

Action for  
Deafness



**MAKING** for Deaf and  
**THINGS** hard of hearing  
**HAPPEN** people  
HAPPEN people

THINGS things  
MAKING making

# Tinnitus Workbook



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# About Tinnitus

## What is Tinnitus?

Tinnitus is defined as the sensation of sound with no external stimulus, sound perceived with no external cause. Tinnitus is not a disease but

a condition that can result from a wide range of underlying causes. Tinnitus can occur in one ear, both ears or inside the head.

## What does Tinnitus sound like?

Tinnitus can be described as many different sounds and can range from simple pure tones to more complex sounds, such as hearing musical notes. Tinnitus is subjective but is most often described as the one of the following:

- ➔ Ringing
- ➔ Whistling
- ➔ Roaring
- ➔ Hissing
- ➔ Rushing
- ➔ Clicking
- ➔ Buzzing

## Why do we experience Tinnitus?

The ear is a conveyor belt for sound, taking all the information that enters our ears up to the brain to be analysed.

Sound helps us to know where we are and what is going on around us. Our brain wants to hear as much as it can in order to make sense of the world around us.

If there is a fault with this conveyor belt, our brain may not be getting all the information it needs so it tries harder to listen out for sounds that may be important. This additional information manifests itself as tinnitus.

## How common is Tinnitus?

It is estimated that around 5 million people in the UK are affected by tinnitus. Many people experience temporary tinnitus following exposure to loud noise, for example at a music concert or when working with machinery. This normally manifests itself as a high pitched tone which lasts for a couple of hours.

Sometimes tinnitus is a symptom of an illness, disorder, or a side effect of medication. It is important to notify your GP or Audiologist of any changes to your tinnitus, especially if it occurs after a change in your medication.

# What causes Tinnitus?

There are different theories as to what exactly causes tinnitus and research is ongoing. Stress, tiredness and anxiety can increase the severity. Tinnitus does not cause hearing loss, but can be a side effect of reduced hearing.

Tinnitus can be linked to multiple factors ranging from physiological to psychological including:

- ➔ Hearing loss
- ➔ Some ear conditions and diseases
- ➔ Noise exposure

- ➔ Fluid behind the ear drum (often presents with “clicking” tinnitus)
- ➔ Ear infections/viral infections
- ➔ Ear, head or neck injuries
- ➔ Some medication
- ➔ Emotional stress

There is currently no cure for tinnitus. There are, however, several different treatment options that are available for managing the symptoms and often patients will try all treatment types.

# What treatment is available?

## HEARING AIDS

Hearing aids can help with tinnitus management by compensating for the hearing loss or amplifying environmental sounds to distract from the tinnitus.

## SOUND THERAPY

Most people notice their tinnitus more in quiet settings. The aim of sound therapy is to mask or distract from the distressing tinnitus sounds and provide some control. Sound generators and relaxation devices emit sounds similar to the tinnitus or relaxing sounds such as the sound of the sea.

## TINNITUS RETRAINING THERAPY (TRT)

This encourages patients to get used to tinnitus so that it becomes less noticeable.

## COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY (CBT)

The aim of CBT is to help the sufferer gain a sense of control over their symptoms by altering thought patterns. This is delivered in sessions with a hearing therapist or specialist audiologist.

## THIS TINNITUS WORKBOOK

The Tinnitus Workbook looks at ways of helping to manage your tinnitus exploring different techniques and ideas.

# Habituation

Habituation is defined as a decreased response to repeated stimulation. This means that the more we are exposed to something, the more we get used to it.

Before we are born we listen to sounds around us from within the womb. This is why when we are born we already recognise our mother's voice. Voices of other family members such as our father or siblings and even the theme tune to our mother's favourite TV programme will also be familiar to us, so as babies we can sleep through this noise knowing that all of these sounds are 'safe'.

We spend our lives adding to this bank of safe sounds and normal sounds that we find in our environment. It is when something changes that we notice them.

We have habituated ourselves to the sound of the clock ticking, the fridge humming, the water travelling around the pipes in the central heating. Even though we don't feel like we are hearing these sounds, our brain is still monitoring this information to know what is going on around us. We know the clock has stopped working because we cannot hear it ticking, even though we didn't know we could hear it ticking in the first place.

So when we introduce a new sound, for example if we move into a house next to a railway line, we will hear all the trains to start with. Then, because we know that it is a safe sound and to be expected, after a few months we don't notice it any

more until, of course, someone points it out to us. This is habituation.

