



Mental Health & Wellbeing



think
POSITIVE



What Is Mental Health?

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through to adulthood.

Over the course of your life, if you experience mental health problems, your thinking, mood, and behaviour could be affected. Many factors contribute to mental health problems, including:

- Biological factors, such as genes or brain chemistry
- Life experiences, such as trauma or abuse
- Family history of mental health problems

Mental health problems are common but help is available. People with mental health problems can get better and many recover completely.

Positive Mental Health Allows People To:

- Realize their full potential
- Cope with the stresses of life
- Work productively
- Make meaningful contributions to their communities

Ways To Maintain Positive Mental Health Include:

- Getting professional help if you need it
- Connecting with others
- Staying positive
- Getting physically active
- Helping others
- Getting enough sleep
- Developing coping skills

Early Warning Signs of Mental Health Problems

Not sure if you or someone you know is living with mental health problems? Experiencing one or more of the following feelings or behaviours can be an early warning signs of a problem:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform daily tasks like taking care of your kids or getting to work or school

Mental Health & Wellbeing

What Is Mental Wellbeing

Your mental wellbeing is about your thoughts and feelings and how you cope with the ups and downs of everyday life.

It's not the same thing as mental health, although the two can influence each other.

Long periods of low mental wellbeing can lead to the development of diagnosable mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression. If you're living with a mental health condition, you may experience low mental wellbeing more often, but there will also be long periods where you're able to maintain good mental wellbeing.



What Does Good Mental Wellbeing Look Like?

Good mental wellbeing is NOT the absence of negative thoughts and feelings. We all face difficult and challenging situations/times that cause us to feel angry, sad, overwhelmed and everything in between.

Instead, it's about being able to understand and manage those feelings, so that you're able to:

- Feel confident in yourself
- Build and maintain positive relationships
- Have a sense of purpose
- Live and work productively
- Cope with the normal stresses of day-to-day life
- Manage when things change

What can affect your mental wellbeing?

Our mental wellbeing is often affected by big life events that we have little or no control over such as bereavement, illness or redundancy. In these situations, it's about how we respond, our behaviours and habits that will determine the impact on our mental wellbeing. For example, do we reach out for support or withdraw? Do we assume the worst or remain open to new opportunities?

It's here that our level of resilience comes into play. Resilience is your ability to cope with change and adversity. By strengthening your resilience, you're better able to maintain good mental wellbeing through all of life's ups and downs.

There are also factors that influence our mental wellbeing, which we can control.

Our relationships

Strong connections with friends, family and colleagues help to strengthen our confidence and self-esteem.

Our physical health

Through good nutrition and regular physical activity we can boost our energy levels, improve our confidence and relieve stress. Small changes make a big difference so try to start building healthy habits.

Our emotional health

Practicing mindfulness can help you understand and manage strong emotions so that rather than feeling overwhelmed, you're able to approach difficult situations with a sense of calm and clarity.

5 steps to mental wellbeing

Evidence suggests there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.

1

Connect With Other People

Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. They can:

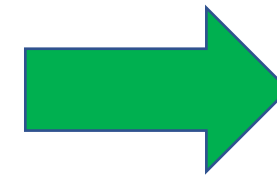
- Help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth
- Give you an opportunity to share positive experiences
- Provide emotional support and allow you to support others

There are lots of things you could try to help build stronger and closer relationships:



Do

- If possible, take time each day to be with your family, for example, try arranging a fixed time to eat dinner together
- Arrange a day out with friends you have not seen for a while
- Try switching off the TV to talk or play a game with your children, friends or family
- Have lunch with a friend/colleague/family member
- Volunteer at a local school, hospital or community group. Find out how to volunteer on the GOV.UK website
- Make the most of technology to stay in touch with friends and family. Video-chat apps like Skype and FaceTime are useful, especially if you live far apart
- Search and download online community apps on the NHS apps library to connect, meet up with people or share information.



