

A holistic approach to pharmacy wellbeing.

How you can contribute to best wellbeing practice through improving workplace culture, connecting with others and prioritising physical health.



PHARMACIST
SUPPORT

#ACTNOW

2024

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PharmacistSupport.org



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Pharmacist Support

Who is Pharmacist Support?

Pharmacist Support is an independent charity providing a wide variety of free and confidential support services to those working and studying in pharmacy. Our vision is for no one in our pharmacy family to face challenging times without us by their side and every year, we provide thousands of acts of support. Our mission is to champion the wellbeing of our pharmacy family.

What is #ACTNow?

We know it can be difficult to find time to prioritise wellbeing, especially with the commitment and pressures that come with working in pharmacy. In our dedication to support you, Pharmacist Support is proud to run our annual ACTNow wellbeing campaigns. ACTNow encourages pharmacy employers, managers and individuals to:

Allow time for wellbeing **Consider the needs of others** **Take action**

Why the focus on wellbeing?

86% of pharmacists are at risk of burnout*. Top factors attributed to burnout include inadequate staffing, lack of work-life balance, insufficient protected learning time, absence of colleague or senior support and long working hours. As the profession's charity, we believe it's our duty to be at the forefront of encouraging workplaces, pharmacy teams and individuals to prioritise wellbeing to help counter the negative effects of burnout, stress and pressure that our pharmacy family experiences.

In this year's Pharmacist ACTNow campaign, we're looking at three key issues which pharmacists told us they'd like support with: equality, diversity and inclusion, loneliness and professional isolation, and physical health. Within this ACTNow taster pack, you will find guidance, support and information on how to positively impact you and your pharmacy team's wellbeing. To access all our free, pharmacy-focused resources, please visit our website.

*Figure from our 2023 Workforce Wellbeing Survey ran jointly with the RPS.

Supporting colleagues through difficulties.

We have a collective responsibility (as colleagues, managers and employers) to support each other through challenging times.

Why is it important?

Knowing we are, or will be, supported at work if we're going through difficulty can help us to thrive in our roles. This is because it increases our levels of trust, reduces stress and boosts our sense of belonging within the team.

With good working conditions, there is more chance the pharmacy team will have the capacity to respond to unforeseen challenges and the resilience to bounce back from difficult events.

What are challenging times?

Everyone faces adversities throughout their lives. Some challenges may be easier for some people to manage, however there are common challenges which are more likely to impact us, including:

- Addiction
- Bereavement
- Financial difficulties
- Mental health difficulties
- Physical health problems
- Relationship breakdowns
- Workplace issues.

How to spot if someone is struggling.

People who work closely with one another are often the first to spot changes in someone's mood or behaviour. As everyone

is different, it's important to understand what *their* signs are that something could be wrong. What may be normal personality traits or habits for one person, might be an indication of going through adversity for someone else. Certain behaviours could indicate that a colleague may be struggling, and these often happen gradually. These include a drop in their productivity, focus, and motivation, changes in how they interact with their colleagues and patients, appearing down, withdrawn, detached, tired, anxious, and displaying other unusual or unpredictable behaviours.

How to give support.

Even when you can see someone's struggling, it can be difficult to know what to do. You might be concerned about causing upset or offense, or simply having misread the situation. However, it's usually better to offer help to someone, than do nothing at all. Here are some tips on how to offer support:

1. Recognise who the most appropriate person to help your colleague is. This may be you, or it may be their line manager, HR or a close friend/colleague.
2. If it isn't you, you could then approach the best person who is and, in a way which is respectful to the colleague you're worried about, let them know about your concerns.
3. If you are the most appropriate person to support a colleague and you're in a position to open up a dialogue, remain positive, empathetic and supportive.

4. If your colleague decides to open up to you, it's important to listen with intent and let them explain their struggles in their own words. Often, allowing someone to offload is the biggest act of support you can give.

5. If needed, direct your colleague to support available to them. This could be through your own employer, or through our charitable services, some of which are outlined below.

