



PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT



A GUIDEBOOK FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS

Mental Health and Well-Being: Stress
and its Impact on Quality of Life

DISCLAIMER

Your circumstances will change significantly. **It is imperative that you read these guidebooks in full before whistleblowing**, as the decisions you make will have serious and lasting consequences. Understanding what lies ahead and preparing accordingly is essential. This is precisely why The Whistleblower House (TWBH) exists—to support whistleblowers who will face these challenges and offer guidance throughout the process. We recommend pre-counselling or evaluation (consultation) with TWBH or a qualified legal practitioner before whistleblowing, to ensure thorough consideration and careful planning. TWBH provides this guidebook for informational purposes only and accepts no liability for any actions taken based on its content.

- This guidebook is not a substitute for legal, financial, psychological, or security advice. Consult qualified professionals for guidance tailored to your situation.
- Evaluate your circumstances without delay—inaction can make your situation worse.
- Emotional reactions or wishful thinking will not change reality. **A calm, logical approach is essential.**
- Do not let pride or fear of judgment cloud your decisions. **Your livelihood and security must come first.**
- A poor decision can have lasting consequences. **Understand the risks before taking action.**
- This guidebook is a **starting point**, not a standalone solution. Seek additional support where needed.
- Whistleblowing can have a profound financial and emotional impact. Be prepared for psychological and financial challenges, and seek professional support if needed.
- Finding new employment may be difficult. **Plan ahead and explore career options early.**

By using this guidebook, you accept full responsibility for your decisions and their consequences.

Note: Whistleblowing can have complex legal, financial, psychological, and security implications. Consult professionals and seek guidance to ensure a well-informed decision-making process.

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WHAT IS A WHISTLEBLOWER?

A whistleblower is anyone who has and reports insider knowledge of illegal, illicit, and fraudulent activities occurring in an organisation. Whistleblowers can be employees, suppliers, contractors, clients, or any individual who becomes aware of wrongful business activities.

THE WHISTLEBLOWER HOUSE DEFINITION OF A WHISTLEBLOWER



A person who, in good faith, reports unlawful or immoral activity within an organisation to an individual or entity they believe will take appropriate action to address it.



INTRODUCTION

Whistleblowers are pivotal in advancing transparency, accountability, and ethical standards within organisations. However, the act of blowing the whistle often carries significant personal and psychological challenges. TWBH recognises the emotional toll this can take and has developed this Psychological Guidebook to provide essential support and guidance to individuals navigating the emotional complexities of their whistleblowing journey.

This guidebook offers practical advice on managing the stress, anxiety, and emotional impact that can arise from whistleblowing. It focuses on understanding the psychological effects of whistleblowing, including the stress it can cause to both the whistleblower and their loved ones. The guide then provides strategies for coping with emotional challenges such as fear, guilt, and identity shifts, as well as the potential strain on relationships and work performance. Finally, it outlines methods for building resilience, including self-care techniques, seeking professional help, and maintaining mental well-being throughout the process.

Through these sections, we aim to help whistleblowers preserve their mental health while continuing their crucial role in exposing wrongdoing and upholding integrity. Whether you are facing emotional challenges directly linked to your whistleblowing actions or simply wish to understand how to manage stress and maintain your psychological well-being, this guide is designed to offer support.

Remember, seeking psychological support and taking proactive steps to manage stress are essential to protecting your emotional health. TWBH is here to assist you at every stage of your whistleblowing journey.



PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS

Stress is normal, but excessive or prolonged stress is unhealthy and needs to be managed. Many factors, such as work, relationships, family, and finances, can contribute to stress, as can being a whistleblower.

Individuals do not usually intend to become whistleblowers. They become aware of wrongdoing and decide to act, often facing retaliation, which can cause significant pain and suffering, not only for themselves but also for family and friends.

TWBH offers psychological support through its panel; this guide is meant to complement that service, not replace it.

Stress management involves actions to reduce stress and improve mental and physical health. While some stress can be motivating, chronic stress harms both mind and body. Effective stress management includes identifying stressors, developing coping strategies, and making lifestyle changes. Common techniques include exercise, mindfulness, healthy choices, time management, social support, and relaxation.

