

MAKING SPACE

Making space

A practical workbook for everyday stress



Understand your load. Prepare a conversation. Make room for recovery. Choose what comes next.

A flexible four-week structure

Worked examples, guided worksheets and weekly reviews to help you explore small, practical changes at your own pace.

Steven Goldsmith | Blue Oak Counselling 36 pages | Printable PDF edition

Use the workbook your way

The four-week structure is a suggested rhythm, not a treatment schedule. Spend around 15-25 minutes on a worksheet, or use a few minutes at a time. Try one change between reviews. A stage can take longer than a week; you don't need to catch up or start again.

Stage	Focus	Pages
Start here	Read the orientation and take your starting snapshot	2-5
Week 1	Understand the load and choose one practical change	6-12
Week 2	Prepare a boundary or task-sharing conversation	13-19
Week 3	Make room for recovery and connection	20-26
Week 4	Review, troubleshoot and plan ongoing support	27-32
Keep using	Reusable planning sheets and research notes	33-36

Choose the version that suits you

The printable edition has writing space. The fillable edition lets you type into the pale boxes in a PDF app. Download it first, add a short test note, save a copy and reopen it to check your app keeps the entries. Some browser previews won't save form responses.

Keep your notes for yourself

Use initials or general descriptions rather than other people's identifying details. Store the file or printed pages somewhere private. You can choose to bring relevant pages to counselling; you don't have to send them to Blue Oak.

If writing is tiring, use brief words, dictate into your own private notes or talk an idea through with someone you trust. Skip exercises that don't fit your needs.

See what you're carrying

A busy schedule shows only part of the load. There's also the remembering, planning, anticipating and emotional effort around each task. You might spend ten minutes making a call and the rest of the day waiting for news. Both can take capacity.



Some demands are visible. Others sit in the background.

A worked example: Sam's week

Sam works part time and helps an older relative. Their list says “work, groceries, appointment”. A closer look adds checking rosters, arranging transport, remembering medication questions and worrying about a bill. Sam's first change isn't a better morning routine. It's asking another family member to take responsibility for arranging the next appointment.

Use the next page to make your own map

List the practical demands, the thinking around them and the resources available. Include paid work, unpaid caring, study, relationships, health and money pressures where relevant. You can leave any category blank.

One demand that other people might not see

Map the whole demand

Choose up to three current demands. For each, name the task and what sits around it. Use concrete examples rather than “everything”. You can repeat this page in a notebook for other areas.

Demand 1: the task, the hidden work, and what makes it difficult**Demand 2: the task, the hidden work, and what makes it difficult****Demand 3: the task, the hidden work, and what makes it difficult****Support or resources I already have, including skills and people**

Choose a starting point

Which demand is both significant and possible to influence? Start there. The hardest or most urgent issue may need professional or practical assistance rather than a self-guided exercise.

Find words you can actually use

You don't need to sound forceful or deliver a perfect script. Use a short statement, a clear limit and a realistic next option if you want to offer one. Avoid a long explanation you feel you have to defend.

Situation	Words you could adapt
A new task at work	"I can take this on if we move another deadline. Which task should come first?"
A repeated request	"I can help for half an hour. I won't be able to stay longer."
An overloaded evening	"I'm at capacity tonight. Can we choose a time to discuss this tomorrow?"
Unclear expectations	"Before I agree, can we clarify what's needed and by when?"

The other person may be disappointed or need time to respond. You can acknowledge that without immediately withdrawing the limit. At work or in caring arrangements, there may also be duties or practical constraints to discuss.

My short statement: what's happening and what I can offer

My limit, and any alternative I'm genuinely able to offer

If I feel pressured to answer immediately, I can say

These are examples to adapt, not rules for every relationship or workplace. Counselling can help you explore why certain conversations feel difficult and choose an approach that fits the situation.

Rest doesn't have to look one way

Recovery can include quiet, enjoyment, a sense of choice or time with something different from the day's demands. Work research distinguishes experiences such as switching off mentally, relaxation, learning or mastery, and control over leisure time. These ideas offer options, not a checklist everyone must complete. [3]



Choose something accessible that fits the time and energy you have.

After a day of decisions, another demanding activity may not feel restorative. On another day, a small creative task or gentle movement may be welcome. Notice what the activity asks of you as well as what you hope it will offer.

A small break has limits

Research on micro-breaks found modest average benefits for energy and fatigue, but no clear overall performance benefit. A short pause isn't a replacement for adequate rest, manageable demands or support. There's no proven ideal break schedule for everyone. [4]

What I most need a break from at the moment