



RESILIENCE & WELLBEING

“Resilience is our ability to adapt and bounce back when things don’t go as planned.”

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*Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's law wrong it learned to walk without having feet.
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air.
Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else ever cared.*

Tupac Shakur, The Rose that Grew from Concrete

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Understanding Stress

We live in a busy and demanding world, with many expectations and pressures placed on us. This can lead to varying degrees of stress - for many people a little stress is a good thing and can help motivate us to reach our goals. However, too much stress can lead to us feeling overwhelmed with distressing symptoms and can cause or exacerbate serious physical and mental health difficulties.

What Is Stress?

Stress is essentially the perception of fear and danger – fight or flight – a state which originates from our earliest human response to threat. When we feel threatened our nervous system releases stress hormones which prepare the body for immediate response to perceived danger. We experience a number of physical reactions - racing heart, sweaty palms, dry mouth, increase in blood pressure and tightening muscles - which lead to an overall increase in body strength and stamina and a sharpening of the senses. In a life threatening situation this response is completely appropriate and, to a lesser degree, these symptoms can be experienced during life events such as exams, interviews, driving tests, weddings etc. However, if we are overwhelmed by these symptoms of stress for an extended period of time then we can experience a marked deterioration in our physical and mental wellbeing

Stress affects everyone during their lives and can be triggered by life events such as bereavement, family difficulties, unemployment, illness and financial problems.

There Can Be Emotional Changes as a Result of Ongoing Stress

Anxiety

Feeling overwhelmed

Agitation

Depression

Loneliness and isolation

There Can Be Cognitive Changes

Poor concentration

Memory problems

Lack of judgement

Racing thoughts

Behaviour Changes

Sleeping more/less

Eating more/less

Spending more money

Using alcohol, cigarettes, chemical stimulants

Physical Changes

Headaches

Dizziness

Digestive upsets

Nausea

Chest pain, rapid heart rate

Frequent colds

Managing Stress

It is important to recognise when these symptoms of stress are impacting on our lives. Many of us need the help and support of friends, family, and health professionals to overcome and manage the causes and symptoms of stress, but there are also immediate steps you can take to help manage your own stress.

Positivity

Try to take a step back from the situation and find something positive to focus on – what brings you happiness, what do you enjoy? What/who are you grateful for?

Break It Down

If the stressor seems too big and you feel it's too much to cope with, try and break it down into sections that you can attempt to overcome in stages. This will reduce the amount of pressure you feel at one time and allow you to see how you can overcome this stress.

Make A Plan

If you know there is something ahead of you that may cause you stress – e.g. a large bill or a social situation - try and set out a plan. Think of ways you can reduce or even remove the stress before it becomes overwhelming – perhaps you can save money in the weeks leading up to this bill. This will allow you to prepare yourself for the upcoming stressor which can limit the amount of pressure you put on yourself at any one time.

