longer.

## Your Stress System in Three Steps

This three-step process reflects well-established findings in stress physiology, showing how the body detects a challenge, activates a short-term stress response, and then returns to balance through parasympathetic recovery.

- 1. Trigger** - A demand, challenge, or perceived threat.
- 2. Response** - The sympathetic nervous system and Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Axis (HPA) activate, releasing adrenaline and cortisol. Heart rate and breathing quicken, and focus narrows.
- 3. Recovery** - Once the demand passes, the parasympathetic 'rest and digest' system restores balance.

**The goal:** shorten the stress response and lengthen the recovery phase - many times a day.



## Quick Practices to Support Recovery (1-5 minutes)

These brief strategies are designed for moments when you notice stress rising. They help interrupt the stress response and guide your system back toward balance. Use them as needed throughout the day.

### 1. Reset your breath

Try a slow, steady exhale. For example: one gentle inhale, then a longer exhale. A longer out-breath helps nudge the body back toward recovery.

### 2. Release physical tension

Drop your shoulders, soften your jaw or wiggle your fingers and toes. Even small movements can interrupt bracing patterns that build during stress.

### 3. Anchor attention

Name three things you can see, hear or feel right now. This helps break the 'mental rush' and reduces reactivity.

### 4. Change your position

Stand up, stretch or take a few steps. Changing posture signals to the body that the "threat moment" has passed.

### 5. Shift perspective

Try a quick reframe such as: "What's the smallest helpful step here?" This reduces the sense of overwhelm and helps the mind refocus.

### 6. Look up and out

Glance at the sky, a window view, greenery or horizon line. A brief visual change can help down-shift the stress response.

## Why This Works

Research shows that slowing the breath, releasing muscle tension, shifting attention, brief movement and short moments of nature contact can support autonomic recovery during stressful moments. These resets are not routines or exercises - just small, interrupting actions you can use whenever the stress response starts to build.



## Stress: Spotting Early Signs

Common indicators that stress may be building include:

- Irritability or feeling overwhelmed
- Racing thoughts or difficulty concentrating
- Sleep disruption or low energy
- More mistakes, feeling rushed or “on edge”
- Withdrawing, procrastinating or relying on unhelpful habits

These signs are not diagnostic - they simply suggest your system may benefit from a reset. Noticing them early can help you steer away from automatic, unhelpful patterns and move towards responses that support recovery rather than add more strain.

## Helpful Vs Unhelpful Coping

When stress builds, it's common to fall into unhelpful coping behaviours that feel relieving in the moment but increase pressure over time. Examples include:

### Unhelpful approaches

Excess alcohol or nicotine, over- or undereating, doom-scrolling, skipping rest, constant activity, or avoidance.

Recognising these patterns early allows you to pivot towards healthier strategies that genuinely support regulation and recovery.

### Helpful approaches

Consistent sleep routine, regular movement, slow breathing, taking breaks, connecting with others, compassionate self-talk, boundary-setting, planning ahead, and spending time outside.

These habits support physiological recovery, help stabilise the stress response, and keep stress within a manageable range.



## Emotional Intelligence (EI)

### What is emotional intelligence (EI)?

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognise, understand and work with your own emotions and the emotions of others. It helps you respond rather than react, communicate more clearly, and build healthier relationships.

Developing EI supports clearer thinking, steadier interactions and more purposeful action - all of which contribute to overall wellbeing.

### Four Everyday EI Skills

#### 1. Self-awareness

Notice and name what you're feeling (even a simple label such as mad, sad, glad, afraid, ashamed can create clarity and reduce reactivity).

#### 2. Self-management

Use a brief pause plan: breathe, notice what's happening, and choose your next step with intention.

#### 3. Social awareness

Stay open and curious about how others might be feeling; listen fully and notice tone, body language and other non-verbal cues.

#### 4. Relationship skills

Communicate needs clearly, set healthy boundaries, express appreciation and repair misunderstandings early.

### Practice: The 90-Second Pause

When a strong emotion arises, pause for about 90 seconds:

**Notice → Breathe → Label → Ask "What matters here?" → Choose the next helpful action.**

This short sequence helps shift you from automatic reactions into more intentional responses.



## Resilience

### What is resilience?

Resilience is the capacity to adapt, recover and continue moving forward when faced with challenges or change. It's not a fixed trait - it's a set of skills, habits and supports that anyone can develop.

