How to improve your mental wellbeing

Explains what mental wellbeing means, and gives tips to help you take care of your mental wellbeing.

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What is mental wellbeing?

Mental wellbeing doesn't have one set meaning. We might use it to talk about how we feel, how well we're coping with daily life or what feels possible at the moment.

Good mental wellbeing doesn't mean you're always happy or unaffected by your experiences. But poor mental wellbeing can make it more difficult to cope with daily life.

Tips for improving your mental wellbeing

There are lots of things we can try to take care of our wellbeing. But it's not always easy to start. You might find it helpful to:

- only try what feels comfortable

- give yourself time to figure out what works for you, going at your own pace

- take small steps. Pick one or two things that feel achievable at first, before moving on to try other ideas.

If you're finding things difficult and these tips don't feel possible, it's ok to ask for help.

See our pages on seeking help for a mental health problem for guidance on finding support and treatment for your mental health.

Relax and reduce stress

Find ways to relax

If there's something that helps you relax, try to find time to fit it into your day. For example, this could be having a bath or going for a walk. If you find it difficult to switch off, you could try some of the tips and exercises in our relaxation pages.

Take a break if you need to

If you're feeling overwhelmed by a stressful situation, try to take a break. A change of scene can help you to relax and relieve feelings of anxiety, even just for a few minutes.

"For me, whenever I feel overwhelmed or like I'm being mentally negative, I put my headphones on and go for a walk. This helps me zone out and ensures I don't do anything I will later regret."

Do something you enjoy

Try to make time to do an activity you like on a regular basis. This could be something small, like cooking a meal, ringing a friend or listening to music.

"I find listening to radio or audiobooks very helpful to distract from low mood or sadness."

Try to manage stress

If you're under a lot of pressure, you may start to feel overwhelmed or out of control. Stress can also cause physical side effects.

See our pages on stress for tips on dealing with pressure and coping with stressful events.

Try mindfulness

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to the present moment, using techniques like meditation, breathing exercises and yoga. It's been shown to help people become more aware of their thoughts and feelings. This means that instead of being overwhelmed by your feelings, it becomes easier to manage them.

See our pages on mindfulness for more information, including some exercises you could try.

"I had to make room to be well. Sounds daft but give yourself some space – in my case I used mindfulness to help me gain control."

Give yourself some tech-free time

If you find that being on your phone or computer a lot is making you feel more busy and stressed, try to take a break. This could be for just an hour or two. If you find this difficult, try putting your phone in another room or setting an alarm to time yourself.

Find ways to learn and be creative

Try doing something creative

Doing something creative can help distract you from difficult thoughts or feelings, or help you to process them. It can also be rewarding.

You could try doing something like drawing, playing a musical instrument or baking. Try not to worry about the finished product. Just focus on enjoying yourself.

Join a class or group

Learning a new skill in a group can be enjoyable, and help boost your confidence. To find out what's on in your area, contact your [local Mind](#), search the [National Alliance of Arts in Health and Wellbeing directory](#), or ask at your local library or community centre.

Try online learning

Online learning is a good option if it's difficult to get out and about or you're short on time.

See the [FutureLearn](#) and [OpenLearn](#) websites to find free online courses.

Craft with Mind

Mind can help you organise a [Crafternoon](#). We also have lots of [crafty templates](#) you can try.

"I find that any sort of craft activity really focuses my mind and stops me concentrating on negative thoughts. It can also be quite rewarding to actually produce something (although can have the opposite effect if things don't work out quite as intended)."

[Read Laura's blog about how listening to and playing music has helped her mental health](#).

Spend time in nature

Try to spend some time outdoors

Spending time in nature outdoors can help improve your mood and reduce feelings of stress and anger. Our information on [nature and mental health](#) has more about the benefits and lots of ideas you could try.

"When I was feeling really low recently I went for a walk in a nearby park. The bulbs were beautiful, and enjoying those and listening to the birds singing really helped lift my mood."

Bring nature indoors

This can give you the benefits of nature without having to go to a park or public garden. You could buy flowers, potted plants or seeds for growing on your window sill. Or you could collect natural materials from outdoors, such as leaves, flowers, feathers, and use them to decorate your living space.

Spend time with animals

Lots of people find that being with animals is calming and enjoyable. You could try pet-sitting or dog walking, feed birds from your window, or visit a local community farm.

"Spending time with an animal... is one of the best things you can do to understand and learn about what wellbeing and happiness really are."

