

The 10 Positive Steps to Mental Wellbeing

Keep Active **Exercise really helps if you're feeling depressed or anxious. It can give you more energy too.**

Regular exercise can help you to sleep better and improve your concentration. It can also help your physical and mental health. Find something you enjoy – walking, gardening, a team sport, swimming or dancing. Group exercise will not only provide you with the benefits from exercise but you will also get benefits from the social aspect. Adults should aim to achieve 150 minutes (2½ hours) of moderate intensity activity over a week, this can look like activity in 10 minutes or more through the day or do 30 minutes on at least 5 days a week.

Take a break **A change of scene or pace is good for your mental health. A few minutes can be enough to de-stress you.**

Try to make time in your day for some 'me' time. Take a break and do something active or do nothing at all. Life is busy, so it is up you make space in your day, you may only need 5 minutes. Become aware of what works for you, this might involve trying something new for example, having a lunch break, mindfulness practice (meditation), yoga or an evening college course. We often put a lot of pressure on ourselves to be everything to all people. There may be some things in your life that can be postponed until you have taken time to make yourself feel better now. It may be helpful to remember that you need to look after your own health in order for you to support others.

Care for others **Caring for others is important in maintaining relationships with people close to you. Joining a club or volunteering can also be rewarding. Everyone has something to offer.**

Caring for others (including pets) in your personal life but also at work can make us feel needed, valued and feel less alone. People spend a lot of time in work, some individuals may spend more time in work than with family. Therefore, it is important that colleagues take care of each other. Listen to people; ask if they are okay and if you can do anything for them.

Although caring for others is good for your mental health, acting as a carer for someone can be very stressful. Don't underestimate the impact acting as a carer can have on your mental health and wellbeing. Remember to make time for yourself. This may mean you need to ask for help or accept help from other people.

Keep in touch **Friends are important, especially at difficult times, you don't have to be strong and struggle on alone.**

Be there – and let others be there for you. Be a good friend and neighbour – keep in touch. Being socially connected has a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. This might be face to face, by telephone or via the internet. Friends, family and acquaintances can be there to listen to you but also to have fun with.

Eat well**There are strong links between what we eat and how we feel.**

A good balanced diet is good for your physical health and your mental health. Try to notice how different food or drinks affect your mood. Such as caffeine, this can increase anxiety levels. Consuming sugar will give us a quick energy boost but results in a sharp drop, lowering energy and mood.

Drink sensibly**Drinking alcohol to deal with problems will only make things worse. It's best to drink in moderation and avoid binges.**

People often use alcohol to deal with stress, difficult feelings or to improve their mood. However, the effect of the alcohol is only temporary and can often make you feel more depressed. Being aware of negative coping methods you may be using. To stay within the recommended daily alcohol limits means 2-3 units a day for men and women with two alcohol free days each week. If you're worried about your drinking levels speak to your doctor.

Do something you are good at**Do something you love doing. Enjoying yourself helps to beat stress and can increase your confidence and self esteem.**

Concentrating on a hobby or something that you enjoy can help to forget your worries and help you to feel happier. Take the time to do something you are good at and enjoy. This may be something that you have done in the past, or something new. Remember to give yourself a pat on the back for your achievements.

Accept who you are**Our beliefs, background, culture, religion, sexuality and experiences make us who we are. Everyone is entitled to respect.**

Everyone is different and everyone has strengths. It is better to accept who you are as being unique rather than wishing you are someone else. We all have things that we are good at. Spend time recognising what you are good at and identifying your strengths and focus on them. If you find this difficult, ask friends and family what strengths they think you have. Feeling good about yourself will boost your confidence and self-esteem.

Talk about your feelings**People can feel isolated and overwhelmed by their problems – it can help to share your feelings.**

It is important to recognise when you are dealing with difficult feelings, emotions or situations and talk about it. Often individuals hide their emotions, however talking to someone you trust can be a better way to cope with a problem. Talking about your feelings can help you to feel supported and less alone. You may choose to talk to a family member, a friend, GP or support line.

Ask for help**Everyone needs help from time to time. If things are getting too much for you and you feel you can't cope, it's okay to ask for help.**

It can be difficult to ask for help but we are not superhuman. It is important to have support. This may mean stepping out of your comfort zone, admit you need help and ask others for the support. Support can come in different forms and from different people, such as, friends, family, professionals, work colleagues, help lines, support groups, Employee Assistance Programmes.

(Adapted from the Mental Health Foundation 'How to Look After your Mental Health' campaign 2007)