## SO, WILL I HABITUATE TO THE TINNITUS?

It is certainly possible to habituate to tinnitus and whilst some people will habituate without much effort, others may need some extra help to get to this point. There are many different methods to help habituation to tinnitus but before we look into these methods, we should look at why some people don't habituate naturally.

## CLASSICAL CONDITIONING

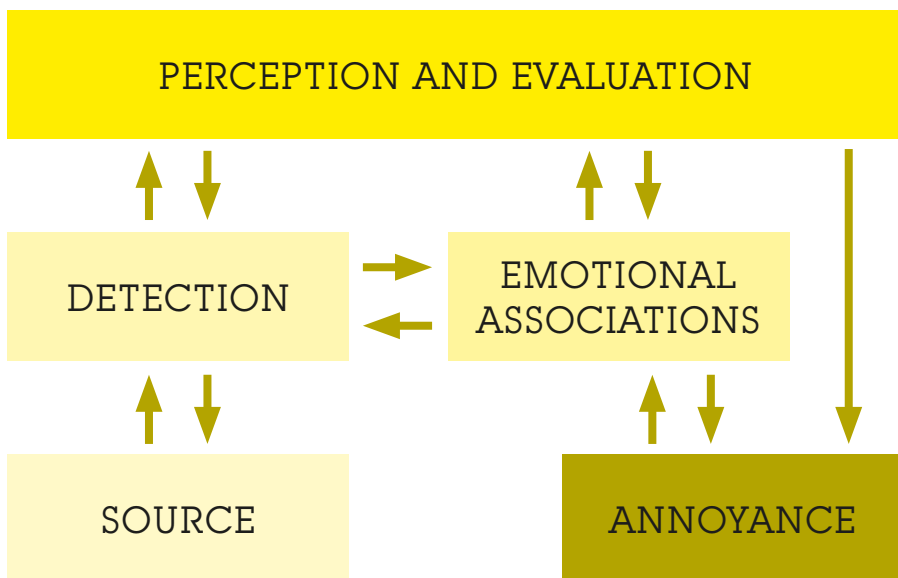
The easiest way to explain classical conditioning is through the most common example: 'Pavlov's Dog'. Pavlov would ring a bell just before he gave food to his dog. When the dog was given the food it would salivate. Over time, the dog learned to associate the sound of the bell with being given food, to the point that whenever Pavlov rang the bell, the dog would automatically start to salivate.



## THE VICIOUS CYCLE

It is therefore possible that not habituating to tinnitus and feeling annoyance or stress from hearing it is because we have unconsciously learned to react in that way.

The process of first noticing tinnitus may lead to worrying about it which in turn makes the tinnitus worse, so we end up worrying about it more.



## BREAKING THE CYCLE

If we take control and intervene at one of the stages, as shown in the vicious cycle above, we may be able to

manage the tinnitus more effectively. The following pages suggest things to try that might help.



## **Start at the Source**

Think about what it is that might be triggering tinnitus.

- |                                        |                                                      |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stress        | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical/Medication          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of Sleep | <input type="checkbox"/> Related to Hearing Loss     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loud Noise    | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please write below): |

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## **Detection –** **When Is It More Noticeable?**

Are there certain times of the day when you are more aware of tinnitus?

- ☐ In quiet
- ☐ In bed
- ☐ Doing certain activities

## **How Does It Make You Feel?**

How do you react to tinnitus? How do you feel when you hear it?

- |                                   |                                                      |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worried  | <input type="checkbox"/> Angry                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stressed | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please write below): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annoyed  |                                                      |

