



Eat Healthily

New research finds that your food choices may affect your mood and mental health. This is sometimes called the “food-mood connection.”

A healthy, balanced diet includes:

- ✓ fruits and vegetables,
- ✓ whole grains,
- ✓ low-fat dairy,
- ✓ lean protein,
- ✓ limited amounts of salt, saturated fat, and added sugar.



TOP TIP FOR BRAIN HEALTH: Eat plenty of wholegrain cereals, leafy greens and dairy foods. Vitamin B is essential to brain health.

Visit the following for some tasty recipes:

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/quick-and-healthy>
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/diets/healthy>



Schedule Me Time

Excess stress hormones like cortisol can be harmful to the brain. Schedule regular periods of “ME-Time” into your week. Taking a little time for yourself refreshes and re-energizes you. It allows you to think more clearly and make better decisions. Taking “me” time also builds your self-esteem, because you are important and deserve to have a little time to yourself. If you engage in something you enjoy during your time-out, you also have the satisfaction of making yourself happy and content.

What can “ME-Time” look like?

Read a book
Turn off all electronics
Get some fresh air
Simply enjoy the down time

If 5 minutes is all you've got, you'd be surprised at how much you can make it count.

- Just breathe. Really focus on taking deep breaths.
- Stretch. Get up from your bed or chair and energise your muscles.
- Do nothing. Sit quietly. Let your mind and body rest.



Focus on Your Strengths

Be realistic with who you are. You are a unique human being. Respect your uniqueness by allowing yourself to be just you and play to the strengths that you have, not that you wished you had. Research suggests that people who use their strengths are happier, feel less stressed (due to having higher degrees of positivity), have more energy, are more confident and experience faster growth and development.

You see a growing body of research is finding that people who use their strengths more at work:

- Are happier
- Experience less [stress](#)
- Feel healthier and have more energy
- Feel more satisfied with their lives
- Are more confident
- Experience faster growth and development
- Are more creative and agile at work
- Feel more satisfied and experience more meaning in their work
- Are more engaged in their work



Sleep 8-9 hours a night

Poor health affects sleep and vice versa. Mental health problems like depression or anxiety often go hand in hand with sleep problems.

We spend about a third of our lives asleep. Sleep is essential - It is as important to our bodies as eating, drinking and breathing, and is vital for maintaining good mental and physical health. Sleeping helps us to recover from mental as well as physical exertion.

How can I get better sleep?

✓ Relaxation

It's easiest to get to sleep when we are able to relax, and let go of concerns. We've all had a night where we lie awake and worry. In the time before we go to bed, we should try and wind down, be less stimulated, and relax.

✓ Lifestyle

What you eat and drink can affect your sleep. Caffeine is a stimulant which can make it harder to sleep, as can sugary meals close to bed time.

✓ Environment

Where you sleep is important. Watching TV, looking at screens or phones or eating in bed can all affect the quality of your sleep. Turn off technology at least 30 minutes before you are due to go to sleep.



Talk About Your Concerns

Talking about your feelings can help you have positive mental fitness and deal with times when you feel troubled. Talking about your feelings isn't a sign of weakness. It's part of taking charge of your wellbeing and doing what you can to stay healthy.

Talk to someone you trust

Talking to someone you trust about something upsetting may help you to:

- sort through the problem & see the situation more clearly.
- look at the problem in a new or different way.
- release built-up tension – this can help gain new insight into the cause of the problem.
- find out that you are not alone – other people may share your feelings!
- identify options or solutions you hadn't thought of before.

Don't keep your problems to yourself

If you don't talk about your problems, you may find your pent-up tensions or feelings burst out in a way that is embarrassing or inappropriate. You might also find that things may get worse if you don't try to get on top of them straight away.

Finding the right person to talk to

An important first step is deciding who you want to talk to. You need to feel that you can trust the person you are talking to.

There are counsellors who specialise in talking to young people or families. They can provide counselling in a variety of specialty areas.

Other ways to deal with your feelings

It is important to find ways to express your feelings. This can help you to release built-up tensions and make better decisions. There are a number of ways you can express how you feel, including:

- **set aside some time** for yourself, even if it is just ten minutes
- **write about how you feel** – this can be a useful way to explore your feelings. Some people keep diaries, others just write down whatever comes into their head. You may want to write a story about whatever is bothering you
- **walk away** from situations that might stress you out or make you angry
- **self-talk** – consciously change negative thought patterns to help you look at things in a more positive light
- **relaxation** is one way to focus your thoughts and consider the big picture. Is your stressful situation worth getting stressed about? Will it matter in the long run?
- **play sport** – sport gives you plenty of chances to get rid of pent up energy
- **be creative** – draw or paint; make a collage
- **use music** – singing, playing or listening to music (or just shouting) can all help. Dance to music at home, or go out and dance as much as you like.



