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Daily Work Reflection — A Gentle Self-Coaching Checklist

A private, non-clinical checklist that helps UK SME readers choose one or two optional work-reflection questions, one realistic next action and a capacity check without turning reflection into performance monitoring.



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Chapter links and PDF bookmarks support navigation. Writing areas are for handwritten or separate notes, not interactive PDF forms.

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A short, private checklist for practical work planning

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Use this in the way that fits today

This is a general education and planning tool, not a diagnosis, therapy, medical assessment or treatment, and not a way to rate your health, value or performance. Choose **one or two prompts**, or leave it for another time. You do not need to write every day, explain a missed day or turn a difficult week into a personal failure.

Keep your page **private by default**. It is not a wellbeing score, a manager form or a performance record. Do not submit it to a manager, add it to an HR system, or put personal reflections into an AI tool. Information that reveals a worker's physical or mental health is specially protected under UK data-protection law; employers must have a clear, necessary purpose and other safeguards before processing it.⁵

This checklist separates two things that can easily get mixed together:

- **Personal routine:** a small, voluntary planning or reflection choice that you control.
- **Work design:** workload, clarity, staffing, training, work patterns, support or change that an employer or team needs to address. HSE identifies demands, control, support, relationships, role and change as areas of work design that can affect stress.¹

1. Start of the work period: choose a direction, not a test

You might be beginning a day, a shift, a project block or returning after time away. Pick what is useful.

☐ **One question I want to carry today is:**

What would make this work period more workable?

What needs clarification before I start?

What is one thing I can do within my role and available time?

My question: _____

☐ **One next action:** I can take this small, observable step:

- ☐ **Reality and capacity check:** I have considered available time, a shift pattern, caring responsibilities, access needs, interruptions and urgent work.
- ☐ This action still fits.
- ☐ I will reduce it, defer it or choose a smaller first step.
- ☐ I need to ask for clarity, time, equipment, cover or a change to the plan.
- ☐ **A work principle I want to use today:** for example, safety, fairness, accuracy, kindness, customer care or learning.
-

Illustrative SME example: A café supervisor has two staff absences before a busy service. Rather than setting three personal targets, they choose one next action: “Confirm the reduced menu and allocate opening tasks.” The staffing gap is a work-design issue to raise, not a reason to judge their resilience.

2. During the work period: pause, notice the work, choose the next practical move

Use this only when it helps. A pause can be as brief as looking away from the screen, getting a drink of water, stretching within your comfort, walking a short safe route, naming what needs doing next, or speaking to someone. You do not have to close your eyes, share feelings or use a breathing exercise.

If you **choose** a breathing pause, sit, stand or lie comfortably. Let your breath go only as deep as is comfortable, without forcing it, and breathe gently and regularly. Stop and use a different option if it is not helpful.⁴

☐ The immediate work issue is:

☐ The smallest useful next move is:

- ☐ Is this mainly a work-design issue?
- ☐ **Demands:** workload, deadlines, work pattern or environment
- ☐ **Control:** too little say over how work is done
- ☐ **Support:** missing resources, training, cover or guidance
- ☐ **Relationships, role or change:** conflict, unclear responsibilities or poorly communicated change

If you tick an item, the next step may be a work conversation or an employer action—not more private reflection. Employers have a duty to assess and act on work-related stress risks; matching demands to skills, time, planning, training and support are examples in HSE guidance.¹

3. End of the work period: take forward what is useful

Choose **one or two** questions. Short answers are enough. You can write “not sure”.

☐ What moved forward, was clarified or was handled with care?

☐ What made the work harder than it needed to be?

☐ What should I carry forward, stop, ask about or hand over?

☐ My next practical step, with the time or support it needs, is:

No “win” is required. Rest, reduced capacity, a change of plan, asking for help and finishing a shift safely can all be sensible outcomes.

4. Once a week or when plans change: capacity, not self-scoring

This is a planning check, not a review of your worth or wellbeing.

☐ The work that genuinely fits my available capacity is:

☐ The work I will defer, delegate, simplify or discuss is:

☐ One constraint I need to make visible is:

☐ One support, adjustment, clarification or resource that could help is:

If you decide to speak with a manager, you can keep the conversation to the work: workload, priorities, hours, training, equipment, cover, handovers or role clarity. You do not have to disclose personal circumstances. Acas says workers do not have to tell their employer about personal problems; if a work-stress conversation happens, managers should approach it sensitively and be clear about confidentiality.³

For employers and managers: use a separate work–design action

Do **not** collect completed checklists, ask people to score how they feel, monitor private reflections or use AI to analyse them. Instead, address a stated work issue through normal, respectful work planning. Where health information is collected for a legitimate reason, ICO guidance says it needs extra protection and a clear, necessary purpose.⁵

Work-design action (not a personal wellbeing record)

- The work issue we can see: _____
- Relevant HSE area(s): demands / control / support / relationships / role / change
- The practical change to test: _____
- Who owns the change: _____ Review date: _____
- How we will check the change worked **without collecting health data or individual reflections**: _____

Illustrative SME example: Repeated shift-handover errors show an unclear role and rushed work pattern. The manager agrees a written handover, named cover and ten minutes of overlap. They review whether the handover happens reliably; they do not ask staff to provide wellbeing scores.

My final action plan

The one action I will take or request:

The first small step and when I will try it:

If it does not fit my capacity, I will instead:

The person, team process or support route I can contact if needed:

When to stop and seek further support

Stop the exercise if it increases distress. You do not need to finish it. This checklist cannot assess what support is right for you.

For urgent mental-health help, use the service for the UK nation you are in: **England:** NHS 111 online or call 111 and select the mental-health option.⁷ **Scotland:** NHS 24 on 111 and choose the mental-health option.⁸ **Wales:** call NHS 111 and press 2.⁹ **Northern Ireland:** Lifeline, 0808 808 8000, is a free confidential 24-hour service for people in crisis or despair.¹⁰ If someone's life is at immediate risk or they cannot keep themselves or someone else safe, call 999 or go to A&E.⁷ ¹⁰

References

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10. [Mental health emergency - if you're in crisis or despair](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/mental-health-emergency-if-youre-crisis-or-despair)
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