6. Consider long-term support from you and your organisation if appropriate. This could be through regular informal check ins, through creating an action plan together, or through more formal support.

This is an extract from our webpage *Supporting colleagues through challenging times*.

How Pharmacist Support can help.

If you or a colleague is struggling, there are many ways we can support.

A Listening Friend

If you are having an issue at work and would like some peer support, Pharmacist Support's Listening Friends are here to help. You can speak anonymously to a trained volunteer pharmacist who understands the pressures of the profession and can help you to find clarity with the issue you're facing.

Counselling

Pharmacist Support offers counselling to pharmacists who are experiencing mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, a change in family circumstances, bereavement, and other psychological difficulties.

Addiction Support

At Pharmacist Support, we offer an Addiction Support service for pharmacists experiencing problems with alcohol, drugs, gambling, eating disorders or other types of dependency.

Financial Assistance

We offer Financial Assistance to pharmacists and former pharmacists and their families, students and trainees who are experiencing unforeseen financial hardship.

Specialist Advice

We can offer debt and benefits advice to help manage debt and understand your benefits entitlement. We also offer advice on employment law, including discrimination and changes to terms and conditions.

Please [visit our website for more information and to access our free and confidential support services.](#)





**For
pharmacy
managers &
leaders!**

Embracing a Workplace Wellbeing Culture.

A new course from Pharmacist Support for managers, supervisors and leaders to help you make practical and positive changes to your workplace and how you manage and support employees. The aim of the training is to create healthy working environments with wellbeing at the core.

Modules you will cover:

1. Introduction to wellbeing in the workplace.
2. Understanding mental health and wellbeing.
3. The role of the manager in creating a positive workplace culture.
4. Communication tools to support team wellbeing.
5. Workplace adjustments and structures to support team wellbeing.
6. Building resilience and a growth mindset in your team and across the organisation.



**[Visit our website
to find out more.](#)**

Breathe to reduce stress.

Stress is the feeling of being under too much mental or emotional pressure.

We all need a certain amount of pressure to function well, as pressure helps people to reach their peak efficiency and increases drive to meet deadlines and achieve targets. However, when pressure becomes too intense and prolonged, this can lead to more serious symptoms and problems such as anxiety, depression, headaches, weight gain/loss, sleep disturbance, sweating, abdominal pain, chest pain and panic attacks.

When we're stressed, the sympathetic nervous system is triggered.

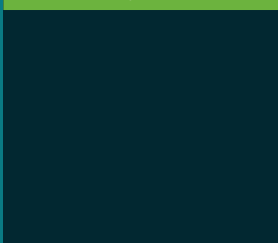
This then activates a chain of reactions in the body. By learning breathing exercises to create calm,

these intentional breaths can activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which calms down the stress response. To relieve stress, some people find a technique called box breathing useful.

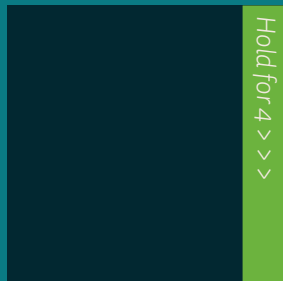
With box breathing, you imagine the pace of your breath following the outside of a box.

This involves inhaling for four seconds, holding air in your lungs for four seconds, exhaling for four seconds then holding your lungs empty for four seconds. To feel the full benefits, repeat the pattern at least three times.

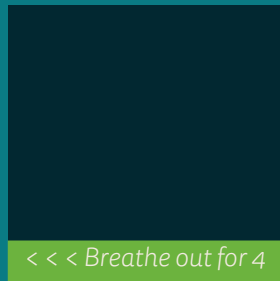
Breathe in for 4 >>>



Hold for 4 >>>



<<< Breathe out for 4

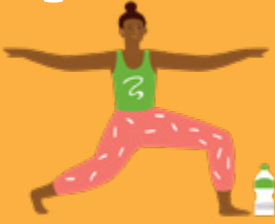


Hold for 4 >>>



This is an excerpt from our video *How to reduce stress through the way you breathe*. [Sign up to our free Wellbeing Learning Platform](#) to access this and many other mental health and wellbeing workshops and videos.

