



International
Wellbeing Insights
People, Culture & Wellbeing



Stress Management Society
from distress to de-stress

MENTAL HEALTH CHAMPIONS

SKILLS SESSION 1:

L.I.F.E. MODEL



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AKKODIS

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WELCOME

Welcome

Stress is an unavoidable part of life, but how we respond to it makes all the difference.

In today's fast-paced world, the pressures of constant change, deadlines, and expectations can quickly build. When managed well, stress can sharpen our focus and drive performance.

But when it becomes persistent and overwhelming, it can impact our health, relationships, and ability to perform at our best.

That's why this programme introduces you to the L.I.F.E. model, a practical framework designed to help you navigate stress with clarity and resilience.

- **Listen** – Create a safe space by listening without judgment, paying attention to both words and body language.
- **Identify** – Notice signs that someone may be struggling, especially with distressing or harmful thoughts.
- **Facilitate** – Guide the conversation gently, using supportive questions to understand their needs.
- **Engage** – Take action by connecting them to support services, staying in touch, and ensuring their safety.

This isn't just about managing stress; it's about creating balance, protecting wellbeing, and unlocking sustainable performance. Whether you're leading a team, juggling priorities, or finding your own path through challenges, the L.I.F.E. model offers simple yet powerful tools to help you move forward with confidence.

Together, let's take the first step towards a healthier, more empowered way of working and living.

Let's begin.



L.I.F.E MODEL

Listen
Identify
Facilitate
Engage

The L.I.F.E. model (Listen, Identify, Facilitate, Engage) is a practical and compassionate approach designed to guide supportive conversations and meaningful interventions. Rooted in awareness and empathy, it empowers individuals to respond with clarity and care when someone may be experiencing suicidal thoughts. By applying the L.I.F.E. framework, we can approach difficult moments with greater confidence— understanding safeguarding responsibilities, and building genuine connection.

This approach strengthens our ability to listen actively, take appropriate action, and foster trust through consistent, compassionate engagement.

Key Aspects of the L.I.F.E Model:

Listen – Create a safe space by actively and non-judgementally listening to what the person is saying, both verbally and non-verbally.

Identify – Recognise signs that someone may be struggling, particularly with suicidal thoughts or emotional distress.

Facilitate – Support the person by guiding the conversation appropriately, using techniques to explore their needs sensitively.

Engage – Take appropriate action by signposting to support services, maintaining ongoing connection, and fulfilling safeguarding responsibilities.

L.I.F.E MODEL

Listen

Identify

Facilitate

Engage

Example in Scenario: A colleague seems withdrawn and showing signs of emotional dis-tress.

You've noticed changes in their behaviour, missed deadlines, isolation, and low mood. You're concerned but unsure how to approach the situation. Instead of ignoring the signs or reacting impulsively, you apply the L.I.F.E.

1. Listen

- Listen with empathy and without judgement.
- Give space without interrupting.
- Notice words, tone, and body language.
- show you care through your presence. Goal: Make the person feel safe and heard.

2. Identify

- Look beneath the surface.
- Spot warning signs or changes in behaviour.
- Ask direct but sensitive questions. Goal: Recognise when deeper support is needed.

3. Facilitate

- Support the conversation with care.
- Use ASK and QPR-inspired techniques.
- Stay calm and compassionate.
- Suggest helpful next steps. Goal: Guide them towards the right support.

4. Engage

- Stay connected and follow up. Signpost to appropriate services. Check in regularly. Know your safeguarding role. Goal: Build trust through consistent support.

LISTEN

KEY SKILLS:

Active listening Empathy Non-judgemental presence
"Levels of Listening" (internal, focused, empathetic)

What Is Active Listening?

Active Listening is the conscious effort to hear not only the words someone is saying but, more importantly, the complete message being communicated, emotionally, physically, and verbally. It's the opposite of passive hearing.

Core Components of Active Listening:

1. Presence

- Be fully in the moment. Turn away from distractions (phones, screens). Maintain soft eye contact if culturally appropriate.

2. Attentive Body Language

- Nod gently to show you're with them.
- Keep an open posture (uncrossed arms, leaning slightly forward).
- Mirror their tone and pace subtly to build rapport.