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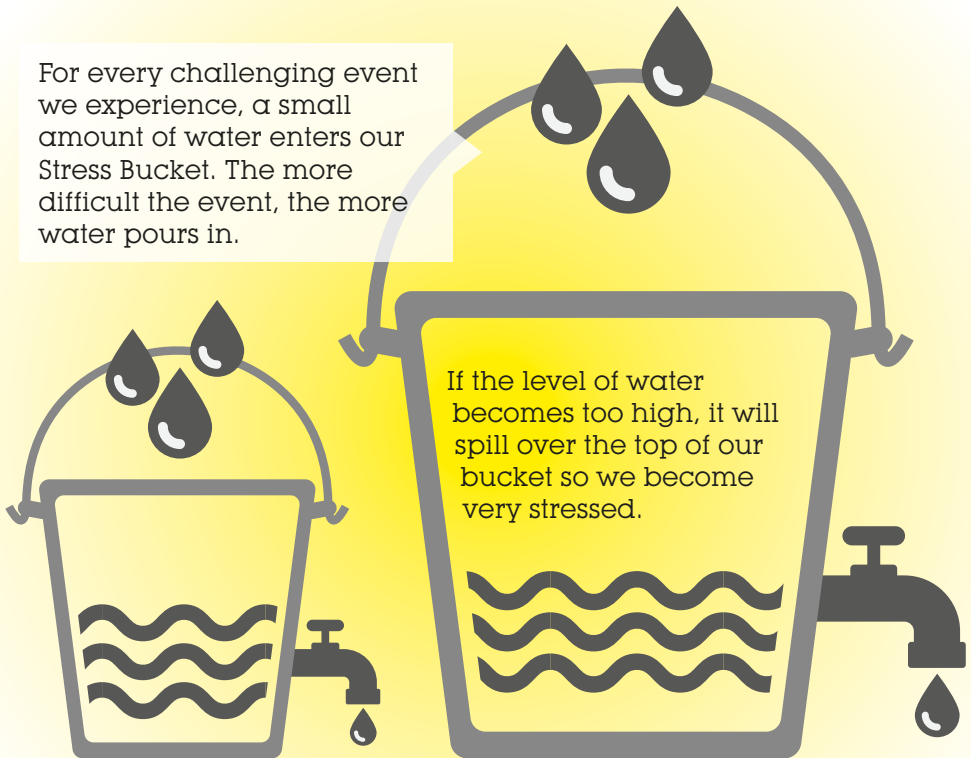
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# The Stress Bucket

Stress is cumulative. As long as the stress that occurs from challenging events stays below our threshold, we can control it. As soon as the stress accumulates and reaches above our threshold we will feel the effects. (*Zubin and Spring, 1977*). To explain this more easily, imagine you have a bucket...

For every challenging event we experience, a small amount of water enters our Stress Bucket. The more difficult the event, the more water pours in.



If the level of water becomes too high, it will spill over the top of our bucket so we become very stressed.

Each of our buckets are a different size, which is why some people seem to be able to cope more than others with challenging life events.

We do, however, have a tap that we can turn on to let some of the stress out. We have to find a way to do this before the water spills over the top of the bucket.



# My Stress Bucket

List all the things that are filling up your stress bucket. This could be tinnitus itself, work-related stress, family stress or just small things that are on your mind.

Now, write down all the things you do to open the tap. This could be reading a book, watching your favourite TV programme, doing exercise, going to an evening class or whatever your hobbies are:

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Are you doing enough to let the water out or is it starting to overflow?

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# Sleep

Sleep is incredibly important for our general health and wellbeing. If we do not sleep enough it can lead to feeling irritable, stressed and cause concentration difficulties.

If lack of sleep persists it can make us more prone to medical problems like heart disease, high blood pressure

and diabetes. It can also lower our immune system, making us more prone to catching colds, flu and other infections.

A good night's sleep can boost our mental wellbeing in addition to keeping us physically healthy.

## Learn to relax before bed

### MAKE A LIST

Make a list of all the things that are on your mind or what needs to be done tomorrow.

Record all your anxieties and frustrations so that they can be put out of your head before you sleep.

### TAKE 5 DEEP BREATHS

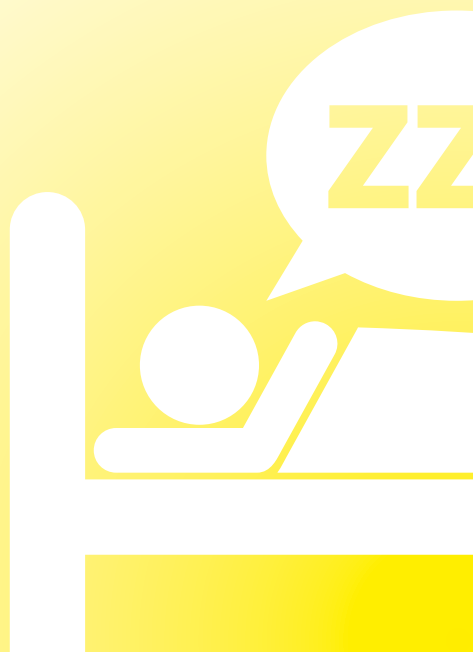
Place one hand on your lower belly and feel it rise and fall as you breathe in for a count of 3, then breathe out for a count of 3. Repeat this 5 times.