Remember, stress management is personal—what works for one may not work for another. It may take time to find what suits you best, so be patient and deliberate in your approach. Managing stress effectively can greatly enhance your well-being and quality of life.



WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a normal physical and mental response to challenging situations. When stressed, your body releases hormones such as adrenaline, triggering physical changes to help you cope.

HOW DOES STRESS AFFECT US?

A small amount of stress can be beneficial, helping us perform daily tasks. However, chronic or excessive stress can lead to physical and mental health problems. The body's 'fight or flight' response releases hormones that keep you alert, but long-term activation of this response can be harmful ([The World Health Organisation](#), 2024).

COMMON CAUSES OF STRESS

Stress can be triggered by various life events, including:

- Major life changes (e.g., death, divorce)
- Family illness
- Work, financial, or relationship issues
- Immigration-related stress

RECOGNISING UNHEALTHY STRESS

Stress becomes unhealthy when it lasts too long or when you feel overwhelmed. Physical symptoms without a medical cause can be a sign of unhealthy stress.

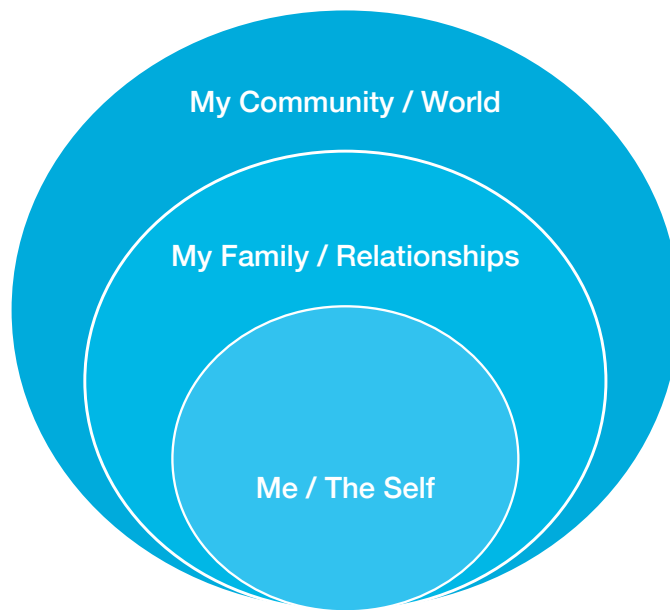
HOW DOES MY STRESS IMPACT THOSE AROUND ME, NAMELY, MY SPOUSE, CHILDREN, COLLEAGUES, AND WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Whistleblowers are individuals with families and social networks that are part of an interconnected system. According to Bowen's Family Systems Theory, a family operates as an emotional system where each member plays a role and is influenced by others (Bowen, 1993). No one person in a family functions entirely independently, and each is affected by their environment, rules, and culture (Fosco & Grych, 2013).

While whistleblowers often act out of professional integrity, values such as fairness, safety, and equality, the stress of whistleblowing can cause feelings of fear, insecurity, and self-doubt. These emotions ripple through the family, affecting spouses, children, parents, and others close to the individual.



DIAGRAM 1: FAMILY SYSTEMS



Stress does not just affect the individual experiencing it, but also those around them. Here's how stress can impact family, work, and social relationships:

- **Relationships:** High stress levels can strain relationships with family, friends, and colleagues. Stress may cause irritability, moodiness, or withdrawal, leading to conflicts, misunderstandings, and emotional distance.
- **Work performance:** Stress often hinders concentration, decision-making, and meeting deadlines. This can affect not only the individual's performance but also that of their team. Over time, this pressure can result in low self-esteem and symptoms of depression or anxiety.
- **Parenting:** Stressed parents may have less patience and emotional energy for their children, affecting the parent-child bond. Children often pick up on their parents' stress, which can lead to emotional distance and increased anxiety.
- **Health:** Chronic stress can negatively affect physical health, reducing an individual's capacity to care for others. Neglecting self-care can make it difficult to carry out responsibilities, adding to the strain on those around them. (See section on What is stress and how it affects us.)
- **Emotional well-being:** Stress is contagious—when one person is stressed, it can affect the emotional well-being of those around them. This creates a cycle of tension and anxiety within families, workplaces, and social circles, leading to greater conflicts over everyday tasks.
- **Community impact:** Widespread stress in a community or workplace can lead to decreased productivity, absenteeism, and higher staff turnover, affecting the overall success of the group or organisation.