Keep Active

Regular exercise can have a profoundly positive impact on Mental Fitness. It also relieves stress, improves memory, helps you sleep better, and boosts your overall mood.

"Your body is all you need; anything outside of that is an added bonus. You can turn any environment into your workout space, and there are no excuses not to get a really good workout when you're home."

There are a multitude of apps and YouTube clips available to keep your Mental and Physical Fitness optimum on both App Store and Google Play. Share with your family and friends if you find any interesting ones.

Apps:



Nike Training Club

Free Download and Sign Up – Easy to use videos talking you through each exercise, ranging from circuit style to yoga workouts. Beginner to Advanced options available. A Range of sessions from 15 minutes to 1 hour.



Seven – 7 minute workout

Need something to do but don't have much time? Free Download and Sign Up - Streaks for continued achievements and completion of 7 minute workouts aimed to improve various aspects of your fitness.

YouTube:

Just Dance – Various artists/songs for a Cardio workout.

Subscribe to Joe Wickes "The Body Coach TV" for various Cardio and circuit style workouts. Click on the link below, or just type these in to the YouTube search bar:

[20 minute full body HITT workout](#)

[20 minute HITT Beginners workout](#)

[25 minute full body workout](#)

[16 minute low impact no noise workout](#)



Practice Relaxation Techniques

There are a multitude of apps and YouTube clips available to keep your Mental and Physical Fitness optimum on both App Store and Google Play. Share with your family and friends if you find any interesting ones.

Apps:



PEAK – Brain Training

Free Download and Sign Up – includes activities to improve focus, grammar and maths skills, brain processing speed and memory skills.



Meditation App

Free download and Sign Up – includes meditation guidance, help with sleeping, relaxation sounds, reducing stress and focus tips.



The Gutenberg Project

Free download, No Sign Up Needed. Thousands of books – for free! Remember, reading keeps your brain active and can transport you to another world.

Childline

What kind of support?

General Support for under 19 year olds.

How to find them?

www.childline.org.uk

Sign up online for 1-2-1 online chat with a counsellor
Helpline 080000 11 11 (24/7)



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Papyrus UK

What kind of support?

Hopeline for those dealing with suicidal thoughts

How to find them?

Call 0800 068 41 41, Text 07786209697

Email pat@papyrus-uk.org

Availability: 10am-10pm weekdays, 2pm-10pm weekends and bank holidays



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Mind

What kind of support?

General support for mental health.

How to find them?

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/

- Urgent help tool
- Online chat (9am-6pm Mon-Fri, except bank holidays)



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One You

What kind of support?

Support for building an action plan to make better choices and improve wellbeing.

How to find them?

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-mind/action-plan/



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Moodjuice

What kind of support?

Support for thinking about emotional problems and trying to overcome these.

How to find them?

www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk



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Moodzone by NHS

What kind of support?

General support for mental health and wellbeing.

How to find them?

www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/



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UK Safer Internet Centre

What kind of support?

Advice on how to get the most out of the Internet whilst staying safe online.

How to find them?

www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/young-people



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Practice Relaxation Techniques

Relaxation techniques improve your mental fitness by;

- lowering your heart rate, blood pressure and breathing rate
- reducing muscle tension and chronic pain.
- improving concentration and mood.
- reducing fatigue.
- reducing anger and frustration.

You can try these techniques to help improve Mental Fitness:

Deep Breathing: take long, slow deep breaths

Visualisation: Close your eyes and vividly imagine a peaceful place (enrich ALL your senses – smell/taste/see/feel) and enjoy your feelings of worry drift away as you explore your peaceful place.

Mindfulness: Meditation has been shown to help people stress less, focus more and even sleep better. **Headspace App** is meditation made simple

Yoga: involves moving and stationary poses combined with deep breathing



Reward Yourself

Positive reinforcement is an effective way of incentivising yourself and when you reward positive behaviour, you're more inclined to behave in that way again. Either reward yourself with something small every time you tick something off of your to-do list or save your treats up for a bigger reward when you've accomplished something in particular like a big project.

Small rewards and treats provoke a little release of dopamine (the feel good hormone) and acts of self-care and rewards allows you to be kind to yourself. Choose things that bring your mood up. Keep a record of things that make you happy. Reward yourself by doing them or getting them when you feel that you deserve a reward. Be creative!