TALK



Don't

Do not rely on technology or social media alone to build relationships. It's easy to get into the habit of only ever texting, messaging or emailing people.



5 steps to mental wellbeing **Active**



2

Be Physically Active

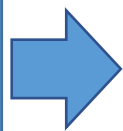
Being active is not only great for your physical health and fitness. Evidence also shows it can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- Raising your self-esteem
- Helping you to set goals or challenges and achieve them
- Causing chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood



Do

- Find free activities to help you get fit
- If you have a disability or long-term health condition, find out about getting active with a disability
- Start running
- Find out how to start swimming, cycling or dancing or another type of exercise



Don't

Don't feel you have to do any of these things if they have no interest to you. It's best to find activities you enjoy and make them a part of your life

Don't

Don't feel that you have to spend hours in a gym. It's best to find activities you enjoy and make them a part of your life



Some Things You Could Try Include:

Do

- Try learning to cook something new. Find out about healthy eating and cooking tips
- Try taking on a new responsibility at work, such as mentoring a or improving your presentation skills
- Work on a DIY project, such as fixing a broken bike, garden gate or something bigger. There are lots of free video tutorials online
- Consider signing up for a course at a local college. You could try learning a new language or a practical skill such as plumbing
- Try new hobbies that challenge you, such as writing a blog, taking up a new sport or learning to paint

3



TRY

Learn New Skills

Research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

Boosting self-confidence and raising self-esteem
Helping you to build a sense of purpose
Helping you to connect with others

Even if you feel like you do not have enough time, or you may not need to learn new things, there are lots of different ways to bring learning into your life.

5 steps to mental wellbeing

4

Give To Others

Acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by:

- Creating positive feelings and a sense of reward
- Giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth
- Helping you connect with other people

It could be small acts of kindness towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community.

Some examples of the things you could try include:

- Saying thank you to someone for something they have done for you
- Asking friends, family or colleagues how they are and really listening to their answer
- Spending time with friends or relatives who need support or company
- Offering to help someone you know with DIY or a work project
- Volunteering in your community, such as helping at a school, hospital or care home



Pay Attention To The Present Moment (mindfulness)

Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges. Read more about mindfulness, including steps you can take to be more mindful in your everyday life.

1 Simple Mindfulness Practices for Daily Life

Mindful Wakeup: Start with a Purpose

This practice is best done first thing in the morning, before checking phones or email.

1. On waking, sit in your bed or a chair in a relaxed posture. Close your eyes and connect with the sensations of your seated body. Make sure your spine is straight, but not rigid.
2. Take three long, deep, nourishing breaths, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Then let your breath settle into its own rhythm, as you follow it in and out, noticing the rise and fall of your chest and belly as you breathe.
3. Ask yourself: "What is my intention for today?" As you think about the people and activities you will face. Ask yourself:
 - How might I show up today to have the best impact?
 - What do I need to take better care of myself?
 - During difficult moments, how might I be more compassionate to others and myself?
 - How might I feel more connected and fulfilled?
4. Set your intention for the day. For example, "Today, I will be kind to myself; be patient with others, give generously, have fun, eat well etc or anything else you feel is important.
5. Throughout the day, check in with yourself. Pause, take a breath, and revisit your intention. Notice, as you become more and more conscious of your intentions for each day, how the quality of your communications, relationships, and mood shifts.

Look after your mental health and wellbeing when staying at home

STAY SAFE
together we will get through this



1. Plan Your Day

We are all adjusting to a new, rather strange, way of life. This can be a risk to our mental wellbeing.

As tempting as it might be to stay in pyjamas all day, regular routines are essential for our identity, self-confidence and purpose.

Try to start your day at roughly the same time you usually would and aim to set aside time each day for movement, relaxation, connection and reflection.

2. Move More Every Day

Being active reduces stress, increases energy levels, can make us more alert and help us sleep better.

Explore different ways of adding physical movement and activity to your day and find some that work best for you.