3. Verbal Cues (Encouragers)

- Use brief affirmations to show understanding: "I see...", "That makes sense...", "Go on...", "I'm listening..."

4. Reflective Responses

- Paraphrase their words to show you're hearing them:
"So what I'm hearing is that you're feeling overwhelmed at

LISTEN

5. Attentive Body Language

- Acknowledge and affirm feelings, not just facts: “That sounds incredibly difficult.” “It makes sense you'd feel like that after everything.”

6. Verbal Cues (Encouragers)

- Resist the urge to solve, fix, or compare.
- Let them finish fully—even if there's silence or they take time to express themselves.

7. Ask Open, Curious Questions

- Instead of “Are you okay?”, try:
“How have things been for you lately?”
“What’s been weighing on your mind?”

What Not to Do

- Jump in with solutions too early Minimise their experience (“At least...”)
- Relate it back to yourself (“That happened to me too...”)
- Use clichés (“Everything happens for a reason”)



LISTEN

Think of a recent conversation where someone shared something emotional or challenging with you.

Now reflect and answer:

How present were you during that conversation?

- Fully focused
- Partly distracted
- Mostly distracted

Which of these did you use?

- Nodding or using open body language
- Verbal encouragers (“I see”, “Go on...”)
- Reflecting their words back to them
- Avoiding interrupting or jumping in with solutions
- Asking open questions

What might you do differently next time to listen more actively?

LISTEN

LEVELS OF LISTENING

1. Internal Listening (Level 1) – Listening to Respond You're hearing the speaker, but your attention is on your own thoughts, judgements, or needs.

Focus: Your own thoughts, reactions, and concerns.

Description: You're technically hearing the other person, but you're mainly focused on how their words relate to you.

Examples: Thinking about what to say next, or being distracted by your own to-do list.

Benefit: Can lead to disengagement and the speaker feeling unheard. Your focus: "How does this affect me?"

Examples: Preparing your response or advice before they finish, as this can feel dismissive

2. Focused Listening (Level 2) – Listening to Understand

Your attention is fully on the other person's words and meaning.

Focus: The speaker's words and meaning.

Description: You're actively trying to understand what the other person is saying.

Examples: Asking clarifying questions, summarising what you've heard.

Benefit: Helps build connection and clarity in communication

Your focus: "What are they really trying to say?"

Examples: Repeating back what they said to check understanding

3. Empathetic Listening (Level 3) – Listening to Feel

You're tuning into what's beneath the words – emotion, energy, tone, and body language.

Focus: The speaker's emotions, tone, and body language.

Description: You're tuning into their emotional state and the message beneath the words.

Examples: Noticing if they seem anxious despite saying they're fine. Reflecting feelings, not just words.

Benefit: Creates psychological safety and trust - crucial in mental health conversations

Your focus: "How does this feel for them?"

Examples: Reflecting not just words but feelings: "It sounds like you're carrying a lot right now." This encourages deep emotional connection and safety.

IDENTIFY

KEY SKILLS:

- Recognising red vs. yellow flags
- Spotting subtle shifts (the non-verbal cues)
- Understanding cultural differences in distress expression

RED VS YELLOW FLAGS (SUBTLE SIGNS):

Understanding the difference between red flag and yellow flag behaviours is crucial for early intervention in mental health and suicide prevention

Based on your learning from The Mental Health Champions Programme, which signs do you think are 'Red Flags' and which do you think are 'Yellow Flags'? Have a go.

(Answers are at the bottom of the page)

- Talking about feeling hopeless or saying "Everyone would be better off without me."
- Withdrawing from meetings and consistently keeping the camera off.
- Repeatedly missing deadlines without explanation.
- Writing goodbye messages or deleting social media accounts suddenly.
- Appearing unusually calm after a period of visible stress.

How might gender, culture or background influence how someone shows distress?

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Talking about feeling hopeless or saying "Everyone would be better off without me."
Withdrawing from meetings and consistently keeping the camera off.
Repeatedly missing deadlines without explanation.
Writing goodbye messages or deleting social media accounts suddenly.
Appearing unusually calm after a period of visible stress.

IDENTIFY

RED FLAG BEHAVIOURS

Definition: Acute, urgent, or high-risk signs that suggest someone may be in immediate danger or crisis. These behaviours typically warrant swift action, including referral or escalation.