Strengthening resilience helps you respond to difficulty with more steadiness, flexibility and clarity.

### What supports resilience?

Resilience grows through small, consistent actions and the environments we create around ourselves. Key contributors include:

- **Supportive relationships and belonging** - Connection with others helps buffer stress and strengthens coping.
- **Healthy routines** - Sleep, movement, nutrition and time outdoors provide a stable physical base for mental wellbeing.
- **Optimism and perspective** - Noticing strengths and focusing on what you can influence helps maintain balance.
- **Purpose and contribution** - Feeling connected to what matters to you supports motivation and direction.
- **Flexible thinking** - Shifting perspective and adapting plans reduces the impact of setbacks.
- **Role models and mentorship** - Learning from others' approaches can guide your own.

### Practice: Cognitive Flexibility Drill

Choose a current challenge and write down:

1. **Three different ways of looking at the situation, and**
2. **Two small actions you can take within 24 hours.**

This encourages perspective-shifting and helps turn challenges into workable next steps.



## Five Ways to Wellbeing (Projuvenate Edition)

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are simple, evidence-informed actions that support both mental and physical health. They work by strengthening connection, stimulating the mind, improving daily rhythm and encouraging small habits that build balance over time. Incorporating even one or two of these each day can make a meaningful difference to your overall sense of wellbeing.

1. **Connect** - Spend time nurturing supportive relationships; express appreciation and stay engaged with people who help you feel grounded and understood.

2. **Be Active** - Move your body in ways that feel accessible and enjoyable. Being active most days - and getting outside when you can - supports energy, mood and recovery.

3. **Keep Learning** - Stimulate your mind through new skills or interests. Learning encourages curiosity, confidence and a sense of progress.

4. **Take Notice** - Slow down and pay attention to the present moment. Savouring small details, pausing with gratitude, or noticing your surroundings helps anchor you and reduce mental clutter.

5. **Give** - Acts of kindness, generosity or appreciation help build meaning and connection. Giving can benefit both the person you support and your own sense of purpose.

**Tip:** Try weaving one 'Way' into your morning and another into your afternoon to support natural rhythm and balance throughout the day.



## Self-Guided Tools and Worksheets

### 1) Stress and Recovery Weekly Tracker

A simple way to notice what's helping you feel balanced and what might need a reset.

Day	Moments of Pressure	How I Steered Myself / Responded	Quick reset used	What Supported Me Today?
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

### 2) Emotional Intelligence Toolkit

A simple way to stay aware, steady and intentional during the week.

My early signals (how I know I'm getting stretched):

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Quick resets that work well for me (1-3 minutes):

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People who help me stay grounded or give useful perspective:

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Helpful habits or boundaries that support me this week:

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A phrase that keeps me on track (eg. 'Pause first' | 'One step at a time' | 'What's important here?')

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## Self-Guided Tools and Worksheets

### 3) Resilience Builder Checklist

Choose three to focus on this week. Small steps build momentum.

- 1 Move outside for 15+ minutes
- 2 Connect with someone supportive (2 x this week)
- 3 Practice a skill or learn something new (3x)
- 4 Do an evening gratitude or reflection (4 nights)
- 5 Carry out one small act of kindness (2x)

### 4) My 5 minute Reset Card

Save to your phone for busy moments.

#### Pause → Breathe → Reset → Move forward

- Soften your shoulders and jaw
- Take a long exhale and breathe in
- **Name what's happening**
- **Choose one, small helpful step**



## Self-Guided Tools and Worksheets

### 5) Your Personal Action Plan

A few small commitments can create meaningful shifts over the week.

#### This week I will ...

- **Protect one core routine**  
(e.g., morning light exposure, a short walk, or a wind-down ritual)
- **Practice one EI skill**  
(e.g., name emotions, use a 90-second pause, listen with curiosity)
- **Connect with one person**  
(support, appreciation, or simply shared time)
- **Reflect on what helped**  
(identify one thing that made a positive difference and build from there)



## References and Further Reading

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## Disclaimer

This resource is designed to support mental wellness and everyday wellbeing. It is not intended to assess, diagnose or treat mental ill health, and it should not replace personalised medical advice.

If you are experiencing ongoing difficulties with mood, anxiety, sleep or other mental health concerns, please contact a healthcare professional. If you ever feel in crisis or at immediate risk, seek urgent support.



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