- **Stress and employment:** Finding new employment can be challenging, especially under stress. It is important to plan ahead and explore career options early.

Recognising the impact of stress on others is crucial. By managing stress effectively and seeking support, individuals can not only improve their own well-being but also create a more positive environment for those around them.



POTENTIAL IMPACT OF WHISTLEBLOWING ON YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING

When stressed, hormones like adrenaline and cortisol cause physical reactions such as a racing heart, tense muscles, and rapid breathing. If these feelings persist after the stressful event, it may indicate chronic stress.

SIGNS OF UNHEALTHY STRESS

Look out for these symptoms:

- Feeling overwhelmed or constantly on edge
- Sleep problems or exhaustion
- Appetite changes
- Physical issues (headaches, stomach problems, muscle tension)
- Difficulty concentrating or mood swings
- Withdrawal from social interactions
- Reliance on substances (alcohol, drugs)
- Thoughts of self-harm or suicide
- Difficulty managing emotions
- Weakened immune system and vulnerability to illness
- Skin and weight changes, and low sex drive
- Nail-biting or skin-picking
- Intrusive negative thoughts
- Hyperventilation and ulcers
- Insomnia or chronic headaches

If these symptoms persist and affect your daily life, seek support from a healthcare professional. Addressing stress early is not a sign of weakness but a step towards protecting your mental and physical health. It is important to prioritise your well-being.



THE IMPACT OF WHISTLEBLOWING ON IDENTITY

Whistleblowing can profoundly affect an individual's identity, leading to questions such as: *'Who am I now?'* and *'Did I make the right decision?'* This act often challenges personal values, reshapes perspectives, and impacts professional and social dynamics.

IDENTITY FORMATION AND SHIFTS

Identity formation involves developing a unique sense of self and place in the world. Whistleblowers may experience shifts in their identity as they navigate the repercussions of their actions. While standing up for integrity can strengthen one's sense of accountability, it may also result in marginalisation or ostracism by colleagues, requiring a re-evaluation of social and professional relationships.

A duality often emerges, with whistleblowers viewed as either heroes or traitors. This perception affects confidence, self-worth, and social standing. For some, the experience fosters a shift towards advocacy, reshaping their identity around empowerment and social justice. Navigating these changes successfully can build resilience and reinforce a sense of self-efficacy, transforming whistleblowers into agents of change.

ADDRESSING CHALLENGES AND SEEKING SUPPORT

Whistleblowing can present career challenges, sometimes compounded by how whistleblower status is perceived or managed. Seeking guidance from career counsellors, mentors, or professional networks can support reintegration and overall well-being. Organisations should handle whistleblower cases sensitively, ensuring a balanced approach that considers both their needs and professional standing.

THE IMPACT OF FEAR AND WORRY ON PROFESSIONAL WORK ETHIC

Fear and worry can significantly impact professional work ethic, influencing productivity, decision-making, and team dynamics. A persistent sense of being a victim may hinder personal growth, create feelings of helplessness, and disrupt workplace harmony.

- **Productivity:** Anxiety about potential outcomes may reduce focus and lead to procrastination.
- **Decision-making:** Fear can stifle innovation and encourage overly cautious choices.
- **Team dynamics:** Mistrust and disengagement can undermine collaboration and effectiveness.
- **Long-term effects:** Fear-driven behaviours may impact confidence, career progression, and communication.

To navigate these challenges, it can be helpful to seek support, develop resilience, and engage in stress management strategies. Connecting with trusted mentors, professional networks, or counselling services can assist whistleblowers in overcoming challenges and maintaining their professional identity and well-being.