Examples:

Talking or joking about suicide or death

Expressing hopelessness or worthlessness “Everyone would be better off without me.”

Giving away personal belongings Sudden calm after a period of distress (can signal a decision to act)

Self-harming behaviours

Withdrawing entirely from social interaction or going silent at work

Changes in sleep patterns (insomnia or oversleeping)

Reckless or dangerous behaviour (e.g. excessive drinking, unsafe driving)

Writing goodbye messages, deleting social media without reason

Unusual visits to loved ones (a final farewell)

Action: These require immediate referral to a professional, safeguarding protocol activation, or calling emergency services if needed.

EXAMPLES OF RED FLAGS:

“I just don’t want to be here anymore.” Joking about death or making comments like

“If I disappeared, no one would notice.”

Giving away personal items unexpectedly, like a favourite book or keep-sake.

Suddenly acting calm and cheerful after weeks of visible stress or anxiety.

IDENTIFY

🚩 YELLOW FLAG BEHAVIOURS

Definition: Subtle, early warning signs that someone may be struggling. These aren't always emergencies, but indicate emotional distress or burnout and should not be ignored.

Examples:

Ongoing low mood, irritability, or fatigue

Declining performance or missed deadlines

Avoiding meetings or camera-off disengagement in remote work
Changes in appearance or hygiene

Over-apologising or expressing guilt

Unexplained absences or frequent sick days

Difficulty concentrating or forgetfulness

Saying things like "I'm tired of this" or "It's just too much lately"

Increased substance use or self-isolating

Action: These call for gentle check-ins, active listening, and consistent support. Use the L.I.F.E. model (especially Listen and Identify) to open up conversation and assess risk.

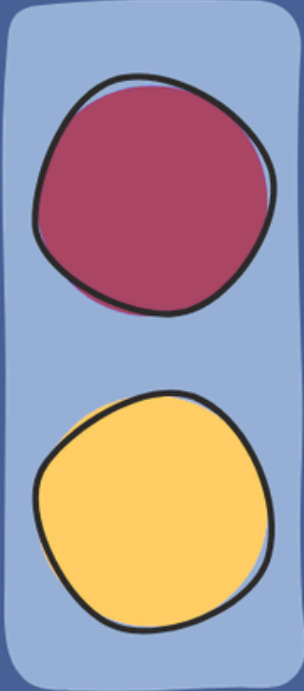
EXAMPLES OF YELLOW FLAGS:

A colleague who's usually upbeat now seems withdrawn and low in energy

Someone starts missing deadlines or turning in work that's not up to their usual standard.

You notice they've stopped switching on their camera in meetings or are unusually quiet.

RED VS YELLOW FLAG BEHAVIOUR IN SUMMARY



Red flags

- Definition: Clear signs of acute distress or crisis that may indicate immediate danger and require urgent action.
- Examples: Talking about suicide, self-harm, sudden calm, giving away belongings, or withdrawing socially.
- Action: Escalate immediately, refer to professionals, activate safeguarding protocols, or call emergency services.

Yellow Flags

- Definition: Early, subtle signs of emotional distress or burnout are non-urgent but important to notice and address.
- Examples: Low mood, disengagement, missed deadlines, changes in appearance, or self-isolation.
- Action: Respond with a gentle check-in using the L.I.F.E. mode (Listen, Identify, and offer ongoing support).

NON-VERBAL CUES



Posture & Physical Presence

- Slumped shoulders or head down
- Avoiding eye contact
- Restlessness or fidgeting
- Reduced facial expressions



Tone of Voice

- Monotone or quiet tone
- Sudden irritability or agitation
- Frequent sighing
- Overcompensating with humour



Absenteeism

- Unexplained absences
- Logging on late or disappearing
- Physically present but disengaged
- Avoiding people or interactions



Change in Habits or Routine

- Neglecting personal hygiene
- Increased consumption of food or alcohol

FACILITATE

KEY SKILLS:

Assertive communication

Boundaries and roles

Signposting confidently

Using the "Signpost Support Triangle":

