

Taking care of

YOU

Tips and techniques guide

Helping you through
your working day in
ED and beyond

 mind
for better mental health

“ I have to look after myself, otherwise I just can't keep going. It's an important part of being able to do my job properly. ”

ED consultant

About this guide

We know you work under challenging time pressures. So all techniques in this guide have been designed to fit around your busy role. Take this time for you – you will feel more in control and able to perform at your best.

You don't have to work through this guide from cover to cover – simply dip in and out, as and when you want to.

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You work in a demanding environment. Exposed to trauma, challenging targets, an unpredictable work load and management pressure.

Research by Mind shows these experiences can have an impact on your mental health and wellbeing. Taking care to stay mentally well will help you manage pressure at work.

Here are some proven easy techniques to use before, during and after your shift.

We developed it in collaboration with ED staff, and with help from experts in coping with highly-demanding roles, from the military to elite athletes.

Take time before your shift

“ I feel anxiety about coming back to work, I'm worrying before I'm even there about what I am going to face. ”

Student nurse, ED

You can't predict what will happen today. That uncertainty would make anyone feel nervous. Take time to mentally prepare by working through a readiness checklist.

Readiness checklist

- Challenge negative thoughts and assumptions. Imagining the worst will fuel any anxiety.
- Take six deep breaths, to slow your heart rate and put your body into a calm, ready state.
- Purposefully leave worries behind. Write them down, say them or shut them in your locker.
- Repeat a motto to start your shift with a positive perspective.

Take a deep breath

Put one hand on your chest, and one on your abdomen. Relax your shoulders and hands. As you slowly breathe in, feel your abdomen rise. As you breathe out, feel it flatten. Repeat six times.

Choose a motto

Mottos are often used by athletes before a race. They can be a good way to shift your perspective. Find one that works for you. Repeat it out loud or write it down, and visualise a positive image.

“ I am prepared and able to succeed. ”

“ I have conquered these challenges before. ”

“ I am focused and determined. ”

“ I am part of a strong and capable team. ”

“ Let's do this. ”

Take care during your shift

“That diverse range of emotion is very difficult. Sometimes you just think: ‘I can’t do this today’, and you don’t know what it is that’s triggered that.”

Senior nurse, ED

Your job will push you out of your comfort zone. Working under pressure can make you feel energised. It can also take a toll.

You need to be alert to your own response to stress.

There are many causes of stress in ED that are out of your control. But you can control how you react when stressful situations happen.



- > Scan your body slowly from head to toe.
- > Identify any physical signs of stress, such as tense muscles, an upset stomach, or shallow breathing.
- > Now scan your mind and mood. Notice if you are snappy, easily startled, or having racing thoughts.

Look out regularly for your stress signature. The sooner you spot stress, the sooner you can manage it.

The

90

second rule

It can take just 90 seconds to manage a strong emotional response.

When you're in a situation that causes stress, an automatic chemical process is started in your body. This will subside quickly if there is no further trigger.

Allow yourself 90 seconds to step back from a situation which causes panic, stress or anger. Take yourself out of the room if you can, or focus attention on something else.

Breathing window

IN

1 Find a square shape in the room.

2 Trace each line clockwise with your eyes.

Take 90 seconds for



OUT

OUT

5 This improves oxygen flow and will adjust your focus.

4 Keep your breathing slow and steady.

3 Take a deep breath in and out as you follow each line.

IN



Rapid recharge

- > Identify where you are holding tension in your body.
- > Tense as many muscles as possible, from face to toes.
- > Hold for five seconds and then release.

make the mundane matter

- > During your next routine activity, notice each of your senses in turn. Focused attention will help you slow down before you move onto your next task.

- > When washing your hands, push down gently and move your thumbs over the wrist in an outward, circular motion. Work your way down to the knuckles and back up again. At the same time count backwards from 10.

Anchoring

Anchoring is an effective technique for inducing a certain frame of mind or emotion. It involves using a touch or gesture as an 'anchor' to change your mood. It works by combining a positive thought with a gesture, to help focus on a positive feeling. The more times you repeat this gesture, the stronger the connection will be.

When you achieve something positive, do a simple gesture, like pulling on your lanyard. This will help remind you of your achievement.

Positive
gesture

=

Positive
feeling

“
I can
do this.
”

The next time you need reassurance, pull on your lanyard, pause for a moment and tell yourself you can do this.

A moment of panic? Take time out

Feel panic rising? Slow things down. Speak more slowly and reduce the volume of your voice. Take ten deep, slow breaths.

Take 90 seconds for



If you can, step away for 90 seconds (see the 90 second rule on page 9). If you can't step away, try counting backwards from 20 to one. Taking this time will allow you to think more clearly.

Switch attention

If something has angered or upset you, 'break state' by focusing purposefully on a simple task. It doesn't matter what it is – re-order the papers you are carrying. Switching your attention to something new helps you refocus.

Take a break

“ I find it really hard to walk away. There's always something more to be done, I start the next job and before you know it 20 minutes have gone by. ”
ED healthcare assistant

Taking your break whenever possible will help you keep performing at your best.

The most effective breaks are when you mentally disengage from work. Even for a few minutes.