TOOLS TO HELP YOU COPE

Knowing how to confront and reduce stress provides greater control and clarity in times of hardship. Some useful techniques are listed below:

PHYSICAL EXERCISE

Regular physical activity can help reduce stress and improve your mood. Whether it is going for a walk, jogging, practicing yoga, or hitting the gym, find an activity you enjoy and make it a regular part of your routine.

Here's how exercise can help manage and reduce stress:

1. **Physical release:** Exercise provides a physical outlet for pent-up energy and tension, triggering the release of endorphins that act as natural mood improvers.
2. **Stress hormone regulation:** Regular activity helps regulate stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, reducing their levels in your body.
3. **Improved sleep:** Exercise can enhance sleep quality, helping you cope better with stress and reducing irritability and fatigue.
4. **Mood enhancement:** Physical activity improves mood by stimulating neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine, which are linked to feelings of well-being.
5. **Mind-body connection:** Activities like yoga, tai chi, and Pilates combine movement with mindfulness and deep breathing, promoting relaxation and reducing stress.
6. **Distraction and focus:** Exercise provides a healthy distraction from stressors and helps shift your focus away from negative thoughts.
7. **Confidence and self-esteem:** Achieving fitness goals through regular exercise can boost your confidence and self-esteem, aiding in stress management.
8. **Social connection:** Group exercises or sports can offer social support and interaction, which is beneficial for reducing stress.
9. **Cognitive (mental) benefits:** Improved focus, memory, and decision-making skills from exercise can help you better manage stress and challenging situations.
10. **Overall health:** Regular exercise enhances physical health, making your body more resilient to stress and improving overall well-being.

Incorporate activities you enjoy into your routine, whether it is walking, stretching, swimming, or even working in your garden at home. Consistency is key to enjoying the stress-relieving benefits of exercise.

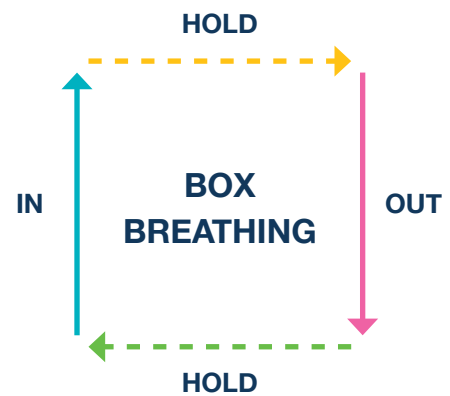


SQUARE BREATHING/BOX BREATHING

Square breathing, also known as box breathing, is a technique that can relieve stress and reset the mind and body after a stressful situation. The method involves slowing down the breath and focusing on a 4-4-4-4 pattern of inhale, hold, exhale, hold (Martin 2024). Box breathing is a simple yet powerful relaxation technique that can be practiced anywhere and at any time.

Tips for Square Breathing

1. Find a quiet space to begin.
2. Keep your eyes closed or open, depending on what feels comfortable.
3. Sit comfortably, either upright or lying on your back.
4. Place one hand on your chest and another on your lower stomach to feel the air entering and leaving smoothly.
5. Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth.
6. Start small: The exercise might feel overwhelming at first, but do not give up; with practice, you will notice the benefits.
7. Visualise drawing a square as you breathe to help maintain focus and minimise distractions.





PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is a technique that helps reduce stress and promote relaxation by systematically tensing and then relaxing specific muscle groups.

Here's how to practice PMR:

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit or lie down.
2. Take a few deep breaths to relax your body and mind. Note where you feel tension, such as in your neck, shoulders, back, forehead, temples, hands, feet, stomach, and glutes.
3. Start with a specific muscle group, such as your hands or feet. Tense (squeeze) those muscles as much as you can for about 5–10 seconds.
4. Release the tension suddenly and completely, allowing the muscles to fully relax.
5. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation in that muscle group.
6. Move on to the next muscle group, such as your arms, shoulders, face, or abdomen, and repeat the process.
7. Continue through each muscle group from your head to your toes.