Voice It

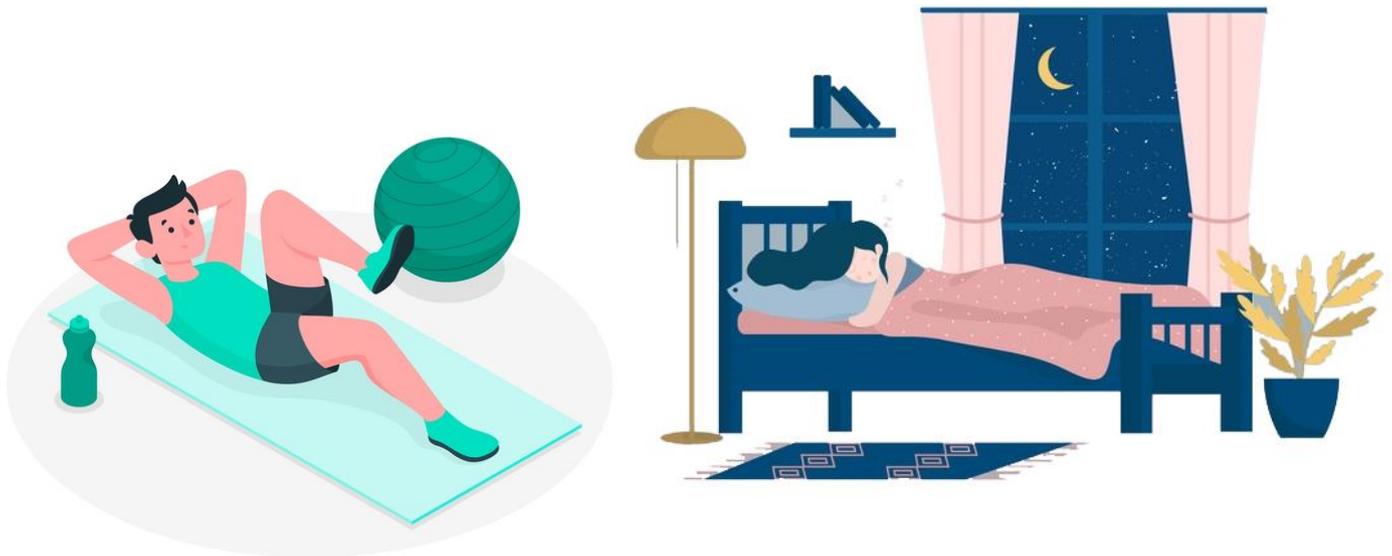
Holding on to stress alone can result in overthinking and can heighten our feelings of stress and anxiety. By talking to someone – friends, family, a helpline – we can break this cycle of overthinking, which can help relieve the feelings of stress instantly. The person we choose to open up to can offer an outside opinion and may even be able to offer some advice on how to help with the problem.

Exercise

Exercise can allow us to work out nervous energy and focus our minds on the present moment, which can help to reduce anxiety and overthinking. Exercise also acts to decrease the level of cortisol, known as the stress hormone, in our body. Further, exercise stimulates the production of endorphins, which elevates our mood instantly. Exercising regularly can also help to regulate our sleeping pattern.

Sleep

Sleep is crucial to reducing stress, as it allows our minds and bodies to rest and recharge. This means we can think more clearly about any problems we may be facing, leaving us better able to cope and problem solve.



Sleep and Stress

When our quality of sleep is impacted by stress, it can adversely affect both our physical and mental health. Stress can lead to a shorter and/or interrupted sleep which can have an impact on our mood, energy levels, concentration, and overall cognitive function.

When we experience anxiety, or have had a particularly stressful day, it can be difficult to switch off at night – even when exhausted. This can lead to overthinking, which can inflate and exaggerate our worries and fears. When finally able to sleep, it may be restless or interrupted. This leaves us feeling tired and drained the next day, which can result in more stress and difficulty sleeping.

Factors That May Help with Your Sleep Are

- A quiet room
- Clean and tidy bedroom
- Dark room
- Bedroom cooler in temperature
- Fresh Air/ open window
- Comfortable mattress/pillows/bedding
- Stick to a sleeping routine
- Meditate before bed
- Have a hot bath or shower before bed
- Have a productive day
- Exercise
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and a heavy meal before bed
- Wind down by doing something relaxing before bed such as reading or practicing mindfulness
- Try to avoid using computer devices/phone an hour before going to bed

Sleep Diary

Keeping a sleep diary can also help us to monitor and identify problems with sleep.

| | DAY 1 | Day 2 | DAY 3 | DAY 4 | DAY 5 | DAY 6 | DAY 7 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| What time did you go to bed? | | | | | | | |
| What time did you try to go to sleep? | | | | | | | |
| What time did you fall asleep (Approx.) | | | | | | | |
| How many times did you wake in the night? | | | | | | | |
| How long were you awake? | | | | | | | |
| What time did you wake in the morning | | | | | | | |
| What time did you get out of bed? | | | | | | | |
| What disturbed your sleep if anything | | | | | | | |



Stress Diary

Keeping a stress diary can help us to monitor and manage our stress.

