

# **COMBAT STRESS**

# **RWP**

# **WORKBOOK**

Recovery Wellness Plan

Adapted for Combat Stress use by  
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## **Who is this workbook for?**

To answer simply, this workbook is for veterans. Some people who have served in the military find that they can, at times, struggle to cope with the hardships, trauma and loss related to military service and operational deployment. You may find that you experience feelings and symptoms that are extremely distressing, and that they may prevent you from doing things you want to do, and being the person you want to be. Some people find that their family and friends have difficulty understanding what you are feeling or relating to your behaviour. It is not uncommon for situations like this to put strains on relationships, and this can leave you feeling very alone. If any of this sounds at all familiar, then this booklet is for you.

## **Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) - Why is this useful?**

For some, the link between what they do in everyday life and how they feel mentally and physically may be a new one. For others, they may have an awareness of how certain things (such as activities, interactions with other people, and experiences) both positive negative, impact their state of wellbeing, but they may not have explored this in any great depth.

This WRAP workbook helps you think about, and write down, things you do and could do to become, and keep yourself well. It is designed to help you become who you want to be and make your life the way you want it. It encourages you to think about what really works for you and will help you recognise triggers, those things that happen to you that set off uncomfortable thoughts, feelings or behaviours. This workbook also looks at the subtle changes in your thoughts, feelings or behaviours which indicate action needs to be taken to avoid becoming unwell. WRAP works on the idea that prevention is better than cure. There's also space to plan action, think about who else can help you, and to review and learn from your experiences.

It is designed as an aid for learning about yourself, what helps you and what doesn't, and how to progressively gain more control over your life.

## Completing the WRAP workbook

Going through the WRAP workbook will take time, but in the end you will have produced a personalised manual aimed at keeping you well.

Under each heading we have given some examples to help you think through the various topics covered in the Workbook - and they are simply that: just examples - you will have your own personal ones. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

We've allowed a whole page per topic - but it's up to you how much you write.

### Can anyone help me to complete my WRAP?

It can be done alone, it is your document and you do not have to show it to anyone unless you decide to. However, many find it valuable to have a supporter, someone they trust who can offer help when needed. Staff will be happy to assist you, so if you are stuck and want help, let us know.

You might also think about asking a trusted family member or friend to support you with your WRAP when you return home. We are all human and need help from time to time, so don't be too proud to ask for it.

### What should I do once my WRAP is completed?

It can become a practical support for you to refer to daily as a reminder and guide, and also something to turn to for ideas at times of difficulty. It can be (and perhaps over time should be) reviewed and amended to remain as useful as possible.

You could decide to share your completed WRAP with trusted friends, family or support staff as some people find it difficult to recognise when they are becoming unwell. However, this is not compulsory and no one else ever **has** to see it.

**This plan is based on empowerment and personal responsibility. It encourages you to focus on your strengths rather than your weaknesses.**

**It becomes *your guide* to support *your wellbeing*.**

## 1. Daily Maintenance Plan

Many people vary in how they feel from day to day. The weather, diet, lack of sleep, our health and many other factors can cause us to have a 'good' or a 'bad' day. This first section helps you to consider what makes you, you.

**a. What am I like when I am feeling both physically and mentally well?**

**How would you describe yourself?**

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### Some ideas:

- |                |                |               |              |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| • Outgoing     | • Bright       | • Athletic    | • A joker    |
| • Happy        | • Cheerful     | • Optimistic  | • Content    |
| • Enjoy crowds | • Talkative    | • Reasonable  | • Curious    |
| • Dramatic     | • Relaxed      | • Responsible | • Generous   |
| • Energetic    | • Patient      | • Shy         | • Thoughtful |
| • Active       | • Flamboyant   | • Calm        | • Friendly   |
| • Humorous     | • Capable      | • Spontaneous | • Quiet      |
| • Serious      | • A chatterbox | • Creative    | • Smiley     |
-

# 1. Daily Maintenance Plan

## b. What are my personal goals? What do I aspire to achieve?

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### Some ideas:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To be well enough to attend an anniversary / wedding / Christening</li><li>• To become well enough for discharge</li><li>• To rebuild a relationship</li><li>• To go on holiday with family / children / friends</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To stop smoking / drinking</li><li>• To regain a previous level of physical fitness / increase physical fitness</li><li>• To re-establish contact with family / friends / old colleagues</li></ul> <p><i>Be specific and where possible give details such as when, how, who, and where.</i></p> |
|--|---|
-

# 1. Daily Maintenance Plan

c. What do I need to do every day to keep myself feeling as well as possible?