### TUNE INTO YOUR OTHER SENSES

Think about how the sheets feel against your skin, think about how the air smells. Listen to the rain outside your window, or a sound from a noise generator.

### TENSE AND RELEASE

Shrug up your shoulders and clench your fists as tight as possible as you breathe in. When you breathe out, give a big sigh and release the tension in your shoulders and hands.



# How to get on a sleep schedule

## BE CONSISTENT

Pick a time to go to bed and a time to wake up and stick to it. Try not to sleep in for more than an hour or two at the most at weekends. That way, your body will be used to this routine enabling you to fall asleep better at night, and wake more easily in the morning.

## MAKE GRADUAL ADJUSTMENTS

Make small changes slowly. You cannot change your routine over night. If you are trying to go to sleep at 10pm rather than midnight, go to bed at 11:45 for 2 or 3 nights, then bring it forward to 11:30. Keep adjusting your bed time by 15 minutes every few nights so that your body can gradually adjust.

## SEE THE MORNING LIGHT

When you get up in the morning, open the curtains to let in the natural light. You will feel awake more quickly.

## DIM THE LIGHTS AT NIGHT

Bright lights keep you awake. By having low level lighting in the evening, your body will know it is time to sleep soon.

## DON'T HIT THE SNOOZE BUTTON

Although it is tempting to allow yourself another 10 minutes sleep, it is better to just get up and out of bed. So set the alarm for the time you need to get up, and when it goes off – get up!

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Don't go to bed on an empty stomach, but make sure you are not feeling full either. Have dinner around the same time every night which should be around two or three hours before you go to bed.

# Noise exposure

Noise exposure not only damages our hearing but it can also trigger tinnitus. So it is a good idea to avoid any excessive noise exposure when possible. Below is a table showing the maximum amount of time you should

spend exposed to high level noise and examples of such noise before it starts to damage your hearing.

							Exposure Level dBA	Max time	
			Rock Concerts	Ambulance Siren	Thunder Clap		120	10 Seconds	
				Home Stereo	Motorcycle		MP3 Player/ear buds	112	1 Min
								109	2 Mins
								107	3 Mins
								105	5 Mins
102	10 Mins								
100	15 Mins								
97	30 Mins								
94	1 Hour								
91	2 Hours								
88	4 Hours								
85	8 Hours								
82	16 Hours								
80	25 Hours								
Leaf Blower	Referee Whistle	Lawn Mower							
	Sporting Events		On The Dance Floor						
Clubs and Discos									
	Vacuum cleaner	Food Blender							

# Things that might help

## Hydration

It is important to remain hydrated at all times as dehydration can affect inner ear function.

Alcohol can cause dehydration and can cause specific fluid shift out of

the inner ear which also causes problems and predisposes to damage.

So, when drinking alcohol, remember to drink water too.

## Hearing protection

If you like going to loud music concerts, play an instrument yourself or if you have other noisy hobbies

such as riding a motorbike or shooting it is advisable to wear some ear protection.

## Custom ear plugs

Custom ear plugs are available to purchase. These will be made to fit your ear perfectly for a comfortable and snug fit. They are fitted with different acoustic filters which will let some sounds in, such as speech, but will reduce louder sounds such as music.



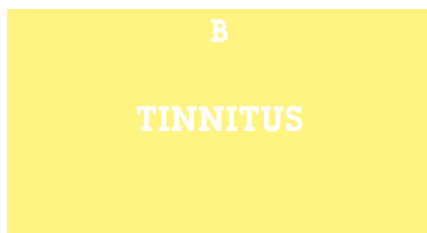
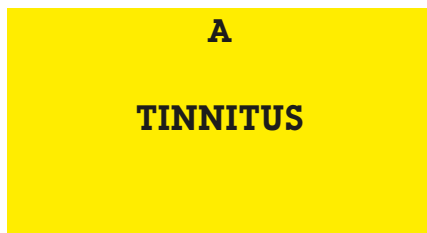
## Medical conditions and medications

Certain medical conditions and medications can cause tinnitus. If you are concerned then please speak to your audiologist or GP. If you have had

a recent change in medication that you think has made your tinnitus worse, speak to your GP or Pharmacist.