4



Follow an online yoga, pilates or tai chi video for a relaxed workout.

Challenge yourself to exercise for longer by doing one of your favourite physical activities.



3



2

Get active with a friend or family member.

7 days of movement

Being physically active on a regular basis can increase your self-esteem and sense of accomplishment, and in turn improve your sustained mental wellbeing.

The NHS recommends doing 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity every week, so have a go at each activity and write how long you managed it for in the spaces provided.

Do 20 squats with weights. (No weights? Use tinned food or a backpack full of books instead!).



5



Try a beginner workout of an exercise you've never done before.

1

6

Go for a walk, jog or run at a time that suits you.



7



Put on your favourite childhood record and dance like no one is watching.



Please visit our [website](#) for more information, [resources](#) and [support](#) for your physical health.



A Dose of Wellbeing: the Pharmacist Support podcast

Introducing our brand-new podcast ... A Dose of Wellbeing.

Join us for inspiring stories and practical insights as we chat to experts and key figures across the pharmacy and wellbeing sectors who are paving the way for best mental health and wellbeing practices. With topics such as pharmacy workplace culture, the link between our diets and mental health, and how to form lasting habits, you won't want to miss out!

Catch us on all good podcast platforms or YouTube by searching for 'Pharmacist Support'.

Inspiring stories and practical insights for you and your pharmacy team!



Staying connected with others.

Even if we consider ourselves to be introverts, or are comfortable in our own company, having good relationships with other people is important for our wellbeing and has been proven to increase our sense of life satisfaction.

The science behind staying connected

When we connect with others a cocktail of chemicals is released into our body:

- Increased oxytocin levels, increasing our levels of trust and happiness
- Increased dopamine levels, giving us a little high and also killing pain
- Decreased cortisol levels, lowering feelings of stress.

Social interaction helps in other ways too:

- Sharing experiences and support helps us to strengthen our mental resilience
- Interaction can help us to improve memory formation and protect the brain from neurodegenerative diseases
- Having regular social connection may help us to live longer

- Social participation can help us to understand social norms and develop healthy habits
- Having close social ties can make us feel happy, give us a sense of life satisfaction, and improve our overall wellbeing.

The impact of loneliness

Loneliness is defined as a state of mind linked to wanting human contact but feeling alone. People can be alone and not feel lonely, or they can have contact with people and still experience feelings of isolation.

Loneliness itself isn't a mental health problem, but it can have a negative impact on mental health, making people feel they have nobody to talk to, disconnected from the world, left out, sad or misunderstood.

According to the mental health charity, Mind, some research suggests that loneliness is associated with an increased risk of certain mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, sleep problems and increased stress. There can also be physical implications of loneliness, such as increased risk of developing high blood pressure, coronary heart disease, stroke or dementia.



Ways to stay connected with others

Reach out to your existing support network

You may already know lots of people, but you don't feel close to them. By reaching out to your social circle and opening up about how you're feeling, you might be able to cultivate a stronger, closer relationship.

Make new connections

You might be craving social interaction because your social circle is small right now. Or perhaps you know lots of people but aren't getting the sort of social interaction you need so need to meet more, or different kinds of, people. Whatever the reason, it can feel daunting to 'put yourself out there'. However, taking this first step could very well lead to finding a great friend or companion. You could:

- join a group related to your interests or hobbies (try searching the Internet for things like 'cycling group/dog walking group/book club/religious group/etc. near me')
- take a class to learn something new and meet people at the same time
- attend a local event (try looking in your local newspaper or searching online/on social media for events happening near you)
- join a befriending service like those offered by Age UK (for over 50s) and through your local services or online directory
- volunteer (there are many charities across the country often looking for volunteers, including Pharmacist Support!).