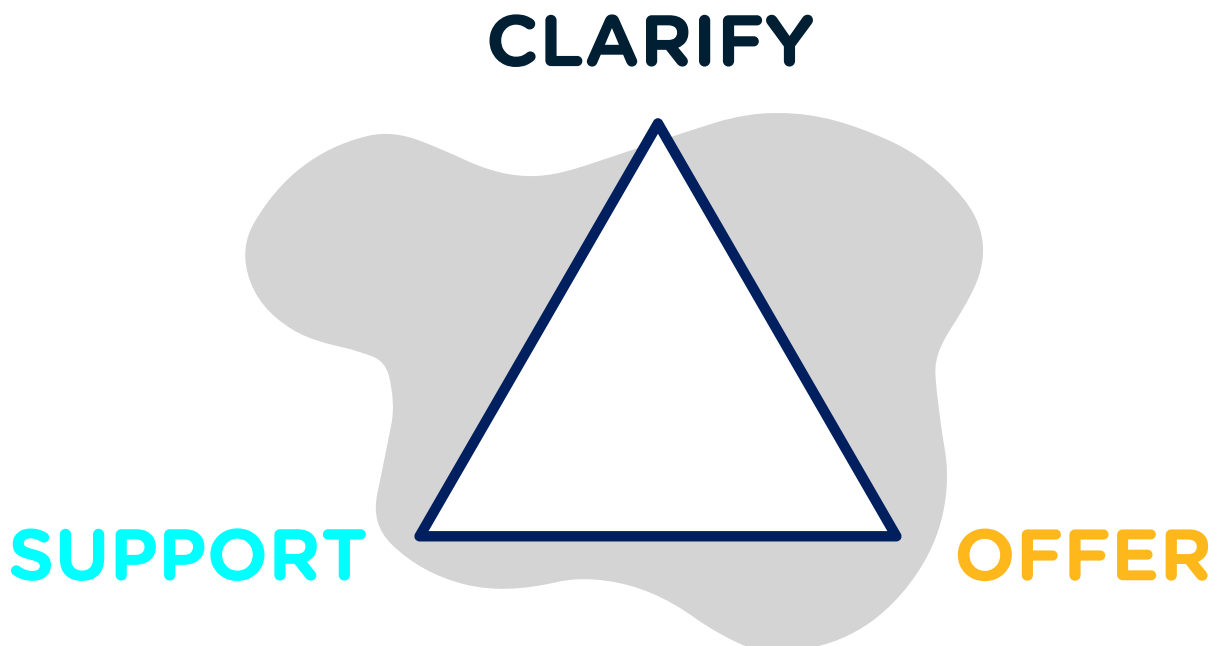
Clarify the need

Offer tailored options

Support action

THE SIGNPOST SUPPORT TRIANGLE:

The Signpost Support Triangle is a structured, compassionate approach to connecting someone in distress with meaningful support, particularly effective in a workplace or Mental Health Champion setting.



FACILITATE

Clarify the Need

Before you offer help, you need to deeply understand what kind of help is actually needed, not just what's obvious or urgent.

What this looks like: Use open-ended questions to explore the underlying issue: "Can you help me understand what's been feeling hardest right now?"

Listen without assumptions. The issue may not be what you initially think (e.g. they may mention work pressure, but the real issue is grief, finances, or burnout).

Reflect back what you hear to confirm: "It sounds like you're feeling overwhelmed by both personal and professional demands. Does that feel right?"

Offer Tailored Options

Don't overwhelm them with a list; offer a few, relevant, and accessible choices based on what you learned in Step 1.

If it's work-related stress: Offer internal resources: line manager, HR, mental health app, workload review.

If emotional/mental distress: Offer external confidential services: EAP, AAP, GP, counselling, local helplines.

If crisis-level distress: Help contact immediate services: Samaritans, national crisis lines, trusted emergency contact.

Support Action

This is the most critical and often forgotten step. People in distress may struggle to follow through even with good intentions.

Ask permission to help initiate contact: "Would it help if I sat with you while you make the call?" "Can I walk you through the process on the app?"

Check their emotional readiness: "Would it feel okay to take that step now, or would you prefer I check in again tomorrow?"

Offer to follow up: Set a reminder or calendar check-in. Use non-intrusive language: "I'll check in next week—no pressure, just want you to know I'm here."