Even at home, there will be lots of

3. Try A Relaxation Technique

Relaxing and focusing on the present can help improve your mental health and lighten negative feelings.

Try some different meditation or breathing exercises to see what helps. For example, sometimes we can be so tense that we do not even remember what being relaxed feels like. Progressive muscle relaxation teaches you to recognise when you are starting to get tense and how to relax.

4. Connect With Others

Staying at home, especially if you live on your own, can feel lonely. Find creative ways to keep in touch with co-workers, friends, family, and others to help you (and them) feel more connected and supported.

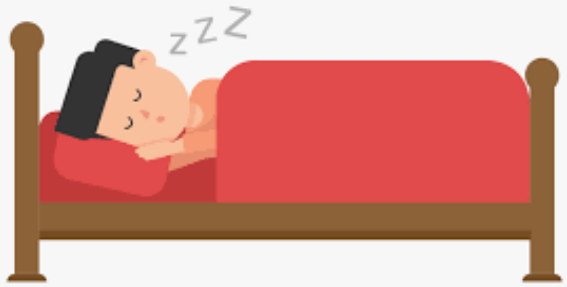
Explore ways of connecting that work for you, whether that's by post, over the phone, social media, or video-chat. This could be anything, from sharing a cup of tea over video, playing an online game together, or simply sending a supportive text-message.



Look after your mental health and wellbeing when staying at home



compassion



5. Take time to reflect and practice self-compassion

Make time every day to reflect on what went well. It's important to recognise your successes and the things you are grateful for, no matter how small. Consider keeping a gratitude journal each day where you could write two or three of these things every night before you go to bed.

Mindfulness techniques may also help you focus on the present rather than dwelling on unhelpful thoughts (though they may not be helpful for those experiencing more severe depression).

We have a number of relaxation and other digital exercises on our website.



6. Improve your sleep

- Feelings of uncertainty and changes to daily life may mean you have more difficulty sleeping.
- There is a lot you can do to improve your sleep. Aim to go to bed and get up at the same time each day, even at the weekend if you can, and try to get some natural sunlight (by opening your curtains and windows) where possible. This helps to regulate your body clock which can help you sleep better.
- Wind down before bed by avoiding using your phone, tablet, computer or TV for an hour before bedtime.



Guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus (COVID-19)



NHS

GUIDANCE

What You Need To Know:

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is having an impact on everyone's daily lives.

It may be difficult, but by following government guidance, you are helping to protect yourself, your family, the NHS and your community.

During this time, you may be bored, frustrated or lonely. You may also feel low, worried, anxious, or be concerned about your health or that of those close to you. These are all common reactions to the difficult situation we face. Everyone reacts differently to events and changes in the way that we think, feel and behave vary between different people and over time. It's important that you take care of your mind as well as your body.

Most people will find strategies that work for them and the difficult feelings associated with the outbreak will pass. Some people, especially those with pre-existing mental health problems, may need extra support.



What Can Help Your Mental Health And Wellbeing

Think about your new daily routine. Life is changing for us all for a while and you will have experienced some disruption to your normal routine. Think about how you can adapt and create positive new routines. Try to engage in useful activities (such as cleaning, cooking or exercise) or meaningful activities (such as reading or being in touch with friends). You might find it helpful to write a plan for your day or week.

Consider how to connect with others. Maintaining relationships with people you trust is important for your mental wellbeing. If you can't meet in person, think about how you can stay in touch with friends and family via telephone, video calls or social media instead – whether it's people you normally see often or connecting with old friends.

The NHS Volunteers Service can also provide a telephone 'check in and chat' for if you have mental health issues and are feeling isolated. Call 0808 196 3646 (8am to 8pm) or visit the website.



It's OK to get help

Guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Help And Support Others

Think about how you could help those around you – it could make a big difference to them and can make you feel better too. It is important to listen to and accept other people's concerns, worries or behaviours. Could you message a friend or family member nearby? Are there community groups that you could join to support others locally? Remember it's important to do this in line with guidance on COVID-19 to keep yourself and everyone safe.