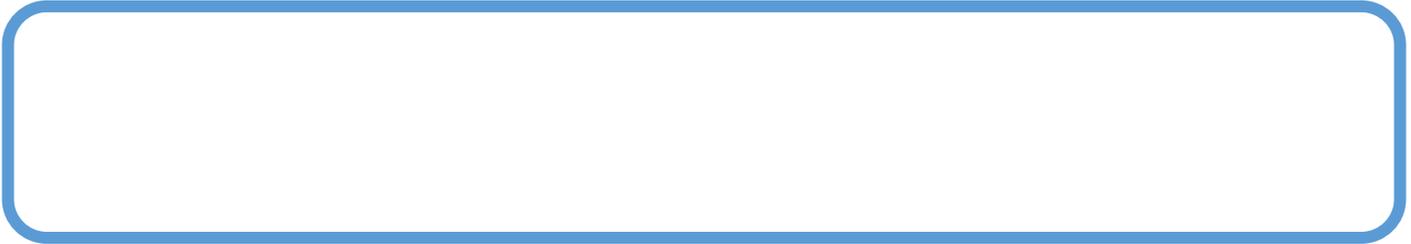
| Date/time | Stressor | Location | Severity | How did I feel | How I handled it | What could I have improved |
|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------------|------------------|----------------------------|
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Express My Stress

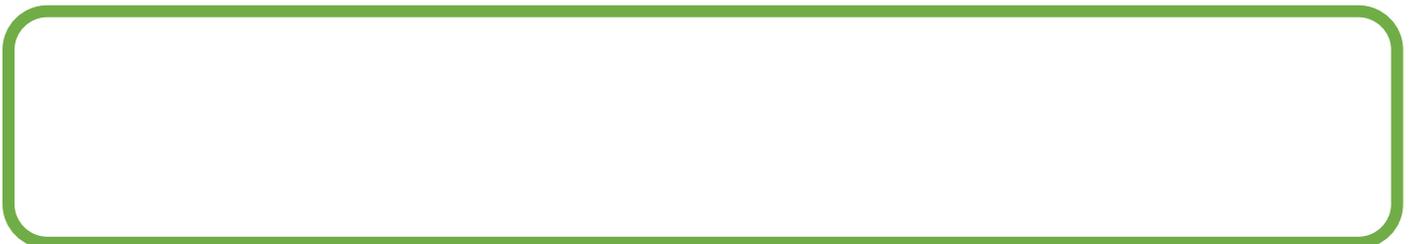
What was the situation? (Place, people, event)



What triggered my stress?



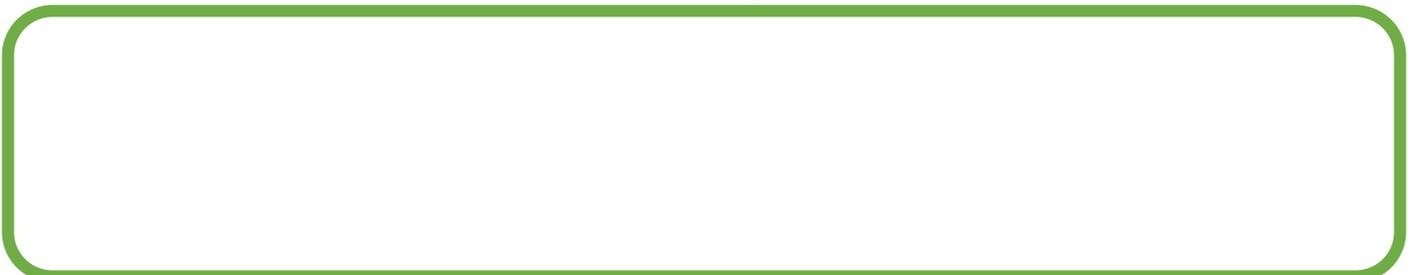
What was my emotional reaction?



What was my physical reaction?