## **Why is my Tinnitus more noticeable when I am in quiet environments?**

When we are driving we adjust the car radio so that we can hear it over the engine noise. When we park and turn the engine off, the contrast between the background noise and the car radio increases so the car radio seems to get louder. This is what happens when we go to bed after a busy day; the background noise reduced so tinnitus becomes more noticeable. So, if we can reduce the contrast between tinnitus and the background noise, we shouldn't hear tinnitus so much.



The word 'Tinnitus' is the same in both A and B, but is less noticeable in B because of the reduced contrast.

## **What can I use to help my Tinnitus in quiet environments?**

If there is no background sound to distract your brain from tinnitus, then you can try to generate some.



### **Hearing Aids and Maskers**

As most people with tinnitus have a hearing loss, the brain does not hear as much background noise to distract from the tinnitus. By using a hearing aid this can provide the brain with other sounds to listen to. Some hearing aids have built in tinnitus maskers that will provide extra white noise to help mask the tinnitus in quiet environments.

## Sound Generators

You can purchase sound generators on which you can choose sounds such as white noise, birds chirping or sea waves to help mask tinnitus.



## Pillow Speakers

If tinnitus is particularly bad when you are trying to sleep and your partner does not want to hear the noise from the sound generator, you can attach a pillow speaker to it and listen through your pillow.

### Sound Generators: Points to remember

- ➔ Adjust the sound carefully in a quiet room
- ➔ Adjust to a level close to but just below the level at which the tinnitus sound starts to change
- ➔ Make sure the sound is below the level that could cause annoyance or discomfort
- ➔ Once set, do not readjust.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

There are many different sound generator apps that you can download onto your smart phone, some are completely free.

# How do we feel about our Tinnitus?

One of the key ways to help to stop bothersome tinnitus is to stop feeling bothered by it.

Easier said than done right? - Wrong.

Just as Pavlov's dog learned to associate the sound of a bell with food, we have learned to associate the sound of our tinnitus as something bad.

But, if Pavlov stopped giving the dog food when he rang the bell, the dog would eventually stop associating the two – it is possible to unlearn things. So, we just have to learn to associate tinnitus with something good, or different.

## Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs)

These are thoughts that can occur at any time or place throughout our lives they are:

- ➔ Automatic - These are thoughts that pop into our heads without any effort
- ➔ Distorted – They do not fit in with all the facts
- ➔ Unhelpful – They are usually quite extreme, negative thoughts that are difficult to shake off
- ➔ Plausible – We usually accept them as facts, and it does not occur to us to question them. We cannot switch them off.

Challenging automatic negative thoughts is like any other skill, it takes regular practice to do it easily. But we must challenge them to break the cycle.  
(Broadway-Horner, 2012)

Some examples of automatic negative thoughts relating to tinnitus may be:

*"I cannot cope with the tinnitus."*

*"It will be like this forever."*

*"It's affecting my life."*





# Challenging Automatic Negative Thoughts

The way to challenge ANTs is to think about what evidence supports the thought, what evidence does not support the thought and to see if we can come up with an alternative thought. Examples are given in the table below:

Automatic Negative Thought	Evidence that supports this thought	Evidence that does not support this thought	Alternative thought
I cannot cope with tinnitus	I feel more stressed and anxious since it started	I forget about it when I am busy	There are many times when tinnitus is not too bad
It will be like this forever	It has not gone away since it started  I have heard there is no cure	Many people do manage to habituate to it  I don't know what the future holds	It can get better
It's affecting my life	I find it hard to sleep  I cannot sit in a quiet room and read without it annoying me	When I am busy I don't notice it  When I put on music I can't hear tinnitus	There are still many things that I enjoy doing where tinnitus doesn't bother me

**The next section is for you to use as an 8 month journal to try out some of the ideas mentioned to see if they help your tinnitus.**

# Month 1

## **My Stress Bucket:**

Things that have caused  
me stress:

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Things I have done to help  
combat stress:

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## **Sleep Strategy:**

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## **How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Times when I noticed my tinnitus:

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Times that helped me ignore my  
tinnitus:

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**How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Automatic Negative Thought:

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Evidence that does not support this thought:

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Evidence that supports this thought:

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Alternative thought:

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**On A Scale Of 0 – 10 This Month My Tinnitus Has Bothered Me:**

Not At All

Very Much So

**0     1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8     9     10**

**Things I Will Try Next Month:**

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# Month 2

## My Stress Bucket:

Things that have caused me stress:

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Things I have done to help combat stress:

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## Sleep Strategy:

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## How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:

Times when I noticed my tinnitus:

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Times that helped me ignore my tinnitus:

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**How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Automatic Negative Thought:

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Evidence that does not support this thought:

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Evidence that supports this thought:

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Alternative thought:

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**On A Scale Of 0 – 10 This Month My Tinnitus Has Bothered Me:**

Not At All

Very Much So

**0     1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8     9     10**

**Things I Will Try Next Month:**

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# Month 3

## **My Stress Bucket:**

Things that have caused me stress:

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Things I have done to help combat stress:

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## **Sleep Strategy:**

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## **How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Times when I noticed my tinnitus:

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Times that helped me ignore my tinnitus:

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**How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Automatic Negative Thought:

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Evidence that does not support this thought:

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Evidence that supports this thought:

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Alternative thought:

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**On A Scale Of 0 – 10 This Month My Tinnitus Has Bothered Me:**

Not At All

Very Much So

**0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10**

**Things I Will Try Next Month:**

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# Month 4

## **My Stress Bucket:**

Things that have caused  
me stress:

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Things I have done to help  
combat stress:

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## **Sleep Strategy:**

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## **How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Times when I noticed my tinnitus:

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Times that helped me ignore my  
tinnitus:

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**How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Automatic Negative Thought:

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Evidence that does not support this thought:

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Evidence that supports this thought:

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Alternative thought:

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**On A Scale Of 0 – 10 This Month My Tinnitus Has Bothered Me:**

Not At All

Very Much So

**0     1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8     9     10**

**Things I Will Try Next Month:**

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# Month 5

## **My Stress Bucket:**

Things that have caused me stress:

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Things I have done to help combat stress:

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## **Sleep Strategy:**

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## **How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Times when I noticed my tinnitus:

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Times that helped me ignore my tinnitus:

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**How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Automatic Negative Thought:

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Evidence that does not support this thought:

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Evidence that supports this thought:

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Alternative thought:

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**On A Scale Of 0 – 10 This Month My Tinnitus Has Bothered Me:**

Not At All

Very Much So

**0     1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8     9     10**

**Things I Will Try Next Month:**

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# Month 6

## **My Stress Bucket:**

Things that have caused me stress:

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Things I have done to help combat stress:

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## **Sleep Strategy:**

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## **How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Times when I noticed my tinnitus:

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Times that helped me ignore my tinnitus:

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**How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Automatic Negative Thought:

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Evidence that does not support this thought:

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Evidence that supports this thought:

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Alternative thought:

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**On A Scale Of 0 – 10 This Month My Tinnitus Has Bothered Me:**

Not At All

Very Much So

**0     1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8     9     10**

**Things I Will Try Next Month:**

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# Month 7

## **My Stress Bucket:**

Things that have caused me stress:

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Things I have done to help combat stress:

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## **Sleep Strategy:**

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## **How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Times when I noticed my tinnitus:

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Times that helped me ignore my tinnitus:

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**How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Automatic Negative Thought:

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Evidence that does not support  
this thought:

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Evidence that supports this  
thought:

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Alternative thought:

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**On A Scale Of 0 – 10 This Month  
My Tinnitus Has Bothered Me:**

Not At All

Very Much So

**0     1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8     9     10**

**Things I Will Try Next Month:**

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# Month 8

## **My Stress Bucket:**

Things that have caused me stress:

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Things I have done to help combat stress:

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## **Sleep Strategy:**

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## **How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:**

Times when I noticed my tinnitus:

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Times that helped me ignore my tinnitus:

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# How Noticeable My Tinnitus Has Been:

Automatic Negative Thought:

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Evidence that does not support this thought:

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Evidence that supports this thought:

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Alternative thought:

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# On A Scale Of 0 – 10 This Month My Tinnitus Has Bothered Me:

Not At All

Very Much So

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

# Things I Will Try Next Month:

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## Other Notes

[illegible]

[illegible]



# Resource Centres

## Haywards Heath (Head Office)

22 Sussex Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 4EA



01444 415582



07800 005423



info@actionfordeafness.org.uk

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## Worthing

2-6 Buckingham Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN11 1TH



01903 217341



07800 005423



info@actionfordeafness.org.uk

**[www.actionfordeafness.org.uk](http://www.actionfordeafness.org.uk)**



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### Data Protection Act 1998

Action for Deafness will not pass on your details to any third party without your consent. We are committed to ensuring that all your personal information is used with your consent, respect for your privacy and only for the limited, clearly stated purposes\*.

\*Please contact us if you would like further details as to how we may use your personal information.

This accords with our legal obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.