

# Using My Toolbox



## What is a Toolbox?

We all have bad days – times when things seem particularly difficult, and there will always be times when we feel upset, low, discouraged, angry, worried or stressed out.

When we are feeling this way, it can be very helpful to have a toolbox we can turn to; a collection of objects, mementos or reminders that will lift our mood, reduce our stress levels, calm us and help us focus, or whatever it is that helps us feel better.

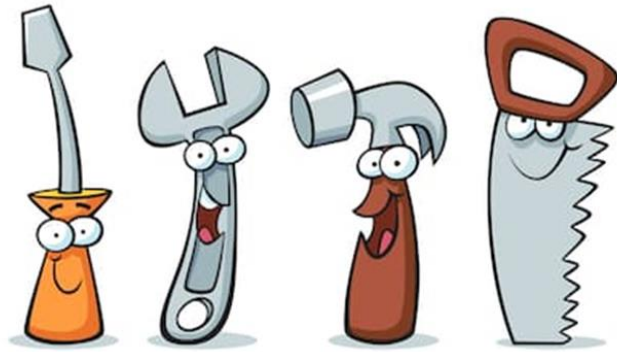
Over the next few pages, we will look at building a toolbox; the things you might already have in your toolbox, and the new things you might want to add. We hope this will be useful for both those who do not yet have a toolbox, and those who do, but want to develop it further.

This document has spaces for you to make notes, so you may wish to print it out. If you don't want to or can't print it out we recommend you get a notebook or similar to make notes in.

## What goes into a toolbox?

Your toolbox might contain a hand cream with a scent that cheers you up, a recipe for something you particularly like to eat, a reminder to get out

and go for a walk, or sit down and spend ten minutes relaxing, or just pause and have a cup of tea. Anything that helps you feel better when things are difficult.



Things that people have put into their toolkits include items with a pleasant scent that brings back good feelings; pictures of people or places that have positive memories; positive affirmations; mindfulness colouring books; reminders to relax, exercise, or breathe; a CD of relaxing music. One person put a gift voucher for their local nail bar in their toolbox because being pampered always made them feel better, and they felt more presentable which increased their self-confidence.

There really is no right or wrong as long as it has a positive effect on your mental health and won't end up causing more problems, mental or physical, in the long run (for instance: alcohol; smoking; drugs etc.).

## What does a toolbox look like?

However good your toolbox, it cannot help you if you can't find it when you need it. If you have items scattered around the house, or are keeping a list of activities and exercises in your head, it is likely you will struggle to locate or remember them when things are getting difficult and you need them most.



We recommend that you take the time to gather everything that you want to include in your toolbox and put them together in one place. Depending on what you have in your toolbox you may want to get a box and put everything in there. Or maybe it's a list of exercises and meditations you find helpful, in which case you may want to write it down and put it in your purse or wallet, or on your phone, or perhaps laminated and pinned to the fridge. You may also want to make a smaller version of your toolbox that you can take with you wherever you go.

### **What do you already have in your toolbox?**

There are almost certainly already things that you do to help manage your mental health that you could make part of your toolbox. Perhaps you have found that going for a walk has helped lift your mood, or doing a breathing exercise has lowered your stress.

Spend some time thinking about what you have done in the past that has helped you feel better when things have been difficult. You can use the space below to make a note of anything you can think of.

## What new things could you put in your toolbox?

The sorts of thing you could put in your toolbox can be split into one of three groups:



**Items and objects** – these are actual physical items and are often the easiest to store in a box. They might be photographs or mementos that make you smile. They might be items that stimulate one or more of your senses such as a CD or a playlist of relaxing music, incense to stimulate your sense of smell, or an interesting crystal you can hold and look at.

**Tools and techniques** – this may simply be a list of the breathing and relaxation exercises, and mindfulness and other meditations that work for you. Perhaps you could include links to your favourite online resources, or if you are more old-school you might include the meditation scripts or a CD with a guided meditation.

**Reminders** – it is easy to forget to do the things that help keep us well, especially when things are becoming more challenging. So you might include a reminder of the activities that help you and your wellbeing: eg. : going for a walk; meditating regularly; taking a long hot bath; calling a trusted friend. You may even want to create a schedule to help you build these things into your day-to-day life.

On the following pages you will find space to make a note of anything you think you would like to try adding to your toolbox. There are sections and prompts for the different types of thing you might add, but please don't feel that you need to find something for every section.

Also, please remember that it is better to try something and find out it doesn't work than to reject something that might work without trying it!

<b>Items and Objects</b>	
<b>Senses</b>	Sight
	Smell
	Sound
	Taste
	Touch

**Items and Objects**

Objects that makes me smile or lift my mood

Things that makes me feel better about myself

Anything else that might work for me

**Tools and Techniques**

Breathing and relaxation exercises, mindfulness and meditations, etc

Resources

Anything else

**Reminders**

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**Notes**

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