Talk About Your Worries

It is quite common to feel worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember that this is a difficult time for everyone and sharing with family and friends how you are feeling and the things you are doing to cope can help them too. If you don't feel able to do that, there are people you can speak to via NHS recommended helplines.

Look After Your Physical Wellbeing

Your physical health has a big impact on how you are feeling emotionally and mentally. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which, in turn, can make you feel worse. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals and drink enough water. One You has a lot of advice and ideas for healthy meals you can cook at home.

Where Possible, Exercise At Home and/or Outside As Often As You Wish

If you can't exercise outside, you can find free, easy 10-minute workouts from Public Health England or other exercise videos to try at home on the NHS Fitness Studio And YouTube. Sport England also has good tips for keeping active at home.

If you are able to go outside, there are lots of easy ways to get moving like walking or gardening.

Seek Advice And Support If You Smoke Or Use Drugs Or Alcohol

Smoking or using drugs or alcohol to cope in times of stress and disruption can make things worse, including your mental health. NHS Smokefree provides information and advice on quitting smoking and One You has resources to help with cutting back on alcohol. You can also call Drinkline for free on 0300 123 1110 for advice and support and Down Your Drink provides interactive web-based support to help people to drink more safely. If you are concerned about drugs use, FRANK offers information and advice, including where to get help, and has a free advice line – 0300 123 6600. You can also reach Marijuana Anonymous and participate in their weekly online meetings to receive support from other peers.

Look After Your Sleep

Feeling anxious or worried can make it harder to get a good night's sleep. Good quality sleep makes a big difference to how you feel mentally and physically, so it's important to get enough.

Try to maintain regular sleeping patterns and keep good sleep hygiene practices, including avoiding screens before bed, cutting back on caffeine and creating a restful environment. The Every Mind Matters sleep page provides practical advice on how to improve your sleep.

Guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus (COVID-19)

be
Positive



Try To Manage Difficult Feelings

Many people find the news about COVID-19 concerning. However, some people may experience such intense anxiety that it becomes a problem. Try to focus on the things you can control, such as managing your media and information intake – 24-hour news and constant social media updates can make you more worried. If it is affecting you, try to limit the time you spend watching, reading, or listening to media coverage of the outbreak. It may help to only check the news at set times or limiting yourself to checking a couple of times a day.

It is okay to acknowledge some things that are outside of your control right now. The Every Mind Matters page on anxiety and NHS mental wellbeing audio guides provide further information on how to manage anxiety.

Get the facts.

Gather high-quality information that will help you to accurately determine your own or other people's risk of contracting COVID-19 so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as GOV.UK, or the NHS website, and fact-check information you get from newsfeeds, social media or other people.

Relax

Do Things You Enjoy

When you are anxious, lonely or low, you may do things that you usually enjoy less often or not at all. Focusing on your favourite hobby, learning something new or simply taking time to relax indoors or outdoors (in line with the guidance) should give you some relief from anxious thoughts and feelings and can boost your mood.

If you can't do the things you normally enjoy because you are staying at home, try to think about how you could adapt them, or try something new. There are lots of free tutorials and courses online and people are coming up with innovative online solutions, such as online pub quizzes and streamed live music concerts.

Set Goals

Setting goals and achieving them gives a sense of control and purpose. Think about things you want or need to do that you can still do at home, such as watching a film, reading a book or learning something online.



Guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus (COVID-19)

Keep Your Mind Active

This can help you feel in control and less low or worried. Read, write, play games, do crossword puzzles, sudokus, jigsaws or drawing and painting, whatever works best for you.

Take Time To Relax And Focus On The Present

This can help with difficult emotions, worries about the future and generally make you feel better.

If You can, Get Outside. If You Can't, Bring Nature In

Spending time in green spaces can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. If you can't go outside, you can try to still get these positive effects by spending time with the windows open to let in fresh air, arranging space to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight, or get out into the garden if you can.