Looking back, what could I have done to either reduce stress levels or prevent the stressful situation altogether?



Resilience

Resilience is how well a person can adapt to the events in their life. A person with good resilience can bounce back more quickly and with less stress than someone whose resilience is less developed.

The Elastic Band Effect

Being resilient does not mean that you don't ever feel stressed or overwhelmed - it means that you are able to bounce back from stressful situations and may have developed strategies to help you do this.

Resilience allows you to keep a clearer outlook and develop the strength needed to acknowledge and accept tough and challenging circumstances.

Everyone has a level of resilience - some naturally have more than others, but you can also practice ways to increase your resilience.

Resilience Can Be Improved By

- Supportive social network: maintain positive connections with friends and family.
- Self-esteem: show kindness towards yourself and value yourself.
- Emotional control: understand the impact of your emotions and try to regulate – not repress emotions.
- Practical planning: think about achievable long and short-term goals and plan steps to reach them.
- Communication skills: learn to express yourself confidently.
- Coping strategies: ask for help when you need it, learn to problem solve, practice mindfulness, use distraction techniques.

There Are Different Types of Resilience

Emotional Resilience

The way an individual deals emotionally with hardship and stress. We each have different sensitivities and cope differently with change. Difficult circumstances can provoke a range of emotional responses.

Individuals with emotional resilience recognise their feelings and understand what has caused them. This allows the individual to approach the situation from a place of understanding, which helps them to overcome the stressors of the situation.

Mental Resilience

Having the capability to mentally cope with or adapt to unsettling and challenging situations. Individuals with mental resilience can stay calm and collected during these difficult circumstances and can move on from them without lasting negative effects.

Physical Resilience

The ability of the body to adapt, preserve energy and have strength in the situation. People who are physically resilient can recover effectively from exhausting and upsetting situations and experiences.

Social Resilience

When a group of people/community can deal with and recover from adverse circumstances, such as economic hardship or natural disasters.

Building Resilience

Resilience is something you can learn and advance over time

Use self-talk methods to think with a positive outlook.

Choose paths to help you overcome obstacles without giving up.

Learn from previous errors.

Accept events that are out of your control.

Do not be afraid to ask for help or advice.

Focus on realistic and achievable goals.

Work on your problem-solving skills.

Write or draw about a time you were faced with a challenge you were able to overcome, learn from and which made you stronger.



Concentrate on dealing with your emotions

Construct, establish and enhance supportive relationships

RESILIENCE

Focus on self-management and your responsibilities

Set goals for personal development

Resilience

Something that makes me feel angry:

How I can calm myself down after this:

Something that makes me feel sad:

How I can deal with this:

Something that makes me feel uncomfortable:

How I can deal with this:

Challenge Your Thoughts

Challenging your thoughts is a dynamic and beneficial way to help reduce stress and anxiety. Below are some different techniques you can try and see if these are helpful for you.

Writing down your thoughts is an active process and may offer more benefits than just thinking them.

The ABCDE Technique

Attention

When you feel anxious, take time out and listen to yourself and what your brain and body are telling you.

Believe?

Do not always trust in your thoughts when you are stressed – anxiety can cause us to tell ourselves things which are untrue.

Challenge

Try and alleviate your anxiety by thinking outside the box and looking at the bigger picture. Are your thoughts fact or are you making assumptions? Are there alternative paths open to you? What would you do if you were in a more relaxed frame of mind, or in someone else's shoes? Get creative!

Discount

Realise that your anxiety is driving your thoughts and opinions, so try and let these go.

Explore Options

Turn your focus on to something that will benefit and help you. Look at what options are available to you.

The THINK Technique

True?

Are my thoughts completely accurate and true? If not, then what are the real details and opinions?

Helpful

Is focussing on these thoughts beneficial to me or others?

Inspiring?

Do I find these thoughts encouraging or does it make me feel uninspired?

Necessary?

Is it necessary for me to focus on these thoughts? Is it important for me to carry these out?

Kind?

