The Wellbeing Corner

cawr Centre for Health, Activity & Wellbeing Research

Cardiff Metropolitan University

Welcome to the Wellbeing Corner.

Sub-Edited each edition by Cardiff City's Medical Director **Professor Len Nokes** and Club Psychologist **Dr. Mikel Mellick** – with contributions from Club medical personnel, health partners, researchers and charities – these pages aim to provide you with information around current wellbeing and health-related issues and campaigns.

And crucially, where you can find more information and get support.

Tonight's match coincides with World Stress Awareness Day. Club Psychologist Dr. Mikel writes about understanding your **Stress Bag** and how to stop feeling overwhelmed…

What is the stress bag?

We have all seen ***Bushy***, the wonderful Cardiff City Kit Man collecting up the balls and throwing them into his bag post warm-up. Being busy creates a moment of order and control amid pre-match euphoria built on excitement and, yes, often stress.

Have you ever felt like everything is getting on top of you? And that however hard you try; you just can't seem to get all the balls in control and packed away for the night.

You're not alone. The **Stress Bag** is a simple but powerful way to understand how we experience and manage stress; you may know it as the stress bucket model. I like to think of it as **'Bushy's Bag'!**

Imagine that your mind and body are like Bushy's Bag. Throughout a day, we gather up different pressures to put into it, gradually filling it up. These might include work deadlines,



financial worries, relationship difficulties, family responsibilities or everyday challenges.

Everyone's bag is a different size. Some people can cope with more stress than others, but we all have a limit. The good news? We can learn to manage what goes into our bag and find ways to control it and even empty it when stresses start to get too heavy.

What happens when the bag is full?

When stress builds up without enough time to recover, our bag can eventually overflow. This is when we may start to feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained or unable to cope.

Common signs that your stress bag is overflowing include:

Burnout: Feeling exhausted, unmotivated and emotionally depleted.

Anxiety: Experiencing constant worry, racing thoughts or feeling on edge.

Irritability: Becoming frustrated, snappy or upset over little things.

Physical symptoms: Struggling with sleep, headaches or muscle tension.

Remember, these aren't signs of weakness. They're signals from your mind and body that you may need to slow down and take care of yourself. We all need times throughout the day to gather up our stresses (like Bushy collecting footballs), tidy them up and dump them for a time.

Three ways to relieve stress

The key to managing stress isn't necessarily removing every stressful situation from the stress bag. Instead, it's about finding healthy ways to pack the balls away and leave other balls on the pitch. We can all do this throughout the day by:

1. Setting Healthy Boundaries
Learn to say 'no' when you're already stretched too thinly. Protecting your time and energy isn't selfish. Try limiting extra commitments and making space for activities that matter to you.

2. Get Moving
Physical activity is a great way to release tension. Whether it's a brisk walk, dancing in your kitchen, yoga or cycling, find something you enjoy. Even 10–15 minutes of movement can help you feel refreshed.

3. Practise Mindfulness
Take a few moments each day to pause and breathe. Try meditation, journalling or simply sitting quietly without distractions. These small moments can help calm your mind and prevent stress from building up.

Make your wellbeing a priority

Within each day there will always be challenges and it's impossible to keep stress out of our bag completely. What matters is recognising when it's getting full and taking steps to manage that.

You don't have to wait until your bag overflows to start looking after yourself.

Make small, manageable changes each day, be kind to yourself and remember that looking after your mental wellbeing is not a luxury: it's a necessity. One small step at a time can make a big difference!

Your Wellbeing Editors For support & info, email **mikel.mellick@cardiffcityfc.co.uk**



For more support & information…

NHS Wales (111, option 2 mental health crisis support line) / NHS England 111

Mind UK: mind.org.uk/need-urgent-help

Call Samaritans on 116 123 (UK-wide)
- **Text SHOUT to 85258 (UK-wide)**
- **Call C.A.L.L. on 0800 132 737 (Wales only)**

ISMA UK
Promoting Stress Prevention and Wellbeing

International stress awareness week (2nd-6th november 2026)

'Rehumanising the Workplace'



International Stress Awareness Week is a major annual campaign created and led by ISMAUK to increase public awareness of stress, its impact, and the importance of mental health and wellbeing. The Week brings together employers, wellbeing practitioners, policymakers, educators and communities in a shared commitment to healthier, more supportive ways of working and living.

International Stress Awareness Week was established by ISMAUK on the 25th anniversary of Stress Awareness Day, expanding the campaign's reach and creating a global platform for awareness and action. Each year, the campaign continues to grow in international reach and influence as more countries take part.

Find out more by visiting isma.org.uk/isma-international-stress-awareness-week

#StressAwarenessDay
#StressAwarenessWeek