FACILITATE

CLARIFYING ROLE BOUNDARIES VS RESPONSIBILITY

These are the duties and commitments aligned with your role. For Mental Health Champions or first-line supporters, this includes:

Responsibility = What You Are Accountable For

These are the duties and commitments aligned with your role. For Mental Health Champions or first-line supporters, including:

- Being available as a compassionate, non-judgemental listener
- Spotting early warning signs (red/yellow flags) and reaching out
- Using frameworks like L.I.F.E. or ASK to navigate conversations
- Encouraging action (signposting or facilitating a next step)
- Maintaining confidentiality unless someone is at risk of harm
- Promoting a culture of openness and psychological safety
- Knowing your limits and when to refer to professionals

These are your proactive duties—they're important, meaningful, and they require courage.

Responsibility = What You Are Not Accountable For

Boundaries protect both the person you're helping and your own wellbeing. Overstepping them can cause harm even if your intention is good.

- Fixing someone's problems
- Diagnosing or treating any condition
- Acting as a therapist, counsellor, or crisis worker
- Being available 24/7 or out of hours
- Taking on emotional burdens without support
- Guaranteeing outcomes ("I can't promise things will be okay, but I'll walk with you as you get help.")

Language Examples to Communicate Boundaries Clearly

"I'm here to support you, but I'm not a trained therapist. Would you be open to us finding someone who can help more deeply?"

"This sounds really tough, and I think it might be time to bring in someone with professional expertise—how does that feel for you?"

"I want to stay connected, but I'm not equipped to hold this alone. Let's explore support options together."

FACILITATE

When someone shares something personal or distressing, do you instinctively try to fix the problem—or pause to understand what support they truly need? Why?

What might stop you from following through with the 'Support Action' step, and how could you prepare yourself to offer that extra help when it really matters?

ENGAGE

KEY SKILLS:

Building ongoing trust

Staying connected

Peer support and accountability

Building Trust for Long-Term Check-Ins

Principles of Trust Building:

Consistency – Show up regularly and reliably

Compassion – Respond without judgement or pressure

Confidentiality – Respect privacy and role boundaries

Clarity – Be honest about what you can and cannot offer

Curiosity – Check in with genuine care, not obligation

Practical Suggestions

Use Gentle Language That Feels Safe

Instead of: “You need to talk to someone.”

Try: “I just wanted to check in—how have you been holding up?”

“I’ve been thinking about our chat. No pressure, just here if you want to talk.”

Offer Predictable, Low-Pressure Check-Ins

Schedule regular, informal follow-ups: “Can I drop you a message tomorrow to see how things are going?”

Use non-intrusive channels like WhatsApp, Slack, or short emails.

Create Anchor Points for Ongoing Support

Refer back to earlier conversations: “Last time you mentioned struggling with sleep. How’s that been lately?”

Make it personal but not invasive, show you listened and cared.

Respect Autonomy

Let them lead the depth of conversation: “No pressure to share anything, just wanted you to know I’m here.”

Avoid pushing for answers or solutions. If they decline support, leave the door open: “I totally understand. If anything ever changes, I’m still here.”

Use Visual Cues and Familiarity (Hybrid/Remote Settings)

Keep camera on if possible; smile gently, show warmth.

Use their name often it fosters connection and humanity.

Mirror their tone and pace to build subconscious rapport.

Bridge to Other Supports While Staying Present

If you refer them on, don’t disappear.

“I know you’ve got support now, but I’m still happy to check in if you’d like.”

ENGAGE

Accountability Partnerships Between Champions

Creating informal peer partnerships helps Champions stay connected, supported, and active in their role without feeling isolated or overwhelmed.

Why Accountability Partnerships Matter

Normalise emotional processing – debrief after tough conversations

Encourage consistent action – small nudges keep momentum going

Foster growth & learning – reflect on what's working, what's hard

Reduce burnout – shared emotional load lightens the impact

How to Create Effective Partnerships

Pair up intentionally

Match based on region, comfort, or communication style

Let pairs opt-in rather than assigning randomly

Set shared goals

Let's both aim to check in with 2 people this month"

"Want to roleplay one ASK scenario before next session?"

Keep it informal but regular

15-minute monthly calls or WhatsApp check-ins

Use a shared reflection template: "What did I try? What did I learn?"

Respect Autonomy

Let them lead the depth of conversation: "No pressure to share anything, just wanted you to know I'm here."