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## Some ideas:

- Eat three healthy meals and three healthy snacks
- Go to bed by 11pm
- Drink at least six glasses of water
- Avoid caffeine, sugar, junk foods, alcohol, certain people, becoming overtired etc,
- Exercise for at least ½ hour
- Get myself outside for at least ½ hour
- Take medications – list type, amount and frequency
- Take vitamin supplements
- Have 20 minutes of relaxation or meditation time
- Write in my journal for at least 15 minutes
- Spend at least ½ hour enjoying a fun or creative activity
- Get support from someone who I can be honest and open with
- Check in with my partner for at least 10 minutes
- Check in with myself; how am I doing mentally / physically / emotionally
- Go to work if it's a work day
- Plan to see someone or do something outside of the home

*Be specific and where possible give details such as when, how, who, and where.*

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## 1. Daily Maintenance Plan

d. What do I do *less often* than every day to keep myself feeling well, feeling alright?

This is what I need to do for myself every so often (weekly, monthly, yearly) to keep myself feeling as well as possible...

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### Some ideas:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Spend time with a good friend</li><li>• Spend extra time with my partner</li><li>• Be in touch with my family</li><li>• Start a new project / course / job</li><li>• Review life goals or ambitions</li><li>• Book to have a massage</li><li>• Set up an appointment with one of my health care professionals</li><li>• Plan a holiday or short break</li><li>• Go to a support group</li><li>• Take a hot bath</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tidy the house</li><li>• Do the laundry</li><li>• Plan something fun for the weekend</li><li>• Write some letters</li><li>• Remember someone's birthday or anniversary</li><li>• Go out for a long walk or do some other extended outdoor activity (gardening, fishing, etc.)</li></ul> |
|---|---|

*Be specific and where possible give details such as when, how, who, and where.*

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## 2. My Personal Triggers

Triggers are **things that happen to us** that are likely to set off a chain reaction of uncomfortable or unhelpful behaviours, thoughts or feelings. In this second section you will explore your personal triggers and consider what you can do to avoid and control them.

### a. Recognition: What are my triggers?

**These are things which can cause me to feel stressed, irritable, unhappy, difficult to be around...**

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#### **Some ideas:**

- Ways that others treat me
  - Anniversary of loss or trauma
  - Environmental stimulus, e.g. car backfiring / helicopter overhead
  - Being over-tired
  - Family conflict
  - Illness
  - Other life stressors: car problems, money worries, divorce, bullying, redundancy, housing problems etc
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## **2. My Personal Triggers**

### **b. Action Point: Avoiding triggers**

**What can I do to avoid or limit my exposure to things that trigger me? What can I ask others to do (or not to do) to help?**

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**Some ideas:**

- Become aware of and avoid certain people or unhelpful / unnecessary stressful situations
  - Ask others for support
  - Make plans for what you are going to do on difficult anniversaries so you are supported through them
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## 2. My Personal Triggers

### c. Action Point: Coping with triggers when they occur

**What can I do when I am triggered to prevent things from getting worse? What can I ask others to do (or not to do) to help?**

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#### **Some ideas:**

- Control breathing
- Focus on priorities
- Talk to a friend or counsellor
- Take the correct medication
- Journaling – write my feelings in a note book
- Do something “normal” like washing my hair, shaving or going out somewhere
- Rationalise thoughts
- Look through old pictures, scrapbooks and photo albums
- Repeat positive affirmations
- Play music
- Physical exercise – go for a walk, gym etc
- Ask for an appointment with a health professional
- Focus on and appreciate what is happening right now
- Take a warm bath
- Do something that makes me laugh
- Make a list of accomplishments
- Spend ten minutes writing down good things about myself
- Do something special for someone else

*Be specific and where possible give details such as when, how, who, and where.*

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### 3. My Early Warning Signs

Early warning signs are the subtle signs of changes in our thoughts, feelings or behaviour, which indicate that you may need to take action to avoid a worsening of your condition or situation. In this third section, you will be considering such changes and your response to them.