Are my thoughts kind? If not, how could I make them more compassionate?

ADAPTED FROM CAROL VIVYAN (2006)



Distraction Activities

When feeling anxious and stressed, challenging techniques may not always be the best option - you may be too emotionally exhausted to think clearly.

Another option is to try out activities that distract your mind from overthinking, as this may help to reduce your stress and anxiety.

Below Are Some Activities You Could Try

- Meal Preparation
- Watch your favourite movie or programme
- Research new healthy recipes
- Try meditation and mindfulness videos
- Play games on your phone/computer etc.
- Attempt Crosswords/ Sudoku/ Word searches
- Learn a musical instrument
- Make a vision board for hopes for the future
- Take an online course
- Decorate a room in your house
- Rearrange the furniture
- Listen to your favourite album/ playlist
- Do a jigsaw
- Update your CV
- Read a book
- Browse a holiday you want to go on
- Have a pamper day
- Write a list of things you want to save up for
- Do some DIY
- Start a journal
- Follow a workout video
- Workout ways you can save more money
- Have a phone or video call with a friend or family member
- Bake
- Do some mindful colouring
- Learn how to knit
- Do some gardening
- Go for a walk
- Relax with your pet
- Research topics you are interested in
- Start to learn a new language

Controlling Stressors

“Grant me the strength to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

This well-known quote from the Serenity Prayer describes the importance of understanding the stressors in our lives which we cannot do anything about and with this in mind allowing ourselves to focus on the stressors which we can actually change. Read some examples below of stressors which within our control and out with our control.

| I Can Control | Out of My Control |
|---|---|
| Personal routine Eating choices Being open to support Speaking your mind | Traffic Getting older The weather Public transport The news |



Think about the stressors in your own life that you can change and write them inside the circle. Write down any stressors you cannot change outside the circle and think about how you could let them go.



Self-Care

Self-Care is the practice of taking an active role in protecting our own wellbeing and happiness, particularly during periods of stress.

In today's busy world, it is sometimes difficult to find the time to take a break for yourself.

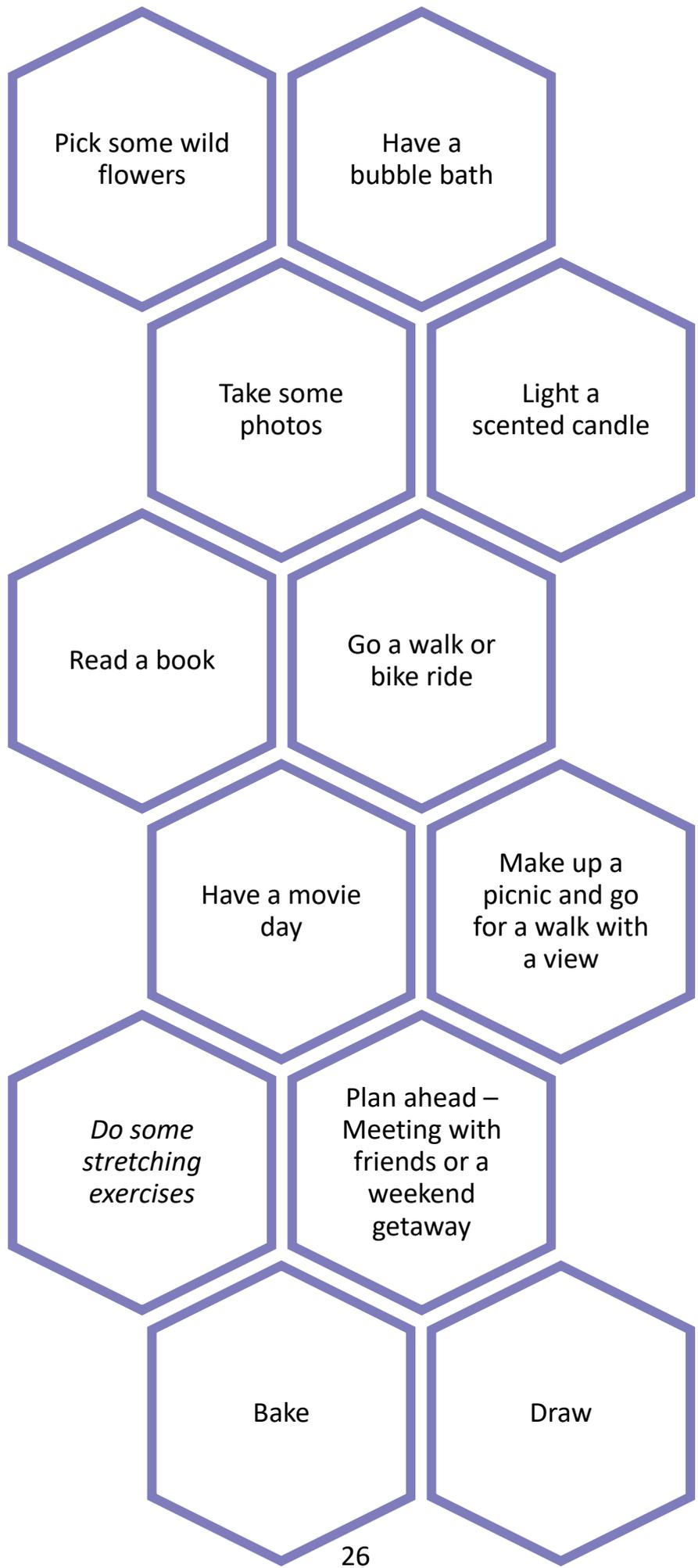
It can be as simple as going for a walk or lighting a candle and enjoying a relaxing bath. These may sound simple, but the little things can have a significant impact on how you feel in your own skin and allow you the opportunity to relax - which we often find hard to do!