MUSCLE-SPECIFIC PMR

FEET	Curl your toes tightly into your feet, then release them.
CALVES	Point or flex your feet, then let them relax.
THIGHS	Squeeze your thighs together tightly, then let them relax.
TORSO	Suck in your abdomen, then release the tension and let it fall.
BACK	Squeeze your shoulder blades together, then release them.
SHOULDERS	Lift and squeeze your shoulders towards your ears, then let them drop.
ARMS	Make fists and squeeze them towards your shoulders, then let them drop.
HANDS	Make a fist by curling your fingers into your palm, then relax your fingers.
FACE	Scrunch your facial features to the centre of your face, then relax.
FULL BODY	Squeeze all muscles together, then release all tension.

PMR can help you become more aware of physical sensations of tension and relaxation. Regular practice can assist in releasing muscle tension, reducing stress, and improving overall well-being.



THE 5 SENSES GROUNDING EXERCISE

The 5 senses grounding exercise is a mindfulness technique that helps you focus on the present moment by engaging each of your senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. It can be particularly useful for reducing anxiety, stress, or overwhelming emotions. Here is how to do it:



WHAT ARE 5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE?

Look for small details such as a pattern on the ceiling, the way light reflects off a surface, or an object you never noticed.



WHAT ARE 4 THINGS YOU CAN FEEL?

Notice the sensation of clothing on your body, the sun on your skin, or the feeling of the chair you are sitting in. Pick up an object and examine its weight, texture, and other physical qualities.



WHAT ARE 3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR?

Pay special attention to the sounds your mind has tuned out, such as a ticking clock, distant traffic, or trees blowing in the wind.



WHAT ARE 2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL?

Try to notice smells in the air around you, such as an air freshener or freshly mowed grass. You may also look around for something that has a scent, such as a flower or an unlit candle.



WHAT IS 1 THING YOU CAN TASTE?

You could use chewing gum, a sweet, or small snacks for this step. Pop one in your mouth and focus your attention closely on the flavours.

Tip:

Keep a daily grounding journal and each day identify new things that you have seen, touched, heard, smelt, and tasted. Get creative and try to identify objects by specific categories, for example:

- What **5 square objects** can you see?
- What are **2 floral things** you can smell? Can you identify them?
- What **4 items** around you can you feel?

This requires you to explore your environment in a mindful way.



Some of the benefits of practicing the 5 senses exercise include:

1. **Increased awareness:** By paying attention to each of your senses, you become more aware of your surroundings and experiences in the present moment.
2. **Stress reduction:** Engaging in the 5 senses exercise can help reduce stress and anxiety by shifting your focus away from negative thoughts and worries.
3. **Improved concentration:** Practicing the 5 senses exercise can help improve your ability to concentrate and focus on the task at hand.
4. **Enhanced sensory perception:** By actively engaging with each of your senses, you may become more aware of and sensitive to your various sensory experiences, which means you may be able to identify feelings of stress sooner because you are able to recognise the signs before they become worse.
5. **Grounding and centring:** The 5 senses exercise can help ground you in the present moment and bring a sense of calm and centredness.

Overall, the 5 senses exercise can be a valuable tool for cultivating mindfulness, reducing stress, and enhancing your overall well-being when practiced intentionally.

HAND-TO-CHEST SOOTHING TECHNIQUE

The hand-to-chest soothing technique is a calming method often used to help regulate emotions, reduce anxiety, and promote relaxation. Here is how you can practice this technique:

1. Find a comfortable and quiet space where you can sit comfortably.
2. Place one hand over your heart area (touching your skin is most beneficial in this step).
3. Pat your chest gently but firmly in the beat of 1-2-1-2-1-2-1-2.
4. Close your eyes, and take slow, deep breaths in. Always inhale through your NOSE and exhale out of your MOUTH.
5. Focus on the sensation of your hands on your chest and the rhythm of your breathing as you pat your chest firmly.
6. As you breathe, begin to gently sway back and forth OR side to side, whichever is most comfortable to you (try to imagine feelings of warmth, comfort, and safety coming out of your hands into your chest).
7. Continue this practice for a few minutes or as long as you need to feel calm.

This technique can be a helpful tool in moments of stress or overwhelm. Remember to practice self-compassion and patience with yourself as you explore different methods of self-soothing.



