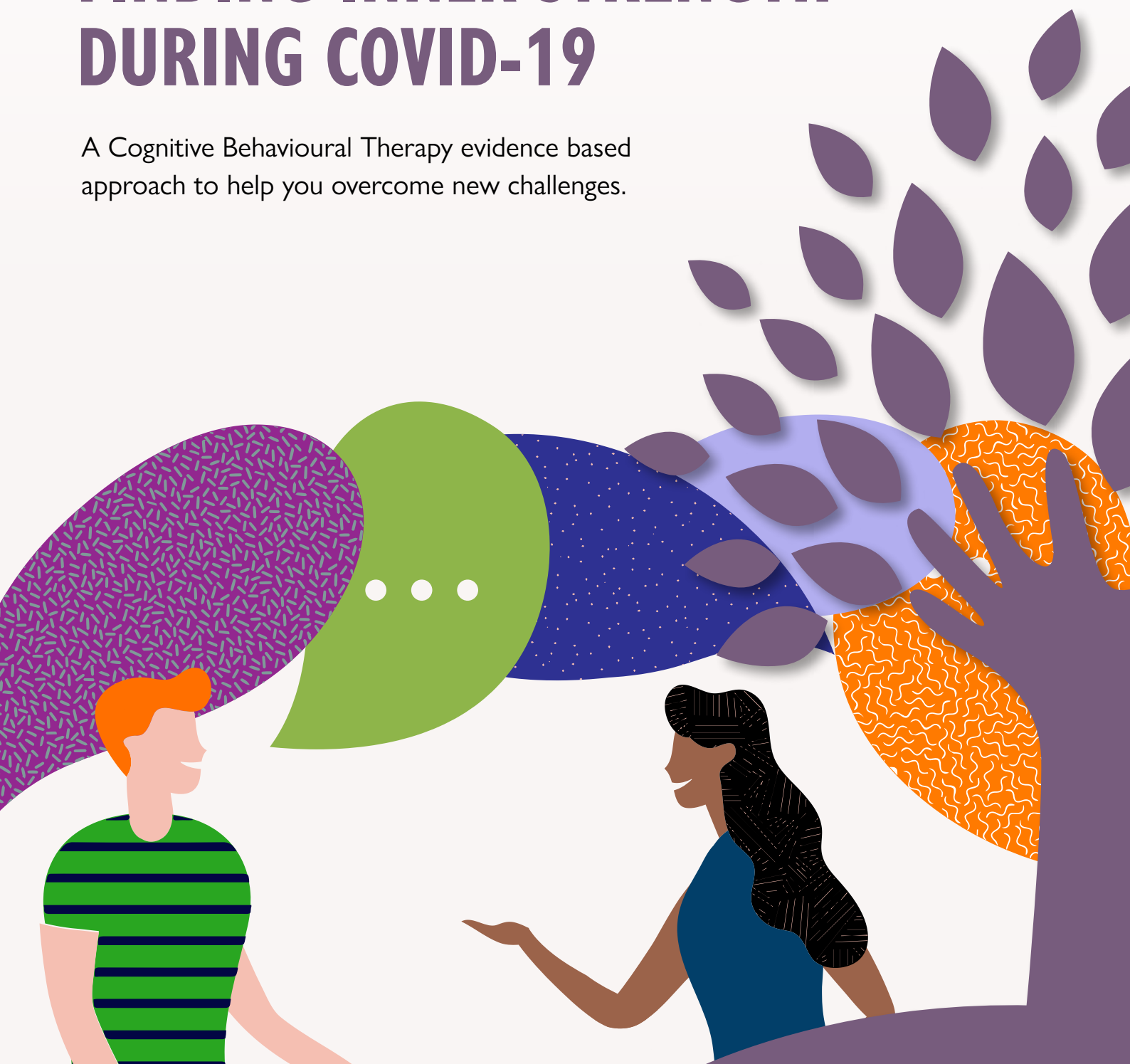


# FINDING INNER STRENGTH DURING COVID-19

A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy evidence based approach to help you overcome new challenges.



# FINDING INNER STRENGTH DURING COVID-19

## YOUR WELLBEING SERVICE IS HERE TO HELP

Demands imposed by COVID-19 are presenting everyone with significant challenges. Whilst many will be able to adapt and cope with lots of these demands, new challenges may mean people struggle at times. For example, common with other University students, studying at the University of Exeter is requiring you to adapt to new ways of studying and assessment. This self-help approach is here to help you manage new demands being placed on you. Being self-help, it has been designed for you to work through on your own. At times however, you may find yourself struggling with a specific step.