Finding self-care methods that work for **you** can help to lower your stress and anxiety levels, boost your self-esteem, improve your relationships with others and benefit your overall health.

It is important to recognise that self-care is different for every individual. We each have a different outlook on what we enjoy and what we hope to achieve. That said, there is a general range of activities included in self-care which can improve your physical and mental well-being and lead to a happier and healthier lifestyle. We have listed some of these activities on the following pages for you to try out and enjoy.

Or, put simply, practice treating yourself with kindness!





Self-Care Planner

Name:

My Self-Care

This Makes Me Happy:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

-
-
-
-
-
-

My Inspiration:

My Goals:

14 Day Writing Challenge

Each day write about one of these topics.

Day 1

- List 6 things that make me happy.

Day 2

- Write about a person that inspires you.

Day 3

- Write down something you struggle with.

Day 4

- Write about something you are excited for.

Day 5

- List 5 facts about yourself.

Day 6

- Write down the best piece of advice you have been given.

Day 7

- What are your highs and lows of the month?

Day 8

- Write about things you want to improve on.

Day 9

- List 6 songs you love and explain why.

Day 10

- Write about a compliment given to you that you will never forget.

Day 11

- List 5 places you want to visit.

Day 12

- Describe a show or film you will never get tired of watching and why.

Day 13

- Write about something, or someone, you are grateful for.

Day 14

- List 5 things that make you laugh.

Positive and Motivational Quotes

*"Believe you can and
you're already
halfway there." –
Theodore Roosevelt*

*"Don't start your day
with the broken
pieces of yesterday.
Every day is a fresh
start. Each day is a
new beginning." -
Unknown*

*"You don't always
need a plan.
Sometimes you just
need to breathe,
trust, let go and see
what happens." –
Mandy Hale.*

*"Life isn't about
waiting for the storm
to pass. It's about
learning how to
dance in the rain." –
Vivian Greene*

*"Look for something
positive in each day,
even if some days
you have to look a
little harder."-
Unknown*

*"Sometimes we're
tested not to show
our weaknesses, but
to discover our
strengths." – FR.
Rishabh. S*



*“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.*

Emily Dickinson, “Hope” is the thing with feathers

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