CONCLUSION

The Psychological Guidebook for Whistleblowers has explored the unique emotional and psychological challenges faced by individuals who expose wrongdoing. From stress and fear to identity shifts and the impact on personal relationships, we have addressed the various ways whistleblowing can affect well-being and professional life.

THE KEY PRINCIPLES OUTLINED IN THIS GUIDE INCLUDE:

- Understanding the emotional and psychological impact of whistleblowing.
- Recognising the interconnectedness of stress on both personal and professional environments.
- Developing strategies for coping with stress, fear, and identity changes.
- Seeking support from mental health professionals, mentors, and organisational resources.

In conclusion, managing the psychological challenges of whistleblowing requires a holistic approach that acknowledges the emotional toll while fostering resilience and well-being. By integrating stress management techniques, seeking support, and maintaining self-care, including physical well-being, whistleblowers can not only navigate their unique challenges but also empower themselves to continue standing for integrity and justice. We hope this guidebook helps you build the emotional and physical resilience needed to thrive in your journey as a whistleblower.



REACHING OUT FOR HELP

FREE TELEPHONE COUNSELLING HOTLINES IN SOUTH AFRICA

ORGANISATION	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT
<u>Akeso Psychiatric Response Unit 24 Hour</u>	The hotline is manned by experienced counselling staff, who are trained to contain and manage the immediate crisis, provide transportation and arrange the required admission to the nearest Psychiatric Clinic, if so required. If the caller is in crisis, the intervention vehicle is dispatched, but if it is not an emergency, the caller is transferred to a registered counsellor for counselling and an appropriate referral.	0861 HELP US (4357 87)
<u>Alcoholics Anonymous South Africa</u>	Worldwide fellowship for alcoholics supporting those choosing to be sober. Only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.	0861 HELPAA (435 722) <u>GET IN TOUCH</u>
<u>Al-Anon</u>	Al-Anon Family Groups is for the families and friends of problem drinkers, with a special section – Alateen – for children of alcoholics, and a group for adult children of alcoholics.	0861 ALANON (25 26 66) <u>GET IN TOUCH</u>
<u>Adcock Ingram Depression and Anxiety Helpline</u>	Adcock Ingram is a leading South African pharmaceutical manufacturer sponsoring a support line to provide immediate help for people suffering from anxiety and other mental health issues.	(0800) 70 80 90



ORGANISATION	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT
<u>Befrienders Bloemfontein</u>	If you are feeling anxious, confused, hurt, depressed, if you are wondering whether life is worth living...contact the Befrienders today. The service is free and completely confidential. You do not even have to tell us who you are.	(0027) 51 444 5000 <u>GET IN TOUCH</u>
<u>Department of Social Development Substance Abuse Line 24hr helpline</u>	For alcohol and substance abuse rehabilitation and helpline.	(0800) 12 13 14
<u>Lifeline South Africa</u>	24-hour crisis intervention service. "Emotional First Aid station".	(0861) 322 322 <u>GET IN TOUCH</u>
<u>Narcotics Anonymous SA</u>	NA is a non-profit organisation for recovering drug addicts who meet regularly to help each other stay clean.	(0881) 30 03 27 <u>GET IN TOUCH</u>
<u>South African Depression & Anxiety Group - (SADAG)</u>	SADAG is Africa's largest mental health support and advocacy group.	(0800) 12 13 14 <u>GET IN TOUCH</u>
<u>The Whistleblower House NPC – for whistleblower support</u>	The Whistleblower House is a not-for-profit, public benefit organisation that facilitates access to support services for whistleblowers, creates awareness of whistleblowers' plight, and acknowledges the vital role of whistleblowers in strengthening ethics and democracy in South Africa.	+27 64 524 0241 <u>GET IN TOUCH</u>



SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

SELF-CARE ASSESSMENT

Self-care activities are the things you do to maintain good health and improve well-being. You will find that many of these activities are things you already do as part of your normal routine.

In this assessment you will think about how frequently, or how well, you are performing different self-care activities. The goal of this assessment is to help you learn about your self-care needs by spotting patterns and recognising areas of your life that need more attention.