### **IF SO, YOU ARE NOT ON YOUR OWN!**

If needed, trained Practitioners at the University of Exeter Wellbeing Services with expertise in helping with this approach are ready to offer support by e-mail, video-conference or over the telephone. See website for information on how to do this.



***You are in control of the way you choose to work through this workbook.** Therefore, the speed you want to go using the workbook is down to you alongside how you put the techniques you'll learn into practice.*

## RESILIENCE

As a student at the University of Exeter, you'll have faced challenges at times, overcome these and demonstrated your resilience. Learning from times such as this could make you become more aware of things you've done in the past to overcome new challenges.

This approach is informed by techniques associated with 'Strength-Based' Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). An assumption with this approach is that you believe you're already resilient in some areas of your life you enjoy, value or are successful in. Even if you consider them to be quite small.

If you don't feel you have any strengths then get in touch with the University's Wellbeing Services for advice and support.

### What is Resilience?

Resilience is the inner strength and flexibility that enables people to cope effectively when faced with 'challenges' life throws up from time to time. These are certainly being thrown up currently with COVID-19! Being resilient can help minimise the impact challenges have and help cope with them better. It's therefore an asset or strength, a desirable quality or characteristic that's likely to benefit personal effectiveness, achievement and psychological wellbeing.

If you think this approach may be helpful to overcome challenges, perhaps associated with new ways of study, then give it a go.

### WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO LOSE!



## HELPFUL TIPS

Before you get started, sharing some tips may be helpful. Many of these have come from people that have used self-help approaches before.

### Give it your best shot

Because you will not have experienced the demands imposed on you by COVID-19 before, you may initially struggle with some Steps covered by this approach. But just give the approach your best shot. That's all anyone, including yourself, can ask of you.

### Avoid Boom and Bust

Working through this approach, you should go at a rate best suited to you. However, often slow and steady works best.

### Involve family and friends

Given the limitations of COVID-19, you may be using this self-help approach from home and just being with your family and having others around may be helpful. They may be able to help you if struggling in any way with specific Steps, can help you look at things differently, find ways to solve problems or sometimes just for a chat. However, you might be living away from others you trust and find helpful, so you can't ask for face-to-face advice, but you could consider using the telephone or having a video chat.

### Ask for help

Although this is self-help, if you find yourself struggling with any Step then please send the Wellbeing Practitioner an email, being as specific as possible about the difficulty you've experienced with the self-help approach. They will initially provide e-support including specific advice on ways to overcome any difficulties with any of the stages. This approach will hopefully help you to learn how to manage your worries better in these uncertain and challenging times.



## BECOMING MORE RESILIENT IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

This self-help approach consists of 4 Steps:

Step 1: Record a successful regular activity

Step 2: Build a personal model of resilience

Step 3: Apply your personal model of resilience to an area you're currently struggling with

Step 4: Apply to other challenges

### STEP 1: RECORD A SUCCESSFUL REGULAR ACTIVITY

Identify hidden strengths that enable you to complete activities you already undertake successfully. This will help to increase your awareness of some of the helpful strategies you have that may otherwise be taken for granted. If you're successfully able to do something over time, even if you consider it quite trivial, it means you have already demonstrated resilience in some areas.

- Use the Successful Regular Activity worksheet over the page to record an activity you're already able to complete on a regular basis.
- It can be helpful if it's an activity you're successful at, enjoy or value. These may include areas associated with study, hobbies, musical or sporting talents or being a support to friends. It may even include routine activities you successfully achieve such as making it to lectures on time or living within a budget. Think about details of this activity and write them down on the worksheet.
- Now write down any difficulties you've encountered when completing this activity. Some people may face a single difficulty again and again, others may experience several.
- If you find yourself facing various difficulties you don't need to write them all down. In this case just choose the most common difficulty you face and note how often you encounter it.
- Finally, think about things that help you complete your successful regular activity, even in the face of difficulty.



# SUCCESSFUL REGULAR ACTIVITY WORKSHEET

<b>Successful Regular Activity</b> Describe what it is, how you do it, how often do you do it and who is with you.
What?
How?
How often?
Who?