#### a. Recognition: What are my early warning signs?

**What are the subtle signs of changes within me that I notice and others may notice?**

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**Some ideas:**

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| • Stress rash                                  | • Nightmares                  |
| • Over reacting about things                   | • Being 'mentally tired'      |
| • Strong emotions                              | • Inability to sleep          |
| • Forgetfulness                                | • Flashbacks                  |
| • Avoiding usually enjoyable events/activities | • Being irritable with others |
| • Being tearful                                | • Feeling self-critical       |
|  | • Staying in bed all day      |
-

### 3. My Early Warning Signs

#### b. Action Point: What can I do about them?

**What action can I take when I recognise the early warning signs?**

**What can I ask others to do (or not to do) to help?**

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#### **Some ideas:**

- Make sure I am following my 'daily maintenance' plan
  - Talk to a friend or counsellor or health professional
  - Extra rest
  - Ask for a medication review
  - Attend a support group
  - Mindfulness exercises
  - Make 'to do' lists
  - Relaxation and stress reduction exercises
  - Extra exercise
- Be specific and where possible give details such as when, how, who, and where.*
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## **4. When Things are Breaking Down**

Signs of potential crisis are when things start breaking down or getting worse, where the situation has become uncomfortable, serious or even dangerous, but you are still able to take action on your own behalf.

### **a. Recognition: What are the signs that I am nearing a potential crisis?**

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#### **Some ideas:**

- Crying all of the time
  - Short temper
  - Arguing with friends, family, co-workers
  - Sleeping all day
  - Not sleeping at night
  - Drinking too much alcohol
  - Experiencing increased anxiety / number of panic attacks
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## 4. When Things are Breaking Down

### b. Action Point: What can I do when I recognise I am nearing a potential crisis?

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#### Some ideas:

- Make sure I am following my 'daily maintenance' plan
  - Make an appointment with GP or call the GP out of hours service
  - Make an appointment with my care co-ordinator or counsellor
  - Take time off from home and work responsibilities (name the number of days and who can offer support)
  - Contact helplines
  - Relaxation and stress reduction exercises
  - Ask for a medication review
  - Engage in activities that are particularly meaningful for me
  - Ask trusted friends, family or health professional to telephone / visit to check on my wellbeing
- Be specific and where possible give details such as when, how, who, and where.*
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## 5. Supporters and Emergency Contact Numbers

It's sometimes difficult to ask for help: but it's important to do so. We all need help from time to time, we are all human.

List those people who could provide some additional support when things get difficult. They can be family members, work colleagues, friends or healthcare professionals. You may want to name some people for certain tasks.

### These are my supporters:

Name	Connection/role
Phone number	
Email	

Name	Connection/role
Phone number	
Email	

Name	Connection/role
Phone number	
Email	

Name	Connection/role
Phone number	
Email	

### These are my emergency contact numbers if I feel in crisis:



## **6. Reviewing the Situation**

**This section is for completion at a later stage when necessary.**

If despite your best efforts at caring for yourself and working with others, you still go through a difficult patch, this is not the end of the world, nor does it mean you cannot recover and the issues can be helped.

Recovery is a process that you can get back to at any time and after any experience, no matter how bad. But in order to do so it will be very helpful to reflect on what has happened to you and what you learn from it. Some can do this alone, but most of us are greatly helped by having someone we trust to turn to, and talk it over together. However, pick your time when you are ready and willing to make sense of it, and you have the energy to do so. Then talk and think through what has happened, and compare this with what you have written so far.

**What have you learned about yourself and others through this difficulty?**

**Are there any of your Action Points that didn't work out as you had hoped?**

## **6. Reviewing the Situation**

**What's the one smallest change you can make which would make the biggest difference next time?**

**What else might you do differently next time?**

**What changes can you make to your workbook to make further difficulties less likely?**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Combat Stress RWP Workbook has been developed based on the original WRAP:

- Copeland, M.E. (2007) *Wellness Recovery Action Plan for veterans and people in the military*, Vermont; Peach Press.

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