Challenges You May Be Facing

You may be experiencing challenges in your life at the moment that are affecting your mental health. The following advice may help you to think about potential challenges you may encounter and make a plan for them. Making these plans could help to protect or improve your mental health during these challenging times.

Essential Supplies

If you are not able to go out, think about how you can get any supplies you need, such as food, medication or other essentials. You might be able to phone or email your local shops to get a food delivery, or get food online, or get friends, family or neighbours to help. If there's no one to help you get essential supplies, find out if you can get help from a volunteer through the NHS Volunteer Responders programme.

If you're finding it hard to afford food, find out if you're eligible for Universal Credit. If you have a child, find out if they can get free school meals. Apply for Healthy Start vouchers if you're 10 or more weeks pregnant or have a child under 4. Get more information on accessing food and other essential supplies.

Financial Concerns

You may be worried about work and money these issues can have a big impact on your mental health. For guidance on what your rights are at work, what benefits you are entitled to and what further support is available, see guidance for work and support or advice from Citizens Advice or the National Debtline.

If You Care For Other People

You may be worried about how to ensure care for those who rely on you, either your dependants at home or others that you regularly visit. Let your local authority know if you provide care, or support someone you don't live with. Further advice on creating a contingency plan and sources of support are available from Carers UK.

Guidance on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus (COVID-19)

**IMPORTANT
INFORMATION**



Let's Talk
About It!



If You Are Being Treated Or Taking Medication For Existing Conditions

Continue accessing treatment and support where possible. If you have been requested to stay at home, let relevant services know you are staying at home, and work out how to continue receiving support during this time:

ask about having appointments by phone, text or online. For example, this could be with your counsellor, therapist or support worker, nurse, care worker or befriender



Keep Taking Your Medication

You might be able to order repeat prescriptions by phone, or online using an app or website if your doctor's surgery offers this.

Ask your pharmacy about getting your medication delivered or think about who you could ask to collect it for you if you are self-isolating or shielding. The NHS website has more information about getting prescriptions for someone else and checking if you have to pay for prescriptions



It is **IMPORTANT** to follow government advice on helping to avoid the spread of COVID-19, but if you find you are going beyond the recommendations, if this is making you feel stressed or anxious, or if you are having intrusive thoughts here are some things you could try:

- Let other people know you're struggling, for example, you could ask them not to discuss the news with you
- Breathing exercises can help you cope and feel more in control.
- Set limits, like washing your hands for the recommended 20 seconds
- Plan something to do after washing your hands, which could help distract you and change your focus

Help To Stop The Virus From Spreading

There are 4 easy steps you can take to reduce the risk of getting COVID-19 or spreading it to others:

- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water
- Use a tissue for coughs and sneezes and bin it safely and wash your hands
- Avoid touching your face, including your mouth and eyes
- Get up to date information about what you can and cannot do, or what to do if you feel unwell on the NHS 111 number and website.



For Advice On COVID-19 And Any Symptoms See The [NHS Website](#)

If you are experiencing stress, feelings of anxiety or low mood, you can use the NHS mental health and wellbeing for self-assessment, audio guides and practical tools. Every Mind Matters also provides simple tips and advice to start taking better care of your mental health.

If you are still struggling after several weeks and it is affecting your daily life, please contact NHS 111 online. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. If you feel you need someone to talk to, speak to a GP or support is available through the NHS or mental health charities – NHS mental health services have remained open for business throughout this time, including delivering support digitally and over the phone where possible. You can find further information on how to access mental health services and search what is available in your area.

If you have an existing mental health condition and you need help collecting shopping, medication or would like a telephone 'check in and chat', visit the NHS Volunteers Service or call 0808 196 3646 (8am to 8pm) to arrange volunteer support.

In a medical emergency, call 999. This is when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk. A mental health emergency should be taken as seriously as a physical health emergency.



CATCH IT



BIN IT



KILL IT