Put in the effort

Friendships take time and effort, especially as we get older, but it's worth it. Like other relationships in our lives, we need to be proactive with our friendships and make an effort. Here are some tips to help strengthen your connections:

- Start the conversation with someone you'd like to know better by asking questions to encourage a dialogue

- Showing interest can go a long way in making someone feel comfortable, valued and listened to in your presence
- If you're feeling a connection with someone or a group of people, take the initiative to invite them to do something, such as getting a coffee
- Where possible, say "yes" to invitations to meet up ... and remember to reciprocate the invitation!
- Even if you can't meet up or go out often, keep the friendship going through messaging and/or a phone call every now and again. Letting someone know you're thinking of them can help them to feel valued in the friendship and make it stronger
- Keep in mind that it takes time to feel a strong connection with someone so don't expect results straight away. At the same time, coming on too strong may turn people away, so remember to take it slowly.

Helping others to stay connected

According to the Campaign to End Loneliness, nine million people in the UK lack friendship and support. Even if you're lucky enough to keep a busy home or social life, make sure to check in on people who might be spending a lot of time alone or struggling to maintain positive social connections. You might make a huge impact on their life just by saying hello.

This is an extract from our webpage [Staying connected with others.](#)





Our partnership with the Pharmacists' Defence Association (PDA)

The PDA and their members donate a minimum of £1 per membership each year to the charity. Since 2017, the PDA has committed to making this contribution on an ongoing basis; these donations now exceed £250,000. As well as this financial support, the PDA helps us raise charity awareness through their vast network and develop charitable activities. Without their continued partnership vital support and activities like our ACTNow campaign, wouldn't be possible.

About the PDA

The PDA is a not-for-profit membership organisation and independent trade union which aims to act upon and support the needs of individual pharmacists.

For further information, please visit the-pda.org

What next in your pharmacy career?

Boots is the UK's leading health and beauty retailer.

By choosing Boots for your career in pharmacy, you'll have the opportunity to continue your journey of constant learning while providing valuable care at the heart of a community.

With over 2,200 stores and a team of around 52,000 colleagues, of which over 4,500 are registered pharmacists, you'll receive expert support from your store team and the wider Boots pharmacy network.

Together, we'll continue to be the trusted and much-loved community pharmacy we've been for more than 170 years.

boots.jobs/pharmacy

A word from Kim Innes,
General Manager UK
at Teva UK



"Pharmacists are at the heart of communities across the UK. Our pharmacists dedicate themselves to improving the lives of their patients, so at Teva UK we're proud we have the opportunity to partner with Pharmacist Support who do fantastic work for the pharmacy community. Our pharmacists provide valuable care for patients up and down the country, improving the health and wellbeing of the communities they live and work in. It's a vital front-line service for patients and their families."

Our partnership with Teva UK

We've been working with Teva UK for a number of years to raise awareness of the charity and our support services amongst their vast networks. This includes delivering live online wellbeing workshops to their Teva One members and headline sponsorship of our Pharmacist ACTNow wellbeing campaign. Through this type of corporate sponsorship, we are able to raise much needed funds to support our vital support services.

About Teva UK

Teva UK is a leader in UK healthcare, supplying a wide range of medicines to the UK's National Health Service, as well as working alongside NHS organisations to improve the management of long-term health conditions.

For further information, please visit tevauk.com

“I’ll never know the people whose donations supported me, but I’d love them to know they made the difference for me, my family and our future.”

Help us to make good things happen!

As the profession’s charity, we provide vital assistance to people in our pharmacy family facing challenges like burnout, depression, financial struggles, and more. With your help, we can ensure that no one faces tough times alone.

Please make a donation today



Thanks to your generosity, you are helping to make sure support is available for your colleagues, peers and future pharmacists whenever they need us. Take a look at our case studies to see how your donations have already helped people across our pharmacy family.

The impact of your donation



Pharmacist Support is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 9237609 and charity number 1158974.

We're proud to be able to support people from such a caring profession.

We'll never give up on what we call our **pharmacy family.**



[Sign up to our newsletter](#) to get all our latest updates, news and support straight to your inbox!



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