

Rebuilding Ordinary Life After Trauma

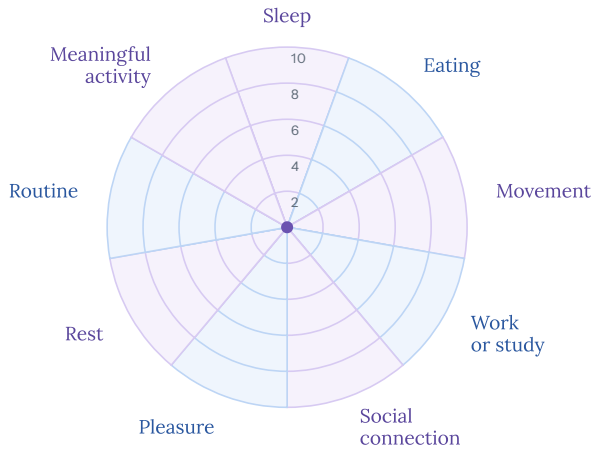
TRAUMA AND RECOVERY · RESTORING EVERYDAY FUNCTIONING

Small, steady steps back towards the parts of life that matter to you

After trauma, everyday life often changes. Sleep, appetite, work and time with others can all be affected. Gently rebuilding ordinary routines can support recovery alongside therapy. This is not a race, and progress is rarely a straight line. Choose one or two areas to begin with.

01 My life wheel

where things are now



How to use the wheel

1. For each area, shade from the centre outwards to show how it is going now (0 = very affected, 10 = going well).
2. Notice which areas feel strongest; these can be sources of support.
3. Choose one or two areas where a small step feels possible, rather than the hardest area.

An area I would like to rebuild first: _____

What might help, or get in the way: _____

Some areas may be affected by symptoms such as nightmares, low appetite or exhaustion. It is worth talking these through with your psychologist or GP.

02 Nine areas of everyday life

one small step at a time

01 Sleep

A regular wake time and a gentle wind-down can help, even when nights are hard.

One small step: _____ ☐ tried

02 Eating

Regular, simple meals can help steady energy and mood.

One small step: _____ ☐ tried

03 Movement

Gentle activity counts, such as a short walk or stretching.

One small step: _____ ☐ tried

04 Work or study

A gradual, planned return may be easier than all at once. Caring and volunteering count too.

One small step: _____ ☐ tried

05 Social connection

Reconnecting with one person who feels safe and supportive can be a good start.

One small step: _____ ☐ tried

06 Pleasure

Small enjoyable moments matter, even if enjoyment feels muted at first.

One small step: _____ ☐ tried

07 Rest

Rest is part of recovery, not something that has to be earned.

One small step: _____ ☐ tried

08 Routine

A few predictable anchors in the day can bring a sense of steadiness.

One small step: _____ ☐ tried

09 Meaningful activity

Doing things linked to what matters to you can help life feel like yours again.

One small step: _____ ☐ tried

03 My steps this week

up to three

My small step	Area	When	Done	How it went and what I noticed
			☐	
			☐	
			☐	

To bring to my next session: _____

WHAT THE RESEARCH SUGGESTS

Trauma treatment guidelines emphasise recovery of everyday functioning, such as work, study and relationships, alongside symptom relief (NICE, 2018; Phoenix Australia, 2020). Lower social support has been one of the more consistent risk factors linked with PTSD (Brewin et al., 2000), and in a small number of trials, physical activity was linked with reduced PTSD and depressive symptoms (Rosenbaum et al., 2015). This worksheet is informed by this research but is not a treatment in itself.

GO AT YOUR OWN PACE

Reflecting on how life has changed can bring up emotions. You can pause, stop, focus on a different area, or return to this later. If you become significantly distressed, consider speaking with your psychologist or another appropriate professional.

SOURCES

Brewin, C. R., Andrews, B., & Valentine, J. D. (2000). Meta-analysis of risk factors for posttraumatic stress disorder in trauma-exposed adults. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 68(5), 748–766. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.68.5.748>
National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. (2018). *Post-traumatic stress disorder* (NICE Guideline NG116). <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng116>

Phoenix Australia. (2020). *Australian guidelines for the prevention and treatment of acute stress disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder and complex PTSD*. Phoenix Australia – Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health.

Rosenbaum, S., Vancampfort, D., Steel, Z., Newby, J., Ward, P. B., & Stubbs, B. (2015). Physical activity in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychiatry Research*, 230(2), 130–136. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2015.10.017>