<b>Difficulties You've Encountered Doing Your Successful Regular Activity</b> Describe what they are, the most common difficulty and what helps you to keep going.
What?
Most common difficulty?
How often?
What helps you complete this activity?

## STEP 2: BUILD A PERSONAL MODEL OF RESILIENCE

Based on your successful activity; the next step is to build your own *Personal Model of Resilience* to help you identify strengths you already have and then build a model of resilience based on these.

- Search for strengths you already use to complete an activity you can successfully carry out. These can be personal qualities or even attitudes you already have.
  - Strengths will be different for different people. But if difficult to recognise, the following possibilities may help.
    - Getting along with people
    - Working well in a team
    - Completing tasks, even if struggling at first
    - Getting a job done when you'd rather be doing something else
    - Working to deadlines
    - Asking for help if needed
    - Reading and planning
    - Solving problems
    - Being creative
    - Using humour appropriately
    - Keeping yourself healthy
- Now identify specific strategies you've used when completing your successful regular activity. Add any more you feel could be helpful in other challenges you may face.
- Sometimes images or metaphors can have a positive impact on how we feel and behave more than words. So, describe any you may use to get through challenges and ways in which they help you.



# PERSONAL MODEL OF RESILIENCE WORKSHEET

## Strengths

List the strengths you identified in your successful regular activity

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## General Strategies

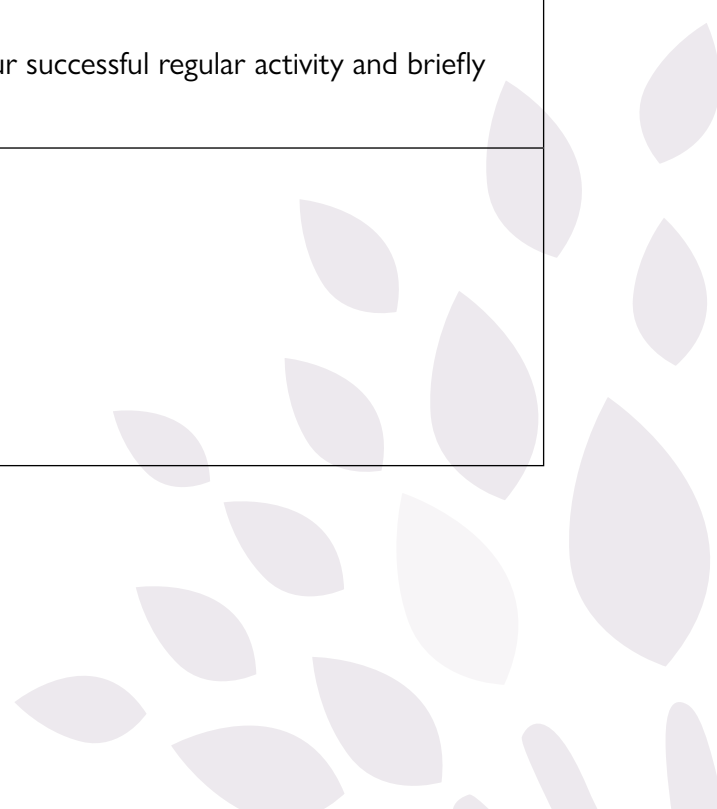
Write down strategies you applied that helped you complete your successful regular activity

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## Images or Metaphors

Write down images or metaphors you have for your successful regular activity and briefly describe them

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## STEP 3: APPLY YOUR PERSONAL MODEL OF RESILIENCE TO AN AREA YOU'RE CURRENTLY STRUGGLING WITH

Consider ways you could apply your *Personal Model of Resilience* to other challenges you encounter.

- Think about areas you currently find challenging and write them down on the **RESILIENCE APPLICATION WORKSHEET**.
- Now look at your *Personal Model of Resilience* for strengths, strategies and metaphors or images you think could be helpful.
- Consider if any could be helpful if applied to the other areas you're currently struggling a little with.
- Write these down on the **RESILIENCE APPLICATION WORKSHEET**.

Looking back at those you've listed in your *Personal Model of Resilience* from time to time may help.





# RESILIENCE APPLICATION WORKSHEET

Areas you currently find challenging

Strategies you feel it would be helpful to apply





## STEP 4: APPLY TO OTHER CHALLENGES

Now you've developed your own *Personal Model of Resilience*, apply it to other challenges you're currently struggling with or may face in the future.