There are no right or wrong answers on this assessment. There may be activities that you have no interest in, and other activities may not be included. This list is not comprehensive, but serves as a starting point for thinking about your self-care needs.

1. I do this poorly	I do this rarely or not at all
2. I do this OK	I do this sometimes
3. I do this well	I do this often
* I would like to improve at this	I would like to do this more frequently

1 2 3 * Physical Self-Care

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Eat healthy food |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Take care of personal hygiene |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Exercise |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Wear clothes that help me feel good about myself |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Eat regularly |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Participate in fun activities (e.g. walking, swimming, dancing, sports) |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Get enough sleep |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Go to preventative medical appointments (e.g. checkups, teeth cleanings) |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Rest when sick |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Overall physical self-care |



1 2 3 * **Psychological / Emotional Self-Care**

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Take time off from work, school, and other obligations
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Participate in hobbies
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Get away from distractions (e.g. phone, email)
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Learn new things, unrelated to work or school
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Express my feelings in a healthy way (e.g. talking, creating art, journaling)
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Recognise my own strength and achievements
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Go on vacations or day-trips
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Do something comforting (e.g. re-watch a favourite movie, take a long bath)
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Find reasons to laugh
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Talk about my problems
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Overall psychological and emotional self-care

1 2 3 * **Social Self-Care**

- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Spend time with people I like
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Call or write to friends and family who are far away
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Have stimulating conversations
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Meet new people
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Spend time alone with my romantic partner
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Ask other for help, when needed
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Do enjoyable activities with other people
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Have intimate time with my romantic partner
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Keep in touch with old friends
- ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Overall social self-care



1 2 3 * Spiritual Self-Care

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Spend time in nature |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Meditate |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Pray |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Recognise the things that give meaning to my life |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Act in accordance with my morals and values |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Set aside time for thought and reflection |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Participate in a cause that is important to me |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Appreciate art that is impactful to me (e.g. music, film, literature) |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Overall spiritual self-care |

1 2 3 * Professional Self-Care

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Improve my professional skills |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Say “no” to excessive new responsibilities |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Take on projects that are interesting or rewarding |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Learn new things related to my profession |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Make time to talk and build relationships with colleagues |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Take break during work |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Maintain balance between my professional and personal life |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Keep a comfortable workspace that allows me to be successful |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Advocate for fair pay, benefits, and other needs |
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | Overall professional self-care |



SELF-TEST FOR ANXIETY

This questionnaire - called the GAD-7 screening tool - can help you find out if you might have an anxiety disorder that needs treatment. It calculates how many common symptoms you have and based on your answers - suggests where you might be on the scale from mild to severe anxiety.

GAD-7 stands for “Generalized Anxiety Disorder” and has 7 questions in the tool. Choose one answer for each of the 7 questions below:

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problem?	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
1. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	0	1	2	3
2. Not being able to stop or control worrying	0	1	2	3
3. Worrying too much about different things	0	1	2	3
4. Trouble relaxing	0	1	2	3
5. Being so restless that it is hard to sit still	0	1	2	3
6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	0	1	2	3
7. Feeling afraid, as if something awful might happen	0	1	2	3
Add up your results for each column				
Total score (add column totals together)				



What your total score means

Your total score is a guide to how severe your anxiety disorder may be:

- 0 - 4 = mild anxiety
- 5 - 9 = moderate anxiety
- 10 - 14 = moderately severe anxiety
- 15 - 21 = severe anxiety

If your score is 10 or higher, or if you feel that anxiety is affecting your daily life, call your doctor.

The GAD-7 was developed by Drs. Robert L. Spitzer, Janet B. W. Williams, Kurt Kroenke, and colleagues, with an education grant from Pfizer, Inc.



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A MEETING PLACE FOR COURAGE

The Whistleblower House is a not-for-profit, public benefit organisation that facilitates access to support services for whistleblowers, creates awareness of whistleblowers' plight, and acknowledges the vital role of whistleblowers in strengthening ethics and democracy in South Africa.

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 www.whistleblowerhouse.org

 info@whistleblowerhouse.org

 (+27) 064 524 0241

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