Try an exercise from this guide to make the most of your break and help you recharge.

One minute for you - tense and relax

Tensing and releasing muscles can help you feel more in control of your mood.



Inhale and tense one muscle group for five seconds – like your feet, or shoulder muscles.

.....



Exhale and release the tension that's there, imagining stress leaving your body.

.....



Relax for 10 seconds, and move on to the next muscle group, until you've worked through your whole body.

.....



When releasing the tension, focus on the changes you feel when the muscle is relaxed.

.....



Finally, tense your entire body and then relax. Take a deep breath and focus on the feeling of ease.

Take a moment at the end of your shift

“ Sometimes I find it very difficult to unwind, the events play on my mind the next day. I'm not very good at switching off. It will take me a couple of days. I get a knot in my shoulders. It manifests in physical pain. ”

Student nurse, ED

Hand over the baton to colleagues starting their shift. But don't keep running in the race. You are part of a team and you have done your bit.

Going home checklist

Just as you prepare mentally to start work, do the same at the end of your shift. Complete a going home checklist, to ensure work stays at work.

- Take a moment to think about today or write down your thoughts.
- Acknowledge three things that were difficult. Purposefully let each of them go.
- Consider three things you felt pleased about, however small.
- Choose an action that signals the end of your working day. This may be shutting your locker door, taking off your uniform, or getting to the bike rack.
- Switch attention to what you will do when you get home.
- How will you rest and recharge?

Take time to transition to home

- > Move your mind away from ED.
- > If thoughts keep returning to work, try changing your route home.
- > Refocus your thoughts by counting objects above eye-level – to lift your gaze upwards and change perspective.



Take time at home

“Sitting at home picturing scenarios in your head, thinking anxiously, what if this happens? Or what if that happens? You can't know what the situation of the department will be like, so that is madness.”

ED nurse

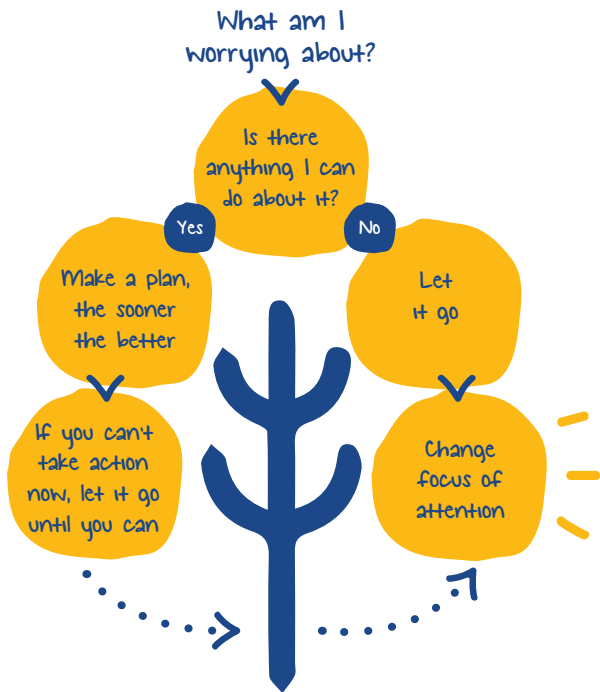
Invest in time at home to recharge and recover from your last shift.

Transferring worries to paper

Writing down worries or concerns is a powerful way of clearing your mind. Have a notepad by your bed and set aside five minutes at the end of the day to jot down your thoughts.

Letting go of worries

If you are turning things over in your mind, follow the worry tree.



Move

Exercise can act as a stress reliever. Think of easy ways to include more exercise in your busy routine. Park the car further away, get off the bus a few stops earlier, or take the stairs. Ask colleagues what they do. Being active boosts feel-good endorphins and distracts you from daily worries.

Find what works for you

Go for a walk, call a friend, buy some flowers, read a book – make a list of activities that help you recharge and feel yourself. Don't wait until you're in a low moment to do this.

Make gratitude a habit

First thing in the morning or last thing at night, write down a list of things you are grateful for. We can instinctively be more sensitive to negative events and emotions. Practising gratitude can help restore balance and has been shown to have a positive effect on wellbeing.

Night, night

Sleep is crucial in recovering from mental and physical exertion. Lack of sleep affects your mood, concentration and energy levels. Before you go to bed ensure you have taken steps (like the worry tree) to tackle anxiety and rumination.

Clear your mind

- > Address any negative thoughts that cause you stress and worry before you get into bed.
- > Introduce scheduled worry time.

Research shows that containing your worry within designated times can help free up the mind for other activities, like sleep.

Be sleep ready

- > Visualise peaceful scenes or imagine yourself breathing quietly, gently falling asleep.
.....
- > To help get in a sleep ready state, try some of the relaxation techniques listed in this guide.

Prepare for sleep checklist

- Avoid stimulants (texting, iPads, caffeine)
- Avoid sleep disruptors (alcohol, naps)
- Exercise (but not before bed)
- Eat wisely (don't go to bed hungry or full)
- Follow a relaxing bedtime routine



We're Mind, the mental health charity

We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets both support and respect.

- > mind.org.uk/ED
- > Mind Infoline: call 0300 123 3393
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