- Write down a challenge you're currently experiencing.
  - It's important to be as specific as possible by writing down the 4 W's (What, Where, When, Who).
- Plan the *Strategies to Put Into Action*.
- Think about barriers that might get in the way of you acting on your plan.
  - Write these down in the Possible Barriers section.
  - Make a plan in advance for overcoming them in the *Strategies to Overcome Barriers* section.
  - Planning in advance will make it much more likely you'll overcome the challenge.





# CURRENT CHALLENGE WORKSHEET

What?	When?
Where?	Who?

Strategies to Put into Action	
Strategies	How will I apply the strategy to the challenge identified?

POSSIBLE BARRIERS The following things may get in the way:

STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THE BARRIERS I may overcome these problems by:

*Now apply to a current challenge you're facing.*

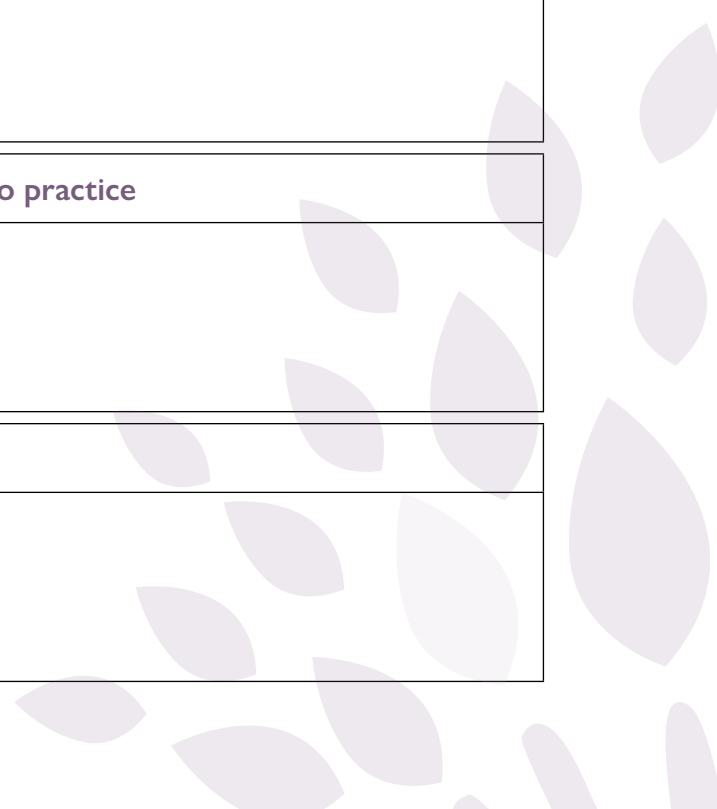


# STAYING RESILIENT IN THE FACE OF COVID-19 WORKSHEET

Hopefully, you've found your *Personal Model of Resilience* has been helpful in addressing the many challenges COVID-19 is presenting. If so then it can be helpful to complete the Staying Resilient in Face of COVID-19 worksheet.

Write down the strengths and strategies you've found helpful whilst using this approach. You can then refer back to this if you find yourself struggling with challenges imposed by COVID-19 or general life hassles again in the future. Like us all, you will face these at this difficult time.

<b>Strengths I now recognise I have</b>
<b>Strategies I already have found helpful in challenging situations</b>
<b>New strategies I have learnt working through this workbook</b>
<b>Things that helped me put these strategies into practice</b>
<b>Sources of support that can help me</b>



## GETTING OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT

You may have given this approach a really good go and found it's helped you better address the challenges you face. However, you may still find yourself struggling in other areas. If so, the University of Exeter has many support services that may be able to help.

However, if you find yourself struggling more generally with your wellbeing or mental health, contact the University of Exeter's Wellbeing Services to discuss your difficulties and see what they can offer.

Otherwise, remember you're not on your own!



# AUTHOR

**Professor Paul Farrand** is Director of the Low-Intensity Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (LICBT) portfolio within Clinical Education, Development and Research (CEDAR); Psychology at the University of Exeter. His main clinical and research interests are in LICBT, especially in a written self-help format and has developed a wide range of written CBT self-help interventions for depression and anxiety. He sits on the Expert Advisory Group for the Department of Health Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme, national level committees developing a broader psychological therapies workforce and at an international level concerning worldwide developments in LICBT. Clinically, he has been Psychological Lead attached to Head and Neck specialties for over 20 years and Academic Lead for the University of Exeter Wellbeing Service.

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