Avoid pushing for answers or solutions. If they decline support, leave the door open: "I totally understand. If anything ever changes, I'm still here."

Support without pressure

You're not reviewing each other's performance; you're holding space, reminding, and encouraging

Engage with Mentors for Deeper Support

Encourage Champions to:

Book a 1:1 check-in with their mentor quarterly

Reach out when unsure how to handle a red flag

Debrief with a mentor after a challenging peer conversation

Suggested Language for Peer Accountability:

"Want to buddy up this month and check in weekly?"

"Let's both bring one conversation example to the next meeting."

"Mind if I text you if I feel unsure about how I handled something?"

ENGAGE

Why belonging matters

- We are biologically wired to connect
- Loneliness is a health risk
 - Increased risk of anxiety, depression and suicide
- Community crates a safety net

What belonging feels like

- Being seen
- Feeling safe to speak
- Knowing you matter
- Having shared experiences

What disconnects look like

- Saying “I’m Fine” when you’re not
- Feeling invisible
- Believeing no one cares

L.I.F.E IN PRACTICE

Joseph is a team leader working at a busy logistics firm in Australia. Lately, his colleague Sam, who usually jokes around and brings a positive vibe to the office, has been unusually withdrawn. He's been missing team lunches, hasn't turned his camera on during remote check-ins, and his recent reports have been late or incomplete.

When Joseph casually asked how he was doing, Sam replied, "Just tired, man... life's a bit much lately," before quickly changing the subject.

Listen:

What's one thing Joseph could say or do to actively listen and show presence without judgement?

Identify: What yellow flags can Joseph spot in Sam's behaviour? Which red flags might require more urgent attention?

Facilitate (Empower):

What support options could Joseph gently offer Sam based on what he learns – without pushing or trying to "fix" him?

Engage:

How might Joseph follow up in a way that feels consistent but not intrusive?

L.I.F.E IN PRACTICE

Amy, a colleague who's worked with you for three years, recently returned from a short leave following a family bereavement. Normally upbeat and sociable, she's been noticeably withdrawn over the last few weeks. She's missed several team stand-ups without explanation. Her once-detailed work has become inconsistent and rushed. She declined a team lunch, saying, "I just don't have it in me anymore." You overheard her mutter, "what's the point anyway?" after a meeting. A close teammate said Amy messaged them at 2 a.m. saying she "felt like a burden" and "everyone would be better off without her." She is incredibly distant and disengaged. She sent you a message on Teams, which included statements like 'I don't want to be here anymore' and 'I have had enough'.

Listen

How would you respond to Amy's Teams message in a way that shows empathy and avoids judgement?

Identify

What red flag behaviours are present in this situation? Why is it important not to dismiss these as "just grief".

Facilitate

What steps could you take to help Amy access immediate support without overwhelming her? What words or actions might help her feel safer taking that next step?

Engage

After referring or escalating, how would you stay connected and supportive while respecting her space and your own boundaries?

SIGNPOST & SUPPORT

WORKPLACE RESOURCES



What Akkodis resources are available to you locally?

Visit: <https://intranet-theadecogroup.unily.com/sites/hr-global/SitePageModern/221809/find-you-local-support>

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL WELLBEING INSIGHTS

Big ideas, inspiring stories, robust ethics, strong principles and a values-driven approach have been at the heart of our organisation since our inception.

We believe that wellbeing isn't just a perk; it's the foundation of a thriving, high-performing, and sustainable workplace. Our mission is simple but powerful: to empower organisations and individuals to take control of their wellbeing, creating cultures where people don't just survive but truly thrive.

We've been at the forefront of workplace wellbeing since 2003, helping organisations worldwide build happier, healthier, and more resilient teams. But we're not here to tick boxes or promote one-off initiatives, we're here to drive meaningful, lasting change.

Our mission is to maximise physical, mental, emotional and social health as well as improve relationships, performance, productivity, creativity, morale, recruitment and retention by creating a resilient workforce and equipping them to cope with change and adversity.

For more information or to book a workshop or a free no-obligation consultation, see www.wellbeing.work or call +44 (0) 203 142 8659 or email info@stress.org.uk



We provide a range of services across the UK and internationally. We are always happy to discuss how we can support you.

We look forward to supporting your wellbeing journey.

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We have supported many organisations, including:

