



# Wellbeing

## Perfectionism

### Life is Messy

No matter how hard we try to keep life perfect, neat and tidy, just as we want it to be – it is messy. We can have days, even weeks, where things seem to be going smoothly, and then something happens – a phone call, an argument, an illness, a situation at work, a mess-up, a mistake, a pandemic – and our lives get messy fast and can even feel like they are unravelling.

You may know the ‘feeling’ of that happening. The feeling anxious, hot, or even shaking. A tightness that goes from our shoulders and up our necks. Grinding or clenching our teeth. Oh – and then there’s spilling all that anxiety out on others. The snappiness, the flying off the handle at the smallest of things, the impatience. High levels of annoyance and frustration.

### What can we do about this?

#### 1. Let go of the things you can’t control

Acknowledging that we simply can’t control everything can be difficult for us to accept. But it is so important. Otherwise we will expend so much energy in the wrong places and on the wrong things. It can be helpful to think through, in any situation, what we can control and what is outside of our control. Doing this helps us work out what actions we can take and what changes we can make. It also helps us feel a bit calmer too.

#### 2. Breathe

Sometimes the thing we really need to do is sigh. Just letting out a few deep sighs and then allowing ourselves to breathe more deeply and slowly, noticing our bodies and being present to how we feel can be such a profound medicine. And it is, of course, completely free!

#### 3. Rid yourself of the curse of perfectionism

We all have expectations of how we would like our lives to be but some of us do have a tendency towards being more ‘perfectionist’ than others. However, perfectionism is a dead-end street. It is toxic and ties us up in knots as we attempt to seek the impossible. Instead what we can do is follow the invitation to do the best we can – which on some days will be as much as getting ourselves up on time and on other days will be the glory of doing two hours of exercise, some home cooking, decorating and meeting up with friends! Why, because life is messy and so we do the best we can in the space we are in.

#### 4. Make a manageable list and start small

Making a to-do list really does help. The important thing is for that list to be manageable and achievable. And it doesn’t matter if that to-do-list contains small tasks because that is where we can start. When life is messy and complicated what we need to be able to do is achieve things that help us feel and know that we have the power and agency to manage who and how we are.

#### 5. Forgive ourselves

Doing all this isn’t easy and we don’t get things right every day and we do feel inadequate at times and we may even feel like we are to blame for the mess we are in. But we must always learn to forgive ourselves, which simply means letting go of what isn’t right, what has gone wrong, whatever ‘it’ is. This doesn’t mean that it doesn’t matter. It just means we are choosing to not be shackled by mess!