Try a mindfulness exercise in nature

Pay attention to your surroundings and find things to see, hear, taste, smell and touch. See our information on taking a mindful moment in nature for ideas you could try.

"I have several physical health challenges as well as mental health... so I've had to be creative in what I do for my wellbeing. I'm part of a community gardening group... I can pot up plants and help make nutritious meals."

Read Katie's blog about how discovering a love of gardening has helped her.

Connect with others

Connecting with others can help us have a greater sense of belonging and reduce feelings of loneliness.

Talk to someone you trust

Opening up to a trusted friend or family member can help you feel listened to and supported. Sometimes, just acknowledging your feelings by saying them out loud can also help.

Try peer support

If you're finding things hard, talking to people who have similar feelings or experiences can help. This could be face-to-face at a peer support group, or through an online community like Mind's Elefriends. See our pages on peer support to find out more.

Volunteer

Using your time to help others can give you a sense of purpose, help you meet people and boost your self-esteem. See the Do It website for volunteering opportunities.

Read Nikki's blog about how peer support has helped her.

Look after your physical health

Drink water regularly

Drinking enough water is important for your mental and physical health. The NHS has more information about water, drinks and your health.

Think about your diet

Try to eat regular meals and have a balanced diet, as this can help your mood and energy levels. See our pages on [food and mood](#) for more information. If you have a difficult relationship with food and eating, our pages on [eating problems](#) have information and tips which may help.

Look after yourself

Basic self-care, like brushing your teeth or having a shower, is important for your physical health and can help you feel better. If you're struggling, try to set yourself small goals, like getting up and washing your face.

Try to avoid drugs and alcohol

You might feel like using drugs or alcohol to cope with any difficult feelings. But in the long run they can make you feel worse. See our pages on [recreational drugs and alcohol](#) to find out more.

Try to keep active

Try to build physical activity into your daily routine, if possible. It doesn't have to be anything big, like running a marathon. If you aren't used to being active, start off small and try to find something you enjoy.

Our pages on [physical activity and your mental health](#) have ideas for most ages and abilities, including things you can do at home. The NHS also has a page of [sitting exercises](#) that you could try.

"I aim to go for a walk at lunchtime during the working week. It gives me time to clear my head from the morning which helps prepare me for the afternoon stint. It also reminds me that Monday-Friday isn't all about work. I need to also look after myself."

Try to get enough sleep

Establish a routine

Try and establish a routine around bed time, to help set a regular sleeping pattern.

Avoid screens

Give yourself some tech-free time before sleep, and avoid bright screens that can affect your sleep.

Try to wind down before bed

Do a relaxing activity, like having a bath, or try a [relaxation exercise](#) before you go to sleep. It may also help to avoid having caffeine before your bed time, as this can keep you awake.

Try to make your sleeping environment comfortable

A comfortable sleeping environment can help improve your sleep. Small changes can help. For example, you might sleep better with a low light on, or with different bedding.

If you're staying in hospital, having your own items can help make things feel more comfortable and personal. For example, you could ask to use your own pillow or blanket.

If you're living in a hostel or supported accommodation, the Groundswell website has some ideas for improving your sleep.

See our pages on sleep problems for more information, including more tips to improve your sleep.

"I also read if I can't sleep... as well as drinking herbal tea, it helps me relax and fall asleep faster. If this doesn't help, I focus on my breathing and try and empty my brain."

Useful contacts

Mind's services

- Helplines – our Infolines provide information and support by phone, email and text.

- Local Minds – provide face-to-face services across England and Wales. These might be talking therapies, peer support and advocacy.

- Elefriends – our supportive online community for anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

Other organisations

Do-it

do-it.org
Lists UK volunteering opportunities.

Groundswell

groundswell.org.uk
Information and support for homeless people. Also provides peer-to-peer health advocacy in London.

Mental Health Foundation

mentalhealth.org.uk
Provides information about mental health problems, including personal stories, podcasts and videos.

National Alliance for Arts, Health and Wellbeing

artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk
Information about arts activities to help with wellbeing, including a directory of local groups.

NHS UK

nhs.uk
Information about health problems and treatments, including details of local NHS services in England.

Samaritans

116 123 (freephone)
jo@samaritans.org
Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK
PO Box 90 90
Stirling FK8 2SA
samaritans.org

Open 24/7 for anyone who needs to talk. You can visit some branches in person. They also have a Welsh Language Line on 0300 123 3